

Mercy Emerging Leaders Fellowship in Integral Ecology

4 February 2022

Introducing the successful candidates

This year sees the inauguration of the Mercy Emerging Leaders Fellowship in Integral Ecology. The fellowship program is for those who perhaps already have experience in leadership to turn their attention to Integral Ecology awareness and animation because they have a desire to be part of the ongoing enhancement and development of reflective action for Gospel justice in response to the cries of Earth and of those rendered poor.

The program includes monthly input and study in Integral Ecology, mentoring, involvement in a local action group, a culminating project presentation and three immersion retreats (Cairns, Sydney/Blue Mountains and Melbourne/Queenscliff).

Four exceptional women were successful in their application to be part of the 2022 Fellowship.

Tara Egger



Tara is passionate about animating efforts for Gospel justice to care for and protect our common home. In her current role as Head of Identity and CAS, part of the College Mission Leadership team at Monte

Sant' Angelo, North Sydney, she is tasked with exploring the interconnections and rich inspiration of our faith traditions, Aboriginal Spirituality, our spirituality and integral ecology.

Having long had a genuine curiosity and respect for the natural world and Indigenous wisdom, Tara formed a strong relationship with Elders within her community and has initiated many actions including creating a tradition of celebrating the sacred places at her school. As a contributor to Mercy Global Presence,

she has also supported a strong commitment in Mercy to raise consciousness for the cry of Earth and the cry of those rendered poor.

Faced with the ecological crisis, Tara sees the opportunities arising for leaders to bring the Gospel vision with the theology and integrate this into action in a way that is a relevant invitation for young people into our faith. "At this point in time, we are fortunate as educators that our students are passionate about our 'Common Home'. They are in fact leading the imperative for us to act." Tara's passion led her to travel to the Central Desert in 2013 and 2016 to work in community with the Mutijulu people, the Aboriginal custodians of Uluru. She worked in Land Care, Maruku Art Cooperative, Child Care and the Nursing Home. In 2016 she was able to travel out to Wala Water Hole and Kulpitjata. She has also led immersion experiences in Timor Leste. About these experiences, Tara reflects: "Hearing the Cry of the Poor is one thing but understanding how to respond in a sustainable manner is imperative." "As a teacher or as a student, we can't address the challenges of our time until we understand our place within the problem. Cultural change is slow and needs to be on an individual level step by step. As Catherine

McAuley stated: *'...thus we may hope to get on taking short, careful steps, not great strides.'*"

Tara is keen to direct her experience in leadership towards the current needs of our time: "When I saw this Fellowship, it touched my heart. It appeared to be offering everything that is sacred to me. I feel that in all I do, I am just touching the surface of knowing and understanding integral ecology. To have the opportunity to place my focus in this area and to further develop my knowledge and understanding would be a gift for life."

Brigitte McDonald



Brigitte is a passionate advocate for Earth and am a firm believer in the Butterfly Effect which espouses that small changes can equal unpredictable, significant changes at a later stage.

Brigitte's love of the natural world led to her

vocation as a Biology teacher and she brings this to her current role as a Deputy Principal, currently at St Columba's College, Essendon, Vic. "Finding God in nature is one way that I can reconnect young people with their faith and the biblical tradition".

Having been selected to be part of the Coaching Program at the Melbourne Zoo to share real world environmental issues that impact on biodiversity, Brigitte encouraged the involvement of her College in the Precious Plastics Program in partnership with Monash University as a way of impacting on the waste produced in the community. She is also keen to learn more about Indigenous stewardship on traditional lands, caring for Country, which has supported the management of natural systems for tens of thousands of years. With a team of student leaders, she is now leading her College's commitment the Laudato Si' Action Platform.

"This Fellowship provides a wonderful opportunity for me to continue my spiritual formation, particularly within the sphere of creation, stewardship and ecology and share

this with my students and colleagues. My involvement as a Fellow will provide me with a wealth of knowledge, spiritual nourishment and resources which will enable me to support our College in its journey towards 'greater love for our Creator, each other, and the home we share' (LS 14)."

Priscilla O'Brien



Priscilla is currently the Ministry Development Coordinator at Seville Mercy Conference Centre, Cairns, which has Laudato Si' at the heart of its mission. Priscilla is responsible for creating programs to animate

Laudato Si' for their guests and the local community.

"This fellowship will help with my formation so that in turn I can help others with Laudato Si' offerings. It will help me to consolidate our work at Seville and give me some depth and credibility whilst creating new activities and events."

Since growing up in Mauritius and having spent time living with the Tiwi people on Bathurst Island in the Northern Territory, the natural world has always been a source of solace, relaxation and of God's presence for Priscilla. This connection led to a deep concern for Earth in the face of human damage but also a desire to spread active hope, especially guided by Indigenous people and journeying with young people. In 2016 she founded Reach Youth Ministries, inspiring young people to connect with their faith to make the world a better place.

"What motivates me is my Christian calling to Mission... As an Australian, I have also been interested in Indigenous connection to land and their wisdom in taking care of creation... I believe that we have a lot to learn from our First Nations people and at Seville we are always looking at ways to partner and work with them in our offerings to the public."

Juliet Talarico



By means of her work, volunteering, and personal practice, Juliet is immersed in the teachings of environmental regeneration, Laudato Si', and eco-spirituality. In 2018 she completed a Bachelor of Biological

Science in ecology and since then embraced many experiences for immersions, scholarships, and managed grant applications for regenerative practices.

In 2019, she undertook an internship at the ISMAPNG ministry Rahamim Ecology Centre, Bathurst, where she began exploring her spirituality and expanding community involvement. As an emerging community educator, she immersed herself in the values of simplicity, contemplation, and advocacy. She

co-taught courses about the ecological crisis to young people and adults around Australia and, after acquiring a Mercy Foundation grant, co-taught a permaculture course to refugees and vulnerable women in Melbourne.

Her current positions include bush regeneration and program facilitation at the Mercy Hub.

"By working amongst nature, I understand the urgency of how humans must shift from our fragmented conventional practices to regenerative systems, where humans participate as nature rather than above it (Shifting from 'sustainability' to regeneration, Reed).

I am drawn to this program as it is led by women, encourages contemplation, and drives collective action."

Sally Neaves

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