



# Many Paths ....

Newsletter of Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG

Issue 1, April 2017

## Welcome to Many Paths ...

Welcome to the first edition of the Institute-wide newsletter for Mercy Associates. For quite a long time Mercy Associates groups have been meeting, but most have little or no contact with other groups. Our purpose in preparing a newsletter that covers all of the Institute is to share the stories of the many groups now operating. Each is unique, shaped by the people, places and the Sisters of Mercy who have founded and shepherded these groups over the years. Sharing their stories is a powerful way to present groups with new ideas and strengthen their sense of connection to ISMAPNG and other Mercy Associates groups.

This newsletter includes something from almost every group, including the group in Timor Leste. Thank you to those in the groups who wrote articles, took photos, and sent these in by the due date. Thank you also to Christine Convery for providing quite a few photos for this newsletter.

Many Mercy Associates don't have internet access, so please consider printing and sharing this with those in your group who may not otherwise see it. It's important to spread the word about the great things that are happening around the groups as they bring Catherine's charisma to life in their day to day lives, sharing times of prayer and service for the glory of God and the benefit of humankind.

### Network Facilitators

We are making steady progress on putting personnel in place to support Mercy Associates groups. The appointment of Christine Convery as Network Facilitator for NSW has been a great benefit to groups in that state. At present we are recruiting for similar positions for Victoria and Queensland. If you know of people who might be suited to this role please let me know so I can send them the position description.

### Mercy Associates Leadership Group (MALG)

In October 2016 the MALG met for the first time in Sydney. Members at the moment are Jan O'Connor (Perth),

Annette Rowe (Gladstone), Anne O'Connell (Ballarat), Ann Murphy (Young), Joan Neal (Townsville), and Sr Sally Bradley RSM (member of the Institute Leadership Team). Some further members will be appointed before the group holds its meeting in Sydney from 5-7 May. This group is a reference group to monitor how the Mercy Associates movement overall is going and they will also discuss significant issues that arise as the initiative continues in the implementation phase.

### Administrative Handbook

The administrative handbook is nearing completion, and should be available to groups by mid-2017. As Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG, we have certain obligations in how we conduct our groups and ourselves, and the handbook will provide details of such things. Each group will receive a few copies, and although it will seem quite heavy-going when you first see it, it's best to regard it as a reference book. Read it through to see what kinds of topics it covers, then keep it at hand so you can look up the way to do things as the need arises.

### Formation Resource

A formation resource is being developed for groups to use in the formation programme for people who express an interest in becoming Mercy Associates. To date, such preparation of aspiring Mercy Associates has fallen totally on individual groups. The formation resource, which is well-advanced in development, will be useful to sponsors who are working with aspiring Mercy Associates. The team working on this includes Sheena Barber (Launceston), Bernard Dobson (Melbourne), Les Stewart (Ballarat) and Terry Power (Cairns).

In her recent visits to some NSW groups, Christine Convery showed the draft formation resource to groups she visited and received enthusiastic responses. Though primarily intended to be used with aspiring Mercy Associates, those who have already been Associates for years believe the resource will be very useful in providing reflection materials and general information for their regular Mercy Associates meetings.

**Carmel Ross,**  
Executive Officer



## A message from the Institute

### Leadership Team...

All these wonderful stories in this Newsletter tell us that the founding story of Catherine McAuley is not just for Sisters of Mercy, but holds meaning and inspiration for so many women and men of mercy. Since the beginning of the new Institute it has been an inspiring journey working with lay women and men who are already Mercy Associates, or those who desire to become Mercy Associates, and to develop an Institute-wide initiative with a renewed vision and framework.



We have listened deeply to where the Spirit may be leading us all as we 'widen our tent pegs' to include those who feel called to be more actively involved and committed to the mission of Mercy. We believe that being a Mercy Associate is another 'pathway' in Mercy which offers strength to live out Catherine's vision and hold a valuable connection with the Sisters of Mercy. We also believe that the charism of mercy is a gift for the whole church and beyond. This is a present call from Pope Francis. We are hopeful that a model for Mercy Associates that is inclusive of different capacities, ages and life commitments will continue to emerge into the future, a model which balances contemplation with action in a world so in need of hospitality, compassion and justice.

We are very grateful to all those who water the seeds of Mercy and plant new ones. May the gift of new life continue to lead us all into a hope filled future this Easter.

With blessings to all

**Sally Bradley RSM**  
(Institute Councillor)



## From Timor Leste...

Greetings to our fellow Mercy Associates / Friends in Australia and Papua New Guinea. We are so pleased to tell you a little about our Associate Group in Aileu, Timor Leste. Three years ago our Associates group began. Now there are eight of us, including two single women and three married couples. Our ages range from 22 - 37 years.

Our monthly times of formation have provided us with opportunities to focus and reflect on different materials including:

- ◆ The Life and Charism of Catherine McAuley
- ◆ Images of God
- ◆ Mercy in Scripture
- ◆ Methods of Praying and Contemplation
- ◆ The Year of Mercy
- ◆ Laudato Si (translated into Tetum).

Over a period of time we have been fortunate to collect a number of resources. These include: pictures of Mary, Mother of Mercy and Catherine McAuley, a New Testament and Laudato Si (both in Tetum). A copy of the Sucipe, Mercy Seed, Circle of Mercy plus a variety of printed materials.

Our responsibility is to prepare for significant Mercy dates. This year Anita and Victor will be our hosts for Mercy Day. Paulo has undertaken to arrange transport since to travel to their home is quite a distance.

Over the years some individual members have had contact with Sisters of Mercy. In addition our Associates group has welcomed two other Sisters. First of all Sr Barbara Bolster (Institute Leadership Team) then Sr Helen White (Community Leader for the Northern Community). We celebrated a simple Commitment Ritual on both occasions.

During this new phase of formation, our attention is drawn to the Vision Statement and the Practices and Responsibilities of Mercy Associates, keeping in mind that Pope Francis in Laudato Si has urgently appealed to us to 'listen to both the cry of the earth and the poor' (LS 49) as a Gospel imperative, in our lives and Our Common Home.

Finally, it's when we sing "Mercy Seed" that we are so well reminded of our MERCY BEGINNINGS.

... 'A little seed was planted and it began to grow  
And the sower's name was Catherine  
...So remember from this little seedling  
You're a branch on this great tree.



We the Aileu group of Associates in Timor Leste are very proud to be a part of the Mercy Story and so delighted to be alongside each of you 'on this great tree'.

**Sr Mary Anne Dwyer RSM**  
with the Associates

## And the mercy charism will live on...



After visiting some Mercy Associates groups in NSW recently my hope is that the current Mercy Associates groups will continue to be and show by their actions the charism of mercy. These groups of men and women impressed me greatly with their deep love and compassion for one another and those they meet in their day-to-day lives. They continue to support

and give encouragement with hope to each other, especially to those who are facing challenges and difficulties in their lives. They truly are giving “expression to God’s mercy in all their relationships, and in the ordinariness of their daily lives” (from the Mercy Associates Vision Statement).

It has been my pleasure to have also met with some aspiring Mercy Associates over recent months. Very recently I met up with a young lady in my local area of the Hunter Valley, who wishes to know more about the Mercy Associates movement and how she might go about becoming a Mercy Associate. After chatting with her over her lunch break from work, she is very excited about being associated with Mercy. Over our delicious lunch at a local café, she shared with me that she has experienced a real ‘call’ to this way of ‘Mercy-ing’, and feels that this is what she desires in her life now as a committed Catholic woman. With the prospect and hope that a new Mercy Associates group will come into being in her workplace, this young wife and mother has a firm desire to “seek a faith community in which to nurture and live out the charism of Mercy” (from the Mercy Associates Vision in Practice Statement).

As the Director of Nursing in an Aged Care facility, I can see that this woman has quite an influence with her fellow workers and is able to put forward and share this opportunity for a new Mercy Associates group to start, very effectively. I feel she will attract the right people into forming a new aspiring Mercy Associates group with her.

I very much look forward to supporting all emerging and existing Mercy Associates groups as I continue working in my role as the Mercy Associates Network Facilitator for NSW. This work I see as a real privilege and would like to feel that I can be an effective resource person who is available to each of the Mercy Associates groups and aspiring Mercy Associates in NSW.

**Christine Convery**

May He bless and protect you, and make you the instrument of His glory.’

Extract from a letter from Catherine McAuley to Frances Warde June 16, 1838

## From Gladstone...

The Mercy Associates of Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish Gladstone consists of 45 members. Approximately 34 members are active and regularly attend meetings.

We have met continually for over 10 years on the first Saturday of the month. Our gatherings begin with a reflection on the teachings of Catherine McAuley and conclude with the Suscipe.

At each gathering, we have a guest speaker and warmly invite the whole parish to join us, so that they too can benefit from the insight and gifts of the speaker, for example:

### **Personal Sharing**

Life experiences from people such as a Police Officer.

### **Health and Wellbeing**

We recently held a Tai Chi class on balance and articulation—see the photo—don’t you love the arms?

### **Adult Faith Education**

Fr. Kevin Stewart sm shared what he has learnt in his journey with the Marists in many countries.

### **Inter-faith connection**

We have invited our Muslim lady friends to join us for our talk on ‘Compassion and the Golden Rule’. Previously, they shared on Mary in the Koran.

Mercy Associates are involved in a number of areas:

- ◆ Volunteer work at the Mater Hospital – whether it be folding/ preparing Day Surgery packs or providing refreshments following Day Surgery.
- ◆ Our Parish Schools need assistance with Reading Programmes for students.
- ◆ Associates volunteer at the Court House.
- ◆ Church ministries are carried out by Associates.
- ◆ Prayer and physical support for those facing illness or surgery.
- ◆ Various Ecumenical Activities including hosting the 2018 World Day of Prayer.
- ◆ We support Mercy Works through voluntary donations.

The continuing enthusiasm of this group of Associates is fostered by the guidance of our mentor Sr Beryl Amedee rsm.

**Annette Platt**



A Tai Chi class for Gladstone Mercy Associates boosts their health and well-being

## Goulburn...

A small group of Mercy Associates in Goulburn met in March, with Christine Convery and Sr Lorraine Cupitt RSM also attending.

Pat Bourke opened the meeting with an introduction and welcome, and then a prayer. The group's reflection focussed on an article 'Everyday Mercy' in the draft Mercy Associates Formation Resource. The Vision and Vision in Practice Statement and the question sheet for discussion were distributed and will be used at future meetings.

The meeting concluded with the singing of Catherine's Suscipe, and a cuppa and afternoon tea were then enjoyed by everyone. Mass at 6 pm followed for those able to attend.

## Bathurst...

In response to an invitation from the Sisters of Mercy the Bathurst Mercy Associates came into being in 1998.

Quoting from Sr. Patricia Powell's initial presentation, "There is no real blueprint of what we might become. But let's begin a conversation about it so the people who want to be involved actually shape the new reality." So began the Mercy Associates Bathurst...

Over the years the Bathurst Mercy Associates have been involved with the environment, cosmology, House of Welcome for Refugees, Amnesty International, Young Mercies, Reverse Christmas Tree, Spirituality in the Pub (SIP) to name a few.

At our annual Covenant Ceremony we renew our promise to nurture a merciful spirit in our life and to promote the values of mercy, compassion, extravagant hospitality and justice in our society, according to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This Covenant is made in solidarity with the Sisters of Mercy throughout the world.

At our meetings we include sharing examples in our lives where we have sought to be the "face of mercy" to someone we've met along the way. This is a powerful practice and reminds us how readily we can find opportunities to be a merciful presence to others. Our usual number present varies from 10 plus.



Monthly dinner for Mercy Associates in Ballarat is proving to be a popular gathering.

## Ballarat...

Currently there are around 50 men and women in the Ballarat Mercy Associates Group. The Associates in Ballarat were started by the Sisters of Mercy over 27 years ago.

In the early days the Associates assisted the Sisters with various activities. Much fundraising was achieved by many willing Associates over many years. With the advent of ISMAPNG in December 2011 Sr Rita Hayes (RIP) was involved from the outset in being part of shaping the future of the Associates along with individual Ballarat Associates. Those that Sister tapped on the shoulder accepted the challenge of the onerous responsibilities and extensive amounts of time required.

In 2012 the Ballarat Associate Group appointed a new Chairperson and a Core Group was formed, made up of a Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, the portfolios of Spirituality, Pastoral Care and Prayer Ministry, Formation, Fundraising for Mercy Works. The Core Group meets bi-monthly.

A yearly Calendar of Events is published. There is an expectation that all Associates, as part of their renewed commitment, will take part in at least one function per year. There is a monthly dinner at a local hotel to which there is an open invitation to all Associates, and aspiring Associates or friends. Catherine's Cuppa is held each month at a local café and any Associate, or friend can catch up and 'chat'. A small group of long-standing Associates provides a social afternoon twice monthly for a group in a local parish to play Bingo and enjoy hospitality and friendship. This also raises money for Mercy Works. Spiritual days are offered, as this is a big part of being an Associate. An annual Commitment Day is held, usually with Mass, and a lunch afterwards. Short holidays are available for Associates at the Sisters' holiday residences and these are always good times. All these activities and news are linked together in the "Between Us", our periodic Newsletter.

In recent times a new project has commenced - 'Care Packages' are assembled for Berry Street, a welfare organisation providing shelter and support for family members/victims escaping family violence.

On reflection we are a very active Mercy Associate Group, and having established our new identity following the formation of ISMAPNG, we are hoping to remain a strong group always inspired by the charisma of Catherine.

## Toronto... a group closes

The original Mercy Associates group in Toronto operated for many years, with a total of about 20 members in earlier times. As its Associates have aged, the group became smaller and less able to attend meetings. In 2016, Sr Dot Campion, who has worked with this group, initiated a discernment process to determine whether to continue or wind up the group.

The decision was to disband the group. To acknowledge all that the group had meant to the Associates over the years, they held a final gathering and celebrated its 'life' with a luncheon at Mercy Spirituality Centre at Toronto which had been their meeting place for nearly 20 years.



Farewell luncheon at Mercy Spirituality Centre in Toronto, with Sr Dot Campion in centre of front row.



## From the Institute Leader, Sr Berneice Loch RSM

The charism of the Mercy of God, as gifted to us by Catherine, is one that has many elements. It is founded on prayer and spirituality that provide nourishment to enable our hearts and minds to embody mercy and for us to be a beacon of mercy in our everyday lives. At times it means that we may need to roll our sleeves up and be bold, practical and innovative in responding to the many people in need in our global community..... The call to be a merciful person isn't one that has to be undertaken as an individual. It is about combining in a rich, fulfilling and supportive way by being part of a community.

Address at the launch of renewal of Mercy Associates, Sydney, 9 June 2016

## Toronto... and a new group emerges...

Though the first Mercy Associates group to form in Toronto has disbanded, a new Mercy Associates group has commenced.

We are meeting four times this year and we are working through Madeleine Duckett RSM's book "Boots, Cracked Pots and a Place at the Table", which is our focus and our theme is Growing in Mercy - Growing in a deeper understanding of Catherine McAuley and Mercy in our lives and our World.

Our formation began last year with our first gathering in September where we were joined by guest speaker Sr Berice Livermore and Chris Convey who shared the new model for Australia and PNG. Our formation continued with a December Christmas gathering. As we continue we are journeying through the book and small groups have been formed with week night meetings in private homes once a fortnight/month to discuss the formation and work at a pace suitable to all members. I see formation being early next year.

We have invited Anne Ryan to speak at one of our gatherings this year and we gather at the Mercy Spirituality Centre in Toronto. We welcome all past Associates to our gatherings as we see them as wonderful mentors who offer guidance and support. So there has been about 10 to 12 at the gatherings. Sr Dorothy Campion also joins us and any other local Sisters who are available, who also offer great mentoring.

The group is about everyone feeling valued and able to participate and have ownership of their group and their journey and all are welcome, past, present and future. Each gathering is centred around a shared sacred space and allows time for quiet meditation, personal and group reflection, biblical reflection, journaling, creative input and shared cuppa of course. (With yummy scones home cooked by one of our members)...

**Grace Soley**



Grace Soley and Catherine Cunningham, from the new Toronto Mercy Associates group.

## Tuart Hill, Perth...

The Perth Mercy Associate Group gathers regularly at St Catherine's House of Hospitality, Tuart Hill, for prayer, reflection and community – we always end with “a comfortable cup of tea”.

Our group leader Jan O'Connor leads the gathering. Her explanation of the Gospels and the ensuing discussions never fail to deepen our understanding of the Scriptures. This can then be helpful in general conversations with family and mixed groups.

Our song “The Circle of Mercy” seems to reflect the atmosphere of our gatherings – “for the circle of Mercy is timeless...”.

Our group has had a very busy 12 months, beginning with our re-commitment to ISMAPNG. Our joyful ceremony was led by Sr Carmel Wringe, deputising for Sr Marie Duffy RSM (Community Leader, South A Community).

Our recent recruitment drive in local parishes was successful in encouraging five new people to attend our “Come and See” day. We enjoyed their input and they appeared to enjoy the day and were enthusiastic about returning. This would bring our number to twenty.

Mass for the feast of Our Lady of Mercy at St Mary's Cathedral was attended by many associates, sharing with the Sisters a special milestone. It marked 170 years since the first Sisters of Mercy arrived in WA arriving in Fremantle in January 1846.

Our fund raising concert for Mercy Works followed. We had a full house. The crowd enjoyed the singing, comedy sketches and a lovely afternoon tea. A superb day was had by all and we raised over \$4000.

We continue to be inspired by Catherine, the Scriptures and the joy of having each other as companions on our faith journey.

**Maureen Allen and Sandra Atkinson**



The camaraderie of a comfortable cup of tea—  
Mercy Associates at Tuart Hill in Perth

Let us pray well and never get  
weary of doing what is good.

**Catherine McAuley**

## Rockhampton...

In October 2016, Sr Helen White, Community Leader of the Northern Region of ISMAPNG, received the commitment of 44 lay women and men to the new movement at the affectionately called ‘The Range Convent’ – a magnificent colonial architectural masterpiece that espouses pressed tin ceilings.

This occasion included the celebration of the Silver Jubilee (25 years) of Mercy Associates, which was founded in Rockhampton in 1991.

In this setting on 11<sup>th</sup> February (despite Rockhampton's savage, relentless heat), we were exposed to the world of Catherine McAuley by way of women who had visited Baggot Street, Dublin.

Sonya Franklin shared her experiences of wonder and awe at being able to walk where Catherine had walked. Patricia McDevitt had selected some of Catherine's correspondence for us to peruse and so learn more of the way she thought and dealt with the life and issues of her time. Beryl Mills introduced the women and men to the incredibly inspiring art work of Sr Claire Augustine Moore, a contemporary of the foundress.

Some of the ministries in which our Associates are involved are:

### **Pastoral Care and Visitation**

- Of the sick/aged in various Health and Aged Care facilities and private homes
- In schools where various activities take place
- Of families.

**Volunteer** work at St Vincent de Paul and Community Services.

**Fundraising** for Mercy Works and local needs.

### **What is on the calendar?**

On 10th June, Sr Carmel Dwan RSM will lead a Reflection Day on ‘God is a Surprise’ for the Mercy, Josephite and Presentation Associates at Middle Hall, the Range Convent.

In August, Dianne Rowan will be the Guest Presenter and speak on Faith, Hope and Love and in November the topic will be ‘The Jessie Tree’.

May the mercy of Easter reach everyone, both believers and those far away as a sign that the Kingdom of God is already present in our midst!

**Sonya Franklin, Sr Beryl Amedee RSM and Beryl Mills**



## Mercy Associates' 2016 Pilgrimage to Mercy International Centre, Dublin

A group of sixteen Mercy Associates from throughout the Institute were privileged to travel to Ireland to undertake a pilgrimage to the Mercy International Centre at 64A Baggot Street Dublin from 4-10 September 2016. Mercy Associate, Anne O'Connell, together with Sr Karen Donnellon rsm, led the group.

The group was also privileged to have Sr Mary Kay Dobrovolny rsm and Sr Mary Trainer rsm as the facilitators and presenters of the pilgrimage program, both of whom have a great passion for and a great love of Catherine and her companions and whose stories they love to share.

During the program, the pilgrims were invited to explore and ponder the life and times of Catherine McAuley - from her early childhood with the loss of her dear father to the times in her adult life where she was compelled to find a way of living as the family fortune diminished.

The pilgrims participated in a number of moving liturgies and the highlight for many was the liturgy which included a procession to the small burial chapel containing Catherine's grave in the grounds of Mercy International Centre. Another such liturgy, the Renewal of Commitment, was celebrated at the now deconsecrated chapel of the Presentation Sisters at George's Hill where the pilgrims were able to hold in their hands the actual ring which Catherine received on her profession into religious life in this chapel in 1831.

As well as spending time at Mercy International Centre, the group visited sites around Dublin which were important in Catherine's life. Notable among these was a visit to Coolock House where the Sisters there were most welcoming and delighted in sharing Catherine's story. A walk around the older part of Dublin city which would have been familiar territory to Catherine and her family was of great interest.

It was a great privilege to spend much of the pilgrimage at 64A Baggot Street, the house Catherine built to achieve her dream of assisting the underprivileged in her community - to pray in the chapel where Catherine prayed, to visit the room where she died, to ponder the essence of Catherine and the women and men behind the letter correspondence to and from Catherine, and to explore the rich Heritage Centre which contained informative displays, and documents and objects of significant historical interest. One item which caught the eye of many was the first register which was so beautifully illuminated by Sr Mary Clare Augustine Moore but whose slow artistic progress was a source of annoyance for Catherine.

One day, the pilgrims journeyed outside Dublin to Glendalough, County Wicklow, one of the most sacred sites in Ireland where St Kevin established a monastic settlement in the sixth century. Although the weather was

unfavourable, nevertheless, it was a joy to wander in the peaceful valley and learn of the life of this great saint.

The group enjoyed the wonderful hospitality of Sr Mary Reynolds rsm, Sr Margaret Scroope rsm and Sr Kathy Higgins rsm and the other members of the staff and volunteers of Mercy International Centre. They were made to feel very welcome and the comfortable accommodation and shared meals were much appreciated.

As Mercy Associates, the pilgrims were encouraged to realise that they were members of a worldwide Mercy Network consisting of Sisters of Mercy, associates, partners and volunteers who continue the work of Mercy started by Catherine almost 200 years ago: *I felt God desired me to do something lasting for the poor. (C McAuley).*

At their closing ritual, the pilgrims were invited to consider the following reflection as they prepared to return to their homes, with joyful thanks for being able to have made such a wonderful, spiritually uplifting pilgrimage and one where beautiful bonds of camaraderie were formed:

Choose God every day.

Choose to live the life God gives you to give.

Choose to live it as Jesus lived it, to the glory of the Father, and in service to human needs.

Choose to give the Gift you have been given with love, tender courage and humble cheerfulness.

And choose it every day.

Be a steward of God's great gift of mercy

The Gift that explodes Divine Love into history, into the universe, even to unseen galaxies.

And into unimagined recesses of the human heart.

...EMBRACE GOD'S GIFT . . . RECEIVE IT . . . Dispense it freely, immediately, luxuriously.

For the gift evaporates in storage, BUT becomes the measure of oil and meal . . . NEVER EMPTY.

When constantly served to a world of people hungering to be WRAPPED IN MERCY . . . ACCEPTED . . .

LOVED . . . FORGIVEN . . . CHERISHED.

(Joanna Regan)

**Patricia McDevitt, Rockhampton**



## Apollo Bay...

Hello from all of us at Apollo Bay! A recent birthday on 22<sup>nd</sup> February bade me to pause and look at my years as a Mercy Associate. My accumulated papers revealed the many both happy and sad events that have passed us by, those who have left our Parish, those who have saddened us by their deaths, and those who have joined us and remain today, active loving members of our Mercy Associates.

Our Christmas Mass this year had the difference of being celebrated in our refurbished Church, with its new entrance and Chapel. Handed over late from the builders it presented a problem in getting it all together, however our Mercy Associates, together with husbands and various Parish volunteers, did bring it together in time.

Finally on the 19<sup>th</sup> February we were able to declare our refurbished Church and our new extension open. Bishop Paul Bird CSSR blessed our new Entrance and Chapel and dedicated our Loud Fence memorial to the local victims of clerical abuse. A beautiful Mass followed in front of a truly ecumenical congregation. After the obligatory speeches all were invited to the light lunch prepared by our Mercy Associates. Overall a perfectly executed day.

I'll leave you with an entreaty from a dim past "Whomsoever you see in distress see in him/her a fellow man" God Bless!

Linda

## Gunnedah...

Our group of 21 Associates are mainly older women and one man. At present I am acting as contact person and Sr Gabrielle Foley works closely with one Associate, Val McCann and helpers in fund raising ventures and other practical things. The remaining Sister in Gunnedah, Sr Christine Belling is supportive when her other duties permit. We are hoping to have a lay contact person for the group soon.

**Sr Regina McInerney RSM**

We ought then have great confidence in God in the discharge of all these offices of Mercy, spiritual and corporal, which constitute the business of our lives ...

**Catherine McAuley**

## Young...

Young Mercy Associates began on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2011 with Sr Ursula from Goulburn, Sr Lorraine Cupitt and Christine Convery in attendance. Monthly meetings have continued and lay women and Sr Ellen, Sr Monica and Sr Helen joined in also.

Aspects of our group that make it special are the joining in of prayer and reflection with Catherine McAuley's beliefs and motivations at the core; it is also a social gathering plus the obligatory cup of tea and a monthly catch up of country folk with each other and also discuss Parish matters.

The local Sisters of Mercy attend every meeting and we are enriched by their presence and knowledge of the Sisters of Mercy. The group gathers on the third Monday at 11am in the Parish Centre, Campbell St, except for December and January.

We had a connection with the Mercy Hospital (historically) but it has since closed and the Mercy Care Centre is our present connection.

At present there are fifteen Associates in Young and recruitment is ongoing. Our guest speakers for the year have included Sr Carolyn Nolan (Central A Community Leader) and Sr Lorraine. Hennessy Catholic College students gave us a powerpoint presentation of their recent trip to Cambodia to the Mercy Orphanage to which our Associates gave a donation.

Throughout the implementation of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea, Associates from Central A have formed part of each stage of the growth to this day. Thanks to Pat Bourke and Ann Murphy who are presently in the team.



## What do you think

of the Mercy Associates newsletter?

We'd love to know what you think of this newsletter. Equally important, we'd like to know what kind of articles you'd like to include in future editions. This edition is unusual because it's the first one and we want to introduce the groups to each other. In future, we won't need to do that, so let us know what you'd like included. Email your ideas to: [mercypassociates@ismapng.org.au](mailto:mercypassociates@ismapng.org.au)

## Griffith...

An initial information evening to form a Mercy Associates group in Griffith was held on March 22nd in the Majellan meeting room of the Griffith Catholic parish.

Eight women attended as well as Srs Theresa Foley and Patricia Johnson RSM, with four apologies. Christine Convery, Network Facilitator for NSW, attended the meeting. Sr Therese Foley will be guiding this group.

There was keen interest in the 'Charism of Mercy' as held by the Sisters of Mercy and from their foundress, Catherine McAuley, as well as very good interest in the Mercy Associates movement.

This aspiring Mercy Associates group will be gathering again in late April to explore further the renewed Mercy Associates movement through the Mercy Associates Vision and Vision in Practice Statement, and to embark on the Mercy Associates Formation Resource.

**Christine Convery**



## Tighes Hill—Providence...

Providence Mercy Associates, Tighes Hill had its origins when Srs Moyà Landry and Val O'Hara lived in Wickham. The early members were part of a 2002 Lenten Prayer Group which we called *Praying with Catherine*. There are at present eleven members, and two others who are still praying Associates, but absent because of sickness or distance.

We meet three times a year, concluding each year with a ritual of commitment or renewal. In our reflecting together, Jesus and Catherine are intimately linked. We reflect, pray and share together, leaving our gathering conscious of our call to Mercy and Justice in our world. We have used Catherine's letters, her poems, and prayers, stories of her life, writings about her, and books such as *the Mystical Heart of Catherine*, *According to Catherine* and Mary Sullivan's books on Catherine. The group does not undertake a specific work of Mercy, but all members strive to live Mercy in their daily lives. As Mercy people we aim "to know God's loving kindness and to share it with others."

The Sisters also run a Prayer Group every fortnight in their home at Tighes Hill. It is an open group but most of the members are Mercy Associates.

We gather in the Mercy Convent at Tighes Hill or at Mercy Services, Tighes Hill, or at Mercy Spirituality Centre, Toronto. We have never had a sub group as organisers of events, depending on Srs Moyà and Val to take the leadership of our Reflection Days and of our Prayer Group. Now that we are moving into the new Institute Mercy Associates, several of our members have offered to be involved as we move our Providence Associates into the future.



## Grafton...

There is a very dedicated group of Mercy Associates in Grafton, with 12 in the group. We meet monthly. At our gatherings we pray, reflect on Catherine's life and plan our activities. We try to keep in touch with the local Sisters sharing morning teas from time to time. We each have a Mercy work that we are involved in but we also have small fund raising activities to support local needs and Mercy Works. Our first activity this year is a movie morning for parishioners.

We had a most amazing morning when we renewed our commitment for the first time to the Institute. The prayer was excellent. All the local Sisters came and we finished off by attending our Christmas outing.

We are looking forward to the visit from Sr Aisla McKinnon, Executive Director of Mercy Works, in May.

**Sr Colleen Brady RSM**

If the love of God really reigns in your heart, it will quickly show itself in the exterior. You will become sweet and attractive in manner. You will have a holy esteem for everyone, beholding them in the image of God.

**Catherine McAuley**

## Mackay...

On Sunday, 18 September 2106 the Mackay Mercy Associates gathered at St. Joseph's Church, North Mackay for the Commitment of the Associates to the New Vision and Model of Mercy Associates in our Institute.

Previously in August we gathered for the launch of the new model which had been celebrated in Sydney.

At the Commitment Ceremony we were privileged to have the presence of Srs Marie and Desma who represented Sr Helen White (Community Leader for the Northern Community) who was unable to be here. Sr Beryl Amedee was also here. As we know, Sr Beryl has been the backbone of the Mercy Associates. Srs Marise, Kerry-Ann, Denise and Margaret were also present. Sr Margaret also attends the meetings with the Associates. During the prayer the Associates read and signed their Commitment then they were presented with their Certificates which had been signed by Sr Helen. They also received Mercy Associates badges which they will wear proudly. Srs Marie, Desma and Beryl assisted with the certificates and badges. We then gathered at the Parish Centre for afternoon tea. It was a very blessed and happy time.

**Sr Lila Galvin RSM**

The corporal and spiritual works of mercy which draw us from contemplation, far from separating us from the love of God, unit us more closely to God and render us more valuable in God's service.

**Catherine McAuley**

## As we enter the Easter season...

This newsletter is being sent out on Holy Thursday, a time when we find ourselves deep in reflection about the Paschal Mystery. The messages for our lives from the incarnation, life, ministry, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus have filled many books and homilies for 2000 years. But God created each of us as a unique human being, and God deals with each of us individually and personally. Easter, therefore, speaks differently to each of us as we draw from these events the lessons we need in our lives each year—and these usually change from year to year.

One of the messages of Easter is that life overall contains times of "death" and loss, as well as times of "resurrection" or renewal. Listening to our own lives to know what to persevere with and what to leave behind might not be easy, yet it is important as we continue to grow and develop into the best version of ourselves that we can be.

Change is not always easy—moving on to what's new in our lives might mean moving out of our routines and comfort zone, yet we will never realise the possibilities our lives hold until we can let go and move on. The resurrection is the most powerful message we have that faith, hope and love should underpin our everyday lives, with a generous sprinkling of the mercy of God through everything we say and do.

**Carmel Ross**

## Caringbah...

Caringbah Mercy Associates meet approximately every two months. In November we have our AGM and in December we have our Christmas Mass with morning tea.

We have our schedule mapped out for 2017 and our focus is generally on spirituality.

We engage a variety of speakers each year, the subject is generally on spirituality and/or Catherine McAuley.

Our meetings start with our "comfortable cup of tea" at 10am then at 10.30am we commence our meeting with prayer and a mercy hymn. At around 12.30pm we have our shared lunch. Some members bring sandwiches and others bring morning tea.

Our group no longer engages in any 'work of mercy' though in the past we have contributed to Mercy Works. We find that looking out for each other is challenging enough as we are not 'young' anymore.

**Annette Smith**



Sr Nance Cale, Annette Smith (Secretary), Carolyn Marr, and Robyn Wienholt (Treasurer)

