



As 2022 draws to a close and signs of the Christmas season are all around, we at the Mercy Hub are so grateful for all that this year has held. Like most people in this uncertain 'post-covid' time we remain keenly aware of the fragility of all life. Our Advent Reflections each week with Elizabeth Dowling have once again guided us in hope and reminded us to look forward with courage and with expansive hearts as we journey towards Christmas.

This 'Hub Highlights' offers a glimpse of some of the activities of recent weeks at the Mercy Hub. It was with great joy that we welcomed our friend Nasar Moradi to our annual Hub Christmas gathering this year. Nasar was released just a couple of days earlier, after 8 years in Immigration detention. It was so wonderful to have him with us in the same space we exhibited his amazing artwork over a year ago. We wish him the best of luck and many blessings as he embarks on this new chapter with his well overdue freedom. In this newsletter an article, 'Heart of the Art' captures news of the special award from the United Nations to Nasar Moradi.

Among others who joined us for Christmas cheer were Sisters of Mercy and other Sisters, Rotary Club members, friends of Mercy Hub and Young Mercy Links members.

We also welcomed two young Eritrean students who are friends of Mercy Hub and joined us again this year. It was a special evening for Simona who had just completed Year 12 at Ave Maria College and received her VCE results! After just five years in Australia, Simona obtained a score of 95 - so is now on her way to study Medicine at Monash University in 2023. We wish her every success with her new pathway.

Thanks to all who came along and helped to make the Christmas gathering such a joyous, and happy evening. We are especially grateful to Juliet Talarico, who did much of the organising and to others who assisted along the way. Special thanks to Loreto Lynch and Cassandra Prinzi who provided beautiful music and carols singing during the evening.

On behalf of everyone at the Mercy Hub may we all find Christmas peace and blessings in these days.

Marg Moore rsm

THREADING NEW WAYS

On the 14th of October Young Mercy Links (YML) ran a workshop with our friends at the women's shelter, Bethlehem House. Elise Ho and Cassandra Prinzi were the YML event project managers and this is their report.

We hoped to use our shared passion in craft as a way of sparking fun and creativity among the residents, using a rainbow of beads and thread. The focus of our workshop was to teach and enable the creation of new wearable art pieces; including necklaces, bracelets and earrings and allowing space for a casual chat.

To reduce costs as well as fashion waste, when sourcing materials, we reached out to members of YML to donate any old, broken or unwanted jewellery that could be upcycled for the workshop.

We would like to thank everyone's generous contribution in providing materials that could be put to artistic use, as well as Angela and Vicki for helping us bring about this first YML workshop as project leaders.



DRESSING TO SAVE THE PLANET

By Phoebe Baillon and Isabelle Clements

On Sunday the 13th of November, Young Mercy Links hosted a Clothing Swap to help end hyper-consumerism. As it was National Recycling Week, we thought it would be a great time to educate people on the impacts the fashion industry has on our environment, along with the social impacts it causes.

Fast fashion is a term used to describe cheap and low-quality clothing that is rapidly produced and is cycled in and out of the market quickly to meet new trends. This in turn leads to hyper consumerism. Hyper consumption is the excessive and rapid consumption of goods beyond a person's necessities, and the associated significant pressure, from all forms of media, to consume those goods as they shape one's identity. Notions such as retail therapy have been engrained into our culture to fuel corporate profits at the cost of the Earth and the most vulnerable. These cheap, trendy garments are designed to be worn only a handful of times before being discarded. After a few wears, the garment either falls apart or goes out of style, encouraging customers to return to the store to shop for new trends.

Unfortunately, most fast fashion garments are made with synthetic fibres that don't degrade over time in landfills. Thanks to the normalization of this overconsumption, the fashion industry has become one of the biggest contributors to global waste and pollution.

This state of excess can be described as stuffocation. We are trapped in a vicious cycle of working and accumulating products to keep up with the pace of consumerism. This fuels the anxiety of modern life; destroying the planet while keeping us from leading more imaginative, fulfilling lives. Materialism is eating us inside out. So how do we stop it? Ads, promotions and 1-click buying functions are all designed to trigger impulse buying. The rate of buying increases the more companies speed up delivery. Therefore, the slower the buying process, the lower the desire to shop. To break free from the cycle of consumerism, we need to slow down.



AN AFTERNOON OF POETRY AND MUSIC

Written by Mary Geason

The theme for the Poetry Day was, fittingly, 'end of the year' and more than one participant referenced the following verse, which is worth sharing with you:

"I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown". And he replied, "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."

(Minnie Louise Haskins, *Prelude to The Gate of the Year*, 1912, passage read by King George VI in 1939 in his Christmas Empire Address.)

As usual, all who shared some poetry, either their own writing or from other Poets, had a wonderful afternoon of appreciation for the insights that the gift of poetry keeps on giving. The irrepressible enthusiasm of Ursula Gilbert, and her love of poetry, is a sustaining inspiration to all who come along.



COMMUNITY CREATIONS

Our wonderful volunteer art teacher, Phil Kreveld continues to run free art classes at the Hub each week in block of six weeks or so. Up to twelve students enjoy the opportunity to explore their creative artistic instincts and many have resolved to continue attending the classes in 2023.

HEART OF THE ART

We are so proud of our dear friend Naser Moradi. What an achievement, an honourable mention in the United Nations 2022 International Art Contest for Minority Artists Working on Statelessness Themes. Extract from Naser's Facebook page.

"Hello Dear Friends

I am so happy! The United Nations Office of Human Rights, the Office of the High Commissioner from Geneva has awarded my art an Honourable Mention and have sent me a certificate, a beautiful trophy statue and a book with a photo of me and few of my art works which tells my story. This is a very valuable gift for me in the difficult situation that I am in, after 8 years of detention still waiting for my freedom.

I thank and appreciate all the friends who encourage and help me. I present this gift to you and all those who work so hard for my freedom and human rights for everyone. Also I would like to say, yes I am happy to receive this award, but how I wish I could have received it outside the cage in the fresh air of freedom not only for me, but for all those who are stateless and suffering unknown in the darkness.

My heartfelt thanks to all of you my friends and supporters.

Naser".



About one week later, Naser was released from detention.

LEAD TODAY FOR TOMORROW

The Mercy Hub was host to Our Lady of Mercy College (OLMC) students , Heidelberg, for a two day student leadership program on Monday 28 and 29 November. The Hub was a buzz with young students presented with structured activities designed to inspire, challenge and nurture leadership potential. Guest speakers attended onsite to give real insight into what makes a good leader.

OLMC appreciates the use of Mercy Hub's convenient and beautiful space for the leadership team to gather, reflect and re-emerge for the new year.



REFLECTIONS AS A NEWCOMER

Written by Jennifer McDowell

As the Mercy Hub continues its role as a welcoming space for groups, students and activities, I am reminded how each day the Mercy Hub Team nurtures this spirit. For me, as a relative newcomer, it is quite inspiring. Firstly, the discussions held during a Comfortable Cuppa weekly zoom session with participants sharing their different perspectives on a spiritual topic, has been illuminating and thought provoking. A thread from that zoom session of "Stay Awake" remains with me.

And so it is with this mindset that I view the activities next door. Sibling is a coffee shop, a social enterprise café offering on site training to help marginalized members of the community gain employability skills. Dean is the volunteer on duty this particular Thursday morning at Sibling. The trainer's tone is gentle and his communication style attentive. Both the Mercy Hub and Sibling share the core values of inclusivity and hospitality that are lived out in daily practice.

