



Many Paths

Newsletter of Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG

Issue 20, November 2021

Dear Associates and Sisters,

We're on the edge of entering the season of Advent, a time of waiting in joyful hope for the celebration of the birth of Christ at Christmas. In the adjacent column is a reflective poem by Mary Wickham, a Sister of Mercy with a remarkable gift for writing poetry.

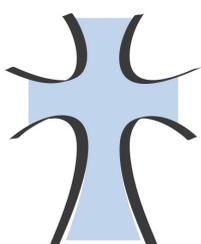
Though Advent starts the liturgical year, in secular terms it signals the forthcoming close of the calendar year. For many, it will have been another year of frustration and struggle, where lockdowns lasted and lasted. Fortunately, most of Australia is now living in relative freedom. But—not so for the people of Papua New Guinea, where there is a Mercy Friends group. In this edition there is an article by Sr Sally Bradley from Mercy Works about the dreadful risk COVID poses in PNG because so few people have access to being vaccinated. Please pray for the people of Papua New Guinea.

The year has seen times of joy too, as is the way of human life. In September, Anne Tudor, a Mercy Associate from Ballarat, contributed an article to *Many Paths* about her work endeavouring to improve support for dementia sufferers and their carers. Anne has just received another award—the Premier's Award for Victorian Senior of the Year—Congratulations!!!

And another joyful celebration has been the establishment of a new Mercy Associates group based in Sydney. At a commitment ceremony in Sydney on Saturday 20th, two candidates made their first commitment and two others renewed their commitment—and so we have a group of four in Sydney, who will sometimes meet by zoom and sometimes gather in person.

On behalf of Chris, Anne, Marg and myself, may you and those dear to you enjoy peace and joyful blessings over the Christmas period.

Carmel Ross
Executive Officer



MERCY
Associates

Institute of Sisters of Mercy
of Australia & Papua New Guinea

One Charism, Many Paths

Christmas

From the rich nutriment of *Rahamim*,
womb of God,
from *Hesed*,
the inmost being of God,
from the secret radiance of mercy
in which the eternal Three
thrive and delight in their threeness,
at calm and supreme in their oneness,
is given to the unseeing world
the mystery of Jesus.

From the amazement of a woman's womb
the unspeakable Word is uttered.
Mercy made human
grows to see the cost and the wonder,
knows in his depths the depths of all terror,
is at home in the kindest deeds,
endures in his heart the paradox of being creature -
beloved and victim, servant and Lord.

Jesus, mercy,
in the wideness of the world,
in the hidden strictures of our own hearts,
Your face is found.

Your gaze will meet ours.
Lead us to look in the right places
this year of years,
O Emmanuel,
God with us.

Mary Wickham RSM,
being the bird poems and prayers, p. 124, 2021



May God preserve and bless
you and grant you all the
graces and precious gifts re-
served for this Holy Season.

Letter to Frances Warde,
23rd December 1837

Mercy Associates Online: 'Mercy Zoomers' celebrates its first year

Mercy Zoomers - formerly known as the Mercy Associates Online Group - has been meeting for a year, with five of us 'zooming in' every month to encourage one another in mercy. We come together from Melbourne, Adelaide, Ballarat, Gladstone in Queensland, and St. Petersburg, Russia! Anne O'Connell and Annette Rowe, both experienced Mercy Associates, generously agreed to support Mandy Bosson and Natalia Pecherskaya as they discerned their call to mercy before making their commitment in November 2020. Annette and Anne, along with Anne Pate, Mercy Associates Network Facilitator for Victoria, join Mandy and Natalia in this online community.

Annette reflects here on her experience as a sponsor and guide:

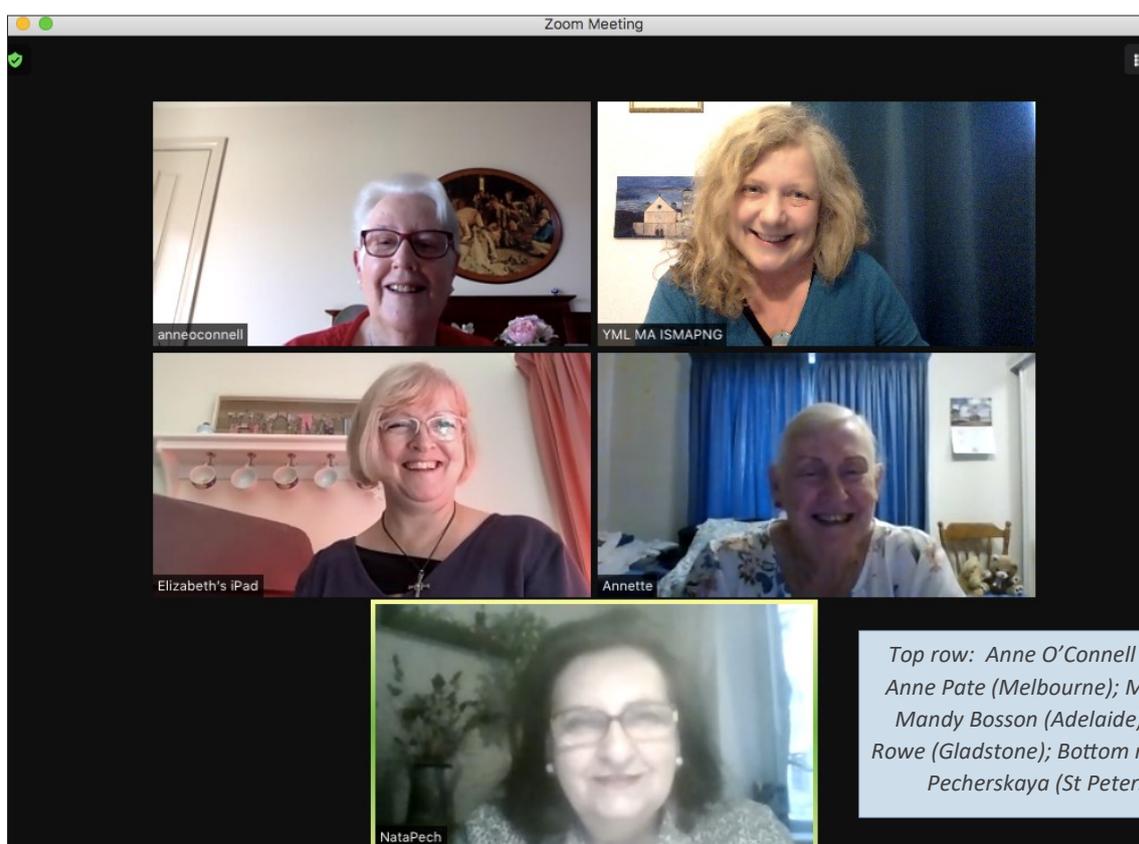
In October 2020, I was asked by Anne Pate, if I was willing to sponsor a Russian Orthodox lady living in St Petersburg, Russia in becoming a Mercy Associate. Her name is Natalia, and she was already well known to the Mercy Sisters in Melbourne. I agreed, even though at that time, I was uncertain how it would all 'work'. Natalia said in her first email, 'What an interesting time, what an opportunity for a Russian to follow Catherine McAuley's way together with you in Australia! Alleluja!'

So how was this going to work and what would spiritual mentoring mean? I needed to be someone who cared about Natalia and wanted the best for her. My goal was not to transmit knowledge or understanding but to bring about a recognition for Natalia of her own giftedness already present in her personality and history. I believe that my role was to assist Natalia to be more aware of her already deep desire to become a more 'merciful' person.

We could only communicate through zoom meetings, so it was very important to learn to listen well and grow in understanding of Natalia's culture and extensive professional life. I would need to learn from her facial expressions and the feelings she would convey through her language when sharing with us. I, with the support of the other members in our small group, would guide when we were reflecting, not direct. I soon learnt that Natalia was journeying 'on the road less travelled' due to the political past and the present Covid-19 restrictions in St Petersburg. We have enjoyed many 'positive' moments this year, focusing on the growth of each other.

This experience certainly has fulfilled our Logo vision '*One Charism, Many Paths*'.

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Mandy Bosson describes her first year as a Mercy Associate and the gift of belonging to this group:

They say that time flies, and it certainly does ... it seems like yesterday, but it was a year ago (26th November 2020) that Natalia and I made our commitment to the Mercy Associates Online Group.

I initially wondered how this would work. Would we get the same out of an online group as opposed to a face to face meeting? Would there be the same interaction and understanding? And what about that feeling of spirituality between us?

The answer is a resounding 'yes'- it does work - wonderfully! I look forward to the monthly zoom meetings with anticipation. It is as if there is no screen between us.

There is sense of companionship and belonging to the group. And while our 'Mercy Ministries' are so varied, we have the benefit of being able to discuss issues and topics with each other in a comfortable space. I think Catherine would approve of us finding a new way to reach out to each other in the spirit of Mercy.

It is as if there is no screen between us. Mandy

As these reflections by Mandy and Annette show, geographic and cultural differences are no barrier to creating a faith community in which to deepen our engagement with mercy!

Anne Pate, Mandy Bosson, Annette Rowe, Anne O'Connell, and Natalia Pecherskaya

The hand of the Master Painter...



The spectacular beauty of **Grafton's** Jacaranda trees has been captured by **Leonie Fish**.



*Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad:
....let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.*

Psalm 96:11-12

Loving Kindness—Gladstone Mercy Associates Retreat

Gladstone Mercy Associates were recently blessed by a visit from Margaret Trevethan (Mercy Associates Network Facilitator Queensland) for a Retreat morning followed by the mandatory training on *'Right Relationships'*.

Marg's theme was *'Loving Kindness'*: The Kindness of Touch, The Kindness of Presence, The Kindness of Inclusion, The Kindness of Advocacy, The Kindness of Forgiveness, The Kindness of Encouragement just to name a few. These topics were in direct relationship to what the gospels say about Jesus, so we were given references to these topics in the New Testament. We were asked to discuss what was foremost in our minds when we are given a particular situation.

Marg also gave us famous quotes ranging from the Dalai Lama XIV, St Teresa of Calcutta, St Clare of Assisi to St Francis of Assisi who wrote *'For it is in the giving that we receive'*. We reflected and prayed about our personal journey through the continuous movement of a stream of scarves of different textures.

As a group, we came to the conclusion that we happily give acts of kindness but it's in the receiving that is hard to do and this is something to work on.

Annette Platt



A Sending

In the strength of God the maker
we are going on a journey.
In the friendship of Jesus
we are going on a journey.
In the safeguarding of the Holy Spirit
we are going on a journey.
A star is shining.
Angels are busy.
Mary is pregnant.
Joseph is packing.
Advent is coming.
It's time to go.
May God bless us with hope
and wonder as we travel.
Amen

Ruth Burgess, from her book *Winter*.



Artist: Jenny Perkins

Announcing a new Sydney Mercy Associates Group

Mercy Associates is delighted to welcome two new Associates, **Dianne Hanna** and **Noeleen Kirwan**, who together with two Mercy Associates, Margery Jackman and Christine Convery, have formed a new Mercy Associates group in Sydney, meeting online and in person.

On Saturday November 20, these four made their Commitment and Re-commitment as Mercy Associates at a beautiful ceremony at the McAuley Centre, Lewisham. In attendance were three Sisters of Mercy, Maureen Sexton (standing in for Sr. Anne Ryan – Community Leader Central B), Sally Bradley and Eileen Quade. As a group of seven Mercy women we prayed together and celebrated the special day with the Ceremony including some scripture readings and a reading from the writings of Catherine McAuley. After the Ceremony we shared a time of hospitality over lunch.

Noeleen and Dianne began their formation period over twelve months ago, online via Zoom, with Christine Convery (Mercy Associates Network Facilitator – NSW), and Margery Jackman. The conversations during this time have been most enriching and inspiring for us as a group. Dianne is a Lebanese Australian and Noeleen is an Irish Australian, from Kildare. With such rich and diverse backgrounds both have brought their diverse cultural and church experiences into our group, in that our group conversations have been woven together like a rich tapestry of life and faith, centred in the charism of Mercy today.

Catherine McAuley's words – *'The tender mercy of God has given us one another'* – reveal this wonderful gift that has brought the four of us together, as Mercy Associates, walking and journeying alongside the Sisters of Mercy.

This new Mercy Associates group will continue to meet both online and in person, as we form a faith community in which we engage with mercy in everyday life, and support one another in the various ministries we are involved in.

Congratulations Noeleen and Dianne on making your very first commitment as Mercy Associates. Welcome to the Mercy Associates movement!

Christine Convery,
Mercy Associates Network Facilitator,
NSW

L-R: Sr Sally Bradley, Noeleen Kirwan, Margery Jackman, Christine Convery, Sr Eileen Quade, Dianne Hanna



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.



From Rockhampton—the origin of a Mercy Associates group

Rockhampton Mercy Associates members gathered in late September 2021 to celebrate Mass, share a morning tea followed by a presentation by Sr Beryl Amedee rsm on the historical development of the Mercy Associates, particularly in the Diocese of Rockhampton - from a seed of an idea planted in 1980 to being part of a national organisation in 2016.

In setting the scene for her presentation, Sr Beryl reflected on how, originally, Catherine McAuley, envisaged establishing a community of pious lay women who would devote themselves to the service of the poor and ignorant, with liberty to return to their worldly life when they no longer felt inclined to discharge such duties. However, circumstances forced Catherine to abandon this idea and, instead, to establish a religious order, the Sisters of Mercy. The development of Mercy Associates, in some way, echoes Catherine's dream of establishing a lay organisation steeped in the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, living in the secular world.

Sr Beryl explained that early thinking on the establishment of Mercy Associates groups in the Diocese of Rockhampton was raised at a chapter of the Rockhampton Sisters of Mercy in 1980, but it was not until 1991 that a formal proposal was put forward and approved at the Chapter of the Rockhampton Sisters of Mercy of that year. Mercy Associates groups were formed in Rockhampton, Gladstone, Mackay, Bundaberg and in other Queensland dioceses.

To provide spiritual formation for these new groups, significant experiences were offered. These included: Diocesan meetings and retreats, guest speakers, monthly prayer leaflets relating to Catherine McAuley's Mercy vision as well as prayer days for the Rockhampton and Gladstone groups.

In 2000, representatives of eighteen congregations of the Sisters of Mercy and their Mercy Associates groups met to



share their stories. An outcome of this sharing was the realisation that a common Mercy Associates' policy was needed. At a subsequent gathering in 2002, a common Mercy Associates National Policy was approved and the role of regional Mercy Associates coordinators was defined.

With the formation of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG) in 2011, meant further adaptation by Mercy Associates groups to bring them under the umbrella of the new Institute. This was completed in 2016.

While each Mercy Associates group enjoys autonomy and informal structuring, spiritual formation of each member is important. As well, each group is encouraged to discern the needs of their community and to support underprivileged people.

Guided by the Mercy values of compassion, justice, hospitality and hope, Mercy Associates aspire to celebrate and give thanks for God's merciful love; to nurture their relationship with God to enable them to witness to their faith in prayer and action; to give expression to God's mercy in

response to the needs of these times in the ordinariness of their daily lives and in all their relationships; and to journey with each other and the Sisters of Mercy and so share the gift of knowing God's loving kindness with others.

Pat McDevitt



Tuart Hill, Perth

Our year has been an interrupted one in many ways, though thankfully, not totally because of Covid. Our thoughts and prayers have been with our sisters and brothers in the eastern states and we are very glad to see you coming out of restrictions. We do hope everything works well.

We are blessed to be able to use St Catherine's House of Hospitality for our gatherings and our Retreat Day. However, this year we have had to work around the various stages of renovations. The now 'almost complete' extension from the dining room to another dining and perhaps utility area leading off it will be a great asset, but the building stages played havoc with our Calendar of Dates. However, an offshoot from this has been the regeneration of an outside area, especially valuable for retreat days and a number of the reflective days held by various groups which use The House. Some of the building off cuts have been creatively used in paths etc.

Sr Elizabeth and some of her helpers have put a great deal of time and effort into creating this area – and I think using 'creative imagination' is an appropriate description.

So, on the suggestion of one of our Associates, Margot Horton, I have taken a number of photos so we can share with you what we now have both to enjoy and to stimulate reflection. I hope you enjoy them as much as I did taking them.



Jan O'Connor



We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia and the indigenous peoples of Papua New Guinea. We pay our respect to past, present and emerging elders. We look forward to an era when all peoples of Australia and Papua New Guinea live in harmony with one another.



<https://japingkaaboriginalart.com/articles/aboriginal-dot-painting/>

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THE DIFFERENCE YOU'VE MADE

in Papua New Guinea

Dear Sisters and Supporters of Mercy Works,

I am writing to you as the Executive Director of Mercy Works Ltd, to thank you so much for your generous contribution towards our recent **COVID 19 Appeal for PNG** and to give you an **interim update on its roll out**. This Emergency Relief for PNG was due to an urgent request from Sr Marianne Kolkia RSM (*photo at right*), who is the In-Country Coordinator of Mercy Works in PNG.

The GOOD NEWS - we far exceed our goal of raising \$12,200 and therefore we have been able to support more local PNG communities where we have a local presence on the ground!

Emergency Relief in the Highlands: The Highlands Emergency Relief will cover Kundiawa and surrounds in the Simbu Province, Goroka and surrounds in the Eastern Highland Province, and Mt. Hagen and surrounds in the Western Highland Province. Efforts are being made to transport **farm produce** to communities who would normally attend daily or weekly markets to buy food. Even with relaxed restrictions on movement around the provinces and regions, people are reluctant to attend markets in townships where it is more likely that they could contract COVID 19.

We have sent AU\$48,158 as Emergency Relief to the Highlands.

Emergency Relief in Kiunga, Western Province:

Kiunga is situated a few hundred kilometres upstream on the Fly River. Given the remoteness of the Western Province there are difficulties with transport which is mostly by boat along the Fly River and then by foot to the remote villages. **Tinned fish and staples like rice** have been purchased for distribution in Iowara - the land set aside by the PNG Government to re-settle refugees from across the Indonesian West Papua border.

Two areas will be supplied with **water tanks**. This will be near Bolovip up near the Starr Ranges and east of Tabubil. Remote villages east of Nomad near the Southern Province border, will receive **potable water** for cooking and drinking. Water becomes an issue when the Fly River and its tributaries experience low levels or even dry up. These people are able to grow vegetables but due to travel restrictions they are unable and too scared to travel to the town centre to buy staples like **rice and bread and extra potatoes, taro and sago**.



We have sent AU\$42,107 as Emergency Relief to the Western Province.

Emergency Relief in Wewak: This project is being rolled out by the local Sisters of Mercy in Wewak and other areas of the East Sepik Province on the Northern Coast of PNG. There are shortages of clean water onto two of the Islands along the coast, Walis and Tarwai Islands. There, in response boats will be hired to transport **water tank equipment**, as well as **tinned fish and staples** from the port of Wewak. This will happen in consultation with village Councilors and church leaders in some instances. **Other food supplies** will go to communities along the highway going inland from Wewak, identified communities along the Sepik River, and up to Kujungini. There will be a focus on women-led households, people living with a disability and those living with HIV and AIDS.

We have sent AU\$26,582 as Emergency Relief to the East Sepik Province.

Thank you for your most generous support. A more complete report will be published in the end of year **Bilum** magazine. Thank you too to the local Sisters of Mercy and our Mercy Works staff in PNG for all their hard work in partnership to roll out these funds to those who are most in need.

Mercy Works Ltd remains deeply committed to working alongside the people of Papua New Guinea into the future.

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

Catherine McAuley, founder of the Sisters of Mercy

Yours in mercy,

Sally Bradley RSM
Executive Director
Mercy Works Ltd



MercyWorks

SISTERS OF MERCY
IN AUSTRALIA & PAPUA NEW GUINEA