

# Te Kete Atawhai

## MERCY BASKET



**QUAKE SHELTER:** Edele and Russell Walker, with their two sons Finn and Liam, have been living in a holiday home owned by Nga Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand in Christchurch, made available to earthquake victims while their own home is repaired. They moved into their temporary accommodation in October and hope to be back in their own house in South Brighton for Christmas. “Repairs can be delayed,” says Edele. “The security of tenure here has been fantastic!” – Mercy’s haven for homeless – page 2



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GIVING SHELTER TO THOSE MADE HOMELESS BY EARTHQUAKES HAS PROMPTED SOME NEW MINISTRIES FOR SISTERS of Mercy living in Christchurch. This has been especially true for a community of four, based in Christchurch East. One of their number, Sr Pauline O'Regan describes their response...

## Holiday houses become haven for homeless

A few weeks after the big quakes in September 2010 and February 2011, the sisters living in east Christchurch became increasingly aware that some families had seen their homes completely destroyed and were desperate for a place to live.

"WE APPROACHED THE LEADERSHIP TEAM OF OUR Congregation, to ask if the two holiday houses in Christchurch could be made available to such families," Pauline reports. "The response was an immediate and generous yes."

"As a result, one family moved into our Heron Street house in South Brighton, and another into the Mercy house at Neptune Place in North Brighton. One family stayed for a year, and the other for two years. At the time, it was virtually impossible to get a house anywhere in Christchurch, but both families moved on as soon as they acquired a house of their own."

There are four sisters in Pauline's community in Christchurch East; the others in this community are Helen Goggin and Marie McCrea in Linwood and Mary Wood who lives in New Brighton nearby. The power of their example proved contagious, says Pauline.

"As more and more people were seeking help, our sisters approached the Little Company of Mary who also have a holiday house in South Brighton. Their response was also positive, and in the two years since the big quakes, four different families have had shelter in their home."

Following the quakes, the four sisters in Christchurch East set up a Mercy Outreach Ministry, to provide shelter and support for the homeless in their area. They received initial funding from their Congregation, with ongoing donations from the Catholic

diocese in Christchurch and from generous individuals over the months that followed.

Two years on, Pauline notes that the greatest need now is to help families seeking temporary accommodation. "The great repair work has begun, and people have to move out while their homes are being repaired or demolished and prepared for rebuilding. In some cases, sisters have taken people into their own homes for this temporary phase."

"Now, in 2013, the house in Heron Street has been made available for families in need of temporary shelter, whether it's for a few weeks or months, or even for a year, if their house has to be rebuilt or relocated."

"It's a drop in the ocean of need," says Pauline, "but it is a great joy to be able to do the little we can, in sheltering the homeless in the best Mercy tradition. We feel that Catherine McAuley might be smiling in heaven."



LINWOOD Sisters of Mercy Helen Goggin, Marie McCrea, Pauline O'Regan and Mary Wood... helping the homeless after Christchurch's big quakes.

## Valued member of Pastoral Care team

Mercy Parklands, the aged care facility in Ellerslie, records with deep regret the death on October 26 of Katherine Gibson, a member of its Pastoral Care team for the past four years.

MAINTAINING A LONG ASSOCIATION with the Dominican Sisters, Katherine was also well known in Mercy circles, having served as Pastoral Care Coordinator at Mercy Hospice Auckland and as a presenter at Mercy Spirituality Centre in Epsom. She held a Master's degree in Religious Education (Chicago) and an LTCL in Music (Piano), and had many years of experience as teacher, music educator and pastoral counsellor, especially in the area of palliative care.

Among those paying tributes at her funeral was Sarah Smith, Pastoral Care Coordinator at Mercy Parklands. "If I picked two of her qualities, they would be her

wisdom and kindness," said Sarah. "She worked over and above for those she was caring for."

"First and last I think of her as a musician. She brought to her pastoral work the same lightness of touch, passion and skill, discipline and heart that are required in playing the piano, and she manifested all of these in the way she approached her own death."

"As her journey unfolded, I could see the strength of her faith. She was serene and sure, humble and practical, continuing to care for others as long as she could. May she be at peace and rise in glory. Her work will go on."



KATHERINE GIBSON... mourned by Mercy Parklands.

## Baggot Street visit 'a light-bulb moment'

Virginia Noonan is a volunteer who currently serves on three Mercy boards, two of them connected to her old school, Villa Maria College in Christchurch. She describes her involvement as the result of a 'light-bulb moment', during a visit to Catherine McAuley's House of Mercy in Dublin.

IN IRELAND FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS ON AN overseas trip with husband Aaron in 2001, they decided to pay a short visit to the House of Mercy in Baggot Street.

"I distinctly remember being met at the door by a Sister of Mercy. When I explained that I was a past pupil of Villa Maria in Christchurch, she smiled and said, 'Aha, another Mercy woman.' It suddenly dawned on me that I was actually part of something much bigger than my old school."

"I was part of an international network of Mercy. I realised that I wanted to remain an active member of this amazing network. Once I returned to Christchurch, I looked at how I could reconnect with Villa Maria through the Past Pupils Association."

"In the meantime, a colleague who had been on the college boards got in touch, to say she was needing to resign and was looking for someone interested in replacing her. After an interview with Sister of Mercy Mary Hanrahan, I was fortunate to be appointed to both the proprietor board and the board of trustees."

"I have loved being part of the Villa Maria community again, working with other trustees who are also passionate about the college. The decision to visit Catherine's House of Mercy that day has had a huge influence on my life. It has introduced me to wonderful people and organisations, led to other governance roles, and has deepened my own faith and commitment to the church."

Virginia has been on Villa's Board of Trustees since 2002 and currently serves as chair of that board. She is also a director on Villa's Proprietor Board, and since 2009 has served on the board of Tiaki Manatu Trust, helping to provide governance for the ministries of the Sisters of Mercy throughout New Zealand.

Virginia also serves on the board of the New Zealand Catholic Education Office, as well as on a commercial board involved in the travel industry.

A graduate of Canterbury University in Law and Arts, she was employed in private practice for some years before taking maternity leave. Her husband Aaron is principal of the Bryndwr parish school and their two children are now six and four years old.

A very supportive husband and extended family allows Virginia to juggle family and work commitments.

"My family was very fortunate to have escaped major property damage following the earthquakes. While our children don't know what it is to live in a city with multi-level buildings, I'm confident that, over time, Christchurch will recreate itself and our children will benefit from a dynamic and vibrant city."

A major project for Virginia has been the development of a web-based resource for Mercy-founded primary schools, many of which continued to be staffed by Sisters of Mercy for several years. "The focus at present is on the two Southern foundations, and has involved research into founding stories and school histories. We've had lots of interviews with Sisters of Mercy."

THIS ISSUE OF TE KETE ATAWHAI INCLUDES THREE features on the volunteers who help to sustain Mercy's ministries through the gift of their time and talent. They currently serve at every level of our organisation – with skills of governance and particular expertise on Mercy's boards, with faith and religious commitment on pastoral care teams, or among the huge team that includes nearly 550 volunteers at Mercy Hospice Auckland.

The ages of Mercy volunteers range from youngsters preparing for their Duke of Edinburgh awards, to those who have retired with expertise and energy to share. The volunteer role is, by definition, an honorary one. Directors are generally appointed to Mercy boards for a three-year period. Most will admit that their volunteering brings its own rewards, and that they receive more than they give.

In the Mercy world, we never speak of someone as "just a volunteer", remembering that Catherine McAuley's first assistants were volunteers who joined her ministries of care and compassion from the goodness of their hearts and the strength of their faith. Catherine's own recollection, "It commenced with two: Sister Doyle and I," is testament to how human history can be changed when like minds and hearts join freely in common cause.



MERCY volunteer Virginia Noonan... 'our world needs Mercy's touch.'

"The board of Tiaki Manatu is aware that some schools have not been familiar with their Mercy origins, and has wanted to provide them with readily accessible resources to help them rediscover their Mercy roots."

"I'm passionate about this project, and want to help our young primary students to engage with the Mercy story, learning to appreciate the sisters who dedicated so many years to educating and nurturing generations of young students."

Virginia says she has been humbled to see what an effect the Mercy story can have. "I've worked with people who over time have come to a deep appreciation of Mercy values, discovering what it means to be part of the wider Mercy network. At Villa Maria, I've seen at first-hand how young Mercy women are equipped to influence their world through the values they have absorbed."

"As a Mercy volunteer, my hope is that I can help as many people as possible to appreciate Mercy and its charism. Because our world needs a touch of Mercy."

Few in the Mercy world would know more about volunteers than Julie Reid, who for more than 16 years has been Volunteer Coordinator at Mercy Hospice Auckland. She talks here about her role in overseeing more than 500 currently engaged in supporting the hospice and its work.

## Volunteers play key role at Mercy Hospice

When Julie Reid began as Volunteer Coordinator at Mercy Hospice Auckland, there were under 100 involved. "Then they just started to come, and they haven't stopped. The total hovers around 550. I never have to go recruiting. People come looking, on a daily basis."

FOR THE YEAR ENDING LAST MARCH, TOTAL hours provided by volunteers was around 48,500. At an estimated rate of \$20 an hour, that's just under \$1 million worth of volunteering contributed to the hospice, which each year has to raise 60% of its operating costs.

What attracts volunteers? For most, says Julie, it's personal experience. A relative or a friend has spent time as a patient at the hospice. Volunteers have often recently retired, and want to spend a portion of their time doing something for others. "The volunteer role becomes a part of their lives."

"But they are people at all levels, from youngsters who need to do community service for their Duke of Edinburgh Award. So our youngest volunteer is around 14 or 15. Most will work in one of our retail shops, each of which will need 30 or 40 volunteers."

"A number of those over 25 who are working fulltime have a social conscience and want to do something with their spare time. The average age of our volunteers is probably around 50 or so."

Volunteers are engaged in a wide range of activities. There is a roster of those who work in the inpatient unit; the roster is nearly always full, with few vacancies. The day programme which runs twice a week involves volunteers, a large number of them providing transport. Volunteers work with Life Stories, helping to record people's memories; some are involved in fund-raising, in aromatherapy and flower arranging, in the communion roster.

Not all have close involvement with patients. "But I think every volunteer contributes to patient well-being, no matter where they are working," says Julie. And all of them receive training before they begin their role.

"There are two levels of training provided. The first is when they come to the hospice. It's called an interview, but I do most of the talking. I tell the Mercy story, from Catherine McAuley and the sisters coming to New Zealand, through to the hospice, its function and their involvement with that."

"The second level consists in the training we run twice a year – a once-a-week session for six weeks. It's quite intensive and sees all the key members of the hospice speaking about their roles. "Depending on where they're working, volunteers will be mentored by another volunteer or maybe a staff member, who will train them in the specifics of their role."

Julie likes to think that volunteers are thanked continually for the tasks they perform. "They are very much appreciated. We have an annual Christmas afternoon tea, a long-service awards



VOLUNTEER coordinator Julie Reid... 'they've just never stopped coming.'

celebration on Foundation Day, 12 Dec, when both staff and volunteers are recognised for their years of service. We remember their birthday, and acknowledge personal things like a bereavement or a bout of ill health.

"Generally volunteers don't ask for recognition. Most tell me they get more than they give. The volunteer role is important, because it brings the community to us, with its cultural diversity and its many different voices. It's a good check for Mercy Hospice, to make sure we're doing all we can for patients and their families."

Volunteers walk the talk of Catherine McAuley's mission and values, says Julie. "She was really an early volunteer, and today's volunteers mirror what her vision brought to people of her day, especially to those facing illness and death."

At Mercy Hospice, the whole organisation appreciates what volunteers do, says Julie. "I think our managers have been very wise to place volunteers so closely within our organisation. We look after them, by providing them with supervision and training if they need it. We have a history here of ensuring that the volunteer base is well looked after. The good results flow from this."

"I've been to Baggot Street and I know Catherine's story well. Her own father modelled concern for others, through volunteering his time," says Julie. "We're very fortunate here at Mercy, because of the responses which people make to the opportunities we're able to provide. We never say that someone is 'just a volunteer', because without them, we would miss out on so much."

## Volunteer – engaging at margins 'is smart'

Nick McDonnell is a young lawyer who works as Regulatory Affairs Manager for Air New Zealand. He also serves as a director on the board of Te Ukaipo, a Mercy initiative based in West Auckland with a focus on young people at risk and their families.

NICK ADMITS THAT HIS BACKGROUND IN GOVERNANCE IS surprising for someone of his age. He did his law degree at Canterbury University and in 2009 was appointed to the University Council when he was elected president of the Students' Association there.

"The students' association is an organisation with a staff of 200 and a \$10 million turnover. Being president meant being chairman of the board, a fulltime job, with a CEO and an advisory board of independent directors. We bought a forest at the base of Mount Hutt, owned a cluster of early learning centres and a bookshop, and were involved in advocacy and student welfare. That was my early introduction to governance."

"Later I came to Air New Zealand, and was sitting on the board of an in-house health provident society, providing staff with assistance for medical expenses. I'd also been to St Thomas's, a school in Christchurch run by the Christian Brothers, not far from our sister school, Villa Maria."

"I knew several people who were active in the Mercy world. One of them told me about the vacancy on the board of Te Ukaipo, so I got in touch and became involved."

Is there a link between Mercy's work at the margins and his own interests? "Absolutely. I wouldn't be volunteering for this work, if there weren't. Working as I do in the corporate world, I'm aware how easy it is to forget that we are part of a very small privileged minority. The work of groups like Te Ukaipo is critical, not only for those in society who really need it, but also for people like me who would probably forget if we didn't have some exposure to it."

"I believe what one recent pope said, that a society can be judged on how it treats its most needy people. I don't buy into the beneficiary bashing that goes on, particularly in New Zealand at the moment. I think the work done by Mercy is pretty amazing."

Nick agrees that there are dangers in allowing the inequality gap to grow too big. "New Zealand is not a big country. The situation where we have something like quarter of a million children living below the poverty line shouldn't happen. We're a small enough country to fix that. Groups like Mercy lead the way; they also keep things afloat till the rest of society is ready to help."

"Part of our governance role is to ensure that Te Ukaipo remains at the edge, for as long as we are needed. I'm extremely surprised at how well organisations like Te Ukaipo do on the limited funds they have, how they continue to operate on what I would consider absolutely minimal funds."

"It's amazing what they're able to do, the people they seem able to serve, the mission they provide on what are really crumbs. I admire our manager and the staff at Te Ukaipo. It's like extremely skilled parents managing a household on a shoestring budget, feeding all the children, keeping the lights on and running a car. So that's been surprising."

The agency has just moved into new premises in West Auckland. "It was formerly a medical centre, so it's well set up for having people come in, where the former site had been a kind of back office, upstairs. The new place is amazing, and a great example of the parent Trust securing the premises, while Te Ukaipo is on the

ground, delivering the services. It's a great example of Mercy's board and ministries working together."

"From its new base, Te Ukaipo can deliver fully on its promises. It's amazing how much the physical environment changes your ability to get the outcomes you've been charged with delivering. Te Ukaipo has had an education programme on the cards for such a long time; now they're able to get it going."

Nick grew up in Christchurch. He pays tribute to his father, "one of the most generous people I know. He raised five boys on his own, from the time I was 10. A lot of my ideas about service have been modelled by him."

Some of his service mentality also came from the Christian Brothers who taught him. "Service is definitely a core building

block in these schools, providing a view of the world from a social justice perspective."

He went to India on a school trip when he was 17, and spent four weeks working in some of Mother Teresa's homes in Calcutta. "You don't realise how formative that experience is until years later. We were there just for a few weeks, but it made a lasting impression. Seeing that sort of thing, you can't close your eyes to it when you're back in New Zealand."

Nick continues to be impressed by the Sisters of Mercy. "They work at the margins, keeping things afloat until society catches up. The work being done at Te Ukaipo is extraordinary, preventing people from falling over completely. I have great admiration and respect for them. And it's great to be able to be part of it."

"The Mercy model, of a Trust with lots of different ministries, is quite interesting. And it's an exciting time to be a volunteer, as the sisters hand over the reins to lay people. The same transition is occurring in other parts of the church as well."

"Our challenge is to maintain the witness of these extraordinary women who founded and sustained these ministries over many decades, while also bringing them into a new age. It's a question of balancing the two, and a good time to be part of the process."

Engaging with people at the margins is smart, says Nick. "Mercy's focus on the Treaty is another example of keeping the boat afloat until the rest of society has caught up."

"I completely endorse the approach we take on Treaty commitment, but I also see that the need is everywhere. Māori are certainly over-represented in some areas – in our prisons, in poverty and child abuse and Mercy's task is to meet the need wherever it exists."



SEPTEMBER IS MERCY MONTH AND A GREAT TIME FOR RETELLING MERCY'S FOUNDING STORIES. FOR YEAR 9 STUDENTS at Carmel College, the month began with a day-long 'Story of Mercy' hikoi or pilgrimage. Over five consecutive days, a bus brought classes of Year 9 girls from their school on the North Shore into the city, to visit places connected with the Sisters of Mercy. They were welcomed to St Mary's Convent, Ponsonby, by Mercy mission staff Teresa Anderson rsm and Dennis Horton. Three students from Year 9BR – Emma McNaught, Jazmin Pirie and Sine O'Sullivan – help to share some of the highlights of their day.

## Hikoi 2013: The story of Mercy in Auckland

One of our first destinations was the cemetery situated just behind St Mary's Convent in Ponsonby. This is a significant part of the Catholic history of Auckland, because it is the final resting place of the founding Sisters of Mercy.

THE MEMORIAL IN THE CENTRE OF THE SMALL CEMETERY honours Mother Cecilia Maher, who led the first Sisters of Mercy from Ireland to Auckland in 1850. Surrounding the memorial are the graves of 36 deceased sisters, including that of Mother Cecilia and several of her pioneer companions. Among them were Sr Philomena Dwyer who kept a diary of the eight-month voyage from Carlow.

After learning about the cemetery, we headed to the original St Mary's Convent chapel, built under the direction of Mother Cecilia Maher and blessed by Bishop Pompallier in 1866. It was used by the pioneer sisters, the first community of Catholic religious women to be established in New Zealand.

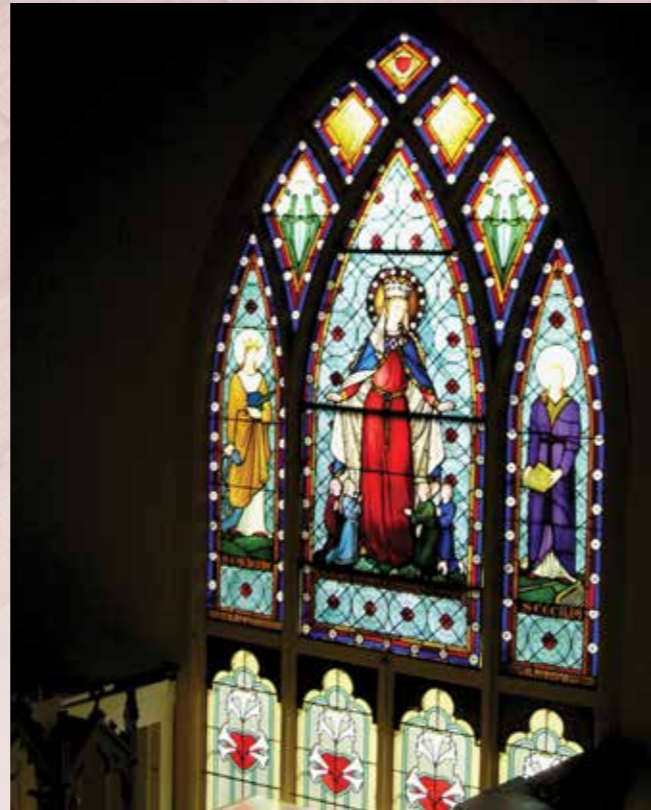
The chapel is cruciform in shape and includes several stained glass windows. Above the altar is one which depicts Mary, the Mother of Mercy, St Catherine and St Cecilia. On either side of the entrance are small windows which honour Catherine and Patrick Darby, reminding us that the chapel also served the Catholics of Ponsonby for some years before their parish church was built.

A distinctive feature of the chapel are the two rows of stalls on either side of the nave, facing the central aisle. We learned that the stalls faced each other because when the sisters sang and prayed they were echoing and responding to one another.

The chapel is closely linked to the development of Catholicism in Auckland and the history of care by the Sisters of Mercy for the young and the poor. The building is significant as the only remaining element of one of the earliest purpose-built convents in this country.



CARMEL College pupils explore the old chapel at St Mary's Convent, as part of their RE hikoi, visiting sites related to the history of the Sisters of Mercy in Auckland.



THE chapel's stained glass window, depicting St Catherine, Our Lady of Mercy and St Cecilia.



THE St Mary's Convent chapel, opened in 1866 by Bishop Pompallier.



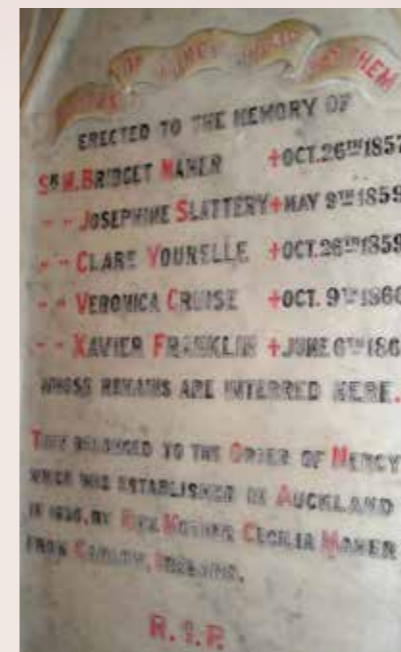
Our middle stop of the day was St Patrick's Cathedral in Auckland. First we attended Mass; then we were free to look around the cathedral. One of the things we noticed was that there is not only the priest's chair in the sanctuary but a larger, more important one.

WE LEARNT THAT THIS IS THE BISHOP'S CHAIR, KNOWN IN Latin as his 'cathedra', from which the name 'cathedral' comes. The cathedra is the place from which the bishop exercises his authority to preach and teach his people.

We also noticed a circle engraved on the floorboards near the back of the cathedral; this marks the spot where in the early days there used to be a well, from which the first community of Sisters of Mercy would almost certainly have drawn their water. During the restoration of the cathedral in 2007, builders found the underground remains of the well and decided to mark its position on the floorboards.

There is a large plaque on one transept of the cathedral listing the names of Sisters of Mercy who were buried in the grounds of the cathedral; several of these have been reinterred in the St Mary's Convent cemetery.

As part of the 2007 restoration, the Sisters of Mercy donated what is now the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of the cathedral as a permanent reminder of their close associations with the building and the diocese of Auckland.



Left: THE memorial to early Sisters of Mercy who were buried near the site of the present cathedral.

Top: ST Patrick's Cathedral, Auckland, close to where the Sisters of Mercy first worked on their arrival in 1850; and the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, behind the altar of St Patrick's Cathedral, was donated by Auckland's Sisters of Mercy as part of renovations in 2007.



Our final destination was O'Neill's Point Cemetery, one of the oldest cemeteries on the North Shore. We came to see two graves in particular: those of Thomas and Mary Poynton. The pair were the first Catholics to settle in New Zealand, arriving in the Hokianga in 1828. Thomas Poynton went to Sydney to ask for a Catholic priest to come to this country; his request resulted in the arrival of Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier on January 10, 1838.

THE BISHOP STAYED WITH THE POYNTONS UNTIL HE HAD HIS own house in Kororareka. The Poyntons attended the first New Zealand Mass, celebrated by Bishop Pompallier on January 13, 1838, at Totara Point in the Hokianga.

In their later life, the Poyntons moved to Auckland's North Shore and are buried at O'Neill's Point, close to their daughter, Catherine O'Shea and her husband. Our classes had recently been learning about the Poynton family, so their graves were an important part of our hikoi and made the trip well worth the effort.

Our class 9BR actually created an entry on Wikipedia about the Poyntons, which can be seen at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary\\_Poynton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Poynton).

Overall, our trip has made us much more aware of the story of Mercy in Aotearoa New Zealand. We now have a stronger appreciation of the contribution of the Sisters of Mercy to the Catholic faith, and also of their contribution to the wider community.



Above: CARMEL pupils on the last stage of their hikoi visiting the O'Neill's Point cemetery in Bayswater on Auckland's North Shore.

Top: HEADSTONES for Mary and Thomas Poynton who died in 1891 and 1892 and were the first Catholics to be buried in the Bayswater cemetery. (Photo by Ulla Bennett, Channel North Shore.)

## Multi-tasking key to managing Mercy properties

His official title is McAuley Trust Executive Manager – Property. Appointed in July this year, Ross Blackmore has direct responsibility for the properties owned by Ngā Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand, and an advisory role on the property dealings of the schools, facilities and ministries operated by the Congregation in this country.

HIS WORK INVOLVES COMPLETE OVERSIGHT OF THE Congregation's asset and property management. At the high end of his work is asset management, helping the Sisters of Mercy to make strategic decisions about buying and selling, refining their property portfolio to meet changing needs. At the lower end is ad-hoc and programmed maintenance.

"This is sometimes called life-cycle costing," Ross explains. "It's about doing the right amount of maintenance at the right time. Our last 10-year maintenance plan was carried out in 2009, so we've got to kick that process off again, making sure that our assumptions and budgets are right. This will involve inspecting all the Congregation's houses, starting in November and moving through the whole country."

A major issue relates to damage to the sisters' houses in Christchurch. "We're spending a lot of time there with the Earthquake Commission and private insurers. We have quite a few houses and properties in the area and there were four major earthquakes.

"You can have multiple claims on one house – with four quakes, there's a potential for four separate claims that have to be negotiated with the EQC. And as if that's not hard enough, those claims are broken down into damage to the building, to the land and to contents. We've got 35 claims outstanding; so that's taking a lot of time.

"Unfortunately, the EQC only covers us to a maximum of \$115,000 per house per quake. If we have a house with \$300,000 worth of damage, we have to go into a completely new negotiation with our private insurer. So it goes on and on. But we're slowly getting through it."

A major project currently under way is the sale of Rosary House, on a property overlooking Hagley Park. "My job has been to interview and appoint real estate agents. There were essentially two buildings connected on the site. The timber structure was badly damaged in the earthquake and is now demolished, but the brick building is still standing. We'll be selling the property as it is."

Ross has an office in Ponsonby and lives three-quarters of an hour north-west of Whangarei. He works three days a week in Auckland, but there's a lot of travel involved in the job.

"In the past three months, I've been away 12 times, most typically to Christchurch, Wellington or Dunedin. But with the long-term maintenance plan, I'll get to all the smaller centres.

"The nature of the job is that issues don't close down, just because I'm not here. The work goes on, because it involves people – residents in our houses, suppliers, tenants, architects. Essentially, I'm available the whole time. Even when I'm north-west of Whangarei, things can be happening. I'm hooked up on my smart phone;

my laptop at home can have McAuley Trust emails bouncing back and forth."

With a Bachelor of Business Studies majoring in valuation and property management, Ross began his career in the 1980s in the Government Valuation Dept in Manukau City. "I trained in the lower-cost housing areas of South Auckland, in the days when government valuers actually got out of their cars and knocked on every door."

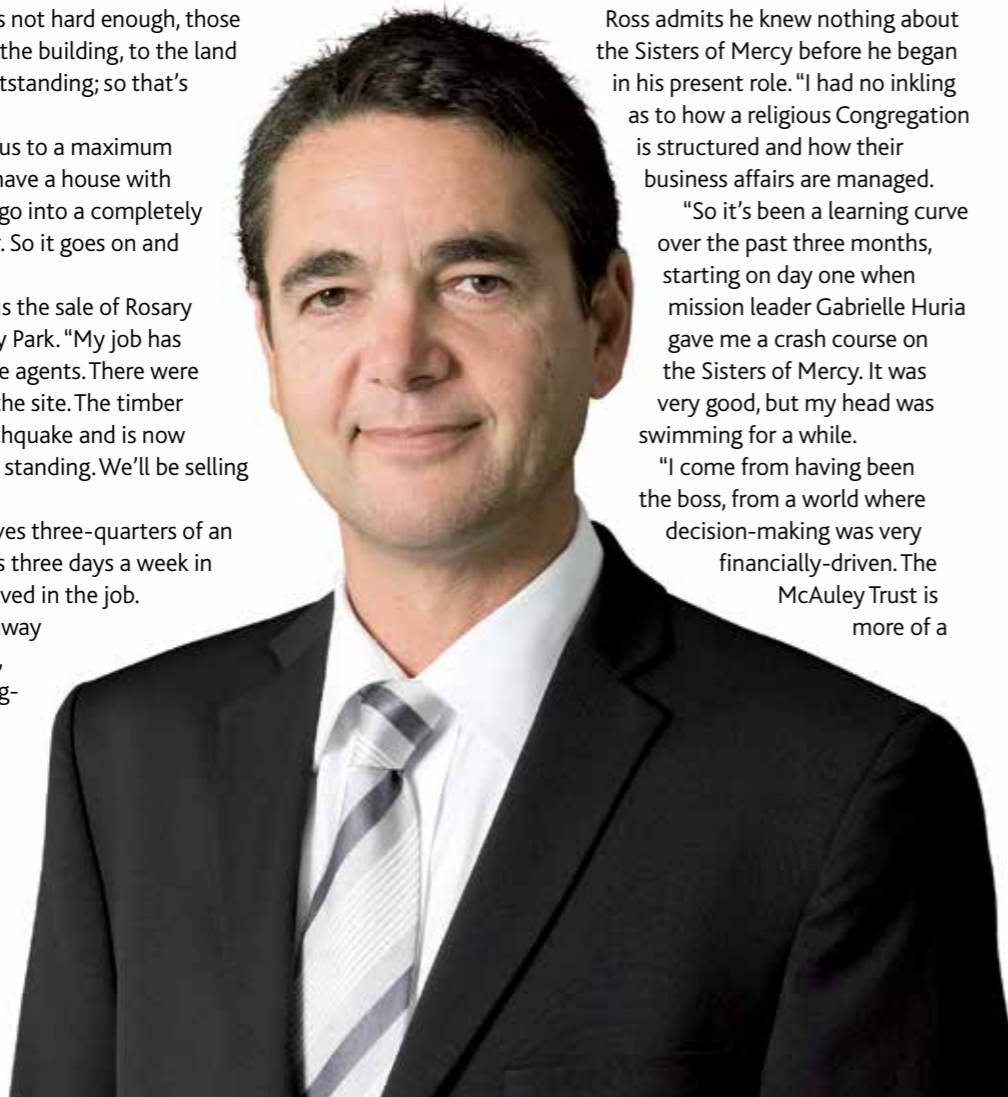
He quickly moved into commercial and industrial valuation and, in the early '90s into project management. In the mid '90s, he oversaw the nationwide roll-out of a telecommunications network for a mobile phone company. From there he moved into commercial and industrial property development with Mainzeal, and later ran a property investment company. "In terms of property, there's not a lot I haven't done.

"If there's one thing that strikes me about our Trust's properties, it's that they are incredibly broad, from the straight-forward to the very complex, and I need to call on the breadth of my experience. If there's something I'm not sure about, I generally know where to go to find the answer."

Ross admits he knew nothing about the Sisters of Mercy before he began in his present role. "I had no inkling as to how a religious Congregation is structured and how their business affairs are managed.

"So it's been a learning curve over the past three months, starting on day one when mission leader Gabrielle Huria gave me a crash course on the Sisters of Mercy. It was very good, but my head was swimming for a while.

"I come from having been the boss, from a world where decision-making was very financially-driven. The McAuley Trust is more of a



## 'Making connections' vital for new administrator

Getting to grips with her new role is Astrid Lambert, appointed in October by the Tiaki Manatu Mercy Ministries Trust Board as Group Administrator.

IN ANNOUNCING HER APPOINTMENT, Trust Board chairman Reuben O'Neill said her role will involve monitoring, supporting and liaising with Mercy's various ministries and providing an effective link between them and the Trust Board.

Astrid expects that the first few months will be focused on "gaining some insights into each of the ministries, so that I am able to understand their challenges and opportunities. As each of the ministries works on their business plans in the coming months, I will be available to support them with this work."

As the Trust has ministries spread throughout the country, "I will be travelling to meet up with each of them," Astrid says.

She has a background in both commercial and not-for-profit business. "I have extensive governance experience, both as a CEO and as a board member and chair of various not-for-profit trusts. I am also a member of the Institute of Directors."

Among her involvements, Astrid lists business mentoring, monitoring financial performance, governance training and support, developing strategies and business plans, business modelling, facility development and project management. "I hope that my range of experience will provide value to the Trust's ministries."

She believes her role will be one of connecting the Trust with its ministries.



GROUP Administrator Astrid Lambert.... connecting Trust with ministries.

"Each of them currently reports monthly to the Trust Board, as well as preparing annual business plans, strategic plans and budgets. Part of my role includes providing support, collating the reports and plans, monitoring and reporting on the activities of the ministries to the Trust Board."

Astrid notes a broad range of Mercy ministries, from "those that are sizeable entities and geared as such, to those that are community-orientated social

enterprises. Each brings its own set of challenges and opportunities. It is important to be able to identify the different 'drivers' within each ministry, and to provide support that will add value to each organisation."

Astrid expects to work mostly with the chairs, CEOs, managers and principals among Mercy's ministries. She identifies most readily with community development and education. "Understanding Mercy's healthcare services will be a priority for me, and I am looking forward to working with our organisations on this."

She recalls being thrown into the "deep end" of project managing a substantial investment in the development of a multi-million-dollar facility a few years ago. "This involved significant technical, financial and legal expertise, so I'm used to managing the challenges of complex projects and enterprises."

Although familiar with the work of the Sisters of Mercy, she admits to having done "quite a bit of research before taking up this position. I have high regard for the sisters and a great respect for their work.

"Their vision is inspiring, and I hope that with future-orientated planning, supported by robust systems and processes, and succession planning, their vision and dreams will continue to inspire others to share in Mercy's great work."

tactile portfolio that involves people. I've come from warehouses and factories, shops and offices, to schools and rest homes, hospitals and houses where people live. So I've had to remind myself in recent months that the answer may not be right, simply because it looks good on the bottom line."

Ross says his biggest challenge has been the immense breadth of the McAuley Trust portfolio. "For its dollar value, it's a huge number of individual properties. And where you've got multiple properties, you get multiple issues, tasks and problems. Just keeping abreast and up-to-date involves a huge exercise in multi-tasking.

"In my head or on my white-board, I'm having to run deployment schedules, in terms of where the 21 Smith St refurbishment is up to. When did I last look at this job? Whom did I last talk to, what needs to be done next? As mere males, we're told we're not good at multi-tasking.

"I'm of the view that, depending on the complexity of the task, the brain can probably cope with and handle between five and 10 projects at one point in time. Whereas I suspect that if you put all the EQC claims we've got on the go, I guess the issues the McAuley Trust has at the moment runs into the hundreds."

Ross says that the Trust is the nicest place he's ever worked in. "It comes back to being that more tactile environment. Commercial organisations by their nature can often be fuelled by greed or ego, by self-interest. Here, from day one, I realised I had walked into something very different.

"People are nice, and they care. All those negative attributes which can surface elsewhere are absent here. And that makes Mercy a much nicer place to come every day. It's something we can cherish and be very proud of."

Earlier this year, Lynda Smith, CEO of Mercy Hospice Auckland, was one of two New Zealanders who joined a group of Australians and Canadians on a week-long Mercy Ethos pilgrimage to Baggot Street, Dublin. She reflects here on the value of that experience.....

## Dublin visit inspires Mercy's future leaders

Spending time in the house built by Catherine McAuley offered a unique chance to reflect on Catherine's style of leadership, and a glimpse of how she approached the issues that confronted her, says Lynda Smith.

"I FIND MYSELF SAYING TO MY TEAM, 'REMEMBER WHAT

Catherine said about taking small steps.' I've had a strong desire to read more about Catherine, to explore her letters and her relationship with the other sisters, to find out more about the links between Sisters of Mercy and nursing pioneer Florence Nightingale.

"Our history wall at Mercy Hospice Auckland, our art work and sculptures all carry more significance for me now and feel more familiar."

The trip to Baggot Street came early in Lynda's role as CEO. "It was important for me to get to know Catherine's story. I felt the responsibility to tell it well, and to inspire others to know about it."

Lynda recalls that on one of the last days of their pilgrimage, the group including fellow Kiwi Mary Curran (Principal, St Catherine's College, Wellington) was charged with comparing the issues Catherine confronted with those faced by Mercy leaders today. "Each in the group enacted a challenge. The skits demonstrated how the basic issues of leadership do not change from century to century – issues of finance, health and personalities; the similarities were striking, if not amusing."

In an age when some worry about what may happen when there are fewer Sisters of Mercy to call on, Lynda is aware of how carefully the sisters have thought about how their legacy will be sustained. "The Mercy International Centre in Baggot Street is a significant building. The sisters there who are charged with telling Catherine's story have been well chosen. We all felt empowered and inspired to carry on Catherine's work, not only by the pilgrimage but by supporting one another in our ministries."

Lynda and Mary Curran met with the Australian group before they went to Dublin, and Lynda has had the chance to catch up with the group in Sydney some time after the event. "To meet before the seed was sown gave us all a sense of the important journey we were about to undertake," Lynda says.

"The power of spending a week with others who hold leadership roles and to reflect together on the task of carrying the mantle of the Sisters of Mercy into the future created a kinship, a common bond amongst us.

"To have the space to consider one's personal leadership, to see how our own values compare and contrast with Catherine's, and to hear how she used her values to make daily decisions, helped to build the foundation for our role in the future.

"The opportunity to meet again in Sydney rekindled the spirit and took us back to Baggot Street. This will be there each time we meet, I'm sure."

Lynda knows that not everyone in Mercy ministries will get the chance to visit the house Catherine built or to walk the streets where she lived. But there are alternatives available for strengthening the Mercy ethos among colleagues in hospice and aged care. "We live today in a world of multimedia," Lynda notes. "So to watch video clips from the other side of the world is something that's at our finger-tips.

"I brought DVDs back with me, and have accessed the website of the Sisters of Mercy many times; these visual and audio tools bring Catherine to us. But what is really important are the



LYNDA Smith was appointed CEO of Mercy Hospice Auckland in June last year; she had previously led the nursing team at the hospice. She is an RN with a passion for palliative care, collaborative leadership and quality in healthcare. Opened in 1979 after many years of end-of-life care provided by Sisters of Mercy in Auckland, Mercy Hospice currently cares for more than 900 patients each year – in their own homes, in residential aged care and in the hospice's 13-bed in-patient unit in Ponsonby.

relationships forged amongst our Mercy colleagues. I appreciate the work being undertaken by mission leader Gabrielle Huria, to bring together Mercy leaders from around New Zealand, to begin finding ways in which we can support each other in Catherine's mission and vision."

Lynda is well aware of the role which hospices play in advocating respect for life. "The 'End of Life Choice Bill' promoted by Labour List MP Maryan Street has been removed from the ballot in recent weeks," says Lynda, "but the debate continues.

"While some nations have legislated to allow 'assisted suicide', the issue remains fraught with difficulty. The New Zealand hospice movement is firmly against assisted suicide. Hospice care aims to assist patients who have a life-limiting condition and their family, to have quality of life for their remaining days, months or years.

"A natural death for those who are aware they are close to dying can allow time to share precious memories, to attend to important business, to achieve special milestones and to say last goodbyes."

The School of St Theresa's in Fusi, Savai'i is a small school in Samoa with a long history. It was founded in 1908 by the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary. Sisters of the Mission also taught there, before the arrival in 2003 of the Sisters of Mercy. Present principal is New Zealand Sister of Mercy Frances Feehan, who filed this report.

## Aussies and Kiwis help school in Fusi

This year there are 11 children in our pre-school, and our roll stands at 85 pupils in Years 1 to 8. In Term 2, we hosted a number of students from Catholic College in Bendigo, who visited us over two weeks in two groups.

THE 16 YOUNG PEOPLE FROM AUSTRALIA CAME AS PART OF the Social Justice strand of their RE programme. They were billeted in pairs with local families, while we hosted the teachers. Sr Tulili arranged the billets and liaised with families. Our volunteers' house, not in use at present, became their base.

On the first morning, the visitors were welcomed with a simple sasa or welcome in song and actions. This included the pre-school children who, like little ones the world over, stole the show.

Over the two weeks, students from Bendigo participated in our school programme. They also had time to take in the sights, and enjoyed our warm sea water. Sr Tulili worked with our teachers to organise a traditional meal and games for our guests.

Catholic College is incredibly generous towards our school, and this year brought us a set of sports tops for the boys.

I am in the process of sewing the school crest on each one! Last year they brought us a netball uniform.

Like all places of learning, St Theresa's is constantly searching for ways to identify and address the education needs of our children, and I acknowledge the staff who are currently working to introduce the new and expanded primary curriculum developed by the Ministry of Education in Samoa. The Government has provided in-service

workshops related to the new Expressive and Visual Arts curriculum.

It has been a lot of learning and a lot of fun, as we have tried our hand at painting, before introducing it to the children! Through the ongoing generosity of Philip Cortesi and his school community at St Anne's in Manurewa and a donation from Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School in Epsom, we have paints and brushes, crayons and paper to implement this new curriculum.

Savai'i is often described as paradise, but life is not all sunshine and sparkling waters. We are fund-raising at present to put topsoil on the field and to repair the driveway.



FUSI: A pupil at St Theresa's School reads, while Sr Tulili listens.

## First lay principal at Samoan primary school

St Joan of Arc School in Leulumoega, Samoa, where Sisters of Mercy have taught since 1977, has its first lay principal.

APPOINTED EARLIER THIS YEAR, MRS LUSIA VAULU TANUVASA is well known at the school, having taught there for 20 years and served as deputy principal, before teaching for 10 years in Government schools in Samoa.

Lusia is excited by recent progress at St Joan of Arc School. She has been involved in professional development this year, assisting teachers to implement a new national curriculum. "Every Monday, staff meet to share presentations on how they are delivering lessons in accord with the new curriculum," Lusia explains.

At the end of Term 2, the school held an English day, with no Samoan spoken. Children presented dramas, songs and poems, performed in front of their parents who came to enjoy the day. Official judges were Mrs Siiva Sala, principal of Paul VI College nearby, and Sr Judith Moroney, who were both impressed with the standard of items, the confidence of



LAY principal Mrs Lusiu Vaulu Tanuvasa.

students, their pronunciation and the polish of their performances.

Lusia is enjoying her new role. "I enjoy working with our teachers, helping them to reflect on their teaching and to plan how to help students do better." She loves drawing children out by using the creative arts, especially drama. Her philosophy is that everything be done for students – "the children must come first," she insists.

NEW SCULPTURE: Srs Teresa Anderson and Bridget Crisp with gardeners Nick Clarke and Moana Waikato at Papatuanuku ki Taurangi Earth Promise Centre at the base of a new sculpture near their garden in Ellerslie, bedecked with prayers in plastic envelopes fluttering in the breeze.

The sculpture was created by a group of young volunteers during an open day at Te Ngākau Waiora Mercy Centre in Epsom, held as part of this year's Auckland Heritage Festival.

Sisters of Mercy and their companions and friends attended a Mercy Day celebration in the parish church close to where the sculpture was being created; they were invited to watch the art work being made and to write a prayer to hang from the sculpture.



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