



Karanga Atawhai

A newsletter for Sisters of Mercy and partners in mission

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Ownership of ministries to change hands

By DENNIS HORTON

For several decades Ngā Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand have placed the governance and management of their ministries in the hands of Tiaki Manatū Ministries Trust while retaining the ownership of these healthcare, education and community development ventures. All this will change with the PJP.

With the creation of Whānau Mercy Ministries, a Ministerial Public Juridic Person (PJP) to be established by the Sisters of Mercy with Vatican approval, both the governance and ownership of these existing ministries will pass to the new entity. Whānau Mercy Ministries will be recognised as the owner of these ministries in both civil and canonical (church) law.

A Trustees group will be formed to provide leadership and governance of the new entity. Members of the Trustees group will be chosen and appointed by the Leadership Team of the Sisters of Mercy. The Sponsorship Committee and the Congregation's Leadership Team are expected to work together later this year to identify people who may be invited to serve as trustees. Initially membership can include sisters but in time the Trustees group is expected to be entirely in lay hands.

A paper outlining the role and responsibilities of trustees has been critiqued by canon lawyer and Australian Sister of Loreto Mary Wright *ibvm*, who has advised the Congregation on issues relating to the PJP over several years. Her feedback on this paper was presented at the June meeting of the Sponsorship Committee and her suggestions are being incorporated by Denise Fox *rsm* who has chaired the PJP Legal Working Party.

Planning is already well in hand for a formation programme for potential trustees. In Mary Wright's view, this formation process should enable participants to speak with confidence about mission. Most of them are likely to be lay people, but they will hold a key leadership role in the church. The ministries for which they will be responsible are first Catholic and then Mercy, not the other way round.

Mary Wright told the Sponsorship Committee that trustees need to be able to talk with confidence to other church leaders, including bishops, about the mission of these ministries. They need to be sure of their ground and have the expertise to speak confidently and authentically about mission, Mary Wright said. It is not so much what they say as their capacity to speak which shows others how important mission is.

She went on to address the question of whether all trustees or a majority should be Catholic. The challenge in a country like New Zealand, where Catholics form only a small proportion of the population, is to ensure that trustees provide a broad

range of skills, all of them committed to mission and able to hold their place with key members of the Catholic Church.

"They need to be people who can speak from their hearts about mission," said Mary Wright.

She emphasised that it is important that the formation for mission they receive gives them the capacity to talk about the gospel of Jesus, and not just about the stories of Mercy. The question was asked, said Mary Wright, whether it is enough that the majority are Catholic and every trustee is committed to gospel values, the Teachings of the Catholic Church and the Mercy story, without necessarily being a Catholic? It will be the decision of the Congregation's Leadership, after advice from the

Sponsorship Committee, as to how the criteria for trustees are defined in the PJP statutes. Vatican authorities will give their opinion on this issue when the draft petition and documents go to Rome.



Mary Wright *ibvm* PHOTO CREDIT UISG

Feedback welcomed

If you have any questions or comments on this newsletter, you are invited to send them directly to either Astrid Lambert (ALambert@somauck.org.nz) or to Richard Kerr-Bell (rkerrbell@somauck.org.nz).

Mission plan aims to ‘form hearts for Mercy’

Plans to provide formation for all those involved in the new Ministerial Public Juridic Person are taking shape, says Richard Kerr-Bell, who works with Margaret Endicott rsm and Lorraine McArthur in the PJP Formation for Mission Committee.

The overall plans envisage three interconnected layers of sky, sea and land, each of which will have its own formation programme. The sky has been designated as Purapura Whetū (eyes of our ancestors) and will include potential trustees of the new PJP.

The sea has been described as Ki Uta Ki Tai (inland to the shore - Mercy made alive) as it moves between sky and land; this will include members of Mercy boards, CEOs and principals, members of Te Waka Tiaki mission team and mission personnel in Mercy ministries.

Land, the third of the layers, has been designated as He Kakano Atawhai (the seeds of Mercy) and includes staff and volunteers in Mercy ministries.

Richard reports that elements for the first year of formation for the Sky programme are already clear, though practical details, dates and venues have still to be decided. The programme will comprise four hui of two days, each including an overnight stay to promote the building of relationships that such an extended stay allows.

The specific aim of the programme is to create a sense of whānau Mercy and to form hearts that will foster a commitment to mission. It is hoped that participants will be helped to ensure that the charism of Mercy remains authentic and vibrant within the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Leaders who take part in the programme will be empowered to make decisions that are informed by the spirit of Mercy. They will learn to recognise that Mercy's

call is to be part of God's mission within the tradition of the Catholic Church. They will also be proactive in living the partnership of equals under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and keen to seek new ways to enhance mutual relationships within the Catholic Church.

The programme will include case studies, group discussion, prayer and reflection and knowledge important for governance in Mercy values and leadership. The range of topics will include Mercy stories in our land, ways of talking about God in our tradition, whānau Mercy and tikanga Mercy.

“While the content of the programme is deep, it is the hui or gathering days that will form the core of ‘forming hearts for Mercy,’” says Richard Kerr-Bell. “Participants will have the chance to develop a real sense of whānau and to appreciate the diversity of Whānau

Mercy Ministries and the many gifts of the Holy Spirit.”

No dates have been set for the programme, but Richard believes it could commence as soon as June or July next year. He anticipates that training for potential Trustees could begin while the process of applying for approval from Rome is under way.

It is expected that a variety of expert presenters will be called on to provide training in specific areas. Preparation of a new mission resource, He Kakano Atawhai (Seeds of Mercy) is almost complete; this will be used as a basic tool for mission formation across all ministries in the months ahead.



Richard Kerr-Bell,
Mission Formation team



Whānaunga Mercy: a graphic from the upcoming mission resource, *He Kakano Atawhai (Seeds of Mercy)*, depicting the unity and diversity of roles within the Mercy whānau.

GRAPHIC DESIGNED BY CHARMINE LOVE FOR TIAKI MANATŪ, USED WITH PERMISSION.