



MERCY GLOBAL PRESENCE – EMERGING

'AN HISTORIC MOMENT - REPORT FROM ISMAPNG – MEETING OF MERCY ASIA PACIFIC LEADERS AND TEAMS'

As current members of the Institute Leadership Team – Berneice Loch RSM, Annette Schneider RSM, Sally Bradley RSM, Barbara Bolster RSM and Theresia Tina RSM - and some of the incoming members of the new ILT – Eveline Crotty RSM, Gaye Lennon RSM and Caroline Ryan RSM – we were all delighted to gather with other Mercy Leaders and Teams from the Aotearoa New Zealand, Brisbane, North Sydney, Parramatta and the Philippines Congregations/Institutes at the Parramatta Congregation Centre on 18 – 19 October, 2017.

This was an historic moment! It was the first time this group of Mercy Leaders and Teams from across the Asia Pacific region had gathered. While the Mercy Leaders of Australia/Papua New Guinea meet each year and Mercy Leadership Teams every two years, this was the first time the Leadership Team from the Philippines have joined us. We were very grateful for the warm hospitality of Mary-Louise Petro rsm and her Leadership Team in Parramatta. From the moment we arrived and greeted each other there was a great sense of energy for Mercy mission in the Asia Pacific. There was a growing bond between us as we acknowledged the Source of our common life, our common charism and our common call to Mercy. Our opening prayer together focused us outwards to the needs of our world with the theme 'With Global Hearts of Mercy'.

The group was joined by Elaine Wainwright rsm, who was the International coordinator of the Mercy International Reflection Process in 2016, and the various Congregation MIRP coordinators: Srs Adele Howard, Valda Dickinson, Sandra Lupi, Natalie Murphy and Teresa Anderson. Using the 4 step MIRProcess, this team ably led us in exploring our understanding of Mercy Global Presence, and in particular what this could mean in the Asia Pacific Region. We continued to



Left to Right: Srs Elaine Wainwright, Adele Howard, Valda Dickinson, Teresa Anderson, Natalie Murphy and Sandra Lupi.

focus outwards on the needs of our world and how our 'Mercy Global Presence' can

especially bring a vibrant response to the two key MIRP themes of 'Displacement of Persons' and 'Degradation of Earth'.



Whole group discussions

Towards the end of the gathering we each met up in our own Leadership Teams to discuss possible ways forward. Our current ISMAPNG Leadership Team was enriched by the thinking of our incoming Leadership Team, who will take this forward in various ways and provide continuity in 2018. Eveline Crotty RSM as the new Leader of ISMAPNG will be present at the meeting of Leaders from Australia/Papua New Guinea, Aotearoa New Zealand and the Philippines in April 2018. Eveline

will also be at the Mercy International Association Leaders meeting in Dublin in May 2018.

Some of the key points raised in our discussion at the meeting are:

1. NAMING THIS NEW GROUP AND GIVING IT A NEW IDENTITY WITHIN MIA

We strongly support naming the coming together of these six congregations as a formal group under the wider umbrella of MIA. The name "Asian-Pacific Mercy" or something similar was suggested. We especially want to continue to offer mutual support in a variety of ways. The areas of possible influence were named as - the participating congregations, MIA itself, the Asian-Pacific Government Forum (APEC), and our presence at the United Nations through linking closely with Angela Reed RSM, 'Coordinator Mercy International Association at the UN - Global Action', who is a member of ISMAPNG .

2. THE NEED FOR AN AUTHORISED STRUCTURE OF "ASIA-PACIFIC MERCY"

There was strong support for the realization that any of this is unlikely to take off without "an Organizing Intelligence". We believe that someone will need to work with the leaders, attend to all the organisational details and actions beyond meetings, and be authorised by the leaders involved and MIA to do so.

3. SPREADING THE MERCY CONNECTIONS FURTHER ACROSS THE ASIA PACIFIC

It is hoped that through MIA we can seek the involvement of Sisters of Mercy across the Asia Pacific who have a presence in such places as Guam, Cambodia, East Timor, and Pakistan.

4. ISMAPNG NEW CHAPTER STATEMENT 2017

We will try to link any outcomes of this gathering with our recent Chapter Statement, as this is a very natural 'fit'.

At this time of global vulnerability
Long dispela taim bilong wol i gat hevi na wari
God's transforming mercy
Marimari bilong God i senisim
fires our hearts anew
hat bilong mipela olsem niupela paia
with deeper reverence for all creation.
wantaim bikpela ona long olgeta samting.
Disturbed by the despair and suffering of many peoples
Plenti ol pipol i tingting long pen na hevi i bagarapim ol.
and the degradation of our Earth,
na long ol bagarap ol i mekim long Graun bilong mipela,
we are impelled
Dispela i kirapim mipela
to reflective action for gospel justice
long lukluk gen long wei na stretpela pasin bilong gutnius.

5. THE NEED FOR EDUCATION AND FORMATION IN THE MIRP ITSELF

We realise the need to actually teach the skills of MIRP itself. This needs to involve education and formation in a broad number of areas such as sharing our story in an atmosphere of respectful listening, the use of scripture, theological and wisdom traditions, and in cultural, political and scientific analysis. The importance of engaging local wisdom first was stressed. We also emphasized considering the community development principle of working to our strengths, especially of the local situation. We agreed that ISMAPNG would join the other Congregations in supporting Adele Howard RSM in the preparation of a publication of a comprehensive document to teach and further enhance the use of the MIRP across



Srs Sue France, Margaret Jones, Lorretto Conroy, Patricia Kirchner and Marian Ladrera.

the Mercy world. We will also continue to offer further support to the Sisters and their lay partners in the Philippines in using the MIRP process. An area to explore among Asia-Pacific Mercy could be that of immersion experiences for our schools and key staff. This requires critical consideration as to how this may work in reality. We wish to use all available forms of internet technology to promote collaboration.

6. AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO SUSTAINABLE LIVING

In November 2016, ISMAPNG launched our Sustainability Policy – ‘An Integrated Approach to Sustainable Living’. The policy looks to integrate sustainable living across seven key areas – energy, water, waste, transport, procurement, investment and infrastructure. It provides a framework for personnel and ministry partners to develop policies, programs and procedure



which will contribute to achieving these overarching objectives. This Policy, the underpinning values and our endeavors to live this out across ISMAPNG, would also be important to include in any of our Asia Pacific Mercy connections.

7. POSSIBLE MIRP THEME OF ‘WATER’ AS A FOCUS

In the wider process at this gathering one group suggested a focus in the Asian-Pacific region on ‘Water’. This theme came through as a concern in several of the MIRP groups and we believe there are many sisters and lay partners across the region who would be interested. There is great potential for us to educate ourselves further around this theme.

8. THE USE OF IMAGES AS A CREATIVE STIMULUS

We believe that the use of common images could be very useful as a creative stimulus. Such examples given are the three symbols which emerged in writing the ‘*Review of the Mercy International Reflection Process: What has been discovered? What has been revealed?*’ (21 April 2017). These three symbols emerged to bring more clarity to the understanding of this Mercy Global Presence: the holon, the butterfly and the global heartbeat. Other symbols and texts from scripture, wisdom traditions or popular writings were mentioned at this gathering, such as ‘widening the tent’ (Isaiah 54), creating the ripple effect and the image of the Hoberman Sphere.

9. LINKS WITH MERCY WORKS LTD

We suggest that Mercy Works Ltd which already supports long term development projects, and works with some of the most challenged people in Australia and the South-East Asia Pacific region, in improving health, enhancing social wellbeing and expanding educational opportunities could be called upon in this venture. Mercy Works Ltd is jointly sponsored by the four Mercy Congregations across Australia and Papua New Guinea.



We believe these nine key points together will help us to strengthen our Mercy connections across the Asia Pacific and in doing so bring life to our Mercy Global Presence in this region.

SALLY BRADLEY RSM

November, 2017

for the Institute Leadership Team of ISMAPNG