

Restoring Our Land

A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

My spiritual journey began as a child of six in what I call “my country”. Close to the village of Lawson in the Central Blue Mountains there is a couple of square kilometres of mountains and valleys, gentle and unremarkable except to those attuned to the shy delights of the area. There, as the youngest child of my widowed, hard-working mother, I spent much time in the bush, most often unnoticed and unbeknown to others. Every chance was taken to explore tracks, rock outcrops, caves, swamps and tabletops, observing the ways of insects and birds, listening for sounds of animals which might come fleetingly into view, peering into clear pools to spot the motionless yabby. All these were my companions: I talked to them and felt their friendly responses. The spirits of those who lived here before also formed a friendly company, whose chatter was to be heard at times in the runnel of waters.

The bush was a magical place. Apart from the ordinary routine of life, it was “another world” and I “another person”, until it came time to return each day to the “real world” of my family and village. My imagination knew no bounds and in the bush it was awakened to a high alert. There everything stood out from the ordinary in a kind of sparkling brilliance. There I wandered as a pupil and all around

me was my teacher. My part was to observe and listen and learn.

Out of all this grew strong convictions to which then as a child I could give no names. I simply knew there were influences on my thinking, which did not come from my family, school or society. I was known as an obstinate kid and I stuck to my guns against what was said about me. Later I have been able to register elements of my growing awareness:

- the futility of combativeness, competition, confrontation and violence
- the sense of symbiosis as the ruling dynamic of nature
- the acceptance of death, not as tragic, but as part of the cycle of life
- the wisdom of patience in adverse conditions
- the value of persistent negotiation as the alternative to aggression
- the sense of responsibility and custodianship of the land
- the observance of a law in the landscape which can guide human behaviour
- the universality and benignity of predation in all living things, but under the constraint of this law.

My magical world came tumbling down when my older brothers discovered and scorned my fantasy:

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Eugene Stockton

“There is no such thing as spirits”. Then I turned to science to explain my world. Curiosity led to avid reading about geology, botany, anthropology, history and all natural sciences. An early interest in Aborigines continued to haunt me. Years later I began to work with Aborigines as chaplain and explored their past in archaeology. Personal contact brought back the old

sense of magic. It returned to me as I entered an Aboriginal home, talked face to face with friends, or held an artefact in my hand, (“a handshake across the centuries” as I once put it in a lecture).

Even now when I see a Koorie on TV I still get a sense of recognition, an affinity. Childhood experience of “my country” helped me to imagine what it was like to grow up as an Aboriginal child: my feet touching the ground, my skin bare to the elements, walking naked among the trees and sleeping on the ground, sustained by food and drink from the bush. It made me understand how one can say, “I am the Land”. I am an emergent from the Land, as a plant emerges from the earth: germinating, maturing and flowering while deepening its roots in the soil. In me the Law of the Land can become articulate in story, dance, ceremony and everyday living. This

is not the “law of the jungle” to be found only in men’s cities, but a Law read from the landscape, a kindly, caring Mother who gives emergence, nourishment, tuition.

Lately, writing and speaking on Aboriginal Spirituality, I found it imperative to urge caution against romanticism and appropriation. One does not need to take over another’s religion or spirituality as one’s own. Aboriginal spirituality offers the newcomer the challenge to read for oneself from the landscape the Law of the Land as they did. A challenge, too, while remaining true to our own religious tradition, to delve deeply into that tradition to find similar insights. It is a challenge to reaffirm strongly our Christian gospel in the light of Aboriginal experience on the common ground of our shared land.

Eugene Stockton

Kaye’s Poem

Aboriginal people do notice and appreciate when we make an effort to link up through the land, but we do not often hear this spoken or written. Here is a valuable poem given anonymously.

*This land is beautiful
That we both know
But it is not the beauty which my eyes behold
It is the spirit of the land that captures mine
and both entwine as one.*

*For me I cannot explain
But I know you understand
For I know you experience this –
this unexplainable thing.*

*You surrender your spirit to the land
and you and it become as one.*

*It never seems to bother you
When people start to tease
You let your spirit run free –
free among the trees*

*You stop and listen, then you turn
enquiring of those around.*

*Can’t you hear, can’t you feel, don’t you know –
I stop and look and give a grin*

*The words I cannot mouth
I know, I feel, for I am experiencing too
just what you are talking about.*

*Then you look rejected as you think I will say
“Hello, we have another one”
and slowly walk away.*

*Although I may say these words
I hope you really know*

*That I envy your naturalness
to be as one with this the land I know.*

*For I and several others too
know this feeling same as you
for as we roam among the trees
we do as the spirits bid us do.*

*This feeling is exciting and yet I can’t explain
just what I really feel
it seems to have no name.*

*I have never met a person who is different from us
who knows and feels the same as we.*

*The people which this land is for us our past
for from this land we have come
and to it we shall return.*

Then they’ll say we are as one “the spirit of the land”.

Leader's Letter

When I, Mary Gilchrist, read the topic for this issue of Pipeline "Restoring the Land" I immediately recalled an article from *Catholica Australia* www.catholica.com.au April 29 2008, by Vince Exley, a retired surveyor from Parramatta area, now living in north Queensland. In this issue Vince, a regular contributor to on-line spirituality discussions, selects random readings by Karl Rahner Social Justice Theologian, on how we need to care for both persons and the environment and how we need to be Church to do this:

'Rahner says that we must consider the great moments in evolution, the movement from matter to life and the movement from life into consciousness of spirit.... These are part of one single history of evolution and form a pattern, a direction, and a current that is generated somehow.'

'Rahner sees the human person as the cosmos itself come to consciousness. We are God's creation evolving to the point where creation becomes conscious of itself and takes on a spiritual life. It is the nature of matter, of this Earth to develop towards consciousness. The cosmos finds itself; it discovers itself when it can reflect upon itself in a human being.'

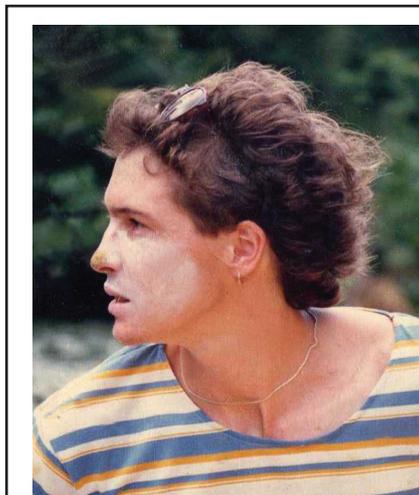
'How is it that these great leaps occur? How does life develop into humankind? How does what is inert develop into life? Rahner says he finds it more helpful to think about that not in terms of God intervening to make things jump but in terms of something already there, the core of matter. He believes that matter has within it the power towards life. There is something intrinsic in it. There is something right back in those gases, right back in the first explosion, that would become life and there is something right back there that would become human consciousness, human spirit.'

'Why does God do this? Why does God set up this whole mysterious reality? Why set up this process of evolution? Rahner says it is very simple: what God wanted to do was to communicate God's very self to creatures. The whole process heads towards God's self communication to



Mary Gilchrist

us and through us to the whole planet and through the planet somehow to the whole of creation. That reality Rahner calls grace. Grace is simply the presence of God reaching out to embrace every person. This whole process is geared towards the communication between God and us and this is the high point in the evolutionary process.'



Rahner says 'our task in caring for the earth has eternal significance because it really matters that we are shaping the earth of the future. The material world is not something to be discarded, in a way beyond our imagination it becomes the new heaven and the new earth – the biblical promise.'

'This view connects up our theology of the earth which the very core of our belief about Jesus Christ. It also connects our view of trinity and grace and all the mainstream theologies, which are important to us. It keeps all creatures and human being in appropriate relationships. It is not an exploitive, dominating, self-centeredness on the human nor is it levelling out of human and all other creatures in some kind of false democracy of creation. It is trying to hold the two in a relationship which values each being and their responsibilities. Care for persons and care for the cosmos go together. Care for the earth and the struggle for justice become part of the one issue. It is an invitation to practice care of the earth because of the insistence that the material world has spiritual and eternal value. Rahner says that we should be the most radical materialists. Matter matters to us radically because of these things.'

Mary Gilchrist

This issue of Pipeline is dedicated to our son Gavin Cockington, who died in 1994 while living and working with Tiwi friends on Melville Island. NT.

The thoughts expressed in this issue were very dear to his heart.

Fiona Cockington
Editor

"Jesus is before all things and in him all things hold together"
Col 1:17

Why save a species?

Recently there was an ecological burn conducted in a small patch of scrub about an hour south of Adelaide. The concept of an ecological burn is strange to most of us – why would anybody deliberately burn a patch of scrub, except to reduce the fuel load and protect property? Well, the area being burnt is home to an endangered species – the Fat-leaf Wattle. The wattle is in decline in the Fleurieu Peninsula (only about 100 plants survive there) and we conducted the burn because it will stimulate the germination of seeds in the soil.

About a week later I was contacted by a local radio station and asked to give an interview. I agreed. Some of the questions set me thinking about how we go about our business in this society of ours, often with very little understanding and care for the workings of the natural world.

The first question was, ‘Why did you decide that burning the scrub would be good for the wattle?’ I explained that wattles, like Banksias, have adapted well to Australian conditions, where fire is a regular visitor to the landscape. They produce hard-coated seeds that can remain dormant and viable in the soil for decades. The heat and pressure of a fire causes the seed coat to break, and if there are good follow-up rains the seed germinates.

I was then asked ‘Why is this wattle in decline?’ This was easy. This species prefers good loamy soils and reliable rainfall. Unfortunately this is exactly the type of location that our settlers chose for cropping and pastures. This particular wattle is also palatable to livestock, so any plants left in the corner of a paddock would have been eaten out. Nowadays the only place this wattle is found is on roadsides and rail corridors. As the remaining populations became further separated

by distance, the opportunity for pollen transfer between sites is reduced, and each population stands a greater chance of becoming inbred. Their capacity to survive disease is diminished as a consequence.

The next question had me stumped. ‘What is so important about this species that it should be saved?’ I needed more time to consider how to answer, and I don’t believe I answered it well. But I’ve thought about it since

Psalm 8 *Psalms Now* Brandt/Corita

*‘O God, how full of wonder and splendour you are!
And Yet you have made me your child.
You have ordained me as your Priest
and chosen me to be your servant.
You have assigned to me the fantastic
responsibility of carrying on Your
Creative activity’*

We pray Creator God that you will help us to cooperate with your creative activity in restoring our land.

then, and I think the answer should have been ‘What is so important about us humans that we think we have the right to act as demi-gods and determine the fate of any species?’ We have at best a basic understanding of the complex interactions between organisms in the natural realm, and we are only just beginning to understand how our human activities can affect these systems. Here is an example.

Australia is home to a group of plants called spider-orchids. There are perhaps 200 species of spider-orchid, but many of them are in decline. The flowers of these plants are not pollinated by bees because they don’t produce nectar. Many of them produce



C clavigera wasp on spider orchid
- photo by R. Bates

a scent that simulates the pheromone of a native female wasp. A male native wasp, deceived by the scent, visits the flower and accidentally brushes pollen on its body, which it then transports to another flower. But wait, there’s more. Wasps often parasitize other insects. After a female native wasp has mated, it buries itself underground and lays its eggs inside the larva of a scarab beetle. The eggs will eventually hatch and grow to become the next generation of adult wasps.

This intricate sequence of interactions is fascinating, and it’s only one small part of the picture. But unfortunately it’s also dependant on a stable and healthy environment. For example, if a drift of insecticide spray happened to settle at the time when the scarab beetles were active, there would be no larvae for the female wasp to parasitize in a few weeks time. The following spring there would be no male wasps to pollinate the spider-orchid flowers, and no seed produced. The unintended effect of a human activity has been detrimental for at least three other species.

When the Europeans settled this country, they found it to be a harsh land, with hot summers, unreliable

rains, often infertile soils and mostly unpalatable plants offering little in the way of sustenance. The aborigines were considered largely ignorant and were treated with arrogance. The settlers feared fire because their custom was to settle in one place, work the soil and wait for crops to ripen and livestock to fatten. While they waited they built dwellings and accumulated possessions to fill them. The aborigines had no fear of fire – they used it to keep the land healthy, burning it when it was

too overgrown and using it to capture their prey. They had little in the way of possessions, and moved freely across the landscape, taking advantage of the produce that could be harvested in different places at different seasons. The society that has replaced them has grown strong and has grown quickly. It is able to feed and shelter many more people. But it has done so without really understanding the rhythms of the land, and it runs the risk of being unsustainable. Most of its inhabitants

spend their days driving cars from one building to another and interacting with technology when they get there. We rely on TV and the internet to tell us how the outside world works. Our lifestyle is more comfortable than the first settlers, but we continue to build ever larger houses and accumulate ever more possessions. Our demands on the resources available continue to rise. We do not tread lightly on this earth.

Doug Bickerton

Save Our River – a cry from the Heart



Milang, SA on the shores of Lake Alexandrina. Note the Jetty and boat ramp out of the water. The Lake is presently 32cm below sea level. Picture Mt Barker Courier March 5th 2008

*‘rivers die from the bottom and it creeps back up’
‘what those who depend on the Murray river want and need is a regime that commits first to maintaining the river.’*

Professor Mike Young, Adelaide University, ABC Stateline 18th April.

Please pray for courage and wisdom for the new Federal Management of the Murray Darling Basin and members of COAG (Council of Australian

Government) as they make decisions about the future of the river. We are thankful for all who are working hard to solve the problems and have compassion for those who are sacrificing for the sake of the river and those who will be asked to sacrifice in the future. The river is still a lovely place to spend time, I encourage you to visit the river and spend some time in mediation and prayer.

*Fiona Cockington
Editor*

For more information about the river see Fiona’s full article on our web site. www.wellspringcommunity.org.au

From the Editor



I had a dream the other night. I was trying to have a shower with my business suit on. I learned from that that if I really wanted to be clean (washed clean and forgiven) I needed to come humbly before God naked without the material trimmings, willing to say that I am sorry for my contribution to harming this land and its people. This I do!

The article above is from Doug Bickerton, Doug was born in Toowoomba in Queensland into a Christian family, eldest of five children of a local GP and his wife. Doug has a masters degree in Natural Resource Management and works for the Department of Environment and Heritage in South Australia. A committed *Greenie*, he presently lives in Coromandel Valley in SA with his son, and has recently become included in our family.

Fiona

Neither here nor there

My ancestry is mostly Irish. I was born in Australia. Two countries, and two not-so-simple histories, added up to a sense of not really belonging to either place. I'd tried to connect to both countries. I'd stood at Ubirr, in Kakadu, and wondered at the x-ray art. I'd stood in the Celtic womb-tomb at Newgrange, in Ireland, and gazed at spiral circles.

And I felt like an interloper.

When your history is in one part of the world, and your future is in another, it's hard not to feel a little torn. In her memoir *Almost French*, about making a new life in Paris, Australian writer Sarah Turnbull recalls a Greek immigrant saying 'It is a terrible curse to love two countries.' And yet all of us non-indigenous Australians are afflicted with this curse.

I briefly aligned my past and my present when I volunteered a few years ago at Kilcranny House, a centre for reconciliation near Coleraine in Northern Ireland. It was a centre founded by a group called the Peace People after a bombing in the area. It welcomed children from Protestant and Catholic schools. The garden was organic, tended to by a prisoner from Belfast on day release and local volunteers.

I'd signed up because I thought I shared the values of the place. It was only when I got there that I realised I was a secret sectarian. I felt resentful that the currency was the pound and not the euro. I was very suspicious of what the English had done to my forbears, when I worked out that they happened to leave for Australia just as the English were seizing land in the area. I thought about my famished forbears in the south who'd left because of the famine. I even sang 'A nation once again' to myself while planting potatoes.

But the futility of my anger became clear when the areas of Coleraine rebuilt after bomb blasts were pointed out to me by a local woman, after we'd spent the day playing hand puppets together with local children. As I stood at the site of the violence, I decided it was time to let my grudge go.

Fast forward five years and I was standing in the crowd waiting for the giant screen to come to life at ElderPark in Adelaide. I was surrounded by indigenous and non-indigenous, young and old, office workers and hippies. We are all waiting for the long overdue apology.

I was surprised to hear the words of the Lord's prayer open Parliament. I flinched a little at hearing the prayer in a non-church setting. Wasn't there supposed to be a neat divide between the sacred and the secular in modern Australia?

As Kevin Rudd spoke, it became clear that my sacred and secular worlds were colliding. The whole speech was steeped in Christian imagery, from the reference to the 'clanging gong' to the 'stain on our nation's soul' to 'post-reformation theology.'

Reflecting communally on past wrongs and seeking a way forward reminded me of the third rite of reconciliation, loved by many modern Catholics and now banned by Rome. There was a sense as I stood there, not of a magic wand or a quick fix, but a new beginning (yet another biblical concept, 'Behold, I make all things new...').

But unlike that foggy grey day in Northern

Elder Park, Adelaide - Crowd waiting for the long overdue apology to Indigenous Australians

Ireland, when I decided it was time I forgave those who'd wronged my ancestors, I stood in the bright Australian sun as one who needed forgiving. Had those hungry, land deprived ancestors of mine settled on land occupied by indigenous Australians? I would never know. But whether or not my ancestors were the actual dispossessors, like all white people I had benefited from the indigenous dispossession.

It was not so much our Prime Minister's eloquent speech, but the response of the indigenous people present to his words that was the transforming moment for me. The emotions I witnessed seemed to be joy and gratitude, perhaps summed up by the t-shirt worn by some indigenous people which simply said 'Thanks.'

Strange then, that the words of the Lord's prayer that had so grated on me should sum up the moment so well. *Forgive us, as we forgive.*

My Australian Irishness merged together as I left the eclectic crowd behind, and remembered the words of a poem by Seamus Heaney:

*... once in a lifetime
the longed for tidal wave
of justice can rise up,
and hope and history rhyme.*

Finally, my love of two countries was a blessing, not a curse. I felt whole, not torn. Hopeful, not guilty. Let the new chapter of our history begin.

Michelle Coram



Report on greening the church: Saturday 8 March 2008

Does the church need greening? What does this title mean?

In Newcastle, in early March, over 100 people gathered to examine the concept of 'Greening the Church' with the plenary session led by Rev Dr Norman Habel of the Adelaide School of Divinity. Norman has devised liturgies which explore different themes each Sunday, to be held during September.

Norman's workshop showed how the Australian initiative is now taken up in Europe and North America as well as the Philippines. He spoke of the Ecological Crisis, the Greening movement, and the impact of Ecology.

'Earth is a planet, a piece of stardust that originated in cosmic space and evolved into a living habitat. It is a fragile web of interconnected and interdependent forces and domains of existence. It is a living community in which humans and other beings are kin who live and move and have their common destiny. Where is God in this?'

He posed the question: How do we reflect these ideas in our worship?

In 2008 from September 1, with the theme 'Spirit in Creation', each of the Sundays focuses on Creation

Day, Forest Sunday, Land Sunday, Outback Sunday, River or Social Justice Sunday, with October 4 being St Francis of Assisi Day. Resources are available free on the website www.seasonofcreation.com, including Bible studies, sermon themes, children's talks, songs and visuals.

After lunch, electives were offered:

❁ Project Green Church at Maroubra Junction Uniting Church, Sydney, greening of the local congregation.

❁ Interfaith Action on Climate Change: achieving results at local and national levels from the Climate Change Institute.

❁ "The Sixth Day" – an environmental play on caring for God's creation, from the children of St Alban's Anglican Church, Charlestown.

❁ Rainwater harvesting and gully restoration in the grounds of Elective on Greening the local congregation, St Alban's, Charlestown.

❁ Holy Family Catholic School, Merewether - a local school, environmentally self-sufficient.

❁ Pacific Calling: the Church's ecumenical global response to climate change from the NSW Ecumenical Council.

❁ Fair Trade – a way of life!

The Seminar was sponsored by

❁ Justice Committee, Hunter Presbytery Uniting Church in Australia

❁ The Environment Commission Anglican Diocese of Newcastle

❁ Ecumenical Commission Catholic Diocese of Maitland/Newcastle

❁ Wellspring Community

The Justice committee is establishing 'justice advocates' within congregations, to form a network of enthusiasm and give strong support for issues of social justice within the Hunter Presbytery. It was wonderful to see so many of our advocates present at 'Greening the Church' as well as representatives from our sister churches.

The Wellspring Community was well represented at the seminar, two local members involved in the planning committee and others attending as it was our regular meeting day. The successful outcome shows that smaller groups can 'support' other events and become more of a voice within the community, especially when the subject comes within one of our Areas of Concern.

Helen Weavers

Contact person for Hunter Wellspring group/Member of Hunter Presbytery Justice Committee.



Elective on Greening the local congregation

Transit Lounge

Jill Robertson would like to direct us to the internet magazine called Transit Lounge. It is a Uniting Church publication and is available at:

<http://www.thetransitlounge.com.au/domestic/wellspring>

GOING TO GALONG

God loves ME!

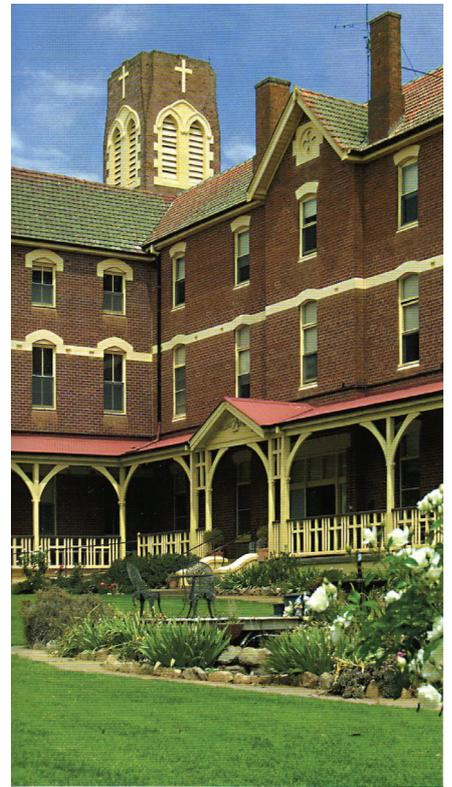
Did I need to go away on a four-day Retreat to discover this? Well, yes and no. I know 'God so loves the world', and 'God loves us', but 'God loves ME'? This was a harder one to accept.

In April this year I attended an 'Emmaus Journey' at St Clement's Retreat Centre, at Galong (formerly St Clement's Monastery), located between Yass and Harden in rural New South Wales north of Canberra.. The participants, led by Fr Bill Goldman, were given the opportunity to re-visit their life journeys by identifying those times of pain, joy, difficulty, highlights and lowlights, significant Christ moments, and unforgiven or unresolved issues. After these sessions we were encouraged to walk in silence in the beautiful countryside surrounding St Clement's and let the Holy Spirit work. When I admitted I had felt unworthy of God's love, some valuable insights were given, one participant counselled me not to keep struggling to do the "right" thing, but to live simply and peacefully in God's love. Now all this is quite basic, but it was suggested there could be an issue in my life which would lead to my difficulty. I recognised this as true – both in my distant as well as recent past. 'You are made in God's image, He loves you as you are, stop trying so hard, rest in His love', said Fr Bill. As I took this to God in prayer I felt liberated, with joy in my heart as a result.

Wherever you live, I strongly recommend that you find a Retreat Centre or its equivalent to get away from the busyness of being a Christian in today's world to find spiritual refreshment or, in the words of the St Clement's Retreat Centre on Day

15 of the Prayer Diary, 'come aside ... and rest a while'. It is one of those places where I perceive the divide between the spiritual world and our world is a very thin veil. St Clement's is an ideal place for me, because the Retreats are biblical and Christ-centred. As a bible-loving Protestant I can find good teaching and a loving atmosphere and an opportunity to explore more deeply the areas which unite us, Catholic and non-Catholic, as together we find a 'healing balm' to equip us for our unique service in the world.

Bless those who have compiled the Wellspring Prayer Diary which emphasises prayerful mediation as part of our leaders aim for 'community building'. I have been heartened greatly by the Sunday Reflection, especially the first paragraph. Wellspring is also connected with other Retreat Centres in Western Australia (Day 12), Queensland (Day 27), and 'Campfire of the Heart' in Alice Springs (Day 10). As bible-reading, prayer, and meditation are



not chores but gifts from God, so too are these Retreat Centres.

If you haven't experienced a Retreat, I hope you will pluck up courage to go. As my friend Margaret Calvo has written (Day 15), I join with her in her prayer for 'the journey ahead, that I will not take my eyes off you, Lord'.

Jeannie Walker

St Clement's website:

www.stclement.com.au

Offsetting My Car and House Emissions

A couple of years ago I signed up with Greenfleet. I was concerned about climate change from increased concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. I realised that my car emissions contributed to greenhouse gas concentrations and I wanted to offset them.

Greenfleet is a not-for-profit organization. Its program provided a simple way to reduce my impact on

the environment (www.greenfleet.com.au). For \$51, Greenfleet planted 17 native trees on my behalf. These trees will help to create a forest, and as they grow will absorb the greenhouse gases generated by my car for one year. Based on the most recent ABS statistics (released October 2007), the average car driving on Australia's roads generates 3.9 tonnes of greenhouse gases per year. Seventeen trees will offset this amount of emissions.

When it came time to sign up again last year, I realised that, although Greenfleet is an admirable organization, I had no real relationship with Greenfleet. It was too impersonal. I began to look for a more connected way, a more relational way, of offsetting my emissions. As I looked around I discovered that St. Clements Retreat Centre at Galong in rural NSW (www.stclement.com.au) had a tree-planting program. Fr Pat Corbett is a Friend of Wellspring and we pray for him and St Clements on Day 15 of each month. Some people in my cell group have been to retreats at St Clements and appreciate its ministry very much. Here was my relationship and so I sent my \$51 to St Clements.

Margaret and I recently travelled to southern NSW and on the way we had afternoon tea with David Sloane, a Member of Wellspring, who lives in Corowa (also Day 15). David reminded me that he has a landcare project on the family property at Savernake, near Berrigan, about 40 minutes drive from Corowa where he spends two days each week now that he is retired. He is busily planting trees in this landcare project. So I now have two relationships I can build on for my emissions offsets. The Greenfleet calculator tells me that my house creates about 9 tonnes of emissions each year so perhaps I can offset that by supporting David's project, too. To see satellite views of both sites go

to <http://www.wellspringcommunity.org.au/blog/?p=141>

But why should I care about my emissions? Partly because I care about my neighbours and the future generations – I want to leave this world at least as good as I found it. I also care because I believe that God has entrusted the care for this world to us. Genesis 2 points out that there was no vegetation on earth until human beings were created. We came before the vegetation. God wanted us to work the earth and care for it. We are God's co-workers in completing the earth. I need to be doing my bit!

Neil Holm

The law of cycles

We live at Numbugga near Bega on the Far South Coast of NSW, on land which adjoins the South East Forests National Park. This piece of beautiful earth is softly undulating, partly bush and partly cleared, sloping down from a crest to a clear permanent creek, facing three round forested hills. We settled down here a few years ago in order to practice a gentle way of life, centred on prayer and in harmony with nature, welcoming people for retreats or just in need of peace. Prayer, ecology and hospitality are the three expressions of our spirituality.

We want to rediscover, in a very practical and concrete way, what living in harmony with Creation really means. In our view there is less of a necessity to restore the land as nature does that beautifully if we let her, rather it is urgent to restore our ways of living in order to respect the earth. Aboriginal people would probably agree that a piece of land dictates its own laws and therefore we have to fit into this natural order. The laws of nature are made of cycles. Our consumption and production should

be integrated into these natural cycles. That means, resources cannot be consumed quicker than they renew themselves. Nature does not know 'waste', as 'waste' is in fact nothing else than a resource for the further stage of the cycle. Cycles are characterised by variations in quantity (alternation of 'lean and fat cows'), time and speed of reconstitution, and localisation (where it happens). Our needs have therefore to adapt in quality, quantity, time and place to these given cycles.

In fact, each of our deeds can only be said to be based on a responsible attitude if we take care to respect the natural laws. Each act is a personal responsible choice: what do I eat? how do I dress? which means of transport do I use? what kind of materials is my dwelling made up of? Not avoiding the complexity of these questions is part of the core of our spiritual path. It is the incarnated expression of what matters for us. It is the cumulative effect of our acts that makes our world what it is.

After living here for four years, our vegetable garden is becoming

slowly the main source of our food, though we have as yet not solved the problem for inter-seasonal storage and conservation. We remain still



Yves and Ursula de Morsier with Clabon Allen



Yves and Ursula de Morsier swimming on their property

too dependent on shops. We try to buy locally produced goods where this is available. There is still a long way to go. On the other hand, we have installed a solar system which produces all our electricity and heats up our water. We have composting toilets which provide fertiliser for the garden, and our grey water is filtered by sand and reused in the garden's watering system. No waste except for packaging from shopping! So far it seems to respect pretty well the laws of cycles.

Our main problem which remains unsolved, is the question of transport. As long as we are relying on cars and fuel, our way of life will have

a strongly negative impact on our environment. It is urgent to really reinvent other ways of transporting ourselves. It would be technically easy to convert our car into an electric one, which would have a radius of action of some 50 km and which we would recharge with solar electricity. Yet it is not only a question of technology and investment; it is mainly the question of reviewing our priorities. We belong to the 10% of the world's population which consumes 80% of the world's wealth! It is time to divide our impact by 8, and to rediscover simplicity. Self-limitation is certainly the rule for the coming age; not in the form of self-punishment, but in the

sense of a mature accomplishment: small is beautiful! Simplicity will be a necessary characteristic of any true spiritual path. As a wider community, we need to look deeply at our needs, values and priorities: do we want comfort and mobility ...or do we want to share truly with all sentient beings, as one living body, the true peace which the practice of justice and love brings, as co-creators of the coming kingdom? That would surely be the real restoration of ourselves!

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Book Review

CROSSING BORDERS - Shaping Faith, Ministry and Identity in Multicultural Australia

Edited by Helen Richmond and Myong Duk Yang

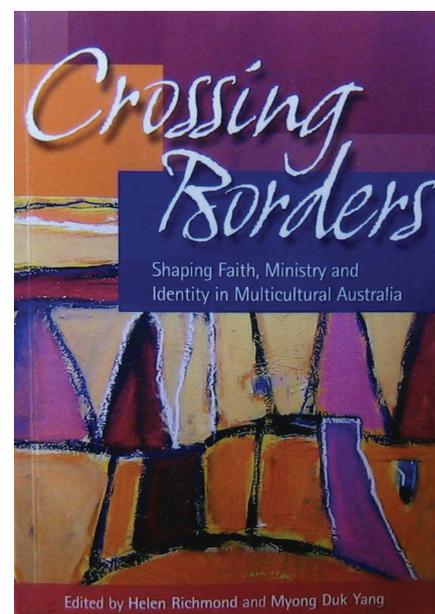
'Interfaith is the agenda for the 21st Century'. With these words, the then President of the Uniting Church in Australia, the Rev Dr Dean Drayton opened a conference in Adelaide several years ago on multicultural and interfaith relations. This book gives powerful expression to the first part of that agenda by alerting us to the way the Australian Church has found new life as it learns from those Christians who have come to Australia from Asia, the Middle East, the Pacific, Africa and Latin America. Helen Richmond and Myong Duk Yang, both ordained ministers of the Uniting Church and actively involved in cross cultural ministry, are well placed to edit such a book.

In 26 short, easy-to-read chapters they have gathered stories from a variety of denominational ministers and lay people which demonstrate what cross cultural ministry is all about learning 'to share the space within which one

culture will interact with another in intentional and meaningful ways.' It is clear that a book of this size can only give a glimpse of the process but it gives us incentive to find other examples close to where we are which allow us to add further chapters to the story.

But there is more. This is not just a series of stories about newcomers to this country. These 'hyphenated' Christians are making a very positive contribution. 'The face of theology is changing' (Clive Pearson p.204) as different cultures demonstrate the need to invent a new theology based on a shifting sense of identity, rather than merely receiving an existing theology and imposing its contours onto a different context.' Even the way in which we read and interpret the Bible is altered as one article shows. All of which makes it an exciting read.

The final chapter consists of what is called 'A Theological Statement', part of a 'Multicultural Vision for the Church' issued by the Multicultural Network in Melbourne in 2005. It could form the basis for lively discussion among the churches.



The editors' efforts in compiling this book will be best rewarded if we don't just put it on our library shelf but use it to lead us along a new path of valuing cultural diversity in all dimensions of church life. And I now wait eagerly for the next book in which we cross the borders of other faiths and religions.

Wellspring Members, Margaret and Clabon Allen, have contributed a chapter to this book. It is available from Kentigem in Sydney and Uni Church in Melbourne and as a Uniting Church Publication should be available through all Synod Offices of the Uniting Church. The cost is approx. \$25.00.

Margaret Ford

Restoring the Land

It is now 60 years since the State of Israel was declared. At last Jewish people, long persecuted, displaced and homeless, would be able to settle on land the international community declared to be 'theirs'.

It is now 60 years since the Palestinian people woke up to find they could no longer live on their land, till the soil and plant their vines and orchards. They were being forcibly removed.

It is 41 years since the land called Palestine was occupied by Israel. This illegal occupation continues without any foreseeable hope of any land being restored to the Palestinians. The opposite is true, that more and more land is being illegally confiscated. The Wall, said to be necessary to keep Israelis safe from attack by suicide bombers and other attacks in reality cuts deep into Palestinian West Bank land and separates Palestinian people from the remaining land they need to work for their livelihood. The increasing network of private roads that provide Israelis with direct access to their homes, schools, work and society, completely denies Palestinians similar access to theirs.

On the 8th May 2008, a joint declaration was issued by 140 world Christian leaders, stating that, as Israel marks its 60th anniversary this May, for Israelis and Palestinians the conflict and the suffering continues. We believe, they said, that this landmark is an important opportunity for Christian leaders around the world to add their voices to a special call for a justice-based peace.

The statement acknowledges the pain of both peoples – and the rights of both peoples to security and dignity. Grounded in biblical truth and supported by pastors, professors, heads of organisations and editors across denominational, national and

political lines, this historic statement will be a prophetic cry and a powerful witness.

Church communities around the world have arranged special events in the week of 4 – 10 June to mark these 41 years and to stand with the people of Palestine as they implore us to help them seek peace with Israel, to restore them to their land and restore the land to all who would live there.

Events include:

✿ On Sunday, June 8, parishes on five continents will pray for peace with churches in Jerusalem.

✿ 300 refugee children will send letters to Palestinian refugee kids; a 'Youth Café' will have singing and jamming for peace. (Philippines)

✿ Churches in two places are going to Parliament House to launch their week of action. (Australia and Scotland)

✿ Bethlehemites made a 'human clock' in Manger Square on June 8 to mark the six long decades since 1948.

✿ One capital city has a multi-religious, multi-cultural peace service as part of the action week and will host Palestinian church leaders to meet politicians throughout the year. (Norway)

✿ One participating member has called 23 partner churches to join; another has alerted 100 member organisations around the world. (Germany and Pax Christi)

✿ Former Ecumenical Accompaniers are guest speakers in several countries and churches are using the week to inform parishes about the WCC-led Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum.

✿ An orchestra of Palestinian and local musicians will give concerts and a film festival will screen documentaries giving Israeli points of view. (Netherlands)

✿ A big-city parish 5,000 kilometers from the conflict plans to erect a full-sized section of the Wall. (Scotland)

✿ 50 cities in one country have new olive trees this year, planted as signs of hope with church help. (France)

An ecumenical working group in Australia has arranged a special media event at Parliament House Canberra on Thursday 4 June, at which Heads of Churches will release a joint statement. Australian church leaders who were among the signatories to the declaration referred to above, will take part in this event, releasing their own joint statement.

A comprehensive kit is also to be launched, and then distributed to churches across Australia, as well as being available for community and other uses.

It contains a Prayer Card, the Statement of Australian Church Leaders, a brochure called 'Disappearing Palestine', an information sheet and a poem called 'It's Time for Palestine', part of which says:

...It's time to honour all who have suffered, Palestinians and Israelis.

It's time to learn from past wrongs...

It's time to seek forgiveness between communities and to repair a broken land together.

It's time to move forward as human beings who are all made in the image of God...

We can stand with oppressed peoples like the Palestinians. Be inspired by what others are doing! Decide to act in your local Wellspring Community group or church. Action is only limited by your creativity and desire to 'break the silence surrounding injustice'.

A place to start: International Church Action for Peace in Palestine and Israel (ICAPPI) www.icappi.org.au

Gillian Hunt

History of the Wellspring Community.

A small group in Sydney is collecting some of our history and collating some of our stories.

If you have any material for the archives please send to

Peggy Goldsmith and Jim Tulip, 8 Taylor Road, Woodford NSW 2778.

Anne McPherson would value your reflections on your involvement with the Wellspring Community. The following questions may help:

*What Attracted you to the Community?

*What have been the highlights of your involvement?

*What have been the difficulties and disappointments?

*What is the most important aspect of the Community for you today?

*What do you think Wellspring has to offer in the coming years to the Australian Christian Community and to the wider Australian Community?

*What, if anything, needs to change in the Community's life to fulfil these roles?

Please send your reflections to annemcp@bigpond.net.au and to bonitafrank@hotmail.com or to PO Box 1689 Macquarie Centre. NSW 2113.

An Urban Pilgrimage in Western Sydney 17th – 21st October 2008

An ecumenical event facilitated by members of the Wellspring Community in partnership with the NSW Ecumenical Council – all welcome!

'Walking the edge' and the book recently published by Wellspring, *Campfires and Wellsprings in Surprising Places*, by Anne McPherson and Peter Millar, along with all of Wellspring's areas of concern, are an inspiration for an ecumenical urban pilgrimage in western Sydney this October, beginning in Anti-Poverty Week. This area, where Anne ministered with the Mount Druitt Community Ministry team for several years, brings together people from many distinct cultural groups, including many Indigenous Australians. A higher than average unemployment level and many other challenges have prodded the local churches into working together to meet special needs. The pilgrimage will involve coming to listen, to understand many issues more fully, and to explore what Christian community means in the context of urban Australia.

Accommodation is available in the Lakes Academy, beside an historical Methodist Church in Castlereagh, near Penrith, about 80 minutes drive west of Sydney. Starting on the Friday evening, participants may stay for two or four nights or come during the

day. A few snippets from the program follow. The Saturday morning will include a Forum in which several people involved in community building in Melbourne and western Sydney, will share something of their own journeys. There will be time to meet with local Indigenous people and visit venues of special interest not far from Castlereagh. Each day will include some sharing of our own stories and praying together. The Sunday morning will provide a chance to worship with one of a variety of churches in the Mount Druitt area, including the Tongan congregation whom the Uniting Church NSW Moderator will also be visiting that day. Participants may join in worship with members of the multicultural Holy Family Church or Indigenous Church congregations. Monday and Tuesday will form a complete segment. The program will include a 'street retreat' in the Mt Druitt Shopping Centre and visits to the Mount Druitt Community Ministry with a variety of related activities on Monday. The Holy Family Centre will welcome us on the Tuesday, treating us to visits to several activities including the Men's Shed, followed by a lunch with the local Reconciliation Group who will share their stories. De-briefing and prayer for the journey will conclude at 2.30pm.

All are welcome!

For your registration form or enquiries, please contact Clabon Allen on 02 9798 4663 or clabon.margaret@bigpond.com before July! We recommend your expression of interest as early as possible! (Completed forms & \$50 deposits required by 19 Sept) Mail to: Urban Pilgrimage, Wellspring Community Inc, PO Box 1689, Macquarie Centre, NSW 2113

Jenny Johnston

Pipeline theme for September Issue is: Our Dream for 2020

Editor for this issue is Bonita Frank – Please have your material to Bonita by the 9th August.

PO Box 903, Spit Junction, NSW 2088 bonitafrank@hotmail.com
2020

*The greater danger
for most of us
is not that our aim is
too high
and we miss it,
but that it is
too low
and we reach it.*

Michaelangelo (1475-1564)

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