



Pipeline

April, 2003

The Newsletter of The Wellspring Community Inc.
An Australian Community Inspired by the Iona Community

Marches for Peace - Sunday February 16, 2003.



Neil and Margaret Holm holding up the Wellspring banner with support from the Mennonites Hyde Park, Sydney, NSW

South Australia

It is estimated that 100,000 people came together in central Adelaide yesterday to express their belief that war against Iraq is not the way to bring about an end to terrorism in our world.

They gathered in Victoria Square in the rain to march to Parliament House: men and women of all ages, young people and children chanting their slogans against war with their banners held high declaring themselves for peace and pleading with the world's leaders and especially our Prime Minister to listen to them.

For many the emphasis was on the immorality of the killing of thousands of innocent Iraqi children, for others the dire consequences of the opening up of a wider

conflict that could mark the beginnings of a third World War.

Meanwhile the Churches are sponsoring regular Prayer Vigils for Peace and encouraging their members to write to their political leaders to express their opposition to war against Iraq and to give more time to let the weapons inspectors do their work.

Brian Ball

Tasmania

Our Civic Square is an excellent gathering area, with its shallow bowl shape, different levels and seating in the form of benches, steps and brick walls. The weather was perfect and although Police permission had not been given to march on the street, the assembly decided to anyway.

A male and a female Police officer were on the edge of the crowd with their bicycles. When the first marchers moved off, they rode ahead and controlled the traffic lights as necessary.

There was some chanting, a few women were singing peace songs harmoniously and beautifully, and the whole crowd of all ages, dogs and the occasional wheel chair, proceeded in orderly fashion and returned to hear several speakers. Amongst them: the chairperson of the Teachers Federation, a representative of the Meat Workers Union, a grade 11 student who had represented Tasmania in the Federation anniversary Youth Parliament, a young male and a couple of women.

All spoke well, especially the young people,

who were well prepared with facts and figures.

I saw many familiar faces as we do in a small city, and was grateful for the turnout. Many people were there who had not marched in protest before. This is heart stopping.

There is hope. We must not be frightened. God is working amongst us.

Pat McKenzie



Leader's Letter

Yesterday I spoke at a Peace Rally in Mt Druitt, one of hundreds of local actions around the world. I focused on the strength of the world-wide people's movement for peace and the new phenomenon of a 'global, visible, public, viable, open dialogue and conversation on the very legitimacy of war', quoting 80 year old Dr Robert Muller, former assistant secretary general of the United Nations who has been involved with the UN since its founding. The world community is waging peace. This week 180 boxes of petitions were delivered to the UN Security Council members from one million people. I also spoke of the importance of maintaining hope, and, using ideas in *From Violence to Wholeness* I acknowledged that for me active non-violence or peace-building is a spiritual journey that brings us face to face with our illusions as well as with the source of life and love and compassion. It is a journey from violence to wholeness, from fear to peace, from despair to hope. During the afternoon I ventured into conversation with a group of Moslem men and children sitting on the grass listening to the speeches. We exchanged names and phone numbers, and I think they will accept an invitation to meet with our peace group.

Tonight I turned off the television with the military analysts coldly discussing strategies for the attack on Iraq, all from the perspective of 'our' forces, 'our' planes and tanks, 'our' technological cleverness. I lit my peace candle, and wept for the Iraqi men, women and children, and gave thanks for those people who have chosen to be there with them, the 100 'human shields' and the 35 'Voices in the Wilderness' including the Reverend Neville Watson from Perth. At this moment my journey seems to be from hope to despair. Perhaps the real test of our hope and faith is to go through these times of darkness.

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In recent weeks many of you have been renewing your association with Wellspring Community, either as Friends or Members. And there have been discussions about what it means to be a Member of the Community and to live the Rule. **I would like to invite you to write something of what it means for you to be part of this Community, either as a Member or Friend, so that we can share some reflections in the next issue of 'Pipeline'.**

Grace and peace, Anne

CELTIC AND ABORIGINAL SPIRITUALITY

Is there a connection?



A Seminar arranged by the Wellspring Community together with Richmond Uniting Church.

Betty Pike of the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry in Melbourne together with the Rev Dr Peter Millar from the Iona Community in Scotland shared their insights and experiences. Some ninety people gathered at Richmond Uniting Church for the seminar.

The day began with a ritual in the Church park. Betty called our attention to the earth, fire and water and invited the group to touch the earth and water then receive the warmth of the fire. This ritual, which embraced both Aboriginal and Celtic spirituality, helped people to make a transition into the day and begin listening from the “heart”.

We proceeded back to the Gallery. Betty gave a deeply considered introduction to the

topic of the day. She affirmed that, “For Aboriginal people the sense of the visible and invisible realms of spirit and matter overlapping and influencing each other is at the heart of our spirituality. All is as one, related, connected and tied together to create balance and harmony and all can be affected by any action that can break or strengthen the bond.”

Betty, a Nyungar woman from Southern Western Australia is from both Aboriginal and Celtic roots and therefore has struggled to integrate Aboriginal and Celtic Spirituality in her own self. She is conscious that both cultures have an appreciation of the mystery at the heart of spirituality: “ ‘The Divine energy’ which endowed the whole creation and evolved co-creatively with the unfolding universe itself.” In contrast many of the first settlers called it a God forsaken land,

refraining from listening to the experiences of the people who had lived with its seasons and moods through many ages of severe ecological changes.

Before Peter shared his background and experiences as a Celt from Scotland, he prefaced his story with a warning. When considering Celtic spirituality we need to remember that spirituality is about the way in which people have responded to God at different times and in different places. We cannot re-create the conditions under which it operated and therefore “must not romanticise about its wholeness and authenticity in the hope of rejecting what we find unhelpful in our present age. Rather we must seek to look for the characteristics of the Celtic tradition which can be interpreted afresh for our day in the context of our own experience.”

For Peter, Celtic spirituality is prophetic. In this bland post-modern society, Celtic spirituality calls us to compassion in our common humanity. This in turn calls us to live at the margins at sometime in our lives even if we are 70. This is certainly true for Peter who continues to live and work with those confronting issues of justice and pain in society.

In Celtic spirituality, life may be understood as a journey and exploration. For Peter, we undertake this journey with the question, “Are we allowing our minds to be open to the wholeness of God in the ordinary?”

As Betty said earlier, Celtic spirituality points to the mystery of life and calls us to recognise the world as sacred. Celtic Christians, as did Aboriginal people, had a deep “sense of connectedness”- to God, to the sacred earth and to one another. They were conscious that every aspect of life was permeated by Christ’s forgiving love, healing power and divine light. This appreciation of our connectedness is counter-cultural challenging the individualism of our society.

We brought this “sense of connectedness” and God’s presence into our afternoon work. We met in the Church and lit candles affirming our belief that Christ’s light overcomes the darkness. We were

conscious of our contemporary world, particularly the need for peace and healing.

Betty responded to the initial request to hear her story by sharing what it meant to be taken away from her aboriginal mother and heritage. We found her story profoundly moving, particularly the moment when she met her mother who recognised her as her child. Betty’s story touched many strands of aboriginal struggle and history and gave us a first hand account of a spirituality that is grounded in justice and the need to be heard.

A member of the organizing group, Pam Hydon followed this story with an account of Fire Fire Burning Bright. The Gija people of Warnum in the Kimberley brought a Joonba corroboree to Melbourne and performed it in the State Theatre. The story concerned a group of aborigines who were poisoned at the beginning of the First World War. For decades, this story was held by the people and not shared publicly for fear of reprisal. Recently, the Gija people brought the story to Melbourne in the hope that “we might be friends together”. In other words, they were working to restore the connection that has been broken by mistrust and fear.

These stories were painful to hear and to integrate, yet both spoke of hope. For Betty, the story-tellers, dancers, poets, artists, songwriters and musicians invite us to remember the wisdom of the past. “It is they who will hold the culture together for the future, in face of hardship, persecution, oppression, wars and the eternal hunger for the Spirit. All these things are central to the healing of identity that holds us together, even to the land itself.”

Peter invited people to share some of their concerns as a means to affirm their response to the depth of this history. As Peter had said earlier, stories, whether Celtic or Aboriginal invite us to respond in a deeper and authentic way to the world of which we are part. We were thus invited to relate the day’s journey to our own lives and the issues we faced in the world today.

Robert Hoskin

(Correction: Robert Hoskin notes that in his article in the February Pipeline, the name of Maisie O’Sullivan was incorrectly given as Maisie McKenzie.)

BOOK REVIEWS

LIVING WITH A NEIGHBOUR WHO IS DIFFERENT

By Keith Rowe

The September 11 destruction in New York, the arrival of asylum-seekers to our shores, Al Qaeda, terrorists, the Bali bombings, Islam and jihad, 'terrorism' kits and fridge magnets, the impending war on Iraq: these are major anxieties for those of us who have lived in Australia for a long time and have made Australia our home. Christians in particular are greatly troubled by these issues. If we are confused and unclear as to how to live with people of a different historical, cultural and spiritual background, Keith Rowe's *Living with the Neighbour who is Different* is a valuable resource.

This book is the published version of a report on the subject presented to the Ninth Assembly of the Uniting Church in Adelaide in July 2000. The report was prepared by Dr Keith Rowe, minister and theologian, on behalf of the Uniting Church's Doctrine Working Group of Theology and Discipleship.

Dr Rowe does not provide information on, say, Islam or Buddhism. There are a number of recently-published books that can tell us about these faiths. *Living with the Neighbour who is Different* seeks to equip us for dialogue (the word is used over and over again - 'dialogue: open and frank discussion of ideas, as in seeking mutual understanding' (Collins Australian Pocket English Dictionary). Within today's Australian multi-religious society, dialogue with those of faiths other than our own is, perhaps, more difficult yet more lovingly proactive and, as he puts it, is 'a theological necessity'.(p.15) It is not an activity solely for professional church leaders and theologians, although this is one aspect of Australian dialogue. No, it is an activity for lay-people like you and me. To do so, we should be sufficiently equipped to enter into relationship and dialogue with our neighbours, be they in the next street or in countries only visited in our living rooms via TV and newspapers. This is the aim of his text.

Dr Rowe identifies three broad possibilities for Christian response to inter-faith encounter. They are 'exclusivist' (salvation coming exclusively through Christ and the church, and adherents of other religions live in error), 'inclusivist' (salvation comes through Christ, but Christ is present, incognito, within other faiths) and 'pluralist' (many paths to salvation). He argues there are flaws in each of these positions.

Dr Rowe examines biblical text, pointing out that new questions prompt fresh readings of the Bible: 'over and over, ancient words come alive in new ways, new truth emerges, as the text is touched by questions brought by a new generation of pilgrim believers'.(p.25) He then delves through the history of the Christian faith, finding Christians who have found ways of living in harmony and shared respect with people of other religious convictions, eg Pope Gregory VII, Peter Abelard, Saint Francis of Assisi, Ramon Lull, and John Wesley.

Rowe summarises three theological affirmations for the Christian when engaging in inter-faith dialogue:

1. God delights in diversity and seeks unity
2. The Spirit is present in all of life
3. The centrality of Jesus Christ in Christian believing is not to be compromised

Dialogue, he asserts, is a two-way process, not a one-way street where we impose our faith on others. But what about the faith we hold so dearly in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour: 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me' (John 14:6)? What about the Christian Church's mission to spread the gospel throughout the world?

He answers in this way: in dialogue, everyone remains true to their own spiritual beliefs. Thus the centrality of Jesus Christ for Christians is not to be compromised. 'Our confession of Christ is not something to be argued but something to be affirmed as the foundation on which our life is built'.(p.46) He does suggest, however, that a better starting point is an appreciation of the work

of the Spirit, the presence of God active in every area of life and in every person. Leave discussion on christology to later in the conversation, he suggests. The goal of inter-religious dialogue is not to gather all on earth in the one 'super-faith', but, open to the Holy Spirit, to have 'an environment where diversity is held within a framework of mutual appreciation, common exploration and a shared search for the peaceable Kingdom'.(p.43)

In the section 'Christian Mission in a Multi-Religious World', Dr Rowe discusses the central place of mission and evangelism in our Christian identity. He quotes Emilio Castro, former General Secretary of the World Council of Churches:

'The missionary conviction of the Christian faith is not called into question, but rather it is purified, strengthened and deepened when we place ourselves alongside our neighbours of other faiths in an attitude of respect, of listening and appreciation of the cultural and spiritual treasures belonging to them ... the gospel is by definition for others, but it is so as the expression and message of a non-sectarian love. We rob our neighbour if we fail to evangelise; we rob the gospel if we indulge in proselytism. We serve the gospel by loving one another, by listening, by living together in harmony, by working to overcome barriers ...'.(p.47)

We are to live the Christ life deeply and lovingly, as He lived: 'his hospitality, forgiveness, care for the stranger, interest in the outcast and misunderstood are to be woven into our manner . . . to avoid any hint of crusading fervour, triumphalism or rudeness towards the adherents of other faiths'.(p.47) Dr Rowe suggests our own encounter with the transforming Christ will deepen as a result of inter-faith dialogue as 'we enter ever more deeply into the compassionate, hospitable, risk-taking, God-trusting way of life that Jesus embodied'.(p.60)

I have not done justice to this dense work, but as a lay person I found it answered many of my questions about inter-faith dialogue. Even though the book contains a mere 62 pages of text, it is jam-packed with tightly-written theological ways of approaching our dialogue. Throughout he uses a number of pertinent quotations from eminent thinkers to support his case. The book is not an easy read, but it is one which I think every caring

Christian should undertake. Copies are available from the Wellspring library. There is a Study Guide to *Living with the Neighbour who is Different*, available on the Internet (www.nat.uca.org.au)

This book made me want to pray, in the depths of my being, that we do not have war with Iraq. How can we have dialogue if we are bombing our Muslim brothers and sisters. Such war action divides the people of the world, not enabling them to live together in diversity yet in unity and harmony, as God desires.

Jeannie Walker

FINDING HOPE AGAIN

**Journeying through sorrow and beyond
Canterbury Press, Norwich 2003
by Peter Millar.**

A wave of sorrow was felt by friends around the world on hearing of the sudden death of Dr. Dorothy Millar on 9 March 2001. The experience of his sudden loss has been recorded by her husband Peter in the book *Finding Hope Again*. In this moving work, Peter retraces his many emotions through the death of his life long partner. This roller coaster ride took him from the desolation of having no opportunity to farewell Dorothy through to observing her 'moment of transition into the wider possibilities of God' and lead on to his being enfolded in love. During this difficult time, Peter describes himself as being "engulfed in a great wave of love from all round the world" while "tumbling about in the ocean like a cork on a surging wave".

Sections of the book take the reader on a journey which follows the path of Peter's grief. The sections include "seeing seeds of hope", "identifying bearers and journeys of hope", on to "Hope in the World" and "Christ's Hope".

The seeds of hope section explores the author's time of deep personal anguish, memories and lament. A chapter on intimacy is recounted with gentle sensitivity and followed by tales of inter-connectedness with others who have walked the same path. Friends such as Bill write of 'live loving', Mike speaks of 'an experience to be treasured, as well as endured'; others sent inspiring poems. The author writes that

“connectedness with God lives on ambushed by tears - the rock bottom place where God is present”.

Images of people who lived inspiring, God-centred lives while engulfed in tragedy help the reader to catch a glimpse of the hope emerging through the mist.

Powerful examples of hope in the world are recorded, especially after the events of September 11, including Amber’s letter to the US President and excerpts from Nelson Mandela’s journey. Drawing on spiritual resources from his roots within his Celtic tradition, the Iona Community and the Church of South India, Peter describes how the path forward flows into Christ’s hope.

Peter’s journey has taken him to the place where “held in God’s Spirit there is no essential disconnection between life and

death: in both states we are ‘enfolded in the heart of God.’”

Finding Hope Again finds a place in our minds and on my bookshelf because of our fond memories of Dorothy who taught me ‘to inhabit my days’. It’s an easily readable, honest book that records the pain of the experience of grieving and struggle after the death of a beloved partner - a difficult journey to document. The author moves from a place of fragility of spirit to one of emerging stability and centredness. It offers us hope and assurance that God is fully involved in our lives. Those who have the privilege of reading this book will be enriched and sustained in their own life’s journey toward God.

Helen Weavers



Some of the 250,000 people gathered in Hyde Park, Sydney on February 16th, 2003.

PEOPLE NEWS

Welcome to the following new Friends:

Sheila Bourne, East Maitland, NSW. (02) 4933 4696. Prayer Diary Day 8

Joy Campbell, Morwell, Victoria. 03 5234 4574. Day 30.

Christine Cooper, Lake Munmorah, NSW. 02 4358 3046. Day 8.

Mary Gilchrist, Wattle Grove, NSW. 02 9825 2197 Day 21

Marilyn Obersby, Trafalgar, Victoria. 03 5633 1021. Day 30.

Jacinta Shailer, Wentworth Falls, NSW. 02 4757 2290. Day 2.

John and Trish Thorpe, Harbord, NSW. 02 9905 5023. Day 24.

Prayer Request from Leanne Willson of Clare in SA for herself and her daughter, Jessica. Jessica was involved in a car accident on New Year's morning in Clare. The other person in the car was killed, and Jessica has a broken spine and legs. She had returned to Clare hospital after successful surgery and will be there for at least six weeks and faces a long rehabilitation. She has a 3 year old son, Jordan, and Leanne now has full care of Jordan, with the help of child care, as well as full time work. Leanne and Jessica have had more than their share of difficulties to deal with and would value our prayers for a fresh start, that they may be able to stay linked to the vine and the source of their strength.

News from Tasmania

We had a lovely meeting with Claire Wherrett, Jean Hopwood, Margaret McIntyre, Lorraine Riggall, Rod Dalgleish and Pat McKenzie present with four apologies. We were able to sit round the table to eat. After the meal, Claire led the liturgy beautifully, with all taking part. People are sharing at some depth and appreciate each other and the trust that is building between us.

Sheryl Neasey has offered us her place next time. Peter visited her there and will be able to picture the place, with its level setting in a beautiful garden which can be appreciated from the floor to ceiling windows in every room. We are hoping the 1st Tuesday of the month will suit most of us. Next meeting: April 1st.

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