



Pipeline

August, 2003

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

WHY THE WELLSPRING COMMUNITY IS NEEDED IN AUSTRALIA TODAY

Peter Millar

Christians should not be comfortable clubs of conformity but communities of loving defiance. (Ronald Sider)

May God give us once more the courage to hope. (Soren Kierkegaard)

How should we live? Live welcoming to all. (Mechtild of Magdeburg)

As I return to Scotland I leave with a quiet, yet strong, conviction that a movement like The Wellspring Community is much needed in contemporary Australia. This is for many reasons. Its central vision is earthed in an earlier missionary and prophetic vision — that of The Iona Community.

In tandem with Iona, Wellspring holds to an “incarnational theology” – recognising that the Gospel and ordinary life are inseparable. That theology gives life and energy to many truths and insights. Take a few of these:

- God is truly in our midst.
- We are a pilgrim people.
- Healing is not only for ourselves, but for the nations.
- Without a prophetic critique of society, rooted in Christ’s wisdom and hope, we perish.
- Christ is found in everyday experiences.
- In the stranger we see the face of God – of Christ.
- Every moment is a precious moment.
- Life is always provisional.
- Struggle and prayer go together.

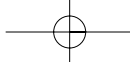
And so on.

This incarnational theology is something substantially different from the rather limited, often domesticated theologies which surround us both in the UK and in Australia. This is a theology which does not see the world as essentially “a dark, evil-ridden place” from which we have to be constantly rescued, but rather as “the place of God’s abiding” permeated with Christ’s eternal hope, healing and grace.

The Wellspring Community has been brought into existence by this living and loving God in order to constantly articulate, through its vision, actions and community life, this welcoming Gospel which is open to the world in its many pluralities and contradictions — God’s world in all of its beauty and pain and uncertainty. It will, in the years to come, (if it remains alert to this central vision and does not become imprisoned in its own self-maintenance), attract many Australians who are already walking on the path of an incarnational faith, of an earthed spirituality. This is exciting, and there are many signs that The Wellspring Community is on the cusp of new maturity and insight. We must be thankful to past leadership for all of that, and for those who started the Community in the 1990s.

The Community is also important for it holds together (as does The Iona Community) many different, yet connected, dimensions of Christian faith

- attention to Scripture,



- faithful prayerfulness,
- a passion for justice
- the realisation that healing, mission and spiritual discovery are to be engaged with on a day- to-day basis.
- an ability to cross over denominations, which is a prophetic gift given church realities in the western world!
- knowledge that the wounded earth cries out for healing (as do the nations) and that environmental issues are never to be on the edge of its thinking and reflecting.

Yet for me the significance of The Wellspring Community also lies in the rich, creative lives of its Members and Friends. In the human face of the Community we are truly blessed for we have in our midst many women and men of depth and spiritual wisdom who have, through their journeys, acted out what we can call a “contemporary witness” to Christ. They have “walked the walk” and not just talked it! People of integrity, courage and faithfulness.

And so our ongoing task is to be a prophetic, praying, hope-filled group in solidarity with many others throughout Australia who share our hopes and dreams. The new leadership of the

Community will require renewed imagination as they reflect on its ministry and outreach.

There are many ways forward for the Community and not just one! At a time when fundamentalist interpretations of Christianity are rampant, we are called to be an alternative voice within a searching and fragile world. But not an “alternative voice” simply in a posture of opposition. That would be meaningless. Rather The Wellspring Community, now more than 10 years old, lives with a confidence that our wider vision is earthed in Scripture and in God’s amazingly rich ongoing revelation. That is where our hope comes from and it must constantly be grounded in a deep listening to the Spirit. There is so much ahead for this Community in modern Australia for we all believe that we walk each day with a God of surprises!

“From the cowardice that dare not face new truth,

From the laziness that is content with half truth,

From the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth

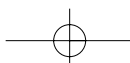
Good Lord, deliver us.”
(A prayer from Kenya.)

Joseph Pearce,
Small Is Still Beautiful,
Collins, London 2002. ISBN 0-00-714215 -3. \$19.95.
(A book review by Peter Millar)

The late E.F. Schumacher’s revolutionary study of the economic structure of the western world won him great acclaim and an international reputation. In this new book Joseph Pearce brings together the powerful arguments of “SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL” into the 21st century and re-assesses their relevance to the world today. His conclusions rage against rampant consumerism, arguing that it has resulted in gross economic inefficiency and environmental degradation and dispossessed and alienated populations. A worthwhile read – and a challenging one. Important reading, especially as we reflect, spiritually and theologically on our present global realities.

Leo Tolstoy,
The Three Questions,
Scholastic Press, New York 2002. ISBN 0-439-53763-0 \$14.75.
(Book review by Peter Millar)

This is a beautifully produced new version of Tolstoy’s great short story first published in 1903. The three questions are, “When is the best time to do things?” “Who is the most important one?” and “What is the right thing to do?”. Tolstoy has a message and a deep challenge to our own fragile time, and this short book is in itself a road for meditation on the great themes of our life’s journey. It is beautifully illustrated and would make an ideal gift, and an unusual one. Definitely a book for sharing with others.



Leaders' Letter

Thank you for your encouragement and confidence in us as we commence our term as co-leaders.

We want to pay tribute to Anne's leadership over the past four years. She has endeared herself to us because of her optimism and dedication to several important goals: to maintain her theological and other studies; to become the Uniting Church Community Minister in Mt Druitt; and in her determination to have a strong working Council to support the Wellspring Community. She has become a personal friend of many of us.

The number of members and friends has increased greatly over the time of her leadership as a result of her efforts and of Dorothy and Peter Millar's visits to many of you. We look forward to visiting you over the coming year.



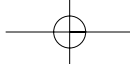
Peggy Goldsmith

Peggy is now 'retired' and living in the Blue Mountains, NSW, after a career as a teacher/educator in the area of English as a Second Language. She is an active participant in Leura Uniting Church as an Elder and member of the Worship and Singing Groups. From 2001 until recently Peggy was deputy leader of The Wellspring Community and with Jim Tulip (her husband) was joint editor of Pipeline. Peggy and Jim share the leadership of the Blue Mountains Wellspring Cell Group. They are on the steering committee of the Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group. Peggy's husband Peter Goldsmith died in 1997. Her family comprises two daughters, one son, and 13 grandchildren shared with Jim who has three sons and one daughter.

We are writing this letter during the Pilgrimage to the Centre. We are encouraged by the spirit of the Pilgrimage among those who physically accompanied us. We are very encouraged by the spirit of the Pilgrimage among those who, like Jean Walker, Lisa Wriley, and Penny Jones, have accompanied us in other ways. Jean wrote to us. She said that, with great delight, she has worked through the Pilgrimage booklets, has surrounded us with prayer, and has been able "to feel in all ways a participant in the Wellspring Pilgrimage to Australia's 'spiritual heartland'." She went on to say, "May you all have the courage to reach out to 'the other', that you enjoy 'hospitality' and that you delight in participating as a community together sharing the blessings of your pilgrimage with your fellow Wellspring-ers."

At its next meeting, the Wellspring Community Council will discern God's direction for the continuing pilgrimage of the whole Wellspring Community. As co-leaders, we are committed to a process of discernment by Council. We have ideas and proposals to present to Council. We hope that the next issue of Pipeline will outline some of the exciting and adventurous directions God is sending us. Please pray for each member of Council (see list on back page) as we prepare and engage in our discussions. You may like to pray the passage that Jean sent us: Paul, speaking in the marketplace of ideas in Athens, says:

The God who made the world and everything in it, this Master of sky and land, doesn't live in custom-made shrines or need the human race to run errands for him, as if he couldn't take care of himself. He makes the creatures; the creatures don't make him. Starting from scratch, he made the entire human race and made the earth hospitable, with plenty of time and space for living so we could seek after God, and not just grope around in the dark but actually find him. He doesn't play hide-and-seek with us. He's not remote; he's near. We live and move in him, can't get away from him! One of your poets said it well: "We're the God-created." Well, if we are the god-created, it doesn't make a lot



of sense to think we could hire a sculptor to chisel a god out of stone for us, does it?
(Acts 17: 24-28 The Message)

We not only seek your prayers; we seek your wisdom. Each member and friend of the Wellspring Community has part of the corporate wisdom of the Wellspring Community. We discern God's purpose by considering all contributions. Please share your wisdom in your cell groups, with your state contact person, or with council members so that we have much to consider when we meet.

We close with a prayer from one of the pilgrimage prayer times:

Great Creator of all,

Come to us from the desert with the warmth of the rising sun.

Let there be light in our words

Let there be light on the path we walk.

Let us remember always that you give the gift of a new day.

Peggy Goldsmith and Neil Holm

Neil Holm

Neil and Margaret met in 1966 when they were teaching in nearby schools. From 1968, they lived in the Northern Territory where they taught in Aboriginal schools, Neil trained Aboriginal teachers, and Margaret became mother to John and Alison (who is now mother of Emily and Jamie, grandkids extraordinaire!). From 1987 to 1999, they extended their cross cultural (and surrogate parenting) skills as Director and Director of Studies at International House at the University of Queensland. In recent years, Neil has worked in inner-city Sydney with St John's Anglican Church Darlinghurst. Neil now works as Academic Director, Macquarie Christian Studies Institute. They are members of the Inner North Sydney Cell Group. For some time Neil was contact for the Reconciliation Area of Concern and Margaret was contact person for NSW.



REFLECTIONS FOR THE JOURNEY

God does not give an answer to all our questions, but, in Jesus, God enters into the heart of the questions. (Leonardo Boff)

Poverty is a beatitude. It is a way of being, of thinking, of loving. It is a gift of the Spirit. Poverty is detachment and freedom and above all, truth. (Carlo Carreto)

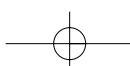
If the eye is pure, there will be sunshine in your soul. (Matthew 6:22)

Christ was not crucified on a cathedral altar between two silver candlesticks, but on a rubbish dump between two thieves. (George MacLeod.)

Maximum sensitivity and maximum availability are hallmarks of being with Christ. (Christopher Duraisingh)

Lord, how glad we are that you we don't hold you, but that you hold us.
(Prayer from Haiti)

The real sanctity of a church is that it is a place where we can go to weep in common. (Miguel de Unamuno)



WONDER AND WILL TO CARE

Margaret Ford

On June 21, the auditorium of the Catholic University Strathfield Campus was filled for a multi-faith forum on Ecology. With the impetus coming from the Columban Peace Institute, the forum was organised by three associated groups — the Archdiocesan Commission for Ecumenism and Inter-Faith Relations, the Australian Catholic University, and Catholic EarthCare Australia. Skilfully chaired by Dr. Paul Collins, the tone for the day was set by Frances Bodkin, a D'harawal Aboriginal descendant, who began by reprimanding all who speak of aborigines as the original or traditional owners of the land. As we then listened to speakers from Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and the Christian church the theme of stewardship was a common one.

To say it was a day of inspiration is an understatement and it culminated in our adoption of a proposal to form a Faith and Ecology network, with a variety of aims including:

- learning from each other in a spirit of dialogue so as to better promote the spiritual dimension of ecological questions,
- giving a united voice of concern over particular environmental issues.

For twelve months the Columban Peace Ecology and Justice Centre (PEJ) is willing to facilitate the Faith and Ecology Network by establishing a data base of individuals and groups interested in membership of the Network, and in arranging a number of gatherings on issues suggested by members. In twelve months time they will arrange another major function to review the operation of the Network. It is all very exciting stuff and seems to me to fit very easily into the Wellspring Community's areas of concern.

To care for the Earth is to share with God in the act of Creation.

Peter Millar shared this letter from his friend Helen Cook in Scotland:

There was a gut wrenching picture in our papers this week, a close up of the face of an asylum-seeker who has sewn together his eyelids and his lips so he cannot see or speak or eat and drink, in protest not just at his own treatment, but at the treatment of others. That really challenges my "connectedness". I thought at first it was a religious picture I was looking at — he looked positively Christ-like. And of course that is precisely what he is. And it touched me profoundly. And when I realised it wasn't Christ but this asylum-seeker I found myself uttering the usual crap! But I cannot let it go, and it is my icon this week! And will sit alongside the photo I cut from the Guardian during the Kosovo conflict of the legs (in joggers and trainers) of a young woman who climbed a hill behind her refugee camp to hang herself because she had been raped and saw no future for herself. I wanted to nail that photo on to every altar.

FINDING HOPE AGAIN

Copies of Peter Millar's latest book "Finding Hope Again: journeying through sorrow and beyond"(The Canterbury Press, London, 2003) can be ordered through Anne McPherson at a discounted rate. Anne is still overseeing The Wellspring Community book-room.

VICTORIAN WELLSPRING SEEDING GROUP

Wendy Hudson

Six of us met at Robert Hoskin's church and walked to a Burmese restaurant on Bridge Road, Richmond. We dined beneath a large and challenging photograph of Ang Sang Sui Chi (spelling?) A very helpful waiter assisted us chose delicious curries from the menu and a fruity white wine to go with them. In an upper room of exposed bricks and cosy open fireplace, we shared in reflections on Robert and Pam's trip to the Kimberley with Betty Pike and caught up on news from Felicity and Scott Lowrey. Jo and I shared the events we had enjoyed together as part of the seeding group. Our next dinner will be in early October – possibly a labyrinth walk.

SEVEN WEEKS ON IONA

Experiences of an Aussie Volunteer

John Connor

From March 18 to May 8 of this year, I worked as an Aussie volunteer with the Iona Community. The volunteers, about 30 in all, came from Scotland, England and Wales, Canada Germany, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Japan, the US and Australia. We ranged in age from early twenties to late sixties. We served general housekeeping, kitchen duties, office duties, driving and maintenance, and the Iona Community shop.

It was a great joy to live and work in such a lovely environment. From our dormitory window in the MacLeod Centre, we could see across fields in which sheep grazed to the ever changing colours of Iona Sound and the majestic hills of Mull.

*With earthly eyes we see above us,
clouds or sunshine, grey or bright,
But with the eye of faith
We know you reign,
instinct in the sun ray.
Speaking in the storm
Warming and renewing all creation,
Christ above us. . . .*

(George MacLeod)

Each day at 9am we joined in a most sustaining morning service liturgy, without a benediction, as we moved out from the abbey to our daily tasks, an expression of our ongoing worship. I assisted in the Iona Community shop, where visitors to the island could purchase books or Celtic jewellery and memorabilia. The evening services at 9pm, centred on the concerns of the Community: peace and justice, healing, commitment, welcome and hospitality and on shared Eucharist with people of different denominational backgrounds. . The song "all are welcome, all are welcome here," from the Scottish Common ground hymn book, continues to echo in my ears.

Working together for peace and justice is a central concern of the community. It was evident in the stand against the war in Iraq, in the prayers for those who are suffering injustice, in demonstrating against nuclear weapons at a nearby Trident Submarine

base, and in the active support of the poor in our world, whether at home or abroad.

A warm bond developed between the members of the volunteer team. This is not to say that we did not occasionally, in our rough edges, rub up against each other. However, this was an opportunity for each of us to look at ourselves and how we were contributing to any fractures in relationships.

My only criticism of volunteer life on Iona is the little time or space for private reflection, meditation and prayer. Life was very busy with a very full program of activities. We were also living in a small dormitory. Iona spirituality is very much one of meeting God in the ordinary round of life and work, in the midst of creation, and in shared community worship. I warmly respond to this non-dualistic approach to spirituality but also know that I need to draw aside for meditative prayer and quietness and to reflect on where God was present in the events and relationships of the day. Maybe I needed to exercise more choice in deciding which events and activities I took part in. Certainly, my overall experience of living with the resident staff and volunteers on Iona was very positive. I can heartily endorse the experience of Iona as a thin place, "a place where heaven and earth come together".



A visit to Santa Teresa Community, 80 km east of Alice Springs, is not the time you expect to meet someone who has just written a book on *Artful Living in Celtic Homes*. However,

Phillipa Fox, a teacher at the school, has done so. Her book, 112 pages long, roughly A5 size, includes chapters such as *Inside the Hose, Spinning, Weaving and Dyeings, and Ceilidhs*. It is illustrated with line drawings like the of a harvest knot of plaited straw made as a love token and a drinking tumbler of staved wood featured here. If you would like a copy, send \$22.95 (includes postage and handling) to The Tanach Press, PO Box 390, Goodwood SA 5034.

Campfire in the Heart

David Woods is a Friend of the Wellspring Community who lives in Alice Springs with his wife, Sue, and three daughters. He made a very significant contribution to the recent Pilgrimage. He writes about their vision for a Campfire in the Heart:

Sue and I are into our 5th year here in Alice Springs. Our coming to Alice was a step of faith, moving from St Joseph's House of Prayer in Goulburn, not really knowing what was in store. We have taken up work where we have been able to offer our gifts. We have engaged in a lot of learning. And it's been great, but not easy ... deeply significant. In the back of our minds there has always been a question, 'why are we here?'

But we have not felt that there was a great urgency to answer the question, knowing that in God's own time all would be revealed. There has been in our minds something of the thought of a place of hospitality, prayer; a spirituality that links with the people and the land of Central Australia yet stands strong in its Gospel tradition.

We found a property of 5 acres, just 6 kms out of town in a beautiful setting that has a very spacious designer home; an outdoor area with a campfire, generous shade over railway sleeper seats and tables (seating for 50); another dwelling that has been used as a restaurant and could easily be used as a home. Over the back fence is bushland and an opportunity to walk to the MacDonnell's southern face.

From being casually interested, giving plenty of time to ponder, pray, talk to people and make a decision, we find ourselves really drawn to this place as we have processed the possibilities in our minds. We see that the main house could be used as a place of retreat. One of the rooms would make a great chapel; the large open living area could provide a meeting space for at least 50 people. Other rooms lend themselves to be set up as retreat accommodation.

Our family may live in the second house and the single room dwellings would make ideal accommodation for others who have indicated their wish to join us. The setting gives great opportunities for both indoor and outdoor gatherings. It answers our hope for

a place of hospitality and retreat, a 'campfire in the heart'. This would serve people on several levels:

- Locally, there is the opportunity to offer a style of community to be lived, a gathering point for indigenous and non-indigenous people, a place to pray, to chew the cud and give support to people who seek to address the enormous issues that are so 'in our face' in the centre of this great land.
- For travellers, for pilgrims, this space can offer a place to come, either individually or in groups to reflect on their time in the Centre.
- For Spirituality Centres around Australia, this can add to the network a place to link with the Centre.

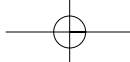
What are the practical considerations? Of course, a place like this comes at considerable cost. We have never had money, and it is not in our intention to own such a place. We would prefer to set up a trust or other body to hold the property and the vision so that others may benefit beyond our time here. We write to you at this time to ask your prayer and response to such a proposal. This dream is beyond what we can do, but the 'call' is strong enough within us to take it very seriously. That is why we share it with you. We know there is a need. There is considerable support from people we have shared this story with in Alice Springs and with friends from other places.

Thank-you in anticipation of your prayerful response

David and Sue had a remarkable response to this letter. Friends sent them about \$450,00 and they had an offer of a bridging loan for the remaining \$200,000. They continue to seek additional funds so they can repay the bridging



Peg Goodluck, Neil Holm & David Woods (left to right) at the property



loan. They are setting up a trust with provision for the sale of units in the trust. Those of us on the pilgrimage were able to visit the site and pray with David for God's continued blessing on this project. If you would like to assist this remarkable project, please contact David and Sue at 135 Woods Terrace, Alice Springs NT 0870 nmi@octa4.net.au

Thanks

Eugene Stockton would like to thank the Wellspring Community and individual donors for subsidising his part in the Pilgrimage. He thoroughly enjoyed himself! [And made a remarkable contribution to the success of the Pilgrimage. (Editor)]

Welcome

A warm welcome to Alan and Betty Matthews of Thornlie W A (08 9459 8269) who have recently become Members of the Community.

Welcome too to new Friends of the Community:

Alan Bawden & Kathryn Richards Stawell Vic Day 23

Jean Bindon Bunbury WA Day 4

Janine & Michael Cranney Wynyard Tas 03 6442 3994 cranney@tassie.net.au Day 6

Dayspring Centre for Christian Spirituality and Counselling Dianella WA 08 9275 3773 info@dayspring.org.au Day 12

Lea Ellson Bunbury 08 9721 6895 Day 4

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