

The launch of the “Janette Gray rsm Fund”

About sixty people gathered at the Centre for Theology and Ministry in Parkville on Saturday May 26 to remember the life and ministry of Jan Gray and to launch in her honour the fund to promote the education and leadership of women in theology. Initially, the fund will be used in two ways: as a scholarship to enable a woman to do a doctorate in theology; for an annual lecture honouring Jan by showcasing theological scholarship and effective communication of academic insight, something in which Jan herself excelled.

It was a truly happy occasion. Three speakers – a doctoral student of Jan (Christy Capper), an academic colleague (Professor Christiaan Mostert) and a Sister of Mercy (Veronica Lawson) – shared their appreciation of Jan from their particular perspectives, and in between the speakers, people shared from the floor something of their different experiences of Jan; lots of nods, many laughs and warm acclaim moved through the room. Perhaps what contributed most to it being such a lovely evening was the fact that almost everyone who was there had some personal connection with Jan and was ready, before, during and after the official program, to tell their stories about her and her influence on their lives. Delicious finger food and good wine no doubt helped the conversation flow, and in honour of Jan’s love of music in all its forms, a young student from Queen’s College added to the atmosphere by playing her flute. (Simone mentioned later that she had never before been part of such an occasion ... and she loved it!)

The Vice Chancellor of the University, Professor Peter Sherlock, talked about contributing to the fund and mentioned the gratitude of the university for the very generous donation the Sisters of Mercy had made to initiate it. Let’s hope this donation is the first of many to promote the theological education and leadership of women, so that they may flourish personally and the benefits flow from them for the good of the church and society.

It was good to be there. Thanks to the many Mercies who came and also to the large number who sent apologies and were unable to attend because of previous engagements, or illness. Jan would have been embarrassed by such attention given to her, but we were just proud to be able to give it.

Kathleen Williams chairs the hard working and creative committee (Katharine Massam, Sean Winter, Frances Baker, Fotini Toso) that prepared for the evening and will continue being responsible for the fund.