

Karanga Atawhai

In Solidarity with First Nations Peoples

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

At the heart of our collective work is a long-standing commitment to dignity, justice, and the flourishing of all people. Across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, that commitment calls us to engage deeply with the histories, realities, and aspirations of First Nations peoples. The whakataukī above reminds us that enduring change is never achieved alone, it is shaped through collective effort, shared purpose, and genuine partnership.

This is both an invitation and a responsibility. As faith-based organisations, we are constantly being called to move beyond intent and into action, working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Māori and Pasifika communities in ways that are grounded in respect, trust and reciprocity.

Co-convenor Esmai Manahan, (MacKillop’s National Director for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Service Development), speaks to the importance of how we do this work:

“For us to be successful in achieving change we must be transparent and authentic. Through working together, we can help shape what concepts such as self-determination, identity, family, culture and community mean for our communities and our Mercy organisations.”

The First Nations Alliance has been established to support this shift, from individual effort to collective impact. It brings together Mercy organisations with a shared commitment to strengthening relationships, deepening understanding, and delivering better outcomes for First Nations peoples.

Fellow convenor Phil Alexander-Crawford (Whānau Mercy Ministries) reflects:

“The Alliance is about building on the strategies and actions already in place across Mercy organisations, including Reconciliation Action Plans. It is about strengthening relationships and working in genuine partnership with our



Mercy whānau to take practical steps that enable First Nations communities to thrive.”

A recent gathering in Melbourne provided a powerful opportunity to listen, to connect, and to begin shaping what comes next. It reinforced a shared belief: that this is a moment to act.

Esmai: “We see this as a time for First Nations voices and our wider faith based organisations to come together, to align our efforts, support one another, and drive better outcomes.”

The challenge now is clear:

- To move forward with intent.
- To act with courage.
- To build relationships that are enduring, not transactional.
- And to ensure that our commitment to reconciliation is reflected not only in what we say, but in what we do, together.

Philip Alexander-Crawford



From the Mercy Whānau

Voices of Mercy

Josie Ruawhare, Operations Manager at Te Waipuna Puawai, recently travelled to New York through the Mercy International Association's Mercy Global Action Mercy Emerging Leaders Fellowship (MELF). Bringing together emerging Mercy leaders from around the world, the fellowship offers opportunities to build strong connections across the Mercy world through international encounters, webinars, modules, mentorship, and shared learning. These are her reflections:



My journey through the Mercy Emerging Leaders Fellowship has been both grounding and expansive. The immersion in Cambodia opened my eyes to the global realities of injustice, resilience, and the strength of communities who continue to rise despite adversity. Carrying those reflections into New York, I found a growing confidence in my own voice and the work we are doing here in Aotearoa. What has been especially meaningful is sharing this journey alongside an international Mercy whānau. Building whanaungatanga with other cohort members created a space of deep connection, where stories, challenges, and hopes were held with mutual respect and care.

These relationships have reminded me that while our contexts may differ, our commitment to dignity and justice is shared. As a mana wahine, this experience has strengthened my sense of responsibility to lead in a way that is culturally grounded and relational, knowing that I carry not only my own community, but also the wider Mercy movement with me. It has affirmed that the work of Whānau Mercy Ministries in Aotearoa has a place within this global story, and that these connections bring both opportunity and responsibility as we continue to learn from one another.

What I am learning, not only through MELF but also here at Commission on the Status of Women, held at United Nations, New York, is that justice work must begin with listening. I did a lot of listening, hearing from people from all over the world about how they mobilise themselves to respond to the injustices they see in their countries and communities.

Mercy has always called us to walk alongside those experiencing hardship with compassion, humility, and courage. Rather than approaching communities with predetermined solutions, Mercy invites us to recognise the dignity, wisdom, and resilience that already exist within people and place.



image: Josie Ruawhare



Josie Ruawhare and MELF Cohort 5 participants

Excellence on the Polyfest Stage

Last year, St Mary's College Auckland returned to ASB Polyfest after a 30-year absence. At only their second return to the festival last month, the mahi of the girls, tutors, staff, and whānau was clearly evident, reflected in an outstanding set of results including: 1st in Mōteatea, 1st in Poi, 1st in Haka Taparahi and 1st Manukura Wahine Div. 3 (400/400) – Te Au Āio Ani Mereti. Along with other placings they achieved overall 2nd in Division 3. Their power performance is available to see [here](#).



Heritage Webinar Series

The Path to the First House of Mercy 1827



A new Heritage Webinar Series from Mercy International Association has been rolled out, exploring the story and context leading to the founding of the first House of Mercy in 1827, as we journey toward the 200th anniversary of the first House of Mercy in 2027.

These will be led by Head of Heritage and Spirituality Caroline Thompson. They are live at 11:30pm NZ time but we encourage you to register and a recording will be sent out to you.

Webinar One - The Penal Laws at 11.30pm on Monday 25th May 2026. Click here to [register](#).

Webinar Two - Poverty in Catherine McAuley's Time at 11.30pm on Wednesday 24th June 2026. Click here to [register](#).

Webinar Three - The History of Baggot Street at 11.30pm on Wednesday 22nd July 2026. Click here to [register](#).

You can read more about the series [here](#).

Answering the Call of Mercy

A day of remembrance, held in community

On Sunday, April 19th, a large group excitedly gathered for the inaugural Community Day of the Dead. Though stormy weather shifted our plans indoors, we transformed the space into a living ngahere filled with art, storytelling, and remembrance. The day began with an hour of art making and memento creation led by Art Yoga, offering participants time to reflect and honour loved ones. This was followed by a ceremony of remembrance led with care by Zenith Virago (founder of the Australian Natural Death Care Centre, educator, and Deathwalker) and beautifully supported with karakia and waiata from Tina and her māmā, KiRā. The afternoon concluded with sunshine, happy tears, and smiles. Together, these offerings created a safe space for reflection and connection, reminding us how powerful community support can be during hard times. The gathering was open to anyone carrying the loss of someone they love, welcoming all religions, spiritualities, beliefs, and cultures. Created for and by community, the event was held with support by Te Korowai Hapori (Mercy Hospice's community action team), alongside valued community partners.

By Lana Petrović, Mercy Hospice



Images: Supplied by Mercy Hospice

Whānau Mercy Ministries Trustees Reappointed



Gerald Scanlan



Philip
Alexander-Crawford



Charlotte
Cummings

The current trustees of Whānau Mercy Ministries Trust have been reappointed for a further three-year term, through to 31 March 2029. The appointments were made by the Sponsors Council, the leadership team of the Ngā Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa | Sisters of Mercy Aotearoa New Zealand.



Judy Whiteman



Catherine Fyfe



Michael Quigg

Symposium Update

Catherine McAuley Symposium Registrations are now open

Registrations are now open for the Catherine McAuley Symposium. You can find our more and view the speakers [here](#). As part of the registration process, a limited number of rooms have been secured at nearby accommodation option at a discounted rate. These will be available on a first come, first served basis, so early registration is encouraged.

The Symposium offers an opportunity to explore more widely what it means to be a religious organisation in a changing global environment. Particular emphasis will be given to the significance and contribution of Indigenous perspectives within religious organisations.

Paper proposals are still being welcomed from across a broad range of contexts. We invite those working, researching, or reflecting in this space, within and beyond Mercy, to consider contributing a workshop or paper. A concurrent student programme is also planned for students aged 16 years and over, and we welcome any workshops for this programme as well.

The committee will review all submissions at the end of each month. You can submit papers [here](#) for either the main sessions or the student sessions.

[REGISTRATION FORM](#)

Help keep Mercy Hospice in the community

Mercy Hospice has launched its Tank of Thanks Urgent Appeal to help keep community palliative care nurses on the road during rising fuel costs. These nurses travel across Auckland to visit patients in their homes, providing care, dignity, and comfort at a critical time.

With demand for hospice care continuing to grow, this support is essential to ensure services remain available and free for those who need them most.

If you are able, please consider making a donation to support this vital work and help keep care reaching those in need.

[Donate Here](#)



Please forward this on

We would love to reach more people and share the mahi we are doing and connect to our wider community as well. Please feel free to share this newsletter widely, and we encourage people to subscribe. The QR code will take you to the Karanga Atawhai Subscription page.



REGISTRATION IS OPEN

Mercy Alliance Webinars

Mercy Alliance which includes Whānau Mercy Ministries, Mercy Ministry Companions, Mercy Care and Mercy Partners, works collaboratively to offer formation opportunities. These opportunities also create space to come together, build relationships, and connect with others involved in MPJP's in Australia.

These are not able to be recorded, so please attend if you are able. We are organising two webinars for 2026:

Listen deeply, engage the heart.... and get the job done: exploring contemporary approaches to Mission Discernment Monday June 15, from 3.00pm – 4.30pm, NZ time, led by Pip McIlroy, Group Director, Mission and Pastoral Care, Mercy Health Australia, who will develop further the seminar she led in 2025 on discernment.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Engaging with ethical issues in ministry governance and leadership

Thursday October 22, from 3.00pm – 4.30pm, NZ time, led by Dan Fleming, National Director, Ethics – St Vincents, who will explore ethical issues in ministry governance and leadership.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

We want to hear from you...

Share your stories with us

We hope Karanga Atawhai can be a place where our ministries are connected, and where the wider Mercy mahi across our whānau can be seen and shared.

If you have a story to contribute, we would love to hear from you please email: natasha@whanaumercy.nz

