



Mercy Ministry Companions

A Guide for Board Chairs, Deputy Chairs, Directors, CEOs, Principals, Senior Leadership teams, middle leaders and other groups to accompany the recording of the MMC Conference Keynote Address delivered by

**Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv, Bishop of Parramatta, entitled
“*EMBODYING GOD’S MERCY FOR THE WORLD: Re-imagining mission, identity and esprit de corps today*” on 27 October 2022.**

This Resource Guide is provided to assist Board Chairs, Directors, CEOs, Principals, Senior Leadership teams, Mission Co-ordinators, middle leaders and others to reflect on our identity and our mission as Mercy Ministry Companions. The resources can be used by small groups (e.g. as part of a Board meeting, a regular Exec team meeting or departmental meeting or staff formation offering) or as a self-paced ongoing formation opportunity for people currently in these leadership roles or for emerging leaders.

The recording of the 27 October Keynote Address and responses from panel members can be considered in five (5) parts. The contents of each Part are summarized below:

Part 1: Introduction (Begins at 00:04:40)

Bishop Long introduces the Keynote by setting the context for the establishment of Mercy Ministry Companions by the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea. He reminds us that:

1. MMC is called to become a ‘best practice’ model of a ministerial public juridic person (MPJP) in the Australian Church
2. Religious congregations have long been prophets, meeting needs where they found them and continuing to renew their ministries and re-establish them when necessary in response to the call of God’s Spirit
3. MMC is a fresh way of embodying the Gospel of mercy, a reimagining of the founding charism of Mercy in the tradition of Catherine McAuley. It is a way of saying for ministries that ‘our best days are not behind us but before us.’

Part 2: Where the river flows (Begins at 00:10:21)

Points made by Bishop Long include:

1. Religious were often viewed as a cheap labour force within the Church, keeping the community service, education, health and aged care and other ministries going.
2. The call of religious women and men is primarily to scan the horizons around them to determine where emerging needs are and to find ways of working with others to meet those needs.
3. Religious were like an ‘advance party’. The world and the Church need such people to lead them to new thresholds and crossroads where God is calling us to travel.
4. Sometimes we fall into the trap of trying to keep the old ways going, wasting valuable energy in doing so and missing the fresh insights and opportunities for collaboration.
5. MMC is a new Church entity, called to go where the river flows, to be alert to the gaps between the Gospel and the realities of the contexts in which we operate.

6. An urgent need in our time is to critique where we are being called to venture, to find the spaces where the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are intersecting.
7. Another urgent need is to be purposeful in reclaiming the call of lay people, women and men, to take their place as leaders within the Church. MMC can be a sign of hope in this area.

Part 3: Myth drift or mission focused (Begins at 00:19:51)

Key points include:

1. Large faith-based entities such as MMC face the challenge of ensuring that their mission focus does not weaken. External factors can put great pressure on our mission focus e.g. increasing secularism in our culture, efforts to balance the budget, corporate demands.
2. Directors, CEOs, Principals and other mission-leaders must interiorize the founding stories of their ministries and make decisions which align with the core values. If they do not, then the mission focus will drift. For this reason, the ongoing formation of leaders is critically important.
3. Ministry leaders in our time need to be very clear about the identity of their organization if they are to engage with a dominant culture which may be quite different from the core values of the ministry.
4. As leaders we need to foster regular practices which keep us attuned to our purpose, identity and vision and enable us to be true to our core values. Fruitful regular practices include prayer and reflection, critical thinking and reflective practice.

Part 4: The new relational paradigm (Begins at 00:25:42)

Key points include:

1. The breaking down of 'the care economy', in part due to the COVID pandemic, has contributed to a breaking down of human and social infrastructure.
2. Care should be at the centre of our economy – what would Australia look like if we really placed 'care' at the centre and celebrated it?
3. What would our Church look like if its structures and relationships are configured in such a way that we can be a source of hope for people and our planet?
4. We are called to be a synodal Church, a church where clericalism is replaced by a discipleship of equals and the creation of a new culture of humility, accountability and service. When the equality of all the baptized is lived out, everyone can recognize and embrace the many opportunities which come for ministry and service of others.
5. Pope Francis continually calls us as Church to embrace our mission to engage with the poor and those on the peripheries of society. Our Church might look very different if we reformed ourselves and our actions and did this consistently.
6. As ministry and mission leaders, we might embrace a more nuanced 'bottom line' in future – the bottom line where God signs off on what we have done during the year. While being in the black is a source of satisfaction, a deeper sense of satisfaction arises when our work reflects the values we espouse, the mission we process and the governance that frames our decision-making.
7. Catherine McAuley and other founders like her embodied the boundary-breaking spirit of Jesus in the Gospel. All were able to come to the table. We draw inspiration from them today as we take up the call to be partners in a shared destiny of hope, communion and life for all.

Questions for Reflection following the Keynote Address.

1. It is in our DNA as catalysts of God's new order to go where the river flows in order to explore new frontiers of engagement and new possibilities of solidarity. **Where and how do you think you could find and witness to the God of life and love today?**
2. The living out of the mission and founding values at all levels of the organizational culture is vital to Mercy Ministry Companions. **What educational, formative and developmental processes do you think are needed to ensure its effectiveness? How do we invest in such a way that mission is actually driving the business in decision-making and values-based outcomes?**
3. Re-founding is critical to the identity, mission and esprit de corps (shared spirit) of the movement. **How do we as guardians and stewards of the founding charism not only prevent the myth drift but also give new expressions to it?**
4. **How can we ensure that the structures and relationships within MMC model the lifegiving, circular, symbiotic and co-operative relational God?**

Part 5: Responses to Bishop Long (Begins at 00:36:47)





Three Conference participants were invited to give a 5-minute response to Bishop Long's address. The panel members were chosen as, alongside Bishop Long, each one had also been a participant in the recent Plenary Council of the Church in Australia.

Eveline Crotty RSM (Leader of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea and Chair of the Sponsors Council of Mercy Ministry Companions)



Cathy Jenkins (Executive Director, Mission Leadership, Mercy Health Australia)

Dr Maeve Heaney VDMF (Director of the Xavier Centre for Theological Formation, Australian Catholic University)



Resources included in this Resource Guide package are:

-  Vimeo recording of the seminar <https://vimeo.com/778357282>
-  This Resource Guide
-  PDF copy of Bishop Long's Keynote Address
-  PDF of Eveline Crotty's response to Bishop Long's Address

Using Part 1

-  View the Introduction to the video presentation
-  As needed, the video can be paused for conversation.

Using Part 2

-  View this section on the video recording
-  Invite small group conversation or personal reflection on the question below.

- ✚ It is in our DNA as catalysts of God’s new order to go where the river flows in order to explore new frontiers of engagement and new possibilities of solidarity. *Where and how do you think you could find and witness to the God of life and love today?*

Using Part 3

- ✚ View this section on the video recording
- ✚ Invite small group conversation or personal reflection on the questions below.
The living out of the mission and founding values at all levels of the organizational culture is vital to Mercy Ministry Companions. *What educational, formative and developmental processes do you think are needed to ensure its effectiveness? How do we invest in such a way that mission is actually driving the business in decision-making and values-based outcomes?*
Re-founding is critical to the identity, mission and esprit de corps (shared spirit) of the movement. *How do we as guardians and stewards of the founding charism not only prevent the myth drift but also give new expressions to it?*

Using Part 4

- ✚ View this section on the video recording.
- ✚ Invite small group conversation or personal reflection on the question below.
- ✚ *How can we ensure that the structures and relationships within MMC model the lifegiving, circular, symbiotic and co-operative relational God?*

Engaging with the questions for reflection

- ✚ Invite some sharing about the insights which have emerged in the conversations or personal reflection on the questions posed by Bishop Long. The questions are located at the end of the text of his Keynote Address and have also been included in Parts 1 - 4 above for ease of reference.

Using Part 5

As you view each response on the video recording, note down any points of particular relevance to your leadership role.

- ✚ Eveline Crotty RSM
- ✚ Dr Maeve Heaney VDMF
- ✚ Cathy Jenkins

How would you respond to Bishop Vincent’s address if asked to do so? Find an opportunity to share your response with a colleague.

Concluding remarks

I hope this Resource Guide is a helpful means of revisiting the Conference Keynote Address and panel responses if you were there in person on Day 1 or for sharing Bishop Long’s insights with your

ministry colleagues in small, manageable 'bytes'. I would appreciate any feedback you can provide which would make the resource even more effective.

My gratitude for their assistance in developing this Resource Guide goes to Georgie Thomas from Mercy Health and Helen Boland from Mercy Ministry Companions.

If you would value further assistance with the ongoing formation of Board members, CEOs, Leadership teams and those in designated leadership roles within your ministry, you are most welcome to contact me at annette.schneider@mercyministrycompanions.org.au

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December 9, 2022