



Many Paths

Newsletter of Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG

Issue 18, September 2021

Welcome to Many Paths

As I write this introduction, two states of Australia are struggling to live with lockdown conditions imposed by the virulent spread of **COVID-19 Delta**. The impact on people, as individuals, members of families, employees and volunteers is evident in many ways—on wellbeing, on financial security, and on health. Please keep everyone in these two states and around the world in your prayers, as we strive to build vaccination rates to a level where people are safer from infection and able to regain the personal freedoms not available to them at the moment.

In recent weeks, we have witnessed the distressing situation in **Afghanistan** as military forces that have fought against the Taliban for decades leave—with the immediate return of control of the country to the Taliban. The prayer on page 8 was published by Mercy International Association—please add this to your prayers regularly. Though tens of thousands were evacuated before the 31 August deadline, so many remain whose lives will be in danger—our prayers are the best support we can offer.

We have some fabulous articles in this edition:

- ♦ **Chris Convery** has provided a reflective article relating to the experience of COVID lockdowns;
- ♦ **Anne Tudor**, from Ballarat, has written about her work with those who suffer from dementia and their carers;
- ♦ **Sally Neaves** has written about the Laudato Si goals;
- ♦ **Jo Rix**, from Ballarat, has written about the Season of Creation;
- ♦ Activities of Mercy Associates groups who can meet.

It turns out that we received so much material for this newsletter that another one is needed. As a one off, **another edition of Many Paths will be published early in October**.

I hope you find content in this edition that is interesting, relevant and inspiring. We are living through uncertain and challenging times, yet we have our faith to give mean-

ing and hope to our lives and experiences—these blessings are our strength...

Carmel Ross, Executive Officer

*Below is an article sent in by the **Ballarat** group about a gathering they held before Victoria's current lockdown began. It's a poignant reminder of how much we cherish the ability to physically gather together...*

In spite of difficulties to maintain contact among Mercy Associates during 2020 and 2021, we were fortunate to gather at The Golf House Hotel on Sunday 20 June for a 'coming together' luncheon.

Twenty-two Associates attended. It was a happy occasion to celebrate being Mercy Associates after long periods of lockdown, enjoy each other's company and the hospitality, and for Associates to finally meet our three newest members, Kathy, Sandra and Korina.

A short prayer time acknowledged the importance of the vision of Catherine McAuley, the Sisters, all present and those who were unable to be there on the day, particularly those who are ill or experiencing grief, and we remembered those who have died. We pray that these difficult corona virus times of not being able to gather on a regular basis will soon be behind us and that we can come together frequently, bringing life to each other in the spirit of Catherine through our prayers and works of mercy.



Our charity is to be cordial. Now cordial signifies something that renews, invigorates and warms. Such should be the effect of our love for each other.

Cork Manuscript

Nurturing faith during a time of struggle...

During this challenging time I would like to offer this poem/prayer as a reflection. I trust you'll find it a blessing as well as a message of Hope.

Prayer During a Pandemic

Loving God, Holy One,
Your desire is for our wholeness and well-being.
We hold in tenderness and prayer
the collective suffering of
our world at this time.

We grieve precious lives lost and
vulnerable lives threatened.

We ache for ourselves and
our neighbours, standing
before an uncertain future.

We pray: may love, not fear, go viral.
Inspire our leaders to discern and
choose wisely, aligned with the
common good.

Help us to practice social distancing
and reveal to us new and creative
ways to come together in spirit
and in solidarity.

Call us to profound trust in Your
Faithful presence,
You, the Holy One,
breathing within us,
breathing among us,
breathing around us
in our beautiful yet
wounded world.

~ by Sr. Katie Clauss IHM



May you be blessed in Mercy, affectionately,

Christine Convery

I believe that 'Radical Optimism' and 'Active Hope' give us the faith and courage to face the difficult realities that are being unveiled in our times."

(from Richard Rohr's *Daily Meditation – Telling a new story*, 15 January 2021.

Also, I find this verse from Philippians speaks to me at this present moment.

Have no anxiety at all; but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. (Philippians 4:6)

This verse reminds me of Catherine McAuley's *Suscipe* prayer; ... *Take from my heart all painful anxiety, let nothing sadden me but sin...*

Catherine lived her life with the 'Radical Optimism' and 'Active Hope' that Richard Rohr speaks of.

'Her devotional prayer was centered on Christ and on God's universal Mercy. If you read Catherine's letters or her Retreat Instructions, you will find there is no sentimentality.

Her prayer reflects her time and place but deeper still it reveals a soul that recognized the importance of a vital prayer life. She would say herself; "how can we teach the Love of God if our own hearts are cold". She described prayer as: a plant, the seed of which is sown in the heart of every Christian but its growth depends on the care we take to nourish it.

Catherine reminded those who would share her life and charism to cultivate a contemplative attitude to life because she knew from experience that out of a contemplative heart would flow compassionate service for those in need, and the fruits of prayer are seen in our everyday choices/actions in life.'

(Adapted from *Catherine McAuley – Heroic and Holy*, by Brenda Dolphin RSM, presented at the St. Louis Mo. Mercy Convention Centre, 23 October 2016).

Dear Mercy Associates—a reflection by Anne Tudor, Mercy Associate, Ballarat

If you have been impacted by dementia and have the experience of being a primary carer, you will know the challenges, demands and relentless emotional, physical and social toll it takes over time. You'd also be aware of the privilege of this role, the opportunity for growth, satisfaction and moments of humour and joy that is also part of caring for someone you love deeply.

The emphasis here is not on dementia itself, but on how we were able to use our experience in coming to terms with our changed reality to support others impacted by dementia, particularly those with Younger Onset Dementia.

The invitation was to write about the contribution Edie Mayhew, my late wife and I have made to Dementia Australia (formerly called Alzheimer's Australia), as well as to our local Ballarat Community through the Bigger Hearts Dementia Friendly Ballarat campaign and its flagship project, Woowookarung Dementia Friendly Forest and Sensory Trail. A brief overview of our dementia story will offer some context for our passionate dementia advocacy.

It begins earlier than Edie's diagnosis with Younger Onset Dementia, Alzheimer's Disease in 2010. My mother had Alzheimer's and Vascular Dementia for the last 22 years of her life. Edie and I resigned from our roles in education in Melbourne in 1991 and moved to Ballarat to support my parents. After making this decision I was offered a place in the Masters in Clinical Psychology course at University of Melbourne, requiring me to drive 2-5 times a week. I completed my thesis on caregiving and dementia and learned as much about dementia as I could. My mother's dementia was teaching me a great deal, about dementia, myself and my family. She mostly accepted her situation bravely while my father was a revelation in learning how to cook and keep house while mostly keeping his patience in check. When my mother moved into aged care she'd plead with me to take her home. Each visit ended in turmoil and guilt until she eventually settled. My father moved within walking distance from the care home to feed her twice a day.

I worked for ten years with Ballarat Health Services as a Clinical Psychologist and was often asked to speak to staff in residential care homes, and regularly saw patients impacted by dementia. I learnt a great deal more about dementia and how well and how poorly aged care was delivered.

In 2005, the year my mother died, concerns about Edie's memory first surfaced. As she had the most remarkable memory, forgetting to pass on messages and failing to turn up to arranged appointments was very significant. It was five years later we received a formal diagnosis. Edie was 59 and although not a surprise, waiting for a diagnosis for five years was a huge strain on both of us, Edie because she was in denial and withdrawn, and me because she wouldn't talk to me. Although we cried when we received the news, we were also relieved to have an explanation and we could begin to plan a way through, together.

We soon became actively involved with Dementia Australia (DA) in supportive roles and from 2013-18 asked to speak at local, state and national events, as well as international conferences in Perth, Budapest and Wellington. Print and television interviews were regularly requested and social media became another way spreading a positive of message about dementia.

Melvin, our Dementia Assist Dog came into our lives in 2016, as part of a joint research project with Dementia Australia and Vision Australia. He brought such richness, colour and joy to our lives, and became part of our advocacy team.

When Edie moved into care, Melvin visited with me and gave so much love to Edie and other residents. He remains my much-loved companion.

We made four films from 2016-2019 following the progression of Edie's dementia. Mr. Velvet Ears, Edie's pet name for Melvin, is our last and most well-known. It traces Edie's move from home to residential care, in real time. Not one to lay bare my emotions for all to see, I recognize that the intense, raw and honest emotions of the experience for me as carer is what gives the film its value and integrity. It hasn't been done before, as you can understand why. The link to the film is: museumoflove.com.au - *Pulse of My Heart*.

Anne, Edie and Melvin...



The advocacy experiences energized us as they were social gatherings and genuine comradeship existed in the wider dementia family. It helped us deal with the grinding pain of dementia. Our presentations included the best and worst of dementia, day to day frustrations for me as carer and day to day challenges for Edie as her precious memories dissipated and her mind became more tangled. The sense of loss Edie felt in having to retire, the powerlessness I felt when Edie would lock me out because she'd forgotten I was at the clothes line; and my constant concern for safety when finding the gas had been left on for hours and the front door left unlocked. Edie's moment of despair when she said "I may as well be dead".

There were beautiful moments as well, moments of deep spiritual connection. I felt at times that Edie was in touch with a beyond and that I was in the presence of deep spirituality and astonishing intuition. Our love and respect increased as this insidious disease relentlessly progressed. We promised to be the best we could be for each other and those around us, Edie with her dementia and me in my role as her care partner.

From 2016, our energies were mostly devoted to our local area as travel became prohibitive. With the support of Dr Catherine Barrett @celebrateageing, another Sister of Mercy girl, City of Ballarat, Dementia Australia and Carers Respite, we created Bigger Hearts Dementia Friendly Community, Ballarat campaign. In 2015 when I spoke with Edie about the amazing people we'd met since her diagnosis, and experiences we'd had, she responded "Our hearts are bigger". And they were. Bigger Hearts became a call to action in our Ballarat community. Bigger Hearts Dementia Alliance was formed in 2017 to oversee real change and more recently Bigger Hearts Choir comprising people impacted by dementia.

We wanted people to see the person, not the dementia, to be more informed, to create an enabling community where people with dementia felt valued, included and engaged. We wanted to address stigma associated with dementia and demonstrate that people with dementia could have many positive years of living well, especially with the support of community, government, friends and family. On Valentine's Day, 2017, with the leadership of Dr Catherine Barrett, dementia was placed front and centre in Ballarat when we had a beautiful National Symposium, "Love and Dementia".

Finally Woowookarung Regional Park, Dementia Friendly Forest and Sensory Trail was launched in June 2021 and is our proudest achievement. It is a much-loved place for people of all abilities to relax and enjoy the gifts of nature.



Dementia is a tough journey, and you can't do it well, alone. It's tough for the carer and it's tough for the person with dementia. Our desire in wanting to make it easier for others also helped us. Don't you also find you receive more than you give? Our gift to dementia was what was gifted to us – knowledge, experience, generosity, love and hope. Thank you for reading this.



Launched on 25 June, 2021, it is an Australian first, it was co-designed by Parks Vic and people with dementia and care partners. It has multiple features, including conversation nooks, a stone circle, leaning posts and places to sit quietly, reflect or rest. It is a magical place and has helped carry me through the last four profoundly challenging years.

The three of us often walked the Trail from 2018 until Edie's death in June 2020. In a film piece with SBS late 2019, Edie, oblivious to the film crew, stopped walking, looked to the tree tops then turned to me and said, "They want to know how we are?" After catching my breath, I asked Edie what she said to the trees, "I said, we're good" was her answer. The Bush Window, a feature gifted to the Trail, is inscribed with Edie's wisdom: *The trees want to know how you are. Edie Mayhew.*

Anne Tudor, Ballarat Mercy Associates

Laudato Si' Action Platform and our Mercy Commitment

Given the predicament our planet, recently outlined in the updated IPCC report, it is a sign of hope to see Pope Francis leading an ambitious plan for all Catholic sectors to take coordinated action. During Laudato Si' Week in May 2021, Pope Francis launched the **Laudato Si' Action Platform**: 7 Goals, involving 7 Catholic sectors (one being Religious Orders) over 7 years.

The purpose of the Laudato Si' Action Platform is:

"To make communities around the world totally sustainable in the spirit of the integral ecology of Laudato Si'."

Its message is central to the call of the Gospel in our time, specifically in relation to the response we make to the cry for survival from endangered Earth and the cry for relief from vulnerable People. For we are in both an ecological and a social crisis.

This launch is a starting point encouraging the 7 institutions in various arenas of church life to commit to the 7 goals publicly between now and 4 October (Feast day of St Francis of Assisi).

The 7 Laudato Si' Goals are:

1. Response to the Cry of the Earth
2. Response to the Cry of the Poor
3. Ecological Economics
4. Adoption of Simple Lifestyles
5. Ecological Education
6. Ecological Spirituality
7. Emphasis on Community involvement and participatory action

Each of these goals has detailed guides for how they might be explored and actions implemented.

For more information and inspiration, the Laudato Si' Action Platform website is now available <https://laudatosiactionplatform.org/>.

ISMAPNG Launch of the Laudato Si' Action Platform

Through policies and strategic actions, ISMAPNG is making a formal commitment to the 7 Goals of the platform for the coming years. A ritual launch of our Integral Ecology policy will be held on Zoom on 15 October.

Global Launch of the Laudato Si' Action Platform

The video of the official launch can be found [here](#).

During the press release for the launch, Sr Sheila Kinsey FCJM of UISG outlined the **3 pillars** forming the basis for the Religious Orders sector:

1. Encourage congregations to make a commitment to Laudato Si' based on the Congregation's charism. One that is prophetic, public and accountable.
2. To transition to an Integral Ecology through actualisation of the 7 Laudato Si' Goals. We encourage a reflective process of discernment and assessment by listening to the local voices as concerns are raised. Dreams that are shared inspire us forward with actions that seek to be embedded in a community project cycle.
3. Journeying and working together in partnerships, in advocacy efforts with integrity and based on the principles of non-violence, as we meet the challenge of the ecological crisis.

We look forward to taking up the challenges of these goals and the commitment to the Laudato Si' Action Platform.

Sally Neaves, *Integral Ecology Animator, ISMAPNG*



The Season of Creation

The Season of Creation is the time of year when the world's 2.2 billion Christians are invited to pray and care for creation. This prayerful season runs annually from 1 September through to 4 October – the feast of St Francis of Assisi.

The Season of Creation is dedicated to prayer, reflection, and celebration of God as Creator. It also celebrates and reflects prayerfully on the gifts of creation and the mission given us by God to care for creation and respond to its needs and crises today.

This year our theme is 'A Home for All? Renewing the *oikos* of God'. (One of the meanings for the ancient Greek word *oikos* is *home*). *Oikos* is a home for all but our common home, the Earth, is now in danger because of people's greed, exploitation, disrespect, disconnection and systematic degradation.

During these 5 weeks of grace, we are invited to reflect and focus on the loving kindness of God expressed in creation and the abiding presence of God for our communal journey on Earth. Every gift of life on Earth displays God's faithful presence, nourishing and strengthening us.

Pope Francis invites us, individually and within our faith communities, to turn to Jesus as both brother and Cosmic Christ, and pray to God as a caring Father, the loving Creator of all life.

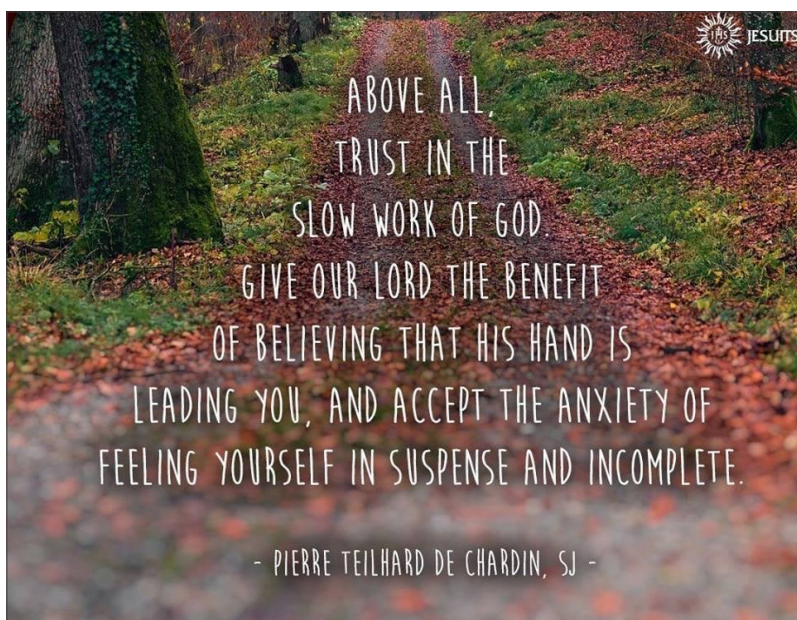
Resources for the Season of Creation are available at <https://seasonofcreation.org/resources/>

Jo Rix, Ballarat



*By listening with an open heart
to those who are most affected,
we can begin, with the help of the Holy Spirit,
to discern the signs of the times.*

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statement 2021-22: [Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor](#), affirms that "we human beings need a change of heart, mind, and behaviour". It exhorts us all to care for creation and the most vulnerable people in our worldwide human family.



Rockhampton-invited to a Loving Kindness Retreat

In early July, the Rockhampton *Mercy Associates* were warmly welcomed by Marg Trevethan to a retreat titled, **Loving Kindness**. The morning began with the celebration of Mass in St Joseph's Cathedral with a special liturgy of music and prayers. Our presider, Father Matthias, encouraged us to show the face of mercy in our world.

Morning tea followed and then Marg's presentation began with a very moving and thought provoking video clip, demonstrating the ripple effect that a single act of kindness may impart.

We were then given some material to reflect upon as to what others are saying about kindness. This opened up much discussion, as there were many, many beautiful quotes to which people were able to relate and had special meaning for them. I wish I had the space to share them all with you, but sayings such as; *kindness isn't always an act, a duty, or a behaviour – it is a mindset that positively changes the world beginning with the person right in front of you* (Jean Wise) and *a single act of kindness throws out roots in all directions, and the roots spring up and make new trees* (Amelia Earhart), we found very powerful. (The latter quote was a favourite amongst the gardeners in our group!)

We were given the opportunity to reflect upon the gentleness of God when listening to music and passing a cloth of



different textures between our fingers. We were also able to ponder on the insights from the scriptures, where we see Jesus in acts of kindness, that are well known to us, such as with the healing of the sick and the Samaritan woman at the well. We also explored specific acts of kindness in everyday life and were reminded that **kindness needs practice!**

Before our final prayer and closing of our reflective morning, we exchanged Kindness Rocks within our group. These will help us recall Marg and the special sharing we enjoyed. We will also be reminded how a simple (perhaps random) act of kindness is able to change our world!

Jennifer Loscher

From Townsville...

The Townsville Mercy Associates group was joined at their recent gathering by three Mercy Sisters, Marie Melville, Carmel King and Carmel Ruddick. The group enjoyed great conversation around the book "A Lens on the Works of Mercy: Clare Agnew and her Legacy". An exciting moment for the group was hearing from Trudy Clarke who has begun the exciting task of journeying with a new group of five women who are considering becoming associates.

Marg Trevethan, Network Facilitator, QLD



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.




mercy international association

Prayer for Afghanistan

Mercy International Association joins in prayer and solidarity with the people of Afghanistan. We pray for the displaced that God will protect them on their journey. We pray for women that they find allies and advocates as they pave a new way forward. We pray for health care workers that they are filled with God's strength as they care for those with COVID in the midst of conflict. We pray for all those seeking dialogue that they may find wisdom in their words and the courage to authentically listen. May all those who seek comfort be consoled, and all those who seek peace be amplified. In the spirit of St. Francis we pray:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me bring love. Where there is offense, let me bring pardon. Where there is discord, let me bring union.

amen.



Mary Wickham rsm—Being the Bird

new poetry book
available



The newly published poetry collection titled **Being The Bird**, by Mary Wickham is now available.

The book can be ordered online from Amazon or Book Depository, and the recommended retail price is AU\$ 24.75. Type *Being the Bird Mary Wickham* in the respec-

tive search box and you should be taken straight to it. There may some delay with delivery due to Covid realities.

The book contains a large number of previously unpublished poems, as well as gathering up some familiar Mercy prayers and litanies, and the set of poems about Baggot St. The poems are essentially about encounter: with the Divine, the natural world, the Celtic landscape and spirit, and those whose lives the poet has shared through journeys of birth and death, dementia and abuse.

In his introduction to Mary's first poetry collection Michael Leunig wrote:

Mary's poems express life's great rapturous impulse to carefully cradle its newborn and dying miracles, with their suffering and beauty, and to passionately embrace them with all that we have and all that we are. Something lifts away from all this and flies to find us and hold us and this is poetry.

Being The Bird, Mary Wickham, ISBN 9 780867 860801.

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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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