

Karanga Atawhai

Karanga Atawhai - The Voice of Whānau Mercy Ministries

January 2026

DIY? Yeah...nah.

Why a new year reminds me that the Whānau Mercy way is never “do it yourself”.

Over the summer break I decided — somewhat boldly — that I would tackle a few long-overdue DIY jobs around home. In true Kiwi fashion, I figured, how hard can it be? Three days later, standing on a ladder under a very high villa ceiling, paint brush in hand and back muscles protesting loudly, I had the answer: quite hard, actually.

By the next week, lesson learned, I watched my apprentice-builder son finish the gib lining over 120 year old wall linings with the skill and efficiency of someone who actually knows what they’re doing. My role became “supervisory” — mostly because I couldn’t bend properly — but also because it was a stark reminder that trying to do everything yourself isn’t always wise, sustainable, or even effective.

As I eased into the new year, that little domestic parable stayed with me. In Whānau Mercy Ministries we are blessed by a model that is intentionally collegial, shared, and relational. Ministerial public juridic persons (MPJP), our formal structure in Church terms, are designed so that no one carries the load alone. Decisions are discerned together. Wisdom is held in community. Strength comes from collaboration, not heroic individual effort. The WMM strategic priorities include Strengthening Whānau Mercy — in part as a way to foster and develop this very sense.



Image: The offending ceiling

The folly of DIY at home made me grateful for the opposite in my work: a Mercy way that says we do this together – as whānau. A year that invites us again into shared leadership, shared learning, shared care for the people and ministries entrusted to us.

Here at the WMM offices, planning with the team again reminds me of the call to collegiality. Welcoming Suzanne O’Rourke to the WMM team was a blessing and a privilege. I look forward to Suzanne being introduced to you all and sharing her experience and gifts with Whānau Mercy.

So, here’s to 2026 — a year where we (I really mean “I”) leave the DIY mentality behind, lean into each other’s gifts, and continue building something far stronger than anything we could construct on our own.

Dave Mullin, Ko te Hapai O, WMMT

**“Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini
My strength is not that of an individual, but of the collective.”**

Introducing a new team member

Welcoming our new Kaihapai.

We are happy to announce that Suzanne O'Rourke has joined the Whānau Mercy Ministries team in the Kaihapai role. Suzanne is an experienced leader in change management, stakeholder engagement, and project delivery. She has successfully supported the work of organisations through complex transitions and managed large-scale relocations, projects, and culture change programmes.

Suzanne is known for her collaborative approach, strong communication skills, and ability to foster a positive workplace culture. Her work experiences span a wide range of organisations, including faith-based and public sector settings - as varied as the Loreto Sisters (internationally) and Sisters of Compassion, various government agencies and the New Zealand Defence Force.

Earlier in her career, Suzanne held roles in international banking and corporate services, contributing to merger and acquisition processes, organisational restructuring, and integrated support services. She holds change management and other relevant certifications and studied Horticultural Commerce at Lincoln University.

In her spare time, Suzanne is in active governance and leadership for Rachel's Vineyard and Greenstone Doors Charitable Trusts. The role of these organisations is to facilitate spiritual and practical support, primarily for women facing pregnancy challenges, abortion grief, and maternal mental health.

Her experience in strategic planning, change, project delivery, and mission-driven leadership will be invaluable as we continue to advance WMMT's strategic priorities.



Image: Susan O'Rourke, Whānau Mercy Ministries Kaihapai.

Mercy Governance Formation:



Te Ao Māori, Tikanga, Te Reo and Mercy Values.

Whānau Mercy Ministries is offering a six-week webinar series starting on the 16th February, Mercy Governance: Strengthening Leadership through Te Ao Māori, Tikanga, Te Reo and Mercy Values, facilitated by Te Waipuna Puawai and designed for trustees, directors, and senior leaders across our Mercy whānau. The series supports participants to deepen their understanding of Te Ao Māori, including key concepts such as whakapapa, mana, mauri, tapu, wairua and whenua, and to explore how tikanga Māori and te reo Māori can meaningfully inform governance, leadership, and decision-making in Aotearoa. Grounded in lived ministry practice, the programme supports trustees, directors, and leaders to strengthen Te Tiriti o Waitangi-responsive leadership grounded in Te Ao Māori, tikanga, te reo, and Mercy values.

Further information and registration details are available via the [Whānau Mercy Ministries website](#).

Share your stories, they connect us all.

We would like to share the stories from your Ministry so we can help build connections and act as a bridge between all our Ministries, please share your stories with any images to: wmm@whanaumercy.nz.

Please forward this newsletter on:

Please share this newsletter with members of your school boards and those involved in our Ministries. Others can subscribe directly by scanning the QR code:



Mercy Governance

Do You Know Someone Aged 18–25 with a heart for Mercy?



Do you know someone aged 18–25 with a passion for social and environmental justice and a heart shaped by Mercy values?

Kākano Atawhai is a new initiative from Whānau Mercy Ministries that wants to bring together young people to grow community, take action, and make a real difference together. This kaupapa brings Mercy peers together to explore issues that matter, from meaningful volunteer mahi in Aotearoa communities to advocacy, kōrero, and shared projects grounded in aroha, whanaungatanga and kaitiakitanga. With opportunities to meet in person in main centres beginning April 2026 and to connect online with Mercy young people across Aotearoa and Australia, we are inviting people to be part of a movement that nurtures hope, sparks collective action and builds friendships along the way.

For more information, to register, or to find out more, visit the Kākano Atawhai page on the [Whānau Mercy Ministries website](#) or contact natasha@whanaumercy.nz.

Mercy Governance

Catholic social teaching and Mercy governance.



Join Whānau Mercy Ministries on 12 February 2026, 7–8 pm for the webinar *Bringing Catholic Social Teachings into Mercy Governance*, where Fr Gerard Aynsley (parish priest and experienced teacher of Catholic Social Teaching) will explore the core principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) and how these can shape decision-making, leadership, and governance in our ministries. The session is designed so participants can take insights back to their boardrooms, connecting CST with Mercy values and the mission of Whānau Mercy Ministries. For details including an add to your calendar link, [visit our website](#).

Lenten Retreat

Walking in Mercy.

Lent begins on the 18th February this year, and Mercy International Association are running an online Lenten retreat entitled Walking in Mercy. The retreat will be offered by Caroline Thompson, MIA's Head of Heritage and Spirituality. There are two time slots available, and the best one for us is the first which begins at 11pm NZ time. There will be Lenten reflections emailed out each week as well. [You can find out more and register here.](#)

Call for names



Puāwaitanga Atawhai – Aspiring Leaders Formation Pathway

This year we are launching Puāwaitanga Atawhai, a formation pathway for aspiring leaders and directors who feel drawn to serve within the Mercy whānau. Thank you to those who have sent in names already.

This programme offers an introduction to our Catholic identity, the calling of Mercy, and the strategic priorities of Whānau Mercy Ministries. Participants will explore how their experience, values, and aspirations align with our mission and governance responsibilities.

Puāwaitanga Atawhai is ideal for:

- People with governance experience seeking Mercy-specific formation.
- Emerging leaders new to governance but strongly aligned with our values.
- Individuals discerning whether a governance role in Mercy is the right next step.

The pathway supports participants to grow in confidence and readiness to contribute to the mission of Mercy in Aotearoa.

If you know someone who you think would make a great director on one of our boards, please send their name to natasha@whanaumercy.nz.



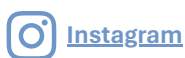
Celebrating International Women's Day:

Women at the table: leadership, synodality, and the courage to change

In recognition of International Women's Day 2026, Whānau Mercy Ministries warmly invites trustees, directors, leaders, staff, and all those interested to join a special webinar, "Women at the Table: Leadership, Synodality, and the Courage to Change," featuring theologian and Mercy Hospice Board director, Dr Rocío Figueroa, on Monday 9 March 2026 at 1 pm (NZ time). The webinar reflects on recent calls from the Catholic Church's synodal journey for women's fuller participation in leadership and decision-making, not as a question of belonging but of how women's voices can shape governance, mission, and daily practice in the Church and Mercy ministries. For details and to register, [visit our website](#).

Launching our social media.

We're pleased to share that Whānau Mercy Ministries is now on social media. Our LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram channels will share reflections, stories, and updates from Whānau Mercy Ministries and our ministries, grounded in Mercy values and our commitment to justice, whanaungatanga, aroha, and kaitiakitanga for people and whenua. These platforms are another way to stay connected with our work, our kaupapa, and the conversations shaping mission and leadership today. We invite you to follow us and join the journey.



Introducing our Calendar.

We're pleased to share our Events Calendar, now available in the Resources section of the Whānau Mercy Ministries website. The calendar brings together upcoming Whānau Mercy Ministry events, key meetings across our ministries, and important Mercy dates throughout the year. It's designed to support planning, connection, and shared awareness across our Mercy whānau. You can view and access the calendar via the [Resources page on our website](#).

Download prayers & resources at whanaumercy.nz/resources

We're regularly adding new karakia and will soon include downloadable formation resources for use in your hui and gatherings. Scan the QR code to access our resource section - so you'll always have a karakia on hand when you need one.



SAVE THE DATE

The Catherine McAuley Symposium.

Whānau Mercy Ministries, in partnership with Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington, is inviting you to save the date for the Catherine McAuley Symposium, a three-day event from **13–15 December 2026** at Rutherford House in Wellington that will reflect on the impact of religion in education, healthcare, and social services through the lens of Catherine McAuley's founding intention "to serve God faithfully." The symposium will bring together academic experts, Mercy leaders, educators, healthcare professionals, and advocates from Aotearoa, the Pacific and beyond, with a special emphasis on the significance and contribution of Indigenous perspectives, and will include a concurrent student programme for those aged 16 and over. You can find full details and a call-for-papers on the Whānau Mercy Ministries website. Registrations will open on April 1st. Link for more information [Catherine McAuley Symposium - Whanau Mercy Ministries](#)

Whānau Mercy hīkoi.

There will be a Hīkoi in October this year, starting at Waitangi, and going on a pilgrimage of some important Aotearoa Mercy sites. At this stage the plans are for it to begin on the 28th October. There will be more details announced as the planning gets underway.

Stay up to date with all the latest

Whānau Mercy Ministries is online...

Check it out today by scanning the QR code, or visit:

whanaumercy.nz

