



Journeying Together



Connections by Indi Stringer

Indi is a proud Aboriginal young woman who has grown up with her family in the Bendigo region of Victoria. Connected to her culture, community, and Country, Indi has a strong passion for exploring all forms of art, particularly performance and the creation of Indigenous artworks. She draws inspiration from the people and environment around her, weaving stories, connections, and cultural knowledge into her creative practice. Indi's art is guided by the values of kindness, compassion, and community, reflecting her desire to create meaningful connections and make a positive impact on the lives of others.

(Mercy Cross used with permission)

The **dots all around the picture** represents a path that we all follow at some point in our life, but they also represent us connecting to one another.

The **bigger and smaller people on the sides** represent all our ancestors watching over us. The bigger people are the older people that have passed on and the smaller people are the young people that have passed on.

The **meeting places with people around them** represent us coming together as companions and talking about our works of mercy and what they can do for everyone.

The **animal tracks** represent our beloved animals exploring our land.

The **river with the leaves** represents taking care of the land.

The **hands holding each other** represents helping and supporting each other.

The **snake weaving between the crops** represents our animals helping our crops to grow and provide food for everyone.

The **bigger feet represent our Elders** leading the **younger people (smaller feet)** to succeed and thrive in education and ongoing learning.

The **four paths leading to the one place** represents us all coming together as companions and engaging in works of mercy.

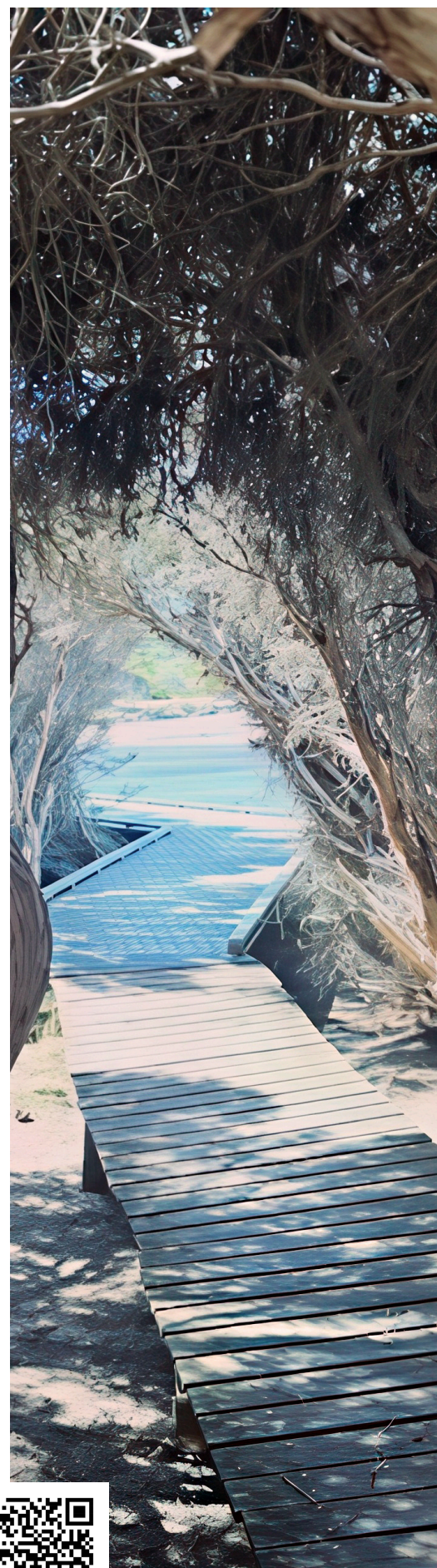
Journeying Together: Formation Pathways within Mercy Ministry Companions

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Journeying together as Mercy people

Journeying Together: Formation Pathways within Mercy Ministry Companions has been developed to support those with responsibility for ongoing formation within Mercy Ministry Companions. A reflective, enabling document, the resource offers encouragement and support for the personal journey each of us makes along our pathway of Mercy. It also provides ideas and insights for embedding a range of ongoing formation opportunities into the cyclical rhythm and cultural fabric of each ministry.

Trustee Directors, board directors and ministry leaders are entrusted to be ‘carriers of the charism of Mercy’ which has shaped our ministries since their inception. We recognise too that some ministries have been shaped by other charisms which also contribute to the richness of their heritage and tradition.



Photo by [Prateek Gautam](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Each of us is invited to become familiar with the contents and flow of this resource and encouraged to dream together about ways of enlivening our ongoing formation opportunities locally and across our ministries. In doing this, as our cover design depicts, we enable many connections to emerge. Discerning together reflects a spirit of synodality as we strive to live the Gospel message in our time and place. It is a privilege to accompany our ministry colleagues on their formation pathways as they grow in confidence and ability to articulate why they do what they do as Mercy people.

The Trustee Directors are grateful to everyone who has contributed to the creation of the resource. During the ‘trial year’ following the launch, we welcome feedback on the document so that it can be enhanced in future editions.

Margaret Bounader

Chair, Mercy Ministry Companions, on behalf of the Council of Trustee Directors

1 September 2026

Beginning the journey

Our journey begins by acknowledging that the spirit of Mercy, God's Mercy, did not arrive in Australia with European settlement. It was present long before, alive in the wisdom, spirituality and custodianship of Australia's First Nations peoples, whose deep care for land, community and culture continues to guide and challenge us today.

Within this living tradition, Mercy Ministry Companions (MMC) formally commenced its own chapter of the journey on 3 December 2021 when it was established as a ministerial public juridic person (MPJP) within the Catholic Church.

MMC holds governance responsibility for the Community Service, Education, Health and Aged Care ministries that were formerly under the stewardship of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG).



Gifted by ISMAPNG, MMC's logo symbolises the shared purpose of these ministries and their collective contribution to, and participation in, the one Mercy mission. It reflects continuity as well as renewal, honouring what has been entrusted while opening new pathways into the future.

The MMC timeline, marking key milestones in this evolving journey, can be viewed via this link:

[MMC Timeline](#) 

In 2026, we celebrated 180 years since the beginning of a particular expression of Mercy in Australia, marked by the arrival in Fremantle on 7 January 1846, of Sr Ursula Frayne and her Mercy companions, Catherine Gogarty, Anne Xavier Dillon, Ignatia de la Hoyde, Aloysius Kelly, Baptist O'Donnell and Catherine O'Reilly.

That moment represents one thread in a much larger tapestry. Today, our ministries continue to weave together many expressions of Mercy – ancient and contemporary – grounded in deep listening, courageous service, and a shared commitment to shaping a more just and compassionate world.

Drawing on our faith tradition and the charism of our founders, the guiding documents which articulate the vision, mission or purpose, and core values of MMC and each ministry are significant points of reference, shaping our growth and strategic direction.

Deepening our understanding of their significance is an important element of our ongoing formation and of our personal and professional learning as Mercy leaders.

MMC Vision Statement

As companions in ministry, we seek to bring about a compassionate and just society and Church by striving to alleviate disadvantage, exclusion and inequality.

MMC Mission Statement

We collaborate in the mission of Jesus by fostering a heart for Mercy within our ministries, in the broader society and for our environment.

The core values of **Compassion, Hope, Hospitality, Justice** and **Respect** shape our attitudes and behaviours within MMC.

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MMC Identity
Statements



Shaping formation pathways

A pathway is not a program; it is the shape a life makes.

Each of us **walks a different way through the same landscape**. Sometimes we are close enough to hear one another's footsteps, sometimes so far apart that we can only trust the shared direction, holding hope. And then, without announcement, our paths cross again: at a doorway, around a table, in the quiet recognition that what matters has been calling us all along.

Formation happens **in the ordinary and in the challenge**; in what we learn and what we practise; in what we cannot solve quickly; in the deep listening and conversations that return us to ourselves; in the moments that ask for courage, and the moments that require cultural humility and compassion.

As Mercy leaders, **we do not walk without companions**. We are supported by our faith tradition and the Mercy charism, handed on by our founders, who keep offering their steady light. The guiding documents that articulate the vision, mission and core values of MMC and each ministry are not simply statements we recite; they are a place we return to, again and again, to remember who we are, and to let our decisions be shaped by what is true.

We name those values as **a kind of compass we can hold in the heart**: the Mercy way of **noticing vulnerability**, choosing what is life-giving, and returning again and again to the courage it takes to be faithful. When the day is complex and the road unclear, the values help us ask the next honest question: what would Mercy look like here?

In faith-based ministries we use many words for **this work of formation or 'becoming'**. In this resource, we draw on a descriptor from the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) Formation Framework (p. 9) as a guide.

“

Formation is an intentional, ongoing and reflective process. Building on the lived experience of individuals and communities, it focuses on growth in **spiritual awareness, theological understanding, vocational motivation and capabilities for mission and service** in the Church and the world.

”

Shaping formation pathways cont.

As leaders, ongoing formation can **widen our worldview and broaden our mindset**, enabling us to see with new eyes, accompanying us as we journey along a ministry path. Dennis Winschel captures this insight when he writes that:

“An individual on a formation path seeks to see the world from a different set of eyes with a wider, more encompassing vision – a different mindset that is more reflective and contemplative. A formation path adds the elements of reflection to analysis; seeks asking the right questions as much as finding the right answers; and values being quiet and still as much as being pro-active.

[*Health Progress*, March–April 2008, p. 22]

When offering formation opportunities in a professional context, sometimes there are **tensions that arise** in the mix of reflection on who we are as people and how we bring ourselves to our professional responsibilities.

Sometimes when these tensions are apparent, it is uncomfortable. At times it is healthy to sit in contemplation, to stay with this feeling of being uncomfortable. At other times, it might be appropriate to **delve further into experiences** of internal tension and discover what we can learn about ourselves and our work.

Staying in a space of tension or discomfort **can require courage**, a self-assuredness on the part of those with responsibility for formation for mission. Having opportunities to explore this experience with a supervisor can be helpful to sustain you in the work.

As you move into the materials that follow, **take your time**. Let the idea of pathways do its quiet work. **Ask what has formed you**, what is forming you now, and what you are being asked to become for the sake of the mission. Ask how you can **collaborate with others** to shape the culture of ongoing formation for mission within your ministry. Ponder the possibilities as we **reimagine the charisms of our founders**.

The blessing of the Mercy charism, indeed of all charisms, is that we are provided with **“a story to enter. A language to speak. A group to which to belong. A way to pray. A work to undertake. A face of God to see...”**

(Claude Marachel, quoted in *Be as Shining Lamps*, p. 7)

This is the gift of Mercy: to grow in our capacity to give and receive God’s Mercy, gifted to us in our encounters with each person, with all of creation, along the way.

Using this resource

Tapping into the **meaning of 'formation'**, with its richness and depth, and consideration of some guiding principles for formation in a Mercy context, invites personal reflection. It also identifies contexts and processes which can shape our formal and informal Induction, orientation and ongoing formation opportunities. (pp. 9-10: 13-14)

Each ministry is **grounded in our Catholic faith tradition** and the charism of our founders. Particularly for ministry leaders, increasing awareness and understanding of the many threads in this faith tradition and the Mercy charism helps to ensure firm foundations for our approach to formation. (pp. 11-12)

Responsibility for induction, orientation and ongoing formation is shared across MMC.

Familiarisation with existing opportunities within and beyond individual ministries enables fruitful networking and more effective use of limited resources. Programs and events offered by peak bodies and other faith-based groups external to MMC also provide additional opportunities and access to resources. (pp. 16-17: 19-20)

Exploring broader contexts for formation enables mission leaders to tap into formation frameworks, programs and associated resources offered by faith-based peak bodies, networks and other agencies external to MMC.

The key principles of formation in a Mercy context, considered alongside the broader frameworks, can be used to shape the development of additional events or programs associated with liturgical seasons and special events during the Church year or within the wider Mercy family. (pp. 19-20)

While some formation pathways are shared and travelled together, there will also be individual pathways emerging in response to curiosity and need. The more supportive the organisational culture, the more possibilities will likely emerge for collaboration within and across ministries. The resources listed on pp. 22-26 reflect the insights, skills and collaboration of many people and will be updated as new ones become available.

Ministry leaders have a vital contribution to make in **enabling and sustaining a supportive formation culture**. Formal and informal aspects of culture-building can be identified and responsibility shared. Research within MMC has identified aspects which can scaffold an organisational structure for ongoing formation and enhance a supportive formation culture. (pp. 17-18)

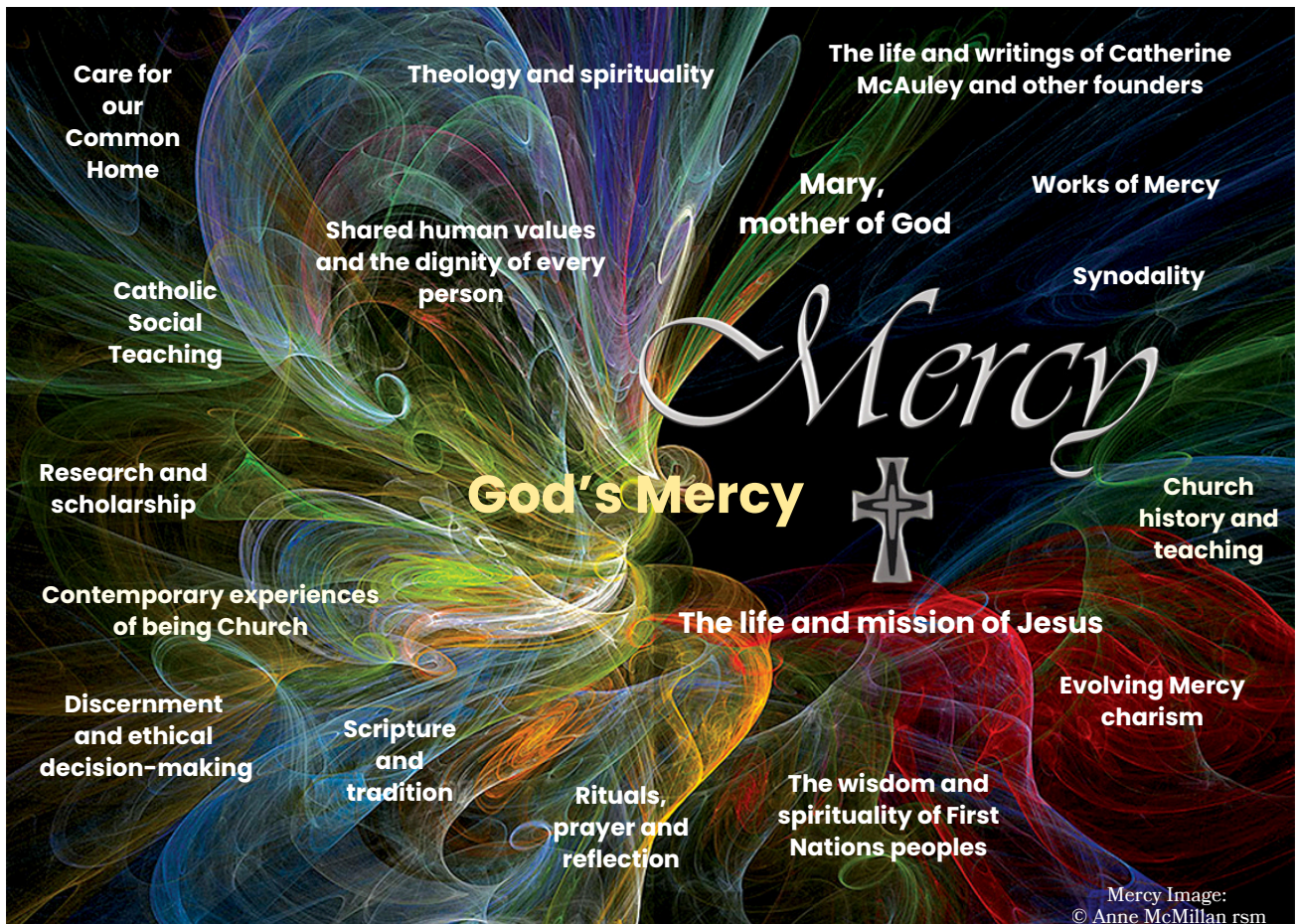
Formation opportunities already exist at ministry level, as do cross-ministry opportunities within MMC.

We have ways of welcoming new staff and volunteers. Individual or small group opportunities are available for **induction** to the 'bigger picture' of the ministry or organisation as a whole and for **orientation** to familiarise people with the practical, location-specific environment of their workplace.

There are also existing programs for Trustee Directors, board directors, senior and middle leaders to explore stewardship, governance and leadership within a Mercy context. (pp. 15-16)

Deepening awareness of our founding tradition

Our faith tradition is like a tapestry in which are woven the threads of our wisdom tradition.



Operating in the name of the Church, each ministry is **grounded in our Catholic faith tradition and the charism of our founders**. For ministry leaders in particular, a deepening awareness and understanding of the many threads within this faith tradition and the Mercy charism are essential to establishing strong foundations for our approach to formation.

Our founding tradition has as its focus the Mercy and compassion of God, revealed in the life and mission of Jesus. Catherine McAuley, as for other founders in their time and place, was gifted with a **particular lens on the Gospel message**, that of Mercy and compassion brought to life through practical engagement in Works of Mercy.

The colour and vibrancy evident in the **cultural fabric of our ministries** reflects the attention given to the many threads of our faith and wisdom traditions.

Deepening awareness of our founding tradition cont.

We also see an opportunity to **weave these threads gently** into ongoing formation resources that can be returned to over time. One example is shown in a series of simple leaflets supporting exploration of the five MMC values. Each resource focuses on a single value, drawing on scripture, the writings of Pope Francis, and the wisdom of Catherine McAuley to offer a grounding context. From there, reflective practices suitable for personal reflection, small groups, or use within meetings can invite deeper engagement with how these values are lived in our ministries:

[Values Resources](#) 

In the **References and Selected Resources** section at the end of this document, you will find some materials which may assist you in your exploration of these threads. The materials may also become sources of inspiration in the creation of prayers, reflections and formation resources for use with your ministry colleagues.



Storytelling is a significant way of introducing people to the history and tradition of each Mercy-heritage ministry and of enabling them to see how their contribution enriches that story, enlivens it, and continues to shape it.

Place is a significant part of each local story. We gain knowledge and inspiration from the wisdom and traditions of local First Nations peoples and from the stories of the Mercy sisters who began our ministries.

Attention to each ministry's **local 'built environment'** with its signs, symbols, artwork and other creative representations of its mission and purpose can also enhance a supportive formation culture. They emphasise a living tradition engaging with current realities.

Co-creation happens when we are **present to those alongside us**. If we build strong foundations for our formation pathways within MMC, the Mercy charism will continue to be reimagined through our creativity and response to the needs of people we accompany. Our collaboration with others signifies our **commitment to a synodal way of being Church**.

Tapping into the richness and depth of our formation

Each person who is part of MMC brings to their life and work a range of personal experiences, gifts, talents and expertise, and their world views, questions, uncertainties and hopes for the future. Together, we contribute to vibrant, multi-faith and multi-cultural organisations. We are invited to use our personal and professional gifts and talents to show the face of God's Mercy to those we meet through whatever role we have, whatever service we give, wherever we are located.



Our holistic growth, our 'formation', is fostered and nurtured in a range of ways. Across MMC and within each ministry, opportunities for

- education
- professional development
- spiritual mentoring
- reflection
- dialogue
- immersion
- induction, and
- service

combine to create a pathway for our ongoing formation. People of all faith traditions and those with no particular affiliation are invited to travel the pathway alongside each other. The process is flexible, dynamic and different for each person.



The journey can open up many different pathways. Its fruits are gifts of God's Spirit. The Spirit can be a disrupter, not just a comforter, so the ongoing formation journey could open up new possibilities and may present some uncomfortable challenges for individuals and for organisations. Journeying together provides mutual support and encouragement as the possibilities are explored and challenges addressed.

Everyone is on a faith journey. As individuals and as part of a team, no matter what our role is within MMC, we are called to grow in our understanding of who we are and why we do what we do in our Community Service, Education and Health and Aged Care ministries.

We are enlivened by the spirit and example of Catherine McAuley and the founders of other religious congregations who began our ministries and have shaped our heritage. Each one sheds light on the 'deep story' of God's Mercy revealed in the life and mission of Jesus.



 The [MMC timeline](#) identifies many 'starting points'. We honour the ongoing story of each ministry.

Guiding principles for mission formation in a Mercy context

The principles outlined in *Be as shining lamps* (p. 4, used with the permission of Mercy Partners) can assist us as we plan, implement and critique our formation offerings across MMC and within each ministry. They highlight contexts and processes which can underpin our engagement with appropriate content. We have introduced another principle, **Formation is loving**, naming that formation is, at its heart, a deepening capacity to love as the God of Mercy loves.

Formation is inclusive

It is respectful of the personal, social, cultural and religious backgrounds of participants and welcomes all perspectives and contributions. While Catherine McAuley's story is situated in the Christian faith tradition, her call to service and love for those who are most vulnerable is universal.



Formation is organic

It is grounded in the everyday realities and the lived experiences of every participant. It honours individual voice and each person's own knowledge and spiritual journey. It is attentive to participant readiness and priorities. Catherine McAuley brought this principle to her teaching, her charity and the formation of those with whom she worked.

Formation is intentional

It is not confined to programs or staff spirituality days. It occurs in story and celebration, in small acts of kindness, in support and mentoring, in the modelling of care and right relationships. A Mercy ministry embodies principles and ways of relating which mean that words are often unnecessary to describe its charism.



Formation is loving

It is grounded in a deepening capacity to love, expressed in love of self, of others, of community and of God. It invites us into humility, to listen deeply, to remain open, and to be shaped continually by what we encounter in others and in the world. Through this, we are called to respond with compassion, dignity and care, especially in the face of vulnerability and injustice.

Formation is holistic

It understands that the individual spiritual journey involves mind, heart and action in the nurturing of personal wellbeing and connection with self, others, God and all of creation. Mercy spirituality is founded on contemplative action for justice and service to others.

Formation is creative and engaging

Its programs honour adult learning principles and engage the heart, mind and spirit. It is never boring, poorly planned or divorced from the life of the ministry or community.

Formation is relational

It is experienced in community and dialogue. It is nurtured in shared experience and commitment to the common good. Catherine McAuley worked alongside others in her quest to support and assist the poor of Dublin, eventually founding a religious congregation of women who shared this call to mission.

Formation is vocational



It is mission-focused and invites a life engagement with God's call to action. Mercy spirituality is centred on being present to those one meets in the everyday; sacramental moments of compassion or companionship; ordinary times of struggle and grief. For Catherine McAuley, every day was an opportunity to be present and attentive to those made poor.

Formation is invitational

It respects the dignity of each person and is never imposed. Catherine McAuley placed no requirements of faith or piety on those she helped. Her actions revealed God's love and compassion to all she encountered.

Exploring formation pathways within MMC

MMC's formation pathways focus on mission-related aspects of our ongoing learning, complementing the role-specific knowledge and skills acquired from other professional learning opportunities.

We draw on a range of existing resources to provide direction along our formation pathway. Some resources, such as stewardship, governance and leadership frameworks or mission-focused programs, are external to MMC while others have been developed by ministries over many years to suit specific groups.

People we serve and accompany

have formative opportunities when they engage with us through informal and formal interactions.



Executive Leaders and Middle Leaders

are 'culture builders', responsible for ensuring MMC or their ministry's vision, mission, purpose and values underpin the services they provide. Formation opportunities support them to integrate personal and professional learning and build confidence as Mercy leaders.



Ministry staff and volunteers

are the interface of the organisation with its broader community. Their formation pathways will vary according to their roles and the needs of the local community they accompany.

Trustee Directors and Board Directors

are involved in the ministries of stewardship and governance and have canonical (Church) and civil responsibilities which require ongoing formation appropriate to their roles.



Sharing responsibility for ongoing formation

Our formation offerings include cross-ministry programs offered by MMC, alongside current formation opportunities offered within ministries and by other external groups.

As new programs or formation opportunities are being planned and implemented, giving consideration to the guiding principles outlined earlier in this document and to the content areas identified in relevant frameworks may be helpful. These frameworks have been informed by the wisdom and experience of people in the field. They can also help to shape new and ongoing formation opportunities and future evaluation or impact measurement initiatives.

The focus of the formation opportunities offered by MMC is **cross-ministry**. Opportunities include:

- Participation in the MMC Conference
- An induction program for board directors and senior executive new to MMC ministries
- Leadership programs for board directors, senior leaders and middle leaders
- [Orientation to Mercy Modules](#) 
- [Mercy Ministry Companions: An Introduction](#) 

As needed or requested, other ongoing formation seminars are offered in person or online by MMC.

MMC's Mission Network, whose members hold responsibility for ongoing formation within their ministries, also contributes to and enhances MMC's supportive formation culture.

The Appendix on p. 27 provides information about the ongoing formation opportunities offered by MMC, ministry boards and ministries. It will be updated as new opportunities are developed.

The ongoing formation seminars arranged by **Mercy Alliance** members support trustees, board directors and senior leaders of ministries within the four Mercy heritage MPJPs across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand:

- MercyCare,
- Mercy Partners
- Mercy Ministry Companions
- Whanau Mercy Ministries

Mercy Alliance offers ongoing formation seminars online, twice yearly, focusing on issues relevant to Mercy heritage MPJPs.

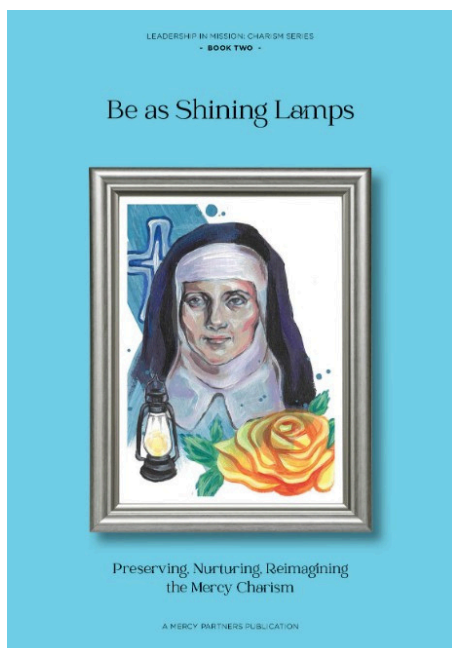
The **First Nations Mercy Circle** has been established to create a collaborative space where First Nations voices are heard, shape decisions, strengthen identity, and carry wisdom, leadership and culture forward across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.





Enabling a supportive formation culture

“Clear Catholic identity and a Mercy commitment to justice and action for those made poor are foundational to authentic Mercy culture.” (*Be as Shining Lamps*, p. 57)



Each Mercy ministry operates within a distinct social and cultural context. All are grounded in the one Mercy charism, with its lens on the Gospel, and are also shaped by the life and vision of Catherine McAuley. This shared charism unites diverse expressions of mission and guides how Mercy is embodied in practice.

In *Be as Shining Lamps*, the section on nurturing a Mercy Culture (pp. 56–63) can support leaders to map their organisation’s culture through a Mercy lens. Current strengths and less-developed dimensions of organisational culture can be identified, providing insight into the potential for ‘**mission drift**’ to occur and how it can be addressed. Our goal is ‘**Mission Integrity**’ where what we proclaim is reflected in our attitudes, behaviours and ministry practice.

Nurturing a Mercy culture does not occur overnight; it is an ongoing, intentional and formative process that unfolds over time.

Leading a Supportive Formation Culture

Leaders have an important role in nurturing and preserving an authentic Mercy culture. An extensive **mapping exercise** across MMC identified **six key aspects** which provide a supportive framework for an integrated approach to ensuring appropriate formation pathways and opportunities are available for all ministry staff. [Sustaining an effective environment](#) The six aspects are outlined on the following page, p. 18.

In addition to being a support framework, these aspects provide lenses through which a ministry’s current formation offerings can be critiqued as part of embedding a supportive formation culture.

Articulating mission-focused responsibilities in core documents

Ministry leaders are encouraged to critique their core documents to ensure that mission-focused formation responsibilities are clearly outlined. These core documents include statements of vision, mission or purpose, values; strategic plans or frameworks and related goals; formation policies, plans and programs.

1

Designating individuals or groups with responsibility for 'formation for mission'

Some ministries resource a Formation Leader, others have a leader and a small team of people, while others have a designated person holding responsibility for a particular component of formation for mission, such as the induction of new staff. Whatever words are used to denote the responsibility, it is important to have clearly articulated responsibilities and lines of accountability.

2

Implementing policies, plans and procedures encompassing formation for mission

Active formation policies, plans and procedures are important contributors to an integrated approach to formation for mission. Whether they are comprehensive, well-established or a 'work in progress', they provide a reference point against which to critique current practice.

3

Engaging all ministry personnel in appropriate formation programs

All people engaged in ministry within MMC need to access formation opportunities suited to their needs, the roles they undertake, and their working hours. Some programs are provided 'in house' by ministries while others are available within an MMC cross-ministry context. Keeping timely and accurate personnel records of involvement in formation activities is an important component of this aspect.

4

Resourcing induction, orientation and ongoing formation for mission

If it is recognised as a priority and if it is to be effective, formation for mission needs to be adequately resourced. 'Mission drift' can occur quickly, at a significant risk to the organisation, if mission-focused formation is not a leadership priority supported by appropriate levels of resourcing, reflected in annual budgets. Both larger and smaller ministries have challenges to address in this aspect, including competing priorities, compliance requirements and varying needs for time and resources.

5

Embedding appropriate and timely means of accountability and evaluation in formation-related reporting processes

Each sphere of stewardship, governance and leadership is called to exercise accountability and responsibility to enhance mission effectiveness within MMC. An important component of embedding a supportive formation culture, this commitment is undertaken with integrity and in a timely manner.

6

Evaluation of each formation opportunity, as soon as possible after it concludes, enables immediate feedback to be used to enhance subsequent offerings. It is more challenging to measure the impact of programs over a longer term, using a mix of quantitative (statistical) and qualitative (quotes, video clips, photos, storytelling) data. MMC is currently exploring ways of supporting ministries in the development and use of evaluation strategies for a range of formation offerings.

Integrating opportunities for ongoing formation for mission

There are many ways of integrating local ministry-specific, MMC cross-ministry and external offerings so that formation pathways unfold for our ministry colleagues. If done purposefully, rather than in an *ad hoc* way, this integration enables individuals and small groups to be welcomed and invited to engage in a range of meaningful and relevant induction, orientation and ongoing formation opportunities. These opportunities create a pathway for their ongoing formation journey.

Some **faith-based peak bodies** (see links below) have developed formation frameworks which outline broad formation dimensions or themes and related areas of exploration. These provide reference points for mapping existing programs and accessing external opportunities available for ministries and MMC.

- **Association of Ministerial Public Juridic Persons (AMPJP)**. 
- **National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC)**. 
- **Catholic Health Australia (CHA)**. 

 **Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA)** also has a range of formation-related material on its website.

 **Mercy International Association (MIA)** makes available a wealth of resources on Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy, Mercy Heritage and Spirituality, and Mercy Global Action.

Ongoing formation opportunities available through these peak bodies and other external groups are advertised regularly via **enewsletters** e.g. from:

- **AMPJP** 
- **Cath Events** 
- **Mercyenews** 

Award Courses

Ministry colleagues seeking to deepen their knowledge of scripture, theology, governance and leadership in Catholic ministry contexts can undertake award courses as part of their ongoing formation pathways. Further information is available from tertiary providers including:

- **Australian Catholic University (ACU)** 
- **Broken Bay Institute/TAITE** 
- **University of Divinity** 

Initiating new programs

In addition to programs offered regularly, new formation programs are often initiated by ministries in response to emerging needs or exploration of themes associated with special events during the Church year or within the wider Mercy family and other founding congregations. The principles of formation outlined earlier in this resource can inform the discernment of appropriate content and processes for the development of new programs.

Communicating and evaluating ongoing formation opportunities

Program implementation can be cyclical or on an 'as needed' basis, offering flexibility appropriate to the workplace. A ministry calendar of formation events, published in a timely manner, enables people to plan accordingly and participate.

Embedding evaluation in formation offerings enables organisers and presenters to receive and critique immediate or short-term feedback and to implement appropriate changes in future offerings.

Identifying the longer-term impact of formation programs is important for a range of reasons but can be challenging to achieve. Long-term, we value knowledge about the effectiveness of personal and professional formation opportunities in enhancing participants' awareness of charism, mission and purpose. It is affirming to recognise that participation increases confidence to be 'carriers of the charism.'

We value suggestions for enriching the pathways people are taking and making them more accessible. Annual performance reviews provide a valuable opportunity for conversations about ongoing pathways. Feedback also assists ministries to remain purposeful and strategic in their resourcing of formation offerings.



Continuing the journey together

With its twists and turns, challenges and blessings, each person's formation pathway can become a journey of discovery. Think about your own formation journey and the pathways you have taken. In retrospect, many shorter journeys may have contributed to the bigger picture of your personal and professional growth. It is likely that some of the people you have met along the way have been or remain significant for you.

Those with responsibility for ongoing formation for mission play a vital role in the life of MMC. We are enriched by the example of their ongoing commitment to personal formation and the leadership they show in nurturing the unfolding story of God's Mercy within MMC and its ministries.



Trustee Directors, ministry board directors, ministry leaders, staff and volunteers bring experience and knowledge when they accept a new role and are welcomed within MMC or any of our Community Services, Education, or Health and Aged Care ministries.

Induction and orientation programs build on this experience and knowledge. Additional opportunities for ongoing formation contribute to a lifelong learning environment for those who choose to engage alongside others or in self-paced settings.



There are many ways we can encourage each other and collaborate in sustaining a supportive, vibrant ongoing formation culture across MMC. Informal conversations and sharing of ideas and challenges can develop into networks and communities of practice, providing practical guidance and opportunities to collaborate on resource and program development. It is heartening to know this is already happening within MMC.

Thank you for your leadership as an authentic 'carrier of the charism of Mercy', a gift we are blessed to give and to receive in the encounters of each day.

- May this resource be a **helpful companion** as you continue to travel along your formation pathways.
- May it **increase your confidence** to be a mission leader.
- May you continue to **invite and support** your ministry colleagues to be authentic faces of God's Mercy.
- May you **continue to walk together** enhancing your collective capabilities by fostering high quality formation opportunities.

**As companions in ministry,
we journey together as we
explore ongoing formation
pathways and possibilities
for our time and place!**



References and selected resources

References:

[Association of Ministerial Public Juridic Persons \(AMPJP\)](#) 

[Catholic Health Australia](#) 

[Catholic Social Services Australia](#) 

[Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea \(ISMAPNG\)](#) (2021) 

[Orientation to Mercy Modules](#) 

[Mercy International Association \(MIA\)](#) 

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Mercy Ministry Companions MMC (2025) [An Introduction](#) 

Mercy Ministry Companions (2023) [Sustaining an effective environment for enhancing 'formation for mission' within Mercy Ministry Companions](#) 

National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) (2017) **A Framework for Formation for Mission in Catholic Education**

Thompson, C. (2023) *Be as Shining Lamps* Brisbane: Mercy Partners

Winschel, D. (2008) 'Formation Path in the Workplace: How Does It Work?' *Health Progress* March–April pp. 20–22

Marachel, C. (2000) *Toward an effective partnership between religious and laity in fulfilment of charism and responsibility for mission*. Proceedings of the 56th Conference of the Unione Superiore Generali, Rome

Selected Resources (by theme):

Care for our Common Home

- Pope Francis (2015) *Laudato Si: On Care for our Common Home* Strathfield: St Pauls Publications
- Pope Francis (2020) *Let us Dream: The Path to a Better Future*. London: Simon and Schuster
- Pope Francis (2023) *Laudate Deum: Apostolic Exhortation to all people of good will On the Climate Crisis* Strathfield: St Pauls Publications

Catherine McAuley

- Nicholls, A. (2024) 'Leading with Courage: Catherine McAuley's understanding' *MAST* Vol. 29, No. 2, pp. 26–31
- Sullivan, M. (2004) *The Correspondence of Catherine McAuley 1818–1841* Dublin: Four Courts Press
- Sullivan, M. (2012) *The Path of Mercy: The life of Catherine McAuley* Dublin: Four Courts Press
- Sullivan, M. (2019) *Catherine McAuley and McAuley Ministries*. Text of video presentation. (Mary Sullivan explores the merciful mission of Catherine McAuley and the call for ministries today to be 'Houses of Mercy')

Catholic Social Teaching

- Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference (2014) *Building Bridges: Social Justice Statements from Australia's Catholic Bishops 1988–2013*
<https://www.catholic.au/s/article/Social-Justice-Statements> 📄
- Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (2004) *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* London: Bloomsbury Publishing
https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html 📄
- Pope Leo XIV (2025) *Dilexi Te Apostolic Exhortation to all Christians on Love for the Poor*
https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/apost_exhortations/documents/20251004-dilexi-te.html 📄
- Pope Leo XIV (2026) *Disarmed and Disarming: Peace is a Gift* A collection of Pope Leo's addresses and reflections on peace since his election on 8 May 2025
- Pope Leo XIV (2026) *Magnifica humanitas: On safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence* <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html> 📄

Discernment and ethical decision-making

- Catholic Health Australia (2021) *Mission Discernment: A Resource for Decision-Making in the Catholic Health Tradition*
-  [Plenary Council Australia \(2019–2020\) Introduction to Discernment](https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/introduction-to-discernment/) four videoclips explore the following aspects: *The Value of Discernment* (42 mins); *What is Discernment* (1.02 mins); *What are the origins of Discernment* (4 mins 32 secs); *The difference between Discernment and Decision-making* (2 mins 46 secs)

- *An Introduction to Spiritual Conversation* – Fr John Dardis SJ (13 mins 45 secs) [Watch on YouTube](#) 🎧
- [Covenant Health \(US\): Mission Discernment Tool – A Process for Making Good Organisational Decisions](#) 🎧
- [Kildare Ministries – Living Justice Living Peace Charter. This resource offers a practical framework and guiding questions to support discernment and decision-making in ministry contexts.](#) 🎧
- MercyCare – *Mission and Ethical Discernment and Decision-Making Guide* (including accompanying fact sheets on mission discernment and cultivating a culture of discernment) 🎧
- [Sisters of Mercy New Zealand – Atawhai Mai Atawhai Atu – Mercy Given Mercy Received](#) 🎧

Edmund Rice

Keogh, D. (1996) *Edmund Rice 1762–1844* Dublin: Four Courts Press

The evolving Mercy charism

- Pope Francis (2014) *The Church of Mercy* London: Darton, Longman and Todd
- Thompson, C. (2023) *Be as Shining Lamps* Brisbane: Mercy Partners

First Nations wisdom and spirituality

- Aboriginal spirituality – specifically developed to support the **faith formation of leaders and staff**, presenting Aboriginal spirituality through a Catholic lens while foregrounding Aboriginal voices and wisdom. <https://www.csns.catholic.edu.au/system/files/2024-10/Aboriginal-Spirituality-Documents.pdf> 🎧
- **Dr Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr writings on Dadirri – the quiet stillness within each of us** <https://www.dadirri.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Dadirri-Inner-Deep-Listening-M-R-Ungunmerr-Bauman-Refl.pdf> 🎧
- **NATSICC – Our Spirituality Resource Collection** <https://www.natsicc.org.au/our-spirituality> 🎧

The Mercy of God

- Kasper, W. (2013) *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life* New York: Paulist Press
- Pope Francis (2016) *Misericordia et Misera* Strathfield: St Pauls Publications

The life and Mission of Jesus

- Coloe, M. (2017) *A Friendly Guide to the Birth of Jesus* Mulgrave: John Garrett Publishing
- Hamilton, A. (2011) *A Friendly Guide to Jesus* Mulgrave: John Garrett Publishing
- Moloney, F. (2013) *Resurrection of the Messiah: A Narrative Commentary on the Resurrection Accounts in the Four Gospels* New York: Paulist Press

Mary MacKillop

- Gardiner, P. (1994) *An Extraordinary Australian: Mary MacKillop* Alexandria NSW: E. J. Dwyer Australia

Theology and spirituality

- Dowling, E. and Lawson, V. (2013) 'An Earth Community Being Shattered By Displacement': Mercy Perspectives,' *SeaChanges* 6 (2013) pp 1-22.

Scripture and tradition

- Lawson, V. (2015) *The Blessing of Mercy: Biblical Perspectives and Ecological Challenges* Northcote: Morning Star Publishing
- *Friendly Guide Series* Mulgrave: John Garrett Publications (written by recognised theologians and scripture scholars, the books provide accessible information on the Catholic faith, scripture and Church history)
- **The Earth Bible Commentary Series** Bloomsbury Publishing (Provide ecological readings of biblical texts, focusing on some of the core issues facing the world today)

Synodality

- Benjamin, A. and Burford, C. (2021) *Leadership in a Synodal Church* Mulgrave: Garrett Publishing
- Pope Leo: the Synod and Synodality <https://www.synod.va/en/the-synod/pope-leo-and-the-synod.html> 
- Benjamin, A. and Burford, C. (2026) *Leadership after the Synod* Mulgrave: Garrett Publishing
- Lennan, R. (2022) *The Church: Graced, Missionary and Synodal. A Theology for the Plenary Council* <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/A-Theology-of-Church-Text-for-Plenary-Council-Richard-Lennan-15-May-2022.pdf> 
- Pascoe, S., Calder, J. and Heaney, M. L. (2025) *Inclusive Governance in a Synodal Church* Australian Catholic University

Ursula Frayne

- Byrne, G. (1981) *Valiant Women: Letters from the Foundation Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia 1845-1849* Melbourne: The Polding Press
- Kovesi Killerby, C. (1996) *Ursula Frayne: A Biography* Fremantle: University of Notre Dame, Australia

Works of Mercy

- Connell, P. (2011) *Catherine McAuley: Works of Mercy* St Lucia: Custom Publishing
- Pope Francis (2017) *The Works of Mercy* Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books
- Schneider, A. (2019) *A Lens on the Works of Mercy: Clare Agnew and her Legacy* Dublin: Mercy International Association
- <https://www.mercyworld.org/about/works-of-mercy/> 

Appendix

Within MMC, various induction, orientation and ongoing formation opportunities are currently available. Details are included in this Appendix for information, providing a snapshot of the ways each ministry engages its board, executive and middle leaders, staff and volunteers in ongoing formation.

MMC cross-ministry formation resources

- [Orientation to Mercy Modules](#) 
- [Mercy Ministry Companions: An Introduction](#) 
- [Quick Guide to Mercy Resources](#) 
- [Middle Leaders Program](#) 
- [Identity Statements](#) 
- [Journeying Together: Formation Pathways within Mercy Ministry Companions](#) 

Ministry-based resources and formation opportunities

The above link enables access to formation-related information provided by MMC's Community Services, Education and Health and Aged Care ministries:

- Mercy Community Services: MacKillop Family Services, McAuley Community Services for Women and Mercy Connect
- Mercy Education
- Mercy Health and Aged Care

As needed, the information will be updated in the online version of *Journeying Together: Formation Pathways within Mercy Ministry Companions*. Please contact the relevant ministry, if you would like further information about its programs or resources or are seeking permission to use or adapt items developed by the ministry.

If you become aware of any inaccuracies contained in the Appendix, please contact mmc@mercyministrycompanions.org.au

