

WHĀNAU MERCY MINISTRIES

Formation Strategy Approach

Te Ara Atawhai - The Whānau Mercy Way



February 2026



Te Ara Atawhai – The Whānau Mercy Way

Whānau Mercy Ministries continues the work entrusted to us by Ngā Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa, Sisters of Mercy New Zealand, whose mission has shaped communities across Aotearoa for more than 175 years.

Our formation strategy, Te Ara Atawhai – The Whānau Mercy Way, ensures that this mission remains alive, visible and responsive in our time.

Why Formation Matters

Formation is about more than learning information. It is about shaping hearts, minds and leadership so that everything we do reflects:

- Our Catholic identity
- The charism of Mercy
- Our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi
- Care for our common home
- Strong, ethical and mission-aligned governance

Formation helps us remain faithful to the deeper *why* behind our ministries in education, healthcare, housing and social services. It ensures that Mercy is not just remembered, it is lived.

What We Seek to Cultivate


Through Te Ara Atawhai, we aim to nurture people who:

- Live and lead with aroha, whanaungatanga and kaitiakitanga
- Safeguard the dignity of every person
- Advocate for justice, compassion and care for creation
- Understand Mercy as part of God's mission in the Catholic Church
- Strengthen Māori voice and leadership in the spirit of Te Tiriti
- Govern and lead with integrity and discernment

Formation deepens belonging within the Mercy whānau and connects us to the wider Mercy family locally and globally.

Who Formation Is For

Formation at Whānau Mercy Ministries extends across our whole Mercy whānau. It is designed to support trustees, chairs, directors, senior leaders, staff and volunteers to



understand and faithfully carry our Catholic identity and Mercy charism within their roles.

Formation also reaches into our Mercy colleges, where students encounter the story, values and spirit of Mercy through education, leadership opportunities and service. In this way, formation nurtures identity and belonging, shaping young people who may carry Mercy forward in many different ways.

Within community outreach initiatives, formation may take the form of shared reflection, values-based leadership and justice-oriented action. While those who receive services are never viewed as subjects of formation, spaces of collaboration and advocacy can invite mutual learning grounded in dignity, compassion and care for our common home.

The depth and intensity of formation reflects each person's relationship with Mercy. For some, it includes structured theological and governance development. For others, it is an introduction to Mercy story and values expressed in daily work or service.

As part of the wider Catholic community in Aotearoa, we also recognise that Mercy formation is a gift to be shared. Where appropriate, Whānau Mercy Ministries may offer formation resources, workshops or collaborative learning opportunities to other Catholic organisations and partners. In doing so, we contribute to a Church that walks together in faith, justice and hope.

How Formation Is Delivered


Our approach combines:

- Orientation and ongoing learning
- Online and in-person sessions
- Hui Whānau and pilgrimage opportunities
- Digital resources such as Karanga Atawhai and the whanaumercy.nz website
- Engagement with the wider Mercy network
- Governance development through Institute of Directors frameworks
- Practical tools for discernment and decision-making

We are committed to ensuring formation is accessible, engaging and meaningful, while recognising the demands placed on leaders and volunteers.

Our Commitment

As the first Ministerial Public Juridic Person established in Aotearoa New Zealand, Whānau Mercy Ministries carries canonical responsibilities within the Catholic Church.



Formation ensures we exercise this responsibility faithfully, collaboratively and with integrity.

Te Ara Atawhai supports us not to replicate the past, but to discern what Mercy calls us to do now.

In a changing world, formation helps us remain rooted in our whakapapa while courageously responding to today's realities, strengthening Mercy for generations to come.