



# Many Paths ....

Newsletter of Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG

Issue 12, March 2020

## Welcome ... as we live through challenging times...

Though 2020 is still young, it has already been a year of extraordinary challenges in our region and around the world. The bushfires in many states that raged for months have seriously disrupted the lives and well-being of tens of thousands of Australians. They will need years to rebuild their lives and regain some sense of hope in the future.

And now, in more recent weeks, the coronavirus, COVID-19, has gone from a newly-emerged human virus in a province in China to a highly-contagious disease spreading throughout most nations around the world. Its impact on those who catch the virus may be so severe as to lead to death, or so mild almost no symptoms are experienced. Yet even those of us who remain in good health are increasingly experiencing negative impacts on our day to day lives and we have no reason to believe this will pass soon.

When catastrophic events unfold, especially those that last for months and which are beyond human control, people can easily feel overwhelmed by their circumstances. Hope is fragile. Our faith tells us that faith, hope and love are gifts of God, freely given to us if we choose to accept them as blessings in our lives. Time spent in prayer and reflection helps us become closer to God's love and support.

In this edition, **Christine Convery** has shared a reflection that includes a David Haas poem about dealing with pain, an experience we will all encounter from time to time in our lives. (p. 5) During this season of Lent, reflecting on how we personally respond to pain—spiritual and/or psychological, is a topic of importance.

## Mercy Associates Leadership Group meeting

Just a fortnight ago, the annual meeting of the **Mercy Associates Leadership Group** was held in Sydney. This group provides invaluable input and support to the Network Facilitators (Chris and Anne) and myself. We were fortunate too that Ellen Geraghty from Mission Integration, was able to join us—this is the section in ISMAPNG

that Mercy Associates is part of. More details of this meeting are on p. 2.

## Mercy Global Presence

ISMAPNG is part of the Mercy International Association, a global organisation comprised of the Mercy congregations around the world. In 2019 MIA began publishing resources that focus on global mercy themes. These resources are referred to as Mercy Global Presence (MGP). On pp. 3-4 there is an article by **Anne Pate** explaining what MGP is and how to access the exceptional quality and variety of resources available through this initiative.

## Coronavirus and your Mercy Associates group

With increasing restrictions being imposed or recommended by government authorities to limit the spread of COVID-19, Mercy Associates groups need to think about whether to hold meetings during this time or defer them. Many Mercy Associates are in their senior years and this seems to be an age range where the virus strikes more frequently and severely. Your health is of paramount importance, so each group should reflect on whether to meet; and each Mercy Associate must reflect on whether to attend if their group is meeting. Check:

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019> for more details.

## Feast of the Annunciation

On March 25<sup>th</sup> we celebrate the feast of the Annunciation, an occasion of great importance in salvation history. On page 8 is an image that might inspire your prayer and reflection on this feast of Mary's unreservedly faithful response to God's request for her to be the mother of Jesus.

**Carmel Ross, Executive Officer**



*Such is the mysterious Providence of God... 'His ways are not like our ways—nor His thoughts like our thoughts.' (Is. 55:8)*

*Catherine to Catherine Leahy,  
13 Nov. 1840*

## Mercy Associates Leadership Group holds annual meeting

The Mercy Associates Leadership Group comprises five representatives from Mercy Associates groups along with the Network Facilitators and Executive Officer. The group meets annually to review various aspects of the Mercy Associates movement and provide input for future planning.

Recently the group spent two days together, with Anne O'Connell (Ballarat), Annette Rowe (Gladstone), Joan Neal (Townsville), Grace Soley (Toronto) and Helen Fowler (Young) attended, along with Christine Convery (NSW), Anne Pate (VIC), Carmel Ross (Executive Officer) and Ellen Geraghty (Director, Mission Integration) attending.

Four Institute Leadership Team members (Eveline Crotty, Gaye Lennon, Maureen Sexton and Liz Moloney) joined the group for dinner on Friday evening, 28 February at the Lewisham office.

Discussions over the weekend covered a broad range of topics:

- ♦ updates were provided on each group;
- ♦ the importance of prayer as a ministry of Mercy Associates;
- ♦ procedures for establishing new groups;
- ♦ the lower age limit for becoming a Mercy Associate;
- ♦ the 'life cycle' of groups;
- ♦ the challenges facing groups where Associates are ageing and the group no longer wants to meet formally;
- ♦ the recent introduction of the first on-line Mercy Associates group – this group has two people experiencing the formation process now and provides an option for Mercy Associates living remotely from any of the existing groups.
- ♦ existing key resources, the Formation Resource and Administrative Handbook, were reviewed and some amendments will be recommended in due course to the ILT;
- ♦ the newly developed self-paced manual for Safeguarding training was also reviewed, and this will be ready to be published imminently. This resource is likely to be adapted for use by other ministries where staff or volunteers were unable to attend face-to-face seminars in 2019.

Ellen Geraghty provided input of the work of the Mission Integration team, of which Mercy Associates forms a part.

Because the Mercy Associate Leadership group meets infrequently, a great deal of discussion is packed into each meeting. Despite the alarmingly long agenda, our discussions were sprinkled liberally with laughter, inspired by everything from the quirks of human nature as they play out in the Mercy Associates groups through to a Powerpoint presentation by Anne on Daisy's first year of life (adored Labrador).

The wisdom of the Mercy Associate representatives was of immense benefit to the quality of discussions, with workable solutions developed to respond to the opportunities and challenges facing the ISMAPNG Mercy Associates movement.

Over the next few months, updates on some of the topics discussed will be sent to groups so they are aware of changes being made.

**Carmel Ross, Executive Officer**



*With Ellen responsible for the selfie, she appears in the lower right corner! As well, standing are, L-R, Joan, Christine, Anne P, Grace, Carmel; seated L-R are Helen, Anne O'C and Annette.*

**Have faith in God ... I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.**

**Mark 11: 22, 24**

### Network Facilitator contact details

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## Mercy Global Presence:

### Global wisdom inspiring local conversations

Mercy Associates bring the worldwide story of mercy to life in new ways in our local communities. As we share mercy with those around us, we also seek nourishment to sustain us in our faith and strengthen our sense of belonging to a global community of mercy. One development which has much to offer us is Mercy Global Presence, which I have been inspired by in my other role with ISMAPNG, at the Mercy Hub in Melbourne. This article describes Mercy Global Presence, in the hope that Mercy Associates groups will be encouraged to explore the rich resources on offer.

Mercy Global Presence is a global initiative led by Mercy International Association, which shares high-quality content developed by sisters and partners in mercy, in a sixteen-month journey from September 2019 until June 2021. The journey will move through four segments - *Global*; *Mercy*; *Presence*; and *Integrated* – each containing four months of material, organized thematically. In the ‘Global’ segment which finished in December 2019, the themes were: *Cosmos/Cosmology*; *Earth and Integral Ecology*; *People and Deep Social Change*; and *Incarnate God in Cosmos and in Person of Jesus*. At its heart, the intention behind Mercy Global Presence is to describe and recognize Mercy Global Presence in our midst, often by shaping new language, new spirituality and new theology. In a globalized world in which the displacement of persons

and degradation of Earth are reaching ever more extreme levels, how can Mercy Global Presence – as it is lived and articulated by people of mercy, including Mercy Associates – be a countercultural sign?

Resources are released monthly on the Mercy Global Presence microsite, with breaks during the northern and southern hemisphere summers. Each month begins with an introduction by Elizabeth Davis rsm, which is available on video as well as in print. Other contributions to each theme include theological imaginings, an artistic response, and voices from grassroots ministry and diverse perspectives. The theme *People and Deep Social Change*, for example, was vividly illustrated by stories shared by students training as teachers in South Sudan, alongside a reflection by a Mercy sister working in this ministry. I encourage you to visit the site (see web address below) and immerse yourself in the resources you will find there. There is much to be gained from reading these materials reflectively and letting them speak into your local situation.

While reading the resources is enriching, in my experience it is in conversation with others that they really come alive. And it is in this way that I hope they can be a valuable asset for Mercy Associates – and that Mercy Associates will join the global conversation inspired by Mercy Global Presence. At a Mercy Hub gathering last year, for example,

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**MERCY  
GLOBAL  
PRESENCE**

[www.mercyglobalpresence.org](http://www.mercyglobalpresence.org)



#### Segment One: *Global*

Cosmos/Cosmology	29 September 2019
Earth and Integral Ecology	30 October 2019
People and Deep Social Change	27 November 2019
Incarnate God in Cosmos and in Person of Jesus	18 December 2019

#### Segment Two: *Mercy*

Faith Traditions & Mercy	25 March 2020
Degradation of Earth	29 April 2020
Displacement of Persons	27 May 2020
New Foundations in Mercy	24 June 2020

#### Segment Three: *Presence*

Presence of/with/to God	30 September 2020
Presence to Earth	28 October 2020
Presence in Ministry and Community	25 November 2020
Presence to Self & Others	16 December 2020

#### Segment Four: *Integrated*

Contemplative Seeing	31 March 2021
Compassionate Heart	28 April 2021
Mercying	26 May 2021
Creating Circles & Culture of Mercy	30 June 2021

Rosemary Patterson rsm shared a photo presentation prepared by Maree Hutchinson rsm (Brisbane Congregation) for the theme *Cosmos/ Cosmology*. In the lively discussion which followed, sisters reflected that in their lifetimes the way we understand our relationship with the cosmos has been transformed, with implications for our choices today.



[www.mercyglobalpresence.org](http://www.mercyglobalpresence.org)

Mercy Global Presence resources can be used creatively as groups find helpful. Each month includes a Facilitators' Guide, with suggested ways to structure conversations, but adaptation to the needs of the group is paramount. Mercy Global Presence is resourced by mercy contributors from around the world, and led by Coordinators and a Guiding Group. The ISMAPNG Coordinator is Adele Howard rsm, who is responsible for promoting and supporting Mercy Global Presence across the Institute. I hope that you will find much to treasure and be challenged by as the journey continues.

The next theme - *Faith Traditions & Mercy* - will be released on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020, within the 'Mercy' segment. You can find all the Mercy Global Presence materials at: <https://www.mercyworld.org/about/our-initiatives/mercy-global-presence/>. The three Network Facilitators – Carmel Ross (WA, Queensland and other locations), Chris Convery (NSW), and Anne Pate (Vic) – are also available for guidance and support within the regions we cover.

**Anne Pate**

**Mercy Associates Network Facilitator - Victoria**

## From Rockhampton...

On the 8<sup>th</sup> February, the Rockhampton Mercy Associates held our first gathering for the year.

We are blessed to be able to celebrate Mass in *Our Lady of Good Counsel Chapel* at the beginning of our meetings and our presider that morning was Father Bryan Hanifin V.G. This was followed by our customary morning tea and then a presentation by Beryl Amedee rsm.

Sister Beryl spoke about 'The History and Vision of Mercy Associates', which was very inspiring listening to Catherine McAuley's story and her original vision of serving the poor, which had not been to establish a religious congregation. We



*The statue of Catherine McAuley inviting a woman and baby in need to the House of Mercy in Dublin.*

heard about the setting up of 'The House of Mercy' and the founding of the Sisters of Mercy in 1831, followed by the arrival of Sister Ursula Frayne in Perth (1846) and Sister Vincent Whitty in Rockhampton (4 August, 1873).

A 'snapshot' of ISMAPNG today and the global scene of Mercy Works was given, but who are Mercy Associates?

The group in Rockhampton formed in 1991, associated with the Sisters of Mercy and lively discussion occurred around the white and black habits the earlier sisters had to wear, amongst other things. It also brought back fond memories of some of our earlier Sisters.



We heard that Mercy Associates are lay women and men who are in-

spired by Catherine McAuley's charism of Mercy and who know God's loving kindness in their own lives and wish to share this with others.

A source of great comfort and hope for all of us was to hear that it is in the 'ordinariness' of our lives that we live out Catherine's message.

We thanked Sister Beryl for enlightening us all.

**Jennifer Loscher**



## Lean in and feel the pain

David Haas

It can be very easy for you to become discouraged when you feel as though all of your sources of hope have gone away.

Then you feel like you are going to collapse under the weight of such hopelessness, and drown.

Getting your hopeful sight back: resuscitating any sense of trust is hard to build again when such times come around.

But know this .....

Jesus, the Christ, the anointed one, is right at this moment,  
in the midst of any darkness you may have –  
becoming one with you and your pain.

Yes, you have to own and feel the bruises and wounds, the injustices and concrete evil that seems to suffocate you at times.

This is the first step.

You have to look at it, touch it, lean into it – only then can it ever be truly healed.

You, all of us, have to sit in the pain because it is there where you can see the great movement of God's healing presence.

If you ignore the wounds – believe it or not -

God will not be able to get close to you.

When you face your brokenness, then, God can come and enter all of it.

As painful as it is,

be present and lean into your brokenness.

God will be with you soon.



In reading and reflecting on this writing by David Haas a verse from Isaiah came into my mind:

I am doing something new – a roadway in the wilderness,  
rivers in the desert. I will make a way for you.    Is. 43:1

I have found it is in our quiet longings and greatest defeats God moves toward us.

And I'd like to conclude with another quote from Isaiah:

For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and  
says to you, 'Do not fear; I will help you.'    Is. 41:13

The above reflection seems very appropriate in this season and Lent and while the world does battle with the Coronavirus. It is within the embrace of God we find Mercy and Hope.

Reflection compiled by Christine Convery

## Timor Leste focuses on Year of the Eucharist

The Timor Leste Mercy Associates group held its first meeting for 2020 just over three weeks ago. Our meetings this year will be on the second Saturday of each month, the next one is March 14.

The spiritual focus in this Diocese is **The Year of the Eucharist**, so it's appropriate that the Eucharist becomes our theme also. The content of our first meeting is below:

### JESUS' TABLE MINISTRY - THE GIFT OF MERCY IS SHARED

Before Jesus instituted the Eucharist, he participated in a table ministry. On these occasions the gift of mercy was offered to those who were in need of physical or spiritual healing. When Jesus offered spiritual advice at the table it was not always accepted.

#### 1. REFLECTION - WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM JESUS' MINISTRY?

Jesus' table ministry was an act of hospitality. He was always showing loving kindness, compassion and offering opportunities to welcome the outcasts and forgive sinners.

Jesus often used meals to engage with people and teach them important lessons about God's loving Mercy.

Let us look at some examples of Jesus' table ministry and see how Jesus' ministry is relevant to our present day living

Dining with the enemy—Levi (Lk. 5:27-32)

#### JESUS' TABLE MINISTRY - THE GIFT OF MERCY IS OFFERED

In Jesus' time tax collectors were despised by their people. Tax collectors were Jews who were collecting Rome's taxes and then keeping some of the tax money for themselves (Lk.19:8). The tax collectors were considered enemies of the Jews as were the Romans.

#### 2. MEDITATION - (Lk 5:32)

#### 3. SHARING

Jesus eating with a tax collector was not acceptable by the Jews.

We know that Jesus was not simply accepting an invitation to Levi's house, but He had a purpose in mind.

'Follow me and be my disciple'. Jesus wanted to show his loving Mercy, acceptance and forgiveness to this outsider, Levi.

#### 4. MERCY IN ACTION

Do you know any 'outsiders' or 'enemies' who are in need of Jesus' love and mercy?

How can you respond to their need in a compassionate way?

#### 5. FURTHER REFLECTION

During the month before we meet, members have been invited to reflect further on Jesus' table ministry.

The uninvited guest (Lk 7:36-50)

Feeding the hungry (Lk.9:10-17)

Mary Anne Dwyer RSM



## Making Memories

During 2019, my husband and I enjoyed a holiday driving through Poland and Lithuania. Experiencing these countries now after such sad and troubled times was a testament to the perseverance of the human spirit and was personally enriching for us.

There were many 'God-Filled' moments during our time away and I have included photos as part of reflection.

It seems somewhat uncertain as to when the first crosses were erected at the Hill of Crosses, Siauliai, in Lithuania, but despite all being destroyed a number of times during the Russian occupation of Lithuania, more and more people continued to lay crosses here and it became a sacred space.

After Pope John Paul II visited the site to say a Mass in 1993, he approached the Franciscan Brothers to build a Monastery there. Now there is a lovely quiet place for Mass, Retreats and Reflection as well as the Hill with hundreds of thousands of crosses and sets of Rosary Beads.

Ros Trestrail, Tuart Hill, Perth





## Retreat by Sr Mary Pat Garvin RSM in Townsville

Townsville Mercy Associates were privileged to join the Sisters of Mercy, and staff from co-ministries in a retreat day with Sr Mary Pat Garvin RSM in March. Thanks to the Institute and Catholic Religious Australia Sr Mary Pat visited regional centres and showed us an interesting process for reading Catherine's letters in such a way that these inspired our own ministries today. Sr Mary Pat encouraged those attending to see Catherine's letters as speaking across time and space 'because her deepest desires, values, beliefs and commitments *reside in our own hearts and lives*'. Within this framework we engaged with the letters which revealed Catherine 's life and work as a Social Mystic and challenged us to see those in our community 'whose relationship with Jesus unleashes social change today', our Social Mystics in 2020!

On the second day Sr Mary Pat welcomed the Sisters of St Joseph who joined the group for a presentation on 'Centred in God... sent on Mission'. All present were inspired by a view of Lectio Divina in a broad definition of 'a way of being in life' and reminded that *memory* releases energy for discipleship. Drawing on a vision based on these concepts, Sr Mary Pat encouraged those present to 'take what I know and go deeper'. Participants agreed Sr Mary Pat certainly energized, reinvigorated, introduced a new 'spark' in her call for us to 'befriend our life'.

Joan Neal



Far left: Sheerah Tait  
Left: Trudi Clarke, Joan Neal,  
Joy Henderson, Anne Henderson  
at the retreat

## MercyWorks—Seeing Hilltop: What A Wonderful View!

Hilltop Road Public School's Community Centre in Sydney supports families in the school through a variety of initiatives, one of which is a very popular English conversation class for mothers.

On 17 February, Sally Bradley, Executive Director of Mercy Works and Paul Taylor, Mercy Connect Sydney Coordinator, visited this vibrant Community Hub. They spent time with the women and also met with the Community Liaison Officer, Catherine Gregory, to find out more about the benefits of the classes.

Mercy Connect currently provides trained volunteer mentors to assist in the adult conversation class held each Monday afternoon. Three Mercy Connect volunteers provide expert guidance to the mothers learning English each week. An additional advantage of attending the class is the opportunity to interact with the other mothers and build friendships.

According to Catherine Gregory, the outstanding success of the adult conversation class has been as a result of the work of the volunteers. In recognition of the progress made, the principal of the primary school has asked if Mercy Connect volunteers can provide mentors to support newly arrived refugee students at the school. A request to which Mercy Works can happily respond!

Kingsley Edwards



Sr Sally Bradley RSM (second from left) and Paul (left) with Hilltop representatives, including a very grateful mother in the photo below with Paul and Sally.





## Gladstone 2020 focus—Corporal Works of Mercy

Welcome to 2020 everyone and what a year it has been so far. We hope and pray that if you have been affected by the bushfires, that you ARE receiving assistance. Also, now we have the coronavirus. In our Diocese though, the drought still affects many parts even though some of us have received wonderful rain.

Our group has once again, agreed to meet monthly from February to November with our ongoing commitment to presenting the *Stations of the Cross* (Digital copies may be downloaded from the Archbishop's Office of Evangelisation, Melbourne, website: [www.cam.org.au/evangelisation](http://www.cam.org.au/evangelisation)), Mercy Day Mass and End of Year dinner. We open our presentations by Guest Speakers to the full Parish.

Our first speaker for the year, was Rosemary from the Community Legal Program who updated us on our Enduring Power of Attorney, Advanced Health Directive and Wills as well as Estate Planning 'as we age'. Many parishioners attended.

This month, Sr Noreen smsm (photo below with Bernice) spoke on the parallels of Pope Francis' spirituality and the special qualities of Mary through her life at Jesus' mother. It was an inspiring presentation.



**BUT** our big decision this year is to spend time at each gathering, reflecting on our **Corporal Works of Mercy**. They are based on the Scripture: *For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.* [Mt 25:34,36] The reflection questions are very challenging.

So far, we have shared upon:

To feed the hungry – the reflection question which raised the most conversation, was *Identify an 'angel of grace' in your life who embodies this work of mercy.* Many names were mentioned.

To give drink to the thirsty – The challenging question was: *Our hearts are restless Lord until they rest in thee.* God thirsts for us all.

We will all take time our copies home for rereading and reflection.

**Annette Rowe**



Then Mary said,  
'Here am I, the  
servant of the Lord;  
let it be with me  
according to your  
word.'

Then the angel  
departed from her.

*Luke 1:38*



*Annunciation, by Luigi Guglielmino, Chiesa di San Dalmazzo, Turin, Italy*



## A Prayer for the Blessing of Mercy Associate Badges

The following prayer has been submitted from Gladstone, where it is used at Commitment/Recommitment ceremonies. Other Mercy Associate groups are welcome to also use this prayer.

God of Mercy, these badges are symbols of the importance of prayer and merciful service in the lives of Mercy Associates. We ask your blessing on these badges. As they wear them may each Mercy Associate be inspired to cherish the faith and commitment to mercy expressed in perfection by Jesus your Son, and lived by Catherine McAuley, the Sisters of Mercy, and other women and men of mercy over the millennia. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord, Amen.



## The Sadness of Death—from Tuart Hill, Perth



Our new year began well and at our first gathering for the year we focussed on going forward in our 'post Christmas' Mercy lives, recognising the blessings which flow from that special time of the year and being grateful for them.

However, our enthusiasm for this time of beginning anew was dampened by the fact that one of our very faithful and

faith-filled members was no longer with us, as he went home to God on January 4<sup>th</sup>.

**Brian O'Connor** and his wife Beryl have been Mercy Associates from our very early days and remained faithful for over twenty years, Beryl still continuing with us.

Brian was a happy family man, strong in his faith, very generous and full of the joy of living. He leaves a very obvious space in our group, but we can confidently say 'well done good and faithful servant' and we hold Beryl in our hearts and our prayers.

**Jan O'Connor**

## Safeguarding Training

During 2019, most Mercy Associates in Australia attended a Safeguarding training seminar. Some Mercy Associates were not able to attend because of illness or other commitments, however this is compulsory training for all Mercy Associates. The only exceptions are those who are unable to attend meetings or undertake any active ministries, which may be due to advanced age or illness.

To provide an extra training option, a 'self-paced' manual has been developed for Mercy Associates. To complete this, Mercy Associates will need to liaise with their Network Facilitator so that the materials can be provided and the correct records can be kept.

Though self-paced, the manual does need a guiding person to help, and this needs to be a Mercy Associate who did the

2019 training seminar. The materials needed are the self-paced manual, the Code of Conduct, the laminated contacts list, the record of attendance form and the form to sign to indicate acceptance of the Code of Conduct. The training will take around one and a half to two hours and is best completed in one session.

The manual, along with more detailed information about how to use it, will be sent by email within the next few weeks. It is essential that all Mercy Associates who attend meetings or undertake a ministry of some kind complete the training by August 2020.

**Carmel Ross,**  
**Executive Officer**

## ISMAPNG Code of Conduct

### Code of Conduct Commitments

1. I commit to behaving respectfully, justly, honestly and with integrity.
2. I commit to creating a supportive, safe and caring environment.
3. I commit to safeguarding all people, particularly children and vulnerable people.
4. I commit to acting within the law, carefully, diligently and as a good steward of resources.

