



# Many Paths ....

Newsletter of Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG

Issue 16, March 2021

## The Joy of Gathering in Person

Dear Associates and Sisters,

In the few months that have elapsed since our last newsletter, COVID restrictions have lifted considerably in Australia. This fortunate development has meant that groups are now able to meet again in person, and most if not all have already held a meeting this year.

When Anne, Chris, Marg and I have been in touch with groups, we've been struck by the sheer joy you have experienced at being able to physically be in the same place when you meet. We know that many Mercy Associates have limited computer skills, so keeping in touch by email, Skype, Zoom, etc., has not been an option for them. Their experience of isolation may have been quite oppressive at times, so it is not surprising to sense the joy they have experienced when they can go to a meeting again.

### Pick up the Phone!

We have also chatted with Associates around Australia about how they maintained contact during the times of heavier restrictions that stopped groups from meeting. By far, the most important was contact by phone.

Some groups set up a 'phone tree', a kind of roster that ensures everyone receives a phone call from another Mercy Associate on a regular basis. The impact was very positive—especially for those who were fearful of venturing out of their home because of the risk of exposure to the virus.

This may seem such an obvious thing to do, yet we live in an age where often, emails, text messages, Facebook and other digital social media have become the main means of communication. However for those who don't use these media, isolation and exclusion can be the result. Years ago,

when access to emails, the internet, etc., was rapidly escalating, social commentator Dale Spender made the observation that the 'new poor' in our society would be those who did not have access to digital social media. She is probably correct, and their poverty is in the form of social isolation...

Some groups have discussed and reviewed how they maintained their connectedness during the COVID restrictions. Most are considering continuing their phone tree contacts, realising how important this practice has been to those who most need to hear from their fellow Mercy Associates.

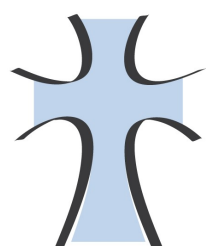
What will your group do? Do you have a regular practice of phoning everyone in the group, especially those who may be unwell or have limited mobility, and who can't easily attend meetings?

It isn't difficult to set up a phone tree or some form of contact roster, and it could make a huge difference to those at risk of loneliness and isolation.

### How many of us are there?

Each year, ISMAPNG gathers data on many aspects of its broad range of activities, including Mercy Associates.

We've just checked with all of the groups, and at the moment, **there's 260 Mercy Associates.** This includes groups in Australia, Timor Leste and Papua New Guinea.



**MERCY**  
Associates

Institute of Sisters of Mercy  
of Australia & Papua New Guinea

**One Charism, Many Paths**



**Let us rejoice when good is  
done, no matter by whom it  
is accomplished.**

## Good Neighbour Award for Gunnedah Mercy Associates

The Mercy Associates group in Gunnedah was honoured to receive the Gunnedah Shire Council Australia Day 'Good Neighbour Award' in memory of two wonderful Dutch immigrants Max and Mikie Maas, who made Gunnedah home and were a shining example of good neighbours, from their service in the war years to their work in our community.

The group also won the award for best decorated table.

None of the Mercy Associates looks for any accolades but it is also a salute to the works of mercy that have been happening in our parish since the arrival of the Sisters in 1879.

The information on the nomination form for the *Max and Mikie Maas Good Neighbour Award* is below:

*During the COVID pandemic lockdown, members of the Gunnedah Mercy Associates and Friends worked quietly behind the scenes bringing comfort and practical support to the housebound, the vulnerable and the bereaved in Gunnedah. Phone calls, cooked meals, shopping and prayer support were all part of the 'giving' distributed in a COVID safe manner ... like the Good Samaritan in the Bible, they showed kindness and mercy to their 'neighbours'.*

*Established in the 1980s as a way of encouraging and supporting the many lay women and men who work alongside the Sisters of Mercy, Mercy Associates cherish the virtue and practice of mercy in their lives reflecting the charism of Catherine McAuley who founded the order in Ireland in 1831. The Gunnedah group was established in 1997 to support the work of the local congregation of the Sisters of Mercy and their mercy values of compassion, justice, hospitality and hope.*

*Over the years, the group has raised thousands of dollars for the community, with a special focus on aged care services, including the Gunnedah Rural Health Centre.*

*Whenever there is a function in the parish, the Associates are there preparing food and cleaning up. At funerals they can be seen quietly passing around cups of cold water outside the church or preparing refreshments for the mourners after the funeral. Good neighbours to all.*

**Marie Hobson**



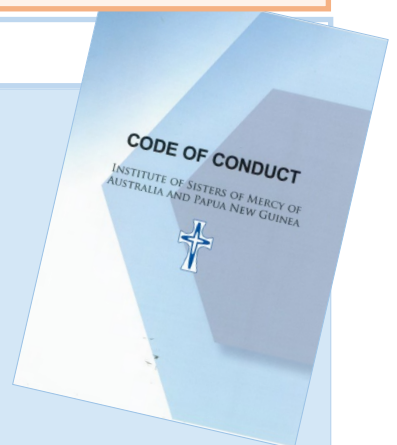
Margaret Nott, Eva Grace, Ann Brady, Val McCann, Colleen Buttenshaw, Pat Mooney, Abby Kidd, with Sr Christine Belling rsm and Sr Regina McInerney rsm

*God wonderfully assists the humble, and makes use of them for His greatest designs, as they never subtract from His glory, by attributing their success to themselves. Catherine McAuley*

## 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.



**I will not use it.**

**No don't need it.**

**I have no one to show me how.**

**Don't worry about it.**

## **Zoom Meetings?**

**No! No! No! Not for Me...**

Does any of this resonate with you? Perhaps you are using Zoom often or occasionally and know just how wonderful this new technology is. **BUT** for those amongst us who take a little time to be convinced of its usefulness then read on.

Early last year due to the pandemic it was decided by our Network Facilitators to make available Zoom Prayer Meetings. Yes we must move with the times, **No not for me. I can't do it.** So I did not participate in these Zoom Prayer meetings. During the year I was asked if I could Zoom, **No I can Face Time though.** A face to face meeting was arranged instead. I should have been able to Zoom, ask about it, everyone seems to be able to do it. "It is easy", several people said. **I think something will go wrong.**

Then the Leadership Group was meeting over a weekend with several Zoom meetings over 3 days. I needed to be at that meeting so I had to be able to Zoom.

Just 4 steps and I was Zooming. This is how easy it is.

- ◆ I downloaded a Zoom app to my computer it is Free (no cost)
- ◆ The zoom meeting has an address which you click on to gain access to the meeting at the allocated time.
- ◆ Next click a button which allows you to have visual access which allows everyone present, to see you.
- ◆ Then a box appears for you to click to allow you audio access, so that everyone at the meeting can hear you.

Once you download the app it is not necessary to download it again.

It has opened up a whole world and endless possibilities for me.

Jesus our great physician made the blind see and the deaf hear, this technology is available in our time, now. Try Zoom, it is for everyone. Jesus also said "Do not be afraid". I was, BUT now...

**I Love Zoom...**

**Helen Fowler, Young**

## **New Associates in Ballarat**

The Ballarat group has re-commenced its dinner gatherings, and as these photos show, this has been to the delight of our members...

On Saturday, 20 March, 2021 at 11am in the Mercy Chapel, a Covid safe, Commitment ceremony was conducted.

We are delighted to have Kathy Curran, Korina Hegert and Sandra Harvey join our group and look forward to getting to know them.



## BALLARAT

The support provided by Sisters of Mercy to their local Mercy Associates groups is always valued and appreciated. In Ballarat, Sr Anne McMillan has been supporting the group in recent years, a role that will now be undertaken by Sr Geraldine Mugarvin.

### Changeover and Thank you

As Sr Anne McMillan's time in the role as contact between the Institute and the Associates concludes we wish to thank her for the support, guidance and friendship she has shared with us over the passed four years. It has been a pleasure to work with her.

### Welcome

We welcome Sr Geraldine Mugarvin as our new contact and look forward to working with her.



Anne O'Connell, Sr Geraldine Mugarvin RSM, Kathy Pollard, Sr Anne McMillan RSM

## ROCKHAMPTON— Remembering the Mercy Story

Greetings from Rockhampton! Another year, more challenges and more good memories to make.

Our committee gathered on 15 January and put forward our ideas for our gatherings this year. It is looking like a wonderful year with spiritual input by faith filled people.

A few of us later met with Margaret and Paul Trevethan for afternoon tea, when they were travelling south, as it was too good an opportunity to miss. It was all very enjoyable.

Our first gathering was on Saturday, 13 February. We began with Mass in our beautiful St Joseph's Cathedral. We then just had to walk across the courtyard to the Cathedral Centre for our meeting.

After a COVID friendly morning tea, our Chair, Ailsa McLaughlin, warmly welcomed us all, including four, new, interested ladies, who were in attendance.

Following on from Sister Joanne Molloy's address at our meeting in November on the Mercy Sisters arrival in Rockhampton and their growth in various parts of the community, in particular, education and health, Sister Beryl Amedee (picture, above right) was our guest speaker for our first meeting of the new year and her topic 'The Mercy Story', began, of course with Catherine



McAuley. The 'story' was well researched and well received. Questions were welcomed along the way. At the conclusion, Sister Beryl invited us to reflect on one or more questions, which she presented to us and to then share our responses, if we wished. The questions Sister Beryl raised were:

*As an Associate of the Sisters of Mercy, what is your spontaneous reaction to the story?*

*What difference does the Mercy Charism make in your life?*

*Where is God in this story?*

*As you reflect on the Mercy Story, what evidence do you see of one person making a difference in our world?*

*How does this reflection inspire you?*

*What gift can you through the Charism of Catherine offer our world today?*

The above generated some beautiful discussion!

We are looking forward with faith and hope to 2021.

**Kathleen Winter**



## Gladstone—a Year that Started with Sorrow and Joy

Gladstone Mercy Associates commenced the year on a 'Sad' note by holding a *Thanksgiving Mass* for one of our Associates, Betty Smith. [Due to Covid restrictions, most Associates could not attend her Funeral service in Dec 2020.] We shared our celebration of her life with her family. Here are a few brief memories:



*Betty as you will all agree, was a gentle, loving soul who had, alongside her beloved husband Paul, a dedication to family like no other. Betty and Paul were always at the Brothers Rugby League Club – always cheering on the team with gusto. If Paul was there on his own, it was only because Betty was cheering on the Hockey team that her daughters / granddaughters were playing in.*

*One thing that always hit a chord with me, was the way her grandsons would come off the field, get changed and come up to the grandstand, shake their grandfathers hand and plant a beautiful kiss on the cheek of Betty – this happened every game.*

*During her children's student life at Chanel College, and because they lived behind the school, each afternoon the teenagers would bring friends home for afternoon tea on their spacious verandah. Catherine's call of hospitality shone through Betty's spirit and life. A woman so loved and who loved so many, will surely be resting in the loving arms of our God.*

At our first gathering in February, we endorsed our team of 10 to assist the coordination of our Associates. We will, this year, be holding our gatherings, along with the Mercy Day Mass.

But our great 'Joy' to begin our 2021, was a visit by **Margaret Trevethan, Queensland Network Facilitator**. Marg was introduced and was asked to tell us a little about herself. She in turn asked us all individually, why we became Mercy Associates and what it meant for us to be involved. Some people shared that their trip to Dublin to walk in the places that Catherine McAuley walked, was a significant time in their lives, especially knowing the hardships that she (Catherine) had to overcome to achieve her vision. Someone else shared that they continued the tradition that their mother had started. They could see what effect it had had on her life. They so wanted that for themselves too. Quite a few people shared that the presence of the Mercy Sisters in Gladstone and their eventual departure, had made the decision easy when approached by various Sisters who are now living in Rockhampton.



Marg has offered to return in July to facilitate a Retreat morning for us. This will be greatly appreciated by all. For Marg, she enjoyed putting 'faces' to 'names'. We concluded with Catherine's Suscipe.

**Annette Platt**

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### One to smile about...



The fact that there's a highway to hell and only a stairway to heaven says a lot about anticipated traffic numbers...



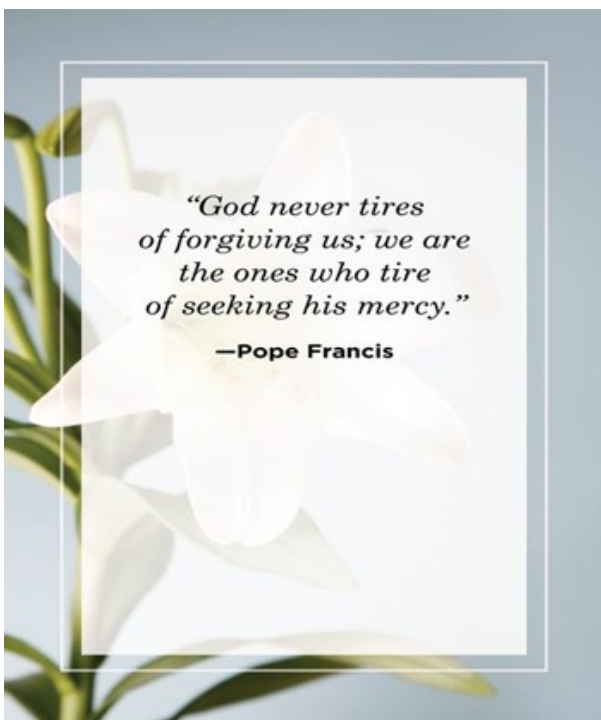
# LENT—A time for Mercy

Marg Trevethan

*The Season of Lent is a time to reflect on our lives and prepare ourselves to enter into the mysteries of Holy Week and Easter.*

A Lenten Journey carries the promise of transformation “through the wilderness to truth, through confusion to clarity, through thirst to living water, through blindness to new sight, through death to life”. In today’s world of confusion and rapid change, Christian communities, like our Mercy Associate family, are invited to ‘take time’ to acknowledge brokenness and pain, for lament, for seeking mercy, healing, restoration and new life.

Catherine said, *“If we open ourselves as much as we can to the friendship of Jesus and the warmth of human love, we will grow in personal maturity, in the serenity and grace of our woman/manhood. This growth is ultimately, God’s transforming work within us.”* This Lenten season may be just the time to immerse ourselves ever more deeply in our friendship with Jesus and each other.



By acknowledging both the awesomeness and brokenness in our world we are expressing our hope for transformation and deep gratitude for God’s abundant mercy. We declare to each other our willingness to change and turn again towards God’s abundant love and the Gospel values that Jesus taught. We remember that we are constantly in need of loving kindness and forgiveness and declare our desire for deeper awareness in coming to know our thirsts, for getting in touch with our blind spots, and realising which parts of us are not really ‘alive’.

We also welcome again the God who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, not judgemental at all! A God who actually ‘relents’ from punishing (Joel 2:13) and holds us as gently as an artisan potter might hold clay, working with the properties of the clay to recreate a beautiful form. (Jeremiah 18:1-6). A God who invites and desires for us fullness of life! Might we be ‘ambassadors’ for this kind of God during Lent (2Cor 5:20-21) sowing seeds of mercy, reaching out to restore the broken within ourselves, our relationships and our world.

As we enter this period of ‘fasting’, could we fast from the things that muddy our focus on God’s abundant love? Perhaps we could fast from making unkind judgements or comments – and ‘feast’ on saying and doing what builds up and encourages instead. Doing this would truly reflect to everyone around us that our God abounds in ‘steadfast love’ that heals the cracks in us with mercy, and invites us to carry forward goodness and beauty.

**Like Catherine we are invited to pray:**

***‘I am a fragile vessel containing your glory. Grant me conversion of heart that I may change what is unloving in my life, strive to live the Gospel more faithfully and repair the harm I have caused others’***

*Lenten prayer on following page*

## During Lent, we pray...

We ask for healing for our fears, those areas where we are afraid in our hearts and spirits and where we haven't the courage to enter fully the lives that God has so generously given us ... Lord have mercy.

We ask for forgiveness for any areas of blindness that we have – especially blindness to the opportunities we have to grow and be creative and be of service to others ... Christ have mercy.

We ask forgiveness for any areas of resentment or bitterness, which put our lives out of joint and take the peace and natural courage that we are supposed to have ... Lord have mercy.

We ask for forgiveness for any wrong we have done to anyone, directly in word or deed or indirectly through poor thinking any kind of negativity ... Lord have mercy

We ask for God's help so that when Easter morning comes all the frailty of our minds and spirits may be healed and that we are receptive to the healing, courage and new life the resurrection brings ... Lord have mercy.

Lord, you have given us the gift of a new dawn, the dawn on which Jesus rose from the dead and broke, finally and forever, the chains of darkness and blindness. We ask that streams of Easter light might flow into the intimacy and privacy of our hearts this morning, to heal us and encourage us and enable each of us to make again a new beginning.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Tuart Hill, Perth – Lenten reflection on Hosea

The Tuart Hill Mercy Associates group has met twice since the end of the COVID restrictions were lifted.

At the first meeting in December, the joy of being face to face with each other was evident. The conversation over afternoon tea could have gone on for hours! However that came at the end of the meeting – our meeting included Jan O'Connor and Carmel Ross each presenting Advent reflections, which were well-received by the group.

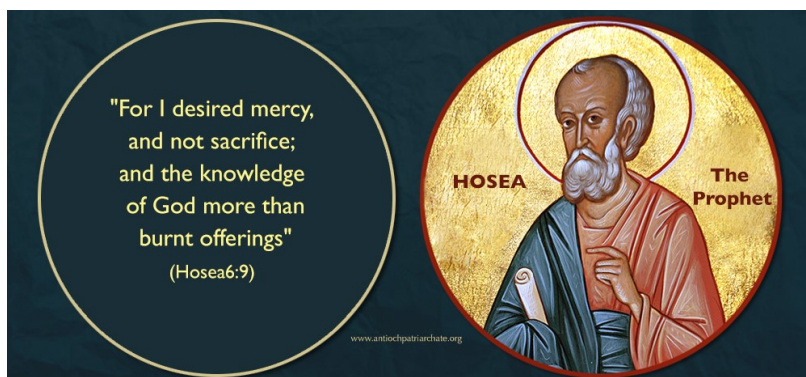
The next meeting, in February, seemed to find the group just as joyful to be meeting in person again. It's odd how much you don't realise the importance of something until you lose it, then you cherish it again.

At the February meeting, Jan O'Connor presented a seminar on the Old Testament book of Hosea, one of the minor prophets. Hosea is an extraordinary story of God's unwavering love and commitment to what can best be described as an adulterous nation – one that kept turning to false idols and forgetting to worship the one true God. Hosea, at God's behest, marries Gomer, a woman of ill-repute. She is unfaithful to him, including leaving him, yet



Hosea will not abandon her. Gomer's life spirals downwards rapidly, to the point where she is enslaved. Even then, Hosea pays the ransom and brings her home again to freedom. The parallel between the capacity of humankind to abandon God and run away is clear – a great reflection to guide our Lenten journey.

**Carmel Ross**



## TOWNSVILLE—Reflection on the Works of Mercy—2021 Theme for Formation

Townsville Mercy Associates met at the House of Prayer in late February for the first time in 2021. Associate Trudy Clarke led the group in prayer challenging all at the beginning of Lent with a prayer by Sir Francis Drake. *Disturb Us Lord:* A short excerpt: *Disturb us Lord when we are too pleased with ourselves, when our dreams have come true because we dreamed too little. When we arrived safely because we sailed too close to the shore.*

The group were delighted to congratulate Trudy on her inaugural Mater Lifetime Contribution award, the Catherine McAuley medal. Presented by the Mater Group Qld this award recognized Trudy's exemplary work in Pastoral Care and leadership as Director of Mission for 19 years at the Mater hospital Townsville.

Congratulations were also passed on to Mercy Associates mentor sister Sr Cath Cuddihy rsm, a loyal and constant supporter of the Townsville Associates group. Sr Cath recently withdrew from her work at the Mater hospital having served there for 45 years in many capacities including nursing and lately, Pastoral Care.

The group is looking forward to the Formation beginning at the next meeting: exploring the new book *A Lens on the Works of Mercy* about Clare Agnew and her legacy by Sr Annette Schneider rsm. The 16 illustrations beautifully show the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy with reflections for our time and suggestions for Contemplation and Action.



Trudy Clarke, Rita Tomba, Sr Marie Melville rsm, Joan Neal, Fiona Williams, Sheerah Tait, Gayle Pollard, Sr Carmel Ruddick rsm



### Thinking Big - Big plans are in place for Simbu after the success in Goroka and Mt. Hagen

Mercy Works has been working tirelessly in the Goroka/Mt. Hagen region for just over fourteen years now.

In that time, Maryanne has become the driving force behind various instruments of change such as the life and skills training programs. In addition to training in practical skills like farming and sewing, Maryanne also identified the need for training in Small to Medium Enterprise (SME). Her experience taught her that this was necessary to enhance the prospects for the trainees to start up and successfully run their own businesses to sell the goods they produce.

Reflecting on what she has gained from this training program Maryanne says, 'the training has given me the opportunity to find a way forward', with plans to now buy shares in LNB Savings and Loans Society. She goes on to say that 'the team behind her is the reason for the strength and hope she carries every day.'

'Helping them plan for the future on top of the strong foundations built as a result of this training. I know that this training has given them the focus to improve their skills and plan for their futures,' she says.

The belief that teaching and training those in this community would help them lift themselves out of poverty and towards a better future is one of the many reasons that has driven Maryanne to succeed. Mercy Works may be leaving the Goroka/Mt. Hagen area, but the Mercy Works' legacy will continue to transform lives well into the future.

The theme developed by Maryanne for the SME program, 'Leave No One Behind', was

created with the aim of building a pathway through agriculture and other businesses to sustainability, reliability and ownership into the future - essential to community development for the poor and disadvantaged people of Papua New Guinea.

Mercy Works has started to move into Simbu Province, so Maryanne is working tirelessly to make connections with local leaders and identify the needs of the community. Simbu province is a rugged mountainous area located in the central highlands. Although the smallest province in the country in land area, it is the most densely populated. A large part of the focus in Simbu will be the SME Training model that was very successful in Goroka and Mt. Hagen.

'Thinking Big, Starting Small' is the statement that will underpin this program. Maryanne's drive and determination to bring about meaningful change within the community provides the foundations for the goals of the program through job creation and up-skilling vulnerable women and men.

