

**Vol. 3 No. 2 of the
SGM JOURNAL:**

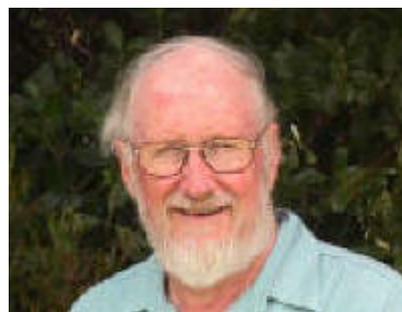
Refresh

**Summer 2003-2004 ISSUE:
"Spirituality Is ..."**

Spiritual Growth Ministries has published a newsletter twice yearly since our inception in 1981.

From Winter 2001 this has become the **SGM Journal of
Contemplative Spirituality, *Refresh*.**

Each issue works with a theme that is both relevant and stimulating of thought, prayer and discipleship. In this issue we took a look at what spirituality "is" ... especially in the New Zealand context.



Refresh Editor Andrew Dunn

We place a nearly complete selection of key articles from each issue of *Refresh* on the website. The full Journal is available by mail. There is a suggested donation of \$5 per issue (New Zealand subscribers) to help cover costs of publication and postage. Simply email our Administrator, Carole Hunt, with your name, postal address and email address and you will be added to our mailing list:

Email Carole Hunt: sgm@clear.net.nz

**Selections from Summer 2003-2004 issue
of Spiritual Growth Ministries Journal of Contemplative Spirituality:**

Refresh

"Spirituality Is ..."

1. [Comment](#)
2. [Spirituality is ...](#)
3. [A Heartfelt Response to Living in this Place](#)
4. [God is in the detail](#)
5. ["Both-And" Spirituality](#)
6. [The Shepherd's Lamb](#)
7. [Images of Spirituality](#)
8. [The Breath of Spirit](#)
9. ['Albatross' Spirituality](#)

10. [To God who Sings through Us](#)
11. [Spirituality is a Lot Like That](#)
12. [The Spirituality of Jesus](#)
13. [Fruits of Silence and Stillness](#)
14. [On Being Contemplative - A Retreat Homily](#)
15. [Spirituality and Justice](#)
16. [Naming our Context](#)
17. [Spiritual Direction Research Paper: "Mission and the Art of Spiritual Direction"](#)
18. [Book Reviews](#)
19. [SGM News](#)
20. [Books](#)
21. [Contributors](#)
22. [For Reflection](#)

COMMENT by Andrew Dunn

Spirituality is the buzz word that's centre-stage in many parts of society today, business as well as church, sport as well as ecology and creation-centred activities, women's movements and men's movements, theology and philosophy. And that's great! How could we have ignored it for so long?

It is, however, a very recent term to describe what's been part of how we are as humans and how creation is as well. Today it describes *those attitudes, beliefs, practices which animate people's lives and help them to reach out* to other realities in life (Wakefield - *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*. 361). It hasn't always been used in this sense in English. For example, in the 15th and 16th centuries it denoted clergy as a distinctive group in society. Later it was used to speak of the spiritual as distinct from the material or bodily. In post reformation times it was covered by the words *piety* and *living the Christian life*.

Spirituality, of course, is not confined to Christianity, and today there is a huge interest in a wide range of spiritualities both in the way they divide and damage our world but also in the way they can draw people together and enrich their lives.

The definitions that follow indicate the extent of the shifts and changes in thinking about spirituality. From it's position as an adjunct to faith it has now come centre stage so fully that for many people inside and outside the church it is the central focus of life. This shift is to be welcomed not least because it recognizes that amongst humanity there is something that is common ground, even common parlance.

One of the challenges of spirituality today is the fuzziness of it, the ill-defined, the edgelessness, even the fringy-ness that leaves the impression that it is above definition or discussion. Moreover the growing interest in spirituality in Christian faith is not without this challenge. Indeed "it is difficult to give a precise definition for Christian Spirituality", writes John Tyson. "The tremendous scope of concepts and experiences involved in the process of renewal and restoration makes precision difficult" (*An Invitation to Christian Spirituality - an ecumenical anthology*. 1999. 3).

How then, in Aotearoa New Zealand, do we describe spirituality that is helpful and hopeful, nourishing and encouraging of life and growth as people of this land and as people of faith, rooted and grounded in the love of God in Jesus Christ, *God with skin on*?

Perhaps for us all the challenge of embracing deeper riches of the spirit will invite a shift in thought patterns and structures that limit the possibilities of spiritual growth. I suspect that the presence of God's Spirit to us and in us, and the equipment we need to hear and embrace this presence will shift our understanding of ways of knowing and seeing the spiritual realities of life. These things are "spiritually discerned" as St Paul puts it and can't be known by reason alone. Further, one of my quiet hopes is that the lively interest in spirituality today will challenge strongly the rampant secularism promoted so religiously and aggressively in New Zealand today. This issue aims to help us all explore our own spirituality more deeply and to find our place more firmly and confidently in this land and in the faith strands we have inherited, and, for increasing numbers, in the new strands developing inside and outside the church. It also seeks to invite us

to engage more with this world and the issues people face as we apply our spirituality to life today.

We don't presume to speak for Maori spirituality. Yet in exploring spirituality in Aotearoa we meet it at every turn. For those interested the best recent essay on indigenous spirituality I have read is by Henare Tate in the collection of essays *He Kupu Whakawairua, Spirituality in Aotearoa New Zealand: Catholic Voices* reviewed in this issue. We will be rubbing shoulders with Maori spirituality in the next few issues as we explore further spirituality in this corner of the south Pacific.

Jo O'Hara's new cover design is a delight and helps to focus us on our theme. We thank her for her artwork and all who have contributed to this issue.

SPIRITUALITY IS ...

Diarmuid O Murchu

Spirituality concerns an ancient and primal search for meaning that is as old as humanity itself ... Spirituality tends to be perceived as a sub-system or offshoot of formal religion. In practice the reality is quite different ... Spirituality is, and always has been, more central to human experience than religion. (*Reclaiming Spirituality*. Crossroad. 1999. vii)

Nan Burgess

Today a fresh, liberating breath of spirituality is touching many lives both within and outside the church. This phenomenon expresses growing awareness of the dimensions of spirituality in daily living, and, naturally, incorporated in such awareness are varying interpretations. ... The hope of increasing numbers of people is expressed in the proposal of Rebecca Propst that "spirituality should be taken out of the corners of our modern existence and become instead the defining point of our existence". (*Looking Into The Depths - Dimensions of Spirituality in New Zealand Short Story*. Colcom Press 1996. 25-26)

Anthony de Mello

The spiritual quest is a journey without distance. You travel from where you are right now to where you have always been. From ignorance to recognition, for all you do is see for the first time what you have always been looking at. Whoever heard of a path that brings you to yourself or a method that makes you what you have always been. Spirituality, after all, is only a matter of becoming what you already are. (Source unknown)

Howard Rice

Spirituality is the pattern by which we shape our lives in response to our experience of God as a very real presence in and around us. ... Our participation in the living Christ means that all human life takes on a sacred quality. The unity of flesh and spirit in Christ is the basis for taking all that is human with utmost reverence. (*Reformed Spirituality*. WJKP 1991. 45 & 163)

Joan Chittister

Spirituality is not meant to be a panacea for human pain. Nor is it a substitute for critical conscience. Spirituality energizes the soul to provide what the world lacks. ... Spirituality plunges us into life with an eye to meaning and purpose. (*Heart of Flesh* - Eerdmans 1998. 1-2)

Margaret Dunn

Christian spirituality focuses us on relationship with Jesus Christ. (*Harvest Field*. 2002)

John North

Any definition of spirituality is not a definition but a signpost showing us the directions to search! (*Refresh* Editorial Group meeting 5.11.03)

Susanne Johnson

Christian spiritual formation is a matter of becoming the song we sing, the Story we tell.
(*Christian Spiritual Formation ...* Abingdon. 1989)

A HEARTFELT RESPONSE TO LIVING IN THIS PLACE

by Ann Gilroy

When we live in a world as beautiful and diverse as that of Aotearoa New Zealand, we find its resonances, affects and challenges in the depths of our spirits. The greenness and the diversity of the landforms; the immensity of the surrounding seas and the contrasting waterscapes; the tangible, misty thermal air and the feel of the prevailing winds; and the radiance, and even danger, of the sun, are all particular to this place and to our experience of dwelling in this place. We can discover in an increasing awareness of this place, the Spirit of God as tangibly revealing and deeply mysterious. Yet we may find our response is at once intuitively fitting and at the same time clumsily inadequate.

In this article I want to suggest five aspects that may engage us more intensely in relationship with the mystery of God in this place.¹ Fundamentally our response is to live into the meaning of the abundance, the variety, the energy and the fullness of our surroundings. In living into this place our beings become integrated with our surroundings and those who share it with us. The following aspects of response engage with and are called forth by our surroundings and the God of this place, - where and in whom we live and breathe and have our being.

In the face of abundance - of water, air, space, greenery, light, and landforms - we respond with respect. In the presence of variety - of cloud formations, plants and trees, hills and mountains, lakes and rivers, ice and thermal waters - we respond with inclusion. In the power of energy - hydro lakes, landslides, earthquakes, winds, solar radiation, sea waves - we respond with participation. In the experience of fullness - rivers, forests, bays, harvests, rain, snow and ice - we respond with fairness. In the presence of beauty, - of colour, form, variety and depth - we respond with integrity.

Our response of respect towards our place as a home acknowledges our relationship and interrelationship with the abundance of life we have around us. We recognise Divine generosity at the heart of our place and we seek to practise ways of living this generosity ourselves. While we cultivate respect as an attitude flowing from God's abundance, we endeavour to avoid the kinds of attitudes or behaviour that deadens respect or substitutes it for good manners. We will endeavour to prevent greediness from creeping into our lives, or miserliness with resources, or jadedness in coping with issues, or the privatization of our interests so that we relate to only particular groups. Our challenge is to shift our boundaries more and more outwards to embrace and practise abundant respect.

Our response of inclusion is to have a consistent attitude of hospitality towards others, and particularly at this time in New Zealand, to new immigrants to this land. We recognise in this place the God who makes room lovingly for a seeming limitless variety of life and we too seek to interpret this hospitality in our own response. So in our practising we look for opportunities to host, and we avoid elitism, or narrow mindedness, or racism and other -isms, as well as passivity in the face of inhospitality. Our challenge is to widen increasingly our vision of inclusivity.

Our response of participation means we become involved in what helps to increase community relationships in this land. We recognise God at home in this place and we seek to respond with an attitude which promotes and enhances community well-being. Correspondingly we endeavour to avoid behaviours and attitudes which militate against participation, such as 'not wanting to get involved', or an isolating privacy, or 'taking on every cause' without prudence, or wanting always to be the boss, or of being unwilling to share. Our challenge is to practise collaborative

participation so that the heart of the community grows.

Our response of fairness involves us in acting justly towards this place and the life at home here. Our response of fairness seeks to establish what is right and also what is the right way of proceeding, so that community relationships are enhanced. We recognise that Divine Providence is for all and we seek to respond to providence in fairness. Consequently we will try to avoid attitudes that fudge or dissipate fairness. Among these are being unable 'to make up your mind' about what is right, or always knowing what is right for others, or not recognizing our own prejudices, or having a judgemental attitude towards others. In practising fairness we endeavour to increase our own self-knowledge and capacity for discernment.

Our response of integrity involves us in seeking to live consistently by our principles and in doing so to grow increasingly integrated in this place. We recognise the Divine Spirit animating and integrating life in rhythmic cycles and arrhythmic happenings - the seasons, the lunar waxing and waning, the predictably unpredictable weather patterns, and the upheavals of shifting tectonic plates. We seek such integrity amidst the hope and uncertainties of our lives. In practising integrity we move away from attitudes or behaviours that would fragment our hope. We would avoid over commitment and over work, or being unable to say 'no', or compartmentalizing our lives, or avoidance and escapist behaviours, or refusal to admit our mistakes. In the practice of integrity we recognise that the pain and suffering of life has coherence and meaning within the fullness of life. Integrity will integrate us into the Spirit of Life revealed in this place around us.

For further reading:

Bergin, Helen, and Susan Smith, eds. *Spirituality in Aotearoa New Zealand: Catholic Voices*. Auckland: Accent Publications, 2002.

Darragh, Neil. *At Home in the Earth: Seeking an Earth-Centred Spirituality*. Auckland: Accent Publications, 2000.

"A Pakeha Christian Spirituality." In *Counselling Issues*, edited by Philip Culbertson, 303-31. Auckland: Accent Publications, 1997.

- 1 See also, Neil Darragh, "A Pakeha Christian Spirituality," in *Counselling Issues*, ed. Philip Culbertson (Auckland: Accent Publications, 1997). Neil Darragh, *At Home in the Earth: Seeking an Earth-Centred Spirituality* (Auckland: Accent Publications, 2000). Helen Bergin and Susan Smith, eds., *Spirituality in Aotearoa New Zealand: Catholic Voices* (Auckland: Accent Publications, 2002).

GOD IS IN THE DETAIL

by John Bluck

I'm a reluctant starter in the search for a Kiwi spirituality. I got into it by accident because I was bored with traditional models of spiritual formation. Bored or burnt out? I'm not sure which. I began my life as an ordinand or seminarian at 18 and would fall asleep at early morning chapel services, in the midst of receiving profound spiritual advice. My contemporaries who stayed awake went on to live holy lives while I wandered off into various spiritual wildernesses, rescued by inspiration from ecumenism, social action, human encounter movements and other brands of religious intensity. I never quite made the cut for the charismatic movement, though I tried hard and remain vaguely disappointed that I didn't taste the undoubtedly exciting fruits of that tree that flowered so brightly in the seventies, and we've been singing about, a little wistfully, ever since.

It was much later, after wandering around the world and back, that I ran into a school of spirituality that I'd been living inside all my life without realising. Call it Kiwi spirituality, or Pakeha, or Tau Iwi if you must, or indigenous. Certainly call it incarnational, and nothing less

than ecumenical. Whatever else it is, it's home grown, it belongs to nowhere else but in the ground beneath our feet and it's all right here.

We began talking about this spirituality in the earliest years of Pakeha settlement and it's grown through several self conscious forms, from a highly romanticised Victorian version in oil paintings full of brooding mountains that Wordsworth could have scribbled off an ode to with ease, through to idealised noble savages, the "tui" and "bellbird" school of poetry, the rugged bush felling, camp oven cooking pioneers who were good, keen and lonely, through to the stirrings of a national identity, monocultural with Maori decoration, then forged in war, depression, economic crisis, and finally coming of age, though still adolescent.

This spirituality can be traced through our literature and art and even our cinema, but you're hard pressed to find it in the theology of our churches, which remained colonial and import dependent for well into the 1960's, long after the rest of the society gave away import licencing and controls. And if you listen to the choruses we sing still and the adulation we heap on visiting American preachers and authors, you might well wonder if there's still some way to go in trusting our own spiritual voices.

I started coming to terms with Kiwi spirituality when I settled again in New Zealand in the early 80's at a time when Maori sovereignty and identity was being clearly staked out in the public domain, as a mainstream issue that couldn't be sidelined any longer. The signs were everywhere around me: Bastion Point, the land marches, the momentum gathering around the Waitangi Tribunal, and in the Anglican Church, the preparations for a Tikanga based church and a prayer book that addressed a God who awaited me here rather than somewhere else. Couple all that with the challenge that came from the Christian feminist movement (women I knew ten years before as easy going colleagues were now monitoring my pronouns and holding me personally responsible for the sins of patriarchy), and I found myself a stranger in a familiar land. There was nothing else to do but set about trying to give an account of the hope that was in me, in a whole new way.

Back then, we started talking about Kiwi spirituality in bold generalisations. The sheer novelty of talking about it at all allowed us that luxury. "Struggle and hope" described it well and a little collection of essays called "Long, white and cloudy" confessed to the open ended and often fuzzy way we talked.

I wouldn't use that title now. It's long, white and a little clearer now, and the lines around spiritual identity and belonging are much sharper.

We've pushed the debate about separate, distinct and definable identities to their limit and the postmodern worldview that says such contrasts are artificial and overplayed is catching up with us. Hybrid identities are overtaking old separations. Younger Maori see no contradiction in claiming the Pakeha part of their whakapapa even as they support an iwi claim under the Treaty. Androgynous images muddle gender separations in popular music and art. The freedom that Generation X enjoys in holding multiple and changing loyalties to brand names and institutions all conspires to make our statements of faith and our places of belonging harder than ever to pin down. World views, credal statements, canon laws and authority figures that define the big picture become obsolete the minute they pretend to have the last word. The only person to dares to claim that is Pam Corkery.

Any sort of exclusive claim on truth of any sort is written off by the postmodern way of seeing the world. Any lingering hope that the church, or any faith tradition for that matter, might have a corner on the spirituality market is surely dismissed by the sight of multi national corporations selling their products as spiritual assets, be that an airline ticket, a bottle of Steinlager or drive in a new Nissan.

In that setting, national let alone indigenous ownership of anything is constantly undermined by a global culture that homogenises everything into a mongrel mix, available to anyone who can pay the price. Consumerism has no scruples and respects no boundaries.

And yet, amazingly enough, despite all those hybridising, homogenising forces at work, we see proudly owned, passionately expressed beliefs and identities commanding attention and respect. Consider the success of moves like "Whale Rider", poetry like Glen Colquhoun's "Playing God" collection, the transformative power of Kura Kaupapa schools, and even the pride most cynical and worldly wise New Zealanders feel when they see underdogs like the Silver Ferns or the Tall Blacks triumph against the odds. These are very local, very particular, very focussed expressions of energy, skill and belief. Yet they speak universally while they last and even after they have been superseded and changed into something quite different, their legacy lives on.

A clearly lived out, well owned and proudly held spirituality for Aotearoa can have that sort of transformative power, regardless of whether it's experienced by people who stand inside or outside the familiar circle of religion, even when they are unable to find any traction from the traditional language and disciplines of church. But for that to happen, we need, I believe, to shift gear in the way we express that spirituality, namely from the general to the particular, the conceptual to the concrete and from fixed categories to fluid processes, the tightly defined to the openly dynamic, from hoping to find the big picture out there somewhere to trusting that there is truth enough and more to be going on with in the bits and pieces right here in front of us.

My claim then is that when it comes to a spirituality for Aotearoa that embraces our struggles and hopes, God is to be found in the detail, in the fine print of this gospel-culture contract that we inherit and constantly need to rewrite.

And we look to the detail not in order to check up on whether some universal laws of theological grammar are being followed, but rather because God is in that detail in every fragment of it, in every dot on every " i " and every cross bar on every " t ". We're accustomed to looking through telescopes to find evidence of the divine spirit in the universe. Let's spend some time looking through the microscope as well, to find that same spirit in the smallest detail of the most local, the most ordinary, the closest to home. To do that, you have to trust the ground on which you stand to be worth the effort of such close scrutiny.

And equally if not more importantly, let's expect to find God in the way those details connect. For it's in those interconnections that we find new reasons for getting excited about the God in whom we live and move and have our being in Aotearoa.

This is the introduction of John Bluck's paper to the Association of Christian Spiritual Director's conference in August this year. Copies of the full text are available from Bishop's Secretary, Box 227, Napier. Enclose \$2.00 for photocopying and postage.

"BOTH - AND" SPIRITUALITY

by Andrew Pritchard

As we christians in Aotearoa New Zealand grow more fully into a spirituality that is both christian and shaped by the contexts, cultures and land in which we live it seems to me that a mark of health will be inclusivity rather than exclusivity, celebration of diversity not insistence on uniformity, both/and rather than either/or. Here then are some contours that mark such a spirituality.

BOTH Bush/Beach AND Bible

We are right to appreciate and celebrate the beauty and wonder of the land in which we are privileged to live; to notice how our lives, spiritual as well as physical, are shaped by bush, sea, mountain and river; to note that Christmas is pohutukawa's in blossom, BBQ's on the beach and

holidays not log fires and snow; to encounter God in sunset, mountain grandeur, stillness of dawn or violence of storm. But we are also right to appreciate and celebrate the Word revealed in the Bible; to live the story of our own lives in faithfulness to the story of God in scripture. We do well to heed some wisdom from the Carthusian Statutes *"For they are mistaken, who think that they can easily attain to interior union with God, while having previously neglected the study of the Word of God, or later abandoned it altogether."*

BOTH Addition AND Subtraction

How I came to read Irvine Stone's biographical novel of Michelangelo "The Agony and the Ecstasy" I don't remember. Back then as a young engineer art and the humanities didn't hold much interest for me and spirituality was mostly about right belief and conforming reasonably closely to my good Baptist upbringing. Now some thirty or more years on the contrast between two of Michelangelo's art forms is still a powerful paradigm of spiritual formation for me. In the fresco in the Sistine Chapel the work of art was created on a blank ceiling, built up little by little by adding a layer of paint and colour here, another layer there. A long slow process gradually building up layer after layer until the work of art was complete. Michelangelo's real love however was sculpture. Here the process was quite different. The work of art was fully present, in potential, in the 40 ton slab of marble. All that was required was the chipping away, the subtraction, of all the bits that didn't fit! *"I saw the angel in the stone"*, Michelangelo said, *"and I set it free!"* Our spiritual growth will sometimes be a process of addition, one good thing, virtue, gift, discipline or victory after another, being added to those already part of us. At other times the sculptor's mallet and chisel will have raised clouds of dust, grit under our feet and broken pieces everywhere! It mostly feels like failure and loss, desertion and chaos ... yet this too, perhaps especially, is growth.

BOTH Contemplation AND Action

Breathing in and breathing out are necessary to survive ... in the right proportion and in the right rhythm. A growing, healthy, spirituality will include detachment - times for reflection, introspection and personal renewal. It will also involve involvement - times of engagement with issues, standing for justice, working for peace. A growing, healthy, spirituality calls for times of silence and solitude and times for dialogue and solidarity. A growing, healthy, spirituality requires that we listen ... to God, ourselves and others ... but also that we speak ... giving a reason for the hope that is in us, bringing encouragement and prophetic challenge. A growing, healthy, spirituality requires BOTH contemplation AND action.

BOTH Alone AND Together

The geographical isolation of New Zealand and the kiwi "do it yourself" attitude intensify the individualism that is prevalent in many western societies. The more communal examples of maori and pacific peoples in New Zealand soften the edges of this pakeha individualism only a little. A significant trend in New Zealand christian culture is the growing number of people who claim christianity but disavow church. The New Zealand fern provides a wonderful national symbol that parallels the body imagery of 1 Corinthians 12. The fern is a fractal - break a small branch off a large one and the small one has the same shape and structure as the big one; break a leaf from the small branch and the leaf has the same shape and structure as the small branch which has the same shape and structure as the whole branch ... and so on. *"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."* 1 Corinthians 12:27 We may do well to critique and challenge the forms and structures of the church yet a healthy spirituality is one which recognises BOTH the uniqueness and the integrity of the individual's relationship with God AND the essentially communal nature of christianity with our need for each other.

BOTH Citizen AND Alien

Over recent years opinions about immigration have been voiced more strongly. More polarisation can be seen on racial issues. *"An Ethic for Christians and Other Aliens in a Strange Land"* is an evocatively titled (and well worth reading) book by William Stringfellow. We are all aliens in this world; yet we are all citizens. We are at home here and yet there is a home for which the heart longs. A healthy, growing, spirituality is at home in, appreciates, nurtures and cares for the

earth, the environment in which we live. At the same time it acknowledges limitations of time, space and physicality, it enjoys transcendent moments of grace and yearns for fulfilment yet to come.

To grow in our spirituality we need openness to other - the one who is different from me denominationally, theologically. We need openness to other - the one whose cultural experience of faith and practice is different to mine. We need openness to other - interfaith dialogue, respect and friendship. A growing healthy spirituality needs BOTH citizen AND alien and acknowledges that we are BOTH citizen AND alien.

As I conclude this reflection on "BOTH - AND" Spirituality I suggest three ways in which it may be implemented, only one of which is healthy.

- 1 We can swing between extremes, being full on at one extreme for a while then swinging wildly to its opposite. Feeling as if we are doing the splits, trying to hold together two things that are mutually exclusive. This is a schizophrenic spirituality.
- 2 We can work intensely at being balanced, always on the alert, moving forward tentatively, struggling for control, trying hard, nervously straining not to fall. This is "tightrope walker" spirituality.
- 3 We can be secure, calm, well grounded. Choosing the appropriate response from the range available as discernment indicates. It seems to me that the need of our time is not for clever men and women, nor even for knowledgeable men and women. Our need is for wise men and women. This is the spirituality of the sage.

As we grow in "BOTH - AND" Spirituality, allowing it to form us then we will see more wise women and wise men in whom the words of the Teacher in Ecclesiastes become incarnate. *"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven ..."*

THE SHEPHERDS' LAMB

by Barbara Sampson

We'd long been shepherds the three of us
 out on Bethlehem's hillsides
 ours a skilled work minding sheep
 leading them to fresh pasture and cool water
 knowing their seasons and their ways
 it was hard not to get attached
 but they were growing up for temple sacrifice
 theirs the bleating of forgiveness
 slaughter their destiny
 they were born to die.

While others thought us ignorant
 we'd pass the time like David watching stars
 every day different with a yarn to spin
 when it came to tall tales we were expert
 but there's no way that night could be exaggerated
 no way to describe something bigger than telling
 no words to describe the terror and the thrill
 the sky lit up like a fireball
 angels soaring singing praises
 a glory song of a Saviour born.

If I'd seen it on my own I would know it as a dream
 but we all saw and heard and felt the holy fire
 and so we went where they pointed
 into Bethlehem's streets and to a rough shelter
 our kind of place

where we found a baby newborn with his parents
 worship the only thing we could do
 praise the only gift we could bring
 welcome the only word we could utter
 gratitude the only story we could tell.
 There was no shepherd skill we missed
 but we'd never seen a Lamb like this.

IMAGES OF SPIRITUALITY

by Andrew Dunn

We live in an exciting age when spirituality and spiritual values are not only freely discussed but are expressed in anything from personal beliefs to company statements.

As we try to make some sense of all this in a world wide open to spiritual things how do we here in Aotearoa New Zealand make some sense of it? What in our context gives us a handle on spirituality? Here are a few images of spirituality that may entice some reflection:

Breathing - the word "spirituality" itself comes from the Latin word *spirare*, meaning 'to breathe', the most basic life-giving action of all human beings. We see it in familiar words like respiration and inspiration suggesting that like breathing spirituality is not an optional extra in life. So spirituality is how we "breathe" as people who are more than animals of flesh and blood, more than economic units of society, more than doers and producers, who we are and where we fit in society and culture. Our breathing will depend on our cultural and inherited spiritual values as well as the fresh learnings from our more recent and current encounters with God. Are there kiwi ways of *breathing*? Undoubtedly. And of course, how we breathe spiritually impacts on our expressions of faith and on how we worship, and there are many of those in Aotearoa New Zealand today.

Nourishing - what nourishes us at the core of our being, in our soul, our "nephesh" (all my being) are the things to return to again and again. There lies the source of strength and growth for the whole of life. This happens in many ways and varied places. How often are there deeply nourishing moments with gatherings of friends or family around a drink, food and the delights of story telling, recalling and reliving great moments, so that they too become great moments? How often in times of celebration and worship? It's no wonder that at the heart of spiritualities there are often sacramental or symbolic meals like Passover, Holy Communion, Love Feast. However, the kiwi dinner party, the hangi, barbie, a fire on the beach or at the crib or bach, sharing a drink with friends and mates are nourishing too for many of us, at levels deeper than some of us can name.

Refreshing - when there are so many things we do that refresh us - a cup of coffee, a jug of beer, a bottle of wine, a sip from a mountain stream, a pot of tea with friends, coffee in the café, sitting in the shade after a busy day, wandering the beach on a fine evening - it's clear that a lot more is going on than just a cup or a sip, a jug or wander. We are refreshed, outside in, head to toe, body and mind and spirit. Again, it's significant that so many ways of spirituality use drink and drinking ceremonies to refresh the soul. "Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation, through your goodness we have this wine to offer, fruit of the vine and made with human hands. It will be our spiritual drink" - the ancient Hebrew blessing Jesus used at the Last Supper. He could boldly say, "I am the water of life - whoever comes to me will never be thirsty". Spirituality is about refreshment and our land has an abundance of suitable images.

Connecting and awareness - Spirituality also links us together ... with others, with creation, with the universe, with life, with God who made us and holds all things in being. And spirituality opens in us an awareness of the rich and delicate things we're talking about in this paper, dimensions that are as real and true as sight and hearing and touch. They are the spiritual

dimensions of life - *taha wairua*.

Companioning - spirituality is about discovering that we are companioned in life. *Con* and *panis*, breaking bread together is something we do in many ways from marriage, family, friendship to sport teams, tramping, fishing, art and craft, music and worship - an abundance of images and examples.

Unfolding - The koru unfolding from the crown of the tree ferns, the mighty kauri and totara lifting high, reaching for the sky, the delicacy of the mosses and lichens sprouting abundantly in the beech forests, the subtle beauty of our fungi and native flowers let alone the beauty and delights of imported flora - and so much of it providing rich images of life, growth and beauty and the wonder of God's handcrafting ways.

Meeting - here's a central point of spirituality: a sense of meeting and being met. Some spiritualities focus more on reaching out, striving for, seeking the unknown. Others focus more on the sense of being met, hearing one's name called, sensing that love is near and reaching into us - what Paul Hawker calls "secret affairs of the soul" (title of his book). The reaching out sort usually require considerable effort or routine or obedience; the being met sort tend to focus more on how to respond appropriately when "it" happens. Both focus on mystery and how God attracts our attention. The first tends to focus more on the transcendent aspects of God; the other on the immanent, God's closeness in all things and at all times. Both can leave us bowled over and often wordless as the significance of being loved to the core of one's being sinks in. The transcendent sort invites deeper silence and solitude with their attendant listening in awe for the still small voice.

Listening - As Jesus put it so sharply, "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it". In its broadest sense spirituality listens widely and openly for the voice of God however it comes. In its more focussed sense it listens to the written word of Scripture and to the voice of the living Word amongst us - and obeys their invitations to life in all its fullness.

Depthing - "deep calls to deep" writes a Hebrew poet (Psalm 42:7). For him or her it was through the harsh events of exile in a foreign land that this occurred. For anyone searching for deeper things today it is a wonderful image of spirituality. In an increasingly shallow world spirituality calls to deeper things, out from the shallows of the shoreline to where the deep blue water is. Or catches our attention when we gaze into the depths of a backwater pool. It's an image of the invitation to the fathomlessness of God. It's an invitation to explore God's deep love and grace. And it's our own deep hearts that call to God's deep heart. Or is it God who calls to us? This depthing becomes an exploration of our life in God and God in us - regardless of any religious affiliations!

Quality of spirit - There's a very useful Russian word to describe spirituality - *dukhovnost*. "It refers to a quality of spirit ... While referring to the intimate life of prayer, it also suggests moral capacity, courage, wisdom, mercy, social responsibility, a readiness to forgive, a way of life centred on love ... in short all that happens in our life when God is the central point of reference". (Jim Forest - quoted in the book *IONA - the energy of God*).

Spirituality always invites us to explore the implications of "breathing" more deeply for it is never a selfish enterprise nor a self-centred indulgence. It always has an outward focus on how we live life and serve others in this world we live in. This means that spirituality has an uncomfortable, sometimes abrasive aspect to it as we challenge the accepted norms and ask the deep questions about the central issues of life on planet earth.

These are some images of spirituality - what others make sense for you?

(An earlier version of this paper was published this year in three student newspapers in Auckland tertiary institutions)

THE BREATH OF SPIRIT

by Anthea Harper

An answerphone message. An article request for 'Refresh'. Something like "What is the place of spirituality in personal maturity?"

My response? A long pause. Then I thought "Well, you know perhaps it's a bit like asking "What is the place of breathing in personal life!" And that got me pondering. So here I am thinking and tapping out my longer response to you.

"I once heard a phrase about God being like the air we breathe."

"Say some more."

"It's about God, or Spirit, being the life force, the ruah, the everywhere-for-everyone Presence. It's about Spirit in the in-spiration, the in-breath and the out-breath, the ebb and flow, the taking in and letting go. You know what happens if we try to stop this natural process?"

"Yes! Blue in the face! Can be fatal!"

"Yes! And even when there is an obstruction, like having a blocked nose, the rhythm in life is inhibited. When the passage for the flow of Spirit is closed we are slow to grow."

"I've heard somewhere that we are spiritual beings having a human experience. Is that what you're saying too?"

"Yes. And because of that spirituality is the essence of our Divinely created nature. Spirit is available to all - like the air we breathe."

"Sounds like we just simply couldn't live without it! So, what's the connection with maturity?"

"I was wondering that too, and have a couple of ideas. Along the way I have noticed that there are three things needed for change, for growth in wholeness, for maturity. They are **awareness**, **willingness** and **support**."

"Meaning?"

"Meaning that unless we are **aware** of what's there, we cannot easily and consciously make choices. Our freedom is limited. Spirit within and outside us invites, informs, encourages us to choose freedom, choose life, - in a word, communicates. So, listening is key to awareness. It's about letting in. Letting in what's there.

"For example, I was visiting a friend in Australia last week who was considering saying 'yes' to a job working with indigenous young people in Alice Springs. She has engaged in work of this kind in Mexico and is well experienced and qualified for work like this. Her 'professional self' was keen, and vocal on the subject! But as she listened to her thoughts, she heard another voice from within, whispering 'Please, I need some time and attention, healing and comfort'.

"In her listening she became aware of something long and silent. Now she had two options instead of one demand. Choice was possible."

"O.K. So, is this where willingness comes in?"

“ Yes. **Willingness** is our commitment to openness. Here trust is the key. It’s about letting go. Letting go fear. It’s about an assent to the consequences of awareness, a surrender to the constant stirring of Spirit unfolding wholeness within us and around us. My friend declared her willingness, not only to stop, attend, listen, but also to face her fear around taking the journey inwards. She said “yes” to the cry from within. Often Yes to this journey requires more courage than a trip to Alice Springs!”

“And what about *support*?”

“Up to this point we have been exploring, if you like, the vertical dimension of spirituality. Here we address the horizontal dimension. We all need support from others.

“And what kind? Probably many and varied. For example, having a context where we remember that we are joined to others for the purpose of giving and receiving love. It’s about being accountable, connected. It’s about Spirit embodied for the sake of the earthed unfolding into wholeness as I mentioned earlier. It’s about having a place where respect is paramount, where we can be ‘ruthlessly honest’ with ourselves in the presence of another. It’s about letting a trusted person in on some of our deepest feelings and thoughts. It’s about having our deepest motives probed. It’s about care, incarnated grace, humour, and being ‘held’. Listening to Spirit together My friend shared her emerging awareness with me. She was willing to trust her heart and my love. She voiced her fears. She admitted she needed someone to help facilitate this process of awareness and willingness. She invited my support to do this.”

“Where else do you see this happening?”

“I am aware of Spirit using every ordinary and mysterious opportunity to awaken this awareness and guide our willingness! I guess spiritual direction is a particularly focused form of this kind of support. We need someone to walk alongside, facilitating awareness of what is right here and now, without agenda or judgement, and encouraging the willingness to embrace it.”

“Shouldn’t we just rely on God, though?”

“Ah! Do I hear a hint of what I would call spirit-duality!”

“Spirit-duality! What do you mean?”

“Well, in some people over the years I have noticed a tendency to think we should look only to God for all of our needs. Whilst we all acknowledge that God *is* the source of all we are and have, it’s the attitude of excluding the human face of the Spirit that concerns me. So, the notion that the truly ‘spiritual’ rely only on the vertical dimension of relationship with God and dismiss God’s vital presence in the horizontal dimension of relating, is a wrinkled and distorted view of Love incarnate, I have come to see.

“That’s why I like the notion of breathing. It brings together the Divine in the human, matter and spirit, into a single integrated whole. All things seen and unseen - in rhythm, connected”.

“Oh! Yes! That reminds me of one of my favourite definitions of intelligence:
Intelligence is the ability to make connections! Great, eh!”

“I think that has a whole lot to do with maturity - maturity as the ability to recognise connections. From this comes wisdom - the mark of the mature. There is something I want to underline as we chew the first bite of this discussion apple and that is, something about knowing through experience that the Spirit is at work within us and in our world at all times and in all ways. That we can trust this, surrender to it. At most what we are called and enabled to be is aware, willing, and supported in this adventure of Life.”

'ALBATROSS' SPIRITUALITY?

by Sue Pickering

Recently I had a day to spare in Dunedin and ventured out with my husband to Otago Peninsula to see the albatross colony, something I had wanted to do for years.

With the sparkling harbour to our left, and a real sense of anticipation, we drove along the coast until we reached the Royal Albatross Visitors' Centre which catered for tourists and ornithologists alike. We went straight inside and approached the counter to find out when we could join a tour to the viewing area - I couldn't wait to see the remarkable wingspan and the sheer size of the birds - far bigger than anything I had seen before.

But, in well-rehearsed and firm tones, the receptionist informed us that the viewing area was closed! We had arrived at the very time when the area was off limits, so that the birds could be undisturbed during their courtship, mating and nesting season.

WHAT A DISAPPOINTMENT! No amount of realistic renditions of albatross in the various static displays, no award winning video clips showing the ocean from above and below, no photographic records detailing the life of the colony, could make up for the real thing - seeing albatross with my own eyes.

I moped about a bit, reluctant to give up the prospect of seeing a real live albatross, until John persuaded me to explore the path leading down towards the cliff edge at the end of Otago Peninsula. I hung onto my hope - perhaps I would see a wingéd one sailing the skies above - and I scanned the view in front of me with longing in my heart. BUT - no amount of searching the clouds and sea stretching out to infinity produced a glimpse of the hoped-for albatross. There was only the occasional spotted shag or common seagull pottering diligently about against a background of waves pounding the rocks far below.

Only the ordinary... ONLY the ordinary?

Gradually I set aside expectation and disappointment and started to look, really look at what was there in front of me and I saw, really saw :

patterns of seaweed like long
luscious hair swinging to the
rhythm of the sea-surge

wonderful waves striding
across the sea like determined elephants,
confidently sweeping
aside any obstacles in
their path

dozens of nesting shags, the
fledglings stretching and
calling,
yearning for food, as
their carefully balanced
parents perched on the
edge of the nests, built
on tiny platforms on the
cliff face.

Once I slowed down long enough to see what was before me, the disappointment melted away and I found myself surprisingly blessed by the ordinary as I saw glimpses of God's beauty, power and faithfulness.

I left that place refreshed.

As we made our way back to our car, I thought of the person whose foresight and dedication had nurtured countless albatross and established this sanctuary. The question of the value of one individual's contribution to the world was something God knew I had been struggling with for some time. This man's example reminded me that one person's commitment and vision can indeed make a difference and through that awareness God answered my unspoken prayer.

What is 'albatross' spirituality? For me it has something to do with the liberating expansiveness of God's love, rather than the life-denying weight of old habits and addictions around our necks.

It has to do with attitudes and preconceptions and how these affect our experience of God's presence in our lives.

It reminds me of the need for stilling and focusing, the slow settling into an interior silence, the need for a receptivity of spirit.

It speaks to me of

longing and thirst for personal experience,
the disappointment of unmet expectations,

the value of persistent searching,

the invitation to take a 'long loving look at the real', until we experience the joy of being surprised by God's grace, revealed to us in the ordinary things of life.

TO GOD WHO SINGS THROUGH US

by Joyce Rupp

Leader:

God who sings in our hearts, as the flute needs openness to receive the breath of melody, we pray to be open to the many ways that your symphony of love plays in our lives.

All:

Thank you for the way that your enlivening Spirit touches us and moves through our beings. Remind us often that each one of us is a special instrument of yours. Together we create the wondrous music in your concert of love.

Leader:

You stand at the door of our hearts, asking for an entrance. You desire to come in and share the intimacy of your presence with us. (Rev.3:20)

All:

Behold, we open the door of our minds and hearts. We welcome your entrance and long for deeper union with you. Come and make music through our lives. Dance through our days and sing in our hearts.

Leader:

We have days when we resist your movement and message. We seek you in stillness, but forget you in busyness. We yearn for fullness, but miss you in emptiness. We welcome you in joy, but reject you in sorrow. We rejoice in the harvest but struggle with the planting.

All:

Open our inner eyes so that we may know you in all the dimensions of our lives. Help us to trust you in the numerous ups and downs, to believe that your song can happen in all aspects of our existence.

Leader:

God of courage and strength, we are waiting to receive your loving energy in the empty corners of our hearts. It is your power working through us that can do more than we can ever ask or imagine. It is your enlivening breath moving through us that enables us to overcome anxieties, fears, doubts and misgivings (Eph.3:20).

All:

Breathe through us, Music Maker, and let your song weave a melody through all we are and do. May we acknowledge your power at work in us and open ourselves to this blessing.

Leader:

You are a God who accepts the uniqueness and beauty of every individual. You love us as we are while you yearn for us to be more. You invite us to extend this kind of love to those who challenge our compassion and our patience. Your love within us will give us the strength to love them as we ought.

All:

Nudge us and encourage us to accept those people who are alien to our love. May your song of kindness and patience be sung through us. Fill our attitude toward others with notes of understanding and nonjudgment.

*(Taken from **Out Of The Ordinary** c2000 by Joyce Rupp. Used by permission of Ave Maria Press. All rights reserved).*

SPIRITUALITY IS A LOT LIKE THAT

by Maggie Smith

I was walking, last week, on the Port Hills which overlook the city of Christchurch on one side and the harbour of Lyttelton on the other ... on a track to Taylor's Mistake, a great beach for surf. High cliffs are pockmarked with hundreds of tiny caves and ledges - nesting places for sea birds in August to October. Year after year they return to their own piece of real estate - safe from predators and storms, plentiful food and marvellous uplifting air currents to practice flying and gliding, to strengthen young wings for the journeys of life.

Spirituality is a lot like that.

It is that natural returning instinct.

It is flying-home to the place of my true identity and purpose - the "I am" place. Only from that place can I live life to the full - in all its abundance. Only from that place can I be strengthened for the journeys of life.

An image I warmed to, as the birds circled and dived with such joy and freedom and ease. It helps to use an image ... for spirituality is a mystery that cannot be defined even as God is a Mystery who cannot be defined.

"St Lynas was quietly reading an old theology book somebody had given him, and was ploughing through chapters about the nature of God. The brothers in the room were startled when he

suddenly stood up, and with great force threw the book through the open window. 'This book should not be laid aside lightly,' he said vehemently, 'but thrown with great force!' 'What's the matter with it?' they asked. 'The fellow's grammar is all wrong!' said St Lynas. 'God is a verb, not a noun.'" (*The Gospel According to St Lynas*. Frank Pagden)

I am a spiritual being ... that is me ... my true and deep me.

- the me God meets in the relationship we call prayer
- the spontaneous moment of wonder and delight - aware of the hand of the Creator
- the devotional moment of receiving bread and wine in remembrance
- the moment of gratitude - a silent thank You
- the moment of grief - sorrow shared with the One acquainted with grief
- formal prayer - familiar, well-loved words
- informal prayer - words tumbled and tangled ... or no words at all

Prayer - being together - I am me meeting I Am God.

Perhaps that is the noun part of spirituality.

The spiritual quest is a journey without distance. You travel from where you are right now to where you have always been ... spirituality ... is only a matter of becoming. (Anthony de Mello).
That's the verb part.

Noun and verb together have this instinctive longing -

the desire of deep to deep
the desire of love to love.

That's the Grace part.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUS

by Warren Deason

To speak of the spirituality of Jesus is to speak of Jesus' way of attending to and living out of his experiential relationship with the I AM WHO I AM, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Holy One of Israel, and whom he embraced as *Abba*, his own dear father.

It is speaking of the way Jesus nourished his inner life, it is speaking of his experience of God's presence and the consequences of this for his life and ministry and his view of the world.
So what were its essential elements?

First of all it was a **spirituality that had its roots in Judaism**. This may seem obvious but it is important to remind ourselves that Jesus was first and foremost a Jew. It's important, because in reading the debates and controversies in the gospels, we can easily assume that Jesus was set on founding a new religion rather than trying to persuade his contemporaries to return to what he believed lay at the heart of the Jewish faith and to form a movement to renew that faith from within.

Today Jesus is being viewed very sympathetically by many Jewish scholars and much of the debate hinges around the nature of Jesus' controversies with the religious authorities.

Any resolution seems difficult as the Jewish side tends to downplay the record of any major departure from Jewish tradition as a Christian interpolation and the Christian side tends to emphasise it as a genuine innovation.

We can however reasonably expect that Jesus observed most of the pious practices of Judaism, valuing the law and encouraging others to do the same. However, he was concerned about what lay at the Law's heart and when questioned about this quotes the Shema - "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength". This comes first and out of it flows a commitment to love your neighbour as yourself.

Jesus' spirituality was charismatic. For Jesus, God's authoritative presence, God's Spirit of power, was a living experiential reality. His ministries of healing and exorcism were signs that he believed in the power of God's Spirit to be instrumental in bringing about the reality of the kingdom in people's lives. Everything that stood in the way of God's dream for the world was being swept aside.

Jesus' vision was shaped by the words of the prophet in Isaiah 61:1.

The Spirit of God, the Master, is on me, because God anointed me. He sent me to preach good news to the poor, heal the heartbroken, announce freedom to all captives, pardon all prisoners.
(The Message. 2002)

The other profound sense of God's presence that Jesus had was of an intimate experience of God as *Abba*. This seemed to be Jesus' favourite way of addressing the Holy One of Israel. Jesus sensed that he could relate to God in the way a child might respond to a loving parent.

This distinctive sense of sonship was a key element in Jesus' spirituality. This was a lively intimacy that Jesus enjoyed. He expected and experienced the care and love of God as *Abba* - Father and in response offered respect, dedication, obedience and self-giving service.

The robust experiential nature of this relationship has even led Jesus to be described as a Jewish "mystic". New Testament scholar Marcus Borg approvingly quotes William James' assertion that for Jesus the experience of the Divine was a "first hand" rather than a "second hand" religious belief.

This is highlighted by the gospel accounts of Jesus' baptism at the hands of John.

Whatever Jesus, or indeed the crowd, "saw" or "heard", there was for him a profound internal sense of the Father's approval and acceptance.

Jesus' spirituality embraced silence and solitude.

Following his baptismal experience he spent several weeks in the desert wilderness wrestling with the implications of his profound sense of connection to God.

During his ministry Jesus often withdrew to what the gospel writers refer to as "lonely places" in order to pray - often for whole nights alone or sometimes very early before others were awake. It seemed Jesus would often withdraw in such a way when he faced difficult or critical moments in his ministry. The Gethsemane accounts reflect Jesus' prayer as an intense struggle - a passionate and painful engagement with *Abba*. A struggle born out of a sudden sense of disruption to the intimate sense of care and love that he usually experienced.

How much Jesus' piety embraced the usual forms of corporate worship in synagogue or temple and the three set periods of prayer each day we do not know from the gospels. We can only assume that Jesus as a pious Jew probably would have shared in such practices and indeed some of his sharpest encounters with authority and his preaching took place in synagogues.

Jesus' spirituality had a contemplative edge.

"Consider the lilies of the field", he told his followers, so you might appreciate God's gracious providence and care. Jesus would often use such everyday scenes and events to raise "working", sometimes uncomfortable, questions in the lives of his hearers. In fact Jesus' spirituality often involved seeing the world in a different way - a way he spoke of as "the kingdom"; a way that would often turn conventional ways of seeing upside down and challenge

accepted wisdom. Ways of seeing that asked people to look at others in new ways. Ways of seeing that invited people to see themselves in new ways. These were not ways reserved for some indefinite future. They were ways that could be embraced in the here and now as followers of Jesus.

This gave for many, a disturbing edge to Jesus' ministry. Jesus charismatic spirituality embraced the prophetic. If God's kingdom is God's dream, the way things are when God is king, then what does that say about existing orders and structures? What about structures that are based on power and wealth and the domination of others? How does God see it when religious systems and values become caught up in these structures and are used to perpetuate them rather than challenge them?

Another strong feature of Jesus' spirituality was his sense of God's inclusiveness. This is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in the many fellowship meals recorded in the gospels. The fact that Jesus chose to eat with those regarded as "outcasts and sinners" sent a strong message about how he understood the nature and love of God. The web of regulations surrounding the consumption of food was based on the concept of purity. What you ate, where and how you ate it and with whom, were all vital issues.

The Holy One was seen as distinct and separate, not to be associated with anything unclean. By implication God's people must also maintain this stance toward their lives. No detail of life was too small to be subjected to this requirement. Unclean things and unclean people were out of bounds and to be avoided. It was these boundaries that Jesus challenged. His experience of God as *Abba* gave him a deep sense of God's compassion for all things. "Be compassionate as God is compassionate".

Jesus said that this compassionate and generous God welcomed home the outcast. In fact this God would be so overtaken with joy that he would run out in ungainly and undignified fashion to embrace them. This was a compassionate God who subverted the usual conventions about performance and reward.

Jesus' spirituality invites us to be in relationship with the compassionate, gracious God we too may name as *Abba*; to be captivated by God's dream of transformation and change and open to having our own lives and priorities disrupted and challenged; to have our hearts softened by God's mercy and enlarged by God's inclusiveness; to become more deeply contemplative as we increasingly discover God at the heart of all things.

FRUITS OF SILENCE AND STILLNESS

by Ross Miller

...the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. (Mark 4:27)

On one occasion while I was hanging about idly, a four-year-old decided to engage me in conversation about Batman. My knowledge of Batman is not extensive, and this became apparent. The child looked at me and asked, *Do you only know a few things?* Smart kid. Spotted it right off.

But not knowing, so often, is not what we want at all. We were raised on Beliefs, which we like to see confirmed in experience. We assume that God has a purpose for us, and we like to see that purpose working out, as we say. We have always understood that some things are true and some things are not, and we generally expect to be able to know what is and what isn't.

I have noticed that not many contemplatives get involved in this kind of debate. Contemplative prayer and life brings us into the realm of not knowing, or no longer knowing as we did; indeed of unknowing, not needing to know, calling in question even basic things we thought we knew.

Or rather, it might be more accurate to say, the contemplative acquires "knowing" at another level, more direct and intuitive - and not very communicable. St Paul wrote of *the eyes of your heart being open, that you may know...* (Eph. 1:18)

* * * * *

In a practical sense, contemplative prayer and life depends on disciplined silence and stillness. Some teachers add simplicity and solitude. In a daily discipline of silence and stillness, agenda-less and image-less, *whether we feel like it that day or not*, we start ever again the process of letting go. The need to know, to find answers, to receive inspiration or ecstatic experiences, or to influence events - all this is distraction, worldly noise.

It is a daily surprise how radical this is. Letting-go includes letting-go of the need to assess "personal progress" in prayer, in letting-go. The Benedictines John Main and Laurence Freeman frequently say, one way or another, that if we must look for "results", "outcomes", "benefits", from contemplative prayer, we should look for them in the changes we begin to notice at other times altogether. We certainly do not set goals in prayer!

Contemplative prayer is not a process for feeling better, dealing with stress, lowering blood pressure, curing disease, achieving serenity.

Thomas Keating is one teacher who makes much of the important word, consent. In the silence and in the stillness, day by day, often for longer than is comfortable or convenient, I am consenting, as deeply as I know how, to what God may do. I think that as time goes by the consent goes deeper, and I am happy that my consent is, so to speak, the only form of "control" I have. I discover that the thought of withdrawing my consent has become what I can no longer do.

This consent, as I learn to give it, goes into the abyss of all my sorrows, huge regrets, injustices, memories - right down there. This is the area I may be unable of myself to let go of. There are things that seem like a life sentence. But the Spirit starts to enable my consent - I become willing to relinquish everything that poisons.

The process seems to be long, rather than dramatic. Everything is a gift - the silence, the attention, the mantra, the discovery every now and then that my fingers have, as it were, been prised off yet something else I had been saying I could not relinquish.

Eventually, one day, I discover that I am consenting quite spontaneously at other times than the times of prayer. I move more into a life which does not hang on to attitudes, memories, possessions, convictions, guilts. It may be something like being poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3).

* * * * *

Thomas Keating, as much as anyone, is a teacher who articulates what God can do within us as we are truly still and silent.¹ Keating writes about the False Self, the accumulation of all our emotional programmes for happiness. This is very close to what St Paul calls "the flesh". In contemplative prayer and life we are consenting to the progressive dismantling of this False Self, so that the True Self, which God made, knows and loves, can start to breathe.

Joan Chittister too, in her latest book, sets the inner contemplative process in the paradigm of Jacob wrestling with the mysterious stranger at Peniel. The struggle, she says, is "the process of the internal redefinition of the self".

*It is a slow but determining deconstruction of the self so that a real person can be reborn in us, beyond the expectations of others, even beyond our own previously unassailable assumptions...*²

Perhaps we can try that without the formidable words. At the heart of contemplative prayer and life is the decision to sit still, with empty hands and with no agenda except the deepest inner consent to God of which we are capable. One early item to be knocked off the agenda is impatience or disappointment that "nothing happens".³ Those who use a mantra, say their mantra gently, interiorly, from the start to the finish of the time of prayer. A "space" is cleared, where the pray-er is fully present and paying attention, as God is fully present and paying attention.

And in that "space" God meets our stillness, our silence, and our consent. God can continue the work of replacing the false with the true, fear with love.

In the Fourth Gospel, chapters 14 and 15, we meet Jesus's fathomless concept of mutual abiding, a rich and lovely description of the relationship between the believer and the risen Christ. It is from the abiding that "fruit" comes.

¹ See for instance Thomas Keating: *Invitation To Love - The Way Of Christian Contemplation* (New York, Continuum, 1998).

² Joan D Chittister: *Scarred By Struggle, Transformed By Hope* (Novalis, 2003), p.92.

³ I heard one Benedictine monk advise that "ecstasies and levitations are seriously discouraged".

ON BEING CONTEMPLATIVE - a retreat homily

by Warren Deason

"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." (Matthew 10:16-23, RSV).

The gospel today presents us with quite a menagerie: - sheep, wolves, serpents and doves. Jesus is really working the animal metaphors and similes.

He cautions us that the world is not a safe place and at one level is simply saying something like the now famous words that arose from the TV series *Hill St Blues* - the desk sergeant's parting words to the precinct street cops after role call and the morning briefing was always, "And hey, let's be careful out there!"

This world can be a threatening place to followers of Jesus and he calls us to be and live as sheep, serpents and doves - not a natural collection of animals to be all in one cage and in fact helping them to live with some degree of amiability can be difficult - yet its the qualities that he draws and invites us to display that are significant.

For me they suggest vulnerability, innocence and wisdom.

And I wondered if in fact these were something of the essential qualities of the contemplative way: vulnerability, innocence and wisdom.

Vulnerability

I sense the contemplative way has a good deal to do with an unguarded openness towards things. Of course vulnerability has the idea of being defenceless, unprotected and exposed, but also it seems to be about having a non-aggressive or non-defensive posture or attitude toward the world. A way that seeks to receive rather than impose. A way of praying and being which is essentially receptive, a waiting with risk. When you surround yourself with protective

behaviours or attitudes you are certainly less vulnerable but you are also likely to miss a good deal because the filter is set to a high level of protection - nothing much can slip through. To be contemplative does expose us, because we will need to be open to all situations as potentially speaking to us of God rather than carefully weeding out the more difficult or potentially threatening ones which might lead us to face hard questions.

Innocence

Why doves? Perhaps their whiteness suggests purity, which has always been a key component of innocence. The contemplative way calls us to a degree of naiveté - of a seemingly simple and disarming way of looking at things. The usual models are children - who at their best have this great capacity for wonder and freshness - "Let wonder have it's way in me", is a phrase from one of Ted Loder's prayers that expresses it well.

The problem of course can be the level of our cynicism - we are so used to being jaded, negative and indifferent - it's sometimes hard to shake a suspicious posture towards people and life in general. A wilderness retreat can help us recover a degree of that capacity to wonder, to be with the givenness of things - to let questions about meaning and relevance withdraw for a while. "To be at peace and simply be" (in the words of Shirley Murray's hymn).

It's that sort of innocence toward Jesus which I talked about in our opening retreat devotions: meeting Jesus again for the first time. We can allow ourselves space to meet Jesus, and all the other things we encounter on this retreat as though for the first time and perhaps they will have a new voice and there will be a fresh meeting.

Wisdom

Wise as serpents - maybe Jesus is suggesting a degree of animal cunning and worldly- wise-ness which at first sit a little uneasily with our innocence. Since the Genesis creation story the poor old serpent has been lumbered with an image of craftiness and cunning, shrewdness and deviousness. Perhaps Jesus is inviting at least a level of what we would call *street wisdom* - just making sure we are careful out there. But there is another way of wisdom, which I think sits a little more comfortably in the contemplative stream. It's the way of wisdom that Jesus himself seemed to practice. A way of wisdom that seemed to challenge conventional ways of looking at things. Jesus offered a new perspective, what he spoke of as the kingdom way of seeing.

Sometimes it was a way that turned accepted understanding on its head. This seems to be a natural element of the contemplative way - to be open to new ways of seeing - to let new possibilities, new options present themselves.

It's even been suggested that the wisdom way of Jesus came from his own contemplative way - his own mystical experiences.

"Jesus spoke differently because he had seen differently..." - Marcus Borg.

Perhaps it's that form of seeing that attracts the wolves. New ways of looking and seeing can be threatening to those who have a vested interest in the way things are, whether inside the church or out of it. Or sometimes parts of our own lives resent being unsettled and react strongly against any new way which might demand some upheaval.

So this menagerie of ways of being can be uncomfortable and unruly. Sheep, doves and serpents don't lie down comfortably together within us; they sometimes seem to be at odds with each other. Yet they can, within the loving grace and patience of God, work within us to help us develop that contemplative stance that I suspect each of us really and deeply seeks.

SPIRITUALITY AND JUSTICE

An Interview with Peter Murnane OP

Refresh

Peter, alongside your work as Catholic chaplain at Auckland University and a spiritual director you are engaged among other things in numerous social justice and peace issues in Aotearoa New Zealand and overseas. What brought you here?

Peter Murnane

I came here from Australia 12 years ago at a request from my Province to be part of the Dominican friars' community at St Benedicts, Auckland.

Refresh

So how widespread is your work in social justice and how does this engagement arise out of your spirituality?

PM

It's something that's been growing since I reached mid-life when various concerns came together more for me. It probably began in my family life. I come from a poor working class family that had suffered grave injustice in previous generations. My father - a young man during the Great Depression - had a keen sense of how Authorities can abuse their power, both in Government and Church.

Refresh

And when did this interest begin and why?

PM

As a young boy, about 9 or 10 years old, I can remember being struck most strongly by the parable of the Rich Man who built bigger barns and settled down to enjoy his wealth, but was called by God that night. That showed me that there are deeper realities than just acquiring material wealth or power and basing one's life on them.

Although I was quite "conservative" as a young man and priest, the Vietnam war made me think more deeply about world issues, and begin to protest.

In 1977 the Dominican Friars re-directed their efforts internationally towards "justice and peace", but this was simply returning to our roots: our founder St Dominic in the 13th century was renowned for his compassion for the poor.

Refresh

In the lead-up to the Iraq war you were distributing badges and letter stickers which said "I have family in Iraq". They startled many people into asking questions. Why do that and what impact did it have?

PM

We got the idea from a conference I attended in Manila. Some background will help: between 1998 and 2002 I shared with a Dominican Sister the wonderful privilege of travelling to many parts of Asia and the Pacific, visiting Dominican communities who are often involved in issues of poverty and human rights. In doing this work we saw many related issues that caught our attention. At the Manila Conference last November some Sisters from Iraq spoke about the difficulties people were facing there, so an Australian friar offered to produce and distribute these badges and stickers declaring: "I have family in Iraq".

Visiting many parts of Asia-Pacific led me to consider how deeply inter-connected the world is. Our spirituality has to include, in fact must be based in, justice and the desire for peace. Our spirituality has to take into account the fact that this is one world, in which we and all people are our sisters and brothers. Such a spirituality must begin with us contemplating the real world with all its intricate connections. The suffering we inevitably see will lead us to feel compassion. We will be led into dialogue with others and to form networks of solidarity with those who suffer.

Refresh

Now you took another step recently - when the USA went to war in Iraq - spilling your blood on the US Consul's office carpet here in Auckland. It was dramatic and brought as much criticism as affirmation. How do you cope with the pain of reactions to what you do?

PM

Crudely put, it helped that we received a lot more affirmations than criticism! In fact we didn't just spill our blood on the carpet, we made a sign of the cross on the carpet. This was lost on many, including church people. Again it was a borrowed idea as most of our ideas are. But it was a very powerful statement - my blood was mingled with their blood, the innocent people

who were dying in the war. We received an affirmation from a young Iraqi woman that brought tears to our eyes: she said: "Thank you for spilling your blood with ours".

Blood of course is a many-layered symbol right through Hebrew and Christian literature and the gesture was meant to be sacramental - many saw that point. And it was embarrassing for the US Government. And the shedding of blood still goes on in Iraq today - so it was a criticism, a very pointed criticism of what the US was doing.

How do I cope with criticism? Well I can ignore it for a great length of time. In an emergency I can remain calm but then the reaction comes later so that was a help in doing such an action. Handling the reaction when it does come? I do that through prayer and meditation. I have been much helped over the years by being taught how to meditate. And that leads on to another aspect of spirituality that I have coined; my own description of what happens in me.

A key word for me is the word "flow". Things flow into us and out of us, out from us. Just as happens in the environment; things flow. So also in us. And when the rejection comes I just let it flow away from me. I can let it flow to the foot of the Cross and put it down there. Sometimes when I forget to do that I wonder why I am clogged up, in pain!

Refresh

Thankyou. Now visiting Ahmed Zaoui, the Algerian "terrorist", in his solitary life in Pareoremo Prison went on for months with no public knowledge of it. What do you think these visits have achieved?

PM

Well, an awakening. We heard about his plight in a local Pax Christi group which received a report from Amnesty International. His courageous young lawyers began to look around and plead for help. We made some enquiries and Bishop Bob Leamy and I were able to visit Ahmed in Paremoremo. I have visited him a number of times, and we are now part of the group named *Friends of Ahmed Zaoui*. In fact last week I was down at a vigil at the Auckland Remand Prison where he has been moved to. The vigil was held to continue calling attention to his plight. Here is a key issue because the law that imprisons him is a dreadful law rushed through Parliament in 1999 to block Asian boat people who were said to be coming, but who never arrived! This law allows the Security Intelligence Service to hold him - or any person! - without telling him the charges against him or who his accusers are! And so we're doing this to help him as a person. But we need to reconsider the laws that turn away people every day at Auckland Airport who come seeking our help and compassion.

Some of them will go back to torture and death, as will Ahmed Zaoui if he is sent back to Algeria. I have learnt to know that raising public consciousness is a very good way of countering governments' arrogance in using an individual for "the good of the nation". If he is sent back to Algeria he will be a sacrificial victim - to satisfy the "war against terrorism".

Refresh

There's also the fact that he's Muslim and you're Christian, so there's something happening there too.

PM

Yes, it's a great privilege to be working with him. I've come to know a number of Muslims over the years from local mosques and I've made a point of visiting the mosque in Vermont St, Ponsonby, which is over the road from the Catholic church. We don't share prayer directly but have prayed in our own buildings at the same time and then come together. We've shared events for peace. There is a Christian-Muslim Committee which meets. I've had the privilege of giving a talk to them.

So Ahmed Zaoui was very distressed with his treatment in New Zealand when he himself has tried to be very ecumenical, studying and working with the two faiths in Algeria. As an Imam, he has conducted inter-faith weddings, and visited the Catholic Bishop there and worked with the Catholic San Egidio group from Rome, which works internationally for reconciliation.

I was able to tell him that from his solitary prison cell he has been achieving a great deal of reconciliation in our society, by raising awareness through the *Friends of Ahmed Zaoui* group which contains Muslims and Christians.

Refresh

Now you've had a long-standing support for the Community Gardens for inner city dwellers on Auckland City Council land. This has been a long struggle with bureaucracy which has finally stopped the gardening. What are the learnings from this for others engaged with bureaucracy?

PM

It was a permaculture garden, with many species of plants together. I became involved when our parish Justice, Peace and Development group - which eventually became part of the world-wide *Pax Christi* network - was starting the garden.

We wanted to try to beautify a run-down area; to teach about ecology and recycling; to inspire others and to enjoy gardening ourselves while giving people who are somewhat broken the chance to find themselves in gardening.

It was difficult to obtain permission. While some council members encouraged us and supported our efforts to turn a section of clay and grass into productive gardens, others were reluctant. Eventually we were permitted to use "their" assets. We learned how to present a good case, using a well-designed brochure. We won some acceptance with the City Council and even received some funding on occasion.

Ten years later, when the Council planned to create a "proper park" in the empty space around the garden, during the planning stages public meetings welcomed our presence in the new park. However opposition came from a couple of neighbours who tried many ways to end the project. They ignored the popular acceptance we enjoyed, and lobbied councillors. We also learned how to lobby and made some progress over a number of years.

So in the end wealthy Councillors who couldn't see the benefits of helping the poor, nor of a garden in the concrete city, blocked what we were doing. Quite a lot of misrepresentation was used. Even deceit; for example, we were told that the land was needed for the immediate upgrade of the whole area into parkland. But now, twelve months on nothing has been done with the area.

We were learning not to get angry or self-righteous with bureaucracy. Authority will often make a fiat, a statement and you can't do anything about that. You just have to flow around that, go another way! We learned that opposition is what brings the best publicity for our ideas! Sometimes perhaps, the destruction of dream can teach people more than if it continues.

Refresh

Peter, you also have a real interest in the genetic engineering debate that's at its height now. What caught your attention in that?

PM

Once again I'd like to bring all these interests together. They look like stamp collecting from one point of view but they are all deeply connected in the rights of people to live in the whole earth, in a beautiful environment which God made and which we all share in maintaining. Part of my ecological development, my blossoming if you like, was to realise the wholeness of the earth. When I began to realise what genetic engineering means ("genetic modification" is a gloss to make it sound less invasive!) I realised that this is a very intrusive thing to do. From reading and talking to biologists I learned that it violently alters the delicate DNA structure of living things by putting in the DNA of some other living things. It does not do this neatly or precisely, but in a random sort of way. They fire in the imported gene by combining it with a virus because by itself the gene would be rejected by the host. The gene is grafted in with a virus which has the power to mutate and could do all sorts of horrible things for it doesn't stay there inertly. There is danger in this far beyond the "mad cow" disease that began to alter and affect humans. There has been very little publicity, but many people have already died or been paralysed, by some GE products, particularly tryptophan. It doesn't end there, it could go on and on.

Groups of eminent scientists have joined up to oppose Genetic Engineering. Professors from Harvard and other places tell us of the dangers. Like many, I can accept using it experimentally - as it has been for producing insulin - in the laboratory; but it must be kept there where it can be controlled. It has shown in a few medical cases that it can be a good thing so long as it is carefully contained.

So my justice efforts are coming from a concern about the wholeness of life and the safety of people and the entire environment.

Refresh

So, just to bring all this together, where do you draw your spiritual resources from for this lifestyle?

PM

I have to remind myself, as every Christian does, to be connected to our roots, to God through Christ. I try to do this by daily contact with the Scriptures, especially the gospel, in private and public prayer. As I mentioned, I find that such contemplation leads to other important elements of spirituality, all fitting together: compassion for those who suffer - including our mother the earth! For we ought to contemplate God not just in "heaven", or even in the Scriptures, but also in God's suffering people.

And surely my spirituality comes into play when I try to work for the benefit of others, or in solidarity with others. I suppose it boils down to what Jesus said: that the way to eternal life follows the path of helping - as that Samaritan did - those who most need our care here and now; and today we can see, if we are even half awake, that the world is full of suffering people, many of whom suffer because of what we, the wealthy, are doing to them. After all, we are born to share, more justly than we are so far managing to do, this one world!

NAMING OUR CONTEXT: A Spirituality of Struggle and Hope in Aotearoa New Zealand

A review by Lois McMillan

In August this year - 2003 - just over 100 members of the Association of Christian Spiritual Directors in Aotearoa New Zealand met in Christchurch for their two yearly Conference and Training Event. This, the seventh such event, drew to Bishop Julius Hostel at Ilam, spiritual directors from Northland to Southland. The adjacent park-like grounds in early spring, the cloistered quadrangle with peace inducing water features, the dining hall and the Margaret Wood Lounge proved to be a fine venue. The event was surrounded by the prayerful preparations of a Christchurch team.

John Bluck, Bishop of Waiapu, was the first of our keynote speakers. Making reference to his book "**Long White and Cloudy**" John said his view had, since its writing become "Clearer". In his sharing of this "Clearer" view we were privileged. He spoke of a school of spirituality which is "incarnational, ecumenical, home-grown, the ground beneath our feet. Its concepts are harder to pin down and broader than those of the past. Proud passion shows forth from time to time, as in the film "Whale Rider" and in the achievements of the Silver Ferns and the Tall Blacks". He emphasised that "God is in every bit of the detail of our world; in the way the details connect; in, to use Jung's word, synchronicity. We need to read events symbolically as one decodes dreams. We are bearers of grace-filled reassurance and can foster the art of reading the details with a light heart and with expectancy."

In his second presentation John Bluck urged us to embrace physicality, to be open to ecstasy and the ways the luminal is experienced, to be aware of cross-cultural confusion, to see God in the ordinary, in the unprepossessing ways and in unlikely places." We need to "listen to the silences, have a determined thankfulness, reposition our heads and hearts and take God at face value. It's all right here," he concluded.

The second keynote speaker, Ann Gilroy, Dean of the Catholic Institute of Theology, titled her sessions "Fostering Spirituality in Aotearoa New Zealand". With rich visual images, poetry, music and an interactive approach Ann showed how we are shaped by the landscapes which are our context. They influence our inmost being. Our Land - these islands; the Air around us with its unpredictability and its predictability; we are Water's edge dwellers; our experience of Fire - its comfort and its unsettling. We live in a land of plenty and a land of excess. "Spirituality is about that which permeates us and integrates our lives personally and communally".

The next day Ann Gilroy used the phrase, "Over cups of tea and coffee the sacred becomes..." She spoke of living into

- Respect in abundance - of our land
- Inclusion in variety
- Participation in energy
- Fairness in fullness
- Integrity in beauty.

From her analysing of Ethical Feminist Critiques, Ann highlighted the need to transform attitudes towards shifting power and control. She gave some pointers to how we can move from awareness to practicing. In conclusion, she spoke of Gospel Perspectives. Firstly the virtue of nourishing - the symbolism of a cup of tea. Secondly using more inclusive and feminine ways of recovering the divine and lastly the need to extend private belief into community action, of shifting the centre from personal absorption to community well being.

Further equipping and stretching occurred during workshop sessions. John O'Connor and Pamela Warnes led, "Retreats in Everyday Life". The two sessions focussed on the Christian tradition of these retreats, considered essential characteristics and investigated the possibilities for providing easily accessible retreats. Kathleen Rushton's workshop was titled "Biblical Spirituality - Reading the Texts of our Lives". Awareness of the interface of history (story) and theology with spirituality is ... a key task of spiritual direction. The subject "Shame in Spiritual Formation", was addressed by John Greenslade, who asked what is good news in the face of guilt and failure. Andrew Dunn led a workshop exploring the origins and causes of Spiritual Abuse, "Holy Hell!", recognition of its symptoms and how a creative and healing response can be made. "Inspiration and Resources for Continuing Growth and Development", led by Andrew Pritchard, set out to address the subject using creative and contemplative resources.

Evening sessions could have been an anticlimax after days spent in intense concentration and interaction. On the contrary, architect/potter John Brokenshire, quilt maker Sue Spiegel and hymn writer Colin Gibson inspired and refreshed. Many were awed by the transparency with which John and Sue spoke of their lives and the way their spirituality forms and is evident in their pottery and quilts respectively. Colin spoke of his process and content in the writing of hymns - words and music - with depth and wit. These were evening of rich blessing by three bearers of hope.

And there was struggle. Those members who live and work in isolation expressed their need for more interaction and support. Willingness by many to engage with difficulty became apparent as the days went by. Especially in the forum of the Annual Meeting many sought to speak their truth in love. How do Christians make Eucharist together? How do we express oneness in Christ in the face of differing faith traditions? I believe there must be a way through this dilemma. This body of people continues to make possible valued connection and conversation.

The desire expressed at the 2001 gathering to further explore spirituality in our own context proved to be well grounded. Through gathered prayer, keynote addresses, creativity as expression of spirit being witnessed, workshops and yes, even the Annual Meeting, we focussed on naming our context, understanding and honouring its spirit. An overheard comment echoed my own opinion that this was "the best ever". As a dweller of Te Waipounamu I may be a little biased !

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION RESEARCH PAPER: MISSION AND THE ART OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

by Simon Brown

This essay is a discussion starter, I don't claim to have fresh theological or academic insight nor do I claim to have definitive answers to the issues raised here. I am merely a student in the art of spiritual direction who believes that Christian spiritual direction has a place among the many seekers who, as yet, do not know Christ or His church, but are drawn none-the-less to God

through inexplicable spiritual experiences such as dreams, tragedy or the presence of something of the other world.

I will look at Barry and Connolly's definition of spiritual direction, and with the aid of statistical data from the UK, America and anecdotal evidence from my own practise of spiritual direction outside the framework of the church, I will argue for a broadening of its definition. First—the definition of spiritual direction as presented by Barry and Connolly.

*We define Christian spiritual direction, then, as help given by one Christian to another which enables that person to pay attention to God's personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of that relationship.*¹

...*help given by one Christian to another*. We need to begin by exploring their terminology. Who is the another? Barry and Connolly suggest that the spiritual director is most interested in what happens when a person consciously puts him/herself in the presence of God². A simple deduction makes it clear that the *another*, is a fellow Christian. Who else would purposely put themselves in the presence of God? The ministry of Christian spiritual direction, as Barry and Connolly intend it, is one that is carried out in the church, by church people for church people. While not denying the need for excellent spiritual direction amongst Christians, this essay will argue that the mission field is wide open for Christian spiritual direction for people outside of the Church as well.

Is there a need for spiritual direction outside the Church?

In the UK 1987 an Oxford University survey of 985 randomly selected people stated that 48% of the population answered yes to this question,

“Have you ever been aware of, or influenced by, a presence or power, (whether you call it God or not) which is different from your everyday self?”

The survey was repeated in 2000 with the staggering 76% answering in the affirmative³. Yet only 6–8% of the population were regular church goers. People from all walks of life are having, or have had, spiritual experiences, and a huge percentage of those are not regular church goers. In fact many regular church goers have never had a spiritual experience. An American study in 1998 conducted by the Barna Christian Research Group surveyed the perceived activity of God amongst US Christians. This survey showed that 33% say that they have never experienced God's presence at any time during their lives⁴. If Christian spiritual direction is about working with religious experience, as Barry and Connolly teach⁵, then we need to realise that most religious experiences are happening outside the Church. In first century Palestine Peter learnt this lesson in the house of the Roman centurion Cornelius as recorded in Acts chapter 10. God set it all up so that Peter would do the unacceptable for a Jew and GO to a Gentile's house. Then God did the unthinkable, God went to the Gentile's house, and the people received the Spirit and were baptised into Christ. As in the first century Palestine, God is alive and well in the highways and byways of New Zealand and the secular west.

We (New Zealanders and the Western Church generally,) live in the midst of a period of enthusiasm for spirituality and spiritual direction.⁶ There are growing numbers of people, many with decades of Christian experience, being drawn deeper into the things of God. Barry and Connolly, Guenther, May, and Edwards are but a few modern practitioners/writers who have responded to the cry for developing effective spiritual direction training resources⁷. And so today we see spiritual directors from all major Christian denominations being trained to meet the influx of inquirers. But what is the Church doing to respond to the needs of millions of non-church people who are restless because they have experienced something of the 'Mysterious Other'⁸ we call God. These people, like the mature Christian, find themselves awakened and drawn into this unknown yet 'seductive' spiritual journey seeking understanding and direction. These people are travellers—pilgrims in search of truth. Some pilgrims are secure in communities of faith we call church, most are not and many are lost or alone, angry and hurt or dazed and confused receiving guidance from palm readers, fortune tellers and the like. According to Paul

Hawker 40 per cent of non-fiction book sales in Australia are in the "spirituality self-help area"⁹. People are desperate for effective spiritual direction.

Clearly Barry and Connolly's *another* must be extended to include those outside the church whom God is stirring and drawing. "We desperately need," says Hawker, "trustworthy spiritual guides, yet we look elsewhere because the trustworthy guides aren't putting their hands up. How do you find a trustworthy Christian guide in our culture?"¹⁰ he asks.

The foundational theological assumption of this essay is that God is at work in the whole world drawing people into relationship with God from all cultures, religions, ages and genders. [God is more interested in our daily conversion to Christ-likeness than our Christian credentials, labels or statements. When I say conversion I do not refer to a one-off event such as baptism or a public proclamation of faith, but a life long conversion which, for many, begins years before they are ready to make any statement of faith. As long as there is a legitimate search for spiritual truth it doesn't matter whether a person is an eighty year old saint, or a crystal toting hippie, if God's calling them closer then spiritual directors need to be in place to assist with direction. A Christian mid-wife works equally professionally and compassionately with all women not just those in the Church.

The task of the spiritual director is to be positioned, like a campfire in the wilderness, welcoming sojourners from all corners of life to stop, relax and yarn for a while. A place where tired bodies and spirits are warmed by the fire and refreshed. A friendly atmosphere where stories of the road are shared amongst travellers. The job of the spiritual director is to keep the fire burning¹¹ because one never knows when a traveller will come to sit. It doesn't matter where on the journey the traveller has been exploring, or how long they have been walking, if they come in peace to sit on a log by the campfire, they are welcome.

Some examples will help to put the discussion in context. All names are fictitious but the people behind the names were non-Christian pilgrims who have sat at my fire and enriched my life.

Jenny was in third form when I met her. I was the college chaplain at the time. She was a bright kid adept at rubbing adults/teachers up the wrong way. Witchcraft was her passion but she was interested in all religions and asked for some Christian material to read. I gave her a New Testament and showed her the stories of Jesus. Over the ensuing months Jenny became a regular visitor to my den. Jenny's interest in Jesus genuinely increased with every discussion. Ironically, her practise in witchcraft increased also. She joined the local youth group while still clinging to her 'craft' but eventually strayed from the Christian scene altogether. I met her some years later and discovered she had become a house captain at her school, a sport's woman of national acclaim, was no longer practising witchcraft and had dedicated her life to Christ and fellowshiping in a local church. Jenny came to direction with no understanding of the process of spiritual direction, scant understanding of the Christian story but keen to talk about her spiritual journey.

Jenny gives us a new starting point for spiritual direction. Thomas Keating speaks of 'levels of inner resurrection.' This is his term for stages of faith, the first stage beginning at conversion¹². Jenny demonstrates a 'pre-conversion' stage of faith and perhaps a new starting point for spiritual direction. Jenny qualifies for spiritual direction, not on the basis of her conversion, but on the basis that she's a traveller and she stopped at my fire.

Jed was in the fifth form when he knocked on my door. After brief introductions Jed waded into his story. He had no Christian understanding but was desperate to talk to someone about a disturbing dream he'd had. The outcome of that initial discussion was that Jed became interested in Jesus and wanted to become a Christian. He became a regular member of the local youth group and twelve months later went through the waters of baptism. Unlike Jenny, Jed was unaware of any interest in spiritual things prior to the dream although he had noticed, with some sense of desire, the way the Christian kids treated one another at school.

His teenage world was broken into by a seductive mission God which resulted in him being catapulted on to the journey of spiritual discovery. God was actively involved in Jed's life prior to him coming to me for understanding and his eventual baptism. Jed's starting point for direction was pre-conversion and Christian direction helped make sense of his uncertainties. Barry and Connolly rightly say, "The only prerequisite for engaging in the type of direction we describe is that the person being directed have effective experiences of God which he notices and which he can talk about with his director."¹³ I want to argue that this applies to pilgrims outside the church structure like Jenny and Jed who have had experiences of God but do not have the language to discuss it in Christian terms like God and Jesus. They prefer language like "Something," or "weird," etc. but this does not mean that their experience is any less important or significant.

Another example:

Jack was a hard man. He ran a small business and by his own admission had little time for fatherly responsibilities. Other than his work, rugby was his passion and he loved nothing more than to sit with mates, over a 'few' beers, and watch his favourite sport. I first met Jack when their only child died suddenly and they called me to their home. As a school chaplain I had spent some time with this child and we had become good friends. Jack had no previous Christian experience though his wife had been involved in a church when she was a girl. Jack was beside himself with grief and guilt. "Tell me she's gone to heaven," he pleaded of me through tear filled eyes. I became a regular visitor to the family home over the next week or so and Jack wanted to know more and more about heaven, about God, about where his baby was. "Will she be crippled in heaven like she was on earth?" "Will she hate me?" "How can I get to where she is?" Jack's questions led him to the church and library. He swiftly became a regular worshipper at the local church and hungrily read a small library of spiritual books. Several years on Jack and his wife have developed a personal relationship with God and are now regular members of a local church community.

Like Jed, Jack's world was broken into. There was an explosion in his life and before the dust began to settle Jack was looking for a fire to sit at. There was no question, or thought, of conversion to Christ or commitment to the church. Jack was locked in a spiritual kaleidoscope not knowing which way was up. Jack had no language to make sense of this new world which had engulfed him. Jack, in his pre-conversion state, needed effective Christian spiritual direction.

Jane is a social worker; estranged from her husband she lives with her three kids and a lover. Jane and I became friends several years ago. She had enjoyed a childhood infatuation with God but was currently exploring 'New Age' spirituality. We often discussed spirituality from a variety of angles and I soon discovered that her early adult experience of church was offensive to her and Christian spirituality had therefore become increasingly irrelevant. In our most recent discussion Jane confided that she had begun praying to her childhood God spending regular time in meditation with God. As we spoke of God, his love and grace she wept. "How is it," she asked, "that you can have this love relationship with God and I cannot? I have longed for this kind of relationship all my life but it has eluded me. Is it just luck?"¹⁴

Jane's journey is as long as my own. Though our paths had gone in different directions they did come together eventually. Jane brought a wonderful richness to my campfire sharing precious spiritual jewels from far off lands. I told her stories from home.

For a spiritual director to be effective outside the church s/he needs to have a sound understanding of the Christian faith traditions and spiritual direction skills. S/he must also be familiar with the language and practises of the secular culture in which the directee lives and not be afraid to engage such cultures.

When a teenager says, "it was way out there man," the director needs to inquire of things 'out there' while resisting the temptation of labelling those things with Christian terms. In his book "Soul Survivor"¹⁵, Paul Hawker refers to God as 'The Source'. In so doing he's making his spiritual discoveries accessible to people who are either antagonistic toward Christianity or have no concept of God. In this way Hawker is hinting at the way forward for spiritual direction outside the church.

The form in which the direction takes will develop spontaneously as the relationship grows more intimate. As we have seen with the stories of Jenny, Jed, Jack and Jane, the pilgrims found a safe anchoring place for their stories. Over a long period of time each one found security in the Christian story and eventually their stories became a story of God and His work in their lives. As the 'director/directee' relationship (friendship) emerges so does a healthy understanding of the Christian story develop. The pilgrim may eventually take deliberate steps towards holiness in Christ requiring more 'orthodox' direction where the Bible and church traditions become authoritative. But in the early stages of the relationship s/he is a pilgrim seeking a place to rest, to tell their story and be accepted and refreshed.

So what does spiritual direction look like in pluralistic New Zealand 2002?

- **Client driven.**

Direction is sought by the pilgrim. It is no secret that un-churched citizens no longer knock fervently on the church door seeking interpretation of their dreams or trauma. But in their search for truth they might phone a spiritualist or a palm reader advertised in the media. If the director is to be effective in secular western society then she must be known and available in that society. This would generally be accomplished by anchoring oneself in the affairs of the community serving where ever possible and rubbing shoulders with neighbours over a sustained period of time. The Spirit of our Mission God, who is working in the lives of our neighbours, will eventually seek out the Spirit within the director. Conversations will spark and direction begins albeit very tenuous and unstructured at the beginning. The director may well be a servant of the local community and considered to be a friend of the many.

- **Spiritual direction will be available to all comers regardless of age and cultural or religious history.**

The truth is, Christian spiritual directors have no idea who God is drawing out of darkness into the light. If we are not careful we can miss the signs of God's grace in the lives of teenage witches, New Age neighbours or drunken rugby fans. People with crystals in their windows or heroin in their veins are not exempt from the grace of God. Their experience of the 'Mysterious Other' is valid and their stories are valuable.

- **Devoid of Christian jargon.**

The experience of Pentecost in chapter two of the book of Acts models for us the need to speak to people in the language they understand. Language is a powerful tool to both unite and divide. People who understand the language feel a strong sense of connectedness and security, conversely people who do not understand the language used quickly become isolated and disconnected. This does not mean a spiritual director needs to compromise his own standards of vocabulary to join with the pilgrim in the exercise of gutter language for example or learn all the local jargon. What I am saying is that the director must restrict his/her language to vocabulary common to both. For example, the word conscience, although it does not tell the whole story, it is far more accessible in the Western culture than 'hearing the voice of God' and therefore makes a good starting point when a directee is trying to hear God. The words guilt or shame, mature Christians know, is humankind's response to sin, it's what Adam and Eve experienced after eating the forbidden fruit. Guilt is not sin but guilt is a universal feeling and therefore it may be better to talk about guilt when broaching the subject of sin. The concept of sin is foreign for non-Christian people who believe they live a good life. Spiritual direction is not about word definition it's about experience and fellowship which leads the directee to God. Orthodox Christian language must be restricted to situations

where it is comfortably understood by both. A spiritual director in the secular context will necessarily be involved in deconstructing religious language and reconstructing it in mutually accessible language.

- **The directee's experience and not the Church tradition or Scriptures, is authoritative.**
When directing mature Christians a director can use the Bible with authority because it is the sacred writings accepted by the directee. When working with people in a secular context one must start with what the directee considers authoritative. For example they might have a history of Judaism or Buddhism. Or they might have their world view contained in the writings of Wicca or Gandhi. Some people have no known spiritual connection to any group, tradition or philosophy. For all these people the Bible is something you swear an oath on in court, or something to be found in the top drawer of a motel suite, but very little more. Whatever the Bible is to these people it is not authoritative. This does not mean there is no place for the Bible in Christian spiritual direction in secular society. To the contrary, the stories of Jesus often bring fresh revelation to struggling pilgrims. People in this context love the person of Jesus they meet in the Gospels as long as He is presented in a non-structured open ended way. The Scriptures are often life-giving to pilgrims outside the church and can be a real source of inspiration to all.

- **God is in it.**

The Spirit of Christ is not confined to the stony walls of church buildings in this age, any more than He was in first century Palestine. When Jesus was brought to the temple on the eighth day the prophet Simeon was recorded by Luke as saying,
"...my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light to the Gentiles and for the glory of your people Israel." Lk 1:30ff

Let's not make the mistake the first century Jews made by rejecting all other forms of spirituality. God is active in the 'Gentile' world. It is His intention to redeem it. He invites us, as spiritual directors, to participate in that redemptive process.

- **Verbal prayer in this context is often profound.**

Contrary to popular opinion it's not often that the offer of prayer is rejected when directing a person like Jenny, Jack, Jed or Jane. In fact it is quite likely that the pilgrim will become deeply affected by verbal prayer prayed on their behalf. For people who have never had someone pray for them before the experience can be truly profound and healing. The director would be wise to invest some time before praying into explaining what is about to happen and what the directee needs to do while the prayer is in progress. The pray-er would also be wise to keep the prayer short, free of jargon and specific to the needs of the pilgrim. Touch during prayer can be powerful but needs to be talked through with the directee before starting the prayer. Many times a person will experience the presence of God in prayer, when this happens the director has something authoritative to work with because the experience is unquestionably true and lasting.

- **Stories are shared.**

All stories are equally valid and acceptable. Christianity and the occult sit side by side in spiritual direction. In the story of Jenny we see the co-existence of two very different spiritual world-views. Jenny discovered the incompatibility of witchcraft and Christianity in her own time. Directors must reign in their instincts to correct another person's world-view. Jesus went into the house of Simon the leper not to condemn or correct him but to listen and befriend. Another person's world view, story or religion may seem scary to us, even leprous at times, but with Christ in us the leper's story can do us no harm. We can be free to listen and love.

- **There are few, if any absolutes.**

As post-modernism continues to emerge in western civilisation one characteristic has become evident. According to George Barna 81% of, what he calls 'Generation X' (those born between

1964 and 1985) do not believe in absolute or universal truth¹⁶. In a post-modern society Gene Veith Jr records four activities this emerging culture consider to be major sins:

Dogmatism,
Intolerance,
Being judgmental,
Trying to force your values onto someone else.¹⁷

The problem post-modernists have with the Gospel is the same problem the first century Romans had with it; it claims to have the only truth. This is a major stumbling block to Christian spiritual direction outside the church. The director must come, not from the position of dogmatic truth, but from a position of fellowship, acceptance and love. The truth will be discovered as time and love work together to present truth organically. This of course requires a certain degree of patience and trust.

In this essay I have argued for a broadening of Barry and Connolly's definition of spiritual direction to include all people regardless of age, culture or religion. I have posited a new beginning point for spiritual direction which is, wherever God is doing something in a person's life regardless of age, culture or religion. I have presented four case studies where spiritual direction took place outside the confines of the church which lead five previously non-Christian people into a personal revelation of, and relationship with, Christ.

I now conclude this essay with the question, "Is there a place for mission in the art of spiritual direction?" If the answer is yes then a second question must follow. "What training component is being developed in New Zealand for this growing edge of God's mission?"

¹ Barry and Connolly *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, pg 8.

² Ibid Pg 8.

³ A dramatic increase due to the changed social permission to admit to such awareness. Paul Hawker's paper *Spiritual Experience in the General Population* presented in Wellington, July 2002.

⁴ Paul Hawker's paper *Spiritual Experience in the General Population* presented in Wellington, July 2002.

⁵ Barry and Connolly *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* pg 8.

⁶ ibid Preface vii.

⁷ Barry and Connolly *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, Margaret Guenther *Holy Listening*, Gerald May *Care of Mind Care of Spirit*, Tilden Edwards *Spiritual Friend*.

⁸ Appears often in the writings of Karl Rahner.

⁹ Melanie Pitcher, *ALIVE Magazine* March 1999.

¹⁰ ibid.

¹¹ Keep the fire burning refers to the spiritual fires of the director, kept burning through study, prayer, personal direction and supervision.

¹² Thomas Keating *Intimacy with God*.

¹³ ibid preface xi

¹⁴ Spiritual direction is not an evangelistic tool to be abused by zealots. Directees are not targets, they are not viewed as un-saved. They are spiritual wanderers like anybody else. In the cases of Jenny, Jed, and Jane (Jack initiated most of the meetings however I did pop in from time to time as a neighbour does) the initiative was always with them. They set the agenda for the discussions. Sometimes the discussions were 6mths apart. I, as the director was available, but in no instance did I initiate any of the meetings or spiritual exchanges that ensued. Organised spirituality is viewed with suspicion outside the church and the spiritual director must be patient in this context.

¹⁵ Paul Hawker *Soul Survivor A spiritual quest through 40 days in the wilderness*.

¹⁶ Taken from Russell Brown's article, "What's all this about Generation X". Planet Mag. Ed 14, pg33.

¹⁷ Veith "Post-Modern Times" A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture".
Crossway Books, Illinois. 1994

BOOK REVIEWS

The Theology of Paul the Apostle

James D.G. Dunn. Eerdmans Publishing. 1998. pp737. \$110.00

Reviewed by John McKinlay

This is a magnificent book, a book that has changed my life! I want everybody to read it!

When I retired from the ministry five years ago, I determined that whatever else I did, I would remain a student. One of my felt needs was that I had never really mastered the letter to the Romans. Nor did I have a sufficient grasp on the theology of Paul. In April this year, my attention was drawn to this book by James Dunn (published five years ago!). It turned out to be exactly what I needed.

Dunn's clarity means that he is a delight to read. And the orderly and systematic way the book is set out is very helpful. But the very best thing about it is that Dunn is an immensely experienced and expert exegete.

A word of caution. This is a scholarly book and demands of readers like me plenty of time, determination and concentration. I got through it by small helpings several times a day (it has been much easier the second time through!). I am bound to say that to get the best out of this great work does presuppose some biblical theological training. In his writing, Dunn follows the order of Romans itself. But all the way through the other Pauline letters are fully involved and consulted!

The first great benefit from this book is getting an overview of the whole of Paul's life and thinking. It's like having a wonderful map which shows how all the various parts fit together. Graham Stanton says of this book that there is no comparable book in English. Once read it becomes a marvellous reference book, commentary and general Pauline resource. My copy will be within arms length for the rest of my life!

The second great benefit is that it is a book of real depth. It contains the equivalent of in-depth articles on every aspect of Paul's theology. Let me give just one example. More than 100 pages are devoted to The Beginning of Salvation, in my language, how people become Christians. In this section the starting point and centre is justification by faith. But Dunn brings into close association with justification by faith two further themes: Participation in Christ (the theme of knowing Christ in personal communion: being "in Christ"), and the gift of the Spirit (experiencing God's power). In Dunn's words "justified with God, bonded with Christ, gifted with Spirit". I find this to be an extremely powerful and liberating insight.

That is just one example. There is much much more.

This is a faith affirming, faith enhancing book.

He Kupu Whakawairua

Spirituality in Aotearoa New Zealand: Catholic Voices

Eds: Helen Bergin and Susan Smith

Accent Publications, Auckland 2002 \$35.00

Reviewed by Sheila Pritchard

There are fifteen voices in this book of essays. Fifteen contemporary NZ Catholics reveal their particular slant on spirituality. Their starting points include reflections on the Holy Spirit,

wisdom literature, justice, history, the place of imagination and the place of Catholic schools. Their personal stories include the perspectives of Maori women and men, Pakeha lay men and women, religious sisters, priests and youth workers. This provides a great range of voices from which to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

Like any book of essays some chapters will appeal more than others to each reader. I found myself fascinated to read side by side chapters from the perspective of Maori women, Pakeha lay women and religious sisters; three groups of women with very different experiences of spirituality. My appetite was whetted to learn more about the depths of Maori spirituality. The shallowness of my general knowledge was revealed!

The impact of Vatican 2 was a thread that ran through many of the stories. Even though the Council took place in the 1960's the ripples of that defining moment in Catholic history continue to have significant influence. It has affected clergy, lay people and religious orders. It has changed the way Eucharist is celebrated and how the ordinary parishoner defines what "being a Catholic" means. As a Protestant reader I gained a deeper understanding of just how big a turning point it was.

Reading this book would no doubt be a different experience for a Catholic. I read it as a warmly interested "outsider". I'd like to know how it felt to an "insider"! The introduction says that the book "is a fruit of faculty research from members of the Catholic Institute of Theology in Auckland." I suspect that that influenced the parameters of which voices would be heard. At the end of the book are four responses from people of other denominations. I thoroughly enjoyed the book and found it enlightening, though I tend to agree with one of the respondents who said it didn't go far enough in exploring the more risky growing edges of post-modern, post-Church spirituality. However, the many voices that were heard were well worth listening to.

Reel Spirituality

Theology and film in dialogue

Robert K. Johnston. Baker Academic. 2000. pp 236 US\$ 16.99

Reviewed by Andrew Dunn

Robert Johnston is professor of Theology and Culture at Fuller theological Seminary and in this easily read book he does two significant things that caught my eye. He challenges his readers to get to grips with their cultures and the activity of doing theology *within* them, and he urges a serious engagement with movies as a way of doing that. "Everything you need to know about life is in the movies" (a statement by the character Travis in the movie *Grand Canyon*) catches the eye on the dedication page.

There's no doubting the power of film today. For one thing the movie theatre and the TV screen have become the places where people gather to reflect on life and to be entertained. For another, films follow the thought patterns and the political, moral and life issues of the day as purposefully, and in a more readily available form, than any other medium. Churches often feel they have to compete with these places of thought and reflection - Johnston argues that to see films as antagonists rather than as a powerful way of engaging with culture and modern thought and morality, limits our involvement in one of the most influential forces today that gives shape to people's lives and our understanding of what's going on.

Johnston helps us look at films with fresh eyes and critical judgment, and to see them from a theological perspective. He gives many examples of this as he reviews some of the great films of the last two decades or so. He encourages us to be film critics and to respond to movies theologically, i.e. to find gospel ideas, religious experiences and even the sacramental where films become means of grace to our generation.

He offers many ways of reflecting on movies, well illustrated by diagrams and shots from a wide range of movies. A very significant book for the movie buff, and an excellent starter for the doubters.

SGM NEWS

by Andrew Pritchard (Covenor of Spiritual Growth Ministries)

As another year draws to a close I wonder how many of us review how the year has gone for us and use such a review in planning towards the future?

One part of our September Workgroup meeting focused around such issues, though with a more extended focus than just one year. Over the years of SGM's history there has been a consistent, faithful adherence to a central call - promoting contemplative spirituality in Aotearoa/New Zealand and making available resources for spiritual growth. It is no surprise though that the way in which that central call is lived out changes over time. This is how it should be as needs change. Over early years contemplative spirituality was not well known in NZ and resources were scarce. During this period a primary role for SGM was running retreats and workshops on prayer and aids to spiritual growth. Enthusiastic reports from people who attended such events fuelled demand and requests to make events more uniformly available throughout the country lead to growth that was limited by the number of people equipped and available for retreat teams and to facilitate other events. People returned from the events that were run hungry for on-going accompaniment in their spiritual growth. So SGM's Formation Programme for Spiritual Director's was born. This, together with other overseas and local programmes, has seen a steady growth in the number of Spiritual Directors and their geographical spread throughout the country. Many of these directors are now running retreats, quiet days and workshops in their local areas and there is now good availability of such events through most areas of the country. Less and less is it necessary for SGM to organise and provide such events on a national basis. You will see this reflected in our 2004 Programme, where now the vast majority of retreats are in the regional part of the programme, organised and run by directors in their local areas. However our central call, promoting contemplative spirituality in Aotearoa/New Zealand and making available resources for spiritual growth, continues to be strong. The formation, support and encouragement of spiritual directors is one aspect of this. Workshops in the Art of Supervising Spiritual Directors are one example, discussion pages on our web site allowing interaction and sharing of information and resources is another. Alongside this we see a significant contribution in communication and publicity: using our network and the Programme to promote opportunities for contemplative spiritual growth throughout the country; continuing to expand the web site with pages dedicated for the use of participants on the Formation Programme, content specifically aimed at on-going development of Spiritual Directors as well as content of interest to anyone pursuing a contemplative spirituality; this journal, Refresh, which encourages and nurtures people so well in their journey with God.

A Minute of Appreciation from our September Workgroup meeting:

Workgroup accepts Margaret Dunn's resignation from the Workgroup with regret. We acknowledge with gratitude the great contribution that Margaret has made to SGM in general and to Workgroup in particular, over almost 20 years. Her wisdom and insight have played a large part in making SGM what it is today and will be sorely missed. We are grateful that Margaret and Andrew's hospitality enables Workgroup to continue to meet at Oasis and to use them in less formal ways.

Margaret has made an enormous contribution to Workgroup, in leading events, contributing to the Formation Programme and in so many unseen ways. We are grateful to God for her and wish her well, hopefully in a more relaxed and mellow phase of life and ministry.

The vacancy created on Workgroup will be ably filled by Jane Wilkinson from Tauranga. Jane brings experience from church ministry and a vitality and passion for spiritual growth. As a more recent participant in the Formation Programme and a mother with young children she will have

much to offer as we focus on the needs of younger adults and look for ways that SGM might support their spiritual growth.

Finally, two ways in which you may be able to support this ministry:

- contributing to our Friends of SGM Appeal
- purchasing a copy of "*Uncharted Tracks*", for yourself, a friend or your church library.

BOOKS

David Adam

Walking the Edges - Living in the Presence of God

SPCK 2003. \$27.95. Meditations on the lives of Celtic saints.

Joan Chittister

Heart of Flesh - a Feminist Spirituality for Women and Men

Eerdmans 1998. pp 187

Bruce Demarest

Soulguide - Following Jesus as Spiritual Director

Navpress 2003. pp 203. \$33.95

Phil Dyer

The Four Paths - A Pilgrim's Guide to the Universe

Taewera Press, NZ. 2003. pp 198. \$20.00.

A story exploring creation spirituality. Available from Wangapeka Study and Retreat Centre, RD2., Wakefield, Nelson.

Laurence Freeman

A Pearl of Great Price. Sharing the gift of meditation by starting a group.

World Community for Christian Meditation. Media Media 2002. pp 60.

Available from WCCM (NZ), P.O. Box 15402 Tauranga. \$8.00

Peter Murnane O.P.

Don't Release Genetic Engineering!

A Christian Response on why we must not allow genetically engineered life-forms in our environment and food. A 16 page booklet available from the author at 1 Benedict St, Auckland.

pmopnz@yahoo.com.au 2003

P. Morris, H. Ricketts, M. Grimshaw

Spirit in a Strange Land

- NZ Spiritual verse. 2003 Montana Book Awards. PP 200. \$39.95.

W. Paul Jones

The Art of spiritual Direction

Giving and receiving Spiritual Guidance.

Upper Room. 2002. pp 296. US \$17.00

Anna Johnstone

The God Walk. A collection of poems

Published by Johnstone2 Photography. 2003.

80pp. \$22.50. A beautiful collection of meditations and photos with a foreword by Eddie Askew.

Available from Anna at 2/143a Manuka Rd, Glenfield. 1310. Phone 09 444-9409. Email:

enquiries@johnstone2.co.nz

Sue Pickering

Pools of Provision

Resources for quiet days and days of reflection.

2003 pp 100. \$20.00 available from Sue, 83 Vivian St, New Plymouth, NZ.

John Tyson (editor)

Invitation To Christian Spirituality

An ecumenical anthology.

Oxford University Press. 1999 Pp 474

Jane E. Vennard

Embracing the World - Praying for Justice and Peace.

Jossey-Bass, San Francisco. 2003. pp145 US \$18.95

CONTRIBUTORS

John Bluck is Anglican Bishop of Waiapu Diocese and lives in Napier.

Simon Brown is pastor of Glenbrook Community Church, trains school chaplains and is developing a six acre block near Waiuku , Franklin.

Warren Deason is pastor at Albany Presbyterian Church, North Shore City.

Andrew Dunn lives at *Oasis Retreat and Study Centre*, Albany and works as a spiritual director and supervisor.

Ann Gilroy is a lecturer in the School of Theology in The University of Auckland and is Dean of the Catholic Institute of Theology.

Anthea Harper is a psychotherapist who lives at *The Light House*, Torbay, on Auckland's North Shore.

Anna Johnstone lives in Glenfield, North Shore, and works in the family photography business.

John McKinlay lives at Birkenhead, North Shore, where he is retired after a lifetime of ministry in Indonesia, Singapore and New Zealand.

Lois McMillan comes from Herbert, North Otago, where she lives on a farm and is a spiritual director and retreat leader.

Ross Miller is retired from ministry and lives in Onehunga. He leads a contemplation group at St Luke's Church, Remuera.

Peter Murnane is Catholic chaplain at Auckland University and a member of the Dominican community at St Benedicts in central Auckland.

Jo O'Hara, a Christchurch artist and sculptor, has drawn the artwork in this issue.

Sue Pickering is the SGM Co-Ordinator of Spiritual Direction Formation and lives in New Plymouth. She is a spiritual director, supervisor and Anglican priest.

Andrew Pritchard lives in community at Paraparaumu. He teaches spirituality, convenes the SGM Workgroup and, with Lyn his wife, grows cala lilies.

Sheila Pritchard is a spiritual director and writer and lives at *The Light House*, Torbay, North Shore.

Barbara Sampson lives at Trentham where she works as a spiritual director and writes the Salvation Army devotional guide *Words of Life*.

Maggie Smith lives at Hororata where she and her husband are developing a reflective garden in the wetlands of their farm. She is a spiritual director and Anglican priest.

FOR REFLECTION

*Now the Lord is the Spirit,
and where the Spirit of the Lord is,
there is freedom.
And all of us with unveiled faces,
seeing the glory of the Lord
as though reflected in a mirror,
are being transformed into the same image
from one degree of glory to another;
for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.*

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 NRSV 1989

* * * * *

*Spirituality is never a once-and-for-all achievement.
Rather, it is a process of ongoing growth,
change and response to new challenges.
Pable.*

* * * * *

A Miktam of David

*The Lord is my chosen portion
and my cup;
you hold my lot.*

*The boundary lines have fallen
for me in pleasant places;
I have a goodly heritage.*

*I bless the Lord who gives
me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.
I keep the Lord always
before me;
because he is at my
right hand,
I shall not be moved.*

*Therefore my heart is glad,
and my soul rejoices;
my body also rests secure.
For you do not give me
up to Sheol,*

*or let your faithful one
see the Pit.*

*Show me the path of life.
In your presence there is fullness of joy;
in your right hand
are pleasures forevermore.*

Psalm 16: 5-11

* * * * *

Freedom
Freedom from fear
From shadowy nothingness
which clouds the sunshine
of my soul
sending shivers
through the summer of my life

Freedom
to push open stiffened windows
cobwebbed with tension and distrust
To let in sweetness
freshness
perfumes of truth
and to deeply breathe

Anna Johnstone

* * * * *

I think, God
that I've used a small ruler
and a very black pen
to draw the lines of life
around me
Brought up to obey unquestioningly
there's been a certain safety
in this set pattern
But now I've thrown away the ruler
and replaced the pen
with soft pastels
Risky business
my stern self mutters
but her heart-gentle sister
weaves her scarf of silken dreams
and reaches for her dancing shoes

Anna Johnstone

* * * * *

“With what shall I come
before the Lord,

and bow myself
before God on High?"

...

He has told you, O mortal,
what is good;
and what does the Lord
require of you
but to do justice,
and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly
with your God?

Micah 6:6, 8. NRSV 1989

* * * * *

*Grant me the grace O God,
to know what I should know,
to love what I should love,
to praise what pleases you, and
to cherish everything that is
precious to you.
Keep me from judging simply by
what my eyes see,
or my ears hear;
help me to know the difference
between appearance and spiritual
reality.
Above all, may I have the grace
always to seek your joy.*

Thomas a Kempis

* * * * *

*Love is revealed in words.
When words are not enough
it is revealed in deeds.
When deeds are not enough
Love resorts to music.
Creation
is the music of God*

Indian Proverb

* * * * *

*This not the age of information.
This is not
the age of information.
Forget the news
and the radio,
and the blurred screen.
This is the time
of loaves
and fishes.*

*People are hungry,
and one good word is bread
for a thousand.*

David Whyte

TOP OF PAGE