

Hospitality as Sacred Practice

CHRIST IN THE STRANGER - THE GIFT OF HOSPITALITY

Every Saturday during the evening service of welcome in Iona Abbey, the words of a Celtic rune of hospitality are used:

We saw a stranger yesterday,
We put food in the eating place,
Drink in the drinking place,
Music in the listening place,
And, with the name of the triune God,
He blessed us and our house,
Our cattle and our dear ones.
As the lark says in her song:
Often, often, often, goes Christ in
the stranger's guise.

'Often, often, often, goes Christ in the stranger's guise' is an apt affirmation to say as a new group of people come together from all over the world to begin a week-long process of forming community in the Iona Community's island centres. Still, what does it actually mean when it is taken away from simply being a ritual response in the context of a service and put into practise on a daily basis?

Well, strangers are actually quite awkward. They don't know how things are done and upset all our routines. Everything takes longer and you need to spend time explaining

the 'obvious'. The ways of a stranger can often be odd and unsettling; they think in different ways and do the unusual, talk differently and hold different values. They are challenging.

In other words, by their very presence, the stranger makes us aware of our fundamental assumptions and complacencies. In this there is a gift - a different perspective which can be illuminating and liberating. It can assist us to step out of our easy habits and routines and re-engage with life.

Yet this gift requires us to see hospitality in a different light. Too often we see hospitality as something we give and others receive - a one-way street - a functional commodity that is often bought and sold. Instead we need to reach for a deeper level of hospitality. If we truly see Christ in the stranger, then hospitality is not just something we give to others, it becomes equally about what we open ourselves to receive. In this sense, hospitality becomes a space between two people, a mutual openness where a deeper meeting and transformation can take place. In allowing the stranger to give you space, to hold you and meet you also, you begin to live the mutuality

» INSIDE this issue

- » HOSPITALITY: A SACRED PRACTICE
Neil & Margaret Holm
Page 2
- » LEADER'S LETTER
Jill Robertson
Page 3
- » FROM THE EDITOR
Bonita Frank
Page 4
- » THE HOSPITALITY OF WESTERN NSW
Doug Hewitt
Page 5
- » BOOK REVIEW: *SOME OF MY FRIENDS ARE POETS* BY MAC NICOLL
Jim Tulip
Page 6
- » JOHN BELL COMES TO AUSTRALIA
Page 7
- » BITS & PIECES
Page 8
- » THOUGHTS ON GOOD & EVIL
THE TALL MAN by Chloe Hooper
Christine Fensham
Page 9
- » RECEPTIVE ECUMENISM
Peggy Goldsmith
Page 10
- » HOSPITALITY - A POEM
Gillian Hunt
Page 10
- » THE UNCHOSEN NEIGHBOUR
Rowena Aberdeen
Page 11
- » NUNGALINYA COLLEGE
Page 12

of true hospitality and create a space in which the Spirit can move.

Still, this is a difficult place and we often resist it because to offer hospitality in this way we must allow ourselves to be broken open. To let in the stranger we have to release control of our environment, our safety, and open ourselves to the uncomfortable and unexpected influence of the 'other'. But in a way, it is exactly in this vulnerability that Christ becomes present; we see Christ in the stranger because we risk being open.

As Jean Vanier so eloquently puts it, 'hospitality means bringing strangers into your heart, which may or may not result in inviting strangers to your table'.

So if hospitality is in the heart, then why should we go out of our way to offer the practical signs of hospitality? While living on Iona for three years, I realised that deep hospitality could work in two ways. Sometimes, wonderfully and unexpectedly, it is



Rowena Aberdeen

easy to open our heart to someone. We feel safe enough with ourselves and with them to risk a connection and intimacy with the yet unknown. Creation of the sacred space of hospitality feels simple, it expresses itself in a mutual offering and we feel blessed by the encounter. In these times, letting the stranger into our hearts naturally leads to our actions of hospitality as a response.

More usually this risk feels too great. We can't leap into an openness of spirit for all manner of reasons; we are too

tired, they speak a different language, we are shy, they are shy, our lives are too different and so the list goes on. In this situation it is only in turning up daily to the more tangible rituals of hospitality – sharing meals and worship, engaging in conversation, making beds, washing up - that the slow work of opening our hearts takes place. The activities serving not as ends in themselves, which simply leads to boredom and resentment, but as a reminder and a path to opening our hearts. They prepare us for seeing the sacred.

So let us take the words of our worship out into the daily practice of our lives - putting 'food in the eating place, drink in the drinking place, music in the listening place' and so reminding ourselves that in wonderful and surprising ways, 'often, often, often, goes Christ in the stranger's guise'.

Rowena Aberdeen
(former Warden of Macleod Centre, Iona)

Hospitality: A Sacred Practice

'Hospitality is a wonderful way of sharing God's love for us with others! Hospitality is a discipline of service. Hospitality is just a chance to be together and share - that is the stuff of hospitality.' (Adapted from Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 1984:120).

Neil and Margaret Holm suggest some simple ways of being together, of sharing in ways that might help us practise hospitality across our special dispersed community.

1. Sharing prayer concerns with other members of the community. Every few months, in the lives of most of us, there is usually one personal incident and one issue relating to friends, community, or the world that affects us emotionally and for which we would value prayer and concern from others.

2. Consciously seeking to connect with members and friends of the

Community when we are on holidays or travelling and to accept their hospitality. Or to at least phone them as we pass through their town.

3. Considering, as we read or hear news items, whether this incident is likely to affect a member or friend of the Community.

4. After we read *Pipeline*, contacting the author (or editor) and letting them know that we were stimulated by the article.

5. Looking at the Wellspring website for the latest news and then following up a friend or member.

6. Seeing every Wellspring email as an attempt to build relationships. Seeking to empathise with the reader. Asking ourselves, what is going on in the life of the reader? How can I connect my life with their life? Am I putting building relationships ahead of the 'business' part of the email?

7. Just for the heck of it, phoning someone in the Community. Or writing a letter. Or sending a card.

8. As we use the Prayer Diary, phoning and asking the person we are praying for, how are you? How are things going for you?

9. Visualising Wellspring as a 'network of support' whose best role involves 'encouraging, celebrating and supporting its members and friends and fellow-travellers - the people already engaged in various activities' - rather than trying to do our own little thing. Jonathon Inkpin, for one, immensely values prayer, encouragement and active support for ecumenical activities. Offering prayer and encouragement to one another and to those already involved on the front line.

Leader's Letter

Dear Wellspring friends,

As you have lived
in the light of truth
so may you die
As you have loved
in the purity of heart
so may you be loved
As you have given
with generosity of hand
so may you now receive

These are the first few verses of a blessing by Nicola Slee (*A Book of Blessings – Wild Goose Publications*) that I was recently asked to read to a friend who was dying. It was an incredible privilege to be invited into the home where the family and several friends were gathered to be with our friend in the last few hours of his life. I had earlier sent this blessing by email, but the family asked me to read it to him while we were all there. He was conscious and took it all in and said how encouraging it was to have us all there. What a sacred time of hospitality. The openness of the family to invite others into their home when they knew it was the last few hours of our friend's life is one of the most special times of deep and sacred hospitality that I have ever experienced.

This has made me think about how I would differentiate between Christian hospitality and any other sort of hospitality. For me it was the acknowledgement of the presence of God in that place and then the following logic that if God is there, then God is host. We were drawn into intimacy with each other, through the recognition of the presence of God there too.

St Benedict said it was the duty of all monasteries to offer hospitality to whoever appeared at their door. Each visitor was to be treated as though they were Christ himself. What a challenge – especially when some visitors become hard to enjoy after a certain amount of time! This unconditional welcome of visitors has been handed down to us



Jill Robertson

as part of our sacred duty, and is one that we in Wellspring take seriously as we offer hospitality to each other.

Obligation and duty sound like heavy words but I am sure that you will agree with me when I say that the joys of hospitality, both in the giving and receiving are just delightful. What a privilege to be invited in to share time and experience with other people.

I am also thinking of hospitality as the way we welcome people into our churches. This is the height of sacred practice and yet so often is a place of anything but welcome. Most churches would have people rostered to welcome worshippers to church, but is that welcome carried through into the way the church is laid out, the worship conducted and the way people notice and look after each other?

I get worried when I go to churches where it is expected that you know how worship works – when to stand up, when to sit down etc. How children are welcomed is another important aspect of this. At our church in Canberra we want to make it obvious that children are welcome, and the area set aside for the little ones to play is right next to the pulpit! Yes, the preacher gets the occasional visit

from a toddler, but isn't that so much better than presuming that they will be seen but not heard! We have one little boy who likes to go up to the minister and have a hug and perhaps help him deliver the benediction! What message would he get if he was constantly rejected? I am sure the parents actually feel more worried by this activity than the rest of the congregation.

The language that is used in church is also another part of hospitality. Do we use language that is everyday language, or do we use archaisms? Do we presume that if you come to church you will know the Lord's Prayer off by heart? Small things can sometimes be the barrier that sends people away. In visiting other churches while I have been in China I have been aware of being a bit apprehensive when I went in – in case I didn't know how they did things! Luckily there were no embarrassing moments but it was presumed that I knew my way around the song book that was there and that I could follow a printed order of service (even one that was folded out of order!). How careful we must be to avoid being stumbling blocks to others. It is all a matter of hospitality as a sacred practice.

On a personal note, the hospitality we have received most joyfully was from our children when we visited two of the families in China. One family in Beijing and the other in Hong Kong. Reversing the roles of childhood so that they looked after us was great! Both children and their families were so accommodating to us. They wanted to be assured of our comfort, while also letting us have the run of their homes too. I am sure they wanted to make certain we were fit enough to play with the grandchildren too – another delight of the time away.

Well I must go and make up the beds in the back room as we have visitors coming tomorrow. I hope they feel welcome!

With my best wishes for the blessings of your giving and receiving hospitality.

Jill Robertson

From the Editor

One of my favourite Bible stories is that of Jesus's visit to the home of Martha and her sister Mary (Luke 10: 38-42). Martha is distracted by all her household tasks and is angry that Mary isn't helping her. Perhaps to her further annoyance, Jesus praises the listening role that Mary has taken.

This year I have been absorbing myself in the work of Esther de Waal, especially her books, *Seeing God: The Way of St Benedict* and its accompanying Commentary, *A Life-Giving Way*, and *The Way of Simplicity: The Cistercian Tradition*. I've always identified with Mary. I feel much preaching outwardly proclaims Mary's role while at the same time showing preference for action, or activity. Personality will lead us individually to favour one or the other, but St Benedict, writes de Waal, shows that balance is needed. Aelred, one of the early Cistercian writers, elucidates:

You see, if Mary had been alone in the house, no one would have fed the Lord; if Martha had been alone, no one would have tasted his presence and his words. Martha thus represents the action, the labour accomplished for Christ, Mary the repose that frees from bodily labour, in order to taste the sweetness of the Lord in reading, prayer and contemplation. That is why... so long as Christ is on earth, poor, subject to hunger, to thirst, to temptation, it is necessary that these two women inhabit the same house, that in one soul the two activities occur... (The Way of Simplicity, p. 80)

Esther de Waal presents in current thought and language these spiritual truths of the early church writers. As the world fell apart following the fall of the Roman Empire in 410, it was the Rule of St Benedict for the monastic communities that provided a 'centre' for people, a sense of security in a chaotic world. What may surprise us



Bonita Frank

is that the teachings and insights of St Benedict are still immensely relevant. I think this is why many people are exploring the 'new monasticism' today, looking for a way of life that deals with the problems of the world we find ourselves in.

My insights come from many sources. I'm also reflecting on the excerpts of Thich Nhat Hanh (a Buddhist monk) in *Essential Writings*. His assessment of our ills today is that we fail to listen, quietly and deeply to ourselves, to each other, and to our beautiful environment:

The destructive capacity of non-stop busyness rivals nuclear weapons and is as addictive as opium. It empties the life of the spirit. False heroes find it easier to make war than deal with the emptiness of their own souls. They may complain about never having time to rest, but the truth is, if they were given time to rest, they would not know what to do. People today do not know how to rest. They fill their free time with countless diversions. People cannot tolerate even a few minutes of unoccupied time. They constantly need something to look at, listen to, or talk about, some activity, all to keep the emptiness inside from rearing its terrifying head. (pp. 44-5)

It is our 'addiction' to activity that is the problem, and deeply affects

our spiritual lives and relationships. To counter this we need to practice 'mindfulness,' that is, attentiveness or awareness.

There is a thoughtful article in the current issue of *Coracle*, the Iona Community's publication, on 'Meditation and the new monasticism' by Laurence Freeman, in which he reflects upon the work of John Main, the Irish Benedictine monk who opened the first Christian Meditation Centre at his monastery in London. Freeman warns us that:

Neglecting the contemplative dimension of religion sends religion off course, either into the lukewarmness and shallowness of much mainstream Christianity or extreme intolerance... Monasticism has always known to keep this balance and train people to live it... Monasticism was originally a lay movement in Christianity... Today the essential monastic spirit is in resurgence – the centrality of contemplation, the love of solitude, the courage to live in community, the equal respect for marriage and other forms of life or perhaps, as our community has found, the opportunity to live as a monk... Iona and the World Community for Christian Meditation reflect many of these awakenings in different forms.

So what is most needful in our society? Balance is required for the health of the soul. I like the phrase 'addiction to activity' as I believe we've become a society too one-sided in favour of action. Let us attend to the contemplative dimension of our faith. What is needed is not frantic action, even when it supposedly helps others, but the ability to listen and attend deeply. In this we discover hospitality as sacred practice. As Rowena Aberdeen might say, in that space between us we find the living Christ.

Bonita Frank

The Hospitality of Western NSW

A chance encounter at the Pooncarie Gallery and Café at the old wharf site on the banks of the Darling River led to a change of route to reach the town of Menindee, and provided for us a great example of the warm hospitality of the people of western NSW. As we indulged in coffee, a mid-morning break from our four-wheel-drive return from Lake Mungo, we were advised to take the western road along the Darling, and call at Bindara Station. 'We'll phone ahead and let them know you are coming, and they can have the billy boiling for your lunch stop.'

So we took their advice and after 100 dusty kilometres arrived to see the magnificent old homestead and observe the current rejuvenation of the riverside vegetation. Alongside the old river gums new growth is being nurtured as these rural people are showing their concern for the land they treasure. Of course we also indulged in that proffered cuppa, and soaked up the hospitality that accompanied it.

This was just one illustration of the great welcome that greeted our group of twenty travellers from the city of Newcastle. In July we spent an extended week absorbing the rich traditions of the First Australians, pioneering miners and rural families, all of whom contribute to the story of outback NSW. We had set out with the objective of developing a better understanding of the rich Aboriginal heritage still apparent along the Darling, and to see evidence of one of the oldest human settlements on planet earth. At the same time we knew of the mining and agrarian history of 150 years of European settlement, and wanted to learn something of that experience. We were rewarded beyond our greatest expectations!

Travel by train for 14 hours each way from Sydney to Broken Hill enabled us to get to know each other better,

while traversing a wide variety of the state's landforms and countryside. Our accommodation ranged from comfortable cabins at 'The Hill,' to the basic nature of the old shearers' quarters at Turlee Station, on the shores of Lake Mungo. Shared meals and kitchen duties helped to build a sense of community and to learn the quirks of human nature! Stories and songs around the campfire while toasting marshmallows brought back many childhood memories. The presence of our Canadian ministerial exchange couple enriched the experience for all.

Our day in Wilcannia, once 'Queen City of the West,' coincided with the celebration of NAIDOC Week, and we joined with the locals, nowadays predominantly Aboriginal people, for a barbecue lunch which included kangaroo rissoles and johnny cake. Two of the Elders took us to the sites of their early homes on the banks of the Darling, and we saw several trees from which canoes had been cut by their ancestors.

Visits to galleries, both Aboriginal and European, with accompanying descriptive commentaries about their



*Canoe tree at
Darling River, Wilcannia*

paintings, engendered a deep respect for the skills of the outback artist. This much-maligned town has many people who represent the best of outback drive and spirituality, from both the indigenous residents and those who have come later. Several members of our group who were fearful of the prospect of time in Wilcannia rated the day there as one of the highlights of the week. Later in Broken Hill we were fortunate to see the works of the Wilcannia Artists in Residence program.

At the historic sites of Mutawintji and Lake Mungo, young Aboriginal guides opened our eyes to the 40,000 years of indigenous heritage that remains at those sites. Ochre stencils on cave walls and intricate rock engravings give reminders of a major gathering place for ceremonial occasions at Mutawintji. Clan members from a wide area were accustomed to joining in such celebrations.

Five hundred kilometres to the south the continuing erosion of the lake bed, 30,000 years after the last water dried up at Mungo, has in recent years revealed the remains of Mungo Woman and Mungo Man. Many artefacts of indigenous presence are evident along the shores of the former lake. Notable also are the eroded dunes called The Walls of China, which evoke a moon-like landscape (See photo over page).

All this history is graphically described in the park's exhibition centre. The old woolshed, built by Chinese labour, is a reminder of a century of grazing sheep on the lake bed and of the significant contribution of early Chinese workers.

We passed through the town of Wentworth, at the junction of the Darling and Murray Rivers, and reflected on life in the 19th century,



Isabel Hewitt at Walls of China, Lake Mungo

when river traffic included paddle steamers taking the essential supplies up the Darling to Wilcannia and Bourke, and bringing out mountains of baled wool. Those were the years when the nation ‘rode on the sheep’s back.’

The river is still flowing, but in greatly reduced volume, another outcome of our abuse of nature’s resources. Water extracted for irrigation of cotton in the north means that very little reaches

the Murray, and at its mouth the flow has ceased.

Mining history was observed in the museums of Broken Hill and Silverton. At the latter, dubbed Hollywood of the Outback, we were reminded of the many movies and TV series filmed there. From the Mundi Mundi lookout to the west we gazed to South Australia with the Flinders Ranges in the far distance. What an expanse!

The nights were cold but as we gazed at the star-lit sky and its vivid constellations we city-dwellers were reminded of the beauty we often miss.

Morning tea after worship with the Uniting Church congregation on Sunday brought an invitation to use the church bus the following day, when their regular driver Les would give us a tour of the city and its scattered galleries. He went out of his way to ensure we didn’t miss any of the sights of his beloved home town.

Some members of our group found time to visit the School of the Air and the Royal Flying Doctor Base, both of which were unique experiences for our Canadian visitors.

While we all expected to have memories of the places we visited, it is the people we met who made the time so enriching. From our Aboriginal hosts at Wilcannia, to the National Park guides who told their people’s story, and the long term residents of towns and rural properties, all opened their hearts to a group of strangers, and made us feel welcome. Genuine hospitality is alive and well in these remote regions.

Doug Hewitt

Book Review: Some of my Friends are Poets by Mac Nicoll

We are familiar with Julie Perrin’s poem ‘Deep Stillness’:

For you
Deep stillness of the silent inland
For you
Deep blue of the desert skies

And when sung to Robin Mann’s melody, it has become something like a Wellspring anthem. As a poem by itself, however, it reads like a love poem.

Here, in Mac Nicoll’s collection of 52 poems, *Some of my Friends are Poets*, ‘Deep Stillness’ is the final poem, and takes on the quality of

the poems preceding it in being alive with spirituality. Mac Nicoll’s friends are mature Australians with wide experiences of life and church, and able to state their views with eloquence and good judgment. The collection is a happy idea, something Wellspring members will enjoy and learn from in the expression of their own beliefs and feelings.

Peter Sanders in ‘Joy,’ ‘Strings’ and ‘Lunch Break’ has wit playing over familiar themes. Robin Pryor’s rich meditative stance is there in ‘Primal Conversation,’ ‘Rounded Resonance’ and ‘Unhurried River’. He writes:

‘The massive river red gums, stocky, solid...[are] Like a forest of Rodin’s thinkers’. Beverley Campbell’s ‘Feral Poppies’ is a fine poem where unusual things in Nature ‘overshadow the natural reserve of their Icelandic sisters’. Malcolm Cormack’s ‘The Christ of Baghdad’ tells us that ‘The arms of brutal men are everywhere’, while his ‘My Father’s Windows’ is a moving personal statement of love that can never say, as man to man, ‘I love you’. Gail Prichard’s ‘Donkey’s Journey’ has a ballad-like manner, the kind of musical verse that blends with song:

I carried the Christ child
 Before he was born
 I found him a stable
 Shelter till morn
 I witnessed his birth
 I marvelled with joy
 That love for us all flowed
 From one little boy.

Digby Hannah's 'Thinking About Dad' is close to a prose poem, plain in its statements but rising to sympathy in its hard won sincerity:

My dad died today
 He left a heritage
 It's called 'evangelical'
 If that sounds as though it could
 mean revival rallies and angels
 In a way, it does...

The challenge of poetry to show originality and a way with words is met in a dozen different ways in Mac Nicoll's collection. Again, it is Julie Perrin who catches the eye:

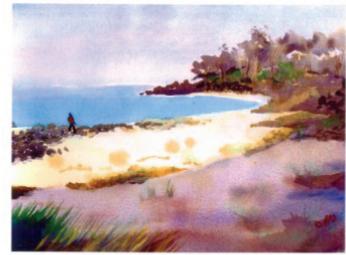
At twenty-something I wanted to
 Collapse into neat folds
 Insert myself through the dark slot
 Of the red box
 At the end of my suburban street
 And post myself to a far place.

Imagination becomes an event here, especially when looked back on from later life. Biography then reads like an old postcard 'with only a quickly licked stamp / disclosing my origins'.

Mac Nicoll has used his own gifts as a one-time school teacher who became the Yarra Yarra Presbytery Minister, a lay person ministering to clergy. He now finds in his friends of a lifetime a world of surprising talent and religious experience. There is a graciousness about the collection that is finely expressed by Margaret Nicoll's paintings on front and back covers.

(For any information about this publication contact Mac Nicoll on

SOME OF MY FRIENDS ARE POETS



52 poems collected by Mac Nicoll

03 93881435 or email: macmarg@optusnet.com.au

Jim Tulip

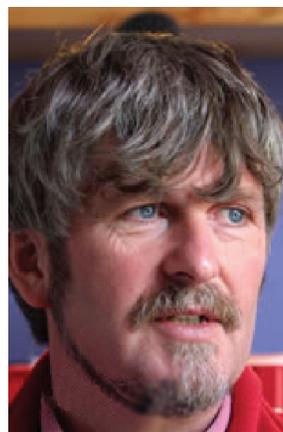
John Bell comes to Australia again!

People seem to react differently when told the exciting news that John is coming to Newcastle – 'Who's John Bell?' or 'Oh, I love Shakespeare'.

The Rev John Bell is a minister of the Church of Scotland, a theologian, a world renowned song writer, musician, and author working for the Iona Community. His passion is for the renewal of congregational worship at the grass roots level. He is known world-wide for his leadership in music for worship. John is coming to Australia to take part in the MusicFest held in Canberra, then coming to visit the Hunter, the Blue Mountains and Sydney, and other places.

John writes: 'One of my obsessions in life is persuading people that they can sing. One in four adults believes they can't sing, simply because at a vulnerable time in

their lives someone – a parent, friend or teacher – told them they couldn't. And they live under the shadow of that pronouncement. They sometimes even give themselves a title – the groaner, the crow, the drone.



'I don't believe that God would ask us to sing him a new song unless he knew it was possible. So I try to persuade people to forget what was said to them in the past, and believe that they have the voice of an apprentice angel.'¹

NEWCASTLE appearance: A workshop for musicians and worship

leaders will be held on Saturday 24 October from 9.30 am to 4.30pm (Cost is \$30 and registration is essential) - and on Sunday 25 October from 2.30 to 4.30 pm (Cost is \$10 but no registration is required).

Everyone is invited to A BIG SING. Both events will take place at the Adamstown Uniting Church, corner of Glebe and Brunner Roads, Adamstown. Enquiries can be directed to Helen Weavers: 02 49 684 636 kweavers@bigpond.net.au with registration for the workshop to Pam Evans: 02 49 517 843 lbpk.evans@bigpond.com

John will be in WA 8-15 October, the Blue Mountains on Wednesday night 21st October, and at the Pitt Street Uniting Church, Sydney on Monday evening 26th October, 7 pm, where it is anticipated he will speak on '10 Things They Didn't Tell Me About Jesus'.

¹'This is the Day', edited by Neil Paynter, Wild Goose Publications 2002

Bits and Pieces

• 2011 Wellspring Gathering: It is now decided: our next Wellspring Gathering will take place in Perth. There is a very keen group there and if we get a date for the middle of the year some fares may be cheaper and thus give us time to get in early. You will be hearing more. Well done WA.

• Congratulations also to Betty Matthews who has been elected WA State Contact. A very big 'thank you' to Janet Watts who has held that position for such a long period and is now an elected member of the Wellspring Council. We also welcomed Alan Bawden (Tas. Member formerly of Vic.) as a Member of the National Council.

• Celtic Pilgrimage again from 8-13 November organised by the Beechworth Uniting Church. It is a 5 day walk-and-reflection from Bright to Beechworth. Contact Don Pope on 03 282 835 or dpo25858@bigpond.net.au

• Bonhoeffer '09: 5th Annual Australian Conference on the Discipleship and Legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer – Kincumber NSW 9-20 November 2009.

• Ian Robinson (Friend WA) reported on the last Spirit journey from Perth to Alice via the Great Victoria Desert, Western Simpson Desert and then home via Lake Eyre. Do think now to set aside a week of next year, any week in July will be pretty reliable, and reserve the time. As well as the usual types of driving adventures, including the middle section of the Canning Stock Route via Newman, he hopes to hold a base camp at Lake Yeo via Laverton, where there is a sit down loo, a veranda at the old homestead, and great country to explore. Also emerging, courtesy of John Boundy in Alice, is a journey that includes a flight out to a remote desert airstrip, then walk home! All these journeys seem to be costing about \$100 per day plus food and fuel. Start saving now. Let Ian know. (See photo above)

• Visiting Melbourne? Drop into the Artastic Gallery and view the watercolours with the theme 'the Heavens' by Marg Nicoll (Friend Vic.) who was inspired by the psalmist



Petermann Rangers – doesn't this tempt you to do a Spirit journey with Ian Robinson?

who wrote, 'When we consider the Heavens, what is Man that Thou art mindful of him?' Marg also exhibited at *creations at the cato v* in early August at the Victorian Artists Society Galleries.

• People of all faiths attended a celebration of Buddha's birthday in the Chinese Gardens at Darling Harbour in May. Members of various faiths offered prayers for world peace and harmony. Doug Golding (Friend NSW) represented the Anglican community and offered the Prayer of St. Francis.

• Taizé community gathering in the Philippines in 2010. The NSW Ecumenical Council Director, Jonathan Inkin, (NSW Member) has drawn our attention to this event early in 2010 and asked if Wellspring from all parts of Australia would bring this event to the attention of any young people we know and give the event publicity and support. NSW will gather a group together and also organise one week's exposure to families and church groups outside of the city prior to the main event. If you know of a young person who would like to go but cannot find the contact people in your state, please contact Jonathan.

The Council has asked that Wellspring members and friends encourage and

support the attendance of youth within their local church and community and raise or offer financial assistance towards their costs.

• Parliament of the World's Religions Sydney Pre-Parliament Event was held on 2nd August. The theme was Fasting and Feasting: Food, Faith and the Environment.

A morning keynote address was given by Russ Grayson of the Sydney Food Fairness Alliance, 'The global food situation: threats, ways forward', followed by speakers from Al Ghazzali Islamic Centre, St. George Anglican Church, Paddington, Ramakrishna Sarada Vedanta Society, Maroubra Junction Uniting Church, Orthodox Jewish social justice activist, Santi Forest Buddhist Monastery, Catholic Institute of Sydney. All acknowledged the traditional owners of this land.

The question was: 'How will we be feeding 9 billion people in 2050?' Six Wellspring people were present. The presentations were excellent and very challenging. Then we were entertained and educated by six extremely talented groups of singers and musicians from various religious backgrounds.

The afternoon session keynote speaker was Professor Larissa Behrendt, on 'Making a World of Difference: Hearing Each Other, Healing the Earth'. Larissa is Professor of Law and Director of Research at the Jumbunna

Indigenous House of Learning at the University of Technology Sydney. Professor Behrendt has been named Person of the Year by NAIDOC. Then Rachael Kohn, ABC Radio National's Religion Report, chaired a panel discussion with 6 young people from various traditions – Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Sikh and Baha'i.

The whole day's programme was a feast indeed and would entice one to attend the main event in Melbourne, 3-9 December 2009, at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. They are expecting 8-10,000 people:

www.parliamentofreligions.org for further details.

- Anyone interested in events throughout Australia on Climate



Lake Eyre 2009, Ian Robinson

Change, Christians and Nonviolence could check with <http://paceebene.wordpress.com/2009/07/20/christians-climate-change-and-nonviolence>.

- The Council sincerely thanks those who were able to respond to our special appeal for financial assistance for basic Wellspring work. The appeal to date has raised \$2,300. We are still open for donations. All our unsold books (excepting our own publications) go to Kentigern in early September. We were very pleased with our Book Sale.

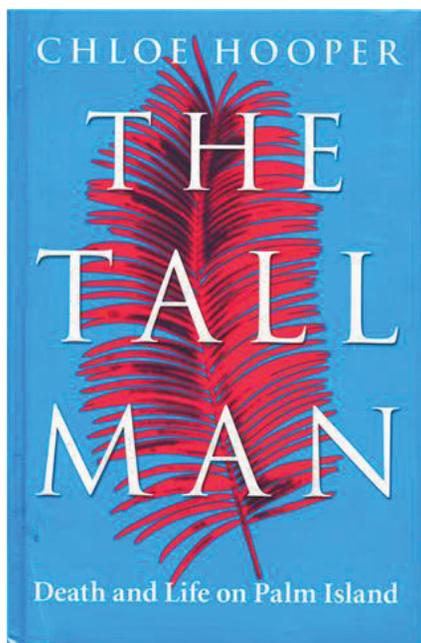
Thoughts on Good and Evil

The Tall Man by Chloe Hooper

The Spirits around Laura in Cape York have long thin arms and long thin legs and move unseen in the night to do evil. By day they slide back into the country's sandstone cliffs living in the cracks. On rock faces in gullies and gorges and caves their stretched-out bodies are painted in red ochre with all-seeing white eyes. We are in indigenous territory from the first sentence: here are bad spirits. Where are the good ones?

This story, while relating horrendous incidents, creates with calm beauty the tropical environment of Palm Island. Here we encounter the various characters involved in the story of the death of Cameron 'Mulrunji' Doomadgee. They were mostly descendants of those Aborigines transported from more than 40 different tribes with incompatible languages, territorial and kinship groups to the island. Queensland government policy was to use Palm Island as a penitentiary and a mission from 1918 till 1960. It was a convenient location, 45 km from the Mainland - and so too far to swim! It has gained a reputation as a dysfunctional place. The land that was 'home' for 'Mulrunji' was NOT Palm Island but Doomadgee on the mainland.

This book tries fairly to trace the events so that we see both sides of the story of how the unfortunate Cameron Doomadgee died. He died within an hour of his arrest from a ruptured liver.



Could such an injury be self-imposed? If not, who was responsible? Many attempts have been made within the justice system to find - or hide - the truth.

One local man sets the scene for us: 'I was born to drink beer, everyone in the Gulf is.' Beer transcends race! The only place open after 5 o'clock was the pub, so there was no other shopping. 'Natives regard the man according to how he can hold his own in fighting and hunting,' he said. Meanwhile his little boys were aping the arts of war with their toy spears, woomeras and shields.

Police action is one side of the story. Chris Hurley, known by some as 'an upright cop,' 'the cop who cared' and who 'was so good with the children,' was responsible for Cameron's arrest while he was drunk and verbally abusive, and for his time in custody and the treatment he received. In dealing with so many indigenous people living lives of drunkenness, away from their own land and roots, how does a law enforcement officer cope with this situation and the distress it caused?

This book raises many questions which we might ask ourselves: How do we handle drunk people? How do we deal with grieving people or those deliberately damaged by violent action? What does this story do to our sensitivities and can we still stay compassionate? On the author's first visit to Palm Island she found conflicting stories about what happened on the day that Doomadgee died. Where did the truth lie? Was it possible to find it? How do we connect to this gripping story and learn from it. Does it challenge our prejudices? Is it hard to be 'good' where issues of good and evil are blurred? What is justice in a place like Palm Island? This story is not yet truly resolved. I invite you to buy or borrow a copy of this powerful work and consider your answers to the many questions *The Tall Man* raises. Let's start a discussion group within Wellspring.

Christine Fensham

Receptive Ecumenism/Receiving the Gift:

Jonathon Inkpin, Blue Mountains Wellspring Group -
Saturday, 11th July 2009 at Woodford

We were very fortunate to have as our guest speaker, the General Secretary of the NSW Ecumenical Council, Jonathan Inkpin, a member of Wellspring Community on the Central Coast. Discussions at a recent major ecumenical conference in Durham, England, gave rise to some new perspectives in ecumenical thought. Instead of asking the question, *What is it that we have to share?* (as Christians), a different question is suggested: *What gifts are there that others have that we need?*

Jonathan quoted from Pope John Paul II's speech in Alice Springs earlier - *The Church in Australia will not be the Church which Jesus Christ wishes it to be until your gift has been joyfully received* - said to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders but more widely applicable. The Church in Australia will not be the Church which Jesus wishes it to be until all the gifts of all the Churches have been JOYFULLY received

We were asked the question: *What are the gifts that churches in Australia - Anglican, Catholic and Uniting - are offering to each other, and are they being received joyfully?* In pairs we considered what gifts would be the ones that we might receive from the Anglican, Armenian, Baptist, Catholic, Coptic, Eastern Rite (e.g. Maronite), Greek Orthodox, Pentecostal, Salvation Army, Uniting Churches - a rewarding experience for those present.

Jonathan went on to discuss: 'The church is not a theory: It's a practice.' Instead of Christians wearing armbands with WWJD (*What would Jesus do?*) he suggested HWJDI (*How would Jesus do it?*).

In talking about different generations and focussing on young people now, Jonathan observed:



Jonathon Inkpin

- Young people are spiritual
- The following things are important:

Experience	E
Participation	P
Image	I
Connection	C EPIC

- No organisation needed - just communication.

Jonathan talked of Mission in the world and conversion. He suggested conversion could be different types of conversation - which are different kinds of mission:

1. downloading - telling our story to others without real dialogue
2. debate - also more like non-receptive ecumenism often?
3. receptive - much better, though possibly can stay within our own/Christian, even churchy, circles if we are not careful?
4. generative - looking not just to within and between each of us but also outside and outwards to where the Spirit also is.

He suggested what is needed is a generative conversation which looks outside and outwards. Young people don't need a different message -- they are looking for depth.

Faith communities: People are coming together in faith in different ways, for example, Chaplains such as John Martin are meeting together ecumenically, ministering together and sharing retreat time together. *The Gathering* (meeting at Hazelbrook in the Blue Mountains) is another example of a faith community, not strictly part of a denomination.

Anne McPherson drew on rich inner resources in the preparation of the ecumenical liturgy for the day.

Peggy Goldsmith

Hospitality

Try to define it and words can turn formal.

We speak of welcoming the stranger as our guest; we seek to offer shelter, sustenance and comfort; to share communal wealth.

Giving's easier than being at receiving end for all who search for ways to reimburse and keep the tally even.

Unrepeatable and unrepayable those generous times of care - money gifted in a greeting; a holiday or house to share; a friend who offers time and refers to it as 'spare'; a home where dying is a gift embraced by all who dare - kindness overwhelming, a taste of grace itself.

Gillian Hunt

The Unchosen Neighbour

I had hoped to include this article by Rowena in the previous Pipeline but there wasn't space. The Gathering in Canberra gave some the experience of living together for 3 to 4 short days. But what is it like to spend longer periods, in this case three years, in Community where choice of companions is not an option? The following article reflects upon this experience. Ed.

'To find my own life is a task I cannot undertake without the neighbour'

This comment by Rowan Williams from his book *Silence and Honey Cakes* in many ways sums up the reasons I chose to go and live and work with the Iona Community for three years. Of course, before I arrived I could not have articulated this thought so clearly. Still, in the years I spent as MacLeod Centre Warden I lived into the deeper meaning of this phrase – with all its attendant joys and challenges.

In our world today, most of us can choose our 'neighbours' – those we socialise with are usually people like us, who reflect the world as we see it. We struggle with church and office 'politics', breathe a sigh of relief that we leave at the end of the day or only see them once a week and so can avoid the attendant difficulties of struggling with others to reconcile differences or find ways to journey in diversity.

So what happens if you put yourself in a position where you can't walk away? Where your colleagues must also become your friends and family and support? Where, as we say on Iona, we choose to be open to unchosen relationships?

Well, then life gets interesting!

The unchosen 'neighbour' provides us with a different perspective. A mirror that does not reflect our own preconceptions, that holds us accountable to recognising who we really are, rather than who we like to think we are. It is in this way our

'neighbour' gives us a new context, a place in which we must put all our values and intentions into practice.

We are all wonderful and loving people... until we have to engage with the messy reality of human relationships, where nothing is perfect and we must wrestle each moment with our ideals verses the interactions that make up our days...

'Am I really kind and generous? Or only when I'm not tired and stressed?'

'Am I really good at communicating? Or only when the other person reacts 'appropriately?'

'How do I react when I have to deal with the negative consequences of another person's actions...? especially when I think they were wrong in the first place? Am I really loving or does judgement and righteous indignation creep in?'

We all know our ideals in these situations, what we believe about ourselves and how we think we would act, but it is in the testing of these that happens when we live among unchosen neighbours that we begin to see if these beliefs show through in our actions. In community living we can no longer pretend we are our intentions; we must recognise we are our actions, including our actions in tiredness, stress, hurt and conflict. In this, we come face-to-face with our own brokenness....

Luckily, for me anyway, daily life also provided many opportunities for a stumbling and halting progress towards a truer love for those around me. A daily practice of love. Anywhere else and I would have run away from that practice. I know, because even on Iona I tried. Everyone tries, because deep love is hard – uncomfortable and challenging. I had to give up valuing 'right' and 'fair' and instead seek the deep truth of another's story,

no matter how foreign to mine. But on Iona you can't run away. You need your fellow staff; they laugh and cry with you, support and socialise with you, give you what you need to survive a busy and challenging season. So eventually you turn up and try again (and again... and again!), and in that you find moments of grace, of a love you didn't think you had and moments where the Spirit moved when you'd thought it impossible.

Don't get me wrong – not all relationships are reconciled and not all people become close friends. But you can move a step or two closer to being able to love others for who and what they are in your life, whether that be a close companion who provides nourishment and support, or someone who mirrors to us our judgemental attitudes, because they trigger them all. Both are important to our journey; both help us to be open, to grow and to slowly move from brokenness to wholeness, as individuals and as community.

I love something one of my fellow Resident staff said: 'When I'm not living in community, I'm a lot more careless with relationships.' Being on Iona and living in community has taught me more about the value of all the relationships present in my life, and for that I am grateful.

Rowena Aberdeen



Abbey Housekeeping Team on Iona: Bonita (Ed), Ines (Germany), Brenton and Holly (USA)

NUNGALINYA COLLEGE

WHERE? Darwin, Northern Territory.

WHAT? An ecumenical college sponsored by Catholic, Anglican and Uniting Churches

PURPOSE? To give an opportunity for Aboriginal people to study, and obtain qualifications in, theology, art, community development and practical subjects

WHY SHOULD WELLSRING BE INTERESTED? Because this college is helping Aboriginal people from all over Australia to take control of their own future and that of their community. It demonstrates the links between spirituality and society and takes aboriginal culture seriously

WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS?

MONEY! The supporting churches can only do so much. Government funding currently covers 45% of the costs

STAFFING: Government funding is dependent on the college passing an assessment, including almost-impossible-to-obtain teaching qualifications which depend on a fluency in English that many of the potential teachers just do not have

BUREAUCRACY: Need I say more – this can be the death of creativity

WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS?

SUPPORT: The participating churches support the college as well as they are able, and other denominations also send students

CREATIVITY: There is a wealth of creativity evident, through the art programme and through the connecting of theology with aboriginal spirituality and law

THE STUDENTS: Many of the graduates occupy leadership roles all over the country through congregations. A dinner* held on 21 July in Sydney for those interested in becoming Friends of Nungalinya heard the stories of those who had graduated from the college and gone on to make important contributions to church and society

WHAT CAN WELLSRING DO?

- Be Friends of Nungalinya
- Be interested and follow their progress
- PRAY FOR THEM
- Raise money to support this crucial venture
- Visit the college if you are in Darwin

*The dinner was attended by Mary Gilchrist, Anne McPherson, Margaret and Neil Holm, Alec and June Mills and Margaret and Clabon Allen

Can we suggest that the college might be added to the Prayer Diary for next year? [Mary has copy of DVD about the College which can be loaned out. Please contact her if you are interested.]

Margaret Allen

WELLSRING COMMUNITY INC.

Leaders:	Jill Robertson	02 6259 0576	jillrobertson@wellspringcommunity.org.au
	Mary Gilchrist	02 9825 2197	marygilchrist@wellspringcommunity.org.au
Cell Groups Contacts:			
Queensland:	Christine Fensham	07 3392 1246	chrisfen@ihug.com.au
Blue Mountains:	Peggy Goldsmith	02 4758 8104	pwgold@bigpond.net.au
Newcastle:	Helen Weavers	02 4968 4636	kweavers@bigpond.net.au
Inner West Sydney:	Isobel Bishop	02 9568 1020	isobeljimbish@optusnet.com.au
South Sydney:	Clabon Allen	02 9798 4663	clabon.margaret@bigpond.net.au
NSW State:	John Burnard	02 4283 2439	jburnard@aapt.net.au
ACT:	Merilyn Tandukar	02 6296 4046	merilyn@tandukar.id.au
Victoria:	Peter Baker	03 9803 3353	pbaker@adr.net.au
Tasmania:	Pat McKenzie	03 6344 2357	pmc16202@bigpond.com
South Australia:	Di Shearer	08 8536 3937	dishearer@adam.com.au
Western Australia:	Betty Matthews	08 9453 9996	betty.matthews@ispx.com.au
Overseas:	Margaret Holm	02 9868 5915	n_m_holm@internode.on.net
Administrator:	Jan McEvoy	02 8259 0813	Mondays, 9 am – 5 pm

PO Box Q924, Queen Victoria Building, Sydney NSW 1230; Phone: 02 8259 0813 wellsring@ncca.org.au; www.wellspringcommunity.org.au

NEXT ISSUE: Theme for the November issue is 'Hearing each other: Healing the earth'. Editor: bonitafrank@hotmail.com, PO Box 903, Spit Junction NSW 2088, 02 9960 5795. **Deadline for material is 13 November 2009**