



# Many Paths ....

Newsletter of Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG

Issue 2, September 2017

## Welcome ...

This is the second edition of Many Paths, and it was delightful to receive such positive responses to the first edition in April. Based on that feedback, this newsletter will be published four times each year. The final edition for 2017 will go out in mid-November.

We also received feedback re what to include. This edition has updates from groups, because it's valuable to share your ideas and initiatives with others, and to learn from others who might inspire your group to new ways of being Mercy Associates. As well, there is some spiritual content—Our Lady of Mercy day is coming up on 24 September; September is also the month dedicated as the Season of Creation; and Chris Convery, the Network Facilitator for NSW, has prepared and shared an insightful reflection on the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. In future editions we will include articles from some of the theologians of the Institute. Please feel welcome to suggest other types of content you'd like to read.

## Receiving Many Paths to your in-box

The first two editions of Many Paths have been sent by email to the contact persons for each group. We are happy to set up an email distribution list so this can be sent directly to Mercy Associates and others interested in this initiative. Please forward your name, email address, and which group you belong to, to [mercyassociates@ismapng.org.au](mailto:mercyassociates@ismapng.org.au) and you will be added to the distribution list.

## Mercy Associates Leadership Group

Welcome to Grace Soley, who has accepted an invitation from Sr Sally Bradley RSM to become a member of the Mercy Associates Leadership Group. Grace is from Toronto (Newcastle), and is part of a new Mercy Associates group that began in September 2016.

## Administrative Handbook and Formation Resource

The Administrative Handbook has been approved by the Executive Leadership Team of the Institute, so we will begin to distribute it to groups over the next few months.

The Formation Resource is almost finalised, and is being used on a trial basis by a few groups at the moment. It is due to be considered for approval mid-September, and will become available to the groups soon after.

## Charter for Mercy Associates from ISMAPNG

The establishment of ISMAPNG almost six years ago changed the 'structure' of Mercy Associates. Each group was previously established by their local congregation. With ISMAPNG being founded, there was a need for a formal document to be prepared to establish Mercy Associates within the Institute. This charter has now been finalised and is included in the Administrative Handbook.

## Things that prayer can help...

Our world contains joys and sorrows, both for ourselves as people created in God's image, and for the planet itself. There is no shortage of people whose words and actions generate division, if not hatred; yet there is an overwhelming number of people around the world who are of goodwill and strive to live in peace. Our prayer is a powerful way to hold the needs of the world in our own hearts and in the presence of God. As Mercy Associates, we are asked to devote time in our group's meetings to prayer, yet also to devote some of our personal time to prayer. When we do this, we are contributing to the healing of the world, as God's Spirit finds ways to soften hardened hearts and open closed minds.....

Wishing each group rich blessings in your prayers and deeds.

**Carmel Ross**  
Mercy Associates Executive Officer



**We have ever confided largely in Divine Providence and shall continue to do so.**

Letter from Catherine to Mary Ann Doyle, Sept. 24, 1841

## ISMAPNG Chapter 2017

During the second half of August, the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea held a Chapter. This was the second Chapter of ISMAPNG, the first having been held in December 2011 when the new Institute was established.

A Chapter is an official, formal assembly of a religious order, and all religious orders are required by canon law to hold a Chapter. At Chapter, major matters concerning the life and mission of the order are determined. When in session, it is the highest governing authority in the Institute and the Institute Leader is the Chapter President.

The Constitutions of ISMAPNG state that a Chapter is normally held every six years. The purpose of Chapter in the life of the Institute is explained clearly in the Constitutions the body of law by which the Sisters live.

*Essentially*, the work of every Chapter is to safeguard and nurture the Institute's integrity of life according to the tradition of religious life entrusted to the Sisters by Catherine McAuley, with its two pivotal, interrelated elements: communion and mission.

## New Institute Leadership Team Announced

**The delegates to the Chapter have elected a Leader and four Councillors for our Institute.**

The new Institute Leadership Team is as follows:

- **Eveline Crotty**, Institute Leader
- **Caroline Ryan**, Councillor and Institute Vicar
- **Marie Duffy**, Councillor
- **Gaye Lennon**, Councillor
- **Elizabeth Moloney**, Councillor.

The transfer of leadership will take place in mid-December 2017 on a date yet to be fixed.

Please pray for these generous women who have accepted leadership responsibility in our Institute.

*Frances Fitzpatrick rsm, Chapter Secretary*

## Mercy Associates Network Facilitator appointed for Victoria

The Institute is delighted to announce that Anne Pate has been appointed to be the Mercy Associates Network Facilitator for Victoria. Anne's most recent employment is with the Jesuit College of Spirituality in Melbourne, where she has been working as a course coordinator. Her qualifications are in social work and social policy, and many of Anne's previous professional roles have been in the community services sector. She is also a qualified spiritual director and works in this area.

The Network Facilitator position in Victoria will involve liaison with the Mercy Associates groups in Ballarat and Apollo Bay, as well as liaising with the many Mercy workplaces in Melbourne and regional Victoria with a view to developing interest in forming new Mercy Associates groups. As with the NSW position held by Christine Convery, the position entails an average of one day per week.

Anne will commence in mid-October, and we look forward to welcoming her.

*Effectively*, this work includes setting the direction for mission initiatives; endorsing ways to enhance Sisters' fidelity to their commitments; reviewing the Institute law (the Constitutions, Directories and policies); examining the Institute's fiscal state and its deployment of resources, and so on. Another work of the Chapter is to elect the Institute's Leader and Council for the following six years.

At the Chapter, there were 65 delegates. Of these, sixty were elected by the members of the Institute (Sisters of Mercy) and five were ex-officio, namely, the Institute Leader and the four Councillors.

*Adapted from an article by Sr Caroline Ryan RSM and Natalie Anderson (HR) in Mercy Matters, May 2017*



## Bathurst—Library at Rahamim Ecological Learning Centre

Members of the Bathurst Mercy Associates Sandra Lynch and Sandra Christoffersen along with Sr Tricia Nugent rsm, the instigator, were involved with the cataloguing of the Spiritual Library that was transferred from Rahamim to an ISMAPNG-owned unit in Bant Street. Mercy Associates were involved with servicing the borrowers on a roster basis. More recently the Library has returned to Rahamim Ecological Learning Centre.

Currently some Mercy Associates are being trained by volunteer Gillian van de Watt to digitise the books. The collection is being broadened to include information relevant to Rahamim, ecology, permaculture and the universe.

Digitising the books is a learning curve for the Mercy Associates with limited techno expertise, but Gillian is exhibiting great patience with the trainees. These trainees will then become part of a roster to service the Library on a weekly basis.

*Jacquin Hershel*



Gillian van de Watt trains Hilary Reedy and Jane Heathershaw on the digitisation process.

## Townsville ...

Mercy Associates in the Townsville Diocese live and work in many centres of this vast diocese from Ingham in the north to Proserpine and Collinsville in the south. They have been supported for many years by Sr Carmel King who has generously volunteered to continue to mentor under the new ISMAPNG model for associates. Meetings of associates have occurred in some regional centres but many associates continue to minister in isolated centres without meeting support.

At a recent meeting of the Sisters of Mercy the Pastoral coordinators Sr Carmel Ruddick and Sr Bev Strong invited Mercy Associate Joan Neal to speak to the sisters about the new ISMAPNG model. The sisters received the new brochure and vision statement for Mercy Associates as well as the mentoring letter addressed to the sisters encouraging them to “talk up” this exciting new way of being Mercy in future years. Enthusiasm was expressed as the Sisters named some of the Mercy institutions and places where, in future, hopefully younger men and women may well take up the challenge of becoming a Mercy Associate and so keep the Mercy charism alive well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Some of the named possibilities for the future where the Mercy charism flourishes today: Loreto Aged Care, the Mater Hospital, St Patrick’s College, schools in Home Hill and Ingham.

*Joan Neal*



## Ballarat launches e-book of its history...

Around fifty Associates and Sisters gathered on Friday June 16 to celebrate the launch of an ebook, ‘Mercy Associates of Ballarat East’, documenting the history of the Mercy Associates of Ballarat East.

Following the welcome and acknowledgement of country, all joined in a reflection that followed our Mercy journey from Catherine’s Dublin to present day Ballarat.

The book was written by two Mercy Associates, Helen Smith and Ann Coswello (pictured), and is dedicated to the memory of our former coordinator, Rita Hayes rsm (1928-2016). The book’s beautiful layout was done by Anne McMillan rsm.

We were fortunate to have Mary Darcy with us to launch the book. She was one of a small group of Sisters who experienced “Associates in Action” whilst in Rochester, New York in the early 80’s. From this encounter the ‘seed was planted’ that led to the formation of the Ballarat East Mercy Associates in 1988.

The ebook can be downloaded as a PDF or read online as an ebook from the ISMAPNG website.

*Anne O’Connell and Helen Smith*



## Tuart Hill, Perth

Our Perth Mercy Associates Group now numbers eighteen members, as we were delighted to welcome four new people to our recent gatherings.

Most of our members continue to be involved in community and parish activities. We see this as an opportunity to spread our Mercy ethos beyond ourselves into the wider community. A number of our Associates also continue to work in a voluntary capacity at “The House of Hospitality”, where we enjoy helping Sr Elizabeth with ‘clean ups’ and ‘set ups’ for the variety of groups using the facility. We also enjoy the interaction with the people attending courses, retreats or having respite, and also with the other volunteers.

Our recent activities have included a Retreat Day held at the Mercy House of Hospitality in Tuart Hill, where we also hold our gatherings. Our theme was “Make Your Home in Me”. It seemed to resonate well with the people, as comments were made such as “it was just what I needed” and about how special it was to be able to take this “time out” to focus on their relationship with God.

We are now working on our annual fund raising event, in the form of a Variety Concert, the proceeds of which will go to Mercy Works. Our first concert, held last year was attended beyond expectations (see photo opposite, lower right hand column). This year we will transfer the venue from the Parish Hall to a nearby Mercy school auditorium. We were delighted to think that we need a larger venue and are very grateful to the Principal and staff of Aranmore Catholic Primary for their generous assistance. While the concert is quite a lot of work, it draws us all together and is also a very rewarding activity.

We are reminded of how Catherine McAuley saw ministry: *While we place all our confidence in God – we must act as if it all depended on our exertion.*

A little later in the year we will hold our annual Re-commitment Ceremony, as part of our gathering. Apart from the importance of the day for us, it will also give our new people some understanding of the ceremony, which we hope, in the not too distant future, they will decide to take part in. An invitation will be extended to the Sisters who are able to do so, to attend. The specialness of the day is added to by their presence and the bestowing of their blessing on the group.

*Margot Horton*

### The Simple Path...

Silence is Prayer  
Prayer is Faith  
Faith is Love  
Love is Service  
The Fruit of Service is Peace.

**Mother Teresa**

## Gunnedah

The Mercy Associates of Gunnedah, a country town in the Armidale diocese, began with orientation of prospective members in 1997, leading to a commitment ceremony in 1998.

Growing in Mercy spirituality has been paramount with Associates who have supported the Sisters locally and elsewhere, contributed to parish life and been involved in projects with the wider community. In the early years a Biggest Morning Tea was held annually to aid cancer research then when McAuley Aged Care Facility closed some years ago, some of its volunteers became Associates and their diverse network of supporters continued, when needed, to work with them to the enrichment of all. One project was fund-raising for a new Medical Centre.

Activities are still undertaken with enthusiasm and the intention of bringing help and comfort to others as Catherine did, but because of members’ ageing, and health concerns, are less frequent. For the same reasons formal gatherings have been reduced to four a year but mutual support and other interaction occur in between. This was evident when two members died earlier in the year.

There are now 19 members. The topic of recruitment was raised at the last gathering but will need further discussion and discernment. The group is looking forward to meeting NSW Mercy Associates Network Facilitator Chris Convery on 25 September.

*Regina McInerney RSM*



## Toronto, Newcastle—the newest Mercy Associates Group

Mercy! A small word that can have profound impact in all we do and with everyone we meet. Our last gathering brought together 12 ladies who included some of our beautiful young women who are teaching us so much about Mercy. We immersed ourselves in Madeline Duckett's book 'Boots, Cracked Pots and a Place at the Table', Chapter three: 'Cracked Pots'. In my preparations for the gathering, I truly felt like a cracked pot or should I say a crack-pot. It is only by the grace of God that I manage to bring together a programme and format that positively impacts, challenges and touches spiritually everyone present on the day. Madeline challenges us to look more deeply into our own lives and strive to live mercy in every aspect of our living. Our morning consists of prayer, reading, learning, sharing in pairs and as a whole group and personal reflection and meditation. We take each other on a journey as we accept and learn. It has been a real joy to see the younger women so keen to participate and come to understand that they are living Mercy in their everyday lives. They have certainly challenged us more mature women in our journeys and how we look at a life of Mercy, spiritually, environmentally and biblically.



It has been our hope as a group to begin formation as Mercy Associates under the new guidelines and format. This is still in the pipeline and we are planning to meet from October for six weeks one night a week in one of our lovely ladies homes - Cathy. We have been waiting for Cathy to move into her new home, which has now happened. We take this opportunity to wish her well in her new home, it has been an up and down journey.

Blessings and Mercy to you all, *Grace Soley*

## Cairns ...

The Cairns Mercy Associates group was established in 1986 as a prayer community of women and men who had a close association with the Sisters of Mercy. With Catherine McAuley as their inspiration, the Associates have gathered for 31 years and endeavoured to make responses in their daily lives from a Mercy perspective and to express Mercy in action. Two significant expressions of this are seen through the Associates active support for Rosies Friends on the Street and for those in aged care.

The transition journey, from Associates of the Cairns Congregation, to Associates of ISMAPNG) came to fruition for our group on 10 December 2016. On this day Associates and Sisters gathered at the Seville Mercy Conference Centre to celebrate Foundation Day and the commissioning as ISMAPNG Associates. We currently have 24 Associates and approximately 20 regularly attend gatherings.

There have been some significant moments for our local associates in recent months and we especially pray for Estelle Kingsley who lost her husband, Malcolm; for Glenda Blaney, who lost her husband, Albert; and for Doris Pyster who turns 90 in a few weeks!

We are currently planning for Mercy Day. The Associates are inviting the local Sisters of Mercy to be our guests on this day which will include a morning of formation, prayer and ritual, and conclude with a shared lunch provided by the Associates.

Our photo is of Sisters of Mercy and Mercy Associates in Cairns on the day of our transition celebration.

*Terry Power*

## May I Live This Day

May I live this day  
Compassionate of heart,  
Gentle in word,  
Gracious in awareness,  
Courageous in  
thought,  
Generous in  
love...



## Gladstone—25th Anniversary of Mercy Associates

The Gladstone Mercy Associates are this year celebrating 25 continuous years of service in conjunction with the Sisters of Mercy, to our local Star of the Sea Parish, at their Mercy Day Mass on 23<sup>rd</sup> September.

How we began: The Rockhampton Sisters of Mercy in 1991, at their local Chapter, formulated a simple policy with a goal 'to explore avenues for men and women of any age to participate with them in Mercy life and works, while continuing to live out their particular call in life.' Offered were opportunities for Prayer and Ministry Associates. The vision evolved and both Sisters and Associates made the wonder of God's work, the inspiration for their work.

In Gladstone, Sr Maria Goretti decided that there were many ladies and gentlemen willing to help the needy and when invited to form a group, approximately 25 parishioners embraced the idea with great enthusiasm. The group spent 12 months in preparation, learning of the life and charism of Catherine McCauley. An Induction Ceremony was held in September 1992.

The Associates were offered the choice of many ministries in the beginning and later in 2000 when the Mater Hospital was opened, many then volunteered in various areas. To this day, this volunteering continues. In 2003, due to ill health, Sr Maria moved to Rockhampton while the Associates group continued to grow in numbers and dedication to the Mercy ethos. Sr Beryl Amedee became the new Mentor and remains with the Associates to this day.

Today, there are 44 committed Mercy Associates under the new vision and model *One Charism, Many Paths*.

*Annette Smith*



In earlier times—Gladstone Associates enjoying Mercy moments—May 1988

## Rockhampton—Combined Associates Retreat

Sixty Associates representing the Sisters of Mercy, Presentation Sisters and Sisters of St Joseph met together at the Range Convent on a chilly morning in June for a Retreat Day conducted by Sr Carmel Dwan rsm. The gathering was the brainchild of Sr Beryl Amedee rsm. Sr Carmel's presentation ('God is a Surprise') commenced after Mass. We reflected on the wonderful mystery of how God gazes on each individual, how He calls us by name and how we respond to the gift of His love. We pondered the example of Jesus' life and His embodiment of mercy. Some women of mercy in the scriptures (as well as the three founders of the religious congregations represented - Catherine McCauley, Nano Nagle and Mary MacKillop) were studied.

A representative from each Associates group presented an overview of their charism or mission statement. Similar values such as service, prayer, friendship and hospitality were identifiable.

To conclude our time together, Sr Carmel led us through a very powerful prayer experience called 'visio divina' where we were encouraged to gaze on some quite remarkable religious bronzes in order to 'listen with the ear of the heart and to see with the eye of the soul.'

Art enables us  
to find ourselves  
and lose ourselves  
at the same time.

- Thomas Merton

We began as women and men coming to represent our own particular groups but, fed by the stimulus of sharing together, we left as appreciative friends, voting unanimously to meet again for further reflection on our common journey.

*Janette Dobson*

## What is Ordinary Time?

The rhythm of the liturgical seasons reflects the rhythm of life — with its celebrations of anniversaries and its seasons of quiet growth and maturing.

Ordinary Time, meaning ordered or numbered time, is celebrated in two segments: from the Monday following the Baptism of Our Lord up to Ash Wednesday; and from Pentecost Monday to the First Sunday of Advent. This makes it the largest season of the Liturgical Year.

In vestments usually green, the colour of hope and growth, the Church counts the thirty-three or thirty-four Sundays of Ordinary Time, inviting her children to meditate upon the whole mystery of Christ – his life, miracles and teachings – in the light of his Resurrection.

If the faithful are to mature in the spiritual life and increase in faith, they must descend the great mountain peaks of Easter and Christmas in order to "pasture" in the vast verdant meadows of *tempus per annum*, or Ordinary Time.

Sunday by Sunday, the Pilgrim Church marks her journey through the *tempus per annum* as she processes through time toward eternity.

[http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/overviews/seasons/Ordinary\\_Time/ordinary1.cfm](http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/overviews/seasons/Ordinary_Time/ordinary1.cfm)