



Reflection: Making profound differences locally

Recently I have been re-reading Margaret Wheatley's book *'Who do we choose to be?'* in which she offers insights into facing reality, claiming leadership and restoring sanity. Her thoughts on 'choosing to lead well in collapse' seem appropriate to me as I write this reflection in Mental Health Week. Each of you reading this Mercy Ministry Companions update is a ministry leader and decision-maker in some way. When the world around us appears to be in a state of collapse, as leaders we can place great pressure on ourselves and on others to stop things unravelling even further. We can take a range of actions but how do we remain 'grounded' and hope-filled in such an environment?

Wheatley suggests that in times of collapse we need to keep things in perspective if our responses to the chaos around us are to be effective. Most of us are not called to lead on the national or global stages, but our leadership is vital in our local Mercy organisations. She writes of effective leaders who are finding new ways to serve.

"These leaders cannot prevent the unravelling of our global civilization and that is not their ambition. They aspire to make a profound difference locally, in the lives of people in their communities and organizations."¹

"... they persevere because they are committed to doing the best they can for people. They have learned that nearly all people desire to do good work in good relationships with their colleagues. In full awareness of the trials and tribulations that will not cease, they offer their leadership skills to create islands of sanity, places of possibility and sanctuary where the destructive dynamics of collapse are kept at bay ... for as long as they can."²

Catherine McAuley recognised the importance of attending to each 'local place' with its own particular ideas and feelings. She also saw the value of taking small steps rather than great strides in reflecting our stance towards those who are poor. 'Local' can expand or shrink depending on the focus of our advocacy, support, practical assistance and our worldview. Doing what is possible where we are and as well as we can with the resources at hand, is a thread running through the vision of our founders and it lives on in us – these small steps can set us on the way of an exciting journey!

In his teachings and through his example, Jesus responded to the needs of the persons with whom he was interacting locally in the towns and villages, which formed part of his journey to Jerusalem. The journey to Jerusalem was not easy. As he spoke to the crowds, healed the sick and embraced the outcast, Jesus was also teaching his followers about the vast expanse of God's love which is broader than they (or we) could grasp or imagine. How blessed are we to have Catherine and the other founders who are part of the family of Mercy Ministry Companions as sources of inspiration on our Gospel-inspired journey, especially when things become difficult.

Imagine your true and best self – heart, mind and spirit – contributing to *'an island of sanity'* in your workplace. Your daily leadership choices can create *'places of possibility and sanctuary'* for those you have the privilege of leading and serving. In collaboration with your fellow travellers, you make such a positive difference in the lives of others. May you have the imagination, energy, grace, sense of perspective and good humour to continue your life-giving service alongside your ministry colleagues ... for as long as you can.

Annette Schneider RSM

^{1&2} [Wheatley, Margaret. 2017, p 48-49. *Who do we choose to be?* [Oakland CA]: [Berret-Koehler Publishers].

MMC Trustees visit McAuley House

In September, Mercy Ministry Companions (MMC) Trustee Directors visited McAuley House in Footscray, to better understand how the service supports women and children who have faced family violence and homelessness, to take control of their lives.

Carol Vale, acting CEO of McAuley Community Services for Women, and Felicity Pringle, Head of Marketing, Advocacy & Fundraising, welcomed the Trustees with an opening prayer and a moving Welcome to Country. They then led a tour of McAuley House to show how the venue is a place for rest, recovery and reconnection, as well as a hub for women and children who have moved into the surrounding community.

The Trustee Directors also visited the nearly completed 14-unit family violence accommodation location, which will be officially opened in late October.



Anthony Loschiavo, MMC EO, and Felicity Pringle, Head Marketing, Advocacy & Fundraising, at McAuley House.



Carol Vale giving Trustee Directors a tour of the family violence accommodation centre.



Trustee Directors sit down with McAuley staff. (L to R) Carole Vale, Tony Goad, Margery Jackman (hidden), Matthew Clancy, Des Powell AM, Anthony Loschiavo, Felicity Pringle, Gabrielle McMullen AM and Emma Constantine, Head of Innovation at McAuley House.



Trustee Directors at the new 14-unit family violence accommodation centre. (L to R) Gabielle McMullen AM, Matthew Clancy Chair MCSAL, Margery Jackman, Carmel Ross, Carol Vale, Margaret Bounader, Tony Goad, Des Powell AM.

Mercy Education Leadership Dinner and Conference

In early October, MMC Chair Margaret Bounader, Trustee Directors Gabrielle McMullen AM and Tony Goad, together with Annette Schneider RSM, MMC Formation Coordinator, and Anthony Loschiavo, MMC EO, attended the Mercy Education Dinner with Mercy Education leaders.

Guests farewelled retiring leaders Mercy Education Board Chair, Sylvia Williams RSM; Board Director Tony Wheeler; and St Brigid's College Principal, Carmen Cox.

Margaret Bounader spoke to attendees about MMC's journey to where it is today and what it means to be a public juridic person. Margaret thanked Mercy Education Chair, Georgina Smith, and her fellow Mercy Education Board Directors, and Christopher Houlihan, CEO, and his Executive Team for their hard work and leadership in what is a challenging time for Catholic education. In wishing the participants an enriching and enjoyable leadership program, Margaret reminded them of the timeless words of Catherine McAuley: "It is our working hearts that [God] longs for".



Tony Wheeler, retiring MEL Director, and Mary Moloney RSM, Principal of Academy of Mary Immaculate, who celebrated 40 years as a professed Sister of Mercy.



Carmel McCormick RSM, College Chaplain at St Aloysius College North Melbourne, and Margaret Bounader, MMC Chair.

The following day, Annette Schneider RSM and Gabrielle McMullen AM attended the Mercy Education Leadership (MEL) Conference and Mass, the theme of which was: Opening our door to an emerging future. Ageing and Disability Commissioner NSW, Robert Fitzgerald AM, presented the keynote address, exploring Faith and Leadership in a Church without Walls, and Judy Young and Janelle Sheahan spoke to the group about MEL's response to Anti-modern Slavery. The conference concluded with the celebration of Mass led by Reverend Dr Brendan Reed.



Ageing and Disability Commissioner NSW, Robert Fitzgerald AM.



Kerrie Fraser, Principal of Mercedes College in Perth and Annette Schneider RSM, MMC Formation Coordinator.

2022 National Catholic Education Conference

The 2022 National Catholic Education Conference, entitled 'The Future is Listening', took place in Melbourne on 4-7 September. Trustee Director Gabrielle McMullen AM and Mercy Education representatives were amongst over 1,300 local, interstate and international delegates.



The conference program, covered a range of topics including Catholic identity and mission, leadership and governance, learning and teaching, student wellbeing, and parent engagement. Plenary sessions with international and local keynote speakers were interspersed with parallel workshops, while live panels fostered conversations on Catholic education in the challenging contemporary environment. Both the Federal Education Minister, Jason Clare MP, and Victorian Minister for Education, Natalie Hutchins MP, addressed the conference.

On the morning of day three, delegates gathered for Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral, with chief celebrant Archbishop Peter A. Comensoli, followed by a procession through the city to return to the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.

After a period of six years and two delays due to the pandemic, the Conference was a wonderful opportunity to catch up with colleagues from across the national Catholic education sector.

Mercy Connect team at the Henty Machinery Field Days

The Mercy Connect team was pleased to attend the first day of the Henty Machinery Field Days (20-22 September), Southern Australia's single biggest agricultural event.

Mercy Connect's Elizabeth Sayers, Stakeholder Engagement Manager, and Harrison Heath, Marketing and Communications Coordinator, joined with other local volunteers to sell raffle tickets in support of the Henty Respite Trust. The Trust is currently raising money to fund the construction of Avondale Place, which will soon include a new respite facility, and four 2-bedroom units for people living with disability.

The team enjoyed a beautiful, sunny day attended by many thousands of locals, with wonderful support and generosity shown towards the Avondale Place project.



Matthew Clancy, Chair MCSA, and Trent Dean, CEO of Mercy Connect.



Mercy Connect's Harrison Heath, Marketing and Communications Coordinator and Trent Dean, CEO.

Recognising a community leader

Mercy Connect is thrilled to be announced as a finalist in two categories of the 2022 Murray-Riverina Regional Business Awards: 'Outstanding Community Organisation', and 'Excellence in Innovation'.

The Murray-Riverina Regional Business Awards, run by not-for-profit organisation Business NSW, recognises and celebrates business growth, resilience, entrepreneurship and success across the region.

This is another wonderful acknowledgment of Mercy Connect and their dedicated and compassionate staff who continue to support those in need to live fulfilled lives. Winners will be announced at a gala on 21 October.

Supporting Young People to Recover from the Devastating Impact of Suicide

MacKillop Family Services has a long and proud history of supporting children, young people and adults to cope with change, loss and grief, through its highly successful Seasons for Growth programs.

Suicide is the leading cause of death for young people under 25 years in Australia, and previous evaluations have highlighted the value of the programs for early intervention and postvention work with young people.



Building on key insights from more than 350,000 participants over the past 26 years, MacKillop has collaborated with Seasons for Growth author, Professor Anne Graham A, at Southern Cross University, along with a high level national advisory group, to develop a new program, Seasons for Life. The program will provide schools with a roadmap to establish support for students and develop resources within their local community.

“This new program, which is provided free to Australian secondary schools, will support young people in small peer groups to develop knowledge and skills to manage change, loss and grief. It will strengthen the knowledge and skills of the family and school staff directly supporting young people”, said MacKillop’s Program Manager, Fiona McCallum.

Funding support from the Department of Health and Aged Care, will ensure every high school across Australia has access to these programs along with training and ongoing support.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the Seasons for Growth and Seasons for Life programs.

Victorian Protecting Children Award winners

Staff at MacKillop Family Services were honoured to receive a number of Victorian Protecting Children Awards at an event held during Child Protection Week (4-10 September).

The Victorian Protecting Children Awards recognise dedicated teams, groups and individuals who demonstrate excellence in protecting children, young people and families.

MacKillop staff and programs won four of the 11 categories in this annual event. Another five MacKillop staff and carers were finalists, and a further four staff members and teams were recognised as nominees in the Awards.

MacKillop’s CEO, Dr Robyn Miller, paid tribute to all staff involved.

“Seeing the work that goes on every single day and night, and the compassion that people display for the children in their care is deeply humbling for me.



[Click here](#) to read more about MacKillop’s awards.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the 2022 Victorian Protecting Children Awards.

Welcome to MMC Daniela Paradiso



Mercy Ministry Companions (MMC) are delighted to welcome Daniela Paradiso on a permanent, part-time basis as the MMC Ministry Property Consultant. Daniela will be working with us on Mondays and Wednesdays, while still retaining her two-days a week for the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea.

Daniela brings extensive skills and experience to our team – there would be few people who would know more about the MPL property portfolio. Welcome Daniela!

Mackillop gives Power to Kids



The instance of sexual exploitation of children residing in care is alarmingly high. Despite the relatively low number of children in residential care, they account for over 80% of child exploitation reports for this cohort.

Power to Kids is a program designed and implemented by MacKillop Family Services in partnership with the University of Melbourne, to respond to the high risk of child exploitation, harmful sexual behaviour and dating violence for young people in care. The project was designed in consultation with an expert advisory group of key researchers, policy makers and practitioners working in the field of child sexual abuse.

Two research projects were conducted around the Power to Kids program in residential care and home-based care, and the program was piloted and evaluated in MacKillop residential care homes. Power to Kids is now being implemented across all MacKillop homes and, through The MacKillop Institute, to all residential care providers in Australia.

[Click here](#) for more information on the Power to Kids program.

Werribee Mercy Hospital hosts GenV milestone event

In early September, Werribee Mercy Hospital hosted the one-year anniversary of the Murdoch Children's Research Institute's GenV study.

The world-first study, which launched at Werribee's Mercy Hospital, tracks the health and wellbeing of Victorians from birth to old age, and aims to better understand and treat the causes of modern childhood health problems such as obesity, asthma, autism, food allergies and mental illness.



To-date, almost 60,000 babies and parents have joined the study, which is recruiting in every birthing hospital across the state. The anniversary also marked a recruitment milestone of more than 22,000 babies since launching one year ago.

State Medical Research Minister, Jaala Pulford, attended the event and also announced a \$685,000 grant for the GenV Maternal Vaccine Study. This study will examine data on pregnancy and infant vaccine safety outcomes in the first year of life for 20,000 mothers and their babies.



Award for Joe Konyneburg

MMC would like to congratulate Joe Konyneburg, MMC Business Manager, who was recently awarded Life Membership of Catholic Education Business Administrators (CEBA) for his outstanding contribution to the organisation. Congratulations from all at MMC on this well-deserved honour.

(L to R) Joe Konyneburg, MMC Business Manager; Helen Boland, Governance Officer; Annette Schneider RSM, Formation Coordinator; Daniela Paradiso, MMC Property Consultant; Anthony Loschiavo, MMC EO.