



Pipeline

June, 2003

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



MAKING PEACE WITH CONFLICT

**a half -day Workshop led by Brendan McKeague of People of the Way,
and Anne McPherson of the Wellspring Community in Perth
on Saturday 10th May 2003.**

A sunny afternoon saw 26 people prepared to grapple with this difficult issue. We came from a variety of church backgrounds – Catholic, Uniting, Anglican, Churches of Christ.

We began by sharing food and sharing stories in an informal way. Brendan introduced us to a discussion on violence and non violence, and soon had us participating in exercises which challenged our understanding. Later Anne led us through some exercises designed to show some of the skills acquired to communicate across conflict, especially the need to listen deeply.

People came away remembering that “every point of view is a view from a particular point”, remembering 4 steps of active non-violence: centring ourselves; disclosing our true selves; receiving the truth of the other; making agreements. We also shared a commitment to be intentionally committed to work as peace-makers and reconcilers in our homes, workplaces, churches, communities and in our world.

Janet Watts

Leader's Letter

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MEMBER OF WELLSRING COMMUNITY?

I have often been asked this question, and in recent months I have been very moved to read the reflections of Members on what it has meant for them.

Many write of the importance of the Prayer Diary and how they feel connected to other Members of the Community by the offering and receiving of prayers, though some, especially those in more distant parts of the country, would really like to know more about the people they are praying for. They also mention the value of being committed to a spiritual discipline, including daily prayer and Bible reading as well as being intentionally attentive to the voice of God in a variety of ways and situations. This takes so many different forms for different Members from lighting a candle with a child and saying thank you for something to spending longer periods in guided or personal meditation.

Some write of the support and encouragement they receive through meeting with a small group, while others have mentioned an occasional meal with an interstate visitor, or a regular monthly phone call, or the exchange of emails serving as a supplement or alternative to a Wellspring cell group.

Others have felt empowered to take a public stand on an issue or take a small step in solidarity with marginalised people by reading of the actions of others and knowing that they are directly or indirectly supported by others in the Community. It has been very encouraging to know that Wellspring Friends and Members around the country, along with many many other people, have been so involved recently in peace actions and in work with refugees and asylum seekers.

Yet others have felt valued and rewarded in different ways for the hard work they have done as Council members or through regional steering groups to provide the structural and administrative framework necessary for us to exist as a scattered community.

All our Members are engaged with local churches and with a variety of social justice groups active in the areas of environmental sustainability, reconciliation and justice for indigenous people, refugees, peace and non-violence, economic justice, poverty and social disadvantage, rural problems and inter-church and inter-faith dialogue. In this they are challenged and inspired as well as supported and encouraged by the Community. We have an amazing resource of experience and wisdom within our Community - on which we don't draw as often as we could.

Members of Wellspring Community make an annual commitment to live according to the Rule of the Community as fully as possible. From what I hear people find accepting this common discipline an encouraging and ultimately liberating experience, rather than an onerous and restrictive demand.

As I have said before the Members are the heart of the Community. Through prayer, through taking responsibility in some area of the Community's life (working on Pipeline, organising meetings, contributing financially and being part of the decision-making processes), through being active in some area of peace and justice, and through mutual support and encouragement, they provide the impetus for the Community.

However, Members of the Community do not see themselves as an especially holy or exclusive group! We exist as a Community as much for the people on the fringe or outside as we do for the Members. Friends of the Community share in most aspects of the Community's life and their personal contributions are invaluable. Those who have been active Friends for some time are regularly invited to consider becoming Members, but I hope never feel pressured to do so. We never want to be a closed fellowship; we seek always to be open to new-comers, enquirers and seekers.

It would be good to receive any comments on these thoughts from Members and Friends around the country.

Grace and peace to you all.

Anne

A STREET RETREAT

- a particularly relevant reflection, as the Community will be doing a street retreat in Alice Springs in July...

I experienced my first 'Street Retreat' soon after we moved into an inner city rectory to begin a new ministry there (1986). With that move came a bit of understanding of culture shock. We were in our former parish on a peninsula south of the city for 21 years. For 10 of those years we were part of a parish-based intentional common-purse community concerned to foster parish renewal: to find new ways of being church; ways to live out of our concerns for social justice; for healing and reconciliation and for friendship with the aboriginal community in our parish. And to live simply! Challenging, crazy, wonderful years.

As I struggled to be at home in my new, seemingly hostile, unfriendly, unpredictable environment, I thought I heard God saying, 'find the nuns and walk the streets'. I discovered a couple of 'houses of prayer and hospitality' in the area run by nuns, a priest: certainly special places where people 'on the margins' found welcome. After quite a 'lost' time, I remembered meeting a Sister at an ecumenical communities conference a couple of years before who had told me about the 'street retreat work' which she and others had been doing. Finally I caught on. I was to experience this different sort of retreat.

It came about in King's Cross, within walking distance of our rectory. We were billeted in various Catholic residences in the King's Cross area. My first impression as I walked about the Cross was of alienation, intruding, this is not my territory. I was encouraged to *wait*, to notice what I noticed, to 'let happen', be present here and now, to be poor. A small community developed among the seven of us retreatants and director, as we met at one of our billets each morning and evening, sharing a meal one of had cooked, praying and talking of our day over a shared eucharist. Sometimes we went together to houses of welcome for those needing friendship. At the end of a week I could say of King's Cross, this is my place, here I am, closer to being at one with these people, in being loved by God, one in having needs, in exploiting and being exploited. All of us need God's merciful love. We can all stand against exploitation and degradation.

While the basis of the retreat experience was the Ignatian Finding God in all things, I quickly connected with my own 'Protestant' background through the Camps Farthest Out Movement: where I learned about being open to God in all of life, expressing my prayer through creativity, movement and dance, living out of my soul's deep desire to love God with all of myself; learning to live in Jesus' parable way, of letting all of life (the ordinary as well as the extraordinary) open me to God, to myself, to others, to all creation. Jesus took what was to hand, what was the common life (a coin, a seed, a prodigal son) to speak of the Kingdom of God, to come to himself: to be at hand to love, to free, to die for love. I began noticing what I notice because what I notice can be a message to me.

This retreat was a new continuing of reconciliation and healing in myself and my relationships, as I became more aware of deep alienation and wounds and abuse in my life - some of which I had heard only faint echoes of until now. I have had much joy in joining that Sister who first told me of her work; in sharing this process with groups of people from various walks of life; of waiting, noticing, being a little more open to the wisdom, love, connectedness in all of life; of being a little more aware of the need and resources for reconciliation; of being challenged to hope and work and pray for justice, for the Kingdom.

Joy Crawford

The Street Retreat Dynamic

Retreatants, who frequently come from the helping professions, can be at a loss when invited to spend the hours just being present to the human reality without trying to analyse or search for immediate answers. The Street Retreat dynamic is simple but profound, beginning with the invitation to 'Come and see'.

The circle of understanding begins with the invitation to Come; See; Listen with the heart; Wait; and Wait; Receive; Pray - celebrate eucharist close to the poor; Reflect with director/with the group; and then Discern in light of action.

Each aspect of this dynamic is important. The 'Word made flesh' is thus heard not so much from the pages of scripture but from the living context of life - the hesitant figure outside the pawn shop; the anxious migrant scanning the work opportunities in the Employment Office; the new-born child creating a centre of warm admirers; the homeless group of Aboriginal people celebrating with the shared flask of wine in the park under the ancient Moreton Bay fig tree.

The Labyrinth grows

Interest in the ancient spiritual practice of the labyrinth continues to grow as we are drawn towards less cerebral and wordy ways into Christian renewal and spiritual growth. As an expression of this, a new labyrinth has for example recently been created in the grounds of Christ Church Anglican Church in Gosford. This follows the form of that in Chartres Cathedral in France, and was directly inspired by last year's Walking the Labyrinth gathering organised by Judith Keller and other Wellspring Members and Friends on NSW's Central Coast. Church members and visitors are being encouraged to walk the labyrinth as a deep and helpful form of spiritual exercise

Members of the recent Pelican People discipleship course walking the labyrinth as part of their exploration of different ways into Christian spirituality



Finding peace in South Africa

Geoff Harris was an early member of Wellspring. In 1999, after 19 years at the University of New England, he moved to the University of Natal in South Africa, where he teaches economics and runs a postgraduate programme in conflict resolution and peace studies.

I am frequently asked in South Africa why I have moved here when the opposite is so common. There are short and long answers to this.

At one level, my life in Australia came to an appropriate end when my daughters grew up and [in the kindest way] 'released' me to come and work in Africa. This had been a long term intention following seven years in PNG in the 1970s. At another level, it is what I call 'God and the universe' stuff. I felt a calling – a matter of the heart -and, as I investigated, a job came up. In addition, it was a job which allowed me to be employed to teach economics but also to help establish a conflict resolution and peace studies programme. I should also admit to a fair bit of 'little boy adventurer' lurking within.

What is it like to live in South Africa?

It may be helpful to start with three of the biggest issues. In some respects, as a relatively well off white person, it is quite similar to Australia. And it is quite possible to live a very comfortable white lifestyle with quite limited contacts with black Africans. In other respects, it is very different. The black majority comprise three quarters of the 42 million people and are generally very poor. It is grinding poverty, which leaves them little in reserve to pay for things like medical costs, school fees and good food. In no sense can this be dismissed as a choice or a lack of will to work: there are simply inadequate opportunities. Early in 2002, the Toyota assembly plant in Durban [where I live] advertised 350 new jobs: 100,000 people lined up in person.

This illustrates a major feature of SA – a dual economy with an affluent, modern sector and a desperately poor, largely rural sector. These are overwhelmingly white and black respectively but I think it is more a matter of class than race: rich black Africans

exhibit virtually all the attitudes characteristics and attitudes of rich whites.

It is a classic example of structural violence – quietly and unintentionally, a large proportion of the population is being left to live in misery. SA is in fact one of the most unequal societies in the world in terms of income and wealth. The free market economic thinking which dominates economic policymaking only reinforces this inequality. Recent budgets have given major tax cuts for the rich and minor increases in welfare payments [there is a welfare system] to the poor.

A second issue is HIV/AIDS. Somewhere between 6 and 8 million of the population are HIV positive; virtually all will die in the next 10 years or so. The country is, by and large, in denial. People will not admit that they are HIV positive; relatives are reported to have died of 'pneumonia' or 'TB' rather than AIDS [in one sense this may be true, as AIDS means that the immune system cannot fend off such opportunistic diseases; but the underlying cause is AIDS].

The government has been very reluctant to admit that the pandemic exists; for whatever reason, it prefers to put the dramatic increase in deaths [currently about 200 000 per annum] down to poverty. Its response in terms of education and medical treatment [anti-retrovirals, admittedly very expensive but local production of cheap generic brands is possible; and nevirapine to prevent transmission of HIV from mothers to babies – cheap] has been absolutely pathetic and has cost tens of thousands of lives.

Third, there are very high levels of violent crime, including 65,000 murders per annum. Almost all of these occur in black African communities for the usual reasons – domestic disputes, quarrels between neighbours etc. Guns are common.

Much of this violence is a legacy from the apartheid regime, which dealt with conflict largely by force and armed some African groups against others. Domestic violence, including sexual assault of children, is also in epidemic proportions. Break-ins are reasonably common [but I think are exaggerated] but whites are targeted not because they are white but because they are rich. I must say that, given the levels of poverty, I am surprised there is not more property crime.

Against these, there are some positives. First, there is remarkable goodwill and a willingness to forgive on the part of the huge majority of black Africans. They have been very willing [too willing?] to blame the apartheid system rather than individual whites. Not that the whites are nasty people; they are kind to their spouses, children and dogs and pray before meals; they are much more spiritual than Australians. But they do not often recognise the structural violence of apartheid or naked capitalism – from which they are the beneficiaries and from which most black Africans gain very little. They have what Scott Peck once called ‘a hole in the mind’ about such matters.

Second, there is a lot of energy from government level put in to tackle the sorts of

issues listed above. Some of this energy is unimaginative and some of it is raw and ill-directed. There is also some corruption of both the illegal and immoral kind but most public servants are trying hard to do their job and to do it honestly.

Third, the NGO sector is vibrant, though apparently a lot less so than during apartheid. It is often fearless in pressing government to take action and frequently does not wait for government but acts itself. Churches are prominent among these NGOs, having fairly recently decided to once again become [as under apartheid] ‘a nuisance to the government’. I have been particularly involved with NGOs opposing a major new arms deal [SA is even safer from invasion than Australia] and the introduction of a Basic Income Grant of about \$20 per month for all South Africans.

I am an optimist. Things can improve but it will need sustained effort because, left to itself, the impact of structural violence will only get worse. I see my major role as helping people see that there are alternatives as far as economics and the handling of conflicts are concerned. I haven’t regretted coming here for a moment.

Geoff Harris

Finding hope again

Peter Millar has now returned from his New Zealand travels and Wellspring Community members and Friends recently joined others at Pitt Street Uniting Church in Sydney to celebrate the publication of his book *Finding Hope Again: Journeying through Sorrow*.



Peter Millar and Penny Jones at the booksigning at Pitt Street Uniting Church

Anne McPherson has been visiting Members and Friends in Western Australia as this issue of Pipeline has been prepared.



Revealing the Holy - review by Ailsa Maley

'Revealing the Holy' is the title of a CD written by John Coleman in Hobart, and produced by L'Arche Australia (the International Federation of Communities, first established in France in 1964 by Jean Vanier and Pere Thomas, which welcome people with intellectual disabilities. Three of the 115 communities across the world are in Australia, in Canberra, Sydney and Hobart).

I found the lyrics very affirming and fulfilling although most of them are rather uniquely presented. I was particularly drawn to the track 'Circle Me O God', which is based on an old Celtic Prayer. The music is great, with both acoustic and electric guitars, with keyboard and sometimes other instruments included. The CD can be obtained from colemansongs@yahoo.com or John Coleman, Beni Abbes Community, PO Box 132, Moonah, Tasmania 7009.

Prayers of the People – Peggy Goldsmith

Let us pray. Let us bring before God the prayers of the people.
We pray for our community and nation.

We pray that our leaders will listen to us
the people,
will hear our hopes, our fears,
our anxieties.

May Christ the human face of God
show us how to be truly human
in our world.

We have seen and felt what it is like
to be the soldiers nailing you
to the Cross
with our precision bombing,
our paratroops falling from the sky
from helicopters like dark angels,
our tanks like Roman legions rumbling along
so powerfully
and leaving rubble everywhere,
our dividing up your garments
as we watch the ransacking of hospitals
and priceless museums and libraries.

Save us
We pray for forgiveness.
Have mercy on us –
O risen Christ,
O lamb of God
you walked on this earth,
you knew pain, you drank the bitter cup,
yet you gave us new life, new hope, new future.
We bow before you now
with meek and grateful hearts.

We pray that our society will find
the will to welcome the stranger
and those who may be different from us.

Lord Jesus, we have seen on our televisions
in recent weeks
a crucifixion like your own.

O Lord we have seen humanity preying upon itself,
like monsters of the deep.
Save us from ourselves, O Lord
Our modern culture is so different
from our Christian faith
and from our faith in you, O risen Lord.
You have given us in your resurrection
something wholly different
from the death wish of the modern media
something far transcending
the sad and fallible values of our own society.

The whole world lives in your love, holy God
and we are your people.
Send us out now in faith
to tell your story
and to live your truth with every race and nation
so that through your powerful and saving Word
people may join together in peace
and give you praise.
O Lord of life, O Christ our Lord
rising above death
with grace, with mercy
and with love.
Hear now our prayers. AMEN

WELLSPRING PEOPLE NEWS

Welcome to the following New Friends:

Winsome Ball Athelstone SA 08 8337 8517 (Day 1)

Marion Davie Wentworth Falls NSW 02 4757 2186 (Day 2)

George Harverson Wentworth Falls, NSW 02 4757 3073 (Day 2)

Kathryn Richards and Alan Bawden Stawell, Vic 03 5358 2634 (Day 23)

Nicole Robinson Drummoyne, NSW 02 9719 9195 (Day 17)

Heather Sparke Budgewoi NSW 02 4390 9039 (Prayer Diary Day 8)

Margaret and Neil Holm are currently visiting family and friends in Brisbane. When they return at the beginning of June, Neil will take up a new position as Academic Director of the Macquarie Christian Studies Institute, attached to Macquarie University in Sydney under the leadership of Robert Banks.

Peggy Goldsmith and Jim Tulip are visiting family and friends in North America, Britain and Germany and are away for most of May and June.

(This edition of Pipeline has consequently been produced by Jonathan Inkpin)

*** Stop Press! JOHN BELL VISIT TO AUSTRALIA**

John Bell of the Iona Community will be leading workshops across the country this June-July!

Please contact Wellspring State Contacts (below) for further details

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