

Highways and Byways

Newsletter of
The John Wallis Foundation

PO Box 2075 Rangeview Vic 3132



Greetings,

Here we are in December, and we say thank you to our supporters for committing to the Foundation for another year.

Over the last few months we have made a special effort to visit as many JWF funded initiatives as we could. This is not easy as many are in remote rural areas. We focused on those relatively close to our Melbourne base and areas where we have JWF Branch members and MSS sisters and supporters located.

In early August Stancea Vichie MSS and I headed north from Melbourne to visits three projects in rural Victoria. Kyabram and Tatura are both located in the Goulburn Valley region of Vic about 160 kms north of Melbourne. Both communities have been impacted by the decline in the dairy industry, lack of regional services and other regional industries closing down. In Tatura we visited Tatura Community House who had received a grant for a new coffee machine to train young people and assist with employment options in local cafes as well as in the Shepparton region. In Kyabram we visited the new Homework Club at Kyabram Community and Learning Centre.

In Bendigo we visited the *Mums and Bubs Learn English* program organised by Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services. Most of the women and their children were of Afghan origin. The program is well supported by community volunteers. JWF funds contributed to new toys and educational resources for the children.

In September Corrie van den Bosch MSS, Lorraine Groves MSS and I visited two programs which support mental health in rural communities in Tasmania. RAW (Rural Alive and Well) is a dynamic organisation based in Oatlands and servicing much of rural Tasmania through outreach workers. The workers, using their vehicles as their office and relying on their own skills and community volunteers, visit and support many in rural communities who are struggling with life's challenges and suffering a decline in their mental health. It is an impressive model of rural support, achieving much with limited resources.

We also met with Christine Waters from St. Helens who was funded by the Foundation to undertake teen mental health training. Christine also brings dynamism to her position and will run teen mental health workshops in 2018.

We greatly appreciated meeting workers at the grass roots level and continue to be amazed at what people can do for their communities with a small sum of money.

Our 2016 2017 Annual Report is available on our website www.jwf.org.au in the About Us section. We would love you to have a look, as it reports on a busy and full financial year.

We are constantly inspired by the generosity of the community of support that surrounds the John Wallis Foundation. Thank you again, and see you all in 2018!

Liz McAloon
Executive Officer



Participants in the 'Mums and Bubs Learn English' Program, Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services, Bendigo, VIC

into the highways and byways

The John Wallis Foundation continues the vision and mission of
the Missionary Sisters of Service



"The yearly John Wallis Memorial Lecture is always much awaited and much enjoyed...."

Hobart Lecture 21st September 2017

Report by Eva Dunn, JWF Hobart Branch Chairperson



"The John Wallis Foundation is doing a wonderful thing for the Catholic community of Tasmania. On the mainland, they have access to high profile speakers pretty easily. Here, we have more difficulty in recruiting them and bringing them to Tassie. The yearly John Wallis Lecture is always much awaited and much enjoyed."

This was said by a discerning lay person after our 2017 John Wallis Memorial Lecture, and it gladdened the heart to hear it. The Lecture that prompted this remark was given by the internationally known and respected Scripture scholar, Fr Frank Moloney SDB. His topic was "The Word of God in the life of the Church – Have we failed?" Fr Frank's historic overview highlighted the ever changing and ever challenging tensions that seem to exist always between Scripture-based Christian faith and the institutional structure of the Church.

There are deep historical roots to this dynamic tension. In his conclusion, Fr Frank reflected on a quote from St Jerome:

"In a prologue to his commentary on Isaiah, St Jerome (347-419 CE) wrote: 'When we approach the Mystery, if a crumb falls to the ground we are troubled. Yet when we are listening to the word of God, and God's word and Christ's flesh are being poured into our ears we pay no heed' (Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah*: PL 24.17). Some sixteen hundred years later, this problem continues. Is it possible that we might bring Scripture back into the life and practice of the Church by "telling the story" of Jesus better in our preaching, in our behaviour, in our commitment to our earth, and to education that is "sourced by the Gospel"? We might thus better reflect the presence of Christ in the life and practice of our Catholic Church. It was the dream of those who created Vatican II, and it is time we returned to the dream."

As we left the Lecture, we felt that we have been given much to ponder upon. Our gratitude goes out to Fr Frank for an experience that will stay with us for quite some time.

As for the occasion itself, it was both intellectually and spiritually profitable and very enjoyable. There were around one hundred people in the audience, in Guilford Young College's beautiful chapel.

The Lecture was Auslan interpreted for the benefit of everyone really, but naturally for our deaf community members. Afterwards, people stayed for over an hour chatting around the supper tables. We all remarked on the fantastic family atmosphere of friendship and community.

The event was a worthy memorial to Fr Wallis and a resounding celebration of the life and contribution of the Missionary Sisters of Service to the life of the Church. By **Eva Dunn**



Lecture attendees enjoying the 'cuppa' with Fr Frank Moloney, top picture, far left.



Finding compassion and careaway from home



When there's no place to call home
Barossa Region, South Australia



Kym bought the new pillows, doonas, sheets and towels and put them together in packs for the young people

Kym Staples believes everyone should have a place to call home. But she knows that isn't how life is for many young people in South Australia's Barossa region.

As case manager with Centacare's Outer North Youth Homelessness Service, Kym tries to find a home for young people who are homeless because of mental health, drug and alcohol, financial or family conflict issues. When she can't find them any housing in the area, she gives them clean bedding and a fresh towel to use as they couch surf waiting for secure medium or long-term accommodation.

Support from the John Wallis Foundation meant Kym was able to put together 20 basic bed packs, which contained a doona, sheet set, pillow and towel.

"Sometimes the young people I work with are bouncing from couch to couch with nothing, not even a towel of their own. They might be able to stay with a friend or relative for a night or two, but then they have to move on. Some young people will stay with someone they don't even know and that is risky," Kym said. She believes the bed packs have made a real difference to young people who have no secure accommodation.

"Having a clean towel and bedding makes a difference to a person's hygiene, but also to their emotional and mental health. Having something clean and warm to sleep in and a towel that no one else has used means a lot to them. It is a fantastically simple, but effective project," Kym said.

Kym gave away one of the last packs to a 16 year old boy, wishing she could find something more when it was needed.

"Everyone deserves somewhere to call home."

Grief when you can't be home
Geraldton, Western Australia

*Vera was in Greenough Regional Prison, near Geraldton, when her beloved father died in Perth. She couldn't attend the funeral, or gather with family in shared grief. But when she was released she asked for the wreath she had made during her incarceration and placed it on her father's grave.

Kate McLeod ran the 10 wreath making classes that Vera and many other Indigenous, non-Indigenous and Maori women attended in the prison and she saw the love and dedication that Vera put into making the wreath. The John Wallis Foundation funded classes were instigated by Kate to help the women, particularly Indigenous women, cope with the grief of a family death while they were in prison.

"There is a lot of guilt and family disappointment when the women can't attend a funeral. Making the cross or circle wreaths helped the women manage this very difficult time," said Kate who is now Executive Manager of Programmes at Centacare in Geraldton and still involved with many of the women.

The wooden crosses were made by prisoners in the men's unit and decorated by the women using blue packaging tape. Plumbing insulation piping glued together created the circle for the other wreath design and tissue paper was used to make the flowers. The wreaths were stored and then delivered to a woman's family by a Centacare volunteer.

"Sadly, there are a lot of family funerals of the women in prison and they experience so much trauma being away from their family at this time. Knowing their wreath will be delivered to the funeral, or family, gave them some comfort," Kate said.
* not her real name.



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Emerging leaders find wisdom in elders

Port Augusta, South Australia



Emerging leaders in Port Augusta in South Australia are being mentored in an exciting project initiated by Schools Ministry Group in partnership with several Christian churches and the Ninnal Seed Community.



The Mentor Support for Young Indigenous Community Members project involved identifying young people within the local Indigenous community who wanted to develop leadership skills with the aim of supporting other young people. This group of young people was mentored and supported to identify their own strengths and develop skills.

Michael Edgecomb from SMG said four young Aboriginal leaders in Port Augusta were given personal and professional mentoring, support to access appropriate community resources, development opportunities, and further vocational training.

"These young people were identified by adult leaders in the community, who see potential in them as future generational leaders," Michael said.

Brandi Nelson's participation in the project led to her getting a job as a Pastoral Care Worker at a local school in Port Augusta.

Brandi (pictured) has started studying externally a Certificate IV in Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care through Hope College in Queensland. She valued the support given her as part of the project, which received support from the John Wallis Foundation. "It gave me the confidence to apply for the Pastoral Care Worker position and work out my next steps," Brandi said.

"School and community leadership are excited by Brandi in this role, and committed to providing ongoing support to her," Michael said.

SMG coordinates and facilitates Christian ministry in South Australian schools and employs more than 300 Pastoral Care Workers in schools.

Let music do the talking

Geelong, Victoria

Life, death and love can be hard for teenagers to discuss. But add some guitar riffs and a couple of musos with industry experience and all that can change. That's certainly Dave Stevens' experience when he and music partner Michael Stangel from RHR Music took their musicianship program into Geelong's Northern Bay College, a school which would not normally have the resources to run such a program.

Fifteen students, all with some singing or instrumental experience and a lot of passion, took part in the program to learn more about the industry and gain confidence in their musical abilities.

"Young people have a lot of ideas in their heads and they know things, but they often have no confidence to put those ideas out into a public space because they are frightened of being ridiculed. This program helped them develop respect for their abilities," Dave said.

The program, with support from the John Wallis Foundation, encouraged students to develop their ideas into a song. Along the way they also learned about the music industry and what to expect if they want to follow their musical dreams. The end product was a collaboratively written and recorded original song.

"It's a lot about confidence and believing that when you are creating a song that there is no right or wrong and that it can be a vehicle to express things that you can't talk about. At the beginning of the first session no one would offer us an idea. Once we got into it, and we started adding some music to their words, they realised that they could do that too," Dave said.

One student agreed: "It was so cool to be able to hear some of the ideas I have had going on for a while in my head, put down into live music tracks, sounded great".



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Missionary Sisters of Service Newsletter

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A Life Enriched by Friendships and Gratitude:

by Margaret Kenny mss

Among the rich memories of my 61 years as a Missionary Sister of Service are the many friendships formed and nourished over numerous kitchen tables in small country towns and isolated rural properties in Tasmania, New South Wales and South Australia.

When first thinking about a religious vocation (as it was then termed) I thought this was a way of thanking God for the life and gifts I had received. I grew up in a Catholic family where involvement in church and church-related activities was taken for granted. After a Catholic school education and a year at business college, I got a position in secretarial employment.

In 1955 I read an article in the Melbourne "Advocate" about a group of Sisters in Tasmania. Founded in 1944 by a diocesan priest, Father John Wallis, with four members of the Legion of Mary, their ministry was to rural and isolated families through parish visitation and correspondence contact. This pastoral ministry, with its distinctive Australian flavour, appealed to me. Their motto "Into the Highways and Byways" was certainly a challenge. In March 1956 I joined the group in Hobart. It was a big break for my family, especially as one of my brothers had just begun studies for the priesthood.



After three years of Novitiate training, I was posted to the Correspondence School - Religion by Letter - to isolated families around Tasmania. There were also pastoral visits to country parishes where I met some of the families I came to know through the Correspondence School.

In 1961 I moved to Parkes, New South Wales, where I spent the next few years in the correspondence school and some pastoral visits, coming to know people *around the kitchen table** in western NSW.

Photo: Margaret in the Correspondence School. Alice Fox mss in the background. Photo: MSS Archives Circa 1960.

In the mid 1960s, I moved back to Hobart where I spent the next eight years in the Catholic Bookshop. Making good reading available to people has been part of the MSS mission from the beginning. On our pastoral visits to parishes we always took a selection of books for adults and children, as well as religious objects.



Photo: Fiona Basile

My years in the Hobart Bookshop coincided with the exciting days of Vatican II and the early post-Vatican movements within the church.

In 1982 I moved to Whyalla, South Australia with involvement again in the Correspondence School, the small bookshop we ran from our house, and visits to families across the Eyre Peninsula, the Flinders Ranges and north to Uluru. I spend 23 years there and developed many friendships with families in this vast area.

When the Baxter Detention Centre opened outside Port Augusta, I joined a group visiting asylum seekers there. This has shaped my involvement in Social Justice Activities.

2005 saw my return to Melbourne. Now living in a unit in Mentone, I continue to be involved in regular gatherings of MSS as well as parish and family activities.

Looking back over the years since joining what was then known as the Home Missionary Sisters of Our Lady, I realise that I am still the one receiving so much from God.

This year Bernadette Wallis went to Ireland and the UK on tour with *The Silent Book*. She received a very warm welcome wherever she went. A photo-story of her trip is posted on www.jwf.org.au. Proceeds of book sales are going to the John Wallis Foundation.

* *Around the Kitchen Table* is the title of a book by Penny Edman. Published in 2008, it tells the story of the Missionary Sisters of Service. It is available from MSS Administration Centre, PO Box 2075 Rangeview Vic. \$20.00 plus postage.

60 Years on a Mission of Love: meet Therese Healy mss

Where does one start telling a story of a woman who has been on the highways and byways of life for more than four score years, more than sixty of these as a Missionary Sister of Service?

Therese Healy has two great passions: she is passionate about people, and passionate about God and the things of God. In her life as a Missionary Sister of Service these two passions have merged as one.

When Therese was thinking about religious life, a priest suggested she read a pamphlet entitled *Into the Highways and Byways*. It was the story of a very new community, the Home Missionary Sisters of Our Lady, now known as the Missionary Sisters of Service. Reading the story of the sisters travelling to wherever people were, touched something in Therese. Growing up in Stawell in western Victoria, she was drawn to country people.

In March 1955 Therese travelled to Hobart to join this new community. After three years of novitiate formation, she had her first taste of the travelling mission in Tasmania. Over the years it took her to Western NSW and the length and breadth of Queensland, to South Australia and, in more recent years, brought her back to Melbourne.

When asked about her experience of mission, Therese tells stories of people and places where she has been. Among the most challenging of her years on the road were those in north Queensland. Based in Richmond, Therese's mission covered the vast area between Richmond, Julia Creek, Karumba, Winton, Cloncurry and Normanton – all places synonymous with the great outback. Her pastoral work happened *around the kitchen table* as she visited families, spending the night at some homes before setting off for the next.



Therese recalls: *What kept me safe on the road was the radio connected to the Flying Doctor radio service. I contacted people, letting them know I was coming. I knew people would soon come to my help if I didn't turn up. I always carried water, a pack of food, a rope in case I got bogged and two spare wheels.*

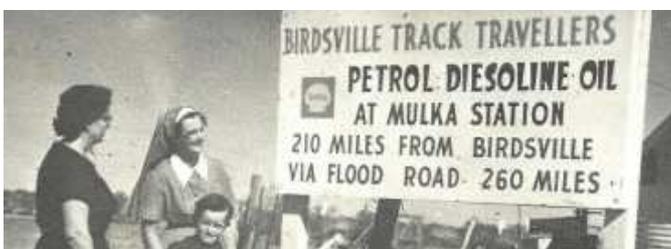
As was the practice of MSS, Therese visited everyone she could in those isolated areas. Her warmth and acceptance of people just as they were broke down any barriers. She tells of visiting a family who were initially not pleased to see her. Hesitantly, they invited her in. After some awkwardness, they told her they were atheists. Therese simply accepted this, and shared a story of another atheist she knew:

This woman came for a cuppa with me at the place where I was staying. In the course of conversation I asked her what made her so happy. She said it was because she loved helping people. What a beautiful woman!

That broke the ice, and her hosts relaxed. When it came time for Therese to leave, they not only invited her to come back, but also to stay the night with them!

Once I went to see a family on the spur of the moment. I had not let them know I was coming and on my way, I got bogged in the dry Flinders River. What now? Then remembered: a truckie told me once what to do in that situation. I wondered if I still had the note on which I had written it down. I looked in the glovebox and there it was: "When bogged in sand, put the vehicle in low gear and idle it out." It worked: "Thanks God", and "Thanks truckie."

In March 2018 Therese will celebrate the 60th anniversary of the making her vows as a Missionary Sister of Service. Congratulations, Therese, and may you be richly blessed as you continue to live your love for God and people, now in St Catherine's Aged Care facility, Balwyn Vic.



An earlier era: Therese on the Birdsville Track. Archives photo.

Wondering about what to give for Christmas?

The Silent Book: A Deaf Family and the Disappearing Australian-Irish Sign Language, by Bernadette Wallis, promises many hours of delightful reading.

To order ring MSS Administration:
(03) 9873 5520

or go to: missionarysisters.org.au

