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The Newsletter of the Wellspring Community Inc • An Australian Community inspired by the Iona Community

Great Expectations and the Common Good

The theme of this issue of Pipeline is Great Expectations and the Common Good. Laura Tingle's 'Quarterly Essay' entitled 'Great Expectations: Government, Entitlement and an Angry Nation' inspired the theme. Tingle argued that we are an angry nation because our great expectations of what government can do for us are increasingly unfulfilled. Tingle pointed out that as we moved towards Federation, the colonies adopted the term 'Commonwealth' "as this reflected an idea of the common good" (p. 6). However, she concludes that the constitution ignored the notion of common good in order to focus on economic interests. Perhaps we have always put economic interests, both personal and national, ahead of the common good.

In fact, democracy and the common good may be incompatible. According to Winton Bates (<http://bit.ly/VNJ14Y>) Joseph Schumpeter in 'Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy' initially defined democracy as 'that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions which realizes the common good by making the people itself decide issues through the election of individuals who are to assemble in order to carry out its will'. Common good is central to this definition. However, Schumpeter went on to argue that democracy in these terms is impossible; because

- *There is no such thing as a common good that all people could agree upon. Differences of principle on questions*

involving ultimate values cannot be reconciled by rational argument.

- *There is no common will; opinions differ on the means that should be used to pursue agreed objectives.*

- *The psychology of crowds and groupthink are opposed to rational consideration of issues.*

- *Incentives for rational decision-making that discipline individuals in their daily life in the home and in business are absent in political decision-making.*

Geoff Stevenson, Old Toongabbie NSW, Day 17, grapples with these issues below

Great Expectations and the Common Good

A small village was filled with great expectations and hopes because a famous Rabbi was coming to visit. Preparations were made and the hopes built: 'What would he say?' 'What would he do?' 'What would be his wisdom for the people of the village?'

They prepared and awaited his arrival. The town hall was set up and the audience were in place – high hopes and great expectations! He arrived and was introduced. He walked out onto the stage and held out his hands to quieten the people. He then danced to a rhythm that was gentle and beautiful. He swayed and danced, moved around the stage and inspired the audience to stand and join the dance. For over an hour they danced

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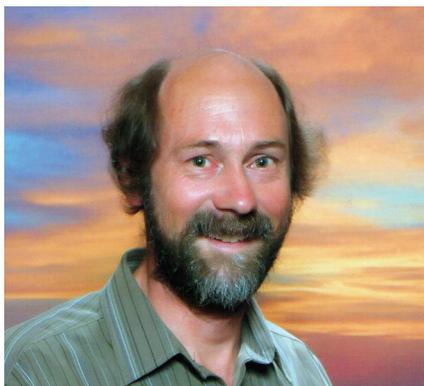
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and danced. Then, tiring from the activity, the Rabbi gestured them to sit, gave a blessing and walked off the stage.

Some of the people were angry because they were waiting for the words of wisdom telling them what was true and good and what they should do. Others were confused, wondering what the Rabbi may have intended. Others went away inspired, stimulated and prepared to act.



Geoff Stevenson

I wonder whether this isn't akin to the experience and expectation of our society. Many are confused by our political, economic and community leadership, wondering why they can't or won't lead. We're not even sure what we want from them or what we really believe they are able to do. I'm not sure most people know what they want let alone what they/we need in our society.

There are other people who have given up on our leaders and political system, complaining and disillusioned by the lack of something – they know not what, only that something is missing. What are the great expectations of these people's lives?

There are others who have been inspired – not by the political or economic systems or the politicians and so on. Their inspiration has come through their liberated thoughts, a moment of insight that has changed their thinking from expectations built around others to expectation of what can only be achieved by each of us working together – towards a common good.

Over the last 3 years I have been involved with a coalition called Sydney Alliance. It is a broad based alliance of grass roots organisations built around 3 caucuses – religious (Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Hindi are all represented), community organisations (as diverse as the Cancer Council, migrant resource centres, environmental groups, community centres, peak bodies) and trade union/employee associations. These groups who represent individuals across the spectrum of society come together to listen to one another and hear the hopes, dreams, concerns and needs of the communities to which we all belong. From thousands of conversations and small meetings to identify needs, regional gatherings and large city-wide assemblies gather to discern what we will do together and how we will do it. We work not for our own interests but for the common good – the good of all people, the millions of individual lives in our large city. The Sydney Alliance is not new nor is it particularly unique. It is built upon the community organising tools and philosophy of the Industrial Areas Foundations that arose in the impoverished slums of Chicago in the 1930s and 40s under the leadership of Saul Alinsky. The origins of the tools and goals are much older and belong to the radical nature of non-violent protests that have arisen at various times throughout history.

As I engage in the tools of the Sydney Alliance I realise that much of this is inherent to Jesus' ministry. He took time to listen to people, often one to one. He heard their yearnings, fears, pain, hopes and responded to the injustice and exclusion that kept people marginalised and resisted the violent forms of control with his particular style of non-violent resistance built around God's love and justice for all people. His proclamation of the 'Kingdom of God', while not particularly new (it has precedents in the law and the prophets of Israel), was profoundly prophetic and invited the transformation of human life – as individuals and society. The

Kingdom of God is about looking at the world from the perspective of God being on the ruling throne (rather than Caesar or whoever rules in our world). What would Australia be like if God was Prime Minister? How would the Federal Budget be different if God was treasurer? When we think about the world from God's perspective it changes everything! The great expectations we sought and struggled to define are transformed into that which serves the common good. I have discovered that the things that I deeply yearn for are not the kinds of messages the politicians promise – prosperity, success, wealth, a nation without refugees, ignorance (even continued abuse) of the environment (and denial of climate change), avoidance of the world's poorest people (through decreasing foreign aid). When I am challenged by God's Kingdom on earth I feel a sense of excitement and liberation. It isn't about me but about us. It isn't my responsibility or that of particular individuals but belongs to all of us. It means everyone has enough and no-one should be in need. It values each person for their uniqueness and what they can contribute – no-one is more important and no-one is less valuable. Everyone has a place and we live with respect for one another.

I have found, through my involvement Sydney Alliance, that I have much in common with those whom I have long been told are different and people that 'we don't associate with'. I have found Muslims who are equally concerned about justice issues as I am and who use many of the same references from Scripture that I use. I have listened to trade unionists who appear hard and unyielding in the 30 second grab on the news who are filled with pain for the suffering people they are trying to support and represent, people who have little English and are being exploited. I have listened to people representing various cultures that are often demonised in the media who are seeking justice and peace, who are trying to work to build a cohesive society in which all people

can participate but who find the going very tough. Some of their own community do not help their situation but most are gracious, ordinary people who want a peaceful life in which they can make a contribution and live in harmony.

I have learned that relationships are vital – this is what we all yearn for. Solid, strong, life-giving relationships with other people where we can work together, share the load and celebrate together. The truly great expectations I hear and feel are for us to live under the Reign of God that is just, fair, peaceful, hopeful, inclusive and invites us to continually work together for that which serves the well-being and common good of the human family and creation beyond.

There is a story of a monastery that had fallen into hard times. The years where the monastery was full of brothers singing, praying and working were long past. The remaining brothers were few in number and growing older. No new brothers had come to the monastery for many years now and the Abbott was deeply concerned. Not knowing what to do he decided to go off into the mountains to retreat, pray and think. Whilst there he stumbled upon a small shack in which lived a

truly wise hermit. The Abbot had heard of the hermit and his legendary wisdom and thought he would pay a visit. He knocked on the door and was finally invited in. The hermit gestured for him to sit down and asked what he wanted to know.

The Abbott told the story of the monastery and how it had fallen on hard times and he didn't know how to turn things around. The hermit sat in silence for what seemed a long time. Eyes closed, he swayed and murmured. Finally he opened his eyes and told the Abbott that one of the brothers was secretly the Messiah. With that he closed his eyes and went back to his praying. The Abbott was quite stunned. He muttered a confused 'thank you' and left.

As he made his way back to the monastery he wondered who it could be – the Messiah was one of them! Who could it be? He contemplated the possibilities but couldn't decide who it was. When he returned he called all the brothers together and told them what the wise hermit had told him – 'One of us is the Messiah!'

The brothers each wondered who it might be? Could it be Brother Cook, he's a great servant. He has a short fuse

though but then the Messiah would hide his identity, wouldn't he? Could it be Brother Gardener or Brother Choirmaster or Brother...? Who could it be?

Believing that the Messiah would hide his identity they began to treat each other as if each one could be the Messiah. Gradually a great transformation came over the Monastery. There was a deep sense of peace and love expressed and received. People who came to picnic in the grounds sensed something different and beautiful. The singing was now filled with beauty and passion that wasn't there before. Gradually younger men came to ask if they could join the Monastery and take their vows. The Monastery was once again filled with life and grace.

Perhaps our Great Expectations may well be seen in the light of this story. Perhaps the Messiah is indeed in our midst but we are not aware of it, can't see it? What if we began to treat each person as if they were the Messiah? What if we looked into the face each person we meet and see the face of Jesus? How might our expectations indeed become great? What might it mean for the common good?

The Elephant in the Room

Although not written with 'Great Expectations' in mind, David Sloane, Corowa NSW, Day 15, alludes to the great expectations of the 21st century: material consumption, never-ending growth, or pursuit of affluence. He challenges Christians to open their eyes and see 'the elephant in the room'.

How could they have got it so wrong? That is the question I ask, when I read how Christians wholeheartedly espoused the jingoism of the first world war in 1914. The same applies to an earlier era in the American South, when many Christians stoutly defended the institution of slavery against the emancipation of slaves.

Likewise, in apartheid South Africa, when the Dutch Reform Church backed the apartheid regime; and again, when the German church in the 1930s tolerated the Nazis.

Of course, there were vocal minorities such as Bonhoeffer's 'Confessing Christians' in Germany and Desmond Tutu and others in South Africa. However, it seems the majority of churches, often quoting chapter and verse, backed the wrong theological horse completely. How did these Bible-believing Christians miss the elephant in their room? The wisdom of hindsight, of course, is a wonderful thing, so I ask myself, what is the

elephant in the room in the early 21st century that we are missing?

I have no doubt future generations will say it will be our involvement in runaway material consumption. Clive Hamilton called it the 'growth fetish'. This is the world's fixation with economic growth in a finite world of limited resources. *Homo economicus* is driving civilization as we know it to an ecological precipice. Most of the mainline churches and para-church organizations like 'Wellspring' and 'Eremos' have been warning about this for years. Still, the environmental crisis deepens every year, as our greenhouse gas emissions go steadily

upward. Even the global financial crisis of 2008-9 hardly made a dent in the upward material consumption. It seems to me that the majority of church members are going along with this, whilst making small adjustments to their lifestyles, like buying green energy or low-energy light bulbs. I don't belittle this, but we still fly overseas in supersonic jets [see note], buy the latest 'must have' digital gadgets; go on luxurious--cruises, drive big petrol-guzzling 4-wheel drives (how many SUVs do you see in church parking lots?) and join in the Christmas buying frenzy. Whilst a minority of Christians are opting out and adopting a radical discipleship green stance, they are too few to make a sizeable impact. In fact, in realizing the enormity of the problem that the world is facing, all our puny efforts are like spitting into the wind. So the question becomes - what appropriate response can concerned Christians make? I believe our response can be two-fold: self-restraint and passive resistance.

Self-restraint:

German theologian Jurgen Moltmann made the point that the environmental crisis stems from a crisis in human beings themselves. This crisis shows itself in humanity's inability to curb its pursuit of affluence at the expense of the planet. This is amply demonstrated in the growth-oriented lifestyle of rich nations and countries such as India and China over the past thirty years. The western church has been carried along in this tidal flood of excess consumption, with only a few abstaining. The latter are making an unpopular counter-cultural protest and are the prophets of our age. This consumer binge, fuelled by rampant capitalism, is fast bringing the whole planet to a crisis point. As well, the power of the military industrial complex, the booming population in the developing world, unfair trade patterns, and corrupt leadership, all play their part in aiding and abetting this crisis.

Some perceptive secular commentators look to religion to curb our appetites

for material possessions. They cite Buddhism as a religion that does not centre on the satisfaction of wants. Christianity, however, has even better credentials if we follow the teaching and example of its founder. The simple lifestyle movement has been with us for decades but has been swamped in the consumer avalanche. However, a new book by American theologian Sallie McFague, 'A New Climate for Theology: God, the World and Global Warming', has opened up fresh lines of thought. Put simply, the self-emptying of God in creation calls western Christians to restrict their lifestyles in response to global warming. This restraint involves the theological notion of KENOSIS (a Greek word meaning self-emptying). It refers to Christ emptying or restricting some divine attributes that incarnation might occur (Philippians 2:5-11). McFague suggested that there is a self-limiting aspect to God in creation that allows the universe, and all that it comprises, the freedom to exist. This does not imply that God is powerless, but affirms that self-restraint is one of the ways God exercises power. Deborah Guess, a post-graduate student from the MCD University of Divinity, in an article in the 'Melbourne Anglican', October 2012, says,

the self-emptying of God in creation and in the event of the incarnation, and the limitation of self which is expressed in the life and death of Jesus Christ, is something which invites, perhaps compels, an ethic which is willing to consider intentionally restricting aspects of the western style of living, in order to respond to the challenge of climate change.

But will this new line of Biblical reasoning have any impact on the lifestyle of the average pew sitter in western churches? In my opinion, probably not. As Deborah Guess postulates, there is a real unresolved tension in the capitalist system between ecology and economics. Ecology tells us that the Earth has a finite amount of resources, space, and

finite ability to deal with carbon and methane emissions. Yet our economic system demands continual growth. Something has to give!

Passive Resistance:

What will it take to rattle the cage and bring the urgency of global warming to the forefront of our leaders' thinking? I once believed that when people started to die from the effects of global warming, the politicians would sit up and take notice. That is now happening with extreme weather events. However, the politicians are still using the issue as a political football. The great majority of the population, it seems to me, are still in a state of practical denial, especially when measures hit the hip pocket nerve. But this will soon change, as extreme weather events around the globe continue to worsen.

Many people, both in the church and outside it, are starting to realise that market fundamentalism or laissez-faire economics, is pushing this consumer binge, which in turn is driving the planet towards the ecological cliff. Hence, many are now calling for a people's movement to rein in the excesses of rampant capitalism and the power of the ultra rich. Leading environmental columnist of the 'Guardian', George Monbiot, now believes this political fight will mean putting the survival of people and the living world above the survival of a few favoured industries (in Australia, the powerful coal industry).

Columnist of the American Christian magazine, 'Sojourners,' Bill McKiddon, agreed. He was very forthright.

My sense is that the time has come to take on the fossil fuel industry itself - not the members of the Congress that they buy in droves each election season, but the real powers. Ignoring the damage they've already caused, these people spend hundreds of millions of dollars each day looking for new fossil fuels, and they spend hundreds of millions each year

making sure no government stops them. They're like the tobacco industry at this point, except that instead of going after your lungs, they going after the lungs of the planet. (Sojourners, January 2013).

He said that as these massive corporations only care about money, we should threaten a little of theirs through consumer boycotts, peaceful protests at shareholders' meetings, and a divestment campaign; in short a passive resistance campaign. He admits this is a David and Goliath struggle, but passion, creativity and a youthful idealism and energy are on our side.

There are signs of hope. Community resistance to coal seam gas extraction

is growing, as the energy companies try to mine good farming country. In my part of the world, the Southern Riverina of NSW, a Landcare awareness campaign led to an energy company withdrawing its claim. Such a struggle is contending with the 'principalities and powers' (Ephesians 6:12) that Walter Wink wrote about in his books. Hence, such passive resistance needs to be surrounded in prayer and in no way resort to violence, thus following the tradition of Ghandi and Martin Luther King.

Unless Christians and the churches can lead the way in self-restraint and passive resistance to the brutal domination of the planet by rampant capitalism, the future for our children

and grandchildren, and all life on this planet, will be grim. That is the elephant in the room in this generation. Will we see it in time?

Note on Air Travel

A return flight from London to New York generates 1.5 tonnes of CO2 per passenger. High altitude deliveries of nitrogen oxides enhances the effects of CO2 by a factor of three [Stern Review, box 15.6]. Likewise, a return flight to Australia from London represents 87% of typical single person's household annual green house gas emissions in a year. If a couple fly, that is 102% of their annual carbon footprint!

Letter from the Leader



Janelle Macgregor

Two weeks ago I purchased a new computer. At the moment I have three computers in front of me – the old PC which I decided to replace because it started doing crazy things (at least I think it's the computer that's doing crazy things!), and my reliable little notebook which I use mainly for showing powerpoints but hope to use while travelling to the Gathering, and the new PC which has only one cord to plug into a power outlet yet it talks magically to everything else in sight and beyond (in principle!), including its own keyboard.

Until my new home is ready in May, I am living 'at no fixed address'.

Without a landline, my android (*android:?!!*) mobile phone is helpful, but it's also oh-so-touchy!

Apparently, what I need most in my life is a dongle! Except! The dongle won't talk to the notebook because it's too old (4 years) and it won't talk to the new computer because the new computer hasn't been set up because it needs to talk to a dongle so it can go online, etc. The old PC won't talk directly to the new PC because the old one needs cables. So, one D-Link later, and my notebook is opening access to the virtual world for me once again - after a very enjoyable fortnight off-line.

Those of you who know about these things will be having a good laugh by now; those of you who are like me, struggling to ask questions about computers and wireless communications without sounding totally idiotic and 20th century, will be sympathetic, I'm sure.

Anyway, it's all fun(?). It is fun to be going through my photographs and moving them into my new computer. I first bought a digital camera in 2008 when we went to Scotland. Since then we've had two new grandies, our

eldest has graduated from high school, the ones in between have started new things, and lots of birthdays candles have been lit and saved into *My Pictures*.

How fortunate I am to have such a healthy and happy family. And, how wonderful it is to be able to say that life is good!

I read recently that "the common good is based in the assumption that life is good". I think that from deep within our inner being we do believe that life is good. Perhaps this belief is what births hope in us. Or perhaps, hope is the enacting of our innate belief that life is good.

Within the discipline of Ethics, the *common good* is understood as what is commonly held within a society to be the goods and values of that society. The pursuit of the *common good* is around us in our daily living. People strive for the good; people fight for the good; people sacrifice for the good. We witness the striving and the fighting and the sacrificing in the lives of those we love, those we know, those we hear about, those we encounter through our engagements in society. We hear stories in the

media every day – and not just in the good-news stories. The presumption that life is good provides a measuring tool for all things.

For Christians, *the common good* has a particular language. God created the world and declared that the world, and all that lives in it, is good. This is the essence of incarnational theology and the Gospels show the way to achieving the *common good* – it’s called the kingdom of God.

Might it be true of Wellspring Community that we hold, individually and collectively, the assumption that life is good? Do we want to see the gap narrowed between indigenous children’s health and the health of other Australian children because we want all children to know that life is good? Similarly, do we want asylum seekers to find protection within Australia because we want to affirm them in their belief that life is good

and that their journey has been worth everything.

As we live in God and God lives in us, the foundational precept that life is good becomes both the motive for, and the meaning of, our quest for peacemaking and justice. Peace and justice is the *common good* that will come on earth in the fullness of God’s time – it’s called the kingdom of God.

Janelle Macgregor

BAMM: BOOKS, ART, MUSIC, MOVIES



BAMM is a place where Members and Friends reflect on their recent viewing, hearing, creating, and reading in ways that engage the central concerns of the Wellspring community.

BAMM: BOOKS

James Charlton is an Australian poet who teaches in the School of Philosophy at the University of Tasmania, and he’s also the poetry editor of the literary quarterly Island, as well as advisory editor for Australasia of Chautauqua Literary Journal, published in upstate



Lucy Jones

New York. He is also Lucy Jones’ (Sandy Bay Tas, Day 25) brother. Lucy sent the following review of James’ latest book. James’ poetry in an earlier collection is called Luminous Bodies and his later publication is So Much Light. In his poetry light, luminescence and incandescence have a special spiritual dimension. To hear some of his poetry go to <http://bit.ly/14KMwtl>

Non-dualism in Eckhart, Julian of Norwich and Traherne: A Theopoetic Reflection

Author: James Charlton.
Publisher: Bloomsbury, 2013

Anyone interested in closing the perceived gap between spirit and matter, the divine and the human or the subject and the object will want this book.

James Charlton is better known as an Australian poet than as a theologian. His writing style is lucid. He favours an inclusive, non-dual and process-

oriented model of theology and philosophy. Since he adheres to an ultimate transcendence, his position implies pantheism as distinct from pantheism.

Eckhart, Julian and Traherne “... understood the fullness of humanity as participation in the divine. Accordingly, they inscribed the reduction of boundaries between the divine and the human and between what is ‘you’ and what is ‘me’.” [page 148]

The chapter on Mother Julian is especially concise. Charlton avoids yet another adumbration of Julian’s often-quoted line ‘All will be well and all manner of things will be well’. He is probably well aware that such lines, torn beyond the author’s intention, can lead to passivity in the face of the world’s problems.

Non-dualism in Eckhart, Julian of Norwich and Traherne comes with high praise from two scholars who are well-regarded for their non-waffly

approach to so-called mysticism: Beatrice Bruteau and Paul Knitter.

Knitter states that Charlton reveals how the three theologians (one German; the other two English) agree in their view that the divine is ‘... a thoroughly non-dualistic Deity in which the Infinite and the finite have their being in each other.’

Unexpected side-lights include an exposition of the meaning of Andrei Rublev’s icon *The Holy Trinity* and clear explanations of the key Christian concepts of kenosis and perichoresis.

There’s a full Index and Glossary. The latter mainly features the more basic Sanskrit words involved in traditional non-dualism.

The international publisher Bloomsbury has chosen to market this book as a hardcover academic textbook. The price of it is therefore high. It can be ordered through any bookshop.

BAMM: BOOKS

Val Bennett, Port Adelaide SA, Day 1 shares a book that she thinks Wellspring members and friends might enjoy because it deals with 9th century inter-faith issues.

The Island House

Author: Val Bennett

Publisher: Simon & Schuster, Australia 2012

My favourite read from Christmas loot this year has to be ‘The Island House’ by Tasmanian, Posie Graeme-Evans. It’s an un-put-downable mix of history, romance & intrigue, especially for a lover of the wild west of Scotland.

Freya Dane, a PhD candidate in archaeology from Sydney, arrives on the Island of Findnar, where her recently deceased father lived and worked.

In AD 800, a young girl named Signy from the local Pictish tribe is taken in by the surviving members of the Christian community who have settled on Findnar. As Signy grows

up behind the walls of the monastery, she finds herself at the centre of a clash between the island’s three religious cultures- caught between her adopted Christian faith, her native Pictish religion and the Viking man she loves.

Alternating between present-day & ninth-Century Scotland, ‘The Island House’ is an intertwined story of fascinating discoveries, and two women connected to each other over the centuries.

Published by Simon & Schuster, Australia in 2012, the book also has very good discussion starters and questions at the end for your own consideration and your book club.

BAMM: BOOKS

Religious thinker Karen Armstrong has written more than 20 books on faith and the major religions, studying what Islam, Judaism and Christianity have in common, and how our faiths shaped world history and drive current events.

A former nun, Armstrong has written two books about this experience: Through the Narrow Gate, about her seven years in the convent, and The Spiral Staircase, about her subsequent spiritual awakening, when she developed her iconoclastic take on the major monotheistic religions -- and on the strains of fundamentalism common to all. She is a powerful voice for ecumenical understanding. To hear Karen Armstrong speak go to her TED talk at <http://bit.ly/13dQ5P>.

Peter Fensham, Annerley Qld, Day 16, offers us a review of her latest book.

Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life

Author: Karen Armstrong

Publisher: Bodley Head Press, 2011

Many readers will be positively familiar with this author’s earlier books such as **A History of God** and **The Case for God**. In this latest book, Karen begins by explaining how it is intended to contribute to ‘the building of a global community in which all peoples can live together in

mutual respect”. To this end, she used her respected knowledge of the great world religions to bring together some of their leaders and then many others who reacted to a draft statement that, when revised, became a **Charter of Compassion**. Underpinning this charter was the recognition in each of these major religions that there is a version of what we know as the Golden Rule:

Always treat others as you would wish them to treat you,

and that, in the basic writings of these religions, this dictum is to be extended to everyone including enemies.

This more recent book is designed for individual or group reading, and each chapter, after explaining and exemplifying its step, includes useful practices for discussion, sharing, and trying that aim to embed the meaning of the step into one’s habits of thought and action.

Not surprisingly for such a major learning task, she starts with individuals where they are, gradually extends their awareness to others. Thus the third step, *Compassion for Yourself*, leads on to *Empathy with others*, then through *Mindfulness and Action*, to step 8, *How should We Speak to One Another and Concern for Everybody* to the final, counterintuitive and difficult step, *Love your Enemies*.

The innate personal survival drives of *feeding, fighting, fleeing* and *reproduction*, are repeatedly contrasted with these relational steps to a compassionate life. The author goes further by imbuing these drives with a biological residue she calls the “reptilian” brain which, for me, was unnecessary and scientifically improbable.

Perhaps because she is an historian, and perhaps so wanting a multi-faith basis for the steps, Karen mainly uses justifications from past religious leaders and thinkers, whereas I would have preferred to have been reminded and encouraged that the steps are possible because contemporary and more recent women and men have shown that a compassionate life is

possible in modern social world that is, in so many ways, different from the societies her examples faced. Martin Luther King, Ghandi, and Thich Nhat Hanh are mentioned in the 12th step, but to not mention Nelson Mandela was to me reprehensible.

Finally, I suspect this English version of the book will be read more by concerned Christians than by non-Christians. For these readers the book is rather light weight in linking it into the familiar parables of Jesus and the many other stories of biblical compassionate action that underpin their interest in the book in the first place.

BAMM: ART
Camino Incarnation



Gail Pritchard

After walking the Camino, Gail Pritchard, Templestowe, Vic Day 4, wrote a Christmas reflection. Thanks to Bill Anderson, Vermont South Vic Day 13, for his note that led to Gail's permission to use this lovely piece.

Membranes rupture.
 Waters break and hay,
 fresh, wet
 with cries of birth
 cradles a fragile frame
 in utter simplicity.
 God's tiny Child is born.

Membranes rupture.
 Round ev'ry bend birth hovers
 like a wind-borne plover

and all the while, the way, unfolds
 the mystery of the Other
 and sows a seed of solitude
 and disquieting reflection.

Membranes rupture.
 Light shines its penetrating ray
 upon the menace of our day
 casting shadows o'er human folly.
 Greed and hatred, corruption, lies,
 human dignity defies.
 And all around
 the web of life
 lies crushed, fermenting on the
 ground,
 dismantled, gasping, groaning.
 Species lost, forever gone.
 Earth's beauty now depleted.

Membranes rupture,
 homeless people tear the air
 in wildest desperation.
 Asylum seekers trapped in camps
 in squalor's suffocation
 where the air of human stench
 fills every crowded space
 and seething rage and fear and pain
 fuels silent indignation.
 Helpless babe in lifeless cage
 moans with malnutrition.
 Stillborn child from shrivelled womb
 lies on an empty breast.

Membranes rupture
 'midst Christmas cheer
 consumer frenzy, every year.
 Pushing, pulsing through the malls
 cut the cord of mass destruction.
 Lead the way o' Scallop Shell
 where the gift of love is free.
 hanging on a wooden cross
 grace upon a Christmas tree
 born those ages long ago
 for ev'ry pilgrim heart to see.

BAMM: ART

Candlemas Blessing

Jonathan Inkipin, Toowoomba Qld, Day 26, shared a Candlemas blessing. The feast of Candlemas, traditionally celebrated on 2 February, is an important pivotal festival of the spiritual calendar, as Christians turn from the light of Christmas towards the greater light of Easter and healing for our world. In Australia, it also enables us to celebrate the full return of the working year and

the beginning of the school year, praying for our local community as a whole.

Wishing you every blessing
 this Candlemas
 at the start of this new school and full
 working year
 May this time be one of delightful
 new beginnings for you
 and for all those with whom you love
 and live.
 When you look to the future may you
 trust and rejoice,
 and when you look to the past
 may you be thankful and forgive.
 May the peace of the Christ child
 continue to bring you joy.
 and may the hope of the resurrected
 One
 bring you new life.
 When you take up new challenges
 may your candles burn bright
 and when you stumble
 may they still flame and flicker in the
 night.
 So may you always know light in
 darkness
 and the Eternal Light within you.
 Amen.

*With the love and prayers of the
 Anglican Parish of St Luke,
 Toowoomba
 ('serving the City and East of
 Toowoomba')*

www.stlukestoowoomba.org.au



Another Candlemas Tradition!

In Scotland, on Candlemas children brought candles to school to light the classrooms on dull days. When gas lighting came, children took money to the teacher to buy sweets and cakes for the children. The boy and girl taking the most money was Candlemas King and Queen for six weeks. They could make one afternoon a week a playtime and let children off punishment.

BAMM: ART

Col Jennings' Art Exhibition



Col Jennings, Springwood NSW, Day 3, is having a solo exhibition of artworks entitled 'Reflections on a Long White Cloud' from 1 March to 2 April at The Olde Block Factory Gallery, Faulconbridge NSW. The exhibition includes paintings and photos.

BAMM: MUSIC

Bruce Cockburn

Neil Holm, Inala Qld, Day 26, is reading about Bruce Cockburn in Brian Walsh's 'Kicking at the Darkness' (Brazos 2011).

Bruce Douglas Cockburn OC is a Canadian folk/rock guitarist and singer-songwriter. His philosophy is summed up in "If I try to understand what it means to be a Christian, I look at the two instructions that were given in the Bible that are paramount, and those are to love God with all your heart and mind, and to love your neighbour as yourself. That's it." Cockburn's albums usually have a spiritual aspect that is best reflected in a recent album in the closing song "Gifts". See video of this song at <http://bit.ly/Yj8FcO> His "Postcards from Cambodia" reveal his sensitivity and compassion:

This is too big for anger,
it's too big for blame
We stumble through history
so humanly lame.
So I bow down my head,
say a prayer for us all
That we don't fear the spirit
when it comes to call.

BAMM: MUSIC

Notable Sacred Music for 2012

Christianity Today reviewed some interesting sacred music.

See <http://bit.ly/WwjI7m> for full descriptions.

John Rutter and the Cambridge Singers - This Is the Day: Music on Royal Occasions

A tribute to Queen Elizabeth II, this is an assemblage of sacred music performed in various ceremonial occasions during her lifetime.

Westminster Choir & Joseph Flummerfelt - Legacy

The set offers a perfect balance of sacred repertoire, including three versions of "The Lord's Prayer" (Stravinsky, Durufle, and Davies), and two settings of the "Agnus Dei" (including Samuel Barber's), alongside poetic songs about nature, and a few well-loved folk songs.

Eric Whitacre - Water Night

The most emotionally fraught track is "When David Heard," referencing the Absalom's death and David's tremendous grief. Whitacre writes with a perfect balance of choral sound, using a wide range of dynamic singing, all juxtaposed with complete silence—a cathartic expression in every sense.

Noel Edison and the Elora Festival Singers - I Saw Eternity

Praiseworthy choral singing is the highlight here, featuring this Canadian group of 25 showcasing timeless hymns and psalm texts.

The King's Singers - Pater Noster: A Choral Reflection on the Lord's Prayer

The King's Singers take a unique musical excursion through the familiar words and phrases of The Lord's Prayer with this compilation of twenty-five choral works spanning the centuries, including Gregorian chant, early polyphony, early English, French Romanticism, and 20th-century gems.

John Gardiner and Monteverdi Choir - Brahms: Ein deutsches Requiem

If you do not own a recording of Brahms' German Requiem, you might want to add this uplifting choral mainstay to your collection. It's filled with some of the greatest emotional romanticism that you'll find,

Phoenix Chorale, Charles Bruffy - Northern Lights: Choral Works by Ola Gjeilo

This is contemporary music that sings with lyricism and dynamic energy from peaceful to fiery.

Indra Thomas - Great Day! Indra Thomas Sings Spirituals

This is an album filled with joy, sorrow, energy, and other various emotions that celebrate the African-American spiritual.

Portara Ensemble - Choral Hymns of the Christian Tradition

"Hymn singing" is the emphasis of this new project featuring the Portara Ensemble of Nashville, Tennessee. There aren't many modern recordings featuring traditional hymnody, simply sung,

Colin Andrews - l'ascension et la messe de la pentecote, Olivier Messiaen

One of the great French composers of the 20th century, organist and composer Messiaen (1908-1992) found expressions for the spiritual truths he learned in the Catholic faith, and these remarkable symphonic-style organ suites have become standard literature in all organ studies today.

BAMM: MOVIE

Peace & Justice Movies

Mark and Mary Hurst, Mona Vale NSW, Day 23, report on the peace and justice film series they put together.

Last year we started a peace and justice film series at Avalon Baptist Peace Memorial Church, co-sponsored by our local Amnesty International group. We advertise with banners, posters, and magazine and newspaper ads throughout the Northern Beaches area of Sydney and usually include a speaker to do a Q and A session after the film. We then have soup and bread and encourage people to discuss the film together. If we can get someone connected to the film as a speaker we do. Otherwise we try to get someone who is knowledgeable and passionate about the film's subject. Even though we are a small congregation we have had attendances at the films from 75 to 150 people.

The films we've shown include:

- **Our Generation**

(<http://www.ourgeneration.org.au/>)

– Our speaker was Jeff McMullen of 60 Minutes fame and one of the film's producers.

- **Budrus**

(<http://www.justvision.org/budrus>) –

Speaker: Vacy Vlazna, Coordinator of Justice for Palestine Matters

- **Pray The Devil Back To Hell**

(<http://praythediabacktohell.com/>)

We didn't have a speaker so we led the discussion. We've met Leymah Gbowee, one of the key women in the film.

- **The Garden At The End of the World**

(<http://www.thegardenattheendoftheworld.info/>)

– Our speakers were the film's maker Gary Caganoff and Mahboba Rawi an Afghan woman featured in the film and organiser of Mahboba's Promise (<http://mahbobaspromise.org/>)

- **The Hungry Tide**

(<http://thehungrytide.com.au/>) – Our speakers were the filmmaker Tom Zubrycki and Phil Glendenning, director of the Edmund Rice Centre, who is featured in the film.

The next film we are planning to screen in June is:

- **Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea**

(<http://deepblueseafilm.com/>)

– Our speaker will be a young man who just spent his summer holidays volunteering with the Salvos on Manus Island, working with asylum seekers being held there.

During January 2012 we showed the film series **Women, War and Peace** (<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/women-war-and-peace/>) during our normal worship times. The films led to some good discussion.

BAMM: MOVIES

Film festivals are becoming popular. In addition to the Peace and Justice movies above, Sydney is holding a social justice film festival. Rev. Bill Crews has founded The Big Picture Film Festival. From 27 February to 05 March at Event Cinemas George Street The Big Picture Film Festival showed the following films. For more information go to <http://www.thebigpicture.org.au/>

Social Justice Films

Anton's Right Here

He suffers autism in a country that doesn't officially acknowledge the disease, yet Anton's inspirational saga lifts the spirit.

Bad Weather

The eye-opening story of 65 sex workers trying to organize benefits for themselves as their workplace crumbles into the sea.

Bernadette: Notes on a political journey

The remarkable real-life story of the youngest ever female to be elected to Britain's Parliament.

Blood In The Mobile

The mobile phone in your pocket contains a dirty little secret the multinationals don't want you to know about. Blood In The Mobile lifts the lid.

Closing night | G-Dog (film only)

"Nothing stops a bullet like a job!" In one gang-plagued Los Angeles

neighbourhood, Jesuit priest Father Greg "G-Dog" Boyle is changing lives.

Five Broken Cameras

An Oscar© nominee for Best Documentary Feature; this is a harrowing, up-to-the-minute mélange of technology, politics and endurance.

Mine

Winner of the non-fiction audience award at the South by Southwest Film Festival, Mine is an inspirational film that speaks to all animal lovers.

On The Bridge

For many of the American men and women returning from combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, their war is just beginning.

One Fine Day

What motivates the individual to action? This uplifting film profiles average people whose frustrations and constructive anger led them to social activism.

Silence in the House of God: Mea Maxima Culpa

The story of the global cover-up of clerical abuse within the Catholic Church and the battle of five individuals to rise above it.

Shadows Of Liberty

In the news business, does the lust for profits trump the quest for truth? See how local news coverage is being crippled to serve corporate masters.

The Reluctant Revolutionary

The chemistry is palpable and the risks enormous; one man watches another's remarkable transformation from beleaguered businessman to zealous activist.

BAMM: MOVIES

Some Thoughts on Organising a Film Festival

A successful film festival will do two things: raise awareness and promote engagement.

Film increases public awareness by highlighting issues and stories otherwise overlooked or neglected. This educational value of film is well recognised. Film has the potential to raise awareness. Heightened awareness



becomes a critical building block for change at the individual level and the wider social level.

As followers of Jesus, we seek heightened awareness. We want to be sensitised to important justice issues that surround us. Scripture reminds us that this should be so but it also urges us to go further:

22 But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. 23 For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves[h] in a mirror; 24 for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. 25 But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing. (James 1 NRSV)

If we take James seriously, we will encourage “doing”. We will go beyond raising public awareness. We will promote engagement. Good planning helps people to understand the issues. Good planning has prepared answers and suggestions that help people ask ‘What can I do?’ and ‘What steps can I take to become engaged?’ (Neil Holm)

BAMM: MOVIES

The Hedgehog

Neil Holm, *Inala Qld, Day 26, reflects on The Hedgehog (2009, directed by Mona Achache, and starring Josiane*

Balasko (Renee), Garance LeGuillermic (Paloma), and Togo Igawa (Mr Ozu)

I recently watched the French film “The Hedgehog” on DVD. I had read and loved the book (*The Elegance of the Hedgehog (French: L’élégance du hérisson)* by the French novelist and professor of philosophy Muriel Barbery) and was thrilled to see the book realised in the film in a satisfying way.

The central character, Renee, a 54-year-old widow, is the concierge (janitor) in a small apartment building for the rich. Almost all the inhabitants of the building see her in stereotypical ways and Renee maintains that façade. However, behind the façade is a life of the mind that explores great literature and film. Life continues in this way until two characters who are culturally different in distinct ways engage her – in this apartment building they are “other”.



The first “other”, Paloma, is a highly intelligent perceptive 11-year-old girl who lives in the building. She has not yet become acculturated to the adult culture of those who live in the building but she is sufficiently perceptive to recognise their entrapment. This recognition is the catalyst of her emerging plan to commit suicide on her 12th birthday. However, she is also sufficiently perceptive to recognise that Renee is like a hedgehog – a prickly fortress on the outside but something much more refined on the inside.

The second “other” is a very elegant and cultured Japanese widower, Mr Ozu, who takes over a vacant apartment. Without the upper class French blinkers, he sees the person, he attends to the particular, he sees the distinctives; he sees Renee as more than a single instance of an homogenous class of concierges.

As the film progresses these three outsiders, Renee, Paloma, and

Mr Ozu, engage in a dance of relationships that leads to a growing sense of community between them. In a sense, the combined spirits of Mr Ozu and Paloma engage with the spirit of Renee in a way that frees her to become herself, that renews and liberates her in ways that help her to become more complete. They help to perfect her. Alone Renee was not fully human. In the small community, she is enabled to transcend her individual state that was a denial of her human fullness.

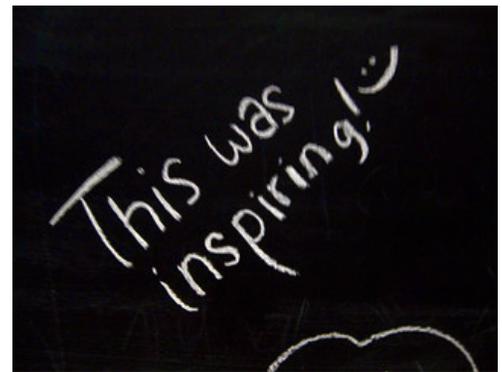
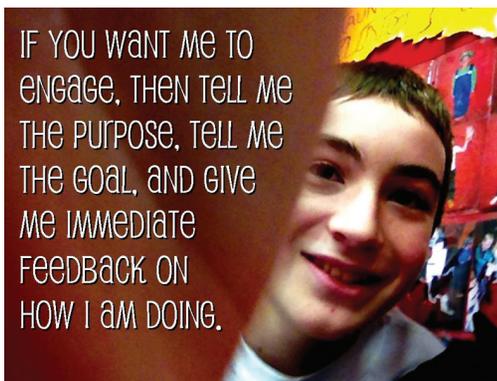
The other building dwellers denied Renee’s particularity; they pushed her into the mechanistic or sub-human homogenous role of concierge that denied her essential humanity. When she visually steps out of her concierge role people in the building fail to recognise her.

In a similar way, people fail to really see Paloma and she doesn’t help by often hiding from members of her family and she often sees them only through the lens of her video recorder. But as Renee and Mr Ozu enter into relationship with Paloma they contribute to her liberation from her invisibility and her death wish and allow her to enter, perhaps for the first time, into acts of genuine affection, empathy, and embrace.

In recognising particularity Mr Ozu, Paloma, and Renee act in ways that God intends all humans to act. Followers of Jesus believe that “Christ and the Holy Spirit bring us and our world, perfected, to the Father.” We are brought in this way so that people and things can come to be that which they are particularly called to be (Gunton p. 73). Humans, created in the image of God, reflect the divine being in communion (p. 217). Thus we, too, are intended to be in relation, and (like Renee, Mr Ozu, and Paloma) to recognise and respect particularity, and through relationship help to constitute each other to be wholly human which entails honouring that particularity that is inherent within each of us.

Gunton, Colin. *The One, the Three, and the Many*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

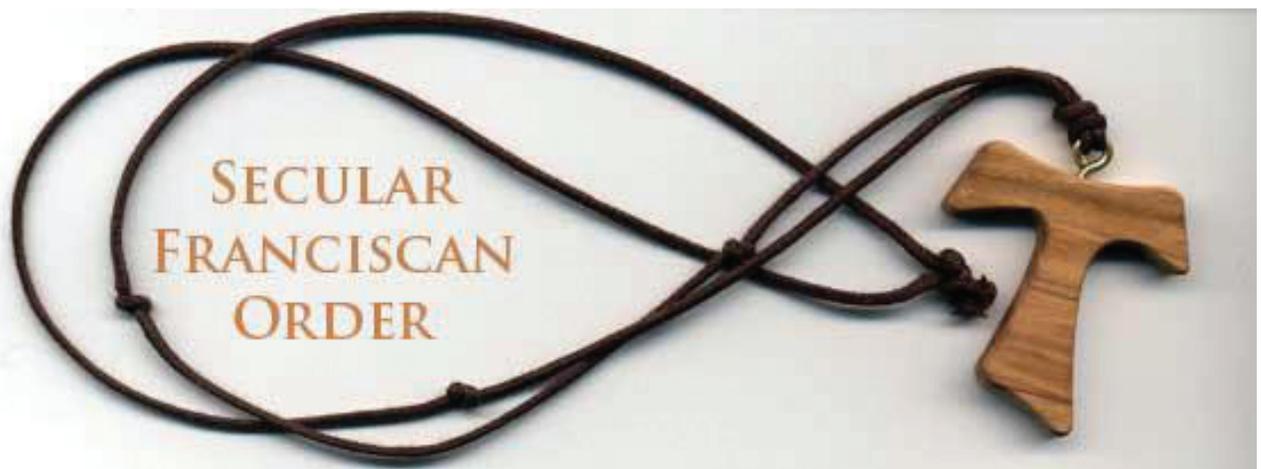
ENGAGEMENT



Engagement: Members and Friends will have an opportunity to engage with or respond to ideas that were addressed in the previous issue of *Pipeline*. Engaging with the ideas of others, respondents will affirm and / or commend the ideas and also take the opportunity to recommend other points of view.

Engagement with the Wellspring Mysteries

In December 2012, Neil Holm wrote on The Wellspring Mysteries. In that article he asked if God had entrusted Wellspring with a particular manifestation of God's mysteries that we have stewardship over. If so, Neil argues that some form of intentional engagement and formation may be necessary. In the following 'Engagement' John Clarkson (Bathurst NSW, Day 1,5 responds to Neil's thoughts on Franciscan formation.



I find the Franciscan rule of life based upon Franciscan Spirituality a backbone to my journey to God. The six months as an inquirer with one's Regional Minister provides a time of feeling the waters of Franciscan life.

The next step which lasts three years is a time of formation with the help of a Novice Counsellor. This period involves twelve sets of notes outlining every aspect of Franciscan life. These notes are shared with one's counsellor who becomes a valued mentor during this time. After working through

eight sets of notes in two years and, if found to be suitable by the Novice Counsellor, permission is gained from the Chapter that the Novice becomes a Professed member of the Third Order. For the next year further notes are worked through with the Novice Counsellor.

Each year we renew our vows at Francistide in October. We attend local fellowship meetings and try to be part of a tri-annual conference for about 350 members throughout Australia. Each year, too, we revise our

rule of life with the help of a spiritual advisor. In Bathurst about ten of us share in a monthly meeting and those of us who have a spiritual advisor find such sharing a real help. We also practise confession to God in the hearing of a priest from time to time. This is a source of encouragement.

I feel that this type of inner discipline helps us to be "a serious people". As Neil says, many of our churches and places are hard places and such a backbone as this is necessary to cope.

Engagement with Sacred Community

In Pipeline December 2012, Jill Robertson wrote on Sacred Community. In this piece she wondered if God had to be involved in sacred community. In the following 'Engagement' Lucy Jones, Sandy Bay, Day 25, offers some further thoughts on this matter.

In her article on "Sacred Community" Jill raises the interesting question as to "...whether or not God had to be involved in a sacred community". She goes on to say that because "I have given my life to God and seek to be a disciple of God's then any community I am involved with becomes one where God is involved." This thought has raised some questions for me.

As a child I was taught that by saying a prayer or claiming God's presence I could, somehow, bring God into my situation. I now think that this appears to be an attempt to manipulate the Presence of God. I had believed in the transcendence rather than the Divine imminence.

An example of the overemphasis on transcendence might be the current crisis in the church around the abuse of children by priests. It is understandable that many people feel betrayed and believe that Christ's presence has now disappeared. To make matters worse the hierarchy of sacred communities where priests traditionally live often kept silent. A wider view may be needed.

Jean-Luc Marion, a contemporary French theologian, says that God saturates an infinity of horizons and phenomena, and Marion characterises God's presence as 'saturated phenomena'. Perhaps the question for me now is this: Can we see where

God is already present? Can we be open to God in all of us?

Like Jill, I belong to a number of similar nurturing communities which are precious to me. Also, I belong to a couple of on-line groups which, like other communities, are dedicated to a purpose. "Some Of Us" is one of these. "It is a world wide movement of people working together to hold corporations accountable for actions and forge a new, sustainable path for a global economy." Not all members would be Christian. I propose that this group is sacred. Might we call this group an 'Intentional Community'?

What do others think?

Engagement with Current Issues: Sport

Sport in Australia and throughout the world is under scrutiny as allegations arise about matching fixing, drugs, and tanking. Jim Parry, Mark Nesti, and Nick Watson have edited a recent book entitled Theology, Ethics and Transcendence in Sports (Taylor & Francis, 2010) as Volume 4 of the Routledge Research in Sport, Culture and Society series. The blurb says, "This book provides an inter-disciplinary examination of the relationship between sport, spirituality and religion. It covers a wide-range of topics, such as prayer and sport, religious and spiritual perspectives on athletic identity and 'flow' in sport, theological analysis of genetic performance enhancement technologies, sectarianism in Scottish football, a spiritual understanding of sport psychology consultancy in English premiership soccer and how Zen may be useful in sports performance and participation. As modern sport is often intertwined with commercial and political agendas, this book also provides an important corrective to the "win at all costs" culture of modern sport, which cannot always be fully understood through secular ethical inquiry. This is a unique and important addition to the current literature for a wide-range of fields including theology and religious studies, psychology, health studies, ethics and sports studies."

Here our own Jonathan Inkpin, Toowoomba Qld, Day 26, offers a Lenten reflection on sport in Australia.

Win by Losing

Australian sport is taking a hard look at itself. Reports show high levels of systematic drug taking and corruption, across all sporting codes. Australia is not alone. Not long ago Indian cricketers were imprisoned for match fixing. Similar events have happened in South Africa and elsewhere. Recently we also saw Lance Armstrong, one of history's most successful sportsmen, finally admit his career was fueled by illegal drug taking. His confession to Oprah Winfrey, television's high priest, was a worldwide exposé of professional sporting ethics.

For Australians this is shocking. As a sporting nation, we pride ourselves on intense commitment and skill. Yet the heart of our core values are a 'fair go' and a level playing field for all. What has gone wrong? How has sport become so corrupted by false values of power, money and success at all costs? For generations Australians have lauded the battlers and underdogs, the little people who struggle against the odds, whether in sport or life in general. Recently however 'battlers' have started being called 'losers', as we adopt American ways of looking down on those

who are not obviously successful. Winning becomes everything and the love of money corrupts. When sports broadcasts are sprinkled with gambling adverts, it is little wonder that our sporting contests become suspect. We have made idols of sport, money and winning. So we end up sacrificing sporting talents and young lives to these false gods.

Jesus taught us that the real winners – those truly 'blessed' by God – are life's battlers: the poor, the pure in heart, the hungry and thirsty, the persecuted, the peacemakers. Only

by letting go of our selfish desires and false idols can we find that which truly satisfies. Jesus said that those who would gain life must begin by letting

go, or losing, it. For 'what good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose their very self?' It is a timely message for today's world as a

whole, as well as Christians who keep Lenten disciplines at this time: losing our lives in God that we may share God's victory.

Engagement with St Paul's Rest Area

In Pipeline December 2012, Mary Gilchrist, Wattle Grove NSW, Day 11, reflected on her desert retreat with Maz Berry (Day 23) and Robin and Bronwyn Pryor (Day 22) at Lake Mungo. Mary spoke of "learning from deep ecology that all landscape has a presence and a memory" and it has an effect on "the sensibility of the people who live there". "Sensibility" is an important word. It encompasses keen intellectual perception (the sensibility of a painter to colour); mental or emotional responsiveness toward something, such as the feelings of another; receptiveness to impression, whether pleasant or unpleasant; acuteness of feeling. Often used in the plural: "The sufferings of the Cuban people shocked our sensibilities" (George F. Kennan); refined awareness and appreciation in matters of feeling; the quality of being affected by changes in the environment (ref. <http://bit.ly/dREeFB>). John Graham, Withersfield Qld, Day 16, lives about 200 km from the Galilee Basin. In the following engagement, John reveals a deep sensibility to what is happening in his area.

Nitrate compounds are used in the preparation of explosives for the mining and construction industries. I understand that fifty-eight thousand (58,000) tons of potassium nitrate will be used each year for explosive purposes at the proposed Adani Mine in the Galilee Basin about 150 km north west of Clermont, Queensland. [Estimates suggest that the Adani project alone could produce around 60 million tonnes of coal every year for up to 150 years (compare with the average current output of Queensland mines of 5 million tonnes. (<http://bit.ly/Sdmv0h>) Editor].

The mine will cover 44,700 hectares that will result in vast habitat destruction where birds and other species lose their homes. These calamitous statistics roll on and on.

And this is just one of four megamines! [For more details on the destruction, see <http://bit.ly/15FHKic>. Editor]

I found the following prayer on a scrap of paper in the Avebury parish church, Wiltshire, England:

Dear Lord, we definitely need your help. You just gotta get in the fiery chariot, and get down here real quick, before the mess is just too great to sort out.

I'm sure this prayer could be classified as "putting the Lord thy God under pressure!" but to my mind, God needs a bit of pressure all right. However, in the end, it should be "thy will be done!" But IS the destruction of the earth God's WILL? I doubt it. God

wouldn't have created this world so staggeringly beautiful just to destroy it. Obviously, God could create another Earth on his ear but it just seems such a waste not to look after this one.



5th July 2012, Queensland. Aerial photography of the Galilee basin, an area set to be plundered by the expansion of the coal industry. ©Greenpeace/Andrew Quilty.

Engagement with What Makes Your Heart Sing

In Pipeline December 2012, Jean Stirling Adelaide Day 18, reported on a SA meeting where those present shared their passions – what made their hearts sing. In this Engagement, Judy Krohn, Forest Lake Qld, Day 26 shares what makes her hear sing.

Some time ago I heard of a ministry project called "Love and Care" which provides bags for small children taken into care because of a family situation, or trouble of some kind. The bags include good quality clothes, new undies, notebooks, toiletries and other items to delight a child's heart. One

of the items needed which grabbed my attention was 1 metre square quilts. As an enthusiastic patchworker, with a large stash of fabric waiting to be used, this gets ticks on three counts: pleasure for a needy child, enjoyment for me, and a satisfying use for all that fabric!



In Pipeline December 2012, Pat McKenzie Launceston Day 7, reflected on spirituality at Christmas. Pat referred to the Blue Christmas service and commented, "Sadly, many experience feelings of abandonment, loneliness and alienation at Christmas time." Pat's comment led Judy Krohn to share her church's sensitive engagement with this concern.

For some, Christmas is besieged with memories of loss – a life partner, a home, a disaster of some kind. Many have welcomed the "Blue Sunday" service planned in our congregation

for the third Sunday of Advent each year. Worshippers are invited to honour the memory of a lost loved one by coming forward and writing the name on a bauble (provided with

pens), and hanging it on a bare tree. After the service it may be taken home to hang on a personal Christmas tree.

Helen Menzies, Karalee Qld, Day 26 reported a similar practice.

The Ipswich Community Hospice where I work as a volunteer has a lovely Christmas celebration. The Remembrance Tree is held at the Booval Fair shopping centre over the first three weeks in December. We provide tickets that read "missing you," "I love you very much," or just

"Seasons Greetings". For two dollars, people choose a coloured Christmas tree bauble, complete a card with the name of a loved one, attach the card to the bauble, and hang it on the tree. This year we filled five trees!! After Christmas, the messages are removed, placed in a bag, and early in the New

Year they are burned. We sprinkle the ashes on the Hospice rose garden. The baubles are recycled. We also sell remembrance candles as well. We feel this is a very important participation in the community as well as fund raiser for the hospice.

Engagement with A Few Principles for Deeper Community Life

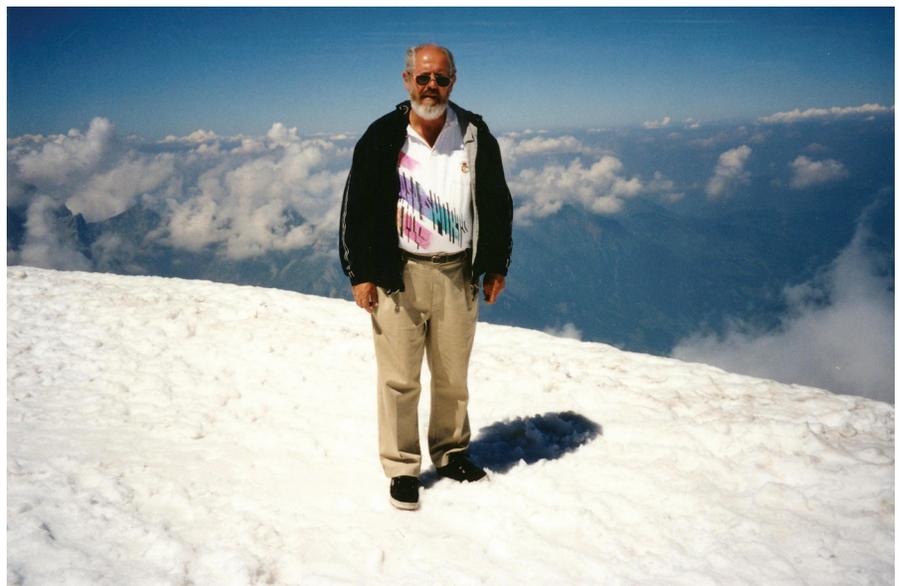
In Pipeline December 2012, Yves de Morsier, Numbugga NSW, former Friend, reminded us that a deeper sense of community life comes, in part, when we engage with nature, 'This wider body, the cosmos, is the garden of our growth We need to integrate all our activities into natural cycles.' Col Jennings, Springwood NSW, Day 3, describes the ways he and Pat engage with nature for 're-creation'. He goes on to discuss the importance of dissociation and well as integration.

How to Dissociate Healthily

In late 2012, Pat and I invested in a Cottage within the pristine Barrington Tops Wilderness area to spend our summers painting, writing, reading and enjoying the quiet, peaceful and beautiful surroundings of the area for ourselves, and for those others who might wish to do the same thing.

Our spirits are restored in just a few days through painting landscapes in these wonderful environs, barbecuing with good friends, singing around a campfire, bushwalking through tall trees dripping with soft rain and branches bursting with soft green stag-horns, swimming in a cool river pools on hot summer days, talking to the friendly rosellas who visit us on our front porch, or writing about the little joys of the wilderness like the American Henry David Thoreau once enjoyed.

Watching a metre square of river bed for ten minutes and seeing the teeming



Col Jennings

life and vast array of water species there, brings wonderment. Wonderment leads to an understanding that our minds and spirits can heal through the beauty of nature and through the gentler, more positive, and 're-creational' life experiences.

Karla McLaren (*The Language of Emotions*), Lloyd Fell (*Mind and Love: the Human Experience*), Simon McCarthy-Jones (*Hearing Voices*), and the National Health Commission's 2012 National Report Card Study (*A Contributing Life*), reinforce the

message that we need to find better ways to heal ourselves and that takes with it the full responsibility of all our communities.

The National Report confirms that mental health is a Human Rights issue, a Community issue, and a Life and Death Issue. All people have the right to *contribute* in all aspects of life and to find better, more positive and creative ways of doing so. Yet as Karla McLaren says, 'As a species, we have been socialised to dissociate and distract ourselves from life as a matter of course'.

If Karla McLaren is right and 'Distraction, avoidance, and addiction form the major impetus in most psyches and most societies' and that 'nearly everyone is dissociated in some way', then maybe we need to find a way to change this pattern. People readily admit their spiritual lives are separate from their everyday lives; that their emotions and their intellects are in opposition, and that they blot out or avoid painful, distressing, and traumatic events.

Miriam Larsen- Barr prefers to use the term *avoidance* rather than *dissociation*.

While it is not always not always a bad thing to *avoid* something, those people who constantly represses their central selves by avoiding important things too much are inclined not to awaken their more creative human resources or gifts in life. Some degree of avoidance and distraction is necessary, but if we dishonour our emotions, ignore our source of pain, other sensations or the trauma in our life, we cannot live life to the fullest. We are stunted! Yet we all can be 'change-agents' in life. Even Anne Frank, with all the suffering she encountered, could say, 'How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.'

So, can people learn to choose better means of distraction, avoidance or dissociation and at the same time deal with their underlying traumas and distress, both now or in the past?

I believe we are capable of choosing and fostering better, more creative ways of behaving. We can find new purpose and direction through creative expression, through mindfulness and being still, being our peaceful self, and by listening to our inner voice at

greater depth. If we need to dissociate or to avoid those harsher things in life, let us choose well - let us dissociate healthily!

Lao Tsu, the great Chinese teacher once taught us, 'Be still to know the absolute. Be active to know the outer. The two spring from the same source. All of life is one whole.'

Mindfulness is paying attention here and now with kindness and curiosity. Mindfulness practice includes:

- Becoming aware of the breath;
- Feeling the various physical sensations of an emotion;
- Noticing thoughts as they pass through the mind;
- Paying attention to all the sounds in the room;
- Noticing what happens in the body when there is stress;
- Watching the thoughts that arise when there is boredom;
- Feeling the stomach rise and fall with each breath

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NEXT ISSUE: The June 2013 issue will include material, photos etc from the National Gathering. However, we are looking for material for BAMB and for Engagement. Please consider what you might contribute.

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Deadline for material is Monday 6th May.