

# *Refresh*

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## The Deep



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**SGM Contacts [www.sgm.org.nz](http://www.sgm.org.nz)**

**Admin:**

The Rev Adrienne Bruce, PO Box 33, Dannevirke 4942, Cell 021 432 768  
[admin@sgm.org.nz](mailto:admin@sgm.org.nz)

**Workgroup Convenor:**

Jane Wilkinson, [janeinwelly@gmail.com](mailto:janeinwelly@gmail.com)

**Spiritual Directors Formation Programme Coordinator:**

Fran Francis, 14 Oruamo Place, Beach Haven, Auckland 0626; 09 4191152 [fran.francis@sgm.org.nz](mailto:fran.francis@sgm.org.nz)

**Desktop Publishing and Printing:**

Advocate Print, Rotorua

**Refresh Editor:**

Anna Johnstone, 2/143a Manuka Road, Bayview, Auckland 0629, 027 353 5646  
[annajay@xtra.co.nz](mailto:annajay@xtra.co.nz)

Cover image shows Rev Caleb Hardie's brother-in-law, Steve Hathaway, in the deep waters of Rarotonga during a whale filming project. Taken by underwater cameraman and marine biologist, Uli Kuntz.

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Maid of the Mist, Niagara Falls

## This time...

When Kerry and I were in Canada to photograph the wedding of a colleague's daughter, we visited Niagara. Standing far above, we looked down and saw the tiny *Maid of the Mist*, the boat which takes tourists right up to the Falls, as shown opposite.

The next morning, we lined up to go ourselves. I grew more and more excited the closer we got to the pounding torrents of water, the spray drenching our plastic ponchos. We were heading right in to the bottom of the Falls. I wanted to get as close as possible, so stood right up against the rail.

A small boy was next to me as the boat went closer and closer to the foot of the roaring curtain of water. 'Turn it round! Turn it round!' he cried in panic and my heart cried out: 'Go further in, further up!' like Farsight, Reepicheep and Aslan himself in C.S. Lewis' *The Last Battle*. To me, this amazing view was a glimpse of the hugeness of God and of my longing to go deeper with God.

When our minister, Rev Caleb Hardie, was on holiday in January, I led a service where we remembered Jesus' call to his first disciples on the lakeside. As part of the reflection, I asked a couple from our church family to share their story with us. Stephanie and Stephen Ellett's words are part of this *Refresh*.

We ended that day with the Galilee Song and for days afterwards the words, 'Set my heart upon the deep' sang time and time again in my head, my spirit, my heart. 'What is the deep for me now, God?' I asked.

So the seeds were sown for this *Refresh*.

The deep means different things for different people. We're blessed to be allowed glimpses into the lives of those who've offered their words. My thanks to all who have shared their thoughts, stories and images in *The Deep*.

Thanks also to:

- \* The staff of the Christchurch Art Gallery, Te Puna o Waiwhetū, who graciously allowed us to view and to use the artwork of Robert Gibbings' woodcut with Fran Francis' article.
- \* Glenn Cauchi of SPCK Publishing UK for permission to quote from *Border Lands*, the writing of the late Rev David Adam, former Vicar of Holy Island.

I hope something in these pages will touch deep places in your heart.

*Anna*

## The Invitation

Caleb Hardie

In 2013, my father-in-law took our extended family on a trip to Rarotonga. Nine adults and nine children enjoying six glorious days of beachside island living. I hate to think what it cost! My father-in-law was dying of cancer and wanted to gather everyone for a family adventure before things worsened.

My own father had done the same thing a couple of years earlier but given the sheer number of grandchildren (19) and the fact both he and my mother were living on ministers' stipends, we only made it as far as Rotorua! It was no less special.

Reflecting on those wonderful family holidays and the interactions that followed, I can begin to see how their respective journeys towards death became an invitation to the rest of us to engage more deeply with life. One we resisted and embraced in equal parts. It is hard to let go of what you know and to adjust to life when the ground seems to be shifting beneath your feet, isn't it?

Going deep can be both exhilarating and scary at the same time! This became apparent to me in a tangible way while we were in Rarotonga. My brother-in-law is a man of the sea and spends many an hour beneath the surface with camera in hand. We had been spending the days snorkelling in the large reef in front of our accommodation but on this occasion, I was encouraged by this avid sea-dweller to venture beyond the reef to the deeper waters beckoning in the distance.

The adventure required a bit of preparation, wetsuits, booties, and gloves (or socks on hands in my case) to ensure we made it across the reef free from cuts. I felt quite nervous venturing out of the safety of our snorkelling zone. In a short space of time, it had become familiar and there was plenty to see and enjoy within. However, such was the enthusiasm of my brother-in-law, that I couldn't help but follow him out to the great unknown.

We swam and crawled our way across the shallow reef until finally we made it and literally dropped off the edge into the wide and stunningly deep ocean. I remember it was so clear that you could see far into the dark depths below, further than I had ever experienced before. It was eerily quiet, entirely mesmerising, and to be honest, somewhat disturbing.

I became acutely aware of how small and vulnerable I was and just how massive the ocean was. I didn't admit as much to my grinning companion, but I felt afraid and overwhelmed by the sheer immenseness of it. The deep will do that to you, won't it? Unsettle you and take you to places you probably wouldn't choose to go. Deep experiences are humbling experiences. There is beauty to encounter though not always seen at the time. Making our way back over the reef without injury was no small feat, given the surges and swells and it brought welcome relief to feel the ground beneath my feet again. It was at that point that we discovered what everyone on shore had seen

that we had not – a large whale swimming just beyond us as we made our way back in. I wasn't sure whether to feel disappointed or not – I was feeling vulnerable enough already and I'm not sure I could've coped with a whale! That would've been too Jonah-like. I wasn't ready for that kind of depth at that point in my life!

But the deep has a way of sneaking up on you, doesn't it? A few years after the Rarotonga trip I found myself floundering in what felt like deep waters again after exiting an unhappy ministry position. This time it did feel very Jonah-like. A journey down, down, down into the depths where I discovered God in ways I had never encountered God before. Silent but present. Powerfully present.

It is interesting who reaches out to you in the deep to offer Incarnational presence. Often, it is people who have been to the depths in their own journeys. The late Very Rev. Andrew Norton was one of these divers for me. He introduced me to some contemplative writers who, I found, had dwelled in the deep too. Writers like Parker Palmer, John Philip Newell, Richard Rohr, and James Martin. Their writings,<sup>1</sup> along with others, marked the beginning of a new and more contemplative journey in my life. I had some wonderfully wise people to engage with along the way too! And it seemed as though they were collectively inviting me to stay where I was rather than trying to rush back to shore. To stay long enough to discover the treasures that perhaps only lie in the deep.

... to discover the treasures  
that perhaps only lie  
in the deep.

Like God's grace at a time when you feel overwhelmed with your own failings, like God's strength at a time when you feel confronted by your own limited capacities, like a renewed compassion for the brokenness of others, like a way of listening and being present to others without answers or ready solutions, like the rhythms and spiritual disciplines that give expression to lament and hope and offer renewed perspective. It felt as though I was beginning to discover the secrets of the deep! A way of seeing, and living, and loving that was God-shaped.

There is a sense in which our journey into the deep is a kind of growing up. Richard Rohr in *Falling Upward* talks about it as growing into the second half of our lives. According to Rohr, we spend the first half constructing our identity, our container if you like, but if we are fortunate enough we will, at some point, move to the second and more important task of filling that container. Rohr writes: "*We know about this further journey from the clear and inviting voices of others who have been there, from the sacred and secular texts that invite us there, from our own observations of people who have entered this new territory, and also, sadly, from those who never seem to move on.*"

<sup>1</sup> Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward* 2011; Parker J Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak* 2000; John Philip Newell, *The Rebirthing of God* 2015; James Martin, SJ, *The Jesuit Guide To (Almost) Everything* 2010



It seems to me that this *further journey* often begins in the depths, at least that has been my experience. That is when we discover 'who we are' in our most vulnerable state and how out of our vulnerability our lives might reveal that unique expression of God in us. I sense that my own time in the deep has included this invitation to *let my life speak*<sup>2</sup>, in ways that it didn't before.

I think my parents went through this transition too when, in their early forties, they began formally training for ministry. The growth that took place within them through that time was palpable for those of us looking on and experiencing the way their faith found renewed expression. The transformation in Dad, particularly, was significant. He had done terribly at school and left early to become a builder. Many of my memories of him from that time are shaped by how he felt about his life and how he was becoming exhausted trying to do something his heart wasn't in. Beginning his studies, with some trepidation no doubt, was like a reawakening to life. In those later years it felt as though he had finally found himself. He was wiser, more compassionate, more inclusive, and the grace he extended took on a broader quality as a result.

... spoke of a second  
half of life lived  
in the deep.

The way he approached his death especially was a gift to those of us farewelling him and spoke of a second half of life lived in the deep. One of the last things he said to us was: '*There are worse things than dying*'. What did my 58 year old father mean? Like not really living perhaps? Like spending a life time in the shallows for fear of the deep? Whatever he meant, I'll take it as an invitation to continue to try to live with depth - a scary and exhilarating proposition!

In Dad's later years he took to writing prayers. The following prayer is from his collection *Sacred Sounds of the Street*.

## At sea Brian Hardie

God, sometimes we feel all locked up.  
It is hard to put into words the way we really feel  
when others stare at us with a critical eye  
or when they mock our ways and our words.

We feel diminished, small, ridiculous!  
God, there are times when we feel all tied up,  
even around family and friends.  
A look of disapproval withers our confidence,  
shatters our fragile front.

We feel lost, wounded, rejected!

God, at certain times in certain places  
when others tower over us, look down on us,  
we feel like a fish out of water – awkward,  
we feel like a cork on the sea;  
bobbing about, aimless, lost, afraid.

God, give us your confidence,  
instil in us the power of your belief.  
Liberate us with the knowledge you have of us;  
fully known,  
completely loved,  
infinitely understood,  
accepted and free.

Help us, O God, to grow in our understanding  
of the deep value you place on our lives  
and help us to accept ourselves –  
to love ourselves  
in the way you know and love and accept us  
and help us to return the compliment  
to those who are all at sea.

2 Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*

## Deep calls to deep.... Psalm 42 v 7

Linda Burson Swift

I often find myself referring to these words in conversations with people when we are exploring life, where questions are loud and answers are often on mute, and also in the context of prayer. The words hold a sense of desperate entreaty, a cry of the heart to connect to something deeper than what can easily be accessed, a call that may not include the sound of our voice but rather the desperate yet silent cry of our souls.

What is this depth that the Psalmist talks about?

Often this passage is used to speak on behalf of the one who is suffering, who is finding life overwhelming, as though they are being swamped by the rush of a mighty waterfall, falling, drowning under its weight. I imagine something a little different when I attempt to describe what this might mean for me and what the call invites me to experience.

*... a hidden place that lies deep within our soul that cannot be tainted in any way*

Trappist monk, Thomas Merton, used a phrase, 'point vierge' or 'virgin point', to describe a hidden place that lies deep within our soul that cannot be tainted in any way, locking out the influences of whatever we may choose to corrupt ourselves with:

*'At the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God, which is never at our disposal. This little point of nothingness and of absolute poverty is the pure glory of God in us.'*

It is the point where our true self resides and where the Spirit of God sustains our very life. Fourteenth century mystic, Julian of Norwich, offers another slant on this by saying that 'we are not simply made by God, we are made of God.'

To grasp this idea changes my view of myself and life, and invites me to seek and connect within myself the very essence of my Source.

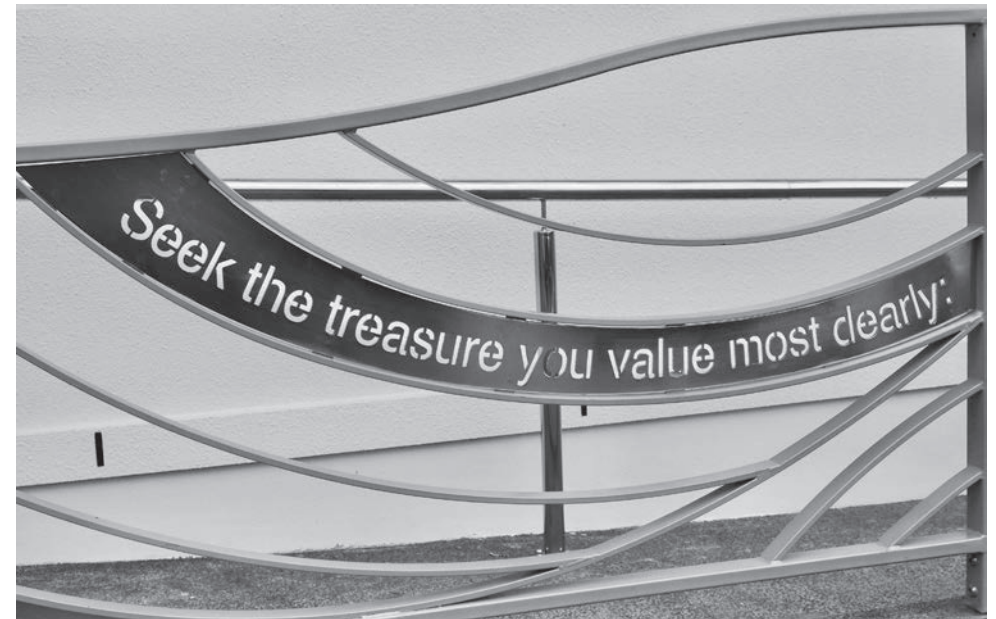
This runs counter to Christianity's doctrine of original sin which claims that we are inherently corrupt. This, in turn, has set in motion a harsh self-judgement that has robbed many of the potential to come to terms with the knowledge that we are inherently good, and therefore free to become.

As I am beginning to understand and embrace this beautiful way of being human, I find myself desiring to guard this virgin point, this depth where I and God exist together and to allow that deep place to be the seed bed where my true self can be acknowledged, embraced and invited to grow up and flourish. I am not alone with myself.

Perhaps this what was meant by the saying to 'guard your heart for from it flows the wellspring of life' - Proverbs 4:23

To begin to even grasp this idea often seems almost impossible. It's like trying to hold water as it runs through my hands. Sometimes it feels like a far-off utopian thought. Other times I brush against the hint of the presence of God and myself as being one. When I can begin to fathom how the depths of my very being are intricately connected to the very depths of God, then I am able to move from love of self to love of others and the world around me.

It allows me to be anchored in the knowledge that God is in me, and I am in God, and that God is the ground of all Being. Not only am I not alone, I am very safe in the World to which I belong.



Handrail outside Taupo Library



Robert Gibbings St Brendan and the Sea Monsters  
Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū; gift of Rosalie Archer, 1975

## Saint Brendan

Fran Francis

14 centimetres of 'exquisite' woodcut artwork is housed at Christchurch Art Gallery. Completed for a book by scholar Helen Waddell called *Beasts and Saints* in 1934, it's 'a rhythmic composition of swirling sea serpents, stingrays and sharks.'<sup>1</sup> The woodcut illustrates a moment in the epic seven-year voyage of St Brendan the Navigator and his monk brethren when he sang the Mass for St Peter's Day in a 'sweet, ringing voice' and something very wonderful happened.

The sea is so clear this day that the brothers gaze into its depths; it seems one could reach out a hand and touch the creatures far below. They are incredibly numerous and like a 'city in motion'; the *Voyage of St Brendan* describes a great 'confusion' of fish while the *Navigatio Brendanus* offers a more peaceful perspective of 'flocks at pasture'. Either way, the monks are edgy and as Brendan sings, the creatures begin to rise to the surface.

In horrified amazement and anxiety the brothers frantically signal to Brendan to take it down a notch, fearful that these 'innumerable fishes great and fierce such as never were discovered to human eye' will be agitated by Brendan's singing, placing them all in danger of capsize, drowning or worse, devourment. Brendan isn't having a bar of it. Waddell's evocative translation picks up the story; St Brendan 'upbraids them all for fools and laughed a great laugh, continuing more solemnly than before, whereupon the monsters of the deep began to rise on all sides, making merry for joy of the Feast, followed after the ship. Yet, when the office for the day was ended, they straightaway turned back and went their way.'

... what do we see  
when we gaze into  
the 'deep'?

A tale easily dismissed as fancy yet like all the best stories it fascinates and lodges in the memory because it is more than the sum of its parts. For starters, what do we see when we gaze into the 'deep'? As we begin the inner journey 'here be monsters' could be etched around the edge of our spiritual map. These waters are uncharted. As we occupy our 'skin boat' (Brendan's was made of ox hides but ours is ours) we make our wobbly way into the deep. Cynthia Bourgeault puts it like this, 'As one sits in Centering Prayer with the intent to rest in and trust in God, the unconscious begins to unload the emotional junk of a lifetime. Repressed memories, pain, accumulated dull hurt rise to the surface and are, through the attitude of gentle consent, allowed to depart.'<sup>2</sup> Here be monsters.

- 1 <https://christchurchartgallery.org.nz/blog/collection/2005/12/st-brendan-and-the-sea-monsters-by-robert-gibbings>
- 2 <https://stbridesliverpool.org.uk/blog/2018/2/22/contemplation-and-contemplative-prayer-a-reflection>



Yet, in the story, Brendan is fearless and joyful. He sings the liturgy and it appears that the creatures are responding both to his voice and to the praise of God. The creatures 'undiscovered by human eye' are invited to the surface and through 'gentle consent' allowed to depart.

That it is on St Peter's Day seems more than coincidence – he who was the 'fisher of men' and who knew how it felt to go out into 'the deep' at the behest of Christ, let down the nets and haul 153 silver darlings aboard, nearly capsizing the boat. One seafaring saint invoking another and without any nets this time many great and mysterious fishes are drawn forth – not to be eaten this time. Brendan seemed to sense their praise and that their presence was a response to God. This is why he wouldn't pipe down but rather, sang more consciously, solemnly and determinedly. God is here!

In this time of *Seaspiracy*, of Chinese fishing 'armadas', of Fukushima radioactive water being dispersed in the sea, of a rubbish patch the size of Texas in the Pacific, of knowing more about space than we do about our oceans, Brendan's reverence for the creatures is instructive and inspiring. This is Celtic Christianity at its nature-embracing best.

There's something marvellous about St Brendan's laugh and his rebuke of the fretful monks. Again, this little account in a much bigger story of pilgrimage, illuminates something of our experience when facing our own depths (or going deeper in God). When parts of me are fretting about these creatures, Brendan is singularly unconcerned and will sing all the more intentionally and trust the music, liturgy and God to do the rest.

*... this little account  
in a much bigger story  
of pilgrimage*

## Heaven's Door

Donald Scott

An early morning walk  
Drinking deeply of dawning day  
Haere mai, come abide with Us

But the clouds they did burst  
My peace suffered the same  
But friend umbrella, glad you came

The paths now awash  
From the heavens above  
Heaven and earth strangely joined

Shelter from the storm did I  
Beneath the wings of Sister tree  
Drawn to move deeper  
Than being tourist was I

Looking from without, gazing from afar  
Yet now invited within  
Immersed  
Baptised  
Enveloped within te korowai o te Atua

Welcome, friend storm  
Your jagged edges  
Reveal heaven's door

We are One,  
Brother Tui, Sister Tree  
Embracing little old me

Yet a strange site to behold  
E tū ana te rā, ka whiti ia tonu  
The sun was rising, shining still  
On distant shores; yet breaking through

The Father's bidding; welcome  
esteemed guest  
The Son's Word; adorned in Creation's  
best  
The Spirit's song; ka tangi ngā manu

*We are One,  
Ko au ko koe, ko koe ko au  
I am in you, you are in me*



Rainy sunrise Auckland: Donald Scott



## Answering the Call

Stephanie & Stephen Ellett – as spoken to the church family at  
Albany Presbyterian Church, January 2021

Before we begin, we would like to share with you this prayer by Thomas Merton.

*"My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.*

*And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone."*

This prayer resonates with us at the moment as over the past few years, Stephen and I have been on a journey and will be leaving this congregation and Auckland in March.

This journey that we have been on has involved numerous hints and nudges from God, each one an invitation to move into a deeper relationship with him. These 'God moments' as we have called them, continue to surprise us, excite us, and terrify us and we are delighted that Anna has asked us today to try to share with you what God has been hinting at, and our guesses for where he is leading us in 2021.

A few years ago, I was challenged by the verses that we are to be the bride of Christ and while I have always attended church and had a Christian walk, I questioned how well I knew the bridegroom that these verses talked about. How deep is my relationship with Christ really?

**... to leave the safety and security of what we know and to move towards the unknown.**

So, I set about studying the Bible. I joined two Bible study groups and was more intentional in growing my faith and understanding of God. These studies opened my eyes to God's invitation to follow him. To be courageous and to leave the safety and security of what we know and to move towards the unknown.

*From my side, I have followed a similar path to Steph. I also sought to get greater insights into who Christ was, and more importantly, who is he is to me today.*

*I started gaining additional perspective of the Bible by attending a home group, reading books by a wide range of Christian authors and using lockdown to listen to other Ministers. This has helped to reframe my long-held views of God from the black and white,*

*conservative and often narrow perception I had, to a deep awareness of who Jesus was and what being a follower actually meant.*

*As we journeyed together, friends shared verses with us, we listened to daily readings, heard different sermons and had words spoken over us - all which pointed towards a continual invitation from God.*

*Steph and I related very strongly to Caleb's words from a few weeks ago, when he talked about 'Strange Whisperings', the story of God calling out to Samuel, as we have, at times, been left gobsmacked and amazed at the timing and exactness of God's whisperings to us.*

*Out of these whisperings has been the challenge to simplify our lives.*

As we continued to pray and seek clarity about what God was hinting at, I have come to believe that living a simpler life is about removing the distractions that creep into our lives, that wear us down and prevent us from truly living.

I felt a strong call that we should leave our jobs and home and to live without many of the creature comforts I appreciate and be open to what God might have in store for us. Knowing how much I enjoy a nice bed, the familiarity of home and the security of a job - the uncertainty and challenge of what God was asking was quite confronting!

Stephen was absolutely floored when I proffered the idea of becoming nomadic for a season while we worked out exactly where God was leading us. I too, was a bit concerned by what just came out of my mouth, but I really felt strongly that this was an invitation from God.

*To take up this invitation meant we had to leave everything behind.*

*Independently from Steph, I felt prompted to step away from my church and work responsibilities. Over the last 18 months I have stepped down from the Parish Council at Hibiscus Coast knowing they are in great hands with a new Minister and last year resigned from the Board of Managers. I also signalled to Session that I will be stepping down in 2021 to embark on this journey.*

*From a work perspective, many of you know I have worked with my father for the last 17 years. At the end of January, I will finish up working with Maurice which will be an enormous change for both of us. I know that this is a change that will take some time for me to process as I will miss working together on various projects, our conversations and our morning coffees.*

*Steph has also recently resigned from her job and will finish up at the end of February. A couple of weeks ago her boss offered her a promotion to a job she had been asking to do for over a year. She was gutted as her boss did not know she was intending to resign. She was torn by his offer but in her heart, she knew that accepting the promotion was not what God wanted for her.*

Part of my wrestling with God has been trying to understand what living a simpler life means, and there is no definitive answer, especially as we all interpret living simply differently.

Like any couple in a relationship, we are two different people with different dreams and desires. Stephen has always enjoyed tramping and has had a dream to walk across America from Mexico to Canada which greatly contrasts to my enjoyment of being a homebody, enjoying my garden and developing our lifestyle block.

In October I felt urged by the Spirit to start walking to work. This is about 6km each way. This was another example of God encouraging me out of my comfort zone. I was kept awake at night for over a week mulling over how I was actually going to walk along the road as in parts it is narrow and, being a 100km road, quite dangerous. But I persevered and now walk several times a week to work and enjoy the spiritual practice and connections that come from these walks.

*These last few months have meant that Steph and I have had many, many discussions to ensure we are on the same page. Every decision, especially as we decide what to do with our house and embark on decluttering our home, has been a challenge. We have had to evaluate what things are important to us individually and as a couple and what are the things we have been hanging onto because we could.*

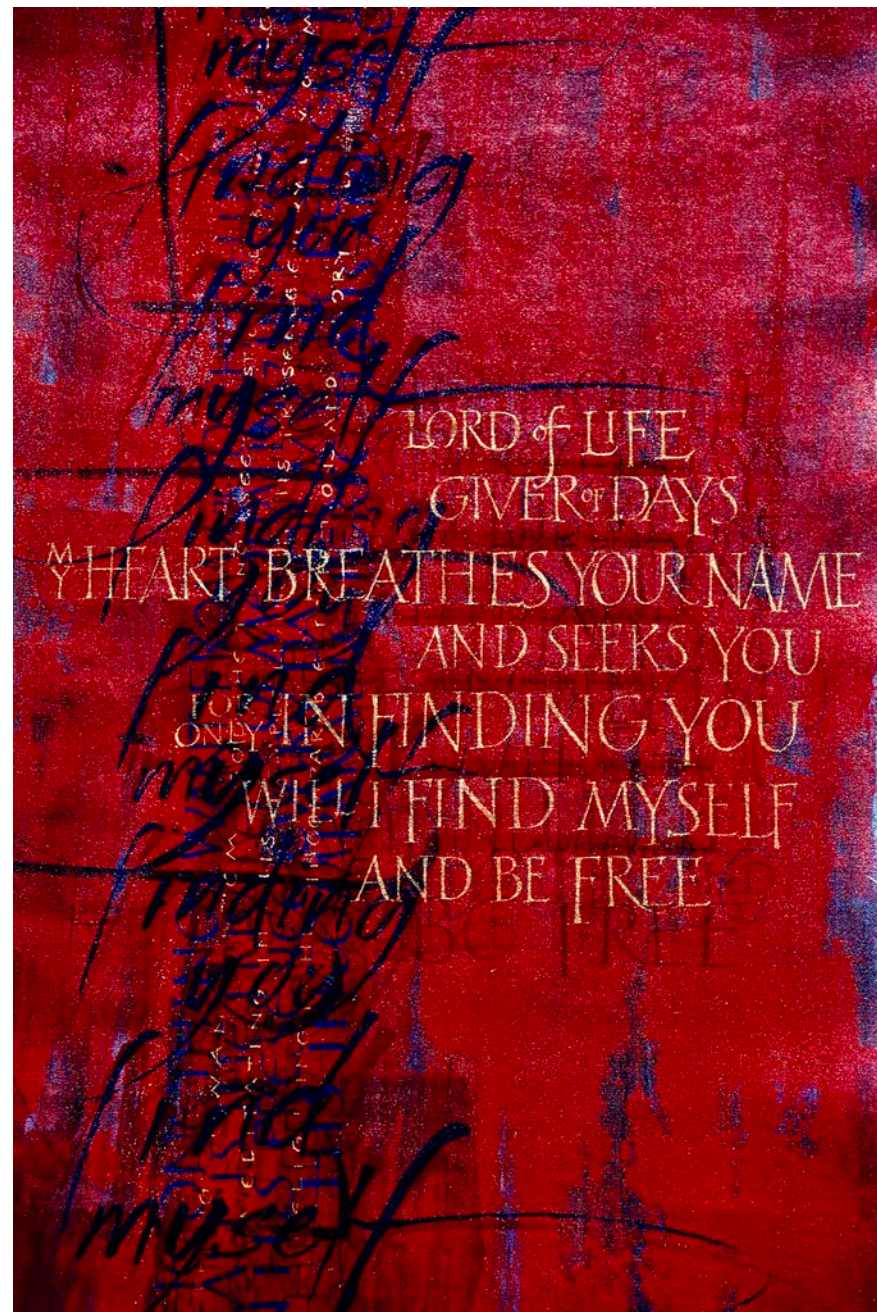
*This has formed a big part of our simplification journey.*

*We know that we will have to leave behind our home, a place where our girls grew up for the last 10 years. As some of you may know we had plans to build our dream home on our property. Last year our plans were finalised by the architect and were ready for submission to Council. This was a big step for us to committing to this project, moving it along from being an idea to more like a reality. These plans were a long time in the making and while this call by God has dampened our desire to keep pursuing this project, we are at peace about this.*

*While we sought to gain clarity on where we would live after leaving our home, we explored a number of different options including tiny homes, caravan and campervans although we did not feel settled with any of these possibilities.*

Come the end of March, we are planning to pack up our small car and head out around New Zealand for 4 - 6 weeks. We see this initial time as a chance to reflect on where we have been and begin to discern the will of God for our next steps. We have questioned whether this journey is just a mid-life crisis, or even a response to our girls leaving home and ending up with an empty nest. But we are adamant that the timing, accuracy and coincidence of the hints and nudges that we have received, overwhelmingly convinces us that this is a call by God.

The fact that we have been open to hearing his word has only made us more aware of these God moments and has inspired us into action. We will miss being a part of this church family when we leave in a couple of months. We look forward to staying in touch. We ask that you keep us in your prayers as we embark on this journey. (It continues – Ed)



Anna Johnstone: *The Freedom Walk* Calligraphy: Margaret Woollett



## Invitations to Deepthing

Andrew Dunn

When I was in my mid-teens I bought a copy of J.B. Phillips *Letters to Young Churches*, one of the early modern translations of Paul's New Testament letters. There began a fascination with more meaningful translations of many of his turns of phrase that seemed shrouded in mystery in the King James version. Since then, of course, there have been many other modern renderings of Paul's letters, the Gospels and other Scriptures. As with the Phillips translations, many of them offer us invitations, in current language, into deepening understandings of our union with Christ, the heart of Paul's spirituality and mysticism.

*... so it becomes a lifelong exploration and deepening.*

Take for example Paul's unique and oft-repeated phrase of believers being 'in Christ', 'in him', 'in the Lord Jesus Christ' and so on. It's the kind of relational term for which there is no simple or final translation. Rather, it's open to experience, to fresh insights, and yet limited by the boundaries of what we are experiencing at present. It's never easy to find words to describe it so it becomes a lifelong exploration and deepening.

Similarly, Paul's use of the term 'Lord'. James Dunn has counted Paul's use of both terms (83 uses of the *in Christ* and related terms and 47 of *in the Lord* group). He also notes that these terms only appear in Paul's writings apart from one reference in 1 Peter. Dunn suggests that these terms of 'participation in Christ' make this relational reality of more significance in our lives and devotion than justification by faith, the usual way of describing the heart of Paul's presentation of the gospel! (James Dunn. *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*. Eerdmans. 1998. Chapter 15 – Participation in Christ).

Ponder these gems as invitational to deepening: "For me to live is Christ and dying is gain" (Phil 2:22). "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 13:14). "To know Christ and be found in him" (Phil 3:8-11). And these stretching comments: "It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me..." (Gal 2:19-20); "Hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:1-4). Or this comment about baptism, "buried with him in baptism and raised with him..." (Col 2:12).

Really apt for me is this verse from Colossians 1:16ff "... all things have been created through and for him ... and in him all things hold together ...". What a fine Christian base for ecology! I get the sense that in touching a soft and attractive fern or bush orchid or a massive kauri, I am touching Him in whom it is held together and is given its uniqueness. To see creation, to touch it, to embrace its presence is to embrace its origins and its being in Him in whom it consists now! I don't think David Attenborough would approve, but then in all his work I don't get any sense of a spirituality beyond his sheer delight in beauty and the intricacies of evolution.

My own discovery is that as life moves on through a wide variety of experiences, challenges, griefs and joys, it enables me to see these spiritual truths more refreshingly and broadening. The same ground is often covered again, but more deeply, more expansively, more nourishingly of the moment.

*... our marriage bond is strengthened in death, not diminished!*

One of the most surprising discoveries with my wife Margaret's death is that our in Christness still envelops us and bonds us together in Him. So much so that she is often present, especially in my early morning prayer times, and our marriage bond is strengthened in death, not diminished! I've never read about that anywhere but have discovered its truth and experience and enjoy its reality.

But how do we enable the deepening to develop? After all, it's a very hectic and busy life without much time for quiet reflection. I'm fortunate in being able to lead a more eremitical life which gives time aplenty to follow a devotional routine that nourishes. I'm also surrounded by bush, birds, and silence that enable the contemplative faculty to flourish. Music plays its part as does reading and the enjoyment of wildlife and zoo-type TV programmes. An annual Auckland Zoo pass gets plenty of use and encourages sheer enjoyment of life in many forms. I haven't been baptised yet from above by orangutans on their high wires but read the cautionary notices!

So I suggest finding what attracts and thrills you – and do more of it as the contemplative faculty is refreshed, expanded and enjoyed. It is in the recovery and expansion of our contemplative faculties that we become more sensitive to the still small voice and the delicate nuances of God's loving are sensed and recognised.

Each of us can build our own routines and patterns of devotion. Do it all wrapped around by the presence of God's love and grace, and in partnership with Christ our Lord.

Whatever happened for St Patrick that enabled him to include this in his *Breastplate*?

Christ be with me, Christ within me.  
Christ behind me, Christ before me.  
Christ beside me, Christ to win me.  
Christ to comfort and restore me.

Christ beneath me, Christ above me.  
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger.  
Christ in hearts of all that love me.  
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

May it be our discovery too!



## One With You Margaret Dunn 1999

Praying is always incomplete,  
Praying is never finished,  
For praying is longing for you, my God,  
And you will never be possessed.

Praying is journeying deeper into you  
Which is never completely achieved,  
For you are deeper than my knowing.  
Praying is following the desire to know and love.

Praying is allowing my will to bend to yours.  
With my humanity and your divinity.  
This process will take me all my life.  
Becoming one with you.



Memorial Wall, Peace Garden, Albany Presbyterian Church

## Launch out into the Deep David Adam

### PAUSE

Use this time to thrust out a little from the land, to discover the amazing depth of the ordinary. Use it until you discover the extra-ordinary that lies in the depths of all things. Realise that you live in the depths all of your life; life is only shallow when we choose to make it so. Move away from what you do out of necessity and habit. Discover the deeps of creation, of your own being, and of God.

*... life is only shallow  
when we choose to  
make it so.*

### PICTURE

See the fishermen mending their nets. Look at the weariness upon them. They are on the beach and their boats are beached also. It is as if the tide has left them all behind. Their nets are broken and they have taken them into their hands. Great holes that let life slip through have to be repaired. At the moment it seems that life is escaping from them, slipping through the net and through their fingers. They know it is necessary to make the holes smaller. If the mesh is too large, everything will escape them, so they are mending their nets.

It is at such a moment that He comes. He comes when life seems to be escaping us. He comes when we toil all night and get nothing for it. Beware, He is wanting to cast His net and He is making the casting area smaller. He does not want everyone just to slip away. See Him being jostled by the crowds. The beach is becoming so crowded, He can hardly move. If He is to land a great catch like this, He will need help. So He calls to the fishermen. He wants their support. He needs a little space. So He borrows their boat – and the fishermen. For a while the talking goes on but then Jesus comes to the important bit: 'Thrust out a little from the land' – a simple request, but it is the beginning of something bigger.

It is nice being there with Him, a bit of time off from work. Sitting there and enjoying the gentle movement of the boat. They begin to wonder why they do not do this more often. It is so relaxing, so refreshing. Because of this action they feel especially close to Him. He is in their boat – and in their lives.

'Launch out into the deep!' That order comes as a bit of a shock. It seems that privileges always bring with them responsibilities. They were just beginning to lie back. 'Launch into the deep!' He wants them to be in the deep waters. He knows that big catches are not in these shallows. 'Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.' Peter wanted to object but he also wanted to plumb new depths, so he obeyed. Here was a catch like never before; though the fishermen were not quite sure who was catching what or whom. All Peter knew was that they had entered the deep with Jesus and their lives would never be the same again. Peter knew that when they came to land, they were caught. See what new depths they enter as they leave all behind and follow Him.

## PONDER

Jesus calls us o'er the tumult  
Of our life's wide restless sea

While we are doing our routine work, He comes.  
While we are mending our nets or our cars, He comes.  
While the very life we seek is slipping through our fingers, He comes.  
When we toil all night and catch nothing, He comes.  
And every time He comes, He calls.  
He calls us today and every day.

'Thrust out a little from the land.'  
Do not be earth bound or desk bound.

Begin to learn 'the glorious liberty of the children of God.' Move out from the crowd and noise each day, so that you may have a little space around you. So that you may know He is in your boat, your house, your life. If you do not do this, you are hardly ready for the next call, 'Launch out into the deep.' Learn to live in the deep, with a deeper awareness of the world, your neighbour and your God. Of the Celts, Robin Flower wrote:

It was not only that these scribes and anchorites lived by the destiny of their dedication in an environment of wood and sea; it was because they brought to that environment an eye washed miraculously clear by continuous spiritual exercises that they, first in Europe, had that strange vision of natural things in an almost unnatural purity.<sup>1</sup>

Let us learn to move from the superficial to the deep. Life is not meant to be a perpetual game of trivial pursuits, it is far more glorious than that.

## PRAY

'Tis God's will I would do,  
My own will I would rein;  
Would give to God his due,  
From my own due refrain;  
God's path I would pursue  
My own path would disdain.<sup>2</sup>

May God shield us by each sheer drop,  
May Christ keep us on each rock-path,  
May the Spirit fill us on each bare slope,  
As we cross hill and plain,  
Who live and reign  
One God forever. Amen.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Robin Flower, *Irish Tradition*, Clarendon Press 1947, p.42

<sup>2</sup> *Poems of the Western Highlanders*, p.59

<sup>3</sup> Traditional Gaelic prayer, translated by G.R.D. McLean and quoted in Martin Reith, *God in our Midst*, SPCK, p.33

Promise that each day you will set apart a little time to discover the depths of things, that you will thrust out a little from the land. Seek to enter the depths of Creation that are all around us, that you may see more clearly. Do not be content with the superficial.



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Celtic Cross: AJ

## Go out into Deep Water

An unhurried meditation on Luke 5:1-11  
Joanne Garton

Find a quiet, comfortable place of solitude.  
Spend a few minutes being silent and still, breathing deeply.  
Read Luke 5:1-11 slowly.

- Imagine you are there by the lakeside – the weather is calm and mild
  - visualise what it is like - the lakeside, the boats, the water, the people
  - imagine the sounds - voices, water gently lapping, movements
  - imagine the smells
- Let the scene form in your mind.

Notice Jesus - what is Jesus like?  
– his clothes, his gestures, his voice, his face  
Jesus has finished talking to the crowd and now you see him getting into one of the boats. You decide to get into the boat too!  
Imagine yourself in the boat with Jesus and the disciples.

Continue to let Jesus reveal himself to you.  
You hear Jesus' voice – he says, **"Go out into deep water and let down the nets."**  
How does this affect you? How do you respond when Jesus says this?  
Take unhurried time here before you move on in the meditation.

The boat goes out into deep water and there is a great catch of fish.  
- imagine the excitement, the noise, the sounds  
- you notice Simon Peter has dropped to his knees in front of Jesus and you hear him say, "Go away from me, Lord. I am a sinful man!"  
How does this scene affect you?

You hear Jesus' voice say to Peter, **"Don't be afraid."**  
Jesus turns and looks at you.  
**Allow Jesus to be present and reveal himself to you.**  
What is the expression on his face?  
What is he saying to you?  
How are you feeling?  
How do you respond to Jesus?  
Spend unhurried time with Jesus.

When you are ready, let the scene gently fade. Don't hurry – there still may be words to hear, words to say, or something to notice.

## See the Phoenix

Jo Anastasiadis

You do not see as we see;  
The greatest pain ever known,  
Was the greatest Love ever shown:  
The Son of God's arms stretched on wood.

We see sorrow, loss, pain  
As threatening to destroy us.  
You see them as something that takes us to You.  
We feel pain,  
We see the immediate.  
You see the future's growth,  
You feel the love.

Outside of time,  
You see beyond our now.  
And beyond the immediate problems,  
Pain, sorrow and doubts  
Are lives deepened in You.  
Seeped in faith, love, joy and hope.

But the lives must live the first,  
Before they know the latter.  
While all that is within would scream  
"Remove the bad."  
Yet without the 'bad'  
The good is not really known.

What is hope without despair?  
What is faith without doubt?  
What is love without pain?  
What is joy without sorrow?

Each known in greater measure because of the other.  
Never do Your eyes rest on the negative,  
Always You see forward to  
The Phoenix that rises from the ashes.



Phoenix: Jo Anastasiadis



# The deepness of time, the deepness of me, the deepness of God

Adrienne Thompson

'*Deep time*' is an evocative phrase coined by John McPhee to express the insignificance of a human lifespan compared to the ages upon ages of forming and unforming and reforming the earth.

My four-year-old grandson can tell me all about dinosaurs. He patiently corrects me when I assign Stegosaurus to the same period as Triceratops. But millions of years are not really a concept for him. I talk to him about his great-grandfather. 'Did he live in the olden days?' asks Billy. 'Yes.' 'Before the dinosaurs or after the dinosaurs?' I smile, but am I any wiser than he is? Dinosaurs, Gondwana land, earth's beginnings in the unimaginable deepness of time are equally unfathomable to me, I just know more of the words.

Abandoning the geological concept, I continue to play with the phrase. *Deep time*. Here in Aotearoa New Zealand I've had little sense of that. A thin layer of vaguely known story lies lightly over the landscape. History here began with James Cook, the bold and clever captain. In the shadowy background were Māori people, insignificant to the story until they, like the mountains, lakes and rivers were discovered by the history-makers.

I have learned differently. My way into deep time in Aotearoa has been through its landmarks – those islands, mountains, rivers and lakes, discovered and named, not by James Cook or those who followed him but by those who came long before. I live near the great harbour of Tara – named by the son of Whātonga the Navigator. I look across it to the islands, Matiu and Makaro, named by Kupe's daughters. When I walk the sacred paths of Tapu-te-ranga, near Island Bay, I remember Hinekiri, Tara's daughter, the gardener who cultivated kumara there 600 years ago, perhaps. When I travel up the coast I recognise Kupe's landing place at the entrance to Porirua harbour. I salute Tūteremoana, the highest point on Kapiti island, and I remember its eponymous Rangatira.

I wonder if some of the meanings of 'whakapapa' find a place in the concept of *deep time*?

*whakapapa*

1. (verb) to lie flat, lay flat.
2. (verb) to place in layers, lay one upon another, stack flat.
3. (verb) to recite in proper order (e.g. genealogies, legends, months), recite genealogies.
4. (noun) genealogy, genealogical table, lineage, descent.

Layer upon layer, pile upon pile, memory, narrative, history, ancestry, putting depth and more depth into my experience of living here in Aotearoa.

Until I became aware of these layers, I experienced a curious blankness. I live here on the far side of the world – and even that terminology is revealing: the far side from where? From Britain, where my ancestry lies, from Asia, my home for 40 years, from Europe and North America that shaped my language, my mythologies, my philosophy, my theology. My body is here but my consciousness is tuned to a different frequency.

My own whakapapa – Scottish and English, European and Christian – is deep inside of me. Oddly, but it's a very common experience for many who begin to engage with te Reo Māori and te Ao Māori, the more I learn and experience of *deep time* in Aotearoa, and the more layers I discover here, the more tuned I am to my own whakapapa, to my connections, physical, mental and spiritual, across the world.

***With the learning  
came the invitation  
– participate here.***

Learning my way into the *deep time* of Aotearoa began with learning a few of the stories, a little of the history of this land, just some of the names of the hills and rivers near me and of the iwi who came and went and beside them. With the learning came the invitation – participate here. I am not merely to know, or even to name, but to acknowledge – to bow – to say hello. To mihi.

E mihi ana ki ngā maunga, ki ngā awa, ki ngā iwi katoa o tēnei whenua. I greet the mountains, the rivers and all the peoples of this land. Almost every morning I go outside to acknowledge the sky and earth, the Whārangī range of hills, the Waipāhihi stream, and the Te Atiawa iwi who have the mana whenua here. What was an empty, blank space inside of me now echoes with resonant voices, singing, speaking, telling, talking. Voices from my whakapapa answering the voices from deep time in Aotearoa.

The God of deep time and deep space takes me out of my depth, and I find that I am at home.







# The Deep Work of God in the World

Jane Wilkinson

I am a spiritual director and meet regularly with people as they reflect on their faith, ministries and everyday life experiences. And when I think of the deep, I am indebted to Franciscan priest, Richard Rohr, and minister-theologian-writer, Frederick Buechner, who both unreservedly tie prayer and contemplation to engagement and action.

Rohr invites prayerful letting go of our sense of control over our lives and cooperating with God's work in the world. He recognises if we pray but don't act justly, our faith won't bear fruit, and on the flip side, he suggests that activists without contemplation burn out and even well-intended actions can cause more harm than good.<sup>1</sup>

And Frederick Buechner eloquently states "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."<sup>2</sup>

Two of my spiritual direction clients, 'Pete' and 'Jen' (names have been changed) have been willing to write something with me about this. One is a community chaplain working amongst people in the social housing space and the other is a family lawyer in a high needs practice and neighbourhood. Over the time Pete and Jen have been coming for spiritual direction, each repeatedly recall significant experiences of God's presence as they engage in loving action and care.

## Pete

I work and live in Christian mission in the social housing flats of Berhampore, South Wellington. I share this same calling with others in the congregation that 'sends' us. I also share it with others who gather fortnightly to worship in a backroom in Berhampore. For us it is essential to Christian existence to find our place and to do life with those of our neighbours who are most adversely affected by our society. This is what it means to follow Jesus' life and make it ours. To be with God is to be with the poor. I pray because I need to be with people and just not in my own bubble (and not just the covid bubble!). I pray because I need to see the darkness and the chinks in the matrix where the light shines through.

Let me elaborate on this prayer-life dance. The 'now' of practising the presence of God is not an escape. The 'now' of prayer is invaded on the one hand by a future darkness of runaway climate disaster and a past darkness of all that has led us to this point – the structures and habits of our colonial and capitalist heritage. This means that for me prayer is also a place of lament. The beatitudes remind me that there is a spirituality of

*I pray because I need to see  
the darkness and the chinks in the  
matrix where the light  
shines through.*

lament amongst the followers of Jesus (the dispirited, the mourners, the yearners for justice). So does Isaiah.

"The way of peace they do not know; there is no justice in their paths. They have turned them into crooked roads; no one who walks along them will know peace. So justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us. We look for light but all is darkness; for brightness but we walk in deep shadows. Like the blind we grope along the wall, feeling our way like people without eyes. At midday we stumble as if it were twilight; among the strong we are like the dead. We all growl like bears; we moan mournfully like doves. We look for justice but find none; for deliverance but it is far away." (Is 59:8-11)

Isaiah speaks for many of my friends. I think of one who spends most of his days wandering the streets looking for cigarette butts, full of anger at the cards he has been dealt, his affect completely flattened by anti-psychotic medication, from which he occasionally emerges in conversation with grand schemes to save the world – schemes that make all his conversation partners nervous and uncertain how to respond because they are completely unrealistic. His story, and many like it, make me want to 'kick at the darkness till it bleeds daylight' (Bruce Cockburn). I don't have the strength to touch his world for too long.

*His story, and many like it,  
make me want to 'kick at the  
darkness till it bleeds  
daylight'*

I think of another who left home in his early teens to live on the streets. Finally, at about thirty years old, he has a roof around him. Much more impervious than the damp walls of his dark flat are the walls he builds around his heart keeping the rest of us out. He makes a practice of avoiding social niceties and thus avoiding any intimacy that might arise from small talk. In the pain and shame of abandonment he hides away. We play chess every week. He usually beats me when he's not high. When things are bad he sees grotesque visions played out on the wallpaper of his flat and is awakened in the night by ghosts and spirits. For him this is part of his Maori spirituality (at least the ghost bit) which he is confident a white guy like me will never understand. He's probably right.

It is much easier to take the middle-class reading of 'the poor you will always have with you' (Mt 26:11). Such a reading allows a moment's pause of regret from the distance of those who benefit from the structures and habits of history, a moment to contemplate its collateral damage, and then move on. On the other hand, what if the poor are always with us because our prayer takes us to them, as it took Jesus? What if prayer-practice is also the place of sending - the place where I, no matter how poor I might be, am motivated to make my home and build my friendship, each day, among those who are worse off than me, and to learn to live and die with them?

How can the poor, the destitute (Lk 6:20) be blessed if their 'spiritual' world is a place of torment? How can the dispirited and the mourners (Mt 5:3-6) have the bliss of God with them when they cannot even imagine the arrival of justice in order to be hungry

1 Rohr, Richard. Action and Contemplation. Daily Meditations. Last modified January 1, 2020. <https://cac.org/2020-daily-meditations/>.

2 Buechner, Frederick. *Wishful Thinking*. HarperCollins Publishers, 1973. 118-119



for it? Maybe I can hunger with them? Maybe we can share some justice together in the Community Room? Or in our backroom Church over a meal?

When I pray for my friends (or myself) I make my way through the Lord's Prayer. I always pause for some time on the prayer for deliverance. The gap between Jesus' victory over death and death's stranglehold over our lives creates unbearable tension. Deliverance often seems the most relevant and also the most impossible. It's one thing to take the boy out of city, but another thing to take the city out of the boy.

So what is this space of prayer in the practice of friendship and mission? Firstly, it is the space of preparation, perhaps even deep formation. When I find myself in the presence of God I find a deep sadness and trauma at the state of the world, but I also find myself lifted, moved, energised – sent in the wake of Jesus. My motivation and vision adjusts. The tragic begins to look a little comic. I am oriented for the day. Secondly this space of prayer draws me into the lives of my friends. I intercede for them. I let Jesus guide me in prayer for the various dimensions of their life and mine. In short, prayer sends me to people and draws us together in our common need of God.

#### Jen

Sometimes I cry in court or mediation when I am supposed to be a lawyer. It is a hard place to navigate professionally, but there is something unavoidably deep and spiritual about vulnerability, remorse, forgiveness, and healing. It moves me and tears can spring involuntarily. When one person reaches across a table in an adversarial justice system and simply says to another "I am sorry for hurting you" - it disrupts process and indicates unseen important, deep, significant work taking place. I worship a God of reaching out. There is something deeply spiritual about a judge being insightful and making wise decisions for this particular family. Truly inspired, I see a wise and creative God reflected in outcomes by a 'system'. There is something deeply spiritual about working with a client in a pivot point in their lives, or a sad time in their lives, or a time when they are broken. Each story is sacred and I have a privileged role to be able to accompany, assist and advocate for people along the legal aspect of their journey. These for me are all God moments – where the divine is in full grit-mode and my inner being resonates accordingly too.

Meeting once a week to talk and pray with one or two other lawyers with faith, and committing to regular spiritual direction has been invaluable for me in being able to continue in my profession and to continue to recognise and receive these God moments. Talking and praying regularly with other believing lawyers has given opportunity for reflection, discussion and gratitude. We share with each other our professional skills too, supporting each other with both prayer and practice. When I go to monthly spiritual direction there also sits the opportunity to reflect and pray more specifically around my faith and work intersection. Having my spiritual director ask questions that allow me to wonder and question – but also receive and relish God's work in my life – is always an

*I worship a God of reaching out.*

encouragement to my faith and to growing my personal view of the world I inhabit. My eyes sharpened and my heart softer I am able to go out again having travelled along the way a bit further with a friend.

Sometimes I carry the responsibility for people that is not mine to carry. Care? Yes. Do a good job? Of course. But it is important for me to remember that when the legal bit is over I will close my file and submit it to archive – whereas my client will live with the outcome of that legal process. The practice of regularly meeting and praying with other lawyers and meeting with a spiritual director, creates the space to step back, to see the bigger picture of a caring, loving God active in both my world and my client's world.

It happened again today. It was a mediation over care arrangements for a 13 year old girl. My client has bi-polar and has periods when she becomes unwell. Things happen that she always regrets and her ex goes to court to get the care of their daughter. Today we are meeting for a mediation prior to a court hearing to see whether or not we can come to agreements rather than require the judge to make a decision. There are three lawyers in the room – one for each parent and one for the child.

It has been a rush for me to get here this morning. My kids were not organised and I needed to give them a lift to school and that put my own timetable out. It was a miracle that I had actually brushed my own hair and got myself to the venue for gam. But I am here – I really like my client – this is the third time we have been through this process. I have seen her well and unwell. I know the pain it causes her to be here. She hates being in the court process feeling judged for having bi-polar.

*... my heart lifts and I am reminded that this is a tapu/sacred moment.*

The convener of our meeting turns to the parties and asks, "Does anyone want to open with a karakia?" My client's ex says he will. As he prays earnestly in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit asking for help and guidance in the time we spend meeting together, my heart lifts and I am reminded that this is a tapu/sacred moment. My scheduled gam mediation has just explicitly invited the greatest reconciler to work amongst us in our legal process today – the tears rise to my eyes.

## A Deep Day

Heather Kelly

Today has been a deep day.

I should have realised from the glorious early minutes of the fiery sunrise (certainly a sailor's warning) and when I found the dead leaf blown through the open bathroom window and resting so neatly in the basin plug hole. I should have realised when I found that the wet underside of the dried up leaf was such a brilliant amber screaming to me that there was hope in the dark days since the medical diagnosis.

I most certainly should have realised when my intercessory prayer was vibrant and effortless (unlike the usual). I should have realised that something was afoot.

God was. In extraordinary ways.

I was quietly eating my breakfast. God broke through – speaking so clearly, so emphatically that for the rest of the day I struggled (but succeeded) to keep up with pen and computer. It could only have been God who inspired, suggested, directed through the day.

Now at 5.30pm (darkness is falling; the street lights are on), I'm musing on the events of the day. On everything that has been written into homily, into worship leading preparation, into the household chores (even the ironing was done!) AND, extraordinarily, I did a little tending to the soil.

Where did the energy come from?

There can be only one source – the well – the deep well, that is God.

It is astonishing. I was drained, I thought, by the recent diagnosis and was tempted to look on it as the last straw that could break this camel's back.

God is so good. I'm not even tired! I feel I could dance but that may well be a step too far for my increasingly paralytic body. Breathe, I tell myself!

The Spirit is dancing in my soul.

O yes; today has been a deep day.

Amen, amen, amen!!!

*There can be only one  
source – the well  
– the deep well,  
that is God.*

## Into the Depths with Eyes Wide Open

Paul Fromont

I now know myself to be a person of weakness and strength, liability and giftedness, darkness and light. I now know that to be whole means to reject none of it but to embrace all of it.<sup>1</sup>

### Rivers

When I was a boy, growing up in Nelson, I loved to swim in the deep-water holes of the Maitai River, and in the clear rivers that flowed through the Lee and Aniseed valleys. I was fascinated by depth and found little excitement in swimming on the surface. At some point I purchased goggles, a snorkel, and flippers, and spent even more time *under water*, often following trout as they glided in the current near the bottom of a river pool.

Whenever, I found myself in a new water hole, the first thing I always did was to swim down to the bottom, with my eyes wide open, and if, in my own boyish way, I could touch the bottom, I felt safe. The sea, on the other hand, was deeper still, and as I aged and became less nervous, I became comfortable with not being able to touch the bottom. I had a respect for the sea, and I also noticed, beneath my youthful bravado, an insistent fear which registered in my heartbeats, and before I relaxed, in my short and shallow breathing. I had a fear of drowning, but also a fear of what the depths hid, of what my consciousness couldn't see, and thus, a fear of the unknown. I wasn't a boy comfortable with mystery and uncertainty.

Decades later, I painted a picture, my visualisation of a cross-section of an imagined ocean. I used ten or so shades of blue, the lightest blue at the surface, and beneath it there were darkening shades of blue, one on top of the other, all the way down to black. It was no work of great artistry or skill, but it symbolised something important for me – the longing for depth in my life. The painting represented something about me that felt unknowable, but that I wanted to explore, *in and down*, beneath the various personas I inhabited.

### Beginnings

Not satisfied with the dominants of conscious life, they set forth – under cover and by various paths, to their destruction or salvation, seeking for a direct experience of what is eternal and deep in them. They follow the lure of the restless unconscious psyche and find themselves in the wilderness.<sup>2</sup>

As I look back from the perspective I now have, I was trying, in my painting, to visually express the beginnings of a realisation that felt *alive*, vital, and energising for me; a need

<sup>1</sup> Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> Paraphrasing a statement by Carl Jung.



Janine Ross-Johnstone <https://www.jphotographic.co.nz>

to begin to explore the subtle, unconscious, and transpersonal aspects of my human experience.

I sensed that I was lacking access to my interior life, and that this hidden world felt important. I was slowly waking up psychologically, and was beginning a search for generative and formational experiences of the deep.

Now, years later, I see that the intuition I was trying to capture in my painting, was what then Professor of Spiritual Theology at Regent College, Eugene H. Peterson, called *Soulcraft*.

I knew I was feeling a persistent pull, inwards and downwards, away from the noisy surface and over-stretched activity of my life. It coincided with mid-life, my very real sense of unhappiness and loneliness, and a seemingly unbridgeable experience of disconnection from what felt needful and life-giving for me. *Psyche*, a Greek word translated as *soul*, was trying to get my attention. I was suffering growth.

#### Invitations

Every risk we take for love, each step we take toward greater consecration, leads deeper into the spaciousness of love.<sup>3</sup>

*... a way out of 'a wood so dark, the way ahead was blotted out'.*

Mine was an invitation into deeper experiences of being human and of human relating. Perhaps too, back then, it was an initiatory experience? I was looking for *my* path, a way out of 'a wood so dark, the way ahead was blotted out'. This, I knew, was an inner path, one of learning to let my life speak, and of listening.

Imagery associated with the word *deep*, or with the noun *depth*, are wide and varied in biblical literature. The Psalmist cries to God 'out of the depths', a metaphor for distress and troubles. It can also be a metaphor for profundity, for example, 'the deep things of God'.

The deep is also a significant *negative* archetype in the biblical imagination. For example, in Psalm 74:13-14, it's the abode of monsters and forces of chaos, something I read, both metaphorically and personally, when I think of my experiences of inner chaos and desolation, or of writer Annie Dillard's 'monsters'.<sup>4</sup>

Parker Palmer, quoting Dillard, writes in his wonderful little book *Let Your Life Speak*, that 'in the deeps are the violence and the terror of which psychology has warned us. But if you ride these monsters down, if you drop with them farther over the world's rim, you find what our sciences cannot locate or name, the substrate, the ocean or matrix ...

<sup>3</sup> Gerald G. May, in his book *The Awakened Heart: Opening Yourself to the Love You Need*.

<sup>4</sup> Annie Dillard in her collection of essays titled *Teaching a Stone to Talk*. "Monsters" can be understood on many levels. For example, our woundedness, complexes, false self, personal shadow, neuroses.



which buoys the rest, which gives goodness its power for good, and evil its power for evil...'

He continues, this time with his own commentary, 'Here Dillard names ... crucial features of any spiritual journey... It will take us inward and downward, toward the hardest realities of our lives...' And why must we go in and down? 'Because as we do so, we will meet the darkness that we carry within ourselves – the ultimate source of the shadows that we project onto other people. If we do not understand that the enemy is within, we will find a thousand ways of making someone 'out there' into the enemy.'<sup>5</sup>

It's no wonder then that when we think of *our* depths, it's a mixed-bag. For some it's a fearful place, or a dark place to be avoided. We don't know what monsters we might find or follow. For others it's a *womb*, a place of nurture, safety, and growth. For some it's both.

Personally, I oftentimes fear the deep and its darkness, **and** I also experience it as a safe place within which nurture and growth occurs. The Spirit broods like a bird over both, and I discern her activity in both my consolations and desolations. In my depths I know that 'every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good'<sup>6</sup>, and so, against the backdrop of Paul's 'prison' or 'captivity' epistle to the Colossians, I *participate* and I *anticipate*.

*We go to counsellors when we want help getting out of caves. We go to [spiritual] directors when we are ready to be led farther in.*

### Eyes Wide Open

We go to counsellors when we want help getting out of caves. We go to [spiritual] directors when we are ready to be led farther in.<sup>7</sup>

Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) was born in northern Spain, funnily enough, in Loyola, but when I think of him and of the deep, I mostly think of him living in a cave, not far from the Spanish town of Manresa. Everything had fallen apart for him, his illusions had been shattered, and he was starting to write his *Spiritual Exercises*. He was, as Belden Lane has reflected, 'facing the work of carving out the canyon of his inner life ... undercutting the bedrock of everything [he'd] known'.<sup>8</sup>

Lane evocatively adds, 'It's no accident that [Ignatius] began taking notes for his *Spiritual Exercises* in a cave. There in subterranean darkness, he explored the complex of motives, attractions, and revulsions that stir the human psyche – leading toward wholeness or disintegration. This is the basic stuff of soul work ... Its starting point was

human experience at its grittiest depths and most dizzying heights. It dares to make a fearless inventory of what is and isn't working for us...'

### Still Deeper Into Love

We deal with [fear] by entering the cave of our own terror, finding a love that's stronger than fear.<sup>9</sup>

Over the years I've come to see, that for me, my journey into depth – as painful and confronting as it can be – is, nonetheless, a healing journey. I've learnt that *some* suffering can soften me. I'm learning to let go of fear, and instead, to see that each step is needful *movement, in and down*, ever deeper into the spaciousness of transforming Love.

Wild as the wind, Love insistently calls to love, and my inner journey slowly continues, deeper and deeper, down beneath my ego, deeper into what feels real, down beneath my 'monsters', and down beneath the darkness, down into something that feels larger, a *place* of deep inner knowing, one in which I'm not afraid to let love in, one in which I *know* I'm loved fiercely, and one in which I know I'm unconditionally loved by Love into becoming *more*, more fully human, more alive, freer, more undivided,<sup>10</sup> holy, and loving.

<sup>5</sup> Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*, p. 80.

<sup>6</sup> Romans 8:28, *The Message* translation.

<sup>7</sup> Barbara Brown Taylor, *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, p. 129.

<sup>8</sup> Belden Lane, all Lane related quotes in the body of the reflection are from *The Great Conversation: Nature and the Care of the Soul*, pp. 222-223, and p.224.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.231.

<sup>10</sup> Here I'm thinking of Parker J. Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*.



Granity Beach: Mike Coleman

## Calm to Connected

Mike Coleman

I am burnt out and I didn't see it coming. I think everyone else around me knew I was burning out. For me it was a slow burn and now I am emotionally drained, bone tired and spiritually numb. I don't feel God at all. All those years of church, songs, scripture, communion, worship and now I am a spiritual nothing. My body has given up. I can't eat gluten, dairy or sugar without bouts in the bathroom or it affecting my sleep.

How did it get to this? What was I thinking all those years of advocating for earthquake affected people while working fulltime in adolescent mental health? I castigate myself for being so stupid and not looking after myself. There's me trying to give others life while I slowly die. Idiot. Why didn't I listen to Fr. Niko who said you can't give what you don't have?

I am standing on the back porch of a bach in Granity. It is nearly dusk. On the West Coast the sun sets on the ocean's horizon. It is a beautiful burnt orange this evening and the sun's rays flicker in my eyes. In front of me is a bamboo grove and on the other side is the beach. I have come to the Coast to heal. My body aches and I am so tired I can hardly walk. Again, I can't believe it has come to this. Even as I write, I find it hard to look back on.

*I close my eyes and hear the roar of the ocean like a bear hug to my soul.*

I step off the porch and at a snail's pace make my way through a path cut through the bamboo and find myself on the beach. I just stand there and breathe. I close my eyes and hear the roar of the ocean like a bear hug to my soul. It's strange reflecting on this as it's not God I feel, like some ritual or emotional space in a church, but something else, a quiet energy. It's not love, it's calmness. Nature reaching into my depths and embracing me, caring for me.

I take a few more steps, no more than a few metres, down the beach. I stop and breathe again through my nose and slowly out my lips just as I taught so many kids over the years. I can feel the air flowing into me, oxygen thawing my nervous system, oxygen healing me. Is this the breath of God? It's like oxygen has the DNA of God within it. I remember the verse and later look it up, "*then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being.*"

I walked for a week in Granity, slow breathing filling my body, emotions and spirit with the DNA of God. I was reviving and recreating. The breathing was prayer. I read no scripture, prayed no verbal prayers, read no Nouwen or Merton. I had no energy for it. I just walked, slowly, ate, drank and breathed. The burnout was deep, real and only the very essence of God could heal me, the flow of air the power of the most common element in the world.

I watched the Netflix documentary, *Cooked*, the other week. It showed a woman's son taking grain to a mill to be ground the old-fashioned way using a stone grinder. The son took the new flour back to his mother and she began to make bread. To the flour she added water, a little salt and kneaded. The narrator explained you cannot live on flour and water but if you put both together and knead in the ingredient of air, bread is made. The air gives bread life, and you can live on this for years.

*... nature at its finest  
reaching out to me  
once again.*

I am standing once again on the back porch of the back in Granity. It is a year later. I am feeling better but not quite myself. I can walk down the beach no problem, I can read fine, but I am still not the person I was before all this tiring mess. I step off the porch and walk the path through the bamboo grove onto the beach. The sun is setting. It flickers on the edge of the ocean, nature at its finest reaching out to me once again. I stand still, eyes wide open, ears to the roar of the waves and breathe. The oxygen flows through me. Slowly over and over I breathe. I am feeling peace, calm but something else is happening within me.

Last year it was like oxygen soothing every electrical and chemical energy sparking within me, right at that neuron space, the flow through my organs and tendons, my whole nervous system calming down. Today this same oxygen, this same flow of God, feels like it is connecting these neurons together, connecting my organs and nervous system. My emotions and body are feeling stable. My brain is firing, and I have clarity about my life and what has happened. Now as I breathe, I feel a greater sense of who I am, a greater sense of myself, my own humanity and giftedness.

From calm to connected I am sparking again, being again, becoming Mike Coleman. How I have craved to become the person I was and feel free to live and love and experience life again. As I reflect over the week in Granity, I have been reborn a third time - water, spirit and oxygen.

## Contemplative art and living with Parkinson's

Tim Roberts

The Danish philosopher, Kierkegaard said, 'Of all ridiculous things the most ridiculous seems to me, to be busy.' The rules of our materialist, consumerist society compress us when everything contemplative in us wants to expand. So many people suffer because they come to believe that busy-ness is key. I fell for this too, and several years ago I eventually became addicted to the intensity of work. I was overworked, overstimulated and overwrought. Eventually I was diagnosed with Parkinson's and was forced to give up my business and busyness. Is there a link? There may be. For the last few years I have been trying to live a contemplative life and find ways to heal the soul loss that my former ways caused. I now regard busy-ness as a form of aggression. Tibetan Buddhism regards it as the worst kind of laziness. It is the frittering away of life.

In a time of destruction, create something: a poem, a parade, a community, a school, a vow, a moral principle, one peaceful moment.

Maxine Hong Kingston

This quote is a declaration of power. I believe participating contemplatively, we can engage in creativity in ways that may help others and the Earth heal. Thich Nhat Hanh often writes about how if we sit and act with peace, we actually influence the universe. But this by Maxine Hong Kingston can also be applied to our inner circumstances, for example, if we are facing a chronic disease.

These days I wake each morning at 4am and generally I feel buoyant, delighted to be alive and I can't wait to write poetry, create art and, of course, to exercise. I have exercised for years to help with movement in the face of Parkinson's. Gradually exercise has become part of mainstream medical advice.

Until recently I would not have considered myself any kind of artist, especially not with Parkinson's. But this has changed. I'm not claiming to be good or even to know what I'm doing but I'm making art and writing poetry and these have lit up my life.

I was thrilled to find out that, if I am in the flow of creating - writing or drawing - then I have much better movement than usual and longer-lasting benefits, even compared with exercise. Perhaps in the future, treatment for Parkinson's will include participating in arts like sculpture and poetry.

I have never felt so empowered, so full of creativity, charged with inspiration and deeply appreciative of life. I am hungry for experiences of being alive and connecting with people, animals, insects and plants. The sadness, frustration and the undignified whittling down of anyone's abilities through a chronic disease will be obvious. Less



obvious is that I consider myself fortunate because, in the five years since my diagnosis, I have redefined my relationship with myself, with life and with spirituality, and in many ways I'm thriving.

I remember that day: the thrill of walking against the wind along the beach. You couldn't be other than fully present. Sand peppered our faces and shins. It was exhilarating. Looking at where I was placing my feet, we picked our way through mats of driftwood. Then I saw an old split, broken and charred plank and I began to wonder how many years it had been battered by the waves; where did it come from, a forest here or perhaps in another country. How many people have handled it? What kinds of birds have sheltered in its branches? Did it creak in the wind? How was it cut and turned into a plank? How did it come to be burned and cast into the sea?

As I stepped over it, in my imagination, I saw a phoenix looking up from the sand and I knew what it wanted to be. I saw the charred wood covered in patterns of feathers, and scales with expression of alertness in its eyes. It may sound silly, but I wanted to give it a future so I brushed the sand away and took it home. It was the first time I had this experience. I'm sure that at some level I did this because I desperately want a future and I don't want to be captive to Parkinson's degeneration.

Beaches have always been special places to me. They are liminal spaces, mysterious and evocative and where the huge forces of tide and weather can devour large sand dunes in a single night or carve delicate, undulating shapes in drifting wood.

I always feel small, humbled and astonished by beaches and privileged to be able to enjoy this beach. One day it's just sand, the next it's covered by millions of shells and the next it can be ploughed up by vast tree trunks driven into the dunes with explosive force. When I am beset by anxiety and fear I come here – not just for healing but for connection and solace and above all, for perspective. The tight, agitated mind cannot sustain itself here and it is never long before worries unwind themselves and I leave spacious and grateful.

I also come to this beach for inspiration and hope – not the greeting card hope but the hope that sees driftwood change from its origins as a seed to tree to flotsam and then finally to new life as it is broken down into nutrients that nourish others. I find this comforting. Jesus said, 'All nature, all formations, all creatures exist in and with one another, and they will be resolved again into their own roots.' Gospel of Thomas:22

What has become clear to me is that the beach is a threshold and that crossing through thresholds doesn't just change us but transforms us. In the same way, I realise now that contemplation is a threshold and it works on us as deftly as any tide. One of the most

*I saw a phoenix looking up from  
the sand and I knew what it  
wanted to be.*

magical experiences for me is walking barefoot on this beach under a bright moon and stars. In Zen the moonlight often represents contemplative transformation:

Midnight. No waves,  
No wind, the empty boat  
Is flooded by moonlight.  
Dogen (1200-1253)

Suzuki Roshi said, 'Each one of us must make our own true way, and when we do, that way will express the universal way.' I think this is part of the reason I am repeatedly drawn to this beach. Every day that I go I find a new beach and it is a sharp reminder that every day we too are renewed.

When I got the phoenix driftwood home, I looked at it for ages and then brushed the sand off, chipped off the charred areas and sandpapered loose pieces away, taking care not to really change its contours. I sat with it for days. I had never done this before and it was liberating. I was not just setting something free in this old plank but I was setting myself free as well. I loved creating as a young child but gradually this was sidelined by a family and school system that tolerated only narrow academic and economic success and had no experience of the arts or creative fulfilment.

Then, with some cheap metallic pens, I tried to bring out what I felt was emanating from the dents and bends of the grain and I have been amazed how my life has changed since. In some paradoxical way, making the driftwood phoenix-like has helped me rise from the ashes of a life shrunken by the effects of Parkinson's.

Parkinson's can make sitting meditation and slow walking meditation too uncomfortable so I am continually experimenting with other forms of meditation. The last time I wrote in *Refresh*, the mainstays of my practice were contemplative listening and writing poetry, especially short poems like haiku.

Now, thanks to the phoenix, I'm discovering that being creative with driftwood is deeply contemplative and profoundly healing. I go searching for beautiful driftwood, and enjoy using all my senses to try to bring out something within it. Thomas Moore advises us to be mystics, to be artists and to embrace our soul, 'Expand your sense of self through art and wonder...Have a greater sense of self through losing yourself.'

Creativity brings me into mindfulness and that opens me to prayer and communion with what I hold sacred. Creativity is becoming my life. Creativity is flow and it is giving – in many senses of the word – it gives meaning, purpose, direction, joy, satisfaction, fulfilment and the opportunities to share and to grow and expand. In my case it stabilises mood, enhances vitality. Whether I'm searching for driftwood, or making, painting, sanding and sculpting driftwood into what I call art, taking photos of the wild beauty or small detail beauty of the beach, writing poetry, it's all life-force and I find it deeply contemplative.

Jung's advice on how to navigate the second half of your life, when fulfilment and peacefulness call to you more loudly than achievement and shallow success, was to do what you loved doing most as a child – but do it differently. I loved art but this was soon overpowered by rigid academic mindsets. I love what is written on mosaic artist Carrie Reichardt's house in London, 'I'm an artist your rules don't apply'.

*... do what you loved doing  
most as a child –  
but do it differently.*

I'm interested in connecting deeply, contemplatively with life right here and now. Thomas Berry thought what is required from humanity now is not transcendence but incense; honest encounters with the deeper aspects of our humanity in which our soul ripens and so we may mature into genuine adults, elders and visionary artists and craftspeople. This is becoming my guiding light.

Creativity has its roots in wonder. I am astonished by the vibrancy and vitality of life but I don't think I would have been open enough to let creativity wash through me unless I had been through the wringer with Parkinson's.

Parkinson's has forced me to reimagine who I am, how I can be, and what I can do, how I derive meaning from life and my purpose. It's an ongoing process but also a revelation. I take less from life and less for granted, and I demand less of myself through pushing and other forms of self-aggression that used to be the norm for me. More than ever I want to contribute, and perhaps poetry and art is the way.

Michael Leunig writes (*When I Talk to You* HarperCollins)

That which is Christ-like within us shall  
Be crucified. It shall suffer and be broken.  
And that which is Christ-like within us  
Shall rise up. It shall love and create.



Phoenix bird among other artwork: Tim Roberts



## Finding Depth

Luke Munn

In the last few years, my wife and I suffered one traumatic moment after another in the form of several late-term miscarriages. There was a cycle of hope and despair, of white-knuckle pleading followed by moments of mourning. I felt like the ground had been knocked out from underneath me. Things were swirling. Nothing was in control.

And in that moment, I was profoundly aware of my lack of depth. Not that I was superficial, but rather that I had plumbed the inner resources I was familiar with - and all too quickly hit the bottom. My typical human fallbacks - retaining an optimistic outlook, acquiring more knowledge, regaining a sense of control - had proven to be insufficient. These shallows had seemed fine when life was going well. Now they seemed flimsy, even laughable, offering no comfort.

... needed to find new depths,  
to draw on some form of  
life and love that  
was infinite.

None of this, of course, is meant to discount the loss involved, nor to wave off mourning and grief in some heroic attempt at returning to 'normal'. But I was acutely aware that I had reached the end of myself and needed to find new depths, to draw on some form of life and love that was infinite. I knew those depths could only be found in Hashem, in the spirit that the early Christians called *Theos pasēs paraklēōs* or the God of all Comfort.

That comfort was quiet rather than spectacular, remaining open to the pain rather than shutting it off. This was not a spiritual syringe of anaesthetic or a divine pill of amnesia. In fact, my brief moments of forgetfulness when first waking up in the morning were always followed by a terrible heaviness as the events rushed back to me. Nothing was resolved or rectified; there were no solutions. Indeed, if there was any overriding feeling during those days, it was a sense of powerlessness. And yet gradually I found myself accepting or even embracing this powerlessness. There was a kind of freedom in acknowledging my lack of control, my inability to 'make things right,' and along with it, the limits of modern Western power: technology, science, medicine.

Somewhere in this confused mess was a sense of my place in the cosmos. If that sentence sounds grand, it was often a humbling or even humiliating experience. I had failed. And yet that drive for success, that neoliberal imperative to self-manage-until-you-make-it, had also been a burden. Hashem would do the work - indeed was already at work in some immense, indescribable way. And that deep presence at work allowed me to rest *in* my 'failure', to stop thrashing about trying to set things right and acknowledge my limits. I was finite; Hashem was infinite.

There was no magic cure. In fact, on many days this presence was closer to an absence, a dynamic of spiritual life that Thomas Merton<sup>1</sup> reminds us is normal. In those times,

1 Merton, Thomas. *New Seeds of Contemplation*. Reprint edition. New York: New Directions, 2007.

comfort had to be intellectual rather than emotional. I had to draw on a make-shift archive of Hashem's work in my life or the lives of others. I relied on a pile of promises from scripture and a theology cobbled together from different sources. These provided reassurance, but they didn't remove the sense of spiritual dryness or distance. And yet over time, reorientation and relinquishing of self to something deeper did offer a kind of slow-burning peace, something inexpressible and frustratingly ungraspable, but definitely there.

What is it like to plumb these spiritual depths? How does it transform or reorient us? People speak of their spiritual encounters 'putting things in perspective.' And while this was certainly true for me, it's a formulation that leaves much to be desired. It reminds me of people who point to the vastness of space, and the way this concept is often used to render our problems unimportant. In this framing, humans are a mote of dust in the universe, an insignificant speck with insignificant dreams and desires. Set against this grand scale, the individual person is someone to be patronised or even pitied. Nothing you do matters, so stop worrying.

Yet this dismissal of my cares and concerns, my hopes and dreams, was not what I experienced. There was certainly a depth, an immensity, to this divine life, but it was not an uncaring or indifferent one. For the early Church Fathers, Hashem was good - indeed, the source of all Goodness - and the creation of humankind was an act of love, flowing out of this overflowing goodness (Weinand,<sup>2</sup> Harrell<sup>3</sup>). For more contemporary orthodox commentators like Brad Jersak,<sup>4</sup> this love is a cruciform love, a self-sacrificial love demonstrated at the cross but one that is still very much alive today. And for Hebrews in the ancient Near East, that divine life was a highly active one - shepherding, cajoling, consoling, judging, forgiving - but always intervening in some way to inch them as a people (sometimes kicking and screaming) towards their promised role.

Of course, this intervention is not always clear. Indeed, repeatedly in the Psalms and the Prophets, we see authors lamenting that G-d has withdrawn from his people, grown cold and callous, abandoned them to their fate. Presence has turned to absence. And yet at those times of crisis, they look to the broader picture, tearing their gaze away from the terrible present and instead looking to the past. For these writers, this history is not some dry academic exercise, but instead a potent story filled with sparks of hope. As our own Māori community reminds us (Rameka<sup>5</sup>), the present emerges from the past and can only be understood in relation to it. *Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua*: 'I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past.'

2 Weinandy, Thomas G. (Thomas Gerard). "St. Irenaeus and the Imago Dei : The Importance of Being Human." *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 6, no. 4 (2003): 15-34. <https://doi.org/10.1353/log.2003.0048>.

3 Harrell, Daniel. "Athanasius and the Goodness of God." *Patheos*, November 10, 2011. <https://www.patheos.com/resources/additional-resources/2010/11/athanasius-and-the-goodness-of-god>.

4 Jersak, Bradley. *A More Christlike God: A More Beautiful Gospel*. Pasadena, CA: CJR Press, 2016.

5 Rameka, Lesley Kay. "Kia Whakatōmuri Te Haere Whakamua: 'I Walk Backwards into the Future with My Eyes Fixed on My Past.'" *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 17, no. 4 (2017): 387-98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1463949116677923>.



This is a narrative populated by a rich cast of characters, people who lived and breathed, who tried and failed, and yet who somehow tapped into the work that their Adonai was doing in the world. And so, rather than cosmic indifference, it is this deep vein of divine life, this steady, subterranean presence spanning from generation to generation, that I think of when I think of depth. This is a long-running narrative, filled with the martyrs and the saints but also everyday individuals with their foibles and flaws - and often those two categories coincide. Placing our problems against this story of divinity and humanity across the ages certainly puts them 'in perspective,' but it is one that is ultimately comforting rather than alienating.



## Music for The Deep

**Benedictus** Karl Jenkins

**De Profundis** (Out of the Depths) Arvo Part

**Da Pacem** (Give Peace) Arvo Part

**Hymn of the Cherubim** Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

**Miserere** Gregorio Allegri

**Os Justi** Anton Bruckner

## The Call of the Deep

Marilyn Wilkinson

I see people not really living.  
I see such pain and grief  
as they hobble along  
with their shutters down  
smiles missing, only a frown.

My heart goes out  
This needn't be  
Our spiritless culture  
causes us to flee  
into selfish realms.  
We know best.  
We don't want change.  
Life stay the same!

We are stuck with these crutches,  
we walk but not well.  
We think we are living  
but when life takes a turn  
and we cannot cope  
and all balance is gone  
then so is our hope.

The life of the Spirit  
can be found if we look  
But we have to want it  
we have to let go  
of the mindset that grips  
that ties us to self  
and the journey we know.

The spiritless culture  
stops us finding The Deep,  
the Christ Light, the God stuff.  
We dare not peep  
in case what we see

knocks us off our perch.  
'Stay up here,' says our heart.  
'It's where most people are.'

We really should listen  
but what do we do?  
We repeat our own story  
we want to impress.  
It's those crutches again  
and we stay in our mess.

We even imbibe to keep us on high.  
'Don't go down,' says our heart.  
'Keep control, play your part.'

Sometimes there's a glimmer  
a dream may seep through.  
Don't dismiss it - this may be  
The Deep calling you.  
But you have to want it:  
you have to want more  
than the grief that you bear.  
and a heart that is sore.

So grab this glimmer  
and jump off your perch.  
Throw away your crutches  
and search.

Being Deep will bring gifts  
beyond all your fears.  
It won't always be easy  
but for the rest of your years  
Wholeness  
will enfold you.

## SGM News

Kia ora friends

I hope you enjoy this *Refresh* edition, and especially those of you who have been doing it hard these past months with Covid restrictions. Thank you so much to all who have contributed, and Anna and Kerry who edit and proofread.

Lately, I've been trying to read one Special Interest Project paper a day (check out the SGM website under 'publications') and Heather Simpson's one entitled 'Dwelling in the Saturday Tomb' names the space we find ourselves in as Covid continues to challenge us. Life currently holds a much greater concentration of uncertainty, fatigue, polarisation, church decline, increased social harm and life-threatening disease. More than ever, contemplative prayer and spirituality is a precious gift and way of life to practise and share.

The Spiritual Directors Programme, professional development days, regional events and SGM Workgroup (board) have faced changes of dates, modes of meeting, and disappointingly, cancellations. Workgroup is especially grateful to Fran Francis for her capable and flexible leadership of the Spiritual Directors Programme in this trying time.

In spite of the challenges, Workgroup meetings continue to be creative, fruitful and hopeful. We are grateful to God for the opportunity to deepen faith in our networks and beyond 'like sparks to set the world on fire' (James K Baxter's 'Song to the Holy Spirit').

I sincerely hope you find the deep peace of God this Advent season.

Ngā manaakitanga

Jane Wilkinson

## SDFP Co-ordinator's Report

I'm a bit over writing about all the adjusting and adapting Covid has required of us as a people, of the programme, of participants and of me. I write this waiting for the latest 4pm 'presser' where we will learn what will now be asked of us by Delta, by the Government and by our consciences. I'm tired of it. I'm grumpy! I don't want to lead the next workshop online (although I'm very glad we can), I don't know if the final weekend for my long-suffering Year 2 participants will happen at Our Lady's Home of Compassion Retreat Centre or in our own homes via our screens. Cancellations and 'pivoting' to Zoom is on the horizon.

If I draw from my own submission to this edition of *Refresh* and imagine the 'curragh' of the Spiritual Directors Formation Programme, I can see we have safely navigated 'this far'. 'Is not God the captain and helmsman? Has not God brought us this far?' Yes! It hasn't been easy, but yes. St Brendan helps shift my attention from the harsh conditions to the providence of God. We have not been holed by icebergs! We have not been swamped or capsized by the flukes of exuberant and curious whales! We are more than merely afloat, we are sailing, progressing onward.

We have continued to sing our song of contemplative journeying and companionship and lo and behold, out of the darkness emerge the wonders of new applicants; people from parts of the Church new to contemplative spirituality; people who have travelled far and wide on their own journey towards this little boat; people who are drawn to the song or the rhythm or even just the shape of the vessel because it somehow resembles *them* - an act of recognition and inclusion which is transformative.

This funny formation course, this ancient/future vessel with its sides of skin and crew of writers, poets, teachers and artists is still afloat, still charting a course to 'the isle of the blessed' (whatever/wherever/whomever that may be) and having a fine time of it. Our own *Navigatio* is being written year by year by people in the programme whose work is published on the SGM website as 'special interest projects'. There are new ones online right now. Go there. Read them. And if you know anyone who seems ready for the Spiritual Directors Formation Programme in 2022, send them our way via [www.sgm.org.nz](http://www.sgm.org.nz).

Fran Francis

## Next time

### The Dance

Contemplative Spirituality is full of references to The Dance. We have Joyce Rupp's *Invitation to the Dance*, and *The Cosmic Dance*, Richard Rohr's *The Divine Dance*, among others. John O'Donohue's *Divine Beauty* opened my eyes to the dance of the sea and the wind. From the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the poetry of Hafez is full of the dance.

But what is the dance for us here, now, in Aotearoa, New Zealand?

*Dance is integral in understanding the history and current life of many cultures, and offers a context for embodied learning about ourselves, how we relate to and communicate with others, and about the world. Dance is experienced in many forms throughout Aotearoa in social, ritual, traditional and contemporary artistic contexts.* University of Waikato: Theatre Studies.

So, how do we dance through these dark Covid days? Let the music of life join our hearts with tangata whenua, sisters and brothers of many cultures, many languages, uniting our steps with theirs in the dance of God in this, our beautiful land. A new community rising phoenix-like from the crushing effects of lockdown and loss.

Share with us, in word, song, images, how you experience the dance of life.

**Come dance with us!**

**Deadline:** 28 February 2022

**Guidelines for contributors**

Please:

- keep submissions to fewer than 1800 words
- be conversational in style
- leave one space after periods
- use inclusive language wherever possible
- ensure images are larger than 2MB
- include a short bio – approx. 50 words – in optimism

But what I would like to say is that the spiritual life is a life in which you gradually learn to listen to a voice that says something else, that says, "You are the beloved and on you my favour rests." I want you to hear that voice. It is not a very loud voice because it is an intimate voice. It comes from a very deep place. It is soft and gentle. I want you to gradually hear that voice. We both have to hear that voice and to claim for ourselves that that voice speaks the truth, our truth. It tells us who we are.

Henri Nouwen



## Contributors

**Caleb Hardie** is the minister of Albany Presbyterian Church and counts it as a privilege to live out his faith amongst this contemplative and thoughtful community. He is married to Deborah and together they have four teenage children: Tolstoy, Caspian, Ambrosia, and Estonia, who keep life interesting, real, and dynamic!

**Linda Burson Swift**, originally from Canterbury, but living much of her adult life in Tamaki Makaurau, has spent many of the past 40 years in ministry, alongside raising a family. Recently retired, Linda continues as a spiritual director and supervisor. Her love of a mystical connection to life can be seen in her writings [lindabursonswift.co.nz](http://lindabursonswift.co.nz)

**Fran Francis**, Coordinator of the SGM Spiritual Directors Formation Programme, is a spiritual director who calls Te Raki Paewhenua ki Tāmaki Makau-rau home. Married to Vic, mother of four, she is loving the productive, creative years of later mid-life. She has knitted five sweaters in lockdown and makes an excellent espresso martini.

**Donald Scott** was born and raised in the remote hills of Southern Hawkes Bay. A farmer/shepherd with a slow journey to becoming an under-shepherd of Jesus. Along with Janice they are very proud parents of four amazing sons, with recent additions of five gorgeous mokopuna to keep them entertained and reminded of the joys of life!

**Stephanie and Stephen Ellett**, a professional couple in their late 40s from Silverdale, North Auckland, resigned from their jobs in response to God's call to live life more simply for a while, to challenge their sense of comfort and to connect with people from different churches and communities as they travel around New Zealand.

**Andrew Dunn** still makes Oasis Retreat Centre at Albany home while preparing to sell the two hectares of covenanted bush and paddocks before moving on. It feels like another leg of the journey in faith and in Christ without full clarity about the future.

**Margaret Dunn** found poetry as a way of reflecting on her discoveries of the deepening journey along with her quilting designs ("That's how I play and pray!") and which came to an end for her in 2017. But for us the genuineness of both live on.

**David Adam** (1936-2020) was a British Anglican priest and writer of prayers in the Celtic pattern. As Rector of Holy Island, Lindisfarne, he ministered to thousands of pilgrims and visitors.

**Jo Garton** is a spiritual director who lives in West Auckland. She finds using contemplative practices takes her deeper into God's love and understanding of self and others. She loves working with scripture and images, especially in small groups or on retreat.

**Jo Anastasiadis** is a spiritual director in Wellington who loves God's creation and seeing others grow in their relationship with God. She has recently rediscovered the delight of play with her young grandchildren and the joy of simple moments.

**Adrienne Thompson** offers spiritual direction and supervision in Wellington with a background sound track of tūi song and kākā screeches thanks to neighbouring Zealandia sanctuary. Her communities include a Baptist church, an anarchic Christian group, a Treaty Action Collective, fellow learners of te Reo Māori and a wonderful family.

**Jane Wilkinson** lives in Wellington. She is the Convenor of SGM Workgroup, Chaplain at Wellington City Mission and a spiritual director.

**Heather Kelly** is resident in a retirement village in Invercargill, where she endeavours to practise a pastoral ministry in a casual role. She is energised by worship leading, creative writing and in the glory of the Creator's handiwork.

**Paul Fromont** lives in Cambridge. He wanders far and wide, with much gratitude, throughout our amazing country with Gita, his wife. They both feel the lure of the sea and dream of one day moving from inland to coastal New Zealand.

**Mike Coleman** lives in Christchurch. He enjoys playing with his grandchildren, cycling, gardening, and walking by the ocean. He works as a school counsellor and is an Anglican Priest.

**Tim Roberts** was diagnosed with Parkinson's six years ago at age 50. He now lives a contemplative life of creativity and kindness while enjoying the beauty and mystery of the Kapiti coast. He has a wonderful family, granddaughter and a ridiculous dog.

**Luke Munn** is a researcher, father, and husband based on a lifestyle block in the north of Tāmaki Makaurau. When not reading or writing, he designs videogames with his boys, plays frisbee golf with his brothers, and loses chess games online.

**Marilyn Wilkinson** lives on the Kapiti Coast. Her husband Peter is in a rest home. Recognising and accepting her limits is a current challenge but Marilyn still loves to tramp when she can, read extending spiritual and other genres, do hand work, write poetry and care for her local environment.

