



Mercy Ministry
Companions

Connections

The Newsletter of Mercy Ministry Companions

May 2025



Reflections from Rome

Gabrielle McMullen AM, Trustee Director

It was a significant time to be in Rome – the days between Pope Francis' funeral and the commencement of the conclave which elected Pope Leo XIV. I was there for the *Inclusive Governance in a Synodal Church* symposium which brought together 30 experts and practitioners in Church governance. The symposium had been scheduled for 28-30 April, months before these historic occurrences.

Now, as the delegates gathered in Rome, we were in a time of transition, moving from the familiar to the unknown, what is termed a 'liminal space'. The conference focused on lay leadership in the Church, which had been promoted by Pope Francis, and on synodality, an invitation from Pope Francis to "journey together ... to serve our brothers and sisters along the way"⁽¹⁾. We asked ourselves would the new pope continue to promote wider participation in the life of the Church as Pope Francis had done?

It was against this background that we came together at the Australian Catholic University (ACU) campus in Rome to consider the outcomes of the first year of the *Inclusive Governance in a Synodal Church* project. The project has been funded by the Porticus Foundation, and is led by Adjunct Professor Susan Pascoe, a Director of Mercy Health, and hosted by ACU. I am a member of the project steering committee.

[Read more](#)



Edmund Rice Feast Day

The feast day of Blessed Edmund Rice was celebrated on 5 May. Edmund Rice was a man of deep faith, compassion and unwavering commitment to justice and education. Born in Ireland in 1762, Edmund dedicated his life to serving the marginalised, founding schools for poor and disadvantaged boys and establishing the Christian Brothers. On this day, we remember his enduring message "The good seed will grow up in the children's hearts". His mission is carried forward in the works of MacKillop Family Services.



Reconciliation Week 2025

Reconciliation Week is celebrated from 27 May – 3 June. Two significant milestones on the journey towards reconciliation are commemorated on these dates, which mark the beginning and conclusion of National Reconciliation week each year.

- The success of the Referendum on 27 May 1967, when Australians voted to change the Constitution. This enabled Aboriginal Australians to be counted as part of the population and acknowledged as equal citizens, and recognised that the Commonwealth would be able to make laws on their behalf.
- The Mabo decision by the Australian High Court, handed down on 3 June 1992, recognised the existence of native title in Australia. This landmark decision acknowledged the traditional ownership and rights of Indigenous people, particularly the Meriam people of the Murray Islands, to their land. It overturned the doctrine of terra nullius, which had been used to justify European colonisation.

We know that the journey to authentic and meaningful reconciliation is a challenging one and that there is much unfinished business for us as a nation. The focus for 2025 is “Bridging now to next”. Within Mercy Ministry Companions, we each have a role to play in bringing about reconciliation as we journey together in this Jubilee Year as ‘pilgrims of hope’. Respectfully, each of us contributes to building relationships and inclusive communities which value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories, cultures, and futures. Our ministries with an established and active Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) can assist those whose RAP is still being established. We are each called to be ‘bridge-builders’ in whatever ways we can, wherever we can, with whatever resources are available to us.

During the coming week, we are invited to reflect upon the prayer below, written by Rev’d Canon Aunty Di Langham for National Reconciliation Week 2025. You can also access the prayer [here](#).

Prayer for Reconciliation Week 2025

Creator God of Holy Dreaming
Bring us together as one,
Reconciled with you and one another.
Bless Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of
this land.
The first peoples to receive your blessings in this
land.
The first peoples to see your beauty in the land,
water, sky and nature.
The first peoples to hear your voice in ancient
stories.
The first to give you praises in ancient places.
The first to know your love and love you in return.
God bless the Elders keeping culture and languages
alive.
Bless all who work in Indigenous and non-Indigenous
communities, making friends, growing partnerships
to a deeper understanding of culture and languages,
learning to love and grow together.
Give us grace to travel together towards
reconciliation for the sake of Jesus Christ.
Amen.

*This prayer was written by Rev'd Canon Aunty Di Langham for
National Reconciliation Week 2025*

From the Trustee Directors



Acknowledgement of Margery Jackman

At the end of May, Margery Jackman concludes her term as a Trustee Director of Mercy Ministry Companions (MMC). Margery is one of the inaugural Trustee Directors and has been a dedicated and valued leader during the establishment and development of MMC. Margery's expertise in Catholic education, formation, safeguarding and professional standards has been impactful and has strengthened the council of Trustee Directors. The Trustee Directors and staff of MMC thank Margery for her time and commitment and wish Margery and her family every blessing as she continues her Mercy journey.



MMC welcomes new Trustee Director

MMC is pleased to announce the appointment of a new Trustee Director. Jennifer Stratton will commence as a Trustee Director on 1 September 2025.

Jennifer brings a deep understanding of Mercy ethos. For the past nine years, she has been Chair of MercyCare, a ministerial Public Juridic Person in Western Australia.

Jennifer has held senior leadership positions in Catholic education, Catholic health and aged care, and Catholic aid and development for the past 24 years. She was Group Director of Mission at St John of God Health Care (SJGHC) for 15 years where she worked closely with the Board and Trustees, assisting them in their leadership of the Mission. In addition to her responsibility for developing the culture, she led a broad range of learning and development initiatives for managers and their teams. She had executive responsibility for social justice initiatives including ground-breaking work in creating employment opportunities within SJGHC for people with a disability. She also led the construction and implementation of SJGHC's first Reconciliation Action Plan.



Congratulations Prof. Gabrielle McMullen AM

Congratulations to Emeritus Professor Gabrielle McMullen AM on the conferral of the ACU honorary degree, Doctor of the University. Gabrielle received this award in recognition of her contributions to academic integrity, equality of opportunity and community engagement, through her work with educational and religious organisations, particularly in the areas of health and aged care, bioethics, Catholic education and theology and social services.

[Read more](#)

From the Formation Coordinator



Mercy Leadership Program and Dublin Pilgrimage (MLPDP) 2025

We welcome home our 24 pilgrims and their Program Facilitators, Sandra Harvey and Amanda Robertson, from Module 2 of the Mercy Leadership Program and Dublin Pilgrimage. As a special feature, in the June edition of *Connections*, we will include a range of reflections from program participants.



Middle Leaders Program

From 19-21 May, our first Cohort of Middle Leaders for 2025 met at Santa Casa Conference Centre in Queenscliff. Fifteen participants from across our Community Services, Education, and Health and Aged Care ministries explored *Mercy Leadership: empowering Middle Leaders* from a range of perspectives, led by the team of Liz Dowling rsm, Belinda Cooney and Annette Schneider rsm, assisted by special guests Brian Keane and Peter White.

The fifteen Middle Leaders in Cohort 2 will gather at the St John of God Retreat Centre, Shoalwater Bay, WA, from 16-18 June, to begin their program. We are very grateful to our Ministry Leaders

for nominating such a wonderful group of Mercy Middle Leaders to participate in the program!

Orientation to Mercy Program

We are pleased that the 8 Module self-paced Program *Orientation to Mercy* has now been accredited by Catholic Education Western Australia for 2025 and 2026. The Modules can be accessed [here](#).

Mercy Education



MMC visits Regional Victoria

The Trustee Directors of Mercy Ministry Companions visited the towns of Bendigo and Kyneton in regional Victoria for their May meeting. The group was pleased to spend time at Catherine McAuley College,

Bendigo and Sacred Heart College, Kyneton.

Joint Board Formation

The Trustee Directors of Mercy Ministry Companions met with the board of Mercy Education Limited (MEL) for a joint formation session on Tuesday 20 May. These joint sessions with each of the ministry boards are important for the continuation of the mission of the ministries as we journey together. The group discussed the development of the new MEL strategic plan and heard from Patty Fawkner SGS on the topic *“The centrality of relationship to Charism and Mission – how does this inform our commitment to governance and leadership in the Mercy tradition?”*

Mercy Community Services



Vale Sister Scholastica Page rsm

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of Sister Scholastica on Friday 9 May. Fondly known as Sister Schol, she had a long and cherished association with Mercy Connect and touched the lives of many within our community — staff, participants, and families alike.

Her dedication, kindness, and strength will have left an enduring impact on all who had the privilege of knowing her. She was not only a valued colleague and friend to many, but also a guiding presence whose legacy will be felt for years to come. May Sister Scholastica rest in peace.

Funding boost for Care Economy CRC

The Care Economy Cooperative Research Centre has been awarded \$35 million dollars of federal funding through the Cooperative Research Centres (CRC) grants. The Care Economy CRC represents a \$129 million partnership involving 60 organisations across Australia. This collaboration focuses on advancing care technology, developing data solutions, and initiating workforce improvements.

Mercy Connect, as part of the consortium, stands to benefit significantly, aiming to develop and implement innovative solutions to improve care over the next decade. Other partners / organisations of the consortium include leading technology and research institutions, aged care, community healthcare, disability services, early childhood education, family services, housing, mental health, wellbeing, and youth services.

Mercy Connect will be involved in advancing care technology, data solutions, and workforce initiatives. This collaboration will support the development of new technology-enabled models of care, enhancing the quality and efficiency of services provided in our sector of disability services and more.

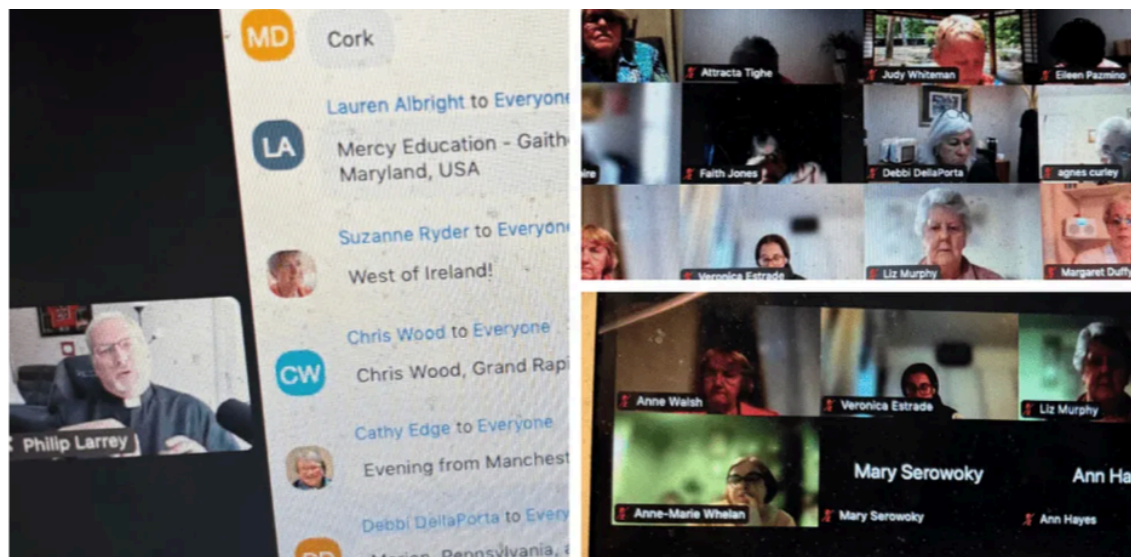
Mercy Health



iGEN celebrates Global Intergenerational Week

Residents at Mercy Health's Bethlehem Home for the Aged and Golden Rise Bendigo celebrated Global Intergenerational Week alongside students from Catherine McAuley College, with a day out at the Bendigo Races. The day was filled with laughter, shared stories and a touch of friendly competition, as the generations came together to enjoy a uniquely Australian experience.

The Intergenerational learning program or iGEN, developed in partnership with Australian Catholic University and Catherine McAuley College, is a pioneering intergenerational learning initiative that brings together people of all ages. Weekly visits, activities and reflections between students and residents of the aged care facilities helps to create mutual bonds and learning across generations. As the program continues to grow, so too does the impact it has on the lives of both the young and the old, demonstrating the enduring value of connection and community.



MIA's Second Mercy Communications Café

Mercy International Association held the second Mercy Communications Café via Zoom on Tuesday 13 May. Guest speaker, Fr Philip Larrey, spoke about the fantastic implications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) from the possibilities of AI as applied in research and medicine, to potential threats, and Congress' recent passing of the TAKE IT DOWN Act relating to the regulation of AI.

Fr Philip introduced Communications Café attendees to Magisterium which he described as a wonderful use of AI. Magisterium AI is trained on the official documents of the Catholic Church and is very reliable because of the data sets used. It has been endorsed by many Bishops around the world and is now used by more than 200,000+ people weekly.

Fr Philip said the Church has a role to play in relation to AI and recommended the Vatican document, [Antiqua et Nova](#), which was published in January 2025. He concluded his address by encouraging the Mercy World to get informed, to educate themselves and to always ensure that ethics are to the fore when working with AI.

The Mercy Communications Café will meet again in July, September and November. The date and topic for July will be confirmed asap.

Save the Date

**4pm, Monday 15 Sept -
5pm, Tuesday 16 Sept**

2025 MMC Conference

Catholic Leadership Centre, East Melbourne

The format will be similar to 2024, exploring in more depth our theme of '*Extending Horizons*'. We are very pleased that Angela Scaffidi has accepted the invitation to facilitate our time together.

Further details about the Conference Program and Registration process will be sent to ministries once they are confirmed.

Please share this Mercy Ministry Companions Newsletter with your colleagues and [opt-in for further communications.](#)

In the spirit of reconciliation, Mercy Ministry Companions acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of the country where we live and work today.

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