

# Te Kete Atawhai

## MERCY BASKET



FIVE members of the Mercy Young Adults group who spent a recent Saturday preparing for their Mercy Day commissioning. With them is (second on right) Sister of Mercy Salome Ioane who has been guiding the group. At left is one of the parent mentors of the group – Mrs Frances Mulipola Sa'u and Christchurch-based Cathy Harrison, on the Congregation's Mission Resource Group, who has been mentoring the students and who facilitated the day. See stories, pages 4 and 5.



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## Putting food on the table a struggle for many families

Sisters of Mercy mounting a demonstration outside Parliament during April feature in *Our Daily Bread: Putting Food on the Table*, this year's Social Justice programme, sponsored by Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand during the second week of September.

THE ANNUAL OBSERVANCE WAS ESTABLISHED BY THE NEW ZEALAND Catholic Bishops and entrusted to Caritas to lead, inviting Catholics and the wider community to consider a current social justice issue in the light of Catholic social teaching.

This year, a 30-page booklet focuses on the struggle many families have to put food on the table. In their foreword, the Catholic Bishops note that an estimated 925 million people around the world go hungry. Even in New Zealand, 33.7 percent of the population live with low to moderate food insecurity, and 7.3 percent live with severe food insecurity.

"This means children arriving at school hungry with nothing for lunch, or families having inadequate diets. People who don't have enough money often have no choice but to live on cheap carbohydrates and fat, leading to health conditions such as diabetes. In developed countries like New Zealand, obesity can be a manifestation of hunger."

Resolving hunger and food insecurity requires political will and commitment, say the bishops. "When food-insecure households are found in New Zealand among those receiving wages as well as among beneficiaries, and hungry children are found at schools from Northland to Southland, community and structural responses are required."

The bishops say that participation in the Eucharist demands that Christians address the needs of people who do not have what they need to survive, including those in our own country. And they



WITNESS: Sisters of Mercy, joined by staff of Caritas Aotearoa NZ, display their banners before Parliament Buildings last April, supporting the UN conference on sustainable development. Seated left is Katrina Fabish rsm who led the initiative; kneeling on right is Congregation Leader Anne Campbell rsm. (Photo by Martin de Jong, Caritas NZ)

quote Pope Benedict who wrote in his encyclical, *God is Love*, "A Eucharist that does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented."

The booklet features a collective 'witness to Rio', mounted by Sisters of Mercy outside Parliament for two weeks in April, which drew attention to the call for ethical considerations at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development held in Brazil last June.

Led by Katrina Fabish rsm, the demonstration was part of a campaign by Sisters of Mercy around the world, pressuring governments for action to ensure a healthy and just planet that feeds all its people. The Caritas booklet quotes a 2011 report of a working group of the Pontifical Academy of Science, insisting that "if we want justice and peace, we must protect the habitat that sustains us."

## Hopes and dreams as another Mercy Day dawns

Celebrated each year on September 24, Mercy Day recalls the opening of the first House of Mercy in 1827, built by Catherine McAuley in Baggot Street, Dublin as a centre for her ministries among the poor and ill in that city.

AS MERCY FOLK AROUND THE WORLD prepare to keep this feast once more, we've invited a couple of local Sisters of Mercy to share their thoughts about this day. The first is Sr Stephanie Kitching who is the Congregation Archivist in Wellington.

"I strongly believe Catherine's heritage of Mercy will endure, though I can't be sure in what form or through what means this will happen," she says. "Catherine had great confidence in the providence of God, and worked tirelessly for those in need."

"We who are inspired by Mercy are called to this trust. It's said that those who give receive more in return. I have a deep gratitude for this and know that God is with us on our journey in this wonderful universe of ours. I look to the Mercy future with peace and assurance."

We asked Stephanie to say what she thinks Catherine McAuley would be most delighted to see, if she were to join us today.

She names the situations where she has seen Mercy at work in the past few weeks:

"In one of our older sisters who is now in hospital, who shares her life and faith, not just with other patients who seek her out, but with staff who are glad to be caring for her. In one of our Mercy colleges, where I've seen a student's urgent needs being deeply cared for. In a gathering of young women exploring Mercy with our sisters. In the building up of a food bank for the hungry."

"My experience will be multiplied by others throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. As Catherine once noted, 'we can never say, it is enough'."

We asked Stephanie if there are signs of hope she can point to, where Mercy is blooming freshly in our midst. "Apart from the increasing commitment of our amazing companions in Mercy, one key sign is that young women are now asking questions and wanting to know more about Mercy,"



Sr Stephanie Kitching .... 'Mercy is God's work, not ours.'

says Stephanie.

"They are caring for others and for our universe in new and diverse ways. I hope we can encourage them and stay alongside them in their search, while remembering that Catherine also insisted that 'the Order is God's work, not ours'."

## Aged care – keeping up with new and rising needs

When Judy Hindrup was appointed CEO in 1992, Assisi Home and Hospital in Hamilton was in the care of an order of Franciscan Sisters. When they returned to England, the facility was taken over in 1994 by the Sisters of Mercy.

THE FRANCISCAN AND MERCY VALUES BOTH FIT WELL WITH HER own beliefs about the dignity of older people, says Judy. "Compassion and care of the poor were central to Catherine McAuley's vision. Our core values are the focus of staff training. Mission is who we are."

In her 20 years at the helm, Judy admits that the acuity of residents has steadily grown. In 1992, residents did not have to be needs-assessed when they came into care, and so long as they met the funding criteria, they received a government subsidy.

"I can remember a couple who were still driving their cars when I came here, somewhat unsafely. One drove the car around our grounds, just to keep the motor in working order. It's close on 20 years since our last resident had a car."

"In the early years, the needs of residents were often more social than clinical. The focus has changed, and we now are expected to manage much higher needs. We recently had a resident on continuous peritoneal dialysis, and we often have one or two who require feeding through stomach tubes. The palliative care needs have become more complex, as well."

When her marriage ended in 1972, Judy went looking for a regular job which allowed her to care for her two-year-old daughter. District nursing fitted the bill. "I worked my way up in that field, and as funding for community services grew, I helped to broaden district nursing services in the wider Waikato region. I could see that, by moving up the chain, I could have more influence on services for older people."

"When the job at Assisi was advertised in late 1991, I was ready for a change. I welcomed the chance to work for a not-for-profit agency that put the needs of residents first. The lack of bureaucracy appealed, too – keeping me closer to staff on the ground."

Over the years, Judy says the issues of caring for older people have remained the same. "In a sense, they've become more important, as I get closer to retirement myself!"

Arriving at Assisi in March 1992, Judy admits she was on a steep learning curve. "Within my first four months, I attended my first Australian Catholic Healthcare Conference. Being immersed in things Catholic was a new challenge."



JUDY HINDRUP (left), CEO of Atawhai Mercy Assisi, with Anne Littlejohn who is supervisor for ISS Property Management Services. Judy holds the quality manual for cleaning services at the facility which Anne has recently compiled.

Among her achievements in the past two decades, Judy lists the building of three new wings, two refurbishments of the whole facility, and the gaining and maintaining of a three-year certification, one of the first 50 facilities in New Zealand to do so.

She is proud, too, of Assisi's accreditation record – first gained in 1996 and held continuously ever since, with a four-year accreditation achieved this year, with no fewer than seven notations for excellence. "This demonstrates clearly that we are focussed on best practice."

Judy says that her biggest challenge has probably come in the past two years, with the opening of 16 new hospital beds and the addition to the facility of half as many more



CEO Judy Hindrup (second on right) at the opening in 2010 of Mercy Court, a 16-bed hospital wing at Atawhai Mercy Assisi in Hamilton. Also pictured (from left) are Mercy Healthcare board chairman Denis Wood, Health Minister Tony Ryall, Congregation Leader Sr Anne Campbell, and Mercy Healthcare Auckland CEO Peter Buckland.

hospital residents and staff. This has meant a change in culture and new challenges for management. "Added to this has been a rise in the employment of staff with English as a second language."

Judy says her strength has come from her family, support from Sisters of Mercy, and excellent long-serving staff in key positions. She also pays tribute to Peter Buckland, CEO of Mercy Healthcare Auckland, "whose position has been critical."

In her 20 years at Assisi, social attitudes have changed, says Judy. "Older people are seen – perhaps by an increasing number of younger people – as a burden on society. They are seen as taking up a larger portion of Vote health than the general population."

"There is resentment about older people working past retirement age, taking up jobs that younger ones could have. They are often seen as the bigger spenders, blocking the provision of housing for larger families."

"Funders of our services for older people need to do more long-term planning, providing better-supported housing that allows older people to live in the community longer, better connected to the community in which they have lived for so long."

"We need not just retirement villages, but facilities that are better connected with the community, providing social as well as care support."

Judy has an eye for staff with the right attitudes. "They need to demonstrate respect – this shows in how they dress and present themselves at interview. They need to have read the information we provide and have given some thought to what the job may involve."

"We're looking for bright personalities, people with a can-do attitude, who are willing to advance their skills. Perhaps starting as a caregiver but willing to go on to train as a nurse."

"RNs straight from training need ongoing support in their first year. This is something we may need to address, in order to attract new RNs into aged care as a career pathway."

"Maybe this is where a Mercy grant for new graduates might help, allowing them to be supernumerary for an extended period, but bonded to stay for a period of time?"

## Commissioning 'an exciting time' for young Mercies

Meet two of the Mercy Young Adults who will be commissioned as members of this group at a ceremony in Auckland on September 22. One of them is now at university, the other in her last year at McAuley High School. They talk about the group and why belonging is important to them....

MERESSAPINNI PUPUALI'I IS IN HER FIRST year at Auckland University, studying for a Bachelor of Science, majoring in Geography and specialising in Environmental Science. She hopes to use her degree to put her faith into practice, working to find ways of caring for the environment and sustaining natural resources.

She was a student at McAuley High School in Otahuhu for five years, "starting as a keen, shy Year 9 student in 2007 and graduating there last year."

She looks back to her time at McAuley with thanks for opportunities to foster her passion for community involvement, "through the Liturgy committee, St Vincent de Paul, Caritas, Amnesty International and many more.

"The best gift I received was a quality Catholic education, which taught me high Christian values and also the values of Mercy. These have already had a huge influence on my life, giving me the courage to strive for personal excellence and to be a stronger and better woman."

The Mercy values Meressapinni identifies include service to others, especially those in need, through volunteer work packing food parcels for poor families.

She also names her role as a steward of earth and environment. "I support this Mercy value by specialising in environmental science, learning strategies and practices that will help to preserve and sustain our earth."

Meressapinni says the Mercy Young Adults group will help her to uphold the values she learnt at school. "There are times when I feel tired and want to give up, because I feel that it's all too much. It's at times like this that I need to know I'm not alone.

"Belonging to the Mercy Young Adults will help me to believe in myself. It will boost my confidence to keep doing the works of mercy."

Meressapinni believes the group is very blessed to have the support and guidance which Sr Salome brings. "It's important for us to have a role model like Salome to inspire us, and to share her greater knowledge about the works of Mercy.

"Just seeing a Sister of Mercy like Salome doing what she does is one of the reasons we are motivated to be part of the Mercy action." But Meressapinni can foresee a time when Salome's role may be filled by "a lay person like myself.

"Although I'm not a Catholic, I strongly believe it's possible to see myself in the future



LEFT: Meressapinni Pupuali'i ... inspired by Mercy story to act with compassion.



RIGHT: Filisita Tuiogo .... Mercy values will still be part of our lives, beyond school

working alongside the Sisters of Mercy. This is because the great inspiration I've received from a Catholic education has developed my passion to be part of Mercy in action, and the feeling I have of wanting to do more when I've grown up."

She says the Mercy Day commissioning ceremony will mean a new beginning for her. "It will be the start of a new journey with other young women, aimed at making a difference in the world. The commissioning will also be a blessing for me, bringing strength and support to go out into the community to do the works of mercy.

"As our families and friends witness the ceremony, I will find confidence, knowing that they have faith in us, and that they support us in our journey as young Mercy adults.

"I will feel super excited about the wonderful journey that lies ahead of us, and also overwhelmed about the chance that's given to us to make a change, and to put our own mark on the world."

Filisita Tuiogo is in her final year at McAuley High School, where she says she is constantly being reminded of Mercy values, through daily prayer and liturgies. Her leadership role at school enables her already to be a role model to younger students. The best gift she has received from McAuley so far is "the sisterly bond" she has with other students.

"When I move on from school, I know that

Mercy values will still be an essential part of my life, especially justice and compassion. But it will take strong faith and prayer to maintain these values after I leave school," Filisita says.

Some of the benefits she hopes to gain from belonging to the Mercy Young Adults group include commitment to social justice, making changes in the community, emphasising the Christian role through good deeds, changing lives, and becoming more aware of the vulnerable in society.

"Having a Sister of Mercy to guide us has made all the difference," says Filisita. "Salome truly keeps our meetings reverent through a strong focus on prayer, and by her acknowledgement of each of us who are present.

"Also, my parents trust Sr Salome and are ready to let me attend meetings at her home." Filisita isn't sure if a lay person could fill this role. "It takes commitment, consistency, reverence and knowledge," she says.

Like her older colleague, Filisita is looking forward to the Mercy Day commissioning ceremony. "This will mean a lot to me. It will not only commission individual members but it will also endorse the group itself.

"This will be our first step towards the future goals and actions we plan. I'll be excited as well as blessed, for the opportunity to be part of a great group which plans to work at social justice in our community."

## Young Mercy adults – a dream come true

At a celebration to mark Mercy Day this year, a group of Young Mercy Adults will be commissioned as members of this newly formed group. The young women, between 18 and 20, are either doing tertiary studies or in their final year at McAuley High School in Otahuhu.

THE LAUNCHING OF THE GROUP FULFILLS A dream for Sister of Mercy Salome Ioane, who is currently chaplain at the school, teaches RE and visits families as a community liaison person at the school.

"I'm really excited about this commissioning ceremony, for the first Mercy Young Adults to be established in New Zealand. I want to acknowledge the role of Katrina Fabish rsm and Cathy Harrison in helping the process of setting up the group. I particularly want to thank the Congregation's leadership team for giving their blessing to this initiative."

The idea for starting the group came when she attended a conference for Mercy Young Adults from Australia and Papua New Guinea, Salome explains. "The groups have been very active in Australia for some time, and the conference made me realise that we too have young people in New Zealand who have been educated in our Mercy schools and who have a similar passion.

"They are passionate about our Mercy values while they are at school, but sadly much of that ends when they leave school. If as a Congregation, we create a way of inviting these young adults to keep their links with us, we'll have a group of young people who will continue to share our passion for bringing God's mercy into the community, and for addressing the social justice issues that arise in our world.

"The youth of today is the future of tomorrow. Do these young women hold the future of the Sisters of Mercy in the next century? I don't know. But my expectations of the group are high.

"I expect these young women to be committed to the group and to enjoy being part of it. I expect them to use this opportunity to develop pathways into their future careers, and to deepen their awareness of social justice issues and their responsibility to others.

"Here's a chance for them to be a voice for the marginalised, and to support those who find little hope in the world. They can be women of mercy, working to bring God's justice into their workplace, and among their families and friends.

"I expect these young women to enjoy being who they are, and to value all the gifts they've been blessed with. They can share these same gifts with others, through any of the ministries they support as volunteers."

Members of the group are currently all

from McAuley High School, which has a strong Pasifika background. "Most of these young women are Samoan, but there's also a Filipino, a Cook Islander and a Tongan.

"This group is the beginning of something new that I hope will continue to strengthen the bonds among all our Mercy high schools in New Zealand.

"While this initiative starts with a group from McAuley High School with a strong Pasifika flavour, I hope that in the near future new groups will also start from other Mercy schools, and they too will blend in other flavours. Our Mercy stories need retelling. Is it possible to re-tell these stories through the lenses of our young people today?"

The Mercy Day commissioning will provide support to these young women, says Salome. "They would welcome any opportunities to engage in social action through volunteering in any of our Mercy ministries and participate actively in areas that need them.

"I also hope to link this group with others involved in social justice, both locally and



Sr Salome... Mercy youth 'the future of tomorrow'

globally. It will be especially good if we can link up with the Mercy Young Adult groups in Australia and Papua New Guinea.

"I think the Mercy Day commissioning is a great opportunity for these young adults to be acknowledged and welcomed into our Mercy world, and for Sisters of Mercy and their partners in mission to recognise these young adults as Mercy partners as well.

"They need the support and encouragement from Sisters and their companions, so that they too can find their place in our collective mission of mercy."

## COMINGS AND GOINGS

THE NEWLY APPOINTED principal of Villa Maria College, Christchurch, is Ms Deborah Brosnahan, who is due to start in this role at the beginning of Term 4 next month. Serving most recently as Human Resources Manager at Dilworth School in Auckland, she has also been the Director of Curriculum, Learning and Teaching at Baradene College in Auckland.



Deborah Brosnahan

As a new teacher, she taught at Villa Maria from 1989 to 1993, and later as teacher/dean from 1995 to 1996. "I have very warm memories of my early teaching career at Villa, and of the staff, students, Sisters and families that together gave me such a great foundation for my career," says Ms Brosnahan. "This is an exciting time to be in education, as we seek to ensure Villa Maria continues to prize what is of value and empowers young women to reach their full potential."

Ms Brosnahan replaces Mrs Mary Lynch, who served at Villa for almost 20 years and was the college's first lay principal. She grew up in Dublin. "I walked the streets that Catherine McAuley walked," she recalls. "I knew the poverty of the people, the greyness of the weather, the bleakness of the tenement houses. I had a personal appreciation of her mission to help working-class women and children."

Mrs Lynch was a student at Villa for four years in the early 1960s. At that time, "there was no talk of women's liberation or equal rights, yet every girl at Villa knew that girls can do anything, that women can and do have a voice in the world. The Sisters of Mercy were daily role models of faith and prayer. They were strong, articulate women who valued education and for whom service was the purpose of their lives. They had high expectations of us, and we would not dare let them down!"

# Forum has Mercy folk brainstorming for the future

What will Mercy's ministries look like in 2025? That was the question which set the background for a forum last May, held at St Mary's Convent in Ponsonby for almost 60 directors and managers currently involved in the ministries of the Sisters of Mercy throughout New Zealand and the Pacific.

THE ONE-DAY FORUM OPENED WITH A REFLECTION BY Congregation Leader Anne Campbell rsm, who spoke of the rich diversity of Mercy's healthcare, education and community development ministries, all charged with working to keep hope alive among the poor and marginalised in our society.

Reuben O'Neill, chair of Tiaki Manatu Mercy Ministries Trust, and mission leader Gabrielle Huria provided an overview of the Trust's current five-year strategic plan, while Dr Lester Levy, professor of Leadership at Auckland University's Business School, shared his ideas on the difference that excellent governance can make.

Insights into how health research changes lives in developing nations came from Professor Philip Hill, who holds the McAuley Chair of International Health at Otago University. Two Maori from Ngai Tahu, Arihia Bennett and Dr Te Maire Tau, spoke of the tensions between traditional tribal values and the corporate funding models which are often used after Treaty claims have been settled.

Carmel College principal Kath Deady and Richard Whitney, CEO of Mercy Hospital in Dunedin drew from their experience to look

ahead at how the ministries they guide are preparing for 2025.

A brain-storming session ended the day, with a raft of suggestions and questions which will go towards shaping the next forum. The ideas clustered around some major themes, including governance issues for the future, induction processes for Mercy lay leaders, and suggestions for keeping Mercy's founding stories alive in the years ahead.

How lay people will ensure good governance of Mercy ministries as fewer sisters are available to serve on boards was a recurring question. Another was how to respond to new needs as they emerge, and to see that Mercy ministries continue to work at the margins of society, instead of doing what we do because that's what we've always done. 'Are we making ice-blocks for Antarctica?' was how one framed the question.

'How Catholic do we need to be?' was another concern. 'Is our mission at the edge sometimes constrained by the institutional church? Can we be Mercy without being Catholic? How do we engage with a church that isn't changing as fast as we are?'

Some made the point that Catherine's ministries began while

FROM LEFT: Reuben O'Neill presenting at Forum; Congregation Leader Anne Campbell rsm gives the reflection that opened the forum; Gabrielle Huria presenting at Forum; St Mary's College Ponsonby students lead the waiata at the Forum opening. Forum photos by Patricia Rowe rsm.

she and her companions were lay people, and that the trend today is for sisters to share their responsibility with the laity. 'We need strong lay leaders, who can critique and contribute to policy.' There was a call to involve former Mercy pupils, enlisting their skills and talents. 'And we should add boys and men, as well.'

In telling the Mercy story, leaders must use social media to communicate. 'How do we use Mercy International to tell the story and engage people today? How do our Mercy institutions do this on their own websites? What are the stories that move us to action? We need to work with Mercy International to develop the Mercy brand.'

What is Mercy's special quality or charism? One put it this way, 'charism is God's gift to the church, for the world.' We need to be open to new forms of mission, open to change. 'To change is to grow; to change often is to be perfect. We must be brave to go where the need calls us.'

'Be the wind that fills our sails, guiding our waka on its way,' went the closing prayer. 'As one stage of our journey ends and another begins, keep us joyful for all that has been, and hopeful for what by your grace has still to be achieved, in mercy's name. Amen.'

FROM LEFT: Mercy school representatives in forum brainstorming session; Katrina Fabish rsm, Cathy Harrison and Rita Vessey rsm in forum mode; Ngai Tahu representatives Arihia Bennett and Te Maire Tau, keynote presenters at the Mercy Forum.

## White-water champions, carrying Mercy into the future

New Zealand's braided rivers, carrying water from snow-clad mountains to the sea, are an image of Mercy adapting its ministries to the needs of today.

THAT WAS THE MESSAGE from Congregation Leader, Anne Campbell rsm, in her reflection at the Mercy Forum in Auckland last May.

'The story of Mercy has flowed through creation since the beginning of time,' she told her audience of around 60 sisters and their colleagues in Mercy ministries, gathered for the one-day forum.

'Catherine McAuley was one conduit of that mercy – a powerful receiver whose vision has continued to engage others for 181 years. She was, as we are, the recipient of a rich tradition to which she brought a heart open to receive, and a spirit willing to be instrumental in its expression in her day and her time.'

'Our time is now – a time when the various stories and the images they give rise to – from cultures, faith traditions and science – can explore a new space and reveal a fuller truth.'

'If we can envision watercourses of Mercy merging across our country and flowing into the seas around our land, the oceans encircling our Earth – we can become the reality.'

Anne Campbell quoted Catherine McAuley who encouraged her followers: 'We must try to be like the rivers which enter the sea, without losing any of the sweetness of the water.'

'All of us, gathered in this room, are carriers of Mercy,' she said. 'Across Aotearoa, Tonga and Samoa, as we sit in our circles of conversation, around board tables and coffee tables, writing our strategic plans, balancing our budgets, prioritising the needs we hear and see, sharing hopes and possibilities, we are together shaping a vision of Mercy that will impel us from our individual, egocentric "rivers", into the sea of consciousness that makes us one with the universe, birthing God's compassionate, tender Mercy.'

'The vision is possible – because of people like yourselves. People who are risking their energy, commitment, skills and gifts in the adventure that is Mercy.'

'You are the white-water rafting champions of the future of Mercy, and we thank you for your courage and dedication. Kia kaha!

'Our rivers seek the sea. And so we run – together.'



SR Anne Campbell... 'you are called to bring God's tender mercy to birth'



Richard Whitney CEO of Mercy Hospital Dunedin and Kath Deady principal of Carmel College Milford, looking ahead at Mercy 2025.



## Dreaming of a shelter for homeless women

As another Mercy Day approaches, commemorating the opening of Catherine McAuley's first House of Mercy in Dublin, Sr Marcellin Wilson says her hopes and dreams are centred on achieving a shelter for homeless women in Wellington.

"THIS VISION HAS FILLED MY WAKING hours for two years, and I need to replenish my energy for this Women's Shelter daily," says Marcellin. "The fact that three Congregations of religious women have been prepared to collaborate in this ministry has been really exciting."

The project has proved more challenging than when first considered, because Housing New Zealand's Social Housing Unit has failed to honour its promise of a house. "This has meant that we've had to seek a house on the open market," says Marcellin. "This is not within our budget, but we live in hope that there is still an answer, hidden in God's surprising capacity to move hearts."

Support for the scheme has come from the Sisters of Compassion and the

Little Company of Mary, as well as from the Sisters of Mercy. "Catherine McAuley might be agreeably surprised to find three religious Congregations working in collusion to follow this dream," says Marcellin.

She says requests for funding have been answered by women in both church and non-religious groups, by more than six women's Congregations and by several women's service groups. Whether triggered by the message of the gospel or by the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the response is still focused on the care of the needy. "Catherine was convinced about channelling the resources of the well-endowed to assist those who were not so blessed. This is a work of mercy that would have delighted her heart."



Sr Marcellin Wilson... trusting in God's capacity to move hearts.

## Care of the dying always a Mercy work

Kathy Lynch is the sole Sister of Mercy working as a nurse at Mercy Hospice Auckland. She currently works in the inpatient unit as the Clinical Nurse Specialist, responsible for orientation of new staff and students and with a special focus on preventing falls and pressure injuries. Her present role was created last November.

KATHY INTERRUPTED HER NURSING career at Mercy Hospice to serve on the Congregation's leadership team from 2005 to 2009, always hoping that she might be able to return to nursing when her term on the team concluded. "It's been a pleasure to work in our new facility since, when I left for Wellington, the hospice was still based at the Mountain Road site, where Mercy Hospital had been.

"To have the hospice here on our Ponsonby site feels to me like a real homecoming, as this whenua is so rich in Mercy history. I'm aware that Mother Bernard Dickson, who is buried nearby, provides a link with the origins of modern nursing, since she had worked alongside Florence Nightingale in the Crimea.

"Caring for the dying was one of the early works undertaken by Catherine McAuley and the first Sisters of Mercy, and the special needs of the dying and their families remain a priority for us into the 21st century."

The intranet being developed at Mercy Hospice Auckland is a valuable resource for improving practice and increasing knowledge, says Kathy Lynch. The hospice subscribes to an extensive web-based best-practice resource called *Uptodate*. "I can access this on a regular basis to increase my clinical knowledge," says Kathy.

"We upload journal articles onto the intranet and use them for discussion in our multidisciplinary journal club," she explains. "The



Sr Kathy Lynch .... hospice work 'a homecoming'

intranet also includes a saved hyperlink to the University of Auckland student resource web page, *Cecil*. A number of hospice staff are pursuing post-graduate studies in palliative care, and this link to *Cecil* enables us to access the university library and our course pages."

Kathy says the intranet is also useful for sharing details on events which are significant to colleagues. "It provides helpful information about birthdays, leave, conferences and congratulatory announcements, such as the arrival of grandchildren.

"For new staff, students or visitors to the hospice, there are good links on the intranet that help to share an understanding of our Mercy history and heritage," says Kathy. "These can provide extra learning opportunities as part of orientation, and can link us to the wider Mercy family of which we are part."

As the number of Sisters of Mercy is now fewer than in recent decades, Kathy says she is inspired to be able to work with a team dedicated to providing the very best in palliative care, whether it's to those in the inpatient unit, or at Mercy Hospice's day-care unit, or in their own homes.

"Each day, I see my colleagues sharing in our Mercy mission through their professional caring," says Kathy. "I see them living out our Mercy values of dignity, compassion, respect, quality, advocacy and stewardship."

## Intranet helping hospice staff to keep in touch

If you're reading this story, chances are you have one of our 300 hard copies in your hand. But if you're on the staff of Mercy Hospice Auckland, you may well be reading a computerised version, on the hospice's intranet.

UP AND RUNNING FOR THE PAST TWO years, the intranet was developed to allow most of the almost 130 staff who currently work for Mercy Hospice to keep informed and up-to-date with events and information.

As few as 13 patients are cared for in the hospice's inpatient unit in Ponsonby; but at any one time, up to 270 others are being nursed in their own homes. This means that on a typical working day, many of the hospice's clinical staff are scattered in homes throughout the Auckland region, caring for people who are facing life-threatening illnesses and supporting their families.

The intranet is currently managed by Teina Stewart, the hospice's administration manager, who is responsible for information technology. "It seemed logical for me to lead the development of our intranet when it began," Teina explains. "These days, three other admin team members do most of the maintenance and editing, and I oversee the site, making suggestions where necessary and approving updates and changes."

Planned initiatives include an *Infection Prevention and Control* page and a *Pharmacy* page. "Both these developments come from a need to keep our staff, especially those in clinical teams, up-to-date with advances in these areas," says Teina. "It will also mean that information can be shared promptly throughout the organisation, without having to wait for the next issue of our staff newsletter."

Tim Hurley, who currently leads the hospice's Family Support Team, agrees that the intranet is one of the best innovations in recent times. "The information is reliable, with nothing lost in translation," says Tim.

"When I log on each day, I can see at a glance which staff are away and when they are due to return, which events are taking

place, and what we are celebrating as an organisation. It's also a great way of making announcements, such as who has a new grandchild."

Tim's team works to provide emotional, spiritual and relationship support to patients with an end-of-life illness, in the context of their family. He likes especially the *Pat on the Back* page. "This is a really positive reinforcement of what we do at Mercy," says Tim. "Staff at the hospice tend to 'go the extra mile' but don't brag about what they do. So it's very cool to read the comments made by patients or their family members."

Listed on the *Pat on the Back* page are links to cards and letters received in appreciation of the work of hospice staff, as well as messages of support and congratulations from other organisations.

"Previously, these messages were often given to a particular team and kept in their office for a few months before being filed away," Teina explains. "Now everyone has the opportunity to read them. Some of them can be extremely moving."

Another feature in the *People* section is a staff list, with the names and photos of everyone who works at Mercy Hospice, detailing the days they work, the teams to which they belong and a contact phone number. "This can be very useful for new staff, helping them to find their way in our organisation," says Teina.

Hospice forms have also started to be filed on the intranet. "The aim is to eventually have all our forms accessible here, reducing confusion about which forms are current and where they are stored."

The intranet is available to all staff, including the managers of Mercy Hospice's seven shops, spread throughout the city. "As they work independently, without access



INTRANET: A staff member of Mercy Hospice checks the latest on the facility's intranet.

to our computer network, it's been hard for them to maintain a sense of being connected to our organisation. This has now been resolved, and they're pleased to be kept up-to-date with what's on, who's away, and the latest news."

Mercy Hospice Auckland is proud of its heritage, says Teina. The intranet has a link on its home page to mission and values. "One of our six values also appears on the top of this page. We also include some Mercy publications in our newsletter section. This gives hospice staff a chance to keep up-to-date with what's happening in the wider Mercy community."

Tim Hurley believes the hospice lives its mission statement. "As a counsellor, the Mercy values of dignity, compassion, respect, quality, advocacy and stewardship inform my practice.

"It's particularly rewarding to be able to reach out to the vulnerable, and sometimes marginalised, sectors of our community."

## COMINGS AND GOINGS

AFTER 19 years as CEO of Mercy Hospice Auckland, Jan Nichols has moved across the harbour to head North Shore Hospice. She was farewelled by a large group of colleagues and friends at Mercy Hospice on June 14; representing the Leadership Team of the Sisters of Mercy was Sr Katrina Fabish. Jan Nichols described nursing as a "surprising career

choice, but a hugely rewarding vocation."

She recalled that she had been drawn by "two distinct but complementary missions – that of the Sisters of Mercy and the hospice movement. Both focus on the ethos of patient and family-centred holistic care, service excellence and team work." The constant challenge over the years has been funding – "especially as the greatest statutory amount we can expect is 70% of our operating costs."

Jon Nichols described the hospice's partnership with volunteers as one of its great hallmarks. Mercy Hospice Auckland currently has 550 volunteers. "They help take our service from ordinary to the extraordinary," Jan Nichols said. The jewel in the crown are the women and men who deliver care to those who are dying. "Their reputation is second to none and is richly deserved. It has been an honour to be part of their work. They are an extraordinary group of people."



Jan Nichols

## Community project 'a recipe for success'

Mercy Hospital's CEO Richard Whitney was on hand in July to see a new early learning centre and family services campus officially opened by the Methodist Mission in South Dunedin. Mercy Hospital has provided funding support for the scheme.

THE CENTRE HAS BEEN DEVELOPED BY THE METHODIST Mission as a community "hub" for families with young children, in what had previously been the Forbury School, until its closure. The facility had been operating in smaller premises in Wesley Street.

The new premises were urgently needed, according to community member Sue Nash. "Our current home has been past the end of its useful life for more than a decade. The buildings were cold and needed constant repairs – money we just didn't have."

Parish volunteers have worked on repainting and the Methodist Mission has invested over \$50,000 on a refurbishment programme, backed by volunteers, community and funder support.

Methodist Mission's chief executive Laura Black thanked Mercy Hospital for its grant to the centre.

Richard Whitney described the centre as accessible, friendly and well-targeted. "If that's not a recipe for success, I'm not sure what is." With historic ties to social outreach in South Dunedin, Mercy Hospital was proud to be part of the venture, he said.

The new site has been welcomed by Dunedin's mayor, Dave Cull, who said the venture would provide a focal point not just for young families but for the whole community.



MERCY Hospital CEO Richard Whitney speaking at the opening of the new 'hub' in South Dunedin. Watching are Methodist Mission chief executive Laura Black and Dunedin mayor Dave Cull. INSET: Dunedin sisters Lisa (right, 5) and Ellie (3) Cowan with their grandmother Yvonne Ritchie at the opening of the early learning and family services 'hub' in South Dunedin. (Photos by Eileen Goodwin, courtesy of Otago Daily Times)

## Committed to helping those in need

Shaped by the Mercy ethos, Mercy Hospital has a long-standing commitment to charitable outreach to ensure its response to the needs of the wider community creates the best possible outcomes.

Over the past year the organisation has continued to focus its funding in three broad areas: community support, surgical outreach and international research. A decrease in surgical outreach funding however, coupled with an increase in community outreach has resulted in a shift in the distribution of funds for the 2011-12 financial year with, Surgical Outreach making up 31%, University of Otago Chair in International Health 27% and Community Support 41% of total funds allocated.

CEO Richard Whitney believes working with other like-minded organisations is vital to the success of Mercy's charitable work. "It is important and healthier for us not to always do things by ourselves. Both partnership and collaborative opportunities enable us to identify what we are good at individually, how our vision can shape a project and what we can facilitate and empower others to do."

Over the past 12 months the community funding allocation has been used for a diverse range of wonderful life enhancing projects including: The Otago Community Hospice's ongoing implementation of the Liverpool Care of the Dying Pathway; The Little Sisters of the Poor refurbished bedroom and sitting spaces for residents; advancing NZ Kidney Health's

organ donor scheme; Foundation of the Blind's enhancing independent living for the visually impaired and the Methodist Mission's new early learning and family services campus which opened in South Dunedin in July.

Mercy Hospital has also partnered with the Salvation Army to support several key projects: Pathways for Women, a programme where input is given to ensure the efforts made by these clients receive additional support; Continuing Care – Relapse Prevention Group, a new initiative designed to bridge the gap between the existing intensive programme and the community support available; and, the Reintegration Facility, a housing option supervised by the Salvation Army which provides three month periods of supported accommodation.

"Working with different entities such as the Salvation Army enables us to recognise their strengths and focus on the similarities such as Christian ethos and compatible values to work with people in need. The move from direct delivery enables the community to see collaboration across agencies rather than the maintenance of silos", says Mr Whitney.

Surgical outreach remains a key focus of Mercy's charitable endeavour with particular regard to assisting people needing surgery to

improve their quality of life, but who don't have the financial capability or qualify for the public hospital system.

Mercy's charitable outreach efforts stretch beyond New Zealand. In 2006 Mercy Hospital signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Otago resulting in the establishment of the University of Otago McAuley Chair in International Health. Over a 10-year period this project will see \$1.5m of funding going towards international research into infectious diseases in countries struggling due to poverty and limited health resources. Further to this an additional \$30,000 has been provided for a one-year extension to the community based research study of tuberculosis in Indonesia.

Mercy bases its community outreach funding allocation on a framework that incorporates: the corporal works of Mercy; a commitment to support children, families and individuals regardless of age; inclusion of other Christian and secular charitable organisations as well as health and non-health humanitarian groups; the ability to react to situations as they arise; and, a commitment its local Otago and Southland communities.

## Delight over appointment of Mercy Hospice CEO

By LINCOLN DAVIES, PR specialist, Mercy Hospice Auckland

STAFF AT MERCY HOSPICE AUCKLAND were delighted to learn last month, after a rigorous recruitment process and several months of deliberation, that their colleague Lynda Smith has been appointed CEO.

She replaces Jan Nichols, who resigned in June after 19 years in the role, to take up the leadership of Hospice North Shore. "Jan is an inspirational leader," says Lynda, "never afraid to innovate and do things outside of the box. To provide those facing a life-limiting illness with a high standard of care, Jan was always the first to say 'we can do it'."

For more than two years, Lynda has worked at Mercy Hospice as Nurse Leader and has been acting CEO since Jan's retirement. "I admire Jan's leadership style. It fosters collaboration. As a result, we have people here who are passionate about their work, and it's quite contagious.

"It's no secret that Mercy Hospice Auckland has had 100 percent engagement and been rated among the top 10 employers in the JRA Best Workplace survey for the past two years."

With a nursing career spanning 35 years and a business diploma, Lynda has undertaken several senior nursing roles in both the community and acute oncology settings. She has held Clinical Nurse Specialist posts at Auckland District Health Board and was Manager of Support and Information Services at the Auckland Cancer Society.

In her latest role as Nursing Team Leader at Mercy Hospice, Lynda has been responsible for a team of 50 nurses, including the inpatient and community teams, as well as education and nursing specialist teams.

"We nurses are passionate about high quality palliative care," says Lynda. "I love working with the nursing team, but I'm also excited about working with the wider clinical team and the support teams which provide the infrastructure to our organisation.

Lynda knows first-hand what it is to lose a loved one, and what is required to get through tough times. Her father Stuart died of secondary cancer from a melanoma at age 49, not long after Lynda began her first nursing job in the oncology ward at Auckland Hospital.

"From this experience, I have a great appreciation of the difference that high-

quality palliative care can make for someone in the last days," she says.

Lynda's time on the oncology ward also meant she would frequently come into contact with Sister of Mercy Margaret Timms, who was instrumental in the establishment of Mercy Hospice some 33 years ago, and was influential in Lynda's decision to specialise in palliative care.

Peter Buckland, CEO of Mercy Healthcare Auckland, says that in the short time she has been with Mercy Hospice, Lynda has shown that she is capable of doing great things. "Her sound background in palliative care services and her experience with a wide range of health sector networks in the Auckland DHB area are impressive," Peter says. "Lynda is such an asset to the Mercy Hospice team. We are all the richer for having her accept this crucial leadership role."

Heading one of the leading hospices in New Zealand, with an international reputation for excellence in care, Lynda has a challenging position to uphold and develop further, Peter Buckland says. "However, she has the support of the Mercy Hospice team, the confidence of the board, and the blessings of the Sisters of Mercy Leadership to surround her in the task."

Mercy Hospice Auckland has an impressive track record. Its services have grown to provide patients in Central Auckland with the most up-to-date support. At any given time, the hospice cares for more than 260 patients. In the past year, 7984 nurse visits and 1181 family support visits were made. In the past six years, the hospice has opened seven Mercy Hospice Shops, to help fund its growing needs.

Peter Buckland says that Lynda's appointment could not have been more timely. A charity largely dependent on the goodwill and generosity of the Auckland community, Mercy Hospice Auckland is about to set its strategic plan for the next five years.

"A big part of putting my hand up for the CEO role was that I could see the potential for where Mercy Hospice could go in the future," says Lynda. "I have a strong sense of what this role means, and a desire to drive the vision.

"With over 70 residential aged care facilities in Auckland DHB area, I know our organisation has so much more to offer, by way of supporting the delivery of



Lynda Smith, new CEO at Mercy Hospice Auckland

high-quality palliative care throughout our community."

Lynda knows there are few one-size-fits-all solutions in palliative care, and she recognises that the number of ways Aucklanders want to care for and say goodbye to their loved one is growing and diverse in nature.

"More and more patients are requesting that their final days be spent at home, for example," she says.

Lynda is especially proud of two initiatives which her nursing team is working on: one is the 'Hospice at Home' project, the other is the A+ Links and Mercy's Community Nursing Team' project. Both are still in the early stages of development, trialled with promising results.

"Every case is unique, and we place importance on providing care for each individual with compassion, dignity and respect," says Lynda.

For many staff and volunteers at Mercy Hospice, their new CEO has what it takes.

"Lynda understands the mission and values of Mercy Hospice," says Volunteer Coordinator Julie Reid, a staff member at Mercy for 15 years. "It was wonderful to hear the good news of her appointment. I couldn't have been happier for her!"

Lynda's new job as CEO has already begun, with an official welcome planned for August 30. She is supported in her new role by husband Graeme, a qualified counsellor and facilitator who keeps home life steady for their nine-year-old son Reuben, while mum pursues her 'dream role' at Mercy Hospice Auckland.

# Mercy ‘a leaven for good in a hurting world’

DEIRDRE MULLAN RSM NEEDS NO INTRODUCTION TO Sisters of Mercy, having served as their representative at the United Nations over several years. Her works include the booklet, *Where in the World are my Sisters?* Published in 2007, that 62-page volume offered a snapshot of Mercy women at work in every corner of the globe, using their worldwide network to make a difference to people's lives.

More recently, a small 60-page pamphlet has appeared from the same source, entitled *Meeting the Global Citizen in You*, with a foreword by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and a wealth of up-to-date facts and figures from Deirdre Mullan and her UN colleagues, inviting Mercy people to be more global in their thinking and acting.

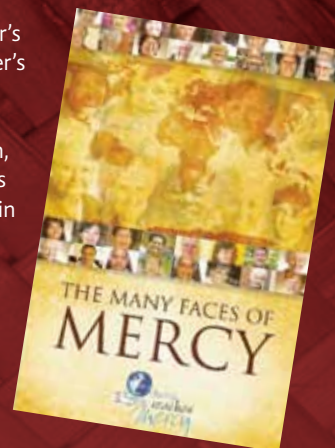
This latest publication has only 16 small pages, but the message is clear. Sisters of Mercy are now working in over 47 countries; their faces are as varied as the cultures they come from; their ages span the generations. But all of them share the conviction that, joined in a global enterprise of service, they can make a difference in the lives of others, bringing the beatitudes to birth.

Deirdre Mullan quotes an elder of the Mi'kmaw, the first people of Nova Scotia, saying that "if you dig a hole in the forest, you will find that the trees are holding hands." Sisters of Mercy around the world are linked in a similar way; "though

we may not know each other's name or recognise each other's faces, we are united by our passion to become voyagers of creativity and compassion, open to the possibility that is ours to be a leaven for good in a hurting world."

The fact that Catherine McAuley was 52 when she founded the Sisters of Mercy "is a reminder to each of us that we need to stop equating numbers and age with effectiveness," says this author. "It only takes one person with courage to change the direction of our world."

Deirdre Mullan says that proceeds from the sale of this booklet will help to provide scholarships for girls in the developing world. Send your order to Dennis Horton at [DHorton@somauck.org.nz](mailto:DHorton@somauck.org.nz) or at Mercy Ministries, Box 6015, Wellesley Street, Auckland, and we'll mail you a copy of *The Many Faces of Mercy* for \$5.



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