



Karanga Atawhai

A newsletter for Sisters of Mercy and partners in mission

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Featured in this edition of Karanga Atawhai are the seven people who have accepted to serve as trustees on the board of Whānau Mercy Ministries, the ministerial Public Juridic Person (PJP) proposed by Ngā Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand.

'After many months, the Holy See has approved our petition to establish Whānau Mercy Ministries,' says Congregation Leader Sue France rsm. 'We are delighted to announce the appointment of these inaugural trustees and to introduce them here.'

The trustees will be responsible in both canon (church) and civil law for the PJP and its ministries. Their primary

task will be to ensure that the new entity is faithful to the call of the Gospel through Mercy mission in the tradition of Catherine McAuley. The trustees will also ensure that the decisions and business affairs of the PJP and its ministries are authentically Catholic. A celebration to mark the inauguration of the Whānau Mercy Ministries, will be held in Auckland on 25 March next year.

Mercy PJP offers new ways of bringing lay gifts to modern world

Among the seven people nominated to serve as trustees on the board of Whānau Mercy Ministries, only one is a Sister of Mercy. Denise Fox rsm has been named by the Congregation's Leadership Team to chair the inaugural board which includes three lay women and three lay men.

Denise's association with the Sisters of Mercy began in her secondary school days when she was educated at St Mary's College in Wellington. Since joining the Sisters of Mercy she has served in the management and governance of Mercy ministries in a number of settings which include teaching, ministry leadership, directorship on ministry and national boards. She spent nine years as a director of the Mercy International Association, two of them as chair of the MIA board.

As a former Leader of the Sisters of Mercy Wellington and Ngā Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand, Denise has a long-held interest in how Mercy ministries might be made sustainable and able to flourish, even when there may be no sisters to guide and nurture them.

Denise says she is excited by the courage of the Congregation in taking this step to establish Whānau Mercy Ministries and allow it to move to a new governance model for its incorporated ministries. 'The emergence of ministerial Public Juridic Persons (PJPs) is one creative response to the call by which the gifts or charisms of the laity are brought to the mission of the church in the modern world.



'The Congregation is entrusting lay leaders to build on the charism and traditions of the Sisters of Mercy and to embody gospel values, Catholic social teaching and the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The trustees will ensure, as faithfully as Catherine McAuley and her sisters, that they are attuned to the signs of the times.'

Denise believes that this will allow Mercy ministries to respond to emerging needs and to flourish into the future. They will be able to develop new expressions of the 'gift of mercy', to address what Pope Francis has described as 'new forms of poverty and vulnerability' as society changes.

'The Sisters of Mercy have a long tradition of engaging in strategic partnerships and adapting to enable our ministries to flourish,' says Denise.

'In forming a new PJP we are building on this tradition, engaging with others in new ways to ensure the future of a shared mission of Mercy.'

'While the first trustees have a huge task before them, establishing the PJP and gaining the trust of the ministries, I have every confidence, as did Catherine and the early sisters, that if this work is of God it will flourish.'

Whakapapa links trustees to Catherine McAuley and her sisters

Philip Alexander-Crawford (Ngāti Hine, Ngāti Rēhia, Ngāpuhi) has been involved with the Sisters of Mercy for more than three years as a Trustee on Tiaki Manatū, the trust which oversees Mercy's healthcare, education and community development ministries. He has also served as chair of Te Ukaipo Mercy Initiatives for Rangatahi, a ministry based in West Auckland that works with youth and their families to help them achieve their potential.

'This has been a rewarding and positive experience for me,' says Phil, 'one which has allowed me to live my faith in supporting mahi that I really believe in. To be able now to take this knowledge and experience into Whānau Mercy Ministries as a trustee is a privilege for which I am grateful.'

Phil says his personal kaupapa is based on whānau in its wider sense (physical, emotional and spiritual) and on whakapapa that includes Catherine McAuley and her Sisters of Mercy. He has a strong sense of whakapono (faith and trust) and ako (teaching and learning). He hopes to make a useful contribution to the collective mahi of this new Trust.



Honoured by sisters' confidence to carry Mercy mission forward

Catherine Fyfe's associations with Mercy began with a couple of years at St James Primary School in Palmerston North. Her father was a banker and her family moved frequently. Her last three years of schooling were spent at Villa Maria College in Christchurch. 'This was my home from an educational perspective,' she says.



The Mercy links were re-established about seven years ago when she was appointed to the board of proprietors of St Mary's College in Wellington. A few months later, she was asked to chair the board of St Catherine's College in Kilbirnie.

'We had St Catherine's property progressing well when I was called back to St Mary's to take over from the retiring chair. The last three years have seen us working hard to bring the St Mary's campus into a modern and attractive place of learning for our students. Mercy's special character is alive and well!'

Having worked for years as head of Human Resources for banks and insurance companies, Catherine spent four years managing HR for a retirement village company. 'After a career in finance, it was an extraordinary privilege to experience the aged care industry with all its challenges and rewards,' she says.

She and husband Steven have two sons and live between Arrowtown and Wellington. 'I have just become a nana for the first time during lockdown and we've finally been able to have our first trip to the UK to meet our grandson.

We spent a month at the playground and library and playing in the garden with a 16-month-old. I hope to teach him to be an avid gardener!'

Catherine feels excited to have been appointed as trustee to the board of Whānau Mercy Ministries. 'The vision Catherine McAuley dreamed of so long ago in Dublin is vital and as necessary as ever in Aotearoa today, just in a slightly different form,' she says. 'The Sisters of Mercy have given so much to education, health and social services, and I feel honoured that they have the confidence in us to take our Mercy mission forward.

'It was an extraordinary experience at our first meeting to have the sisters hand over to us and have the confidence to leave the room. We must continue to ensure that our Mercy traditions give support to those in need.'

Trustee welcomes the chance to bring diversity to board table

Judy Whiteman says she has been inspired for many years by the work of Catherine McAuley and her vision of providing practical assistance to those in need. In 2007-08 she undertook some capacity development work with the Auckland-based Mercy community development ministries Te Ūkaipo and Te Waipuna Puawai.

'From 2014 to 2019 I was a director on the board of Te Waipuna Puawai, serving as chair for the last two of these years. This also meant involvement with Tiaki Manatū Trust. Over this time, I was exposed to the values of the Sisters of Mercy and the variety of ministries they have developed.'

Nominated as a trustee of Whānau Mercy Ministries, Judy says her hope is to help ensure that the work which the Sisters of Mercy have begun continues. 'What excites me most is the chance to share in maintaining and potentially growing the amazing legacy of Catherine McAuley and her sisters in New Zealand.'

Committed to helping people achieve success for themselves and their organizations, she has been a director, facilitator, mentor and consultant in a range of commercial and not-for-profit sectors. 'Whilst having a diverse background in governance, I count curiosity as one of my gifts. I ask questions to understand and explore what has gone before and what is possible in going forward.'



Judy acknowledges that she is not Catholic and did not have a traditional Christian upbringing.

'But I like to think that bringing a different perspective to the issues the new Trust faces will add to the diversity of thinking around the board table. I have been described as open and honest, practical, and down-to-earth. People don't have to die wondering what I am thinking!'

Judy is a chartered member of the Institute of Directors New Zealand and a member of the Chartered Accountants of Australia and New Zealand. She is currently a trustee of New Zealand Housing Foundation and a board member of two other organisations. She previously held a governance role with Presbyterian Support Northern.

Mercy's PJP a model for an emerging church

Gerald Scanlan's links with Mercy began in 2019, with his appointment to the Legal (civil and canonical) Working Party formed to help lay the groundwork for Whānau Mercy Ministries. He was later invited to join the board which oversees the work of Mercy Villas, the independent living facility developed by the Sisters of Mercy in Upper Hutt.



'Through these experiences, I have developed a deepening regard for and appreciation of the Mercy charism,' says Gerald. 'I have been inspired and humbled by the wisdom and courage of Ngā Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand to reimagine their ministry, to share its leadership and to position it for an unknown future.'

Gerald has also been impressed by the Congregation's focus on Te Tiriti o Waitangi and care of creation. In both these areas, 'there is a model for an emerging church, with a renewed commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, both radical and simple in its lived expression and witness.'

Gerald sees the first years of the new ministerial PJP as vital to its future governance. 'I bring extensive leadership and governance experience within the Catholic Church, at both local and national levels, and a lifelong faith commitment. I also offer a wide range of business, people and relationship management skills.'

Whānau Mercy Ministries recognises the 'suffering Christ' in the poor and will grow and adapt to addressing 'new forms of poverty and vulnerability' according to the needs of time and place.

- Canonical statutes of Whānau Mercy Ministries.

Role brings fresh challenge to ‘think and act as a Mercy woman’

Charlotte Cummings has expressed delight in her appointment as a trustee of Whānau Mercy Ministries. ‘I have been privileged to have Sisters of Mercy as part of my whānau and whakapapa, with two of my aunts living out their own calling and ministry as professed sisters,’ she says.

Educated at Villa Maria College in Christchurch, Charlotte says she is grateful for how this new role ‘will continue to shape and challenge how I think and act as a Mercy woman.’

Her professional background has included working in health and social services leadership, particularly with Christian charities. ‘So I look forward to drawing from this experience in supporting the various forms of outreach which are part of Whānau Mercy Ministries.’

Alongside her current consultancy work, her involvement as a counsellor in private practice keeps her keenly aware of the difficulties which many New Zealanders face in their lives today. ‘My work with people in need will inform my perspective as a trustee.’

Charlotte sees as a key challenge facing trustees of Whānau Mercy Ministries that of discerning how to take Mercy forward in Aotearoa, ‘building on the legacy of the Sisters of Mercy in this land. Ensuring that Mercy values remain central in the future of the Trust will be a vital focus as we journey on.’



Family links with Mercy traditions

Michael Quigg is an employment lawyer with Quigg Partners, a Wellington-based legal firm which he and his brother David established over 20 years ago. Michael specialises in employment law.

During his career he has developed expertise in governance and management matters. In this capacity he has presented on behalf of the Institute of Directors in New Zealand at its various conference forums and chairman workshops for over 25 years.

Michael was a foundation pupil at St Francis Xavier School in Tawa and then attended St Patrick’s College in Wellington. He obtained his LLB and LLM degrees from Victoria University.

Two of Michael’s aunts were nuns. One was Sister Maria Stephen of the Home of Compassion; it was through her that Michael came to serve on the board of the Home of Compassion in Island Bay prior to the closure of its hospital.

His other aunt, the late Sister Monica Quigg, approached Michael before her death earlier this year and explained what was being proposed by the Sisters of Mercy regarding the future of their ministries. This led to Michael’s application and the invitation to serve as a trustee of Whānau Mercy Ministries. Michael hopes to bring his legal and business experience to this appointment, along with his vocational background.

In continuing the mission Jesus Christ gave to the Church and in fidelity to the Second Vatican Council, the Sisters of Mercy have shared their charism with the laity, in particular their lay colleagues, in the administration of the proper apostolic works of the Congregation....

Entrusted with the charism of Catherine McAuley to be instruments of God’s mercy and loving kindness to all in need, especially the poor, their lay colleagues will carry into the future the Mercy charism to ensure the incorporated ministries of Whānau Mercy Ministries are authentically Catholic and continue to give expression to the mercy of God in today’s world.

- Preamble, Canonical Statutes of Whānau Mercy Ministries.

