WALKING IN MERCY

Institute Office of Association Quarterly Newsletter *June 2026*

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Youth Mercy Associates in Action

Introduction by Jamie Landry

As an employee of Mercy Education, I often hear inspiring examples of how Catherine McAuley's legacy and the Mercy charism are being taught and shared with students in Mercy Education member schools. The administrators, faculty, and staff across the 55 schools in the Mercy Education system are forming our future leaders in Mercy in remarkable ways.

When I read about the Youth Mercy Associates group at Mercy High School, I was immediately drawn to learn more. Mercy Associate groups everywhere face the ongoing challenge of recruiting new members and deepening understanding of what it means to live in relationship with Mercy. Alison Kline-Kator, Director of Mission Integration, along with dedicated staff members, is introducing young people to the unique covenant between Sisters of Mercy and Mercy Associates. As these students move out into the world, they carry this relationship with them, and it helps shape their futures.

As Mercy Associates, we are blessed with the promise of future members deeply formed in Mercy. Please join me in expressing gratitude for the work being done at Mercy High School in Farmington Hills, Michigan—and in all Mercy schools—to prepare our young people to lead us forward on the path of Mercy.



Students involved in Youth Mercy Associates (YMA) are recognized for their participation and service.

Youth Mercy Associates in Action

By: Alison Kline-Kator, Director of Mission Integration. Mercy High School, Farmington Hills, Michigan.

It's 7:15 a.m. on a Thursday. School doesn't start for another 45 minutes, but the Mission and Ministry office is already filled with teenagers ready for the day's gathering. The chatter quiets as a student leads the group in prayer.

First on the agenda is a brief reflection from Praying with Catherine McAuley by Sisters Helen Marie Burns, RSM, and Sheila Carney, RSM. A student then shares an announcement about upcoming participation in a local ministry serving people who are unhoused or food insecure. The group closes the morning by creating cards for a local sister's 90th birthday.

These students are part of Mercy High School's Youth Mercy Associates (YMA). The movement began in 2000 in England and is known in various Mercy communities as Youth Mercy Associates programs. In 2013, 17 students at Mercy High School in Farmington Hills became charter members of the school's group.

"I love the YMA," Mercy Associate and religious studies teacher Sandy Mals said. "It is a way for them to explore their own faith and what it means to be mercy for others." The mission of YMA is to follow in the footsteps of Catherine McAuley with lives centered on Christ, connecting students to the Sisters of Mercy, Associates, and the Critical Concerns through prayer and action.

"The reason I got really involved when I came to Mercy is that the mission kept drawing me," junior leader Khloe Duneske said. "Lots of people have a heart for service, but this is different. We are helping the community, but we're also part of the community."

Students participate in service projects during meetings, including blanket making for Fleece and Thank You, and off-campus activities such as food distribution. This past fall, they also tended the graves of local sisters. "One of my favorite activities has been gravestone cleaning," Duneske said. "In a way, we are honoring the legacy of those who came before us."

Members also build relationships with the Sisters of Mercy through school Masses, jubilees, and service events. "I really liked meeting the sisters," sophomore Tatiana Kreger said.

Through these relationships, students also reflect on vocation. "These women were our age once," freshman Zoe Richter said. "It's a full-circle moment." Some students say the experience may even shape future discernment of religious life or Mercy association.
"I would definitely consider it," Kreger said. "Being associated with mentors makes me think about how I want to live my life."
"I'm very proud of them," Mals said. "They are incredible young people."



YMA students cleaned local Sisters' gravestones as a service project.

Clouds & Weeds

By: Dr. Peter J. Zografos, © 2026, Mercy Associate

My life journey called me to live in many places and gifted me with experiences from a diverse wealth of cultures and beliefs. I became ever more in awe of the profound effect place has made in my own spirituality.

Often times we are unaware of this “genius loci” or “spirit of place” in our prayer life, which can be enriched and celebrated in acknowledging the uniqueness of both beauty and imperfection.

While living in Seattle, Washington for many years I lived through many months without the sun shining through the clouds. Many found this depressing causing seasonal affective disorder. As I became familiar with the clouds’ various shapes and types, along with their meanings, the clouds became more beautiful in their uniqueness. The clouds also helped create a mist over Puget Sound and the surrounding lands. I was drawn more and more into the mist and discovered its mystical quality.

During those years, I would also fly to Albuquerque every other month to visit with my dear friend and my Mercy spiritual guide Sister Mary Angelo Lobato and the New Mexico associates. While there, I discovered the plant “scotch broom” which was cherished and considered a decorative ornamental plant by her neighbors. However, in the Pacific Northwest my neighbors would dig them up considering them an invasive weed. The history of the invasive plant (*Cytisus scoparius*), native to southern Europe, was introduced to the United States in the 1800s as an ornamental shrub.

Eureka, a simple yet profound juxtaposition of meaning and beauty based on location. Rather than complain about the lack of sunshine and finding an invasive weed in my garden, I leaned into the Ignatian principle of finding God in all things.

The clouds invited me into the mist, as the weeds invited me into the spirituality of place. The Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote: “The world is charged with the grandeur of God.”





Images sourced from Pixabay

CCASA Mercy Associates First General Meeting

By: María del Carmen Pérez, Mercy Associate

On Saturday, May 16, the first general meeting of Associates of the Caribbean, Central and South America Community (CCASA) took place. Aproximately 50 people from the eight participant countrires: Argentina, Belize, Chile, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Peru, and Panama) took part.



Image source: AI-generated artwork.

Following the welcome, the associates divided into small groups to reflect on the questions posed by the Coordinating Team:

- **What challenges are we facing today in our ministries and political contexts?**
- **How do we recognize and accompany our own limits, fatigue, and frustrations in the mission?**
- **What values and characteristics identify us and give us our identity as Mercy Associates?**

The sharing was very deep and fruitful. Afterwards, everyone returned to the main room, where an inspiring video featuring the song “Semillas y Sueños” (“Seeds and Dreams”) was presented before participants once again returned to their small groups. It was a space filled with listening, reflection, and hope, continuing to strengthen the shared journey and renew our commitment to the mission.

Later, the participants returned to the plenary session to briefly express ways of responding to the challenges raised. Each small group committed to sending its conclusions to the Coordinating Team, which will prepare a document to share with the CCASA Associates. The next general meeting will take place in August.

Cohort to Sign Covenants Online

By: Kathy Schiro, OOA Associate Manager and Process Liaison

With great joy, it is announced that the very first cohort of seven women from a new Online Orientation Process will sign their initial covenants at an Online Covenant Ceremony! It will occur on June 22 at 7:00 pm eastern time via zoom. All associates are invited, as are any interested Sisters of Mercy.

Our newest associates are Linda Auker, Annette Clark, Mimi Clark, Catherine Mea Czerepak, Rebecca Jones, Jackie Ostick and Mary Ann Steutermann. Together with their mentors they attended monthly formation meetings and an online retreat. Mentors included Joanne Castner, Mary Enyart, Carnnie Harmon, Nancy Hartsock, Betty Kibble and Lori Williams. Facilitators for this process are Joan Lauriente and Chris Wilde. This online process assists those who are not able to attend local group orientations, largely due to distance.

Staff Update from the Office of Association

By: Tylia Oladipo, Executive Director OOA & Mercy Associate

Jennifer Lesenger has accepted a new position with the Institute Office of Ministry. We thank Jennifer for her service to the Institute Office of Association and for her work as editor of Walking in Mercy. We wish her well as she begins this new role within the Institute.



We are also pleased to announce that Carmen Donnelly has been promoted to the role of Communication Design Administrator for the OOA and will serve as the new editor of Walking in Mercy. Carmen will support communication and design needs for the Office of Association while continuing the important work of strengthening communication across the Mercy Associate community.

Please join us in congratulating Carmen as she begins this new role.
Moving forward, we invite you to contact Carmen for communication-related needs within the OOA.

Mercy Associate Named Vice Chair of Global Mercy Board

Mercy Associate Tylia B. Oladipo was recently appointed Vice Chair of the Mercy International Association Board of Directors. This volunteer leadership role supports the mission and global work of Mercy International Association in collaboration with Mercy communities around the world.


Tylia Oladipo

Tylia currently serves as Executive Director of the Institute Office of Association and has been an active member of the Mercy Associate community since 2012.

In addition to her work with Association, Tylia serves as an Anti-Racism and Racial Equity facilitator, Pastoral Care Minister, and Spiritual Director. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communications and a Master of Arts in Faith and Leadership Formation and is a graduate of the Mercy Emerging Leaders Fellowship Programme.

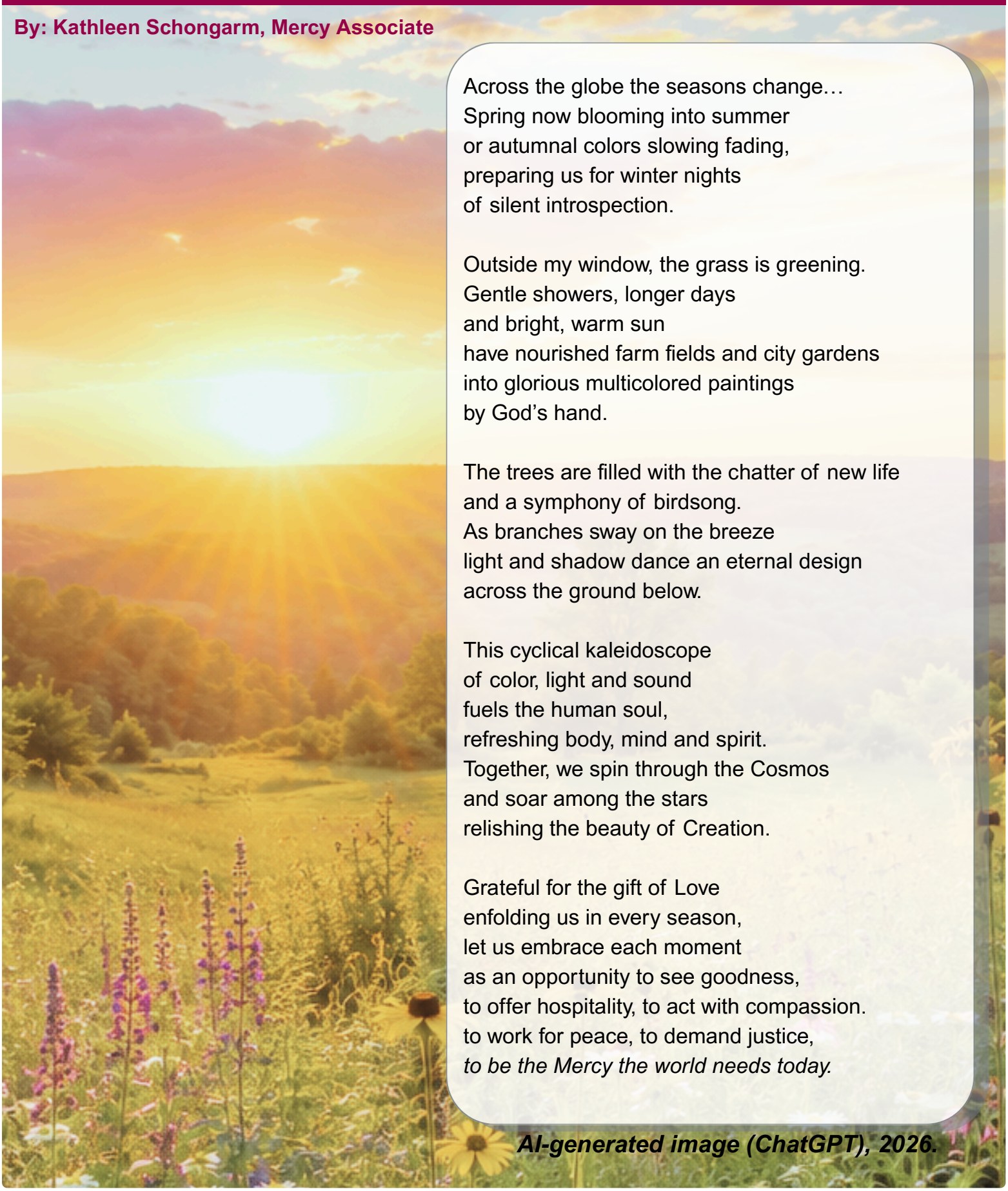
Please join us in congratulating Tylia on this appointment and in praying for her as she begins this new ministry of leadership and service within the global Mercy community.

To learn more about the work of the Mercy International Association, please visit their website:

Mercy International Association

A Reflection for All Seasons

By: Kathleen Schongarm, Mercy Associate



Across the globe the seasons change…
Spring now blooming into summer
or autumnal colors slowing fading,
preparing us for winter nights
of silent introspection.

Outside my window, the grass is greening.
Gentle showers, longer days
and bright, warm sun
have nourished farm fields and city gardens
into glorious multicolored paintings
by God's hand.

The trees are filled with the chatter of new life
and a symphony of birdsong.
As branches sway on the breeze
light and shadow dance an eternal design
across the ground below.

This cyclical kaleidoscope
of color, light and sound
fuels the human soul,
refreshing body, mind and spirit.
Together, we spin through the Cosmos
and soar among the stars
relishing the beauty of Creation.

Grateful for the gift of Love
enfolding us in every season,
let us embrace each moment
as an opportunity to see goodness,
to offer hospitality, to act with compassion.
to work for peace, to demand justice,
to be the Mercy the world needs today.

AI-generated image (ChatGPT), 2026.



March 3
Erika Larrimer, Hoover, AL

April 11
Ellen Marie Fearon, Glen Ellyn, IL
Nancy Ann Frederick, Palos Park, IL
Rose Marie Starks, Chicago, IL
Sheila Murray Rave, Chicago, IL
Joan Elizabeth Zigulich, Evergreen Park, IL

April 20
Linda Ann Auker, Shavertown, PA
Oradell Marie Banker, Mehoopany, PA
Kelly Marie Bezdecki, Shavertown, PA
Catherine Eva DePasquale, Wilkes-Barre, PA
Kathleen Downes, Wilkes-Barre, PA
Rebbeka Ebersole, White Haven, PA
Erica Elgonitis, Dallas, PA
Brian Fulton, Larksville, PA
Cheryl M. Jayne, Sweet Valley, PA
Sandra Johnson, Trucksville, PA
Natalie Dickinson Kulick, Dallas, PA
Kristi Jonelle Lyons, Harveys Lake, PA
Callie Rimpfel Mack, Wilkes-Barre, PA
Megan Mould, Factoryville, PA
Lisa May Norton, Dallas, PA
Dana Fortunato Pavlick, Avoca, PA
Helena Rose Polinsky, Orwigsburg, PA
Jeanette Elizabeth Porcoro, Dallas, PA

March 3
Kathi Beiswenger, Holland, MI

March 29
Marty Jennings, Grosse Pointe Woods, MI

April 1
Nancy Flaherty, Brentwood, NH

April 5
Roberta Van Haag, O'Fallon, MO

April 13
Diane Dolores O'Keefe-Dunne, Chicago, IL

April 16
Jeanine Hoffmann, Pevely, MO

April 28
Marguerite Mary Flynn, Ardmore, PA

April 29
Judy Scott, Pittsburgh, PA

May 2
Darryl Bullock, Middletown, CT

May 9
Mary Lee Gill, Choctaw, OK

From the Newsletter Committee

Let us pray for all people facing violence & injustice.

PRAYER FOR ASSOCIATION



Thank you to our contributors in this issue:

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Do you have a suggestion for our newsletter?
Leave us a message below:

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Sisters of Mercy Hermanas de la Misericordia