



December 2010

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## Spiritual Growth Ministries

Volume 1, Issue 1

### Refresh has a new editor ...

We are delighted to announce that Diane Gilliam-Weeks has been appointed as the Editor of Refresh. Diane lives in Wanaka where she is the minister of the Upper Clutha Presbyterian Parish.

Diane comes to this role with a background in media and publishing, a deep contemplative spirituality, a respect and passion for Refresh and a clear sense of God's call.



Diane will attend the March Workgroup meeting in Auckland to get to know Workgroup members. At that meeting themes for the next issues of Refresh will be decided with the first new issue scheduled for November 2011.

### What makes Workgroup members tick ... ... and go on ticking!

The 2011 Programme that accompanies this Newsletter presents *Resources for the Spiritual Journey* ... retreats, quiet days, workshops and the like presented throughout the country. I trust that as you select and participate in some of these events that you will be better resourced for your journey with God.

But, have you ever wondered what resources other people have found helpful? What resources them in the regular routines of life as well as in highlight events?

Well, in this newsletter members of Workgroup tell you a little about

- themselves
- spiritual practices they find helpful
- a growing edge that interests and/or challenges
- resources for ongoing learning and development

I encourage you to read contemplatively ...

What would you say about yourself?

What spiritual practices do you find helpful?

What growing edges interest and/or challenge you?

and interactively ...

Engage in some of the practices. Seek out some of the resources, visit a web site, read a book ... and feel free to share some of your reflections by emailing:

The Administrator, Carole Hunt [sgm@clear.net.nz](mailto:sgm@clear.net.nz)

## **Mike Wright**

Kia ora! My name's Mike and most days you'll find me 'loitering with intent' as chaplain on the Otago Polytechnic and University of Otago campuses in Dunedin; one of two full time members of an ecumenical team of seven wonderful colleagues (see us at [www.otago.ac.nz/chaplain](http://www.otago.ac.nz/chaplain)). I also gain much enjoyment from dabbling in spiritual direction and supervision as part of, and alongside my chaplaincy. It's an amazing privilege and an exciting adventure!

In my 'spare' time I enjoy catching the odd movie, a good book, and hanging out with family and friends - usually over a smooth Central Otago pinot noir or an excellent long black.

My spiritual 'home base' is Dunedin City Baptist Church; has been for ages. However these days I find I gather spiritual resources & encouragement from a number of other sources too, including visiting other churches in the city, and communing with God on the deck at home or at the beach.

Other key sources and practices these days include spending time in silent meditation; offering my self and my day to God to do whatever with. Often this happens at the beginning of my day – particularly on campus, and usually for no more than 10-15 minutes at a time. At other times I’m practicing the presence of God (‘practicing’ being the operative word), as often as I remember to...! There’s also reading (the Bible, and other materials), and meeting with fellow chaplains and spiritual directors here in the South for mutual support and encouragement; very important! I’m intrigued by the concept of ‘liminality’; the in-between space between what has been and what is yet to be. It’s often a frightening and disorientating place/space to be in, but it’s also a place of great discovery and transformation – at least potentially.

As Richard Rohr says:

*When we hang on the horns of our dilemma (our questions and contradictions) with Christ – between heaven and earth, between the divine and the human realms – it creates liminal space. All transformation takes place when we’re somehow in between, inside liminal space.*

Richard Rohr’s Daily Meditations; CAC publication available online: *receiving Radical Grace*. Adapted from ***Holding the Tension: The Power of Paradox***.

As a chaplain and as a spiritual director I frequently find myself in a place to guide others through such times. It’s a profound challenge to open and hold a place of secure and compassionate hospitality in order to facilitate this encounter with Christ, while at the same time not seeking to rescue the person with quick and easy suggestions and solutions.

I mentioned reading above. I’ve just finished reading ***Spiritual Consolation: An Ignatian Guide for the Greater Discernment of Spirits*** by Timothy Gallagher (Crossroad Publishing: New York, 2007); a really insightful and helpful read. I’ve been struck, and encouraged, by the author’s emphasis on the ‘serene’ yet ‘attentive’ stance of the directee/director couple in the midst of what is often a tense time of discernment.

This year I've also completed (almost) the Interactive Drawing Therapy (IDT) Foundation Course (see [www.InteractiveDrawingTherapy.com](http://www.InteractiveDrawingTherapy.com)); a very powerful tool for counsellors, therapists and others such as myself, not only for work with 'clients', but also for ourselves.

Whatever you've put your hand to this year or are planning to for 2011, may you know God's richest blessings.

### **Jane Wilkinson**

Recently I had to write something about me for a women's event I'm talking at and I stated that I have no hobbies involving a kitchen whiz or a sewing machine. At risk of revealing my deprivation and shallowness, my current hobby is watching *New Zealand's Next Top Model* and *X Factor* on TV. I'm in my 40's with 3 children plus an extra - all at home. I work part-time at Palmerston North Central Baptist Church with my husband Digby and other lovely staff. My role is pastoral. I also see people for Spiritual Direction and Supervision (never let it be said extroverts can't offer or enjoy this privileged work). I've been on the SGM workgroup for 7 years and over the past 2 years I've helped out a bit with the Spiritual Director's Formation Programme - very stretching and rewarding. Last year I finished a Theology Degree that took 22 years from start to finish.

What's currently spiritually nourishing for me? ... In no particular order.

- Spiritual Direction - I've reconnected with a director whom I saw nearly 20 years ago. I'm greatly appreciating the sense of knowing and history.
- Supervision - again, such a nourishing conversation for an external processor!
- Church - I like it!
- Home group - 6 stropky women of faith and courage who are not afraid to challenge or be challenged. Most of them are Anglicans...what does that say?
- Pray as You Go ([www.pray-as-you-go.org](http://www.pray-as-you-go.org))
- Walking the dog (a Westie called Flynn - a fab Spiritual Companion)
- Movies (check out Spirituality and Practice Website for recommendations [www.spiritualityandpractice.com](http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com))
- The quiet early morning cup of tea and prayer

A growing edge of spirituality for me is paying attention to resistance. In Sheila Pritchard's helpful book '*The Lost Art of Meditation*' she talks about climbing over the hump of resistance. I'm slowly seeing that the stuff I'm resistant to is often where there is a growth invite. And same for my directees - I'm finding the conversations will deepen as we loiter around the resistance stuff. Not easy, but a growth edge.

See p 14 for Jane's review of *Using Stories to Help Children* by Liz Maluschnig.

## **Andrew Pritchard**

How did the 23 year-old professional engineer who loved certainty so much that he specialized in digital electronics ... 0 or 1, ON or OFF, Black or White ... rather than struggle with the continually varying analogue variety, how did that young man become a ~~graying~~ gray, confirmed contemplative, at home with mystery, comfortably resigned to not knowing and juggling three constantly changing jobs!

Well, God and 28 more years have something to do with it!

Other formative factors, in no particular order include:

- evangelical, charismatic and social involvement strands of spiritual/theological formation that inform the contemplative strand
- living in the Christian Community that we started with two other families 26 years ago
- being a PK (pastor's kid) who absorbed a love for God and a love for learning and teaching from both my mother and father

The latest delight for my wife Lynn and I is our 8 month-old granddaughter Cassandra who lives with her mum and dad in London – thank God for video-skype! Golf is my healthy addiction, reading my insatiable passion and pottering with wood and things in one of my sheds a favourite therapy and contemplative experience.

What resources me spiritually? On good days the hour after breakfast and newspaper headlines is the most important hour of my day and generally includes:

- Morning Prayer
- Lectio Divina based on the Lectionary Readings
- Centering Prayer

Once I'm into the work of the day I find it incredibly difficult to stop and reenter contemplative prayer space. I continue to work on that!

I am an Associate of Southern Star Abbey, the Cistercian Monastery at Kopua. An annual seven day, largely silent, retreat there has been a fixture in my calendar for many years and one that I wouldn't want to do without. I value small group engagement with monastic associates and others interested in Benedictine spirituality.

Spacious worship supported by a great choir, stimulating, reflection-inviting sermons and eucharist at St Paul's Anglican Cathedral feed my soul.

A growing edge for me comes from two themes related to Christianity and other great faiths that are current in my thinking/wondering ...

- how does the emphasis on spiritual practice that I see valued so highly in many traditions inform my Christian life?
- what is the similarity of the wisdom teachings that arise in all the great faiths saying?

This year I am trying to maximize the value of my reading by recording what books I read, doing a very short annotated bibliography on most of them and fuller notes on a few.

Three books come to mind particularly:

***The Noonday Demon – A Modern Woman’s Struggle with Soul-weariness***, Kathleen Norris, Lion, Oxford, 2008.

(Also published in USA as *Acedia & me: A Marriage, Monks, and a Writer's Life*)

***Free at Last! - An Introduction to Prayer and the Spiritual Life***, Noreen Mackey, The Columba Press, Dublin, 2009.

***Uncommon Gratitude – Alleluia for All that Is***, Joan Chittister and Rowan Williams, Liturgical Press, Minnesota, 2010.

Websites I access frequently in resourcing my spiritual life ...

- [www.universalis.com](http://www.universalis.com) for the Liturgy of the Hours/Daily Office
- [www.ewtn.com/devotionals/inspiration.htm](http://www.ewtn.com/devotionals/inspiration.htm) for Lectionary Readings
- [www.spiritualityandpractice.com/](http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/) for many things including Book and Film Reviews, ecourses etc.

and a recent find for me [abbeyofthearts.com/](http://abbeyofthearts.com/) for the creative side

## **Trish O'Donnell**

I am married to Willem and we have 4 children ages 16-23 years.

I am a Catholic lay woman and I work part time at Marian College as a pastoral chaplain. On my other two days I see people for spiritual direction and supervision. I also work at Marralameda, a Christian community for people with intellectual disability. My role there is to provide supportive supervision for staff.

I completed my spiritual direction training with Spiritual Growth Ministries over 10 years ago and have been involved with supervision and training of those in the SGM formation programme.

To celebrate turning 50 I decided that it was time to stretch my wings and head overseas. The invitation from a friend to travel with her to Chicago for a retreat with Edwina Gateley was all the incentive I needed. The retreat was called, “mystics, rebels and prophets”.

I have always had a deep love of Hildegard of Bingen, a Rhineland mystic of the 12<sup>th</sup> century after studying her illuminations. The late Clarice Greenslade, who you may remember from her many years on the SGM workgroup, had introduced me to the showings of Julian of Norwich over ten years ago and more recently I had come across, Mary Malone's "*Praying with the Woman Mystics*" and found the writings and poems of Mechtilde of Magdeburg and other Beguins very inspiring. So while the content of the retreat was not completely new, the opportunity to spend a week by the shores of beautiful Lake Michigan allowed a deepening and a realisation of how deeply their ideas have influenced my own spirituality, prayer and theology. The common ground these women mystics seem to share is this; they have experienced through their prayer, God's deep and abiding love and have had revelations and visions shown them, glimpses of truth. Through their prayer they have come to know quite profoundly that God is besotted with humans, madly in love with us. There is nothing passionless about our God, who yearns for us, pines for us, holds us and cares for us and desires deeply for us to experience this love. This realisation leads the mystics to grow in their own integrity and their Sophia wisdom and to have a new vision of the kingdom. One might think that this takes them out of the world but in fact the opposite happens mysticism leads the mystic back into the very heart of the world and often to the messiest and most despairing parts of the world. It leads them to tend to the needs of the poor and to stand firm and show leadership in the wake of the injustices and brutalities of their day. It leads them to speak out and at times to rebel. Being in touch with their inner divinity leads them to be people of hope in times of great despair and tumult.

I find particularly refreshing their theology concerning sin. For Hildegard sin is drying up. It's a being out of balance, a getting out of kilter. Her concept of *viriditas* or greening power is so refreshing even today and it fits with Maori concepts like *mauri* or life essence. To see Jesus as the green sap who enables us to grow in moistness, to grow towards the light. "Our baptism is not just a baptism through water but a baptism into moistness." We are baptised into the waters of life.

For Julian sin is 'behovely' - that's old English for "it's useful, it's necessary, it's okay", it has to be, it leads us to Jesus and to know Jesus' mercy. Sin is getting stuck. It's when our compassionate juices stop flowing. For Julian when she trips and falls God loves her even more for her desiring. Edwina summed it up a bit like this, "God doesn't give a fig about our sinfulness. God has got a big blind spot for us!!"

Our call is to reflect the presence of God within. We are called to give birth to the presence of God.

The mystics help me to unravel the great mysteries of the Trinity. They teach me

how to hold the paradoxes of suffering and sin and the mysteries I can't yet comprehend. They are people who haven't held to themselves the fruits of their prayer but through their writings, showings, illuminations and actions teach us about God.

As a woman the other delight for me is the language and the images that the mystics use. I have come back inspired to learn more, to pray more with their writings and to be on the alert for the mystics of our present era of whom Edwina Gateley I feel confident is one. She has written many books and poetry from her experiences as a Catholic laywoman. If you haven't already, find one and read it. You will be moved. I recommend ***Growing into God***, a book of poems and her autobiography, ***In God's Womb***.

### **Barbara McMillan**

I live in Auckland where I coordinate the Spiritual Directors Formation Programme and provide one to one spiritual direction. Much like the participants in our Formation Programme I juggle work and part-time study. I am studying toward a Masters in Spiritual Theology through Regent College, Vancouver. I loved being on study leave there last year reading the Spiritual Classics then sitting with others who had read them, sharing our understanding and insights together.

This year I have been enjoying exploring offshore Auckland as our family has taken up boating. Learning how to read a chart and what the 'road-code' of the sea is combined with being outdoors, immersed in a totally different aspect of creation, is inspiring for me. Venturing into new territories both personal and geographic is where I get energized and the boating adventure promises both energy and relaxation.

Spiritual refreshment happens for me both in times of quiet, centering prayer and in small group situations with others who honestly share their life and faith together. Currently our family meets with two other families for a simple meal together followed by taking the lectionary reading for the day and practicing lectio divina together. The level of honesty and sharing combined with prayer is rich. I am also loving morning worship at our church and find that I connect with God contemplatively in the midst of sensitively led praise.

The area of spirituality which I find most intriguing at the moment is the interconnectedness between our experience of God and our worldview/theology. I want to explore this area further because I believe it is integral to our work as spiritual directors. My own theology is growing and changing as I respond to the challenges of the study that I am undertaking and it leaves me thirsty to go deeper.

Lately I have enjoyed reading: Barbara Brown Taylor, ***The Preaching Life*** (Cowley Publication) which is a compilation of Taylor's personal reflections and theology mixed with sermons she has given. I found her theology refreshing and her scripture reflections brought life to familiar passages.

A book I would recommend for new Christians is Brad Jersak, *Tuning In To the God Who Speaks* (Fresh Wind Press). I heard Jersak speak while we were in Canada last year and was struck by his modern day explanations for ancient Christian prayer practices. He has a contemporary approach to helping others engage in listening prayer with a focus on developing the ability to 'tune-in' to hearing God's voice. Throughout the book he includes reflective questions and practices to try this out.

### **David Crawley**

Although I've lived in and around Auckland for three quarters of my life, my childhood years were spent in rural areas in the South Island. It's a heritage that stays with me, not least in the landscape of my inner world. And there is always a sense of coming home when I revisit the physical landscapes that surrounded those early years.

I love to learn and to teach. After a stint teaching maths at high school level I transferred my focus to theological study and teaching, and that is still my main work context. I lecture in spiritual formation at Laidlaw College (formerly Bible College of New Zealand), having earlier taught biblical studies. Alongside that work, I enjoy offering spiritual direction, supervision and occasional retreats. I have been involved with SGM since I completed my own spiritual direction training 15 years ago, and find it a wonderfully rich experience of encounter with people and their varying spiritual traditions.

I have three grown up children who inspire me in a number of ways as they make their way in the world, and am married to Sarah whom I met in the context of Narrative Therapy training. To relax I love walking, cooking, watching movies, listening to music and sometimes playing my saxophone badly in the privacy of my own room.

The key to my spiritual renewal, or "greening" to use Hildegard's metaphor, is maintaining a simple rhythm of prayer, reflection, music, silence and solitude. Currently this means daily connection with Scripture (often using the podcasts from [www.pray-as-you-go.org](http://www.pray-as-you-go.org)), using *A New Zealand Prayer Book*, quiet days from time to time, and an annual silent retreat. Parts of creation, and silence and solitude, I find to be somehow inherently greening. Centering prayer is a relatively new practice which I am seeking to incorporate more.

The growing edge in my thinking around spirituality concerns relationality. I am deeply challenged by the centrality of "persons-in-relation" as a theme in Scripture and in Christian theology. I'm facing the uncomfortable thought that my own approach to spirituality has largely left my inclination to individualism and inwardness unchallenged. I'm wondering how spiritual formation might resume a more central place in the priorities of church life. I'm also puzzling over the question of what a spirituality that feels more attractive to my fellow men (as in males) might look like.

Meanwhile, I have a PhD I'm supposed to completing, which looks at issues of power in Christian communities.

A few books that have been on my desk recently in relation to these and other matters ...

James C. Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*. Baker, 2008.

MaryKate Morse, *Making Room for Leadership: Power, Space and Influence*. InterVarsity, 2008.

Richard H. Schmidt, *God Seekers: Twenty Centuries of Christian Spiritualities*. Eerdmans, 2008.

Richard W. Flory, *Finding Faith: The Spiritual Quest of the Post-Boomer Generation*. Rutgers University Press, 2008.

Cynthia Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*. Cowley, 2004.

Richard Rohr, *Adam's Return: The Five Promises of Male Initiation*. Crossroad, 2004.

Tom Wright, *Surprised by Hope*. SPCK, 2007.

## **Sue Pickering**

I am an Anglican priest and spiritual director; currently Chaplain at an aged care facility in New Plymouth. I have been heavily involved with the formation of spiritual directors with SGM for over a decade and am the author of three books, two of resources for retreats and the other a practical introduction to spiritual direction. In March I was made a Canon of the newly consecrated Taranaki Cathedral Church of St Mary and enjoy working with the chapter and the new dean in supporting regional ministry and mission. To balance all of the above, I am also refreshed by my fledgling attempts to learn to quilt – the colours and patterns of fabric, the necessary slowing down of thinking and doing provides a contemplative space – looking forward to doing more.

Sources or practices I use for spiritual refreshment and nourishment include silent prayer and the daily office combined with praying during the day when I am at work, intercessory prayer and the examen before bed – if I don't fall asleep first!

Music or song lyrics speak to me sometimes and the beauty all around me in Taranaki constantly draws me closer to God.

I was fortunate to be able to attend a 15 day intensive course at St George's College in Jerusalem on the topic 'The Palestine of Jesus' in May – it was a very rich time spiritually and I thank God for the chance to learn more about Jesus' life and times, but also to experience some intense moments of graced encounter with the reality of the Jesus who heals.

I am being challenged every day by the aged care context – the powerlessness and vulnerability of the elderly, ministry as 'being a non-anxious presence', facing my own limits of energy and stamina, learning to cope with death upon death etc so I am reading, reflecting and beginning to write a little about ageing and spirituality. While many people struggle with an unhelpful image of God, there are others who have hung on to God through multiple losses and severe setbacks and illness – they are an inspiration.

Most of my reading at present centres on the spirituality of aged care, resources such as

- ***Aging, the fulfillment of life*** by Henri Nouwen and Walter Gaffney [Doubleday, 1996]
- ***Spiritual Growth and Care in the Fourth Age of Life*** by Elizabeth MacKinlay [Jessica Kingsley, UK, 2006]
- ***Age-ing and Sage-ing*** by Zalman Schacter-Shalomi, [Grand Central Publishing, NY, 1997]

## **Warren Deason**

I'm married to Sue, have 2 adult children, 1 grandchild whom I indulge and am thoroughly captivated by and baby-sit one day a week, and another expected in January. I currently minister at Albany Presbyterian Church (16 years) and have been in ordained ministry for 33 years.

I discovered contemplative spirituality while training for ministry in Dunedin, oddly enough through reading the desert fathers and mothers and having contact with seminarians at Holy Cross College. At the time my conservative evangelicalism had no answers for the spiritually barren and broken place I found myself in. I attended my first retreat in the early 1980's and was a member of the pilot scheme for training spiritual directors. I have been involved in leading retreats over the years, particularly wilderness retreats at Muriwai on Auckland's west coast, and along with Andrew Dunn, pioneering seven-day silent film retreats. My long held passion for film, probably goes back to childhood days of attending double feature at local cinema with parents on Saturday nights! When we moved to Auckland I gave up my passion for golf for another form of gulf, the Hauraki Gulf – enjoying boating and fishing. I enjoy being the archetypal NZ handyman unwilling to pay for doing something that I can do myself – or maybe that's the Scot's Presbyterian in me. I also like to draw and having a beautiful grandchild as a subject is a great stimulus. One day I would love to paint watercolours.

Silence and mediation are vital for me in spiritual practice and I have also used a variety of daily prayer forms over the years, NZ Prayer Book, Celtic daily prayer, Taize Common Prayer and at present I am enjoying the structure of Pray As You Go – a podcast put together by the Jesuit community in London. And I mustn't forget the wonderfully whimsical prayers and writing of Michael Leunig. Taize music and the meditative music of Margaret Rizza have been important for me as have long walks on Auckland's wild west coast beaches. I have also found NZ poetry, especially of course J K Baxter, important. I agree with Eugene Petersen (*The Contemplative Pastor*) when he writes, "Poets draw us into deeper respect both for words and for the reality they set before us". Also of course, the beautifully lyrical prose of Annie Dillard.

In recent years I have been able to deepen my understanding of the relationship between religion and film by having the opportunity to take study leave at Westminster College Cambridge, England. Before too long I will be taking up the opportunity again to hopefully learn a little more about, among other things, Jewish mysticism, especially as popularised by Rabbi Lawrence Kushner. Writers I have come to appreciate over the years include Marcus Borg and Karen Armstrong as well as the usual suspects of Henri Nouwen, Macrina Wiederkehr, Joyce Rupp, Eugene Petersen and a host of others.

If that all that sounds a bit pretentious and heavy, I love bizarre and irreverent humour – it has a way of deflating and unmasking the pompous, pious and precious in me and stops me taking myself too seriously.

### **Carole Hunt**

I joined the SGM Workgroup in 1997 as the Administrator and have seen SGM develop through many changes particularly in personnel to the present day.

I now live in Whitby – still near the sea but more importantly close to our children and grandchildren who are a constant source of pleasure and delight.

I view my role as the "backroom support" person for the SGM members who are "out there" at the cutting edge of the work and ministry.

I am involved in a small group of wonderful local women who support each other faithfully and also laugh a lot together – which is always "good medicine".

A book I have enjoyed this year is *An Altar in the World* by Barbara Brown Taylor and I also enjoyed hearing her preach when she visited Wellington Cathedral during the year. She spoke about recognising God in the "Ordinary" times and places of life.

A website that blesses me is [www.gratefulness.org](http://www.gratefulness.org). On this website I can walk a labyrinth without stepping out of my front door.

## **John O'Connor**

Twenty-five years ago I was ordained a Catholic priest for the diocese of Christchurch. Through the years since I have served as a priest of a parish. Presently I am the priest for St. Therese of Lisieux Parish, Chatham Islands and Our Lady of Victories, Sockburn, Christchurch.

It is a privilege to serve as a priest. As a priest I have been privileged to share in the joys, hopes, griefs and anxiety of many people. More often these encounters are in the midst of the routine and ordinariness of their lives. Whenever the moment, and whatever the feelings, God is present. My deepest joy is being with people as they encounter the reality of God with them.

This is the joy of spiritual direction; to accompany people who are hungry for God. As a priest, and a Spiritual Director I know that only God can satisfy the longings of the human heart. It is always a joy to witness people awoken to this same awareness.

The life of the God takes us deeper than denominational differences. When we encounter God in a most intimate and personal way, we are led into the beauty of human community. This community is not created by human interest and effort, but is the family of those who have encountered God.

It is a joy to share this journey with the team of Spiritual Growth Ministries. Through our work together may many others awaken to the reality of God's presence and love.

As a Catholic it is the Sacraments of the Church that provide my greatest spiritual refreshment and nourishment. In the minds and practices of too many good people, the life of Faith is reduced to moralism and legalism. This is a tragic reduction of the life of Jesus. Religion at best is the environment that supports life, nourishes faith, and provides an earthly home for the faithful.

The Catholic Tradition provides a rhythm of prayer throughout the hours of the day, centering on the Eucharist. When I submit to this rhythm I know myself to be carried by Jesus.

... and, from Refresh editor-in-waiting **Diane Gilliam-Weeks**

My sense of a mystical relationship with God began in childhood and I have consciously practiced contemplative prayer for thirty years. Today the energy and inspiration I need for my ministry in a busy multi-generational parish is made

possible through the spiritual disciplines especially Centering Prayer and Lectio Divina. Giving and receiving spiritual direction are also a blessing. I am excited by the inter-spiritual conversations going on in the world and believe Christian contemplatives have much to contribute. I am married to Reg and mother to Jessica. Before ordination, my professional background was in television, organisational communication and publishing.

**Book Review: *Using Stories to Help Children*** written by Liz Maluschnig

This can be purchased through [lizmaluschnig@gmail.com](mailto:lizmaluschnig@gmail.com) and retails at \$29.50

With a large purple dragon and small child on the front cover, one could think this to be a simple cutsie children’s book, but don’t be fooled. The author, a Counsellor and Spiritual Director, has collected together 12 gritty stories involving children as a resource for parents, caregivers, teachers and counsellors to be with children in pain. Preceding each story is a page to help the adult with helpful ‘working questions’ and an unpacking of how the story reading process can be used therapeutically.

As we know, children love stories because they bypass thinking and go straight to the heart. They have a disarming way of addressing situations without the hearer (in this case children) needing to protect themselves. And there’s no shying away here from the situations – divorce, domestic violence, death of a parent, sexual abuse, bullying. Liz Maluschnig’s hope is that as children are read these stories, they will open up feelings and issues that they have not been able to articulate – thereby creating a greater intimacy with the parent and teaching them the important skills of emotional intelligence.

Chiefly then, this is a book about *listening* – listening to underlying hurt, focusing on the deeper feeling, and looking through the behaviour to the core issue which children are unwilling or unable to talk about. As the deep listening happens, the angry behaviour disappears.

Whilst it doesn’t use overt ‘Christian language’ this book’s thrust is about real life issues, it’s about longing, it’s about respect, it’s about hope, and it’s about healing. I warmly recommend it.

**Jane Wilkinson**

Did you know that ...

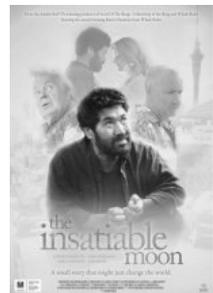
Sue Pickering’s latest book **CREATIVE RETREAT IDEAS** [Canterbury Press, UK, 2010] is now available in New Zealand

It is 262 pages and has a CD ROM to make copying the resources, photos etc easier.

Have you seen this yet ...

... Mike & Rosemary Riddell’s great New Zealand film

**the insatiable moon**



## **Obituary - Neil Churcher**

Don't we miss the sound of his voice? That deep chuckle and the way he had of preaching in prayer. His love of words and his art of crafting prayer in worship. When he walked into the room and was in our company, didn't we feel closer to God. On the 23rd June, Neil Churcher finally merged fully into God. Muriel lost her soul-mate, the children and grandchildren their faithful advocate. The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa, one of its finest sons; and those of us called to the exquisite ministry of Spiritual Direction, a friendly wise colleague and gentle mentor. Neil's funeral service was held in Knox Church Dunedin. His colleague and friend over many years, Ken Irwin, reflected with us about Neil and his contribution to the Presbyterian Church. During Ken's reflection, Neil seemed shyly present. At that gathering I mentioned that if anyone eventually begins to write the history of Spiritual Direction in our land, it can't be achieved without mentioning Neil Churcher's name with gratitude.

Spiritual Direction ministry has an esteemed history within Catholicism, Neil realized it did not need to be confined as such and he along with others widened the boundary. Gentle and always perceptive in listening; Neil broadened the landscape of where and how the living God can be experienced. As part of the founding Work Group for Spiritual Growth Ministries, Neil gave of himself to ensure that the ministry of Spiritual Direction could find a home here in Aotearoa. His diary was full of time given to directee's, supervision of spiritual directors in training and of course those numerous retreats. Neil and Muriel's generosity has been a gift for us all. I have lost count of the number of referrals I have made over the years to Neil. Spiritual Direction ministry is sacred in that it is primarily concerned with a person's relationship with God, that wordless sacred mutuality. Neil's love of Jesus was an abiding passion for him. It was a sheer gift to listen to him during these past years. I along with so many of us do miss him. In his dying he remained faithful to seeking the company of Jesus and the dream of God. May Jesus welcome him into his company and help Muriel and their children know that this is so, allow them to feel his presence merging within them.

I want to conclude this obituary with a prayer he prayed just a few days before he finally merged into the heart of God.

*Thank you for the many years of ministry, given and received.  
For the now gentle coming of Jesus with light and in love and  
for the same blessings of light with love,  
on those who remain after my dying.  
In Jesus name.  
Amen.*

Fr Mark Chamberlain.  
Dunedin North Pastoral area.  
420 Great King St, Dunedin

## **We also acknowledge the deaths of**

Jean Malone whose death after a short illness was a shock to so many.

Robyn Lewis who died after living courageously with cancer for several years.

## **And express deep sympathy to**

Molly King on the sudden death of her husband David.

## SGM News ...

... well by the time you have got to here you've read most of it!

As I write the 2009/10 participants of the formation programme are completing work and preparing for their Closing Weekend. Processing of applications and interviewing people for the 2011/12 intake is proceeding well. It is pleasing to see several applicats from the South Island this year.

As I write this I am deeply aware of gratitude to God.

I am grateful for Andrew Dunn's initiative in birthing Refresh and editing it for all these years and for Diane Gilliam-Weeks availability to pick up the editorial responsibility and I'm looking forward to her first issue next November.

And, I'm grateful for each of you, for your interest in SGM and for your on-going support.

Blessings

*Andrew Pritchard*



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