



Many Paths

Newsletter of Mercy Associates of ISMAPNG

Issue 28, August 2023

Dear Associates and Sisters,

Welcome to the August edition of **Many Paths!**
ISMAPNG Chapter

Last week, Sisters who are Chapter delegates met in Sydney for their pre-Chapter gathering. From September 7—17, they will meet again in Sydney, for the Chapter itself. Chapter is a time of critical importance for a religious congregation. It provides the opportunity to reflect on what has happened within the congregation as well as what is happening in the world beyond. We often speak of ‘reading the signs of the times’ and this is a practice religious congregations undertake in a mindful way as they set new directions for the next six years. Once they have discerned the way forward, they set about electing the leader and council who will govern them during those years. The current Institute Leadership Team continues in their roles until November, when the newly elected Leader and Council assume their roles.

The Sisters have a Chapter prayer, which is on the final page of this newsletter. Prayer is a gift we can give to others when we pray for them, and at this important time in the life of the Sisters and the Institute, you are invited to pray for the Sisters. The prayer is worded for a Sister to pray it, but you will find it easy to adjust a few words here and there so that you can use this same prayer to pray for the Sisters.

Maureen Sexton rsm, our ILT representative

As our next newsletter will go out in November, this is the final edition where our representative on the Institute Leadership Team is Maureen Sexton. Maureen has been a wonderful support to Chris,

Anne, Marg and myself. Her wisdom is always of benefit to us, but even more than this, we have appreciated and been lifted by the confidence she has in us in our roles, and in the Mercy Associates groups as women and men committed to a life of mercy. Maureen has been a blessing to us.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Maureen on behalf of all Mercy Associates. She, like other Institute Leadership Team members, will take a well-earned break after the changeover to the new ILT, but we wish Maureen a healthy and rewarding future in whatever ministry she contributes to in future years.

In this edition...

Maureen spent some time in Papua New Guinea in June, and has written about her experiences there. She was able to meet with some of the Mercy Friends groups, an opportunity they will have appreciated, just as Maureen has.

Marg, Chris and Annette Rowe from the Gladstone group attended the Mercy Ministry Formation Network conference near Brisbane recently, and Marg and Chris have prepared an article about it.

Dianne Hanna, who is in the East Coasters group, is currently undertaking volunteer work in Timor Leste and has already been there for a few months. She has written about her experiences to date and sent many photos of the Timorese people she is working alongside.

And thank you to **Ballarat, Gladstone, Townsville** and **Rockhampton** for sending articles about the activities of your groups—always appreciated!

Carmel Ross, Executive Officer



Dance every evening.

Letter to Cecilia Marmion,
15 Jan. 1841.

From Maureen—visiting Papua New Guinea

Recently I spent two and a half weeks in Papua New Guinea attending a three-day Catherine McAuley Services Ltd (CMSL) board meeting in Port Moresby Papua New Guinea. The rest of the time was in Wewak with our PNG Sisters and supporting Dr Elissa Roper who was teaching a unit for a Program of Theology.

CMSL is an incorporated company owned by the Institute which exists to support programs and projects in PNG. Currently it oversees three programs or projects: Program of Theology for religious women in PNG, Cook-houses 'n Tanks A lot (CTAL) and Mercy Life Skills Training (MLST). The current board comprises three Australian Sisters of Mercy and two Papua New Guinea lay people.

The Board meeting was held at the Bishop's Conference Centre situated a mere 10 minutes from the airport. It provides accommodation and has several rooms for workshops and conferences. It is a real transition hub, a meeting place for people moving to or from overseas and for people transiting within PNG. We meet Bishops, priests, religious and others who are known throughout the Catholic Bishop's conference network. We intentionally hold these extended board meeting days in PNG or Cairns to make it easy for our PNG Directors to attend in person and to strengthen our commitment and understanding of Melanesian culture.

We invited two guest speakers to lead us in discussions a) about Melanesian culture and b) the challenges and difficulties of a foreign company operating in PNG. It also afforded us the opportunity to invite three PNG Mercy sisters and one Rosary sister to join us to share their stories of the programs on the ground and to participate in our discussions. Sisters Theresia Tina (MLST), Maryanne Kolkia (representing the PNG Community Leadership) Rachael Waisman (potential MLST) and Marie Therese RS (animator in teaching of modules Program of Theology). Theresia led prayer and conversations about the Mercy story in PNG and the early days of the Program of Theology.

It was a good experience despite many delays and cancellation of flights domestically and internationally. The internet connection was good which allowed us to hold a zoom session on the Friday with the Program Managers in Australia. I particularly valued the presence of sisters Theresia Tina, Maryanne Kolkia, Rachael Waisman and Marie Therese Jorumbu. It brought home to me the incredible value of 'see me, hear me, know me' and the importance of hearing things from their Melanesian perspective.

On 24 July I travelled to **Wewak** with Elissa Roper, Manager of the Program of Theology. We stayed with our sisters in their residence in the grounds of Divine Word University St Benedict's Campus. Elissa was teaching a

unit of Theology 'Being in touch: Effective Communication of the Gospel.' She had thirteen sisters from four congregations in her class. Nine undertaking a basic diploma and four an advanced diploma. Elissa led the class in a room provided by the Divine Word University, which afforded the use of fans and projector when power was available.



Elissa, Rachael and Maureen with FMIC sisters participating in Program of Theology.

Currently two sisters are in community – Sisters Terri Congi who works at the local regional hospital as a community health nurse and Doreen Manick who is part of the Pastoral Team in the Diocese. They have a lovely lay-person Schola who keeps house and cooks for them. There is another sister Sophie Somiak who also works and lives near the regional hospital. Sister Rachael Waisaman the new Community Leader PNG was also there.

The Program of Theology has been operating for eight years, it will be a real milestone when a number of sisters complete their advanced diploma towards the end of this year. The basic diploma students graduated from the Madang Campus, but thought is being given to the advanced diploma students graduating locally, that is at the St Benedict's Campus in Wewak and the Holy Trinity Campus in Mt Hagen. It will be a major achievement for these women and will hopefully strengthen their ministry activities.

It brought home to me the incredible value of 'see me, hear me, know me' and the importance of hearing things from their Melanesian perspective.



Rachael and Maureen with Rhonda Hikin

Three of the women who support Rachael are members of Mercy Friends, Rhonda a midwife, another Grace a senior lecturer in the school of nursing and Ester a teacher at Mercy Secondary school Yappos. They were keen to share stories especially about Mercy Friends. They have an organised structure, a yearly schedule of meetings and planned activities. The activities are about raising funds to donate to different causes they have identified – prisoners, flood relief, helping a family whose house was burnt down. They are really committed and expressed a desire to have a retreat or some explicit formation on mercy and the gospel.

Sister Rachael Waisman introduced me to three lay-people who have worked closely with her creating awareness of a simple cervical cancer screening technique in Wewak and surrounding villages. To their delight it has been taken up by Catholic Health Services and garnered the support of the doctor responsible for Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the regional hospital. This project was supported by Mercy Works and has now been handed over to the above-mentioned agencies. Rachael has moved on to supporting and teaching life skills to ‘widows’ in her place of residence and in her home village along the coast about 45 minutes from Wewak. These women are widows, single women or women who have been abandoned by their husbands or they have left their husbands due to domestic violence. I spent a morning

with one of the groups, heard their stories, saw what they have been learning. Their lives are far from easy.

I know that all the people I spent time with would be grateful if you remembered them in your prayer.

Sr Maureen Sexton, Institute Councillor
14 July '23

Maureen with group of ‘widows’ Rachael is assisting.



Rachael with Helen Wandokon and two nurses from Kindi Health Clinic. Very active with screening for cervical cancer.



**‘see me,
hear me,
know me’**

Rockhampton Associates inspired by a Gladstone Associate

On 12 August, the Rockhampton Mercy Associates welcomed Annette Rowe to come and meet with them. Annette has been the co-ordinator of the Gladstone Mercy Associates since 2012 and one of their founding members from 1992. Her choice for her presentation was “My life inspired and motivated by Catherine and the Rockhampton Mercy Sisters.”

The morning began with Annette joining us for Mass and sharing our Mercy liturgy.

Our Presider for Mass was Father Samuel Okoroafor, whose homily focused on Faith and Mercy, (which Father Samuel explained go together), as well as listening to (and not just hearing) the Word of God.

Morning tea after Mass is always a great time to catch up with one another and this occasion was no exception. A brief business meeting followed, which commenced with our remembering and praying for our Mercy Associate friends who were unable to be with us due to illness or other difficult circumstances.

Annette shared her faith journey with us, beginning with her family, especially through her father and then continuing with the Sisters of Mercy, when she went nursing. In the Mercy Sisters, Annette was “able to see the face of Christ.”

Annette went on to say that she has been inspired by the words from Mahatma Gandhi to “be the change that you wish to see in the world.”

Life enriching experiences in Annette’s life have included a trip to a slum in Mumbai, India where she vividly remembers that bottle tops were collected to finance one fridge for 3,000 people! Providing the “gift of mercy” to workers in the community in Woorabinda for four and half years was also a very rewarding experience.

In 2016 Annette went on a pilgrimage to Baggot Street in Dublin, where she was able to walk where Catherine walked, see where she died and pray at her grave, amongst other things. This obviously resonated deeply with Annette and the ‘mercy works’, which continue to be her life.

We were also informed about some of the activities of the Gladstone Mercy Associates, one of which involves receiving and responding to the prayer requests from the seafarers, which are placed in the Seafarers Chapel. (I thought, how beautiful is that!)

We concluded with the Prayer for Beatification of Catherine McAuley but not before listening to one of Annette’s much loved songs by Graeme Connors, “we can change the world.”

Claire Stitt sincerely thanked Annette for showing us how she was being the change, which she wanted to see in our world!

Jennifer Loscher



At the heart of this year’s Social Justice Statement is a call for all the People of God to embrace a new engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, an engagement which involves a commitment to listen to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sisters and brothers and to learn from them. This listening and learning and the actions which flow from them must be grounded in a spirit of love if there is to be a change for the better.

<https://socialjustice.catholic.org.au/2023/08/22/social-justice-statement-2023-24/>

SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT 2023-24

Listen, Learn, Love

A New Engagement with Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

35 years of Ballarat Mercy Associates



On Sunday June 25th thirty one people gathered to celebrate 35 years of Ballarat Mercy Associates. Our aim for the day was to celebrate together, reflect on the past and look to the future. While the day was freezing the atmosphere was anything but, from start to end the room buzzed with a positive vibe.

We commenced with champagne, nibbles and lunch. This was followed by a short movie documenting some of the highlights of the past 35 years. It was a wonderful trip down 'memory lane' enabling us to revisit the many and varied undertakings of the past and to reflect on those members who are no longer

with us. The first part of the day concluded with the cutting (and eating) of the anniversary cake. We were delighted to have Ann Coswello, the only remaining member for the first group to make their commitment and Geraldine Mugavin rsm, our mentor preform this task.

The second part of the day focused on unpacking the newly adopted vision statement. We reflected on the many opportunities we have "to nurture and live out the charism and mission of mercy" in our daily lives.

We would like to thank all those who attended, particularly Anne Pate, Victorian coordinator and the sisters. We were delighted to receive messages of congratulations from many who were unable to join us.



Mercy Ministry Formation Network Conference 2023

Christine Convery, Annette Rowe and Marg Trevethan attended the MMFN conference on behalf of Mercy Associates. We found the whole experience very valuable. In both the formal and informal sessions we were able to network with the other attendees and we participated in inspiring presentations and workshops.

There were 34 of us altogether, drawn from a wide range of Mercy ministries including Mercy Ministry Companions, Mercy Partners, Mercy Works, Mercy Global Action, Mercy Hub, Young Mercy Links, Mercy Secondary Schools Association, the Seville Conference Centre and congregations of the Sisters of Mercy in Australia and NZ. It was both eye opening and challenging to realise just how active and alive the mission of mercy is for the world.

We found it enlightening, and encouraging, to discover that so many Mercy initiatives were fostering mercy and in such diverse ways. The purpose of the MMFN itself is to:

- ◆ build a community of common interest and mutual support
- ◆ facilitate sharing resources, for mercy ethos and mission effectiveness, and
- ◆ provide a centre for formation of the formators.

A presentation on Resilience was given by Jo Casamento the Communications and Fundraising Coordinator at Mercy Works. Mercy Works is the development arm of the Sisters of Mercy in Australia and Papua New Guinea and works in partnership with vulnerable communities and local organisations domestically and in the Asia Pacific region to build capacity, dignity, and self-reliance. We heard some of the real-life stories of people being assisted by Mercy in these communities.

Denise Fox rsm spoke of the project, 'Opening Doors',

with MIA (Mercy International Association), and the need for formation and networking to continue to support the work of Mercy around the world. She highlighted that the Mercy Charism is very invitational - a call to be a part of the work - and an invitation to be transformed. She extended this invitation to all of us, and it affirmed in us the priority we give in our Mercy Associates groups to ongoing prayer, formation and action in the Mercy way.

A highlight for us was the prayer we shared. The very meaningful opening prayer had an indigenous focus and the next morning we were led by the group from New Zealand. In the workshops we were focused on Mercy Spirituality, Mercy Culture, Mercy Prayer and Ritual and Mercy Leadership. In these we were introduced to Caroline Thompsons wonderful book *Be as Shining Lamps* Preserving, Nurturing, Reimagining the Mercy Charism. This is a 'Handbook for Formation & Reflection' packed full of prayers, images, reflections and information that would be useful for prayer and formation in any MA group.

It is great to know we are part of this Network which provides us the opportunity to support each other in the work that we are doing together. Mercy Ministry Formation Network is a gathering place, real and virtual, for women and men, lay and religious who are working, or who are interested, in formation in mercy ethos and mission effectiveness within mercy ministries and other groups. It is planned that the group will come together twice each year, once in a gathering planned for Melbourne in 2024 and another time by Zoom.

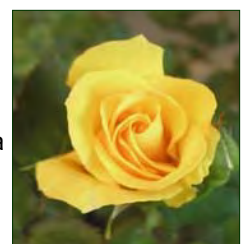
We felt affirmed in all we are doing in Mercy Associates and felt the privilege of being one part of the ongoing and powerful story of Mercy in the world.

Chris Convery & Marg Trevethan



From Townsville

The August meeting of the Townsville Associates was packed with inspirational formation and friendship. Prayer focused us on the qualities of Mercy. The story of the Yellow Catherine McAuley Mercy Rose was shared by Sr Catherine Cuddihy. Each year the replica roses pictured are crafted by students at St Patrick's College and gifted to staff at the Mater and other Mercy workplaces in gratitude for the spirit of mercy they keep alive. We then discussed our ways of making a difference wherever we are by exploring images of leadership such as Midwife, Choreographer, Weaver and Intercessor. The group also acknowledged the passing of long-time and much valued Associate Mr Brian Hooper. And, as always, the food and hospitality was exceptional.



Marg Trevethan, Network Facilitator

DIANNE'S DIARY—VOLUNTEERING IN TIMOR LESTE

Mercy Associate Dianne Hanna has been in Timor Leste since March this year. Below are notes and photos from her time working with local people in this developing nation.

This is when I first arrived. A friend had given me two laptops which I was able to give to the Franciscan Hospitaller sisters when I met with them and Armandina, a university

student I have been supporting through the sisters to continue her university studies to become a teacher.

One laptop was then given to Armandina and the other returned to the boarding house for the almost 40 secondary student girls who board with the sisters.



Then there was the arrival of the dental equipment and consumables that I spent most of last year trying to get donated from different suppliers for the Timorese veterans clinic in Baucau, Timor Leste.

It was rewarding to be able to help unpack the container to receive the two pallets of equipment which included a dental chair, x-ray, etc., as well as support the other NGO's that had items in the container packed by Rotary. It was hard work as it was all done by physical labour.

Then last month I was able to visit the clinic where they

held a healthy teeth program for students in the local school.

The program included cleaning the students' teeth and applying silver fluoride as well as educating students about maintaining good teeth. All students were provided with a toothbrush and toothpaste to take home with them.

Then I was called to go back to the place I volunteered with in 2016-2020 to help with some finance issues they had. It was just what I needed to get out of the city and reconnect with old friends.



Gladstone—a statue of Catherine and a connection with local Seafarers

It was with great joy that members for the Gladstone Mercy Associates, when they visited Chanel College and saw the new **Catherine McAuley's** life size bronze statue, in situ. Catherine is seated on an extended bench with a child and Marcellin Champagnat. Two of the Houses at the College are named McAuley and Marcellin House.

Dr Susan Bunkum, Principal, said that *“It has been two years in the making ... but now it is here, it has been well worth the wait!”* For a recent local ‘free’ magazine advertising Catholic Education Week, two students from each Catholic school were photographed with the statue.

The Mercy Associates with parishioners, visited the Seafarers Centre to learn firsthand about the **Gladstone Seafarers** and how we may be able to support the volunteers who assist there. There are several Associates who pray the prayers requested, that the Seafarers record when they visit the Chapel.

Some of the ‘eye openers’ shared by the Manager on behalf of the Seafarers, were things we take for granted:

- Being able to take their shoes off and stand on grass;
- Being able to reach out to family when on shore, on the Wi-Fi at the Centre;
- Receiving parcels from home that have been sent months ago;
- Being able to go shopping at the Centre and in the City due to volunteer bus drivers.

Sadly, we need to share with our many friends, that Kathleen O’Neill died peacefully while in care. She has been an Honorary Associate for some time now due to her frailty and needing to live closer to family. A Requiem Mass was held for her back here in Gladstone, her hometown, with her family and many Associates in attendance. May Kathleen rest in peace.

Marie-Ann Martin



DIANNE’S DIARY—VOLUNTEERING IN TIMOR LESTE (CONTINUED)

While back in town I was able to make the inauguration of the chapel I helped organize funding for as well as connect with students visiting from Australia who provided instruments to one of the local priests for the youth in his parish.

Also time to connect with the Sao Jose carpentry school to drop off some tools I was able to get Makita to donate. The Sao Jose carpentry is a great local business that provides both training and employment to disengaged youth. The tools help their activities and will also be gifted to some students at the end of the 12 month course to open their own carpentry business back in their local towns. The husband and wife who run the program provide the youth with accommodation and meals to support them as well as some pocket money to buy personal items like soap.



When's your birthday?

Join other Mercy Associates in acknowledging birthdays and praying each month for those whose birthdays fall in that month. Les Stewart from Ballarat Mercy Associates prepares a list of birthdays that also includes feast days during the month, and a prayer. We only need the day and month (not the year!). This sheet is emailed out early in the month. **Send your birthday info to your Network Facilitator if you'd like to participate in this.**



Mercy Associate Honorary is an

option available to Mercy Associates who, because of age, frailty, illness, etc., are no longer able to attend meetings of their local group. It enables them to remain Mercy Associates, with their ministry being prayer for others. A formal acknowledgement is provided through the issuing of an 'Honorary' Certificate. Contact your Network Facilitator (Chris in NSW; Anne in VIC & SA; Marg in QLD; Carmel in WA) if there are Associates in your group for whom this option should be considered.



Let Justice and Peace Flow

Season of Creation 2023

The theme of the **Season of Creation 2023** (September 1- October 4) is **Let Justice and Peace Flow: A Mighty River**. We are invited to join the river of justice and peace on behalf of all Creation and to converge our individual identities in this greater movement for justice, like tributaries come together to form a mighty river. During the Season of Creation a symbolic river will be placed at the entrance of Holy Family Chapel with a prayer intention for each day. Near the river there will be a bowl of shells. You are invited to take one and to keep it in a place where you will see it frequently to remind you that you are joining your own efforts with millions of people around the world – forming a groundswell of justice and peace.

But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

(Amos 5:24)

Resources available from:
<https://seasonofcreation.org/>

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Prayer for Chapter 2023

.. as we live this threshold moment ..

God of Mercy,
As we journey through to Chapter,
*We call one another to conversion
of mind and heart,
Through a common hearing
of the word of God
And a common meeting
with the Holy Spirit. (6.07)*

We share the rich variations of this call
and the many pathways
that have brought us to
*This sacrament of the present moment.
(5.05)*

We pray for openness that listens deeply,
Transparency that meets others honestly
And inclusiveness that invites with
warmth.

And as we live this threshold moment
of Institute life

We pray that:
*Our compassion becomes contemplation;
Our contemplation becomes commitment
To the rebirth of all creation
In Christ (5.01)*

Amen

Quotes are from the Constitution ISMAPNG 2013

Prea bilong Sapta 2023

..Nau yumi stap long dispela dua bilong laip ..

God bilong Marmari,
Taim mipela wokabout I go long Sapta,
*Mipela singautim wanpela na narapela long
sense long tingting na long
hat bilong mipela,
Long harim olgeta wantaim tok bilong God
Na bung wantaim Holi Spirit. (6.07)*

Mipela serim ol plenti gutpela samting long
dispela singaut
Na ol plenti kainkain rot i kisim mipela
Long dispela sacramen bilong taim nau. (5.05)

Mipela prea bai mipela op long harim gut,
Na stap fri long bungim ol arapela
wantaim trupela bel
Na bai mipela i bringim olgeta wantaim
paia bilong laik pasin.

Nau mipela i stap long dispela dua
bilong laip bilong Institute

Mipela i pre:
*Bai bel sori pasin bilong mipela
bai kamap olsem prea
Na prea bilong mipela
bai kamap olsem komitmen
Long olgeta samting i kamap nuipela
long Kraist ((5.01)*

Amen

Quotes are from the Constitution ISMAPNG 2013