



Pipeline

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

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LIVING AS COMMUNITY

*After this
I shall pour out my spirit on all humanity.
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your old people will dream dreams,
And your young people see visions.
Even on the slaves, men and women,
Shall I pour out my spirit in those days.*

Joel 3:1-2

What beautiful and compelling words! And what a vision for community (except for the slaves)! The grace of God at work within a diversity of people; prophetic wisdom which is limited neither by gender, nor by generation/age.

There is often a reluctance in communities to spend time reflecting on the inner life of that community – some regard it as worthless navel-gazing; perhaps as worthless as reflecting too much on one's own inner life.

But actually, there is a long and ancient tradition in Christianity which values the inner journey of individuals and, I think, of communities. The role of the spiritual director, or *anam cara* (soul friend) in the Celtic church, is just one manifestation of this. It is an important way of discerning the movement of the Holy Spirit within the lives of people; it also honours the unfolding ways in which God is further revealing God's self to us now, *in our own time*.

Sometimes there can be so much focus on the mission and outer life of a community (as important as it is) to the detriment of its inner life. Consequently, the wellbeing of that community suffers. I have seen this in at least one community in which I was involved for a few years. As Development Worker for a local SCM group (for four years), I discovered that it was the sense of community and genuine

relationships that the students most valued – and kept them coming back!

So it seems to me that, in our journeying towards our 2007 Gathering, we need to spend some time reflecting on the meaning of community for us as Wellspringers. And we need to have enough courage to be open to new ways of nurturing our community life.

This *Pipeline* edition begins with a persuasive article by **Jim Tulip** on the spirituality and spiritual needs of the younger generations.

It is followed by comments from younger Wellspringers (under 60!) on their personal experience of the Wellspring community. How do we make space for the younger generations within our community?

Leader **Neil Holm** shares with us his vision for the Gathering, and the journey of preparation leading up to it; dreaming new dreams and seeing new visions needs serious engagement with the imagination!

We continue our exploration of our Gathering theme, *Walking the Edge*. **Judith Keller** and **Jenny Johnston**, members of the Central Coast and Hunter cell group, share their personal experience of the edge – through dance and through care of the elderly. **Mary Gilchrist** shares with us some words of wisdom from a book called *Ministry at the Margins*. Do we have the courage to enter the 'foreign world of the Edge', to become the stranger, in order to learn and to be more – just as Jesus did?

And our liturgical/worship contribution is a prayer of Kathy Galloway's, which **Helen Weavers** used at a recent Planning Meeting for the 2007 Gathering (at which Kathy will be speaking). Enjoy!

Ruth Dunnicliff-Hagan (Editor)

GENERATIONS X, Y & Z?

Jim Tulip (NSW)

Looking around the church on Sundays we see our congregations made up mostly of people over 50 years of age. We know it is a problem. But what can be done?

“Throughout the western world, churches are finding it hard to connect with young people, and Australia is no exception

to that”. So writes Philip Hughes, a leader in the Christian Research Association Project in studying young people. Australian Catholic University and Monash University are also active in this project. Their first step is to hear and understand what young people are saying and feeling about faith and church and religion generally. It is a good first step.

Readers of the Victorian journal *Crosslight* (September 2006) will see some of the findings of this research project. The CRA Website www.cra.org.au adds further sociological data.

But this is from the outside. There are other ways of seeing the situation from the inside. Australia has its own Gatherings of young people such as the NCYC – National Christian Youth Convention, held every two years from which young people return every bit as enthused and committed as happened in previous decades. The 2008 Catholic World Youth Day will also be a stimulus in the future.

One recent Sydney initiative was the Eremos Institute Forum held at Epping on September 1, where an evening designed by young people and presenting young people as speakers explored the topic: *Yearning for spiritual nourishment*. It could well prove to be a model for other such evenings around the country.

The forum was a time of spiritual nourishment.



▲ Jim, the gardener...

The honest way in which students from several universities and TAFEs were able to open up their hearts and minds before a sizable audience must be seen as a way forward.

One student spoke theologically. It made her seem a little remote.

But it led her to a memory of Desmond Tutu, finding his congregation filling up with police, going down from the pulpit and beginning to dance. He led everyone out into the street, dancing. It was his answer to injustice.

Another student spoke of clearing out a cupboard to be a private altar, to be a place of difference from a chaotic and hectic life. Another spoke of personal retreats to the desert, and through yoga and ‘listening’. The fourth speaker told of depression and anxiety and of how, in unexpected places, she had experiences of God. It was, in all, a very moving and varied presentation. The audience was drawn into reflection. Student lives seemed similar to other people’s lives, spiritually.

How to allow young people to be young people? It will take an act of faith for mature-aged communities to encourage and support (with finance) initiatives like the Eremos one. But seeing 1,000 young people worshipping at Taize recently, worshipping in silence, in song and prayer was a wonderful surprise. What was it that was attracting them?

The Wellspring Community is well-placed to play a role. Many Wellspringers recall their own student enthusiasms, their ecumenical opening out of perspectives, along with the chance to read and study Biblical literature and theology. Wellspring embodies a ‘young at heart’ way of life and belief.

Wellspring needs to become a patron for new ventures of support for the generations from Generation X onwards.

Consider, then, these responses from younger people who have in recent times joined and become a part of Wellspring. They are real signs of hope.

What attracted me to Wellspring?

I was originally invited by Isobel Bishop to share my dream of a 'simple living community' at a Wellspring meeting.

I found kindred spirits, ecumenical, inclusive, a safe place - I feel encouraged, affirmed, normal when I am with fellow Wellspringers.

I am inspired to live an authentic faith, to engage in the world, to actively seek peace; justice and right relationship with God, this sacred earth and all the other humans I share this planet with.

What keeps me connected now?

My local cell group, and when I can't make it - I still have phone conversations with Jenny occasionally, see Mavis and Bob at church.

I feel part of the community. We certainly get plenty of e-mails! They overwhelm me. I have my prayer diary never far away - though I tend to use it sporadically - I'm not so good at routine and parenting combined with local activism (very low key) leaves me perpetually exhausted.

I've agreed to be the environment contact person - but I actually feel this as a burden - as I do not have the time or energy to do this position justice. I would prefer to be a name on the environment list not the name at the top of it - or at the very least to share the position with someone who actually is organised to act, send e-mails etc - I'm good with the ideas!

Lisa Wriley

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We were first inspired about Wellspring when we visited Iona for a week - that happened to immediately follow the attacks on September 11, 2001. What we found was a community grappling with the most profound personal, political and theological issues that those days threw up. It was a good place to be at the time.

Of course, we did nothing about it after returning home, until early last year I saw an ad for the Wellspring Gathering in Canberra. The gathering was great - it's always a high to be surrounded by people thirsting for an authentic spirituality in our context, committed to peace and justice, and willing to experiment with liturgy and worship.

Both of us were actively involved in university campus Christian groups, and both felt it was a shame there was not really anything like them for 'adults'. We are aware that many idealistic young Christians turn into comfortable middle-class Christians once babies arrive, and we wanted to take pre-emptive action! We have a great church community, but it's small and fragile (as the best things often are), and in our case, missing the older generation and the wisdom they have to offer. So Wellspring for us is about filling that gap.

Of course, we're hopeless at regularly making time for daily prayer for the Community (oops!) or even making it to the cell group meetings every month, but it's wonderful to know there is a Community out there to which we are even loosely a part. We know that we will never be isolated, as the Community will be there for us if and when we need it. And we hope to be able to bring our energy and commitment to keeping the flames of discipleship alive to sustain the Community in the years ahead.

Justin Whelan

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I was attracted by the contemporary re-application of the mission and spirituality of St Columba. It is Christocentric, where I found uncentred spiritualities would tire me out by floating with the currents. It is disciplined, at the same time as experimental. The focus on the hospitality of God reaches far, and strengthens me as an evangelist, even though quite a few members and friends would run a mile from that word. I keep connected because I want my own spiritual disciplines to grow stronger.

Ian Robinson

What attracted me:

- Wellspring’s ecumenical nature. Margaret Silf talks of moving into a post-denominational world, and an ecumenical community is part of that.
- The combination of prayer and action in its areas of concern. The two have been in tension since the time of Mary and Martha, and probably earlier.
- The Celtic influence, particularly the sense that place is sacred.
- The personal touch. Meeting a few Wellspring members and being impressed by their combination of seriousness and warmth, and their hospitality.

What keeps me connected:

- Occasional visits to those we know in the community
- Pipeline

Anthony Dunnicliff-Hagan

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Merran is a medical practitioner and I work with denominations training consultants to assist congregations in crisis or conflict. Our relationship with Wellspring is still emerging, we are geographically separated from many in the community and have a young family so find it difficult to connect in person. However we feel a strong allegiance to the values of the community and would like to continue to pursue the relationship.

What draws me to Wellspring?

Around 12 years ago, I began to explore elements Celtic spirituality which eventually took me on pilgrimage to Iona where I met Peter Millar. The attraction for me was and remains a three way integration of spirituality; that is,

1. spirituality anchored in the environment (especially remote and wild places – here read Tasmania),
2. spirituality passionately engaged in the human quest for peace and justice both locally and globally, and
3. spirituality of community in which encouragement, honesty and accountability are corporate tools for growth.

In my own background spirituality had been somewhat disconnected from all of these - embodied in the traditional evangelical ‘quiet time’ which was practiced alone, in one’s study, with simply a Bible and journal. I don’t denigrate this, as it is still part of my practice. However Wellspring invites me to explore rich soul country that I have found very nourishing.

Tim Dyer

What attracted me to Wellspring was the sophistication, warmth and intelligence of the Wellspringers and the “principles” of Wellspring - Christians with a tolerant approach, interested in social justice, reconciliation and the environment. Ritual and the Eucharist especially are very important to me and being able to be free of denominational boundaries is “heaven” and stimulating.

I really felt that I had come home and connected with like minds -- God knows how I have been searching for a long time. There is a depth of kindness and compassion towards fellow humans and at the same time a commitment to being a better person in Christ. I am a serious insect, a counsellor. I think if word got out, so to speak, there would be more interest. There are a lot of people who feel they are Christians but are very cynical about belonging to established churches...what about you?

A thought is that younger people who have not belonged to established churches might find the music a bit alien.

Sandra Warn

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Our first connection with Wellspring was through our friend Peter Millar whom we met in Sydney and in Edinburgh and who gave us the hospitality of his house in Laggan and encouraged us to join as friends of the Community. We are members of the Pitt Street Uniting Church in Sydney (as are some others) and like the idea of a wider community of ecumenically minded people with a strong focus on social justice issues. We have enjoyed some fine articles in Pipeline and also have been able to provide hospitality to a friend from Brisbane (Doug Golding). I am afraid we are not really participating in an active way and in fact we are heading off to northern South Australia in a few days where Peter will be working as a doctor in Indulkana/Iwantja.

Ros & Peter Bennett

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A dear friend who is a member of Wellspring invited me to a meeting. I found the people friendly and welcoming. The nurturing and care for one another is very evident in our group. I love the fellowship and the sharing of a meal together. I feel spiritually in tune with my Wellspring friends.

My concern for the future of our environment and social issues are very important to me and I am actively supporting these.

Lorraine Riggall

WALKING THE EDGE IMAGINATIVELY

Neil Holm

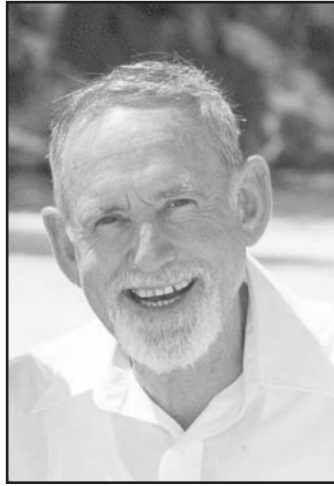
The National Gathering in March 2007 focuses on *Walking the Edge*. We hope to sharpen our focus by using the Beatitudes to help us imagine edge-walking.

In *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places*, Eugene Peterson suggests that the ten plagues were an elaborate exorcism, a casting out of demons, that freed the imagination of the Hebrews from domination by evil. This allowed them to hear and follow their Saviour and to worship God in spirit and in truth. Before Moses they were a broken people who were oppressed by a regime that idolised wealth, power and magnificence. The Hebrews could imagine no life other than one in which they felt dwarfed and insignificant in the face of gigantism, massivity, opulence, prestige, and immensity. Each plague was a blow to the invulnerability and sovereignty of the Pharaonic system.

Likewise, Jesus entered an Egyptian-like world that was dominated by the might and power of the Roman Empire and, more locally, by the Jerusalem Temple – “a godless place, extravagantly conceived and ingeniously constructed by the godless King Herod and presided over by the equally godless Caiaphas, a place where the sovereignty of God was obscured beyond recognition” (p. 168). Once again, gold, power, and magnificence dominated people’s imagination. Jesus’ cleansing of the Temple (John 2: 13-16) purged their imagination.

In the post-Biblical era we read of converts to the faith being required to enter a probationary period of up to two years before they were allowed to receive the Eucharist – times of retraining the imagination so they could understand “their lives and history in terms and images that God had used to reveal himself and his ways” (p. 169), freeing them from their taken-for-granted assumptions and patterns of thinking of their contemporary culture.

Many of us are attracted to the Wellspring Community because we sense that here we might find new ways of thinking about, of imagining, how God wants us to lead our lives in the 21st century. However,



I know that I feel, and I sense that many of us feel, that we remain in thrall to the imaginings and thought patterns of our contemporary culture. We, too, are dwarfed by the power, prestige, opulence, gigantism and the immensity of the all-pervading sovereignty and invulnerability of the economy and the market.

For these reason I pray that our Gathering will be a time in which we help each other to reframe our imaginations, to ponder the impossible,

and to dream the alternatives. In planning the Gathering, we are trying to create times for reflection and contemplation in which we might have space to allow God to set our imaginations free. We are trying to avoid labels like “workshops” because they easily lead us into familiar ways of thinking and being. We are trying to encourage creativity and opportunities for freedom and talking together. We are trying to create spaces in which we can truly imagine “walking the edge” adventurously, excitingly, trustingly, precipitously, expectantly, creatively, and above all, “beatitudinously”.

Geoff Stevenson has already started preparing some material that is designed to stimulate us cognitively (and perhaps in others ways!). We will post this material over the next few months. I am also seeking other members and friends who might prepare other stimulus materials – visual, musical, practical, tactile, kinaesthetical – that might begin to free our imagination in preparation for the Gathering. In addition, we are considering producing a book of prayers, liturgy, and worship ideas. Please let me know if you would like to contribute to either project.

Finally, I urge you to engage with the Beatitudes at least once every week – read silently, read aloud, read in groups, listen to, chant, make posters, illustrate, sing, dance, whisper, shout, type, turn into calligraphy, sculpt – so that your imagination is immersed in, saturated by, steeped in, these glorious and challenging words of Jesus.

DANCING PEACE: AWAKENING SPIRITUALITY

Judith Keller (NSW)

It is 1.30 pm on Saturday September 24 and I have arrived safely at Chester Street from my drive to Sydney from Newcastle for the sacred circle dance session. As Winter is now turning into Spring I have chosen dances and music, as well as items for our circle centre piece that reflect the changing season. I arrange blue scarves and a silver sash in a circular fashion on the floor. I set down the glass bowl filled with water and light the floating candles I have placed in the bowl.



▲ Judith with husband, Gerard

With a sense of gratitude for the beauty of this sacred place where our circle gathers I carefully arrange around the centre piece some green leaves that I collected from the back garden earlier in the day. On the wall behind me I notice the gorgeous hand painted silk banner abundant with foliage and flowers that has now been hung in the church following upon its creation as part of the Spring retreat day the previous week. I am mindful that this place and time to dance subverts the usual rush and busyness of most of my life.



▲ Jenny (left) leading a circle dance

Together with a sense of the peace and beauty of these moments I am aware of the anticipation too that grows inside of me as I await the arrival of dancers for the afternoon ahead. As on previous occasions familiar faces begin to arrive, and some new faces too. There are eleven of us in the dance circle this afternoon, both men and women. As we join hands to begin our time together I invite those present to go around the circle to introduce themselves briefly to the group. Connected hand to hand we then take a few moments before we begin to breathe deeply of the air around us. Maranatha, Come,

Lord Jesus, is silently on my breath as we do this.

I teach a number of dances for the next hour or so until we break for a cuppa. These include the Jewish dance, "Shalom", an English folk dance, "Bells of Norwich", a dance which acknowledges the life and vision of the medieval mystic Julian of Norwich and the words associated with her, "all shall be well again, I know", an Argentinean dance, "Navidad" which acknowledges in a deep way

the earth on which we stand and our connection as human beings to one another and to the earth, and the lovely dance that I myself was recently taught and simply titled, "Meditation", a dance which has been choreographed to a piece of music by the composer Brahms.

After our tea break I include time for us to sit and listen to some sacred songs from Findhorn in Scotland and then I teach the dance steps to this sublimemusic/singing, "Santo, Santo, Santo" ("Holy, Holy, Holy") and "Be Still and Know". In doing so I am conscious of the collective peace and gratitude in our hearts for this wonderful day, our holy time together, and the creativity, community and hospitality we have offered to one another and to the world by coming together in the dance circle.

When we close our gathering at the end of the afternoon we take the time for anyone in the circle to express aloud any prayers that we may wish to pray. I then encourage each of us to take something of the peace and harmony of the dance circle out of the church and into the world. Although we extinguish our floating candles to signal the end of our session, I encourage those present to believe that the light is never really extinguished as long as it lives on in our lives and in the relationships, families, communities to which we take it from the sacred circle. I remind each of us that it is not easy to be a dancer peacemaker in our world today and that to dance in a circle is indeed a subversive act of embodied hospitality to and for one another. Life frequently demands no less of us, however.

Judith has been walking the edge of places of worship through circle dance (and labyrinth walking meditation) for a number of years. Very often she is joined by other risk takers who also yearn for places both of resistance and solidarity where imagination, embodiment, creativity and the arts are central to being human and to giving birth to God in our world today. For 3 years Judith led sacred circle dance in the Chester Street Uniting Church in Epping (until May 2006). She continues to lead dance in Newcastle every month, and in the local branch of the U3A. She is presently dreaming of a community arts project that includes abled and differently abled dancers dancing in a circle as a place to dream dreams and to heal hearts.



**WALKING WITH
THE ELDERLY**
Jenny Johnston (NSW)

In recent months I have become involved in accompanying several very frail elderly people, as their health has deteriorated and they have become increasingly dependent on others to assist them with basic daily living.

For some this journey is filled with many fears – of faculties being lost, of what the future holds, and the realities of giving up their home and having to depend on others.

They are needing to complete their unfinished business, especially being reconciled with friends and relatives. They need also to tell their story; to reflect on their lives as they attempt to find meaning and awareness of their various experiences, and of their place in the universe.

I am finding it is important just to be there with them – for quality time, just listening, silently praying that they will know God’s confronting, strengthening and healing presence at this challenging time in their lives.

**WALKING THE EDGE -
AS A STRANGER**
Mary Gilchrist (NSW)

Recently I came across some notes I took years ago at a talk by Anthony J. Gittens about Christ being countercultural. This made me seek out a more recent book of his: *Ministry at the Margins* (2002).

It is about missionaries and cross-cultural situations but it stretched my mind for a little time.

There is always tension between culture and gospel. To me one way of ‘walking the edge’ is to be in unfamiliar places and amongst unfamiliar people. These can be found in our own towns, cities, nation. We are the stranger. To become a stranger effectively we must learn the process that transforms us as we encounter a new reality, new ideas. We must be willing to be absorbed into another world even if one does not fully understand it.

Strangers need a strong sense of personal identity. We understand the implications and we take them seriously. We are sensitised to giving food, giving drink, welcoming people and so on. This is excellent as far as it goes. It just does not go far enough, it does not carry us where it should. We may take these works of mercy seriously but tend to respond as the provider not as the needy person. Jesus did not say “be kind to strangers” but “we must become strangers ourselves”. “In your mind you must be the same as Christ Jesus”. (Phil 2:5).

Jesus made subordination, going one-down, a requirement of his followers. He washed their feet. As a self-declared stranger, he has nowhere to lay his head; he consorted with undesirables; he constantly crossed boundaries whether territorial, religious, ethnic, tender or kinship. “He came into his own and his own did not receive him” (Jn 1:11)

To choose to be at the edge is to undertake an inferior role with the hope that it leads to encounters, to promote relationships and to facilitate mutuality. As we cross boundaries and enter other worlds we have no right to claim the role of being one-up but every reason to be in the role of stranger or one-down.

“We can actually choose to venture further and further from our comfort zone and to trust ourselves to those who live at the edges of our comfortable little world. We can reflect that Jesus, sent to the outcasts and those on the margins, also had to choose, to seek and to find the needy. If we gather all this knowledge and experience into prayer, we can allow ourselves to be graced as strangers.” (Page 155)

Mary, like Jenny, is a member of the Wellspring Council; she is a member of the Sydney South cell group.

THE STONE THE BUILDERS REJECTED

A prayer by Kathy Galloway

Let us pray for those whose lives are wilderness...

Those who are hungry and thirsty...

Those who are all alone...

Those who are prevented from being the people

God made them to be...

For the stone which the builders rejected
is made the cornerstone.

Let us pray for those whose own
will not receive them...

Those who are not listened to..

Those who are under constant threat...

For the stone which the builders rejected
is made the cornerstone.

Let us pray for those whose calling is denied..

Those who cannot speak their name...

Those whose gifts are not recognized and affirmed...

For the stone which the builders rejected
is made the cornerstone.

Let us pray for those who are judged
and condemned...

Those who are blinded by their own
self-righteousness...

Let us pray for ourselves...

For the stone which the builders rejected
is made the cornerstone.

O Christ, you lived as an ordinary man,
not in style but simply,

yet you still caused an uproar,

and questions everywhere, you drew the
expectations of hungry crowds,

and brought buried conflicts to the light.

May we, who are sometimes swayed

by the crowd's approval,

and who often avoid conflict for fear of its cost to us,
stand firm in the gospel of justice and peace

and follow faithfully in your way of compassion

and solidarity with those who are poor and

excluded, where it may lead us.

Amen.

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