

The cover of the journal 'Refresh' features a photograph of a winter landscape. In the foreground, there are several trees heavily laden with snow, their branches creating a delicate, white web. Behind them, a simple, light-colored building with a dark roof is visible. The background consists of dark, snow-covered hills or mountains under a pale, overcast sky. The overall mood is quiet and serene.

# Refresh

Journal of Contemplative Spirituality  
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## Healing



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Fire and Water by Trish Harris <http://ribbonwooddesigns.com>

# Contemplation as a tool of healing

by Liz Maluschnig

Contemplation is coming home. Imagine God is the ocean and we're each a tiny wave busy rising and falling in this infinite ocean. Each wave only sees its own motion and thinks of itself as separate, saying 'I am wave'. But, when the wave settles down instantly recognises its source – Ocean.

This is true for all of us. When we stop our busyness, we return to our Source – God. We transcend *our* mind, going beyond it to *God's* mind. Healing happens in this place of deep contemplation where that sense of separateness dissolves and we expand into Oneness with our Source. Cynthia Bourgeault suggests 'our own being and the divine become more and more mysteriously interwoven.'

Healing is holistic – involving the Whole of our mindbody and the spirit that flows through our mindbody and infuses us with life. The ancient Hebrew word for this was *nepesh*.

To begin the healing process through contemplation, we need to move out of our protective response where the energising of adrenaline is the dominant force and move into a growth or relaxation response where we can open up in safety.

When adrenaline dominates, our body is prepared to fight, flee or freeze – our heart rate, breathing and blood pressure increase, our immune system, digestion and tissue healing are suppressed. Emotionally and spiritually speaking, we don't absorb, nourish, digest and integrate our experiences. This release of adrenaline may come from any perceived threat – physical, emotional or spiritual. Our body becomes contracted as adrenaline flows freely through our mindbody. We move fast and think fast! But this level of stress can become a way of life and an identity for us and hinder physical and emotional healing.

When we move into the growth or relaxation response, we move from the sympathetic to the parasympathetic nervous system. We relax and begin to connect – with ourselves and with God. We stop trying to achieve, and rest in the belief that: I am enough, I have enough, I do enough. Cynthia Bourgeault says '*we all have a Mary deep within glued to the feet of her Master, but the clarity of our listening is obscured by our outer Martha who has the whole world on her shoulders*'.

Contemplation teaches us to live in our parasympathetic nervous system where through feeling safe, we can put our defenses down, slow down and open up to Life and God. It's the place where healing happens, where we can rest and digest physically, emotionally

**'When we stop listening to our body  
our relationship with it breaks down  
and we don't know when we need  
to relax, exercise, eat, have fun  
or be alone.'**

and spiritually. Here we receive and absorb the lessons of life, allowing us to accept love and nurture from our relationships and the environment.

Emotionally and spiritually, we enter a place beyond *our* mind and into the place of Silence where God is. As we learn to do this we take 'practising the presence of God' into our whole everyday life: reflecting what Brother Lawrence described centuries ago.

We develop dual awareness. We notice our reactions and are less reactive. We notice where we feel physical or emotional pain in our bodies. When we feel wounded, we bring comfort and compassion to ourselves, rather than indulge in defensive patterns that hurt us or those around us.

Today we tend to be stimulation addicts. Contemplation helps soften the way we look at life and ourselves. We move into our aware mind where our true self and God live. There we find spaciousness, connection, a place of relaxation, and a place where the heart leads.

Michael Leunig describes this beautifully:

*God help us to live slowly*

*To move simply*

*To look softly*

*To allow emptiness*

*To let the heart create for us*

*Amen.*

### **Developing Awareness of Thoughts**

To live contemplatively, we need to develop our aware, intuitive or observing mind. We learn to notice our thoughts rather than allow them to dominate us... 'we are not our thoughts' as Jill Bolte Taylor reminds us in *My Stroke of Insight*. As we move into our aware mind, 'the observer', we notice our thoughts, but we aren't fused with them.

Through the compassionate observer in us, we reconnect with our feelings, needs, body, intuition and thinking. Marcus Borg describes this movement as the meaning of repentance: going 'beyond the mind or into the larger mind' and reconnecting with our Source, with God.

Einstein noted '*our intuitive mind is our greatest gift, our thinking mind is its faithful servant. We've glorified the servant and forgotten the gift.*'

### **Developing Awareness of Our Body**

When we stop listening to our body, our relationship with it breaks down. We don't know when we need to relax, exercise, eat, have fun or be alone. When we disconnect from our body and let thinking dominate, we move out of the flow of the Spirit within us.



Listening to our body is a powerful part of healing as Eckhart Tolle explains:

*'The more consciousness you bring into the body, the stronger the immune system becomes...as if every cell awakens and rejoices. The body loves your attention. It's a potent form of self-healing. Most illnesses creep in when you are not present in the body. If the master is not present in the house, all kinds of shady characters will take up residence there. When you inhabit your body it will be hard for unwanted guests to enter.'*

In contemplation we deeply connect with our physical body and tune into our feelings, needs, instincts and impulses.

### **Developing awareness of our emotions – the practice of compassion**

We need to feel *all* our emotions! In a stress response we tend to repress our emotions in our mindbody, where they're buried alive, yet continue to work powerfully within us.

Joy Cowley reminds us *'we carry our childhood within us and live out of it everyday'*. As

children, we develop survival strategies to protect ourselves from feeling the intensity of painful circumstances. As adults, though these situations no longer exist, we continue emotional repression as a way of life. We push down unwanted thoughts, feelings and memories and store them in our mindbody.

Whenever we feel pain we seek some kind of 'pleasure' so we don't have to feel the pain. A good question to ask yourself is, 'what feeling am I eating, shopping, drinking, or running from, with my busyness?'

**'In the stress response we tend to repress our emotions into our mindbody where they are buried alive yet continue to work powerfully within us.'**

In 'the practice of compassion' we hold on to our inner child's hand: our child-self who still feels insecure, afraid, and needy. As we notice what we're doing to avoid fear and pain, we bring our child-self into the patient, compassionate divine presence where healing happens. Once we learn to do this for ourselves, we can offer it to others. We become conduits of the Great Listener. By allowing intense feelings to be experienced, we grow in courage and confidence and experience transformation and healing.

In the practice of compassion we are *with* our suffering, not avoiding it or running from it. As Carl Jung remarked: *'One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light but by facing the darkness'*.

And of course the darkness is our own frightened inner child.

Cynthia Bourgeault describes this process as *'divine therapy – the path of inner healing and transformation. This practice loosens repressed material in the unconscious and penetrates deeper and deeper into the bedrock of pain, the origin of our personal false self.'*

Researcher Gary Schwartz discovered our capacity to 'Attend to, Connect with and Express' our emotions creates the optimal climate for healing. He calls this the ACE factor. During contemplation we notice and connect with our feelings, and living contemplatively we begin to express them in a healthy way. In 1990, psychiatrist David Spiegel studied women with breast cancer who practised the ACE factor in group therapy. The results were incredible. Each of these women lived twice as long as those who didn't participate in the group.

### **Bringing Contemplation into our everyday life**

Using Contemplation as a healing tool means living a life in balance. There's a sense in which we live on two axes: the horizontal, where all the daily drama of life occurs; a place of stress where we're running to have more or running from not having or being enough; and the vertical where our true self lives. The vertical axis can open up through trauma or illness or in contemplation.

Here we develop the qualities of presence, patience, space, stillness, compassion, forgiveness, empathy and gratitude. On this axis we stay connected to God, even though the surface of our life is full of drama and busyness. Like a scuba diver plunging ever deeper on a stormy day – in the depths of our hearts there is always Stillness and Connection. Here we become human *beings* not human *doings*.

If you hadn't noticed, these two axes make up a cross, a symbol of the integration of the sacred with the secular. Jesus was God, spirit made flesh – a worldly life infused with spiritual qualities. The regular practice of contemplation connects our flesh with God the Life-giver. We become balanced, transformed, and complete. We experience physical, emotional and spiritual healing. We become 'full' filled every moment with God, the infinite loving energy of the universe. And we have this unconditional, sustainable love to give to others. Cynthia Bourgeault describes this as Kenosis, '*as we are filled so we give it away*'.

And so we pray daily: *May I be filled with Loving Kindness, May this loving kindness flow through me to others.*

**'Like a scuba diver plunging ever deeper on a stormy day – in the depths of our hearts there is always Stillness and Connection.'**

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# Like Mary

by Joanne Fergusson

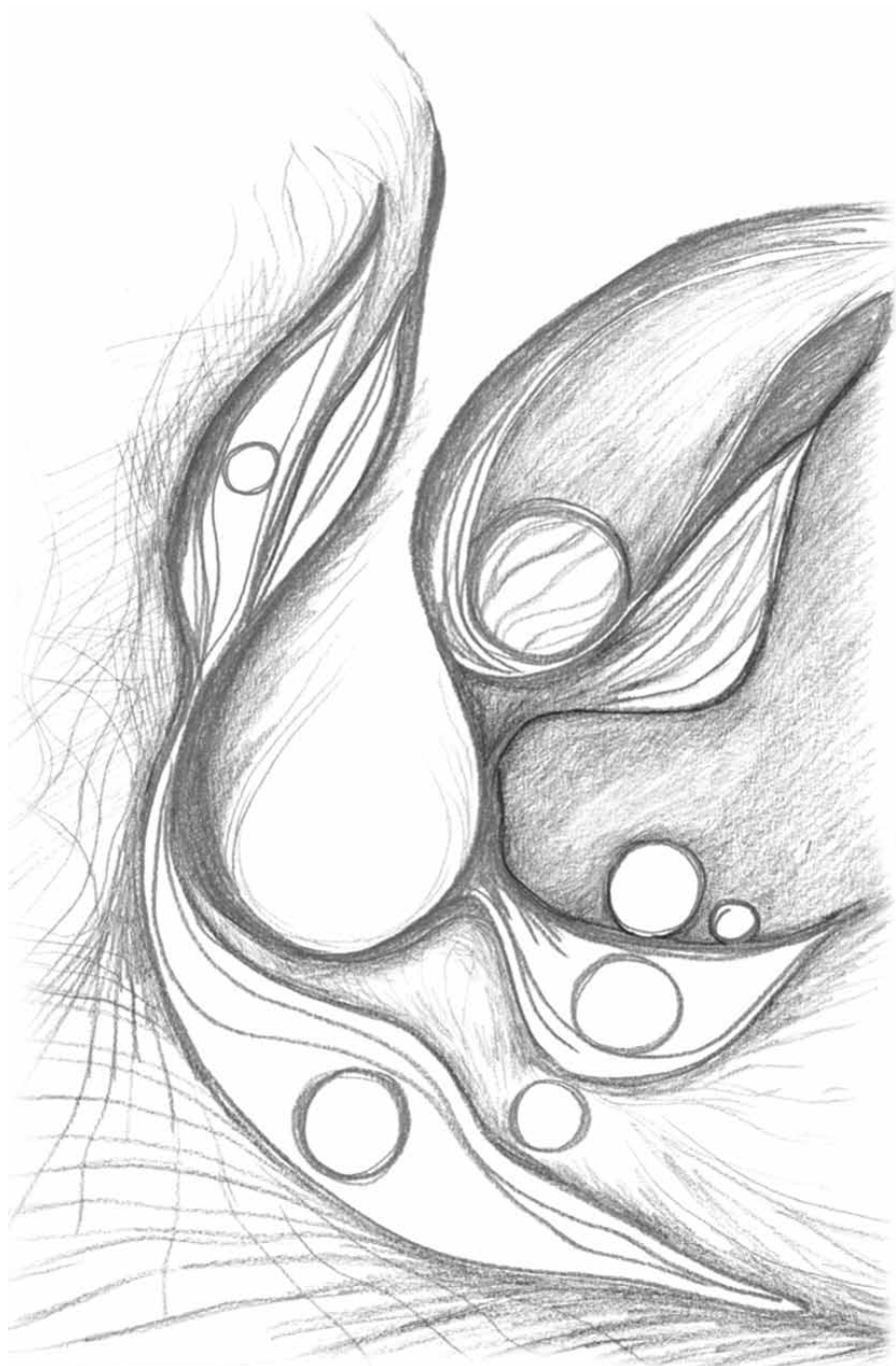
Luke 10:38- 42

Sitting at the feet of Jesus  
sitting near to all that's good  
sitting at the feet of Jesus  
no one telling me 'I should'

He is looking down towards me  
I am looking up at Him  
sitting at the feet of Jesus  
I feel His peace and rest within

Sitting at the feet of Jesus  
there's no pressure to perform  
sitting at the feet of Jesus  
feeling safe and inly warm

Sitting at the feet of Jesus  
I will let Him run the world  
sitting at the feet of Jesus  
where my heart and soul are healed.



Small Awakenings by Trish Harris <http://ribbonwooddesigns.com>

# The fabric called healing

by Trish Harris

For me, healing is a subject full of gaps. A gossamer fabric with great holes in it. I wish it were woven together evenly and beautifully, but this piece of fabric insists on being what it is – a combination of intense, difficult feelings, liberating images, unhelpful theology, unfathomable God, relationships that sustain, childhood experiences, deep appreciation when others share honestly, a world that contains mystery.

My experience of growing up with a disability has profoundly shaped all of that, so that's where I'd like to begin.

When I was a child I used to imagine if I stayed still long enough, God would be able to operate on me, and I would be healed. I knew my hot and painful joints, and a disease set on taking over, would take some fixing, so I guess I put two and two together, and came up with a child's understanding of how God might operate, literally, in my life.

But I wasn't healed, and I didn't get better. There was hospital and drugs and being sick and losing movement, separation from peers and siblings and everyone else I knew who could move with ease.

There were also prayers. As an adult, on my first OE across the Tasman I sat next to a nun who, once we got talking, I discovered had prayed for me when I was a child. My great aunt was a nun, and she'd spread the word throughout her congregation.

Praying was part of life at school, at home, and at church. We prayed for people, that whatever was wrong was fixed. I guess we also prayed because we loved them. I know I was prayed for by many, but as a child who 'didn't

get better', at some unspeakable level, I thought maybe it was my fault.

Our Catholic catechism gave me the word for this – sin. Maybe it was my sin that caused this stubborn disease which couldn't be cured by drugs or prayer?

Growing up in our Catholic world, prayer and healing were like wallpaper in the background of everyday life. As a young adult, however, I can remember two instances where talk of prayer and personal healing were explicit. A friend joined a charismatic house-church down the road and was very keen for me to go. I finally said yes, the night before I went to hospital for my second hip replacement.

At the end of the service, my friend wanted the leader to pray for me.

He asked which hip was being taken out, and proceeded to pray fervently for it to be healed and no operation needed. When I walked out, I didn't feel much different. I

**Maybe it was my sin that caused this stubborn disease which couldn't be cured by drugs or prayer?**

got home to be met by my irate father, and had the hip operation as planned. I didn't expect the hip to be healed, and part of me had been praying just as hard for nothing to happen.

I've often wondered why I felt like this. And as an adult, I've only begun to understand my complex feelings around healing. Some of my fear and hesitation was about: If this joint *had* been healed, how would I explain it to the waiting surgeon? We'd been leading up to this operation for years. How would I explain it to my family? How would I explain it to the rest of the joints in my body? And how would I explain it to my heart and soul - that for 14 years I'd endured this changing body and changing life, and now, for some unknown reason, God had decided to act.....to fix one hip.

Another experience involved deciding not to go to the 'sacrament for the sick' at our local Catholic church. One of my brothers thought I wasn't helping myself if I didn't take everything on offer. Why didn't I go? I know I hated anything that made me stand out. But it was more than that: how could I bear to hope, when everything I experienced in the past caused me to believe nothing would change? It was safer to protect myself from disappointment.

One thing I did want, though, was understanding. I wanted someone to hear my story and my reality, and realise if I suddenly had a different 'healed' body, I wouldn't know who I was any longer....that you couldn't take a knife and get rid of this bit and not that...that I was a whole person.

I heard a definition of healing five years ago, which opened a door for me. It came from a participant in an SGM Spiritual Direction workshop who said, 'healing is about growing into a greater freedom'. It's a definition full of hope and respect. It's not saying healing's an event, but more a process – with no expectations, timeframes or tests of faith.

I've thought about it writing this; wondering what helps me grow into greater freedom, as I consider my experience living in this body, and my relationship with the Spirit. One way that helps is to claim the depth of feelings around this area for me.

In 2003, Dennis Clow spoke on *Christians Coping with Chronic Debilitating Illness* at the Disability, Spirituality & Faith Conference. He said 'A healing service can bring about the miracle of spiritual healing, which in the last analysis, is the most important healing of all... Nevertheless you and I are still left with our disabilities and with all the pain, frustration and despair that can go with them'.

He went on to say the Christian Church is called by scriptures to hear and give voice to this and 'not to attempt to paper over the cracks with a glib and trite piety that pretends as long as we have faith enough to praise God then God will somehow magic all the pain away'. He cited Rachel in Jeremiah (31:15) who 'refuses comfort because of her rage at the senseless slaughter of her children' and *Rachel's Cry* by Billman and Migliore, which calls Rachel's resistance, 'both a protest to and a waiting on God...'

Another way I grow into greater freedom, is reading 'new' theology, especially from disabled people. Nancy Eiesland, author of *The Disabled God*, says 'Jesus Christ as the disabled God provides a symbolic prototype and opens the door to the theological task of rethinking Christian symbols, metaphors, rituals, and doctrines so as to make them accessible to people with disabilities and remove their able-bodied bias'.

She goes on to say, 'theological implications of the disabled God resist the notion of power as absolute control over human-divine affairs. For people with disabilities who have grasped divine healing as the only liberating image the traditional church has offered, relinquishing belief in an all-powerful God who could heal, if He would, is painful. Yet who is this god whose attention we cannot get, whose inability to respond to our pain causes still more pain? This god is surely not Emmanuel – God for us.'

A third way is taking notice of the connection between healing and reconciliation. Reconciliation can involve giving people space to tell their stories (as I've been telling mine) and individuals and institutions taking responsibility for any wrongs that have been done. What are the stories of disabled people within faith communities? And what are the stories of disabled people who find no place in faith communities?

A fourth way is allowing that gossamer fabric to be exactly what it is, no matter how much I'd like to 'even it out'. My experience of living in this body has led to an understanding of prayer as an expression of love, and/or yearning, but not as a magical act. And led to an understanding of God, or the Spirit, more as mystery, than anything else.

I also have to claim a lot of 'I don't knows', and tough old knots whose tension I sometimes need to revisit and at others just to respect.

It is thirty years since the experiences in the first part of this article. In the meantime, the disease has 'burnt out' and I manage the on-going disability and its significant impact with planning and a lot of help. Having my story deeply heard through professional support has made it possible to make changes. This, currently, is the fabric called 'healing', for me. Of course it will be different for others.

**'Yet who is this god whose attention we cannot get, whose inability to respond to our pain causes still more pain? This god is surely not Emmanuel – God for us.' Eiesland**



**This is the ground from which the tree seeks water**  
by Trish Harris <http://ribbonwooddesigns.com>

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Church Mental Health Lobby *A healthy spirituality*, paper presented by Michael Watson and Brenda Cheyne

Rev Andy Calder, *Healing Rituals: Hocus Pocus or a Hopeful Whirlwind?*



# Healing the blind beggar

by Paul Fromont

## Framing the Picture

Art invites encounter. Has a way of opening hearts. Like life, art has the means to break us open, and thus can be a profound means of healing.

Marriage too, this paradoxical mystery, both the most sublime of joys and the most painful of 'aches'<sup>1</sup> invites encounter<sup>2</sup>, healing, and growth; the kind of transformative work that can happen in no other place<sup>3</sup>.

The 'ache' of my marriage, the ache of longing, love, dreams, and hope foundered in late 2011 upon the jagged rocks of its ending. As I write this I'm profoundly unsure if anything life-giving will emerge from the painful gaping wound left by the loss, and the ever-deepening cuts of post-separation choices and behaviour. I feel profound sadness for all the potential and life that will now never be unwrapped by the two of us.

I acutely feel the deep hurt of being told I am no longer loved nor wanted.

My parents recently discovered a beautiful picture of us taken only a few months before the 'end', at a family celebration. It moved me to lament and tears. With all my heart I wanted a different outcome, but it was not to be.

Roger Housden reminds us, while we can run away *from* marriage, 'in marriage there's no escape, from the dark corners of another human being...no escape from the mirror another casts on my own sorry state,' nor we on theirs. 'It summons into awareness the fears, resentments, disillusion, the sheer difficulty that comes with the fact of being human. The savage grace that is marriage is 'the willingness to live with your **eyes open**, fearing neither what you will **see** in the other, nor what they will **see** in you<sup>4</sup>.' I am grateful for that 'presence', and for what it wrought in me over the years of our marriage.

*We look for communion*

*And are turned away, beloved,*

*Each and each... Levertov, "The Ache of Marriage".*

'Love', Rilke tells us, 'is difficult. For one human being to love another...is perhaps the most difficult task entrusted to us, the ultimate task, the final test and proof, the work for which all other work is merely preparation.'



Healing the blind man by Brian Jekel  
<http://www.dayspring.com/>

1 "The Ache of Marriage", a poem by Denise Levertov.

2 "Don't lock me in wedlock; I want marriage, an encounter..." Levertov "About Marriage".

3 *Getting the Love You Want: A Guidebook for Couples* by Harville Hendrix.

4 "A Hidden Joy" in *Ten Poems to Open Your Heart* by Roger Housden, 84

And so, with Rilke and Housden, while still deep within a dark, disorienting painful night, I encountered John's story of the blind beggar [John 1:1-23] through a very moving walk-through art installation, *A Theology of Sight* created and curated by Hamilton-based artist, Maree Aldridge.

### Healing through a radical shift in seeing

We all have blind spots. Inevitably we **see** what we want or *need* to see, but there's always *more* if we're willing to look again from a different angle.

This touching art installation invited me into a radical shift in vision. It invited *metanoia*, what Thomas Moore describes as the 'discovery of a new world of meaning...without *metanoia*', he counsels, 'without a real change of understanding, we apply old solutions to our problems and get nowhere. A deep-seated shift in vision leads to fresh solutions' and invitations.

Changed vision and healing go together, not least in the healing of human experiences of estrangement. It opens us to the possibility of radical **new seeing**, new beginnings, and new *experiences* of life and living. It invites intentional acts of resistance against our all too human tendency to objectify, betray, retaliate, disrespect, demean, blame, to dehumanise and demonise the 'other', often for no other reason than to justify our own behaviour or nourish our egos. Aldridge's installation made this heartbreakingly clear to me.

I saw, and continue to **see**, my own failures, my own contribution. And I regret this radical shift of perspective didn't occur in time for us – *together* – to work with *grace* to heal and 'make beauty out of ugly things' [U2]. In time, to enliven each other and renew our marriage through what psychologist Harville Hendrix calls the move from an unconscious to a '*conscious* relationship'.

*'As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"'*

But as healing has come in the small ways, I've found strength to do what I never foresaw in 1993: to reluctantly let my wife's choices stand, to let her go because I love her and want life, healing, and love for her. Even if that means our journeys are sadly no longer intimately intertwined.

Again and again I'm reminded I can't change her, can't control her. Her decisions are hers alone to make. I can't influence whether she'll ever *see* what I see, *feel* what I feel, or *know* the pain of abandonment and sheer powerlessness I experienced. But I hope she'll one day realise the invitations to wholeness and growth that lay as unwrapped gifts for her within our marriage.

### After an ending: continuing to journey deeper into Christ

The story of the blind beggar, remixed in Aldridge's installation, also brought me to a place of sad realisation: in my marriage I'd rarely been **seen**, accepted and loved for who

I most deeply was. I'd also been profoundly objectified. As a consequence, I'm not sure the person being discarded is actually even *me*, the person I've become, and the person I will become in Christ.<sup>5</sup>

I wrote this poem for my wife last year.

*It is not the future that I fear  
only that  
under a gaze  
I will be and become no more  
than who I once felt I needed to be  
or couldn't help myself being...*

This healing shift in seeing also invites me to confess the ways **my seeing** is only ever partial, and more often than not, self-serving and oblivious to the needs and feelings of others, not un-lovingly so, but blindly, nonetheless.

As I let go, turn slowly outwards and look forward, Rowan Williams' words remain poignant<sup>6</sup>. Because I did glimpse the 'resurrected one' in Aldridge's art. The one who, 'after those closest to him betrayed him and left him to die alone, returns as the source of grace and hope to those treacherous and fearful friends.' Jesus now appears, 'as the agency of a completely gratuitous love. Right outside the calculations, rewards and punishments of human relationships that dominate the 'ordinary' human world, with its underlying assumption we [can only ever] live at each other's expense'.

The resurrection of Jesus makes it *impossible* to accept that the world will always be just oppressors and victims, reactive violence, dread, blame, recrimination, relationship breakdown, and suffering.

**Changed vision and healing go together, not least in the healing of human experiences of estrangement.**

I don't know what form our future relationship will take, but I know paradoxically, the difficult things I do that stretch me beyond myself to enact love and embody care, will bring to me the greatest healing and growth. For these are actions consistent with cruciform-forgiveness, resurrection and new creation. In this work, I'll know, experience and **see** Jesus, whose likeness needs always to be more embodied by my life. There are invitations too to resist fear, let go at deeper and deeper levels, and trust God more honestly with my future and that of my children. My life and theirs is not over; and maybe it hasn't even begun.

*The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could **see**...*

<sup>5</sup> "When Love Fails" Salisbury's *Staying Love: The Top Secrets of Great Relationships*

<sup>6</sup> Rowan Williams foreword to *Alison's Knowing Jesus*, pp. vii-viii.

# Healing the incurable

by Mary McIntyre

My first experience of healing followed the sudden death of my mother in 1970. Overnight our family lost a 54 year old mother and wife in events that had us wondering how life could take such strange and tragic twists.

Over months and years we watched as Dad learned to cope without his soul mate, while supporting his daughters as we married and had families without a mother beside us to enjoy the preparation and celebration.

Healing after such an experience is different for everyone. For me, it was a gradual process, learning to accept and then move on, to live a life as fully as possible in a situation imposed upon me. Dad's strength and faith were the outstanding influence on us all. Even through his grief and pain he was able to acknowledge his God would not leave him alone.

Dad's faith was very practical and God wasn't an 'insurance policy'.

How we lived and coped with life was our decision. As I watched my father, I observed a slow healing process taking place and this helped me greatly with my own. I came to understand the key elements in my healing.

First among these was the love and support of my husband. When siblings and parents are coping with their own grief, they aren't always able to support each other. Next, I discovered new stages and developments like marriage, travel, and the arrival of babies, all bring a new purpose to life. I began to accept 'stuff' happens in life and everyone has to cope with challenges. I experienced the love of God through people who supported me in so many ways: from taking time to talk, make my lunch, smile across the room, or help when a situation became difficult.

Now in 2012, I face another challenge. I've been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. This was as sudden and unexpected as my mother's death. Since receiving the news, my life's been an on-going treatment programme. From my former roles working at the local College, active membership in Rotary, and national presidency of Presbyterian Women, the focus has changed completely to medical appointments, managing life around limited energy, and making optimistic yet realistic plans.

In this situation, healing takes many forms. The grief of giving up important, challenging and exciting roles is very real. And the process of acceptance and letting go is gradual.

Although no one has any surety about the future, to be told you have a terminal illness adds another dimension. Living for the day and making the most of it, is my aim. Achieving this is a definite stage of healing.

I'm comfortable with the knowledge that God is my life force and walks this path with me. Acceptance of the unknown takes longer. But I very much see it as part of the healing process.

Thomas Merton once said, 'True encounter with God liberates something within us, a power we did not know we had, a hope, a capacity for life, a resilience, an ability to bounce back when we thought we were completely defeated; a capacity to grow and change, a power of creative transformation.'

Our state of body, mind and spirit all contribute to healing. But it's not always easy when you're not feeling well. I found simple, natural food is what my body needs especially under stress. Plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, water and other liquids and foods I really like are top priority. Smaller portions more often, rather than three main meals, also helps.

I've found that a positive attitude, peace of mind and emotional wellbeing work together towards healing of our bodies. Research shows their great value in coping with illness or injury. For most of us this involves a conscious effort to keep life in balance. And in my case, I completely removed words like 'dreary' and 'poorly' from my vocabulary. And I told others about it, to reinforce my decision.

Even though peace of mind isn't always easy to maintain, and anxiety is never far away, prayers offered by others and those I pray myself are both strengthening and comforting. I pray my body will respond to treatment, and that I'll have the strength to cope with all that's in front of me. I pray my husband and family will be loved and supported by those near and dear to them when times are tough.

I give thanks for the love that surrounds me from family and friends, at home and around the world; for the skill and compassion of the medical team I work with; and any positive results I have from treatment.

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer reflected from prison, healing takes many forms, each one working towards 'living every day as if it were our last, and yet living in faith as though there were to be a great future.'

**'True encounter with God liberates something within us, a power we did not know we had, a hope, a capacity for life, a resilience, an ability to bounce back when we thought we were completely defeated; a capacity to grow and change, a power of creative transformation.'**

**Thomas Merton**







# The Walk of Healing

by Jo Anastasiadis

The road You have taken me on has led  
Down into the valley of the shadow  
Where I feared much evil, but found none,  
Save what I truly thought about myself.

I have climbed the mountain of pain  
To the precipice of despair,  
Death awaiting, threatening on each side.  
The walk narrow  
Between the cliff of self-pity,  
With the rocks of depression below;  
And the scree of the past  
Offering a slippery slope backwards to where I began.

I have heard my own self echo off the canyon of truth  
Vibrating throughout my reality.  
Traversed the desert of self-sacrifice,  
My thirst growing, my will dying;  
Control being handed to God again and again.  
Finding new life at oases of refreshing,  
Yet beyond still, desert's death in all directions.

I have seen myself in the pond of silence,  
The water sometimes crystal clear:  
Truth obvious to sight;  
Sometimes ruffled by the wind of self-deception:  
Truth distorted, the liquid indistinct, blurred.

I have walked the beach of companionship,  
Jesus by my side and praise in my heart  
Oneness a part of every stride.  
I have wandered the plain of tears  
Wondering where my Companion has gone,  
Feeling the pain of the child uncried for many years.

Turned my back on my Companion  
And walked the base of the volcano of anger  
Smouldering with resentment.  
Stumbled onto the circuit of forgiveness  
A road that circles and crosses many others  
And brings me back to myself.  
I have circled the walls of self-preservation,  
The brick work impenetrable even to me.  
Crossed the drawbridge of self-revelation  
Facing the truth of how I view myself and God.  
Travelled to the plantation of the past  
To discover the slavery to sins, lies and deception  
Planted by the deceiver many years ago.  
Hesitantly stepped the stones of self-disclosure  
Constantly fearing the quicksand of rejection,  
I have faced the enemy of confession:  
Shame and fear burning deeply in my heart;  
Only to realise my enemy was, in fact, a friend.

Meandering into the meadow of love and compassion  
I have lain in the grass allowing  
Your care to seep into me.  
I have trodden the forest of solitude  
Where You have pervaded my soul,  
Transforming without sight with each footfall.

I have been drawn still further  
Into the narrow trail of sorrow and sadness;  
Thorns scratching through past emotions,  
Exposing rejection and grief.  
Plummeted into the abyss of hopelessness,  
The darkness complete without and within.  
Rowed the ocean of fear  
In a dinghy swamped by the surging waves.  
Immobile from the coldness of terror,  
Holding to the ineffective oars of self-effort,  
Waiting for the island of faith or trust to appear.

I have been stranded in No Man's Land,  
The battle between truth and lies  
Raging around me.  
Stopped at the inn of exhaustion  
Too tired to continue;  
Sitting amid neutrality  
Seeking neither to feel nor to change;  
Not wanting to face the road again.  
Yet reprieve from travel, gifts energy,  
So I have journeyed on at Your encouragement.  
I have searched for the fountain of instant healing  
That the rest of the road may be walked  
Without pain or difficulty.  
But healing has not been a destination.  
The journey has brought a little more health  
only one stride after another,  
one landscape at a time.  
Little by little the soul's wounds receive care.  
And always my Companion of the road  
Beckons me forward;  
New terrain awaiting our travelling feet,  
Along the Walk of Healing.

## Why Lord?

by Jo Anastasiadis

"Why Lord?"

Question without answer,  
Nothing gained only ventured.

"I hurt!"

Pain pierces, stabbing the core.

Why? Receives no reply.

"Just wave your magic wand  
Grant me my three wishes."

Tears spill,

Pain elevates rising to the hundredth floor

The basement long forgotten.

The cry rises screamed from silent lips:

"It hurts! Stop it hurting!"

The clawed hand has ripped my midriff open;

The pain of rejection rises

Threatening to split me a thousand ways.

Loneliness rakes its claws;

The soul torn and tattered.

It reminds me

Of the spear tipped with anger plunged into my centre.

Twisted, it ripped love from its home;

Fear took root within the wound;

Love and acceptance were unable to penetrate.

The blade slashed the heart.

Blood poured unchecked into the soul.

Poisoned by self's denial

The hard knot of resentment plugged the hole.

Weariness seeps into my bones.

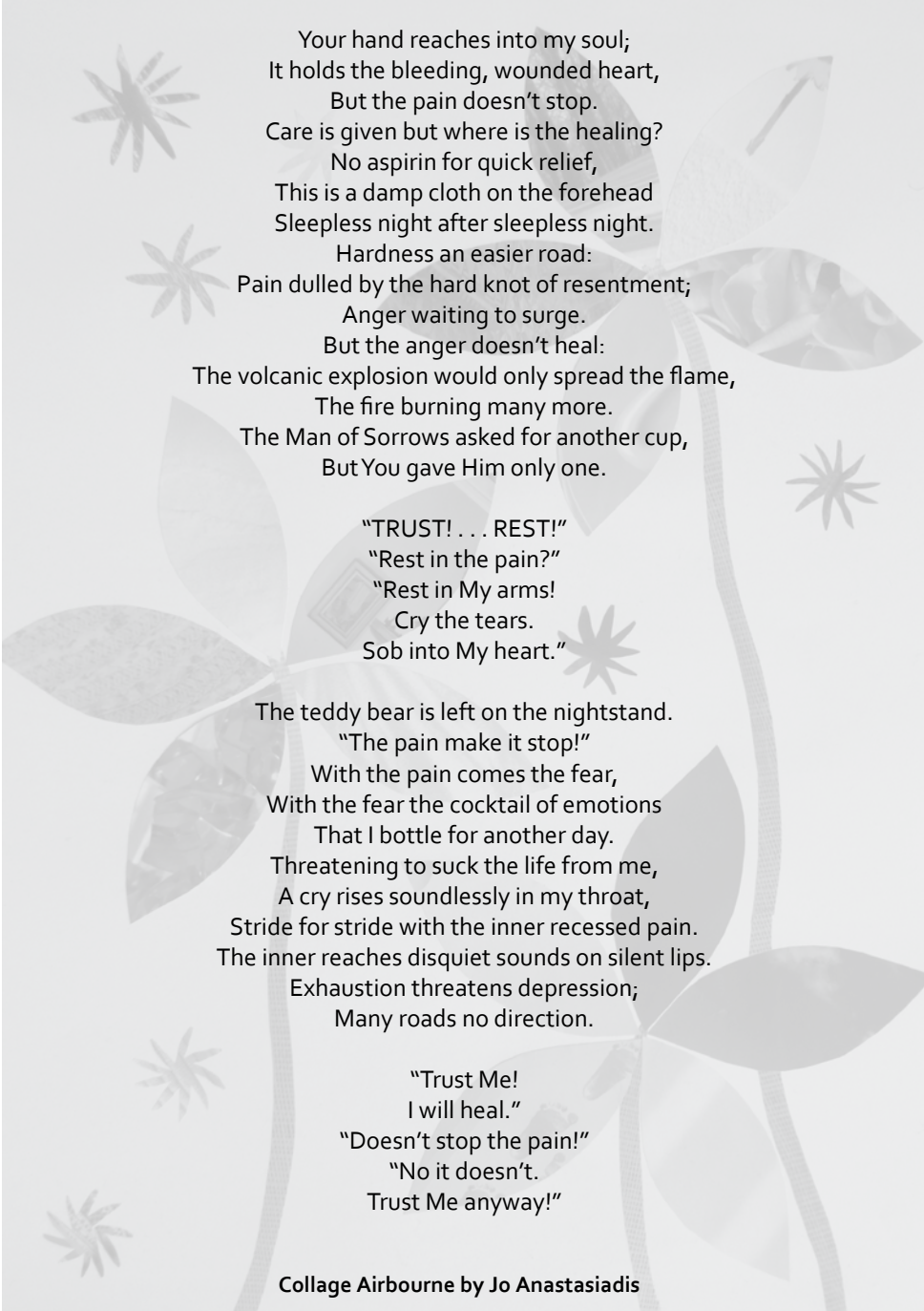
I'm tired of fighting:

I surrender to the pain,

Hopelessness a close second.

No packet healing, just add water,

Instant wholeness at the drive through.



Your hand reaches into my soul;  
It holds the bleeding, wounded heart,  
But the pain doesn't stop.  
Care is given but where is the healing?  
No aspirin for quick relief,  
This is a damp cloth on the forehead  
Sleepless night after sleepless night.  
Hardness an easier road:  
Pain dulled by the hard knot of resentment;  
Anger waiting to surge.  
But the anger doesn't heal:  
The volcanic explosion would only spread the flame,  
The fire burning many more.  
The Man of Sorrows asked for another cup,  
But You gave Him only one.

"TRUST! . . . REST!"

"Rest in the pain?"

"Rest in My arms!

Cry the tears.

Sob into My heart."

The teddy bear is left on the nightstand.  
"The pain make it stop!"  
With the pain comes the fear,  
With the fear the cocktail of emotions  
That I bottle for another day.  
Threatening to suck the life from me,  
A cry rises soundlessly in my throat,  
Stride for stride with the inner recessed pain.  
The inner reaches disquiet sounds on silent lips.  
Exhaustion threatens depression;  
Many roads no direction.

"Trust Me!

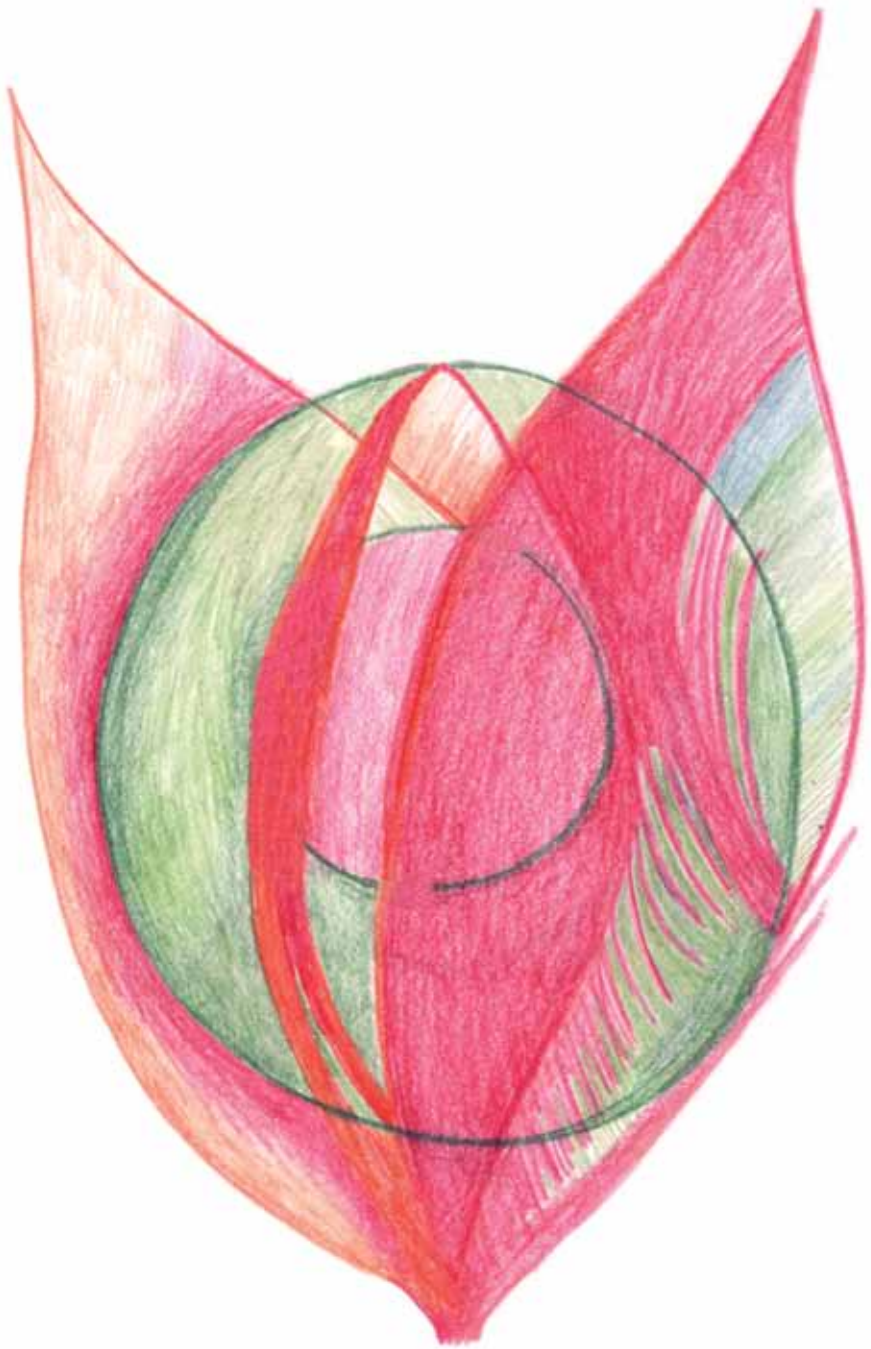
I will heal."

"Doesn't stop the pain!"

"No it doesn't.

Trust Me anyway!"

Collage Airbourne by Jo Anastasiadis



Opening out to joy by Trish Harris <http://ribbonwooddesigns.com>



# Whole, holy and healing

by Peter Stuart

Archbishop Michael Ramsey once wrote, *'To be healthy and to be whole is no substitute for being penitent, forgiven and holy'*.<sup>1</sup> Not everyone would agree with him! However I, for one, think he was right. I think his words go to the heart of many discussions about the nature of the Christian ministry of healing - the validity of which I deeply believe.

Now, is healing (i.e. the Church's ministry of healing), about holiness or wholeness? And what is its relationship to prayer and contemplation?

There's certainly an overlap between holiness and wholeness. Yet people often glibly identify holiness with wholeness and these are not the same. Why?

Because to be *holy* means to be consecrated to and by God; to be centred on God and God's will. To be *whole* means to be integrated around a centre, and a lot depends on what or who that 'centre' is.

I've met people who are very integrated around a centre other than God. Some 'have their shit together' to a degree many Christians don't, yet are nevertheless destructive of others. And I've met God-centred people who, though still visibly wounded at one or other level of their being and not (yet) whole, are true channels of God's love and healing.

The search for 'wholeness' through 'healing' can, all too easily, be selfish.

Another word that helps us grasp the meaning of wholeness is 'simplicity': in the sense of having an undivided heart in the face of the multiplicity of this transient world.

Raymond Pannikar writes:

*All that is in us and around us seems to be manifold...Furthermore, the very many parts of the universe and of our own being seem to be in strife with one another...Nor is this all. Everything seems to be fleeting, inconsistent, passing away....All is vanity. Plurality is a fact. The world is complicated, and so we are often worried and perplexed because we appear to be incapable of handling the many things that interest and yet trouble us.*

*Monkhood is a radical reaction against such a state of affairs. If Man has been defined as the only animal that knows how to say No, monkhood could be described as the radical articulation of this No to the excruciating multiplicity of all that appears to be. The monk is the nonconformist. The monk down the ages has been the one who sails against the wind propelling all things, in search of the simplicity of the source.*

<sup>1</sup> In *The Charismatic Christ* (1974) p45.

*The monk is the one who tries to swim upstream, against the current, to the origin which one supposes to be simple. God is simple.*<sup>2</sup>

The search for 'wholeness' through 'healing' can all too easily be selfish.

So can 'spirituality' with which 'wholeness' and 'healing' are so frequently linked. And all three terms can prove slippery. About 'spirituality', William Stringfellow writes<sup>3</sup>:

*The common practice of resorting to such terms as spirituality in order to hide ignorance or mask incoherence or disguise a void, immeasurably increases and complicates the inherent vagueness of the language of spirituality. ...Spirituality may indicate stoic attitudes, occult phenomena, the practice of so-called mind control, yoga discipline, escapist fantasies, interior journeys, an appreciation of Eastern religions, multifarious pietistic exercises, superstitious imaginations, intensive journals, dynamic muscle tension, assorted dietary regimens, meditation, jogging cults, monastic rigors, mortification of the flesh, wilderness sojourns, political resistance, contemplation, abstinence, hospitality, a vocation of poverty, non-violence, silence, the efforts of prayer, obedience, generosity, exhibiting stigmata, entering solitude...*

A similar though more limited diversity of meanings attaches to the word 'healing', sometimes overlapping 'spirituality'. One Biblical passage which has haunted me over the years is Jeremiah 6:13-14, *'from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying "peace, peace", when there is no peace'*.

Is contemplative prayer essentially about experiencing a unifying inner peace, or about entering and serving the Reign of God in this suffering world? Are we healed in order to experience the former, or serve the latter? Is spiritual direction about helping people become 'whole' in the world *as it is*, or is it more about helping them enter deeply into God's work of *transforming* this broken world?<sup>4</sup> And why did Jesus the Teacher and Healer have to go on to become the Crucified and Risen Christ?

John Stott writes:

*In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it? I have entered many Buddhist temples in different Asian countries and stood respectfully before the statue of the Buddha, his legs crossed, his arms folded, eyes closed, the ghost of a smile playing round his face, detached from the agonies of the world. But each time, after a while I have had to turn away.*

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2 Raymond Pannikar, *Blessed simplicity: The monk as universal archetype*. (It could also be noted that the word 'monk' is derived from monos, alone, originally meant one who lives alone. Then the meaning deepened and the word came to mean someone who is 'one', who has one single objective, an undivided heart, someone who is integrated within themselves.)

3 I think in his *Politics of Spirituality*.

4 All spiritual directors could profit from reading Ch 3 ('Direction, counselling and therapy') of Kenneth Leech's *Soul Friend: A study of spirituality* (1977) – and some undoubtedly should read it all.

*And in imagination I have turned instead to that lonely, twisted, tortured body on the cross, nails through hands and feet, back lacerated, limbs wrenched, brow bleeding from thorn-pricks, mouth dry and intolerably thirsty, plunged in God-forsaken darkness. That is the God for me! He laid aside his immunity to pain. He entered our world of flesh and blood, tears and death. He suffered for us. Our sufferings become more manageable in the light of his. There is still a question mark against human suffering, but over it we boldly stamp another mark, the cross which symbolizes divine suffering.<sup>5</sup>*

I'm not at all sure that does full justice to Buddhism, and more especially to the Bodhisattva stream within it, but Stott does make a powerful point. And as I've written elsewhere, the healing ministry of the Church is where the Dying and Rising of Christ meets us at that part of our total humanity which includes our bodily frailties and our mortality. He does not save us from physical dying, He does not save us from ageing; He does not save us from all possibility of disease, though He may graciously give us a foretaste of the Resurrection fullness to come in what we call 'healing'.

The Church's healing ministry restores *persons*, making them whole. We can have a disease of the body, yet be whole; we can age, yet be whole; we can die, yet be whole. The gracious acts of healing the body, which undoubtedly and gloriously take place, are guarantees to us that our disease and ageing and dying can be transformed when we are joined to the Crucified and Risen Christ. They do not have the last word.<sup>6</sup>

...the Christian authenticity of our wholeness is always tested by whether we go on to minister to others and seek their wholeness.

Within the total healing ministry towards wholeness, the Christian ministry of spiritual direction makes its special contribution, but is more oriented towards growth in *holiness*. And contemplation is about the journey into the centre of our own being, to the God Who is the centre of all being.

This journey may take us away from the 'wholeness' we seem to have at the moment. It may drag to the surface of consciousness many things which shatter our illusions of wholeness. This journey may radically challenge our life-style and identity. Wilderness territory lies between Egypt and the Promised Land.

At the heart of contemplation is the loving submission of our will, in naked faith, to the loving God revealed in Christ. That is costly. And in the process of building our 'wholeness' His way, not ours, the God to whom we lovingly surrender, will send us to love the suffering world one way or another as 'holy' members of his 'holy' people.

5 John Stott, *the Cross of Christ* (1986) p335-6.

6 Peter Stuart, *Some theological foundations for the Church's Ministry of Healing* (Wellington Institute of Theology Occasional Paper), 2003.

Christian contemplation is primarily about holiness in this world, not wholeness. Nevertheless, in the fullness of time, wholeness will be one of its fruits, whether in this life or the Age to come. Contemplation is about making God and His Reign the true centre of our life. We will find our authentic wholeness as we do this, though that should not be (or at least should not remain) the reason why we do it.

Whether we pray contemplatively, or seek healing for ourselves, we are brought towards greater wholeness. But the Christian authenticity of our wholeness is always tested by whether we go on to minister to others and seek *their* wholeness.

When we take all this aboard, we begin to understand, in the light of the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus, the depth of the meaning of 'healing', and thus the meaning of the 'peace' Christ brings us.

We are healed into the peace of the Crucified and Risen Christ, receive it from wounded hands, and communicate it to others with our own wounded hands.

And then, as St Paul puts it: *'...we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit'* (2 Corinthians 3:13).

**We are healed into the peace of  
the Crucified and Risen Christ,  
receive it from wounded hands, and  
communicate it to others with our  
own wounded hands.**

# A remarkable story of healing

by Patte Randall

When I was asked to contribute an article on healing for this issue of *Refresh*, Ricki came to mind. He's given me permission to share his story and requested I use his real name, which I do with the greatest respect. What is remarkable is that Ricki's story highlights the way healing sometimes happens despite circumstances that seem destined to compound damage rather than to give rise to anything positive.

I'm a doctor trained in psychiatry and for the past 27 years I've worked primarily with people who experience an extreme state known as 'psychosis'. Psychosis can sometimes take the form of believing others are against us, out to harm us or saying bad things about us. I have experienced psychosis myself and spoken publicly about my own 'recovery'<sup>2</sup> and the healing that began as I came to faith.<sup>2</sup>

There's increasing evidence that psychosis can arise as a result of abuse and trauma in childhood.<sup>3</sup> I met Ricki two and a half years ago, when I happened to be present throughout a court case in which he was a defendant. The Sunday before, co-incidentally, I had prayed with my home group that we might each be instruments of God's justice and healing. Since that time, I've had the extraordinary privilege of accompanying Ricki on a most unexpected and life-transforming journey. And it's important to state I've had no professional connection with him at any point.

**What is healing after all, but an increasing capacity to cope with the unavoidable and sometimes unbearable ups and downs of life and even to thrive as a result?**

During the trial I witnessed a process that shocked and distressed me – Ricki was being tried for a terrible crime he and his lawyer asserted never even happened. Without going into details the major area of controversy was the reliability of the complainant, who as

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- 1 Randal, P, Stewart, M.W., Proverbs, D., Lampshire, D., Symes, J., Hamer, H. (2009) "The Re-recovery Model" – An integrative developmental stress-vulnerability-strengths approach to mental health. *Psychosis* 1;2: 122-133.
  - 2 Randal, P. (1999) Loving relationship is at the root of recovery. In J. Leibrich (Ed) *A gift of stories. Discovering how to deal with mental illness* (pp 137-144). University of Otago Press/ Mental Health Commission. Randal, P., Geekie, J., Lambrecht, I., & Taitimu, M. (2008). Dissociation, psychosis, and spirituality: Whose voices are we hearing? In A. Moskowitz, I, Schafer & M. Dorahy (Eds) *Psychosis, Trauma and Dissociation: Emerging Perspectives on Severe Psychopathology* (pp. 333-345). Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell. Randal, P (2012) Subjective experience of spirituality and psychosis. In Geekie, J; Randal, P; Lampshire, L; Read, J (Eds) *Experiencing Psychosis: Personal and professional perspectives.* (pp 57-65). London & New York. Routledge.
  - 3 Read, J; Bentall, R (2012) Negative childhood experiences and mental health: theoretical, clinical and primary prevention implications. *British Journal of Psychiatry* 200, 89–91.

a result of a past head injury suffered memory impairment, with the consequence that the gaps were filled by making up spurious accounts of events in daily life.

Expert advice was presented by a Crown witness, who argued the head injury wasn't necessarily relevant to the complainant's capacity to give evidence. This view was strongly opposed by the expert witness for the defense – a psychiatrist whom I happened to know and trust. As always occurs in such cases, the jury had to decide whether the complainant was indeed a reliable witness and whether Ricki was guilty of the crime of which he was accused.

During the trial, I didn't glean a lot of information about him, except he identified himself as a Christian who'd come to know the plaintiff as a member of his church. Later Ricki explained to me, "I believe in The Lord of Hosts so I became a host", thus he'd offered support and hospitality to the impaired young person.

I also discovered from private conversations that Ricki had been given a diagnosis of so-called 'paranoid schizophrenia' many years before. This diagnosis is often given, after a person experiencing psychosis has presented to Mental Health Services. It's still rare for the person's whole story to be heard and validated in a way that promotes healing.

Ricki sat quietly throughout the trial and didn't testify. Some days he was accompanied by a mental health worker but often he endured the court process with no one to support him. He appeared confident his lawyer would win the case and only once showed a hint of anger outside the court: when he caught a glimpse of the complainant's family.

As the days went by, as an observer of the trial listening to various accounts of the 'evidence', I felt increasingly confident of Ricki's innocence. Erratic responses to skillfully asked questions indicated to me the complainant was unable to be reliable despite a willingness to tell the truth. While it's inappropriate to reveal details, with my background and training I could readily understand how this tragic misunderstanding had been perpetuated.

On the ninth day of trial a 'guilty' verdict was announced. I was horrified. Ricki was sent to prison and eventually given an 11 year sentence. Needless to say, he was utterly stunned and bewildered and at a loss to make sense of what had eventuated. So was I.

I recalled my prayer to be an instrument of God's justice and healing.

I felt strongly compelled to support Ricki as best I could in the circumstances. To be found guilty of a very serious crime of which one is innocent, would tax even the most balanced and secure person. When one hasn't committed a crime, to be put into high security prison with men convicted of the most serious offences would shatter the confidence and test the faith of a saint [and indeed there are several Biblical examples].

When Ricki's strongly held beliefs weren't taken seriously in the past he experienced great distress. He fought the system, was hospitalised and forcibly medicated. After



a childhood lived partly in an orphanage, Ricki has suffered, as well, the trauma of abandonment and a deep lack of trust.

Facing an ordeal of this magnitude, I'd have expected a man with Ricki's history to become increasingly mentally unwell. And yet over the past two and a half years as I visited him each month [first communicating through a grid across a thick plate glass window and more recently face to face in the visitors' hall] I've been inspired by his fortitude and courage, his humour and compassion, and his care for the men who surround him – many who've actually done the deeds for which they were found guilty.

Rather than decompensating into psychosis again, succumbing to bitterness, hate and rage or despairing and giving up, Ricki has in some ways flourished. This isn't to say it's easy for him. Certainly there are times he has doubts and struggles with why God allowed this to happen [especially when his Court of Appeal and recently his Supreme Court appeal failed]. He tells me he's never doubted the ultimate trustworthiness and grace of God.

Initially Ricki struggled to forgive his accuser. But as he came to understand more, his compassion and forgiveness grew. He tells me his ordeal has forced him to pray more and to get closer to God. The only book he reads is his Bible and he looks forwards each week to the prison Alpha course. He says he gets opportunities to witness to other men and at times of need they seek him out. He says that his family has been brought together in a new way – and I know from speaking to them they never doubted his innocence.

I've been amazed at Ricki's capacity to encourage and comfort me when I found myself in tears because of his plight or endured the humiliation of being searched for drugs on my way in to visit him. Recently he wrote to me, "It's not God I doubt. I suppose it's a lack of faith that God will answer my prayers the way I expect Him to. Deep down I know He has a plan. If only He would reveal it to me. It seems every time things seem to be going well for me and headed in the direction I want them to, my dreams are turned to crap and yet again I have to pick myself up and scrape myself down. Thank God, He hasn't taken you from me and thank you for your love and perseverance."

**I recalled my prayer to be an instrument of God's justice and healing.**

I see the signs of healing in the authenticity of Ricki's words: they resonate with my own experience – that all too familiar roller-coaster ride of life. What is healing after all, but an increasing capacity to cope with the unavoidable and sometimes unbearable ups and downs of life and even to thrive as a result? Ironically and incredibly, I believe Ricki's mental health is better now than it was the years before the trial. And despite his lack of literal freedom, he's being set free to be the man he's designed to be.

God works in mysterious ways.

I continue to pray that despite the many injustices, Ricki will be released in due course, with provision to live life fully in the grace and blessing of our Lord – who also suffered unjustly and forgave. And that by the grace of God this remarkable man will continue to be healed and strengthened by his ordeal in a way that equips him to fulfill the plan he feels sure God has for his life.

“We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials. For we know they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character....” Romans 5 v3-4  
NLT

**But as he came to understand  
more, his compassion and  
forgiveness grew.**



The slow art of becoming by Trish Harris <http://ribbonwooddesigns.com>

# My Sister

by Anna Johnstone

She was my sister. Well, best friend, really, but so close, we could have been sisters. I'd always admired her, wanted to be like her. She was so unselfish, so giving, so loving. She'd been there for me, heart-strength, heart-comfort when my dear man died. Always ready to listen, ready to help. Ears, hands, heart dedicated to the Master. Willing and glad to do all she could to help anyone, especially the poor. Her skill with the needle meant she was famous, many of us thankful and proud to wear the beautiful garments she made.

She'd been well, then suddenly a fever sent her to bed, and she got steadily worse, weaker. We did all we could. Prepared tasty, nourishing meals to tempt her, but she couldn't eat, couldn't raise the energy for the smallest mouthful.

We prayed, oh, we prayed. Oh Master Jesus, save this dear one who's lived her life to bless others. Give her more time with us. Please spare her and us. Day and night we sat by her, watched as her strength slipped away, until she was gone.

We wept, heart-broken. We wept, hating to believe she'd no longer be a shining light in our group, in our town, in our small world. Those of us closest to her washed her still body gently, reverently, our tears falling, then we dressed her in one of her own soft garments.

We'd heard that Peter, a disciple of our Master, was visiting nearby in Joppa. Heard stories of healings he'd done in Jesus' name. Of a cripple now dancing, of those touched even by his shadow made whole and well. If only he could have been here while she was still with us, maybe he could have helped her.

We wept even more, at the lost opportunity. But some thought it was worth asking him to come, though it seemed a waste of time, a foolish notion.

When Peter arrived, we showed him some of the beautiful clothes she'd made, told him of her beautiful spirit, wept our grief at losing her. He asked us to leave her bedside and we realised he wanted to be alone to express his own grief, to mourn the loss of one who'd lived to show the love of God.

She told us later of a voice, gentle yet strong, encouraging, commanding, calling her name from far away. As if waking slowly from a long dream, she heard it, opened her eyes and met eyes which shone with warmth and welcome. She took the hand he offered her and stood. Peter called us to come in, and surprised at the short time he'd grieved, we entered.

She stood beside him, our Tabitha. Stood by his side, alive, whole, her smile reflecting the amazement and joy on our faces. We cried out praises to God for this miracle, as we reached out to draw her into our arms of love.

# Old age is not for wimps

by Marg Schrader

Healing our fear of diminishment

Twice a week I sit with a group of older women drinking coffee. We've just come from the gym where we're working at keeping our bodies fit. Conversation ranges widely. We're a fascinating diverse group. All of us held positions of responsibility in the past, all have a deep but varied spirituality. Almost always one of us will say, 'Oops, what is her name!' Or 'I was just about to tell you something important and now I've completely forgotten what it was'.

Mary's husband has just gone into the hospital care unit at the local retirement village because of Alzheimer's. I have two siblings with the disease. Jane's giving up the gym because her arthritis is too difficult to manage; Betty's just had a hip replacement. Two of us are widows.

Sometimes we laugh at what a bunch of crocks we are. We tell funny but poignant stories: 'I lost my keys for three days and do you know where they were? In the tissue box!' 'I went to drink the water beside my bed and discovered his teeth in my glass'. Other times, we sit in silence or even cry, as we recognise the growing powerlessness in us and those we love.

**Whatever we do, it's important not to push it down and not to become a miserable martyr.**

What an important time this is, as we negotiate the rapids of failing bodies and minds. That's not to say we don't do all we can to eat well and exercise body and mind, but now we must finally learn to 'let go and let God', trust God is in all and absolutely faithful, discover 'treasures in the darkness and riches hidden in secret places'. Maybe now it's time to remember God still 'calls us by name' and says, 'Listen to me. You have been borne by me from your birth, carried from the womb, even to old age. I am God, even when you turn grey, I will carry you. I have made and I will bear, I will carry and will save.' [Isaiah 45:3 and 46:3,4]

Perhaps old age is a time to unlearn what we spent our energy learning: to be successful, get to the top of the tree, hide our vulnerability. A time to grow by subtraction. Carl Jung said 'a normal goal to a young person, becomes a neurotic hindrance in old age'. And Teilhard de Chardin remarked, 'In my younger years I thanked God for my growing up. But now I thank God for the grace of diminishment.'

In old age, we're called to dismantle many of the walls we built to survive: lose the 'false selves' that helped us make our way in the world. If we haven't already, we must surrender our need to be perfect, to be needed, to always succeed, to be powerful. Things that hid the wonderful person who came fresh from the womb of God.

*In The Majesty of your Loving: a couple's journey through Alzheimer's*, Olivia Ames

Hoblitzelle shares a retreat experience as she struggled with her husband's growing dependence. To her director she cries, 'Everything's falling apart. I want to talk about anger and death.' Her wise director replies, 'You need to feel all of it, your frustrations, your anger, your grief and experience your full humanness.

'Accept all the old securities are collapsing. It is all going, showing you the process of death. This is the biggest thing you've ever done, so be easier on yourself! Just make your life big enough for yourself. Rest in the spaciousness. Let your heart be broken open with love. The centre will hold. The centre is the luminous centre, the great heart, the heart of love.'

As I watched the diminishment of my own brother and sister in Australia, my fear of having Alzheimer's increased exponentially. One of the most important revelations came when I sensed God saying to me, 'Even if you do have it, I will not let you go.' Of course!

We all have to live with our fear, frustration, and weaknesses as well as the loss of those we love. So, how to deal with our own diminishment or that of others? Well, we can go to a lonely place and scream or get large sheets of paper and just draw and draw. Certainly we can find a trusted friend and let it all hang out. Sit with God in prayer, welcome all the feelings and invite God to come. However we feel it's important not to push it down, not to become a miserable martyr.

Mohammed wrote, 'you must die before you die', and Jesus said: 'Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it will not bear fruit.' Richard Rohr understood this: 'Pain teaches a most counterintuitive thing—that we must go down before we even know what up is. Suffering of some sort seems to be the only thing strong enough to destabilize our arrogance and our ignorance. I would define suffering very simply as "whenever you are not in control". All healthy religion shows you what to do with your pain. If we don't transform our pain, we will most assuredly transmit it. If we can't find a way to make our wounds into sacred wounds, we invariably become negative or bitter. If there isn't some way to find some deeper meaning to our suffering, to find that God is somehow in it, and can even use it for good, we will normally close up and close down.'

Perhaps working through our fears in old age provides one of the most important growing and healing times of our life. As Rumi reminds us, 'Your loving does not know it's majesty until it knows its helplessness.'

Let go, let go, let go, until all that is left is you and God.

# Healing from failure

by Digby Wilkinson

Paraphrased, Jesus said, 'If you hang on to your life you will lose it. But, if you let go, then your real life will begin to unfold before you' (Matt 16:25).

As a kid, the concept of healing was little more than getting a scratch, developing a scab and then picking it off, only to go through the whole process again. Healing, as I understood it then, was always guaranteed. However, I had a very limited purview of what required healing. It never occurred to me healing could be emotional, intellectual or spiritual. And it certainly never crossed my mind healing could also be miraculous. My simple mantra was, 'The body heals scabs and hospitals do everything else.'

Like most things in life, age brings a certain perspective. It's not so much knowledge that changes everything, but rather reflective experience. My early twenties revealed physical frailties as a result of accidents that held long term consequences. To this day I hold the painful scars of juvenile stupidity. However there is no point in denying I still possess the same juvenile male attitude that celebrates scars as stories worth telling. In that sense the pain is a symbol of a life lived – and survived.

But what of the middle years? For a guy they're often a mixture of the absurd desire to remain young, but also to grow up. The problem with growing up however is confronting a new discomfort that leers at you every morning: emotional pain in the form of psychological awareness that all is not well.

**I let go of the hopes and dreams that were actually crippling fetters.**

The story I wish to write is not one of healing broken bones, emotional scabs or even deep depression but rather, catastrophic failure.

In October 2002, I was arrested for insurance fraud and breaking and entering. From a criminal point of view it's not all that impressive, but for a man who was the senior pastor of a large church in Tauranga, it was about as bad as it could get. I may not have been an axe murderer, but in that moment, I might as well have been.

In one afternoon a visit from a policeman set off a chain of events that left me jobless, characterless, close to friendless, alienated, disenfranchised and without hope. Though I didn't recognise it at the time, my greatest fear paid me an unexpected visit – failure.

Allow me to back track just a bit. 2002 happened to be my tenth year in ministry. I was in my second church and from all accounts a good pastor climbing the ladder of popular approval. Not only that, I'd become the denominational Golden boy.

Our church was full of people of all ages and I managed to hold them together in some kind of fragile unity. But despite the apparent success something was very wrong.

The surface problem was my rapidly developing addiction to buying mountain bikes. It

was so out of control I was getting into debt; a growing debt that produced a legacy of false insurance claims to cover the shortfall.

However, the underlying issue was boredom and depression. I no longer enjoyed pastoral ministry. In the turmoil of being everything everyone required, I had no idea who I really was. Yet the façade remained in place.

I felt like I was walking on eggshells – what conversations should I have and what conversation should I avoid? Was I keeping everyone happy? Was I still at the top of my game?

I was rational enough to know I was in trouble and desperately wanted 'out' of ministry and my addiction, but I daren't tell a soul. I was utterly terrified by my fear of failure and life without ministry. And it all came to a crushing end when, through a childish act of retribution, I stole a bike.

And there at the bottom of my pit, I began to learn some things about myself, my God, and about healing and wholeness.

Two very important things happened. First, I found a deep trust in the church. Second, I experienced the full force of real grace.

Prior to the crisis I often sat in my study wondering to myself, 'If I wasn't employed as a pastor would I attend or engage with church anymore?'

I always believed the answer to be 'no'. Yet within a couple of days of my descending darkness, there was a desperate surge within me to engage with the church again, but this time through Eucharist. I needed to receive communion within the communion of God's people. Not on my own, but publicly with all others.

The experience of God's grace can only be fully grasped among the people of God. Fortunately, my sense of personal failure was balanced by a deep belief in corporate Christianity. Not everyone was gracious, but most were. And in a strange way, I needed to experience grace and 'dis-grace' together. What I learned is we never fall *from* grace; we can only fall *into* it – with God at least.

I also found real grace isn't a down-pillow and soft mattress. It's solid, firm, encompassing and uncomfortable. Like one of those memory-foam beds: hard at first but shaping quickly to your body through its heat. It perfectly contains you, making the difficult journey of healing possible.

But what does graced healing look like?

The experience of public failure is over inflated because we tend to see ourselves through the eyes of everyone else. So the beginning of my healing was to see myself as God saw me. This happened through two people.

The first was my 18 month old daughter, Lucy. At that point in my life she was the only person I knew who didn't look at me with tainted eyes. She smiled when I came in the





Prodigal Son by Tamara Paetkau

room. She was happy to be cuddled by me, and in her eyes I experienced the peace of God for brief moments each day. It's very difficult to put into words the effect Lucy had on my life at that time. This wee nappy-clad package was my most tangible experience of God's grace.

The second was a man I met in the cells after my sentencing. In a moment of utter despair on a wooden bench beside an exposed stainless toilet, the door lock suddenly clunked and a tall thin man entered. The door shut behind him and he thrust out his hand, 'The name's Pearl. What are you in for?'

Fraud and theft, I told him. He looked at me bemused as I asked what he was being 'done' for? He responded without batting an eye, 'grievous bodily harm and threatening to kill'. He'd been in every jail in the country. Then without pretence, he said, 'Really nice to meet you' and we just chatted.

I hadn't experience that level of simple acceptance by an adult in three months. When I left to meet family and friends, I suddenly knew how prisoners feel when they leave jail. Sadly, they leave the freedom of incarceration, for the imprisonment of once more being unacceptable. Pearl and Lucy changed my life – each was a gift from God. Ten years later, they're still fresh reminders of who I really am before God.

Despite some scarring I'd healed internally. I let go of the hopes and dreams that were actually crippling fetters. I let go of the church, I let go of ministry, and I let go of trying to be what everyone else expected.

Next, God began to reconcile my healing inner world with the frightening external reality I had to re-engage. This was made easier by accepting my newly diagnosed agoraphobia: apart from attending communion every week I'd become a recluse. And the time came to rebuild my life with others.

At the heart of my healing process was repentance. And it sounds like a vicious word to someone in failure, yet when understood, it's far from awful. In reality repentance is the simple process of graced healing.

Repentance (healing) = restitution – recovery – reconciliation – restoration. Within two years I made restitution and largely recovered.

Now I had to reconcile and I learned something important. It's a two way street.

I have no right to expect forgiveness, I only had responsibility to apologise and make restitution. The other person's response is theirs to make and to live with.

I was only called to make peace; I could not be responsible for it.

I also discovered perpetrators almost always become victims as well. Our capacity for revenge in the name of justice is seriously warped. So my healing involved not taking on the responsibilities of others. Instead, I had to attend to my own. In all my fractured relationships I reconciled, but that didn't mean it was reciprocated.

Three years after leaving ministry, sitting in our church in Tauranga, I had a terrifying epiphany. I was listening to an appalling sermon by a guest speaker and a very clear voice said to me, 'It's time to return'. It must have been obvious, because my wife asked if I was okay? To which I said 'no'.

A couple of months later, the church I'd hidden in for three years (for Eucharistic reasons only) asked me to join the pastoral staff as a preacher. But this time as an Anglican. After 15 years as a Baptist, I was ordained Priest in 2006. Everything had changed. The old had gone and the new had come. And I had the ecclesiastical lingerie to prove it!

Would I want to repeat it all again? Absolutely not.

Except for one part – grace.

Grace so changed me, my family, my ministry and my view of the world that I'll be forever grateful. And isn't that the great paradox of healing.

Out of the great pain that we spend so much energy avoiding, comes a new perspective that we would never want changed. Certainly there are scars, but they tell a story of a life lived within God's amazing healing grace.

Out of the great pain that we spend so much energy avoiding, comes a new perspective that we would never want changed.

# Wounded Miracles

by M. Jane Hansen

The blind now see;  
The deaf hear;  
The lame walk;  
The addicts are free.  
Miracles are  
Everywhere!

Sometimes the lame walk,  
Unsteady on their feet;  
The blind see dim reflections'  
The deaf hear only  
Some of the words, and  
The addicts still bear  
Scars.

Even so,  
The powers of darkness are  
Retreating, as the  
Kingdom presses  
In and on -  
One life at a time.

For healing is  
God's Plan;  
Why Jesus came'  
Holy Spirit's work;  
More than bodies mended. It is hope restored,  
Joy, meaning and purpose  
Given back to life, to  
The Living;  
Lives made whole made  
Holy -  
Heaven come down to Earth

# Community healed and transformed

by Bruce Maden

'Spiritual guidance in the Christian tradition is an offering, a bridge, a 'way in' to the Ground of all human life – a 'way in' to shared holy Ground available for all people yearning to touch that Ground more firmly'<sup>1</sup> But when many neighbourhoods are beyond the influence of the institutional Christian Church, how can we help them touch that holy Ground more powerfully?

The solution may be to grow the presence of the *anam cara* – the Celtic word for soul friend.<sup>2</sup> As *anam cara* in the neighbourhood we can create a milieu, an interpersonal climate in which neighbours become ever more free of fear, spiritually perceptive, generous, able to accept responsibility and take the initiative in the spiritual life<sup>3</sup>. As Paul Hawker says, we desperately need trustworthy Christian spiritual guides .

One of these *anam cara* is Brad Rapira. Brad works within a community development agency, Te Aroha Noa Community Services, in the lower socio-economic and culturally diverse suburb of Highbury, Palmerston North. Over the last eighteen months, a key concept that galvanised Brad into action is 'disturbance'. One of the first things to 'disturb' him, was observing a group of young teenage girls drinking alcohol during an early evening visit to the local shopping centre.

Inspired by his dream, Brad dared to engage more deeply – to become an *anam cara* to this community.

As Brad watched, a police car drew up. The constables walked past the girls into a shop. They didn't stop. They didn't intervene. Brad saw people peering out from behind the blinds of a local social service organisation. They too didn't intervene. For over half an hour as Brad interacted with the girls, not one parent came searching for their missing daughters. In our neighbourhood he noted: meaningful intervention was in short supply.

Reflecting on the incident, as a father himself, Brad couldn't imagine he wouldn't be out searching for his daughter if she didn't come home. He wondered if turning a 'blind eye' had become a community and institutional response. Asked what this scenario prompted in him, Brad spoke of dreaming about a community full of families who create such a positive environment for their children, being inebriated outside the

1 Edwards T. (1980) *Spiritual Friend, Reclaiming the Gift of Spiritual Direction*, Paulist Press, New Jersey, USA.

2 O' Donohue J.(1997) *Anam Cara*, Bantam Press, UK.

3 Schneiders S. (1976), *The Contemporary Ministry of Spiritual Direction*, Chicago Studies, Spring, USA.

4 Hawker P. (2002) *Spiritual Experience in the General Population*, paper presented in Wellington, NZ.

Whanau by Lisa Ormsby <http://www.lisaormsby.co.nz/>

neighbourhood shops didn't have any pull power.

He spoke too of fathers who'd search for their daughters if they weren't home and strong communities that took collective responsibility for providing a safe, stimulating and aspirational environment for their children and youth.

In short, Brad longed to see this particular community transformed. He dared to ask, 'could we by God's grace, make this journey?'

Inspired by his dream, Brad dared to engage more deeply – to become an *anam cara* to this community. In his own words Brad writes of further involvement with 'disturbance' since he made that commitment and how he is assisting new life to emerge within community.

'Ko Pukeatua Te MaungaKo te Awakairangi Te Awa Ko Tokomaru Te Waka Ko Waiwhetu Toku Whare Tipuna Ko Te Atiawa Toku Iwi Ko Taku ingoa Brad Paraone Rapira.'

"Kia ora my name is Brad Rapira and I've been privileged to be appointed as a community development facilitator at Te Aroha Noa. As an example of my involvement with 'disturbance' I'd like to share with you my work with a whanau of four children and two parents in their late twenties.

These young parents have grown up regularly witnessing high levels of violence in their homes. Their lifestyle reflects unresolved pain, abandonment, lack of self-worth and a longing for acceptance by others. This is also the foundation from which they parent. It has led to a volatile, soul destroying combination for this whanau that regularly erupts into loud verbal conflict between the two parents.

After receiving a call from a concerned neighbour (this in itself is a sign of change as he has had to break the community rule of 'not narking') I hurry to their home and as I walk up the path I hear a rising crescendo of raised voices. After no-one hears my knock and with the door ajar I walk in with some trepidation. A young baby less than two months old is crying on the floor near to a couple who are heatedly arguing.

My fear is that if the arguing turns to physical violence, the baby could be unintentionally harmed. My vocal attempts to gain some control of the situation fall on deaf ears and so somewhat in desperation I pick up the baby and begin walking towards the door. This dramatic act gets their attention and the fighting stops. My action has at least disrupted their arguing. I ask the couple to sit down and work through what's happening.

A civilised discussion occurs for a while before it again escalates into an abusive conversation. Again I pick up the child and begin to leave. For the second time this disruption has the desired effect. This time we agree to a cool down period during which one will leave. I commit myself to meet with one and come back next day to talk about underlying issues with both.

However the sight of that young baby crying as her parents argued, haunts me. That

evening I'm overcome by deep emotion at the memory of it. I ask myself what I could do tomorrow beyond mediating. An idea slowly forms.

I decide to take my voice and with the power of Atua, stand in the middle of our neighbourhood park surrounded by state houses and declare war on family violence.

A few days later I set up a gazebo and a couple of couches in the park. I use a loud public address system. My message is clear: violence is neither okay nor right, and if we allow it to remain present in our homes we are sowing seeds of destruction and more violence into the next generation.

I speak of my own journey out of violence. My wife comes to stand beside me. I invite people to come out of their homes and join me in sending violence packing from our neighbourhood. A couple of brave young women come out to join me. Even more courageously, they speak to the surrounding homes about never dreaming they'd see the day when a Maori male would speak out against violence in such a public space. Most others only stand at their doorways or lean over their fences to listen.

At the time, I have no idea of the impact of this act. But know the 'disturbance' has begun, and a transformative journey is on the horizon for men, women and their families.

The next day I'm amazed to hear my voice carried over 2-3km. Somehow we were amplified beyond my expectations. A whole community heard my call to stand against violence and to stand up for a safe, stimulating and aspirational environment for our community.

**I know the 'disturbance' has begun,  
and a transformative journey is  
on the horizon for men, women  
and their families.**

Encouraged by this, I'm at the park every Friday to motivate more people to join the conversation and become part of our movement of change.'

As Brad says, 'God is indeed in the neighbourhood!' and moving beyond the framework of institutional religion. A whole community is participating in a healing process and being transformed. People are involved in something bigger than themselves. They're caught up in a vision of life-changing possibilities and the creation of alternative forms of community. With the assistance of anam cara they're discovering deeper truths rooted in the midst of messy reality. They are being led towards holy ground.



# Sing a new song

by Mary Hepburn

In our community, at the end of morning and evening prayer we ask: May God, redeemer, heal us<sup>1</sup>. In the evening we sing, so the words linger longer in our hearts and minds. What is the healing for which we pray?

It's a gift experienced more and more as we live, reflect, and pray, in the 'now' of our lives. A gift that is longed for by all creation. The arts have a special role in facilitating that which is in need of healing.

As Stephen Levine wrote, 'The use of expressive arts...is a restoration of healing to its original source: the imaginal depths of the soul. Only a person skilled in the art of "soul-making" can serve as a guide in these regions.'<sup>2</sup>

Some years ago a terminally ill woman gifted me with a song. Near the end of her sad, troubled life, she wanted to share one of her favorites': *How can I keep from singing*, by choirboy Anthony Way. I was surprised and deeply moved.

Over time, she shared the story of her life. Music had become her companion. Her soul food. Her voice. Music helped her give voice to her own longings that had been so often stifled. Through sharing the music together we honoured her story and her goodness. The simple clarity and beauty of this old Quaker song, moved us to rest in a sacred space of healing. How can music and healing be so linked?

## Healing

The word 'healing' has its origins in Old English *hælen*<sup>3</sup>: meaning to restore to sound health, to wholeness. Also helpful to our understanding is the Māori concept of the 'four cornerstones of health': *te taha wairua* (spiritual), *te taha hinengaro* (mental and emotional wellbeing), *te taha tinana* (physical), *te taha whānau* (social).<sup>4</sup> Ongoing healing and wholeness, are needed in each corner of Te Whare Tapu Whā, and all are connected.

## Music

What is music? There are the technical descriptions. But they don't capture the essence. Plato wrote, 'Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything'.<sup>5</sup> Music comes to be in silence, which is the language of God. Music comes in many forms. Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent.<sup>6</sup> It's a universal language, and ever so deeply personal.

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1 Dominican Praise, 2005.

2 Levine, in CV Painter & B Beckman, *Awakening the Creative Spirit. Bringing the Arts to Spiritual Direction*, Morehouse, Harrisburg, PA, 2010, p.25

3 [www.Merriam-Webster.com](http://www.Merriam-Webster.com)

4 Durie, 1992. <http://maorihealth.govt.nz/moh.nsf>

5 [www.goodreads.com/quotes](http://www.goodreads.com/quotes)

6 Victor Hugo, William Shakespeare, 1/2/4, 1864. <http://enwikiquote.org/>

## Music and healing

In any of the four cornerstones, music and healing go hand in hand.

When the music touches whatever in us that seeks wholeness, there's potential for wholeness to be restored. We all know the power of music in our own lives. Music can also be used in a more structured way to meet identified needs – physical, emotional, cognitive, social, spiritual. Neurologist Oliver Sacks wrote, 'The power of music to integrate and cure...is quite fundamental. It is the profoundest nonchemical medication.'<sup>7</sup>

### In my life

Music has always been part of my life. As a little girl I began piano lessons and after school I'd go to practise at my Nana's! Unencumbered by exams for several years, I played, discovered, and enjoyed. Today, music comes to me in silence and in time and in the ever-unfolding context of my life.

Over years I realised *acompañamiento* [keeping company] was more natural for me than performing. Music was a tool to connect with soul and mind, with the other, with life. *Acompañamiento* is a good model for life: not something you do for another, but something we do *together* requiring deep listening – to self and to-gether. And this keeping company grows as an organic whole, from which emerge different kinds of clarity. Now, as a woman who journeys with others in worship, spiritual growth, and music therapy, I continue to discover how music can be an agent of healing in the lives of so many.

## TE WHARE WAPU WHĀ

### Te Taha Wairua

Music is truly a preaching tool with its capacity to heal and lead us to our own and God's truth. Whether exploring meaning and purpose in life, relationships, or the transcendent, music helps us name mistakes, and hear the call to do things differently. The moment may come in the midst of liturgy, or listening to quiet, beautiful music, or when writing a song. Often, it surprises us, and has the potential to restore a sense of wholeness.

### Te Taha Hinengaro

Benjamin Britten wrote: 'It is cruel, you know, that music should be so beautiful. It has the beauty of loneliness, of pain, of strength and freedom. The beauty of disappointment and never-satisfied love.'<sup>8</sup> Country singer Reba McEntire says, 'For me, singing sad songs often has a way of healing a situation. It gets the hurt out in the open, into the light, out of the darkness.'<sup>9</sup> How often do words in a song touch a place deep within – lead to tears, laughter, or a memory with all its emotion? If what touches

7 Oliver Sacks, *Awakenings*, Vintage edition, 1973, p. 60

8 Benjamin Britten. <http://thinkexist.com/quotation>

9 <http://www.bainyquote.com/quotes>

us is shared, it can free others to recognise and name their own response. Deforia Lane considered her role as a music therapist was to look for the 'cracks in the wall of suffering', and there to find openings for grace, hope, forgiveness and all the depth of the human being.<sup>10</sup>

### **Te Taha Tinana**

Music is often used with positive effect by adults and children with some form of neuro-disability. A man's speech is affected by his stroke, yet he can sing with greater clarity. Given time and support, he can do something he's always loved, and share that joy with his visitors.

Hinewehi Mohi was so moved by the effect of music therapy on her daughter with cerebral palsy, she began the first music therapy centre in New Zealand, bringing hope to so many children and their parents. And I remember using quiet improvised music to support the breathing of a woman near the end of life. As her breathing settled into a gentle rhythm, both the woman and her family moved into a place of quiet peace.

### **Te Taha Whānau**

Music brings people together. Sometimes lyrics act as a trigger for memories, emotions or hope. People discover something to talk about. Music connects. When there's recognition, music moves into a person's feeling history, even when words no longer make sense. Sometimes an old memory can bring life and help those around us catch a glimpse of the person who was 'there'.

One day, in a high-needs psycho-geriatric facility, I started playing and singing *Whispering Hope*. Suddenly a beautiful voice from the other side of the room sang out with great gusto. He was an older man with difficult-to-manage dementia and family was visiting. It was magic! There were tears all round. I learned the song was sung at their wedding and at special times throughout their lives. In it he found a part of himself – when nothing else made sense. Surely, the healing power of music was with the singer and his family on that day.

### **Healing and music**

To heal, to open oneself to healing, is always a gift and a task. When Jesus said, 'We played the pipes for you, and you did not dance' (Lk 7:32), I wonder if he was thinking about our missed opportunities for healing through music! In contrast to every other art form, John O'Donohue reminds us, 'there's something deeper in the way music pervades us. It finds us out in a more immediate and total way.'<sup>11</sup> Once we are found out, healing can begin again! Healing does not mean going back to the way things were before, but rather allowing what is now to move us closer to God.<sup>12</sup>

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10 Lane, Deforia ('94). *Music as Medicine*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, p. 192

11 John O'Donohue, *Divine Beauty*, Bantam Books, London, 2003, p. 72.

12 Ram Dass. <http://www.psychologytoday.com/>

# Wholeness and Healing

by Derek Lightbourne

Most often we refer to the title the other way round. Reversing the words emphasises Jesus' healing takes place in the context of wholeness. We recall times Jesus healed a person then said 'your faith has saved you', sometimes translated from the Greek as 'made you whole.' And while it may include the physical, emotional or relational, Jesus' healing always has this extra dimension of our relationship with him. That's why, when receiving healing prayer, we give thanks in anticipation for what Jesus does, and *who he is*: Saviour and healer.

In a recent talk, I found myself focusing on '*connectedness*' – how important it is we humans are connected with creation, with other people, within ourselves and with Jesus. When we're out of this connectedness, healing is needed to restore us to wholeness – how God means us to be.

Events and circumstances occur which can take us out of this connectedness.

It could be illness, or an upset, an emotional condition, busyness or unresolved hurt from the past. When these surface in the present we can get out of 'sync' with God and the rest of creation.

'The intent of healing prayer is for the 'whole person' and the whole of creation.'

All these may require healing broadly and specifically. Actions like forgiveness can assist in the healing process. The Order of St Luke is 'dedicated to healing the whole person: body, soul and spirit, and to the healing of situations, of nations, and of God's creation.' It's important to remember the *breadth* of circumstances where healing may be needed.

In bringing greater wholeness, not only is it important to take responsibility to seek healing for ourselves, we must be concerned for the healing of situations, nations and the whole of creation. In intercessory prayer for healing in worship, it's easy to forget the bigger picture where healing is needed. And when we focus on the wider parameters of God's concern for the world, the onus is on us to work with God to bring healing, restoration and indeed wholeness.

## Healing of situations

Most often where there is sickness, others are affected too. Spouse and family, friends and church members who empathise with the 'symptom-bearer' are disturbed by worry and anxiety for their loved one in need. And so we pray not only for the person who is ill, we include the *situation* of those who are affected.

## Healing of nations

Many of us discern a prayer burden and calling for a particular country. This arises from knowing people who live there, or following a visit, or just some special association. Here

the breadth of our prayer will be for groups *within* a nation, with different ethnicities, faiths, and values as well as the nation as a whole.

### **Healing of Creation**

This is very much a global focus given our awareness of humanity's contribution to climate change. Yet this concern is not new. It's increasingly understood that planet earth exists in a fragile ecological balance. Perhaps this is the insight of Genesis where we read, 'God said it was good'. Within this, humans have responsibility.

Yet from the beginning of time, exploitation, greed, and mindless action have resulted in erosion, famine, floods, storms and suffering. Where to begin?

Begin with me, in sustainable practice and prayer for the healing of creation?

### **Healing the whole person: body, mind, and spirit**

When prayer for healing is requested, very often a physical symptom is the presenting need. Being guided in this way is helpful, yet at the same time we need to note how the issue affects other parts of our being: the inner spirit, our mind and our attitudes. But especially our relationship with Jesus which probably leads to prayer with more conviction and thanksgiving, knowing God hears and answers every prayer making times and ways his own. And so we acknowledge, the intent of healing prayer is for the '*whole person*'.

Finally, healing viewed holistically connects what we practise in the church context with the medical profession. In many situations, we're in this together. This has been recognised from the time of the early church. In Acts 28 Luke is recalling an incident on the island of Malta. After Paul heals Publius' father through prayer (*iasato from iaomai*) and laying on of hands, Luke notes others who came were also healed, implying medical attention (*therapeuo*). Unfortunately the English rendering of the Greek rarely makes this clear. Both were honoured, Luke as physician and Paul in his ministry.

John Main wrote, 'The silence is there  
within us...we have to  
enter into it, to become silent, to  
become the silence'.

# Presence

by Trish McBride<sup>1</sup>

Where are you, God?  
And then the words  
Words within and words without –  
I am here

A resonance that permeates, pervades  
A whisper echoing through the universe  
A song in the depths of my being –  
I am here

Words of love, words of joy  
Consoling words, creation words  
Nowhere unspoken –  
I am here

Burning bush that startles  
Fine edged sword that knows  
No boundaries of skin or heart –  
I am here

Glimpse of simple sentence  
Stretched through time  
Reassurance of sustaining –  
I am here

Effervescent words, ineluctable words  
Indwelling, inebriating words  
Silent words, dancing words –  
I am here

And I caught up in the dance  
Am present to the All in all!

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1 Used with permission from Exploring the Presence More Faith Patches, Trish McBride, 2011, 135.

## SGM News Winter 2012

The heaviest frost of the year this morning reminds me winter is here ... it also reminds me that God is good! The last six months have seen some significant changes for SGM. Joanne Garton picked up the work of SGM Administrator done so well by Carole Hunt over the last 14 years. The commitment and skills Joanne brings to the role bode well for the years ahead. SGM was birthed some 30 years ago as a mission department within the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa/NZ. Over that time the accounting functions have been carried out, pro bono, by the Presbyterian Savings and Development Society. With restructuring last year, they're no longer able to provide this service. So in the last few months we've made the needed changes, adding Treasurer to Joanne's title and role, with support from accounting advisor, Bill Clifford.

It won't be long before twenty-two first year participants in the Formation Programme will gather for the residential week at Waikanae. The interest in, and response to, the Programme continues to be encouraging. Directors who have completed the Programme contribute in vital ways to many people, both here and overseas.

Other events of note this year have been the Supervision Workshop in Auckland in February and a seven day, silent retreat in Featherston. This latter is the first seven day, silent retreat that SGM has offered for some years because rising costs had made long retreats too expensive for most. A grant from Wallis Trust helped keep costs low for this one. The 16 available places were filled very rapidly and people on the waiting list had to be turned away. We hope to be able to offer a similar retreat in 2013.

We've been blessed to receive two bequests this year. In these challenging financial times such gifts are very helpful and greatly encouraging as are your donations. Thank-you.

The previous edition of *Refresh* was enthusiastically received and widely appreciated. I'm sure this one will bring food for thought and resources for the journey too!

Blessings

Andrew Pritchard

Convenor SGM

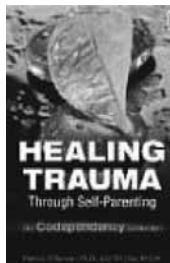


## Resources



### **I Saw Love Today an anthology of spiritual writing with reflections on the Christchurch Earthquake**

Paperback: 136 pages  
Publisher: Pope Print (February 2012)  
ISBN 978-0-473-19511-3  
To order: [lgosling@xtra.co.nz](mailto:lgosling@xtra.co.nz)



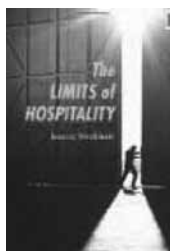
### **Healing Trauma Through Self-Parenting: The Codependency Connection** Patricia O'Gorman Ph.D. Philip Diaz (Authors)

Paperback: 264 pages  
Publisher: HCI; 1 edition (March 14, 2012)  
Language: English  
ISBN-10: 075731614X  
ISBN-13: 978-0757316142



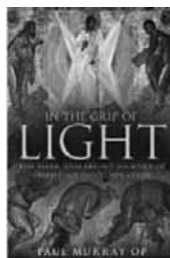
### **You Who Delight Me**

Author: Bronwyn Angela White  
Paperback: 66 Pages  
Publisher: STEELE ROBERTS PUBLISHERS (April 24, 2012)  
ISBN: 978-1-877577-65-9  
To order [bronwyn@spirit-and-faith.com](mailto:bronwyn@spirit-and-faith.com)



### **The Limits of Hospitality**

Jessica Wroblewski  
Paperback: 184 pages  
Publisher: Liturgical Press (April 27, 2012)  
ISBN-10: 0814657648  
ISBN-13: 978-0814657645



### **In the Grip of Light: The Dark and Bright Journey of Christian Contemplation** Paul Murray OP

Paperback: 128 pages  
Publisher: Burns & Oates (August 2, 2012)  
ISBN-10: 1441145508  
ISBN-13: 978-1441145505

# The last word

by Diane Gilliam-Weeks Editor

There's a sense in which the subtext for this edition of Refresh is 'navigating between hope and surrender with the compass of Christ.' That's just what my friend Margie Gillam, pictured opposite, did climbing Mt Aspiring with bone cancer until it became time to surrender completely to the One whose love is stronger than death.

It came to me long ago walking the corridors of hospitals that perhaps God had to create us fragile and breakable in order that we might enjoy the softness of a baby's skin, the passion of love making, and the tenderness of a friend's touch. When Jesus took on flesh he took on the inevitability of pain and death. There is no negotiating this away. As many in this edition assert, healing isn't just physical. It is about ourselves as a whole. About Nephesh in the Hebrew understanding of Being.

And while we can testify to miracles of healing, we do so in full and open acknowledgement of our vulnerability to decay. Not to do so has the potential to belittle or destroy someone's faith.

I do believe God is working for wholeness in everything, but mysteriously within the exquisite physics of the created universe. When I pray, I pray that we might be open to God's wavelength ...God's guidance in all things. The rest is hope and surrender.

Michael Leunig (cartoonist, philosopher and 'Australian Living Treasure') expresses this beautifully:

'When the heart  
Is cut or cracked or broken  
Do not clutch it  
Let the wound lie open  
Let the wind  
From the good old sea blow in  
To bathe the wound with salt  
And let it sting.  
Let a stray dog lick it  
Let a bird lean in the hole and sing  
A simple song like a tiny bell  
And let it ring.'

Our Summer 2013 Edition of Refresh has the theme: 'I and thou'.

I'm looking for a contemplative exploration of the via unitiva and the idea of 'One and Other'. Articles and images to [dianegw@actrix.co.nz](mailto:dianegw@actrix.co.nz) by 26 Aug.



## Haiku

by Jo Anastasiadis

Photo by Alan Uren

Healing is the space  
between my reality  
... and God's

# Book Review

by Andrew Dunn

## Lynne M. Baab. *Friending: Real relationships in a virtual world*

Intervarsity Press. 2011 ISBN 978-0-8308-3419-8. pp190.

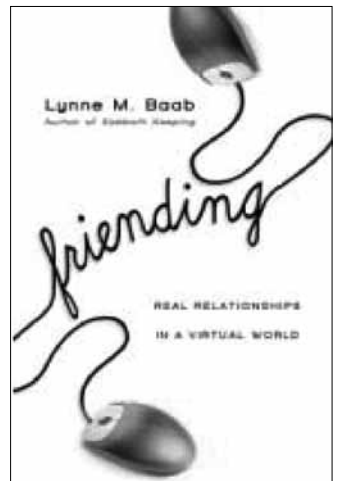
This latest book from the keyboard and heart of Lynne Baab, who teaches pastoral studies at Otago University, is a timely and significant exploration of friendship as a spiritual practice in this Facebook, blogging, texting, mobile phone and keyboard age. She writes about the profundity of initiating and maintaining friendships in this era when the technology tends to shallow up and trivialise our relationships with one another. She sees it is here to stay and offers many useful tips on how to use it profitably in our friending.

Baab explores friendships in Scripture, shares deeply some of her own experiences of friendships, of letting some of them go as she moves to the other side of the world, of maintaining friendships at a distance and beginning again. The challenges of the new technology of communication form a central place as do the challenges beyond technology which are rewarding in the reading and pondering. One challenge is her invitation to fast from technology by putting it all away for a day or a weekend freeing up time for others and for prayer! I thought the book would end there, but no ... there's much more.

And the much more is a significant contribution to Christian writing about friendship. In these seven chapters Baab opens up the richness of friendship with God and with others and how to build and maintain these. The book is well worth reading for these chapters alone. Overall it's a book on timely topics to have in one's own library, in the Church and local Libraries and to lend to many to read and discuss.

The book includes discussion and reflection questions which add to its value for personal and group use.

See also [www.lynnebaab.com](http://www.lynnebaab.com) for Lynne Baab's other books and resources.



# Contributors

**Liz Maluschig** is an RN, Counsellor and Spiritual Director, she co-facilitates cancer healing retreats through the Canlive Trust and author of 3 books: The Greatest Love story of all Time a Christmas story for the very young. Using Stories to help children a guide for parents, teachers, and counsellors; and did you know... a photo essay on the impact of love on brain development in the early years. [lizmaluschig@gmail.com](mailto:lizmaluschig@gmail.com)

**Joanne Fergusson** is National Director of Covenant Keepers NZ, a unique marriage healing ministry, to support those who though separated or divorced choose to remain faithful to their marriage vows and trust God for the restoration of their marriage.

**Trish Harris** enjoys playing with words and images. She works as a writer and a spiritual director and has a small business [www.ribbonwooddesigns.com](http://www.ribbonwooddesigns.com). She lives in the beautiful and diverse city of Porirua. [harrist@paradise.net.nz](mailto:harrist@paradise.net.nz)

**Paul Fromont** lives in Cambridge but wanders and explores far and wide. His journey and the paths he has trodden are marked out behind him on his long-term blog Prodigalkiwi(s) at <http://www.prodigal.typepad.com/>

**Mary McIntyre** lives with husband, Lindsay, in Bannockburn, Central Otago and is constantly amazed at the beauty of their surroundings. She's a member of Rotary International and her local Cromwell branch. Her interests are interior design, reading, handwork, family and friends. She was National Convenor and United Nations Convenor of Presbyterian Women NZ and support staff at intermediate and secondary schools, working one to one with students. She's currently leading a less involved life as she undergoes cancer treatment.

**Jo Anastasiadis** a born and bred Wellingtonian, wife, mother of grown children and spiritual director. She enjoys being outdoors, particularly walking on the beach, taking time out for retreats, and utilizing creativity in her relationship with God. [mail4jo@xtra.co.nz](mailto:mail4jo@xtra.co.nz)

**Peter Stuart** is a 'retired' Anglican priest living in Eastbourne, Wellington. He is National Coordinator of the Cistercian Lay Associate Community linked with Southern Star Abbey, Kopua. Amongst other roles he is a spiritual director and ministry supervisor [peterstuart@clear.net.nz](mailto:peterstuart@clear.net.nz)

**Patte Randall** came from England almost 30 years ago and lives in Auckland. She loves her work and enjoys being with her family and friends, walking up and down hills with her little dog, having breakfast with her home group, going to the cinema, singing, writing and reading.

**Anna Johnstone** enjoys living on Auckland's North Shore with her writer/photographer husband, exploring new paths of creativity, trying out new recipes and learning to play the clarinet. Anna and her husband Kerry are part of the editorial team for Refresh for which the editor is hugely grateful! [www.johnstonez.co.nz](http://www.johnstonez.co.nz)

**Marg Schrader** enjoys living close to the beach on the Kapiti Coast in semi-retirement. She delights in her life which includes her expanding family, some work as a spiritual director, taking worship at her local church, reading, gardening and exercise.

**Digby Wilkinson** is a Baptist Pastor and Anglican priest. He is married to the lovely Jane and has three children. Digby is currently the senior minister at Palmerston North Central Baptist church.

**Jane Hansen** is married to Jim, also mum and grandma. Jane enjoys country life close to the Wairere Falls beneath the Kaimai Ranges, visits from family and friends and writing in response to God's grace in the blessings and challenges of everyday life.

**Bruce Maden** is involved in leadership of Te Aroha Noa Community Services, a committed to the holistic development of the western suburbs of Palmerston North. He has diverse interests in spiritual direction, counselling, social work, adult education, practice research, and most things outside the square!

**Mary Hepburn** is a Sister of Mercy and Member of Dominican Family Community in Dunedin. Ministry includes spiritual direction and music therapy and continues to invite into new places, horizons, and blessings!

**Derek Lightbourne** Past Warden Order of St Luke, is an Anglican minister and has been involved in healing ministry since the 1970's. In retirement his ministry includes sharing with groups of his travel to remote places of New Zealand and beyond, bringing a perspective of the need for care of creation.

**Trish McBride's** writings come from life as a pilgrim, as a privileged hearer of other people's stories, then reflection on these and on her own. She's a Wellington spiritual director, counsellor, and chaplain in a mental health context.

