

11 December 2023

Dear Merici Community,

### Communitas



This year, the Merici community has been called, as people of God, to activate our hearts, heads and hands to connect to those around us. We were invited to walk in Jesus' footsteps and be inspired by his model of love, acceptance, mercy and understanding. Our theme of connection is in so many of Jesus' parables – the Good Samaritan being one. It is in many of the gospel accounts of Jesus and his followers gathering together to share each others' company. It is in the Martha and Mary story which illustrates just how important Jesus thought it was for all of us to take time in our busy lives to stop and connect with each other, to share stories, ideas and to commune spiritually with our God. Jesus asked his followers to welcome those on the margins and, by gathering, to form "church". He says

*"For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." (Matt 18:20).*

In 2023 we have sought to live according to the philosophy of "UBUNTU" that emphasises the importance of community. Great leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu often referred to it when pointing out that healing is achieved in community not in isolation. It essentially means "I am because we are".

Nelson Mandela says that Ubuntu encompasses the interdependence of humans on another and the acknowledgment of one's responsibility to their fellow humans and the world around them. We all are indeed blessed that in 2023, we have had the impetus to act and positively shape our lives and that of others. I continue to feel immensely privileged and proud to be leading such a wonderful community. Our College seeks to be a "bright candle" that makes a positive difference in our local and global communities.

We are a joy-filled and dynamic learning community, intent on building upon the heritage founded by all that have come before us. This heritage works to liberate, empower and motivate young women to use their gifts with confidence, creativity, generosity and in the loving service of others. I am proud to a member of a learning community that responds to changing circumstances with courage, agility, positivity, resilience and skill.

### CATHOLIC CULTURE AND IDENTITY

We have achieved so much as a community this year. We have aspired to live our Catholic values through many initiatives:

- expanding the CYSMA program and Angela's Angels.
- Supporting the dynamic student led Leadership Team and their 'new traditions' in 2023, including our very own Merici College Olympics and pop-up Social Justice/Mission guest speakers.

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- Reviewed the Student Leadership program and thus created two new leadership roles for 2024: the Arts and Culture Captaincies with a view to re-energizing the SRC (or Student Voice) in 2024.
- Celebrating record numbers of students achieving Christian Service Learning Program Angel Wings and creating, for the first time, Platinum (300 hour) and Diamond (500 hour) Angel Wing awards.
- Recognising long serving staff, most notably Mr Gerard Ryan and Ms Virginia McLeod in the naming of significant areas in the College.

The student body also chose to name our café, Angie's Cafe, in honour of our College's special St Angela Merici and plans are afoot to create an even more inviting space in which to gather and relax.

## **EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Our staff have worked collaboratively to build capacity and leadership in order to ensure that we are continually improving and seeking excellence in all that we do. Leadership retreats and training courses for Merici College Senior and Middle Leaders have been initiated and will be annual or bi-annual events. Twice yearly Professional Conversations for all staff are now conducted as part of the Merici College Performance and Development cycle. The third wave of staff to be trained in Catalyst have been working incredibly hard to focus on best practice pedagogy and Merici has led the way in developing Catalyst Instructional Coaching in order to embed and scale the wonderful learnings this System approach has offered to teaching staff.

All of this effort is being reflected in excellence in teaching and learning data at Merici College where high expectations for student growth, efforts and achievement are the norm. It is also reflected in the dedicated work so many staff have put into enabling exchanges and global outreach at Merici. A number of international experiences have been meticulously planned during 2023 in order for our young women to connect with the world in 2024.

## **PARTNERSHIP AND COMMUNITY**

Our extended community has also worked to enrich our lives at Merici College. The College Board, as always, has been a rich source of expert advice concerning several key areas during 2023. These include Catholic Education Canberra & Goulburn (CECG) reviews of governance structures, system changes in terms of financial structures and strategically planning for an expanding number of student enrolments. The Parent and Friends sub-committee of the College Board have been active in building a sense of belonging for our families by supporting our Healthy Food policy and Canteen, family functions such as the Community BBQ at the start of the year, Trivia Night and Christmas Picnic. Our extended Merici family have continued to be active in support of all our young women endeavour to do, be it in sport, clubs and major productions such as Alice in Wonderland.

I am especially proud to recognise the achievement of so many, working in partnership to create and launch a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) for Merici College. Students, staff, parents, carers and indigenous community members worked in unison form this plan and will continue to strive, with all, to achieve the challenging goals identified in the RAP.

## **STEWARDSHIP AND RESOURCES**

We live in community in a fragile and beautiful environment. 2023 has seen many work to care for our common creation. The Sustainability at Merici (SAM) group and Sustainability classes have partnered with university academics to start a long-term re-wilding project at Merici College and the College has initiated the re-registration process as an ACT Smart school. Primary school students have been shown how to plant and grow vegetables and our team is becoming more involved in Archdiocese initiatives around Laudato Si.

Merici College is a member of a number of dynamic systems. We like to think big and be leaders within that those systems and even more broadly. In 2023, the College has been privileged to support, host and participate in a number of programs and events. We have hosted more than 500 young people with the Shine Conference, the Sharing Best Practice Conference and Catalyst workshops for staff from across the CECG system. We have welcomed visitors from across Australia who want to observe what we are doing in the Catalyst space and in our classrooms. Merici College has proudly supported system innovations in Virtual Learning and two of our teachers were recognised at the CECG Awards evening held in August for their contributions in this space. Our expert staff have been members of Board of Senior School Studies working groups and have been recognised as exemplary in BSSS Moderation Day reports.

The College worked to develop our Master Plan, in consultation and collaboration with CECG, focusing on stewardship for the future and providing certainty around enrolment capacity. This will be launched early in 2024.

## **EXTENDED UNIFORM SHOP HOURS DECEMBER 2023/JANUARY 2024**

We are pleased to advise that the Merici College Uniform Shop will be offering extended hours during the December 2023/January 2024 school holidays to meet your uniform requirements.

If you wish to visit the shop for a fitting, the extended hours are as follows:

1. Wednesday 13 December 3:00pm-5:00pm – Drop in
2. Wednesday 24 January 8:00am-1:00pm – Drop in
3. Thursday 25 January 8:00am-1:00pm – Appointments only
4. Monday 29 January 3:00pm-7:00pm – Appointments only
5. Tuesday 30 January 8:00am-1:00pm – Drop In

Parents are strongly encouraged to use the online ordering system as the preferred option for supply, including part orders for Click and Collect. Garments can be returned due to incorrect sizes but please ensure that items have not been worn and tags attached.

For new families: Please make a note of your login information.

<https://shop.merici.act.edu.au/MonitorOnline/app/#/login>

### Online Booking Portal

Please book appointments at this link:

<https://outlook.office365.com/owa/calendar/UniformShop@merici.onmicrosoft.com/bookings/>

Once you have gone to the link, you need to click on the date you want and scroll to the date that is listed above.

Please visit <https://www.merici.act.edu.au/my-merici/resources/uniforms> to find information on all uniform requirements. The uniform price list can be found [here](#).

For all enquiries please contact Jane Rosewarne, Uniform Shop Assistant at [shop@merici.act.edu.au](mailto:shop@merici.act.edu.au).

### COLLEGE CELEBRATIONS

This term has seen a number of services and celebrations for the students in their different year groups. Year 12 students attended a moving Graduation Mass at St Christopher's Cathedral and a special Graduation Dinner and Awards Ceremony. We have also had a wonderful celebration with students and their families at the Formal held at the Canberra Rex, it was a magnificent night ending with a rousing rendition of the College Song! We had a moving Advent Mass and Social for our Year 10 students, and beautiful Advent Liturgies for our Year 7 – 9 students. This year ended with the celebration of academic achievements for our students in Years 7, 8, 9 and 11.

To my staff, I thank you for your support and constant care of our students. I am so grateful for the welcome, trust and dedication of the College staff who make my role exciting and do-able! As several staff are moving to promotional positions, retiring, looking forward to new horizons or moving interstate or retiring, I would like to personally thank you for your professionalism and commitment to educating our young ladies and contributing to the life of Merici College. I wish you an abundance of happiness and peace in all you do in the future.

Thank you to the members of the College Board and P&F Committee, especially to the Chair of the Board, Christina Ween for your support, humour, wisdom and your time, which you all give so freely. We will miss you as Chair but we are very happy to know that you will stay connected to our community as a parent.

To our parents and carers, I value the partnership we share in educating your daughters and thank you for your support. I appreciated your warm words and encouraging emails. We are looking forward to 2024 with the College theme *Spes*, with building renovations continuing, the continued growth of our International Baccalaureate Diploma and Middle Years Programme and many exciting new programs and offerings in the curriculum and extra-curricular area.

For those moving within the ACT or moving interstate or overseas - we hold a strong belief that the education you have received at Merici and the time you have spent here has put you in good stead for whatever path you have chosen. Never be a stranger to us and know that you will always be loved as a member of the Merici College family. If you are leaving our community, can you please contact our Enrolments Officer soon as possible so that we can contact prospective families who would like to join us in 2024 and who are on our waiting lists.

The 2024 school year will begin for Years 7, 11, 12 and new students on Wednesday 31 January and for Years 8, 9 and 10 on Thursday, 1 February. During the week prior to this, staff professional learning, new staff orientation, and staff planning will take place. The 2024 School Calendar can be viewed online [here](#).

In a year of courage, compassion, care, challenge and community, I would like to conclude by sharing, once again, an extract from a beautiful blessing by John O'Donohue.

#### **A Morning Offering**

May my mind come alive today  
To the invisible geography  
That invites me to new frontiers  
To break the dead shell of yesterdays,  
To risk being disturbed and changed.

May I have the courage today  
To live the life that I would love,  
To postpone my dream no longer,  
But do at last what I came here for  
And waste my heart on fear no more.

With my best wishes for a very happy, safe and holy Christmas and New Year season. Cherish being with those you love.



Anna Masters  
Principal