



Read online: <https://newsletters.naavi.com/i/M1730jN>

# Kildare Ministries Newsletter

Issue 7 · 09 Dec 2025

Hospitality - Welcoming All

## In this issue



Editorial



Formation Events



Welcome and Farewells



Keep Updated



Acknowledging Sr Brigid Arthur csb OAM



# Editorial

As we come to the close of 2025, we pause to reflect on a year filled with much to be grateful for—moments of connection, generosity and shared purpose across our ministries. Our theme of *Hospitality – Welcoming All* has helped frame and focus our shared efforts throughout the year, shaping the ways we encountered and supported one another, and reached out to those who were vulnerable or in need of care.

Throughout the year, our schools and community works have embodied hospitality not as a single action, but as a lived expression of who we are and who we are called to be.

In a world marked by conflict and displacement, our commitment to hospitality has been a quiet but steady

reminder that peace begins with how we meet one another. In countless small and significant ways, students, staff, volunteers and families across our ministries have shaped communities where all are received with respect, warmth and possibility. The flame of hope, so central to our story, burned brightly in every ministry that chose inclusion over indifference, and relationship over fear.

As we celebrate the Advent season, we lean into a time of waiting, longing and preparing our hearts once again for the coming of Emmanuel, God-with-us in the birth of Christ. The Advent wreath, with its growing circle of light as each candle is lit, represents the light of Christ in our lives.

Each candle draws us into the spirit of hospitality - **hope** that opens our hearts, **peace** that creates room for others to belong, **joy** that is shared generously, and **love** that reaches out in compassion. As the light deepens week by week, we are reminded that we, too, are called to carry this light into our communities, offering warmth, welcome and presence to all we encounter. May this season renew in us a sense of wonder and strengthen our commitment to creating communities marked by peace, justice and compassionate welcome.

May you and your loved ones be blessed with peace, hope and joy this Christmas, and may the New Year draw us even more deeply into our mission of bringing the Gospel alive through works of justice,

education and compassionate  
service.

*Executive Director*  
Kildare Ministries

on December 19 and reopen  
on the January 27.



**Nicole  
Mange  
Isdorf**

**Please note:** The office of  
Kildare Ministries will close for  
the Christmas holiday period



# Welcome and Farewells

## Welcome to Renee Mazloum, Co-CEO - Brigidine Asylum Seekers Program



We welcome Renee Mazloum to the position of co-CEO alongside Libby Saunders, who has been in the co-leadership role with Sr Brigid Arthur since 2015. Renee commenced in the role on 5th November.

Renee has 12 years of leadership in migrant and refugee services and holds formal qualifications in both Australian Migration Law and Human Resource Management. She is the founder and leader of the LAHA Association, which supports refugee and migrant women. Renee also brings a deeply personal understanding to her work having grown up in a family where her mother was an asylum seeker and her father a refugee.

Having experienced the hardship and isolation that her parents faced, and the challenges she herself encountered as a child in that environment, Renee has developed a lifelong passion for ensuring that people in similar situations today receive the support and dignity her own family was denied.

We warmly welcome Renee to the Kildare Ministries community.

## We Thank and Farewell

**Shane Hogan**

*Interim Principal – Brigidine College, St Ives*



support.

We extend our sincere gratitude to Shane Hogan for his dedicated leadership of Brigidine College St Ives as Interim Principal this year. Shane quickly established positive relationships not only within the College community but also across the wider Kildare Ministries network. Throughout the year, he contributed generously to our formation programs and network meetings, offering insight, collegiality and steady

Through his tireless commitment and careful stewardship, Shane strengthened the foundations of Brigidine College, positioning it with greater clarity and confidence for the future. As Board Chair Michael McDonald reflected, this progress was due in no small part to Shane's compassionate and thoughtful implementation of Board decisions. Throughout his tenure, he consistently demonstrated deep respect for the dignity of every person, ensuring that kindness, fairness and the values at the heart of our mission were upheld in all circumstances.

We thank Shane for his outstanding service, steady leadership and the generosity with which he supported both Brigidine College and the wider Kildare Ministries community. He leaves with our appreciation and warmest wishes for the future.

### **Niluka Perera**

*Kildare Ministries Chief Financial Officer*



Niluka joined Kildare Ministries in January 2020 and quickly came to understand our unique governance model, helping to establish the strong financial systems and processes that continue to underpin our organisation.

Her leadership was marked by professionalism, financial acumen, a sharp eye for detail, and a warm, caring approach.

Niluka's ability to combine strong financial governance with genuine collaboration earned her the respect of colleagues and partners alike. Her resilience, dedication and commitment to excellence have strengthened Kildare Ministries in lasting ways.

We thank Niluka sincerely for her dedicated service, her generosity of spirit, and the sense of mission she brought to her work. She leaves with our warmest wishes as she takes up the



role of Executive Director, Finance and Enabling Services with a large not-for-profit aged care provider in Victoria.

## Photos from our celebratory end of year and farewell lunch for our leaders









# Acknowledging Sr Brigid Arthur csb OAM



This year marks the conclusion of Sr Brigid Arthur's time as Co-Coordinator of the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project (BASP), a ministry she co-founded in 2001 with Sr Catherine Kelly csb. Her remarkable contribution to education, social justice and the mission of Kildare Ministries stands as an enduring testament to her Brigidine vocation — a life lived with courage, compassion and deep faith.

From her earliest days as a Brigidine Sister, Brigid devoted herself to education, serving as teacher and principal in several Catholic secondary schools. She believed that education was about far more than academic achievement — that it must form young people to think critically, act justly and care deeply. Her influence continues today through her regular visits to Kildare Ministries schools, where she speaks with passion about justice for asylum seekers in Australia and calls staff and students alike to act for a more compassionate and equitable society.

Brigid's deep sense of justice and compassion found new expression when she and Sr Catherine Kelly established the Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project in Albert Park. Guided by the Brigidine motto *Strength and Kindness*, BASP provides practical and emotional support to people seeking asylum — offering housing, food, employment assistance, education opportunities and advocacy. For more than two decades, Brigid has been at the forefront of this work, accompanying hundreds of individuals and families, listening to their stories and walking beside them through unimaginable uncertainty. She has been a fearless advocate in the public arena — writing, speaking and lobbying for humane policies and fair treatment of asylum seekers and refugees.

Her advocacy has always reached beyond charity to systemic change. Brigid has represented the interests of the most vulnerable in Parliament, in the media and in the



courts, where she has served as litigation guardian for young people and asylum seekers navigating complex legal processes. Her courage and persistence have given voice to those who might otherwise remain unheard. Through her leadership, BASP has become a powerful symbol of welcome and a source of practical hope for those seeking safety and belonging in Australia.

Since becoming one of Kildare Ministries' community works in 2018, BASP has continued to grow under Brigid's guidance. Even as she concludes her role as Co-Coordinator, she remains closely involved — mentoring others, leading advocacy and education initiatives, and ensuring that the project continues to stand as a beacon of justice and compassion. Her unwavering belief that "hope is not passive" continues to inspire all who share her commitment to hospitality and human dignity.

Throughout her life and ministry, Brigid has embodied the Brigidine spirit — a spirit of strength, kindness, hospitality and justice. Whether in a classroom, in front of a crowd at a public rally, or standing beside someone seeking refuge, she has lived the Gospel with conviction and hope. Her example reminds us that transformation begins with welcome — a welcome that listens, understands and acts.

With deep gratitude, the Trustees and the entire Kildare Ministries community thank Brigid for her lifelong dedication, her leadership and her unwavering belief in the power of hope. Her legacy will continue to inspire and guide us as we seek to live out the Gospel call to act justly and to live in peace.







# Formation Events

## Staff Integral Ecology Retreat

Kildare Ministries Staff travelled to Daylesford Victoria for our Staff Integral Ecology Retreat. We had a range of staff on Retreat, including Teachers, Administration and Student Support Staff, Business managers, Justice leaders and Finance officers. We explored Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* goals of:

- Working towards an Eco-Spirituality
- Educating in Integral Ecology, and
- Exploring the Cry of the Earth *and* the Cry of the Poor.

To maintain our focus on *Laudato Si*, which was named from St Francis of Assisi's *Canticle of Creation*, we structured our program on the notion of Creation as Mother and Sister, emphasizing Interconnectedness between creation, justice for the poor and a simpler more compassionate life in harmony with God's Earth.

We explored:

- A Cosmic Walk in the bush, looking at the timeline of Creation from the Big Bang all the way through to our current existence as humans living on one small planet Earth with all its creatures.
- What it means to live with respect to the limited resources of Earth, by exploring the *Mellidora* – a self-sufficient home and garden created by permaculture co-founder David Holmgren.

- Nature-conscious ritual and deep “Dadirri” listening activities that raise our awareness of God as a deeply intimate God, who is present to us through the Spirit that flows throughout each moment of time. These prayers take us back to the Christian mystics like St Francis of Assisi who taught us the importance of gratitude prayers, like the Canticle of Creation, which help us remember our God is not dualistic or separate from us, but deeply entwined in our lived experience of the world.
- Throughout the Retreat we immersed ourselves in nature:
  - experiencing the power of Water that over centuries has shaped the rock formations at Hepburn’s natural Blowhole
  - walking the ancient land formations of Earth at the extinct volcano of Mt Franklin, and raising our attention to the intricate detail within creation through a colour identification activity
  - connecting to the power of Wind, and the capacity of a local community to take action in choosing to rely completely on wind energy, through a visit to Australia’s first community-owned wind farm
- Sitting with and understanding our sorrow and pain for all the suffering on and of Earth, through the Four Quadrants activity of Joanna Macy.
- Recognising the importance of moving through this ecological crisis by reaching out to each other, in gratitude and an intention of support, as we face the future together
- Using the Seven Goals of Laudato Si’ to help us articulate our responses to the key questions that we must continually ask ourselves and each other, “What needs to be done”, and “What’s mine to do?”. In response to these questions, Business Manager Chris Shelly created this list of questions he wanted to ask himself when making business decisions at Kilbreda College. Chris also shared his list at the following Kildare Ministries Business Managers Network meeting.







## Student Leadership Retreat

Senior Student Leaders from across Kildare Ministries recently gathered at Saltbush, Balnarring Beach for the Leadership Retreat. Blessed with beautiful weather, the leaders thrived as they were thrown in the deep end to learn about themselves as leaders, and what they hope to achieve as leaders of Kildare Ministries schools in 2026. The group's energy elevated the moment they were thrown their first challenge -

*"We had to make a meal from scratch with no recipes – it was such a great exercise in teamwork, especially the importance of communication and allocating roles to get the job done! " Alice, Brigidine College St Ives*

The Student Leaders took great initiative, working together, listening to each other and finding ways to navigate varying levels of cooking experience, timing, food safety, dietary needs and numbers. They served a beautiful meal for all forty people, and our '*silent supervisors*' (staff) were very impressed by their teamwork, problem solving and the delicious outcome!

*"I loved the opportunity to meet each other and explore the Kildare Ministries theme Justice for 2026." Adi, Marian College Ararat*

Our perspectives of each other and our environment impact our understanding of what justice means. To challenge our perspective and remember Jesus' call that we are each parts of the one whole, we watched video footage and interviews with astronauts who have seen planet Earth from space.

*"One thing that is staying with me is that we are all connected, and we all have a common home. We need to remember that everyone is trying to do their best, so we need to give*

*everyone the grace to do that."* Isobel, Marian College, Ararat

This ecological perspective of the world helps us understand that Earth is not just a resource for humans, but has integrity of its very own. We spent time on the Retreat grounding ourselves and connecting to the land of Saltbush through a morning Four Directions prayer on the beach, and learning about our historical connections to the land through an Acknowledgement of Country and Walking Liturgy of the property; we heard the story of the Presentation Sisters first purchasing the property in 1989 to provide vulnerable families with a holiday, and their commitment to regenerating all the land back to its natural state. And we shared the different projects that our own school communities have voluntarily participated in to restore the houses and the land.

*"One thing I found really valuable was learning how to be a lot more grounded, especially through focusing on my breathing, and to really acknowledge the world around me."*

*Charlotte, Brigidine College Indooroopilly*

*"This time at Saltbush has left me with so much more hope for a positive future! I'm coming back to Kilbreda with so many ideas from all around our Kildare Ministries community." Leila, Kilbreda*

We also took Nano Nagle's message to heart and put our actions ahead of our words by getting outside and looking after the land at Saltbush (*Facta non Verba* – Deeds not Words!).

Throughout the Retreat, we kept returning to the Kildare Ministries' call to "make the needs of the vulnerable paramount" both from a justice point of view, and our desire to make everyone in our school community feel like they belong.

*"I was really inspired by the group of leaders here at Saltbush, who have so much compassion for ordinary people who are struggling." Bronson, Marian College Ararat*

*"I loved being surrounded by leaders who want to make a change in their community, their schools. I felt like we grounded our hopes into plans for action." Emily, Killester College*

Student leaders also reflected on their own personal values and ethics, and what the threats to those values are in today's world. There was great discussion and sharing about the challenges of society 'othering' people who are different, of media and political pressures to be 'with us or against us' and of who we let influence us. The Leaders identified and grappled with the apathy of today's society when it comes to injustices around the world and revealed

their wisdom when offering potential approaches to dealing with this in our local school communities and society at large.

*"I learnt a lot from listening to each other as we discussed the ethics and values around some really important issues in our world. I was so inspired by the other school leaders."*

*Jess, Brigidine College St Ives*

*"I made so many connections across the different Kildare Ministries schools in Australia.*

*There is so much strength and wisdom across our group about how we can foster a sense of justice in our schools."* Lilla, Kildare College

*"Witnessing everybody sharing their different ideas and stories around the circle has really*

*made me think about how sharing those really brings us together. It was so inspiring."* Lana, Clonard College

*"What I've loved is everyone has been so vulnerable and honest in sharing their opinions and*

*their beliefs. It gives us a bit of faith in the world that there are leaders who care, and our world is going to be in safe hands, because we have such a good environment and everyone leads with their heart and uses their brain."* Ruby, Clonard College

Our Retreat finished with our Student Leaders planning and holding their own Closing Liturgy to celebrate the connections they'd made, the wisdom they'd shared and the hopes they promised to support each other in. Bringing their strengths and gifts together, they created a beautiful Liturgy with music, prayer, scripture and gratitude. The Leaders agreed they want to reconnect online each term next year to continue their support of each other as they work to inspire their students to work together for Justice in 2026 and beyond.

*"The opportunity to talk to other like-minded people, and get to discuss what I'm really*

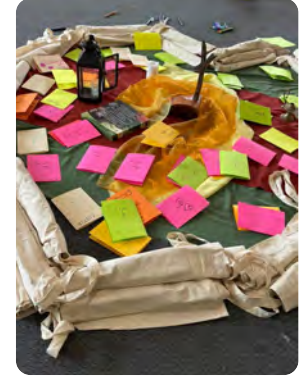
*passionate about. I also found a deeper connection with my leadership partner and my leadership group."* Sienna, Clonard College

*"I was so impressed by other schools who have found ways to integrate their community*

*across year levels."* Bridie, Brigidine College Indooroopilly

*"From this retreat, I've learnt how to deepen connections with people who I wouldn't*

*normally. It's pushed me out of my comfort zone and taught me how to adapt and surround myself with a more diverse community."* Bronson, Marian College Ararat



**Jane Collopy**

*Mission Leader*

Kildare Ministries





## Keep Updated

Follow us on our different social media accounts:



**Facebook** - <http://www.facebook.com/kildareministries/>

**Instagram**- <http://www.instagram.com/kildareministries/>

**LinkedIn** - <https://www.linkedin.com/company/kildare-ministries/>