

MERCY ASSOCIATES OF BALLARAT EAST



Ann Coswello
Helen Smith

MERCY ASSOCIATES OF BALLARAT EAST

The growth of the Mercy Associates of the
former Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy
Ballarat East

1986 - 2017



Ann Coswello
Helen Smith

2017

This book is dedicated to Rita Hayes rsm
1928 – 2016



"[In] September 1994 [Rita] was elected for a five year term as Congregation Leader of the Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy. The burgeoning Mercy Associate Movement was a special interest of Rita over these years and remained so until the day she died. She rests in the knowledge that Mercy Associates have taken a new path with renewed vigour under new leadership."

Veronica Lawson rsm
4th November, 2016

CONTENTS

Foreword	7
The 'Beginning' of Mercy Associates	8
Catherine McAuley	9
Associates in the Modern Era	10
The Ballarat Story	11
• Coordinators	12
• Mercy Associates	12
Recollections	18
Spiritual Development	22
• Reflection Days	22
• All Souls Day	23
• Formation	24
• Commitment Day	25
• Prayer Ministry	26
Reaching Out	27
• Supporting Mercy Works	27
• Care Packages	28
• Communion to the Sick	29
• Swimming	29
Social Activities	30
• Annual Luncheon	30
• Catherine's Cuppa	30
• Social Afternoons	31
• Road Trips	31
• Maintaining Connections	32
Special Occasions	33
• 25 Years	33
• Year of Mercy	34
A New Chapter Begins	36
The Suscipe	37
<i>Appendix 1</i>	38



Focus - Launch of the ISMAPNG Mercy Associates 2016

FOREWORD

There have been Mercy Associates as part of the life of the former Ballarat East Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy since 1987. During that period there have been a number of sisters involved as coordinators of the group.

In September 2016, as the new model of Mercy Associates emerged for the Institute, a conversation took place between Sr Rita Hayes, then coordinator of the group and myself about the importance of remembering, acknowledging and celebrating the past whilst looking to the future. We saw it as important that this be documented in some way.

Sadly Rita died suddenly on November 1st, 2016 but in order to ensure the continuance of this conversation I approached another Associate, Ann Coswello, with the idea of moving the vision to a reality. She agreed and with the cooperation and help of all Associates the project - a brief account of and reflections on the Mercy Associates Ballarat - has been completed.

Helen Smith
2017



THE 'BEGINNING' OF MERCY ASSOCIATES

"The 'concept' of Mercy Associates begin with Catherine McAuley, foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy. Her vision was to alleviate the situation of the poor, sick and ignorant in her native Dublin.

Her intention was to establish a society of secular ladies who would devote themselves to the service of the poor, with liberty to return to their worldly pursuits if they no longer felt inclined to that way of life."¹ However, conflict with the church authorities of the time prevented her fulfilling this vision and led to her establishing the Sisters of Mercy.



This is a sketch by Sr Clare Agnew, a foundation member of the Bermondsey (London) community and a contemporary of Catherine McAuley. "Her sketches of the works of Mercy, done while she was on a visit to several Mercy convents in Ireland in 1840, are the only eye-witness pictures we have of how the early Sisters carried out their ministries of teaching, care of the sick and dying, and visitation of the poor in their homes and in prison."²

¹ www.ourladyofmercy.org.uk Mercy Associates: History

² Anne Hetherington April 23rd 2012 <http://www.mercyworld.org>

CATHERINE MCAULEY



Catherine's life and charism are and have always been the centre of the Associate Program. Study of her spirituality is ongoing and helps to inform our continued commitment and to inspire our daily lives.

We are most fortunate that Catherine's life and thoughts have been very well documented. Many of her letters and Instructions have been preserved and are readily available today.

Try to meet all with PEACE and EASE.

Letter to Elizabeth Moore December 1838

A community in which .. universal charity reigns, is capable of surmounting all difficulties.

We can never say 'it is enough'.

Familiar Instructions, p. 2

If the love of God really reigns in your heart, it will quickly show itself in the exterior.

Retreat Instructions, p. 145

What an ineffable consolation to serve Christ Himself, in the person of the poor, and to walk in the very same path He trod!

Familiar Instructions, p. 16

Lord Jesus, implant your love in my heart. It is all I desire in this world or in the next!

Retreat Instructions, p. 178

ASSOCIATES IN THE MODERN ERA

Associates, as we know them today, were 'born' as a result of the Second Vatican Council. In the document 'Evangelica Testificatio', issued in 1971, Pope Paul VI called upon religious men and women to be faithful to the spirit of their Founder, rediscover their founding Charism and in turn share this with members of the Laity. ³

From an account of the Annual Commitment ceremony we read, "Today's Associates are people, who see around them the human needs that exist and endeavour to do what can be done to make a difference. They are involved, some in groups, some alone, in particular projects that address identified needs."⁴ They "commit themselves to following the gospel message through prayer and active concern for both people and the environment in the light of the charism of Catherine McAuley. This commitment is personal and particular to their life situation. Spiritual nourishment through prayer and information sessions on Scripture, Catherine McAuley's life and legacy, and other matters are a regular feature of their annual calendar of events"⁵

Speaking in Lewisham, at the formal launch of the new vision and model for Mercy Associates in June 2016, Sr. Berneice Loch, leader of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG) said, "We know that the mercy of God is more fully expressed through our collaboration with others. While Mercy Associates respond to the call to mercy in a way that is distinct from that of a religious vocation, there are many common elements. Side by side the two paths offer mutual support and practical assistance as we both work to make God's mercy known in our world. Just like a religious vocation, Associates live out their mercy calling by utilising their unique talents."⁶

Currently, the Associates of the former Ballarat East Congregation continue in two groups, one in Apollo Bay and the other in Ballarat. For many years there was a third group in Donald but that has since concluded.

3 w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/.../hf_p-vi_exh_19710629_evangelica-testificatio

4 www.ballaratcatholic.org.au enews: 17 September 2009

5 Ibid

6 www.institute.mercy.org Becoming Involved: Becoming a Mercy Associate



THE BALLARAT STORY

The initiative for the Ballarat East Mercy Associates began in the early 80's. During this time sisters from Ballarat were working in South America with sisters from Rochester, New York State. The Rochester Community had an established Associates Program and so the seed was planted.

During the next few years Sisters Genevieve McDonald, Barbara Lemke, Elizabeth Teggelove and Rita Hayes visited Rochester and gathered first-hand information on their Associates program.

In 1984, the Chapter of the Ballarat East Congregation passed a recommendation which stated that the Sisters would "develop a program providing greater participation by the laity in [their] life of prayer and active ministry."⁷

During 1985 a working party of five sisters, (Genevieve, Elizabeth, Rita, Maureen Healy and Joan Dalglish) spent 12 months researching similar programs. This work culminated in the development of a document that established the Mercy Associates for the Ballarat East Congregation. In 1986 the Congregation took a decision to implement the program and Sr. Mary Darcy accepted the role of coordinator. This role passed to Sr. Anne McMillan in 1988.

On December 11th 1988 the first commitment ceremony was held. During this celebration eight people became Mercy Associates, receiving a Mercy Associates emblem designed for the group.

In 1989 the Associates Program was established in Donald with twelve people making their commitment. The following year saw the formation of the Apollo Bay Program.





COORDINATORS

BALLARAT

Sr. Mary Darcy 1986 – 87

Sr. Anne McMillan 1988 – 91

Sr. Rosemary Kelly 1992 – 95

Sr. Rita Hayes 1996 – 2016

Rita was assisted by:

- Sr. Maureen Connelly 1996 –1997
- Sr. Barbara Lemke 1998 - 1999

Apollo Bay

Sr. Margaret Kelly

Donald

Sr. Monica Butler

MERCY ASSOCIATES

1988

Ann Coswello

Violet O'Keefe RIP

Phil Denahy RIP

Tressie Penny RIP

Pat Dunne RIP

Iola Tuddenham RIP

Brian Dunne RIP

Denis Crawley RIP

1989

Lilian Bunn RIP

John Howley - Donald

Bernadette Clark

Marie Conlon - Donald RIP

Mary Millar

Pat Donnellon - Donald

Monica Morgan

Noreen Giles - Donald RIP

Ron Morgan RIP

Dick Giles - Donald RIP

Kath O'Connell RIP

Jean Hogan - Donald

Jan Mullaly

Barbara Melican - Donald/Ballarat



Adrian Mullaly RIP
Jack Melican - Donald RIP
Maureen Howley - Donald
Jean Melican - Donald



1990

Betty Frape – Apollo Bay RIP

1991

Joan Shannon RIP

Doreen Donne

Tom Shannon RIP

Mary Millar

Carmel Hanrahan

Bronwyn Frith

Lila Burns RIP



1991 (cont.)

Gwen Edgar
Bernadette Rinaldi
Mary Moran
Eileen O'Meara
Elizabeth Fitzpatrick

1992

Veronica Noonan RIP
Mary Day - Apollo Bay RIP
Kath Buttler

1996

June Auchettl
Cynthia Napoli
Billie Roche

1997

Margaret Dunne RIP
Mollie Sutton - Apollo Bay
Sharon Porter
Kathleen Gallagher - Apollo Bay RIP

1998

Kath Donnelly RIP

1999

Mae Armstrong RIP
Monica McKeegan



2000

Barbara Terry - Apollo Bay

2001

Jeanette Morris

Margaret Berrand - Apollo Bay

2002

Yvonne Honey - Apollo Bay

Elizabeth McIntyre - Apollo Bay

Linda Matthews - Apollo Bay

2003

Maureen Mason

Fran Britt

Carol Riley

Mary Ormrod - Apollo Bay

2004

Monica Mahoney

Carole Hegarty - Apollo Bay

2005

Val Allen

Jean Cherry

2006

Margaret Stewart

Isabel Gutierrez - East Timor

2008

Stephanie Kent

Jenny Debney-Joyce

Lyn Conaghty

Betty Boadle

2009

Carmyl Lyons

Moira Coakley Apollo Bay



2010

Margaret McDonald
 Anne O'Connell
 Helen Cooper
 Bernadette Cullinan
 Kathy Pollard
 Louise Huggins - Apollo Bay

2011

Lyn Snibson
 Helen Smith
 Ursula Diamond-Keith

2012

Gerry Duck
 Liz McCartin
 Michael Stewart
 Doug Knez
 Damien McCartin
 Les Stewart

2013

Natalie Shannon
 Bryan Goble
 Margaret Ridsdale
 Marcia O'Neill
 Sharon McCartin
 Matthew O'Neill

2014

Angie Ng
 Fran Segrave

2015

Millie Dytschenko
 Colleen Davis
 Anne McKenzie
 Gail Kern
 Anne Tudor
 Joanne Rix
 Clare McNulty

2016

Jacey Kavanagh
 Joan Matthews
 Joan Hopkins
 Mollie Cleary



RECOLLECTIONS

From "Between Us" March 2011

At our February meeting, when we thought about what we wanted when we became Associates, we all agreed that friendship was an important factor for us. We also felt that being an Associate provides us with an opportunity for:

- our own spiritual enrichment and supporting that of others;
- getting to know and understand better Catherine McAuley and her legacy;
- expanding our friendship group beyond that in our own parishes;
- working together to assist others;
- working together to give others enjoyment;
- enjoying contact with the Sisters.

In Ballarat

Having been an Associate since the inception of the Ballarat group and having a Mercy education has enabled me to develop an ever-growing awareness of Catherine's spirit in my life. Over the years I have enjoyed many spiritual and social events with Sisters and Associates.

I remember the Revue Concert, which was great fun. We entertained the Sisters with our singing, dancing (which was not up to ballroom standard unfortunately) and recitations amid much laughter.

One event that stands out as a particular highlight for me was the 2013 celebration of 25 years of sharing Mercy. It was a true realisation that both Catherine's charism and work are continuing and hopefully will always do so.

Ann Coswello



Mercy Associates in Donald

I was raised by parents who supported the nuns in our local parish school of St Finbars', Brighton East. It was therefore natural for me to continue this when I married and moved to Donald where everyone worked along with the nuns and helped them in their endeavours.

I am not sure when it happened, but some of the locals formed a group and gathered weekly to pray together. Sr. Mercy was the last of the nuns to lead the group.

Sr. Anne McMillan, Mercy Associates Coordinator, visited us in 1989 and we realised that we were doing the work of Associates. After that, many Donald people officially became Mercy Associates.

Each year, we had a day when the Ballarat Associates would join us in Donald for Mass and a midday meal, hosted by the nuns in the convent. Sr. Monica was the last hostess.

Sadly time has caught up with us and most of the original associates have gone to God, where I am sure they will be praying for the Mercy family.

Barbara Melican

Associates in Apollo Bay

Over the years our numbers have fluctuated as some Associates have moved away and others have gone to their eternal reward. In 2016 we had six members and were led by Sr. Margaret Kelly.

I became an Associate in 2002, at the invitation of Sr. Margaret. At that time we met in the tiny front room of the old convent, with a phone hook up to a member living on the Bellarine Peninsula. We later moved to the chapel in the old Star of the Sea Convent, then onto the new Convent and finally to Sr. Margaret's latest home (always with Molly our canine Associate present.) If Sr. Margaret is away we will meet in the home of an Associate.

We meet every 2nd and 4th Tuesday for a wonderful hour of prayer, reflection and discussion. Sr. Margaret puts many hours into the preparation of each meeting, a self-imposed task much appreciated by us all. Activities we engage in are discussed,

ASSOCIATES IN DONALD!

On the evening of Tuesday, August 29, a number of people gathered at the Convent of Mercy in Donald to hear about Mercy Associates. The community, Srs. Theophane, Monica and Philomena are closely associated with these people in prayer and mutual support. As the evening progressed it was very clear that these people are indeed associated with the Sisters of Mercy in the events of their everyday lives and we are delighted to realise that Mercy Associateship has spread its wings northwards! We look forward to meeting the Donald people on December 10, when they join us that day.



consensus is reached and allocated tasks are then carried out. A typical example of our undertakings is visits to the aged and infirm at the local hospital and hostel.

Every year we have a two-day retreat usually given by a visiting Sister. This year, 2016, our retreat was led by our own Sr. Liz Callen.

Initially our commitment ceremonies were held in our Parish Church during or after Sunday Mass. The date usually coincided with the Ballarat Associates' annual stay at Star of the Sea Convent. As we Apollo Bay Associates renewed our commitment, the Ballarat ladies stood to support us. Over the years we have been fortunate to have Community Leaders with us on many of these occasions. Sr. Rita, Sr. Therese or Sr. Berenice have made the journey from Ballarat to attend our celebration. In latter years we have had our commitment ceremony in the new chapel at Star of the Sea Convent during Mass, with Sr. Margaret and Sr. Pat O'Brien receiving our commitment. Regardless of the venue following the ceremony we celebrated with a feast.

A true highlight of 2016 was being welcomed into ISMAPNG – ONE CHARISM, MANY PATHS.

Yvonne Honey



Reflections 2017 - 'On being an Associate'

At our reflection day in May we were invited to provide a comment on what being a Mercy Associate means to us. The following sum up the feeling of those present.

- Mercy Associates provide a feeling of being surrounded with love and compassion especially when I was grieving with a family loss. Truly extending Catherine McAuley's way of mercy.
- Mercy Associates provide the spiritual companionship that I was looking for.
- Being a Mercy Associate allows me to participate in activities that I wouldn't otherwise have access to.
- Mercy Associates has given me the opportunity to be with like-minded people in prayer and to be aligned in thought with the ideas and charism of Catherine.
- Being a Mercy Associate has enriched my life.
- Meeting with other Mercy Associates from all walks of life & sharing our Mercy experiences.
- Being a Mercy Associate has meant a lot to me. When my husband and I came to Ballarat East about ten years ago, we found it hard to make social contacts. Then I was invited to join the Associate Group where I found kindness, friendship, and spiritual direction. I have also developed a great admiration for Catherine McAuley, and do my best to follow her charism.'
- My prayer for all associates, My Lord and my God show us the way.
- Mercy Associates have provided me with the opportunity to explore the ideals of Catherine McAuley. Her commitment to the poor has been a source of great inspiration for me.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

"Our hearts can always be in the same place, centered on God."

"Prayer is a plant ... if it is cultivated and nourished, it will produce abundant fruit."

Reflection Days

Scanning through the "Between Us" newsletters the importance of the Reflection Day is clearly evident. The range, topics and number of events indicate that spiritual development is and has always been a central element in the Associates' program. The list below of topics and presenters, in no particular order, is testament to this.

"Celtic Wisdom" CDs of John O'Donohue

"The Blessing of Mercy" - Veronica Lawson rsm

"Mercy in the Scriptures" - Veronica Lawson rsm

"Universe as the Revelation of God" - Mary Dennett rsm

"The Beatitudes" - Veronica Lawson rsm

"Mercy Ministry and Catherine McAuley" - Clare Forbes rsm

"Gods love for us" - Lis Teggelove rsm

"Enriching of lives with prayer" - Fran Britt, Geraldine Mugavin rsm & Gerardine Cooney rsm

"Exploring Models of Future Mercy Membership" - Rosemary Kelly rsm

"Time with Catherine" - Ursula Gilbert rsm

"Luke's Writings" - Veronica Lawson rsm

"Development of the Structure of the Mass over the Centuries" - Sr Irmina

"Exploring Catherine's Letters" - Mary Duffy rsm

"A Journey from the Head to the Heart" - Frank Smith CSSR

"Praying with Catherine McAuley" - Helen Marie Burns rsm & Sheila Carney rsm

"Living in the Changing Church" - Kathleen Moran rsm

"The mystical Heart of Catherine McAuley" - Lyn Snibson

"Revealing Women in Old and New Testament" - Elaine Wainwright rsm

"Input into Faith Journey - A Missionary Journey" - Frank Smith CSSR

"Catherine's Ireland and her Letters" - Ursula Gilbert rsm

"Mercy Spirituality" - Gerardine Cooney rsm

"Celtic Spirituality" - Anne Forbes rsm

"Aboriginal Spirituality" - Jeanette Morris

"Following Jesus in the Spirit of Catherine" - Helen & Mary Duffy rsm

"Seasons related to Life Cycles" - Lis Teggelove rsm

All Souls Day

"Will we all meet in heaven? O what joy even to think of it."

Catherine McAuley in a letter to Teresa White

The first reference to the annual ceremony at the Ballarat New Cemetery was in the calendar published in "Between Us" for the year 2000. Initially the reflection for deceased Sisters and Associates was held on 11th November. This date had dual significance, as it marks both the Anniversary of Catherine McAuley's death and the end of the First World War. The Ceremony was moved to All Souls Day, 2nd November in 2011.



Formation

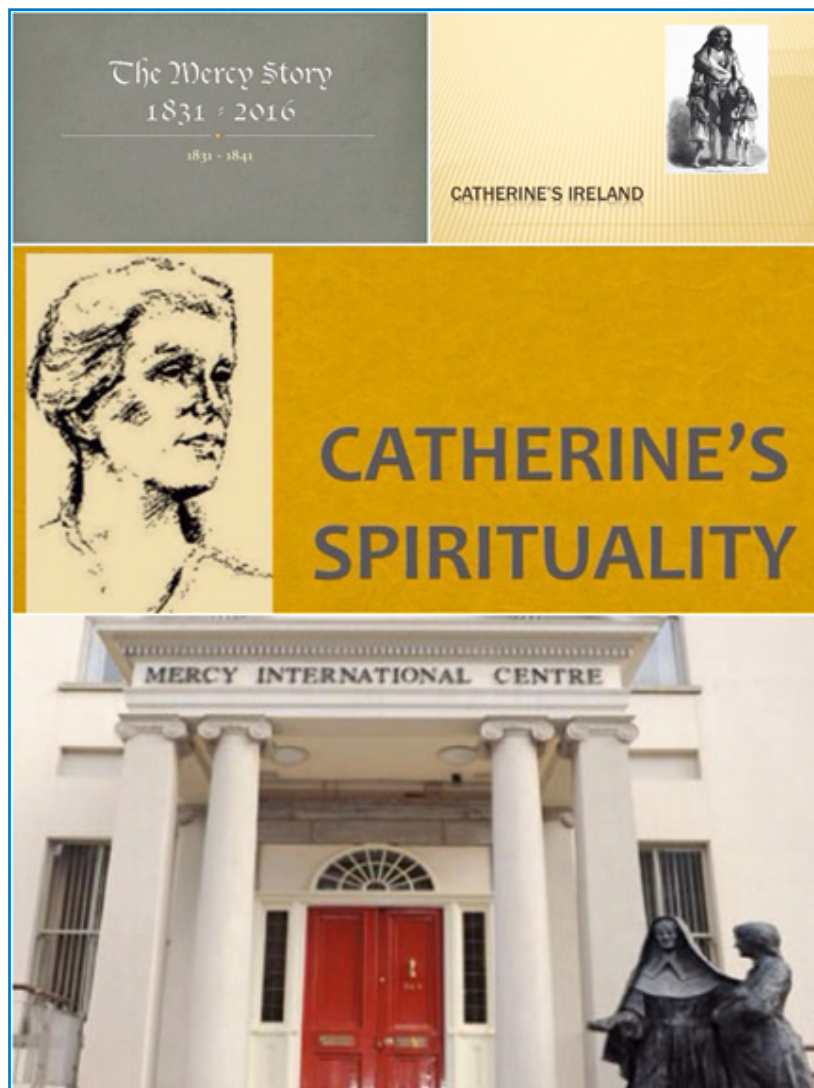
All new Associates participate in a formation program. While the format and presentation has changed over the years, the core elements have remained constant. Prospective Associates attend a series of sessions that focus on Catherine's life, her mission to the poor and the work of Mercy Sisters and Associates in contemporary society.

A review of the Associates Program conducted in 2000 listed the key components as:

- Catherine's life and spirituality;
- the works of the Sisters of Mercy;
- specific matters relating to Ballarat Sisters and Associates.

The current program first introduced in 2015 has five key areas namely:

- Catherine McAuley – Her Life;
- Catherine – Called by the Spirit;
- Mercy from Ireland to Australia;
- Mercy Associates;
- Reflection



Commitment Day

Each year the Formation Sessions are followed by the annual commitment ceremony. At this celebration new Associates make their commitment followed by a re-commitment of existing members.

A luncheon follows the ceremony, which provides an opportunity for the new members to meet all Associates and Sisters who have gathered for the occasion.



Prayer Ministry

After reading the article "Prayer doesn't change God it changes us" in "Just Mercy" (see Appendix 1) I began to think that the Ballarat Mercy Associates could set up such a program and raised the matter with our management team, the Core Group.

In February 2016 the matter was discussed and a meeting was set up with Steph Kent, Anne O'Connell and myself to see how this might work. Following this meeting some documents were put together and a letter was sent to each Associate inviting them participate in the Prayer Ministry. The response was positive and we began to look at the format we would use. Our monthly Prayer Ministry sheet is similar to that outlined in the above-mentioned article.



Some of the topics covered in the Prayer Ministry program are:

- New Vision and Model for Mercy Associates;
- The Murnong Trail (a biodiversity trail through the bush surrounding Damascus College Ballarat);
- For a World in which a new spirit of Love and Justice will break through;
- Mercy and Social Justice;
- Peace in Families;
- Workers for the Harvest;
- The Children of the World;
- We Pray for Those in our Midst who are Mourning the Loss of a Loved One or a Personal Loss of Some Kind;
- End of the Year Of Mercy;
- Models of Mercy;
- Recent Launch of ISMAPNG Sustainability Policy.

From August 2016, thirty-one Prayer Ministry sheets have been sent out monthly – twenty-one by email and ten by Post Box drop. There has been encouraging feedback from participating Associates. Steph Kent and I liaise about the issues to be prayed for and encourage Associates to offer suggestions for prayer.

Kathy Pollard

REACHING OUT

"The poor need help today, not next week."

"It is for God we serve the poor, and not for thanks."

Familiar Instructions, p. 140

Supporting Mercy Works

Back copies of "Between Us" clearly show that Associates have continued Catherine's passion for and commitment to the poor and marginalized of our World. The Newsletters show a range of activities that Associates and Sisters have undertaken over the years focused on raising:

- money to assist those who find themselves in need;
- awareness of the circumstances that causes poverty.



Care Packages

In 2016 a group of Sisters and Associates resurrected the previous practice of providing care packages to young people at Lisa Lodge. Sr. Rita Hayes was the major influence in establishing Lisa Lodge in 1980 to provide counselling and residential care for 'at risk' adolescent girls. This facility has now being absorbed into Berry Street, Ballarat and has as its primary brief the provision of support and emergency accommodation to individuals and families escaping violence.

Rita's inspiration was the catalyst for the reintroduction of care packages. Her enthusiasm motivated the group to begin collecting, assembling and delivering packages to Berry Street. In October we produced 100 packages for women, 100 for children from infancy to 14, and 40 packs for young men. Sisters and Associates donated many of the items. A number of local businesses also gave donations or provided discounted goods. A group of Sisters, Associates and friends knitted "Care Teddies" for distribution to children as part of this project. In each gift bag we placed a laminated message, *"Love simply shares, gives and receives freely"*. Kathleen Williams RSM

As a result of the positive feedback we have received from the Berry Street staff we will continue to provide these packs as required. This is an important community action of Mercy and a wonderful way to keep Rita's legacy alive.

Anne Tudor



Communion to Nursing Homes

In June 2000 Sr. Maureen Connelly requested the Associates to provide volunteers to assist Fr. Henry Nicholl with preparation for Saturday morning Mass at the Queen Elizabeth Home.

In an article in "Between Us" 2000, Mary Moran said, "As we become familiar with the arrangements and the residences, I feel sure it will work well and be of assistance to Fr Henry. A very rewarding task!"



Swimming

In 2013, armed with funding from the Sisters of Mercy, Griffin Bequest, Rita Hayes and a group of Associates began a swimming program for African children.

The half hour classes were conducted during one week of the mid year school holidays. The classes initially took place at the Ballarat Aquatic Centre. In 2014 they were moved to the Federation University Pool.



It is always amazing to see the enthusiasm and development of each child as the week progresses. "I can swim in deep water now" was the proud boast of an eight-year old after three days of her program.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

"You must be cheerful and happy, animating all around you."

Letter to Frances Warde February 17, 1838

"The union which exists among you will draw the favour and blessing of heaven..."

Letter to Josephine Warde January 27, 1838

Annual Luncheon

The annual luncheon is a relatively new activity having been introduced in 2007. This event, held every February, is a shared meal designed for social interaction and launch of our official year.



Catherine's Cuppa

"Will you tell the Sisters to get a good cup of tea...when I am gone and to comfort one another." Catherine McAuley on her deathbed



Catherine's Cuppa, a regular feature of our calendar, was first held on Friday March 5th 2009 at Café Best in Dana St Ballarat. Over the years, while there have been minor changes, these monthly gatherings have proved to be very popular.

In 2016 the decision was made to meet at Saltbush Kitchen at M.A.D.E. in Ballarat East. Other venues we have used for our gatherings have been Futures, Forget Me Not Café, Beechworth Bakery and Formosa Café.

Social Afternoons

A group of Associates hold a social afternoon twice a month for Sisters and local residents in the Gathering Room at Ballarat East.

Bingo and cards are played with all winners receiving small prizes. In addition to this an entrance prize is given at each session. A tasty afternoon tea follows amid much chatter and laughter. Positive comments have been made about the friendliness and the social interaction. Each gathering is eagerly anticipated!

In trying to pinpoint the introduction of this event, we scoured the collection of "Between Us." The first mention we could find was a reminder notice for 12th September 1994. A tradition in the making! *Ann Coswello*



Road Trips

Over the years Associates have traveled many kilometers as they journeyed between Donald, Ballarat, Apollo Bay and Hall's Gap.

Reports and photographs from these gatherings show elements of reflection, recreation, relaxation and relationship building.

Maintaining Connections

Since the foundation of the Associate groups of the former Ballarat East Congregation, communication has played a vital role.

The “Between Us” newsletter and the regular “get-to-gethers” in Donald, Apollo Bay, Ballarat and in more recent years, Halls Gap enabled members to develop connections and share information across the groups.



Between Us

The first edition of “Between Us”, the Associates’ quarterly newsletter, was published in April 1989. From its inception Sisters and Associates have contributed articles and reports for inclusion in the journal.

The publication has had four editors during its history. Sr. Anne McMillan was the initial editor; Srs. Rosemary Kelly and Rita Hayes followed her. In 2007 Margaret Stewart took on the role and has been the editor until a changeover in 2017. An editorial group is now in action.

As one looked through the archival copies of ‘Between Us’ one interesting factor that became evident was the impact of technology on the printing world and on each of us and the changes this has brought about in the way we now communicate.

SPECIAL OCCASIONS

On the 22nd September 2013 many Associates gathered to celebrate *25 years of sharing Mercy* in their lives. Bishop Peter Connors and Father Adrian McNerney celebrated Mass at St Alipius' Church, Ballarat East. Those present renewed their commitment and prayed for deceased members. This was followed by lunch at the Barkly Motel where food, laughter and memories were shared. Well-done to all.



YEAR OF MERCY - *Two Pilgrimages*

Following the Pope's proclamation of the Jubilee Year of Mercy 2015-16, a group of Sisters and Associates came together in Ballarat for a 'think tank'. The aim was to develop ways we could live and celebrate this Year of Mercy as Associates within our Church and local communities and beyond.

From our reading of 'Misericordiae Vultus' we were aware of the place of pilgrimage during the Holy Year. This fostered ideas of pilgrimages both to local places of interest and to Catherine's House of Mercy in Dublin. From this, two pilgrimages evolved.

Catherine's House of Mercy Dublin

A number of Ballarat Associates expressed an interest in participating in a Dublin pilgrimage. Our first step was to make contact with Baggot Street. A proposal to invite other Associates within ISMAPNG to join the pilgrimage was presented to the ILT and Community Leaders. We received encouragement to go ahead with planning.



All 16 participants, 7 from Ballarat and 9 from other groups within ISMAPNG, funded their own pilgrimage costs and made their various ways to Dublin to begin this wonderful time in Catherine's house.

The pilgrimage began on Sunday September 4th, 2016. We were accompanied by our facilitator, Karon Donnellon rsm and presenters, Mary Kay Dobrovolny rsm and Mary Trainor rsm, who led us on the most wonderful journey of immersion into Catherine's life, the Dublin of her times and all that has emanated from such an inspirational life.

The 6 day program ended all too quickly and as we reflected on the week all expressed a renewed sense of the need for Mercy in the world now and the role that we, as Associates, play in that.

There was a recommendation from the pilgrims that what we had experienced was invaluable and would be a wonderful inclusion in Associate formation every few years. All expressed a deep appreciation to MIA and the Institute for the support received for this, the first pilgrimage made by Mercy Associates from within ISMAPNG - to Catherine's house in Dublin.

Anne O'Connell

The Academy of Mary Immaculate Fitzroy

On April 2016 a group of Associates and friends made a pilgrimage to the first Mercy convent in Victoria, the Academy of Mary Immaculate in Nicholson Street, Fitzroy. The Academy was established by Sister Ursula Frayne and her companions following their arrival in Melbourne from Perth in 1857.

The current Principal, Sister Mary Moloney, greeted the 23 pilgrims and then led them on a tour of the Academy. This included a visit to the Heritage Room in the original convent and the Creation Windows in the most recently constructed section of the school. Among the treasures displayed in the Heritage Room are the diary of Sister Ursula and a beautiful wooden dresser with Irish crockery from Baggot Street Dublin.

The Creation Windows, which were commissioned to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the school, consist of three different designs telling the story of creation from the biblical, indigenous and scientific perspective.

Our tour concluded with a visit to Sister Ursula's memorial chapel and gravesite. The chapel is extremely beautiful and has a very holy and peaceful atmosphere.

It was inspiring to spend this time at the Academy, a place where the dreams of two very spiritual, courageous and resourceful Mercy women - Catherine McAuley and Ursula Frayne, first took root in Victoria. With the support of their companion sisters over many decades, their wish to create a better world for all people, but especially children, young girls and women, continues.

Ursula Diamond-Keith



A NEW CHAPTER BEGINS

In 2013 the leadership team of ISMAPNG supported a process to look at renewal and future options for the Mercy Associate movement. This was done in the hope that new workplace Associate Groups would be formed in the future. Two Ballarat Associates, Margaret McDonald and Les Stewart were members of the teams engaged in this investigation.

This project was completed in 2016 and on 29th October we gathered in Ballarat for the local launch of the new “Vision and Model for Mercy Associates.” During the ceremony we acknowledged the past, celebrated the present and looked to the future with confidence. Symbols were a major part of the celebration and all were brought forward and placed on a central table. The items involved were:

- a message stick representing the indigenous people of the area;
- a Mercy cross;
- a copy of the Vision Statement;
- a list of all current Mercy Associates;
- a copy of the logo and motto.

The new badges were then blessed by Karon Donnellon rsm, representing Community Leader Berenice Kerr rsm who was unable to be present. Karon then presented a certificate, vision statement and badge to all Associates present.

THE VISION STATEMENT OF MERCY ASSOCIATES



Mercy Associates are called to live and share the compassion of God revealed in the life of Jesus Christ, in Scripture and through the vision and charism of Catherine McAuley.

Guided by mercy values of compassion, justice, hospitality and hope, they:

- celebrate and give thanks for God’s merciful love;
- nurture their relationship with God to enable them to witness to their faith in prayer and action;
- give expression to God’s mercy:
 - in response to the needs of these times
 - in the ordinariness of their daily lives
 - and in all their relationships
- journey with each other and the Sisters of Mercy.

THE SUSCIPE OF CATHERINE MCAULEY

*My God,
I am yours for time and eternity,
Lord, I am yours forever.
It is you who must teach me
to trust in your providence,
loving Lord.
You are a God of love and tenderness.
I put my faith in you.
And I ask that you grant me
acceptance of your will,
loving Lord.
Take from my heart all painful anxiety,
Let nothing sadden me but sin
and let delight be
hoping
to see your face
God, my all.*



Catherine McAuley
Foundress of the Sisters of Mercy

PRAYER DOESN'T CHANGE GOD, IT CHANGES US.

Mercy Associates gatherings always include a period of prayer and this ranges from having a set collection of prayers through to having a group member whose job it is to prepare a prayer and reflection to use at each meeting. Whatever the format, prayer is core to being part of a Mercy Associates group.

As well, quite a number of groups with members who are housebound have developed prayer ministry as one of their ways of serving the needs of others. This involves a member of each of these Mercy Associates groups drawing up a list of prayer intentions each month, and these include those in the local community who are ill, grieving, or experiencing suffering of some kind; and other needs within Australia and beyond, such as those displaced by the war in Syria; refugees seeking to resettle; those affected by natural disasters around the world.

Someone in the group has the job of contacting the housebound Mercy Associates and letting them know of the prayer needs of the month. Some important things then happen: First, the needs of the world have an extra person praying for them as these housebound Mercy Associates adopt a personal ministry of prayer. These prayers are, as it were, added to the prayers of the local Mercy Associates group, expanding the faith community of people who care about these world needs and devote prayer time to them.

Second, these housebound women and men of mercy remain connected to their local Mercy Associates group, even though they no longer can attend meetings. Becoming elderly, frail and housebound can often be a time of increasing isolation, and also a time of feeling useless as one's physical capabilities steadily wane. But prayer doesn't require physical abilities, it requires a heart that wants to be open to God and to express its compassion and concern for those in need around the world. Age needn't get in the way, and continuing to belong to a Mercy Associates group through this ministry helps to alleviate the isolation that might otherwise be experienced.

Mercy Associates groups are faith communities bonded by their commitment to prayer and to ministry action suited to their abilities. The previous Abbot of New Norcia, Dom Placid Spearitt OSB, once commented that prayer doesn't change God, it changes us. The Mercy Associates groups involved in prayer ministry are serving the world through their prayer, yet they also are remaining connected to their local group and enriching their spiritual life as they keep a central focus on prayer.

Carmel Ross, Mercy Associates Executive Officer

From 'Just Mercy', October 19, 2015



