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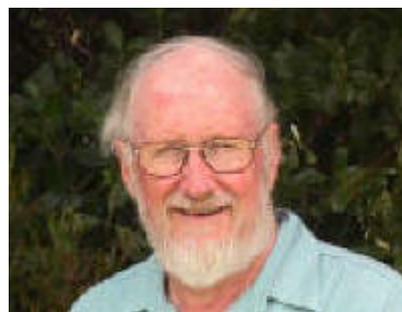
Refresh

**SUMMER 2004-2005 ISSUE:
"Pilgrimage"**

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

In the Winter of 2001 this became 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 take a look at meditation.



Refresh Editor Andrew Dunn

We place a nearly complete selection of key articles from each issue of *Refresh* on the SGM 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:

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of Spiritual Growth Ministries Journal of Contemplative Spirituality:**

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COMMENT by Andrew Dunn

Pilgrimage has been central to the life and experience of God's people from the beginning.

Indeed the notion of pilgrimage plays a central role in many religious traditions. There too, as in Christian faith it has a very specific meaning for many. That is, the well prepared journey to a particular sacred place where something special has happened in the past or present, a historical site (e.g. Jerusalem) or where a saint, leader or mystic lives. It may be alone or in company with others, each adding some significance to the journey. The faithful solitary journey has many blessings while the pilgrimage in company offers community, companionship, safety and encouragement along the way. This is illustrated beautifully in Jacques Perrin's wonderful film *Travelling Birds*.

Yet, our theme offers much more than the planned journey to a special place. Abraham and Sarah went out answering the call of God not knowing where their response would lead. In some psalms and in the New Testament people of faith are identified as sojourners (Psalm 39:12), strangers (Psalm 119:19) and pilgrims (1 Peter 2:11). In Acts we are described as having "our tents pitched here". And as disciples of Jesus we are invited to take up our crosses and follow him. Yet many contemplative people and those who have an awareness of God's presence everywhere, feel distinctly uncomfortable with the suggestion that they are *pilgrims through this barren land*, as the hymn puts it. For them, for us, sojourner means living in an exploratory way in the present place the journey has brought us to. *Strangers*, but only in the sense we have not been here before and would like to make it home and explore it more deeply. *Pilgrims* in the sense that our journey doesn't stop here. There is always so much more of God's love and grace to discover, so much more truth to break open from God's Word, as the Pilgrim Fathers put it so expectantly; so much more of this planet we call home to discover, understand, enjoy.

So, in this issue of *Refresh* we explore various ways our theme can be used, from the planned pilgrimage, to the challenges of life, personal growth, care of the earth, even the life of our nation. We are asking questions not only of what pilgrimage offers us a people of faith but also of us in Aotearoa at this critical point in our national life. Is there a time when migrants from all corners of the globe finally become pilgrims on a common journey?

There are guidebooks aplenty for every great site, organised tours, discount fares and knowledgeable guides for the planned journey. Yet the most significant aspects of the faith pilgrimage involve the journey itself with all the risk and trust in God that this demands of us. Even the goal itself may be unclear as we "put one foot in front of the other in love and trust" (from David Griebner's parable). Yet, as Richard Gillard reminds us in his *Servant Song*, "we are pilgrims on a journey, we are fellow travellers on the road here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load". In that too there is encouragement and confidence building. The best guide of course is the Lord himself and yet he seems to have an uncanny knack of allowing us to find our own way with him at our shoulders!

Indeed in the Celtic strand of the faith the *peregrinatio*, the pilgrims who followed the winds of the Holy Spirit, went simply and obediently without any road map or goal in mind apart from obedience. The "green martyrs" as they were known, never expected to return home. They went and went and wherever they found a welcome there they put down their roots for a while, established a community of faith and then went on again. It was as if their goal was carried with them, their obedience to Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the eternal life they hoped for.

John Bunyan's view was more specific - for him pilgrimage describes the Christian's personal journey from the present City of Destruction to the Celestial City, and we use his dream to invite some reflection on appropriate images for today's pilgrims.

In the last few decades we have come to see this globe on which we live as our only home. We are its stewards, protectors of the most fragile and delicate systems of life anywhere in the universe (as far as we know) that can only be adequately nurtured and conserved by residents rather than passers by. Perhaps one of the greatest discoveries for modern day pilgrims is a fresh sense of home and how to preserve it and make it more so for our children, grandchildren and those yet to come.

I hope that in your reading and reflection there will be many encouraging things for you and your own journey on The Way.

BIBLICAL IMAGES OF PILGRIMAGE *by John Franklin*

Last year, my niece made pilgrimage. She walked the ancient way to Santiago de Compostela in western Spain.

Amanda is never short of words, but she seemed to be scraping the barrel to adequately explain what had happened to her. She does not subscribe to any recognised orthodoxy, but on the way, life had purpose and significance; on the way, ordinariness was vibrant with new meaning; on the way, strangers were close companions. God was there. She walked, she made pilgrimage, and her life was changed.

The most fundamental image of the spiritual life is pilgrimage. Its images are the images of journeying, of exile and homecoming, of breakdown and reconciliation. And these are the themes of scripture. With one eye, scripture may look like a wilderness of words, but with both eyes, its images are translucent, speaking of a movement from wilderness to paradise.

Genesis tells of our expulsion from the paradise of Eden, and Revelation reveals a New Jerusalem as our eternal home. In between, Abraham and Sarah, with nothing more than a perceived promise, step way beyond their comfort zones. Joseph's journey to Egypt is more of a hijacking than a pilgrimage, but the pilgrimage he makes in his interior life is transforming. Moses leads a migration-sized pilgrimage complaining at one point that God was not delivering these people at all, but in spite of this, the Promised Land is reached and home is found. Much later, captives are marched to Babylon where singing the Lord's song became a lament, but the journey into God was radically transforming.

Pilgrimage is the fundamental image of the Hebrew Bible as it is of the New Testament. Joseph, and a pregnant Mary, journey away from home to Bethlehem. They are not made welcome, but the birth welcomes humanity. Wise men follow a star and make pilgrimage in search of a child. They activate political hornets. The family goes up to Jerusalem when Jesus is twelve. The parents are out of their minds with anxiety while Jesus has a profound insight as to his identity. In adult years, Jesus walks along the beach and gathers some followers. He goes up a mountain and his disciples are gobsmacked by glory. Later, Paul rides off to Damascus and falls off his horse, an event that changes the world forever.

Scripture is rich with journeys, physical and spiritual, the outer physical journey often being the vehicle or the metaphor for the inner spiritual journey. People are moving from somewhere to somewhere else, and God, travelling with them is transforming them as they go. The Bible shows images of God on the move. And in a challenging and profoundly important sense, scripture speaks of pilgrimage as the very life of God, the Holy Trinity. The Father goes out in creating energy making cosmos, making life. Jesus the Christ, the only begotten, journeys among us full of grace and truth. And like wind, the Holy Spirit comes among us revealing Christ, creating community; "Inside and outside the fences, you blow where you wish to blow."¹

The biblical image of God, it would seem, is not that of the One Eternal Fixedness. Rather, we have an image of The One On The Move, The Dynamic One, The Journeyer.

So what does this say of our vocation? What is our identity as human beings? God is Love, and those who live in love are on a pilgrimage if they are in God.² What is our vocation then but to follow a call into the eternal pilgrimage, to be caught up into the constant dynamic of Love, and to enter the depth and richness and life that is God? "Our God is marching on!"³

Let's look at one little piece of scripture to get a glimpse of some of the things that pilgrim imagery can tell us. We will go to Luke for whom the journey motif is important.

Luke 9:51 "...he set his face to go to Jerusalem." Whether it is physical or spiritual, pilgrimage asks decision of us. Jesus had a clear sense of purpose, obedience to God. He had no guaranteed outcomes but he had total commitment to the integrity of his knowing that he had to go to Jerusalem. He knew it would be costly, but his face was not set toward the cost and its implication. His face was physically set toward a destination, but inwardly, without flinching, his face was set towards God. "Look to him and be radiant."⁴ Can we walk that steadfastly into what God has made us for? With his help, we can.

Luke 13:33 "...today, tomorrow and the next day I must be on my way..." Jesus was told that Herod was out to kill him. So...? He was not to be diverted. And I think of David Griebner's story of the Carpenter and the Unbuilder.⁵ The Carpenter was on a journey to have dinner with the King, and along the way, he would stop and build houses for himself till the power of the call would resurface and move him on again. And the question arises, How single-minded am I? God may be infinitely patient, but the amount of time I have to get on with the journey is measurable. What does God ask of me that I may have looked away from and even almost forgotten? Jesus, empower me to say with you, "Today, tomorrow and the next day I must be on my way."

Luke 14:25 "Now large crowds were travelling with him..." On the way, Jesus was not alone. Nor are we. We may see ourselves in Sarah and laugh at the preposterous moves of God. We may with David, lament the death of a child. We may with Jeremiah find that we either have to say something and get into trouble, or not say anything and have our guts burn out. With St Augustine we may be prompted to "take up and read" and be radically transformed.⁶ With John Wesley, we may find our heart "strangely warmed". We have friends and family with whom we talk and eat and share whose journeys inspire us, and whose observations of our journey, challenges or encourages us. We are not alone. How can we be open to let other pilgrims bless us on our way?

Luke 17:11 "On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee." Keeping their distance, ten lepers approached him. Nine are healed. One is made well. This is a significant encounter for the one, an outcast, a Samaritan. And is it not the case, that on pilgrimage, along the way, we encounter all sorts of people. Some we may be threatened by; others too much of a challenge. But, along the way, am I not the hospitality of Christ? Am I not an agent of healing and reconciling grace, "ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven"⁷ as I am? How can I keep passing on that grace as I continue on the way?

Luke 19:28 "...he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem." And he finds a colt on which to make an entry. Yes, we get there! We may have arrived in the place prepared for us⁸ but the journey may yet have more to ask of us. And we trust. So we may well ask how robust is our trust?

Luke 24:28 "As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on." The adventure continues. Are we going with him?

The bible tells our story. It tells God's story. It is one of pilgrimage, of moving on with God. As we follow Jesus on the way, it is surely our experience of pilgrimage that life finds purpose and significance; that ordinariness is vibrant with new meaning; that on the way, strangers are close companions. Our call is this, to make pilgrimage, living joyfully and responsively before God who journeys with us.

1 James K. Baxter, *Song to the Holy Spirit*, Collected Poems, Oxford University Press, Wellington, 1979.

2 John 4:7

3 Julia Ward Howe; *Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord*, 1861.

4 Psalm 34.5

5 David Griebner; *The Carpenter and the Unbuilder*, Upper Room Books, Nashville, 1996.

6 Augustine, *The Confessions*, 401.

7 Henry Francis Lyte, *Praise, my soul, the King of heaven*, 1834.

8 John 14:3

A PILGRIMAGE FROM "HERMITAGE" TO "hermitage" AND BEYOND by Sue Pickering

any of us have heard of Rembrandt's painting "The Return of the Prodigal Son" and know of the impact it had on famous Christians such as Henri Nouwen. When I knew that John and I were going to St Petersburg as part of an overseas trip earlier this year, going to THE HERMITAGE to see that painting was, naturally, high on my 'agenda'.

With the help of a well-informed guide, we explored the collections of Catherine the Great of Russia which are housed in the gilded group of palaces which make up 'THE HERMITAGE'. Like many before us, John and I were stunned by the sheer scale and quality of the collection of paintings, sculpture, porcelain, furniture, as we walked through room after room of exquisite examples of human creativity brought together through the influence of one powerful woman.

Eventually our tour party reached the room holding the cherished painting. Immediately my dream of quality minutes spent in silent contemplation evaporated. Hordes of other people crowded the space in front of the painting, intently gazing at the iconic meeting between father and son. There was little opportunity for me to stop and reflect before our tour party moved on.

But there was a surprise waiting for me in an adjacent room.

While the rest of the tour party gazed intently at Rembrandt's 'Danae' on one wall, my eyes were drawn and held by the look on the face of one man in the painting opposite. I was gripped by the extraordinary mix of raw emotion: horror, disbelief, bewilderment, anguish, panic - they were all there in the expression of this man who was helping to do the unthinkable, lowering the body of Jesus from the cross. For several uninterrupted minutes I was absorbed in this man's reality, connected across time with this most painful of moments as death descended on hopes and healing and miracle-working hands.

That painting was Rembrandt's "The Descent from the Cross" - one among thousands of works of art in 'The Hermitage'. As I sit and type this article now five months later, it is the one that remains with me because, through that painting, I was faced with my own response to disbelief, my own moments of panic, my own ability to be knocked off track by the unexpected, and my own need of God to sustain me in the midst of my anguish.

I had gone to 'THE HERMITAGE' with my own agenda, but God chose to meet me in an unexpected encounter with the reality of Jesus' death and the effect it had on those who had followed and believed in him. It was an uncomfortable awareness which I carry still.

Several weeks later John and I travelled to the south-west of England and there encountered another hermitage. According to the date carved in the stone mantelpiece, this fisherman's cottage had stood in this little cove since the 1760's. Now it was a place of retreat and reflection at the tip of the southern Cornish coast, miles from motorways and supermarkets. Windswept and wild, this tiny village was home to a handful of fishermen and their families and a couple of opportunist black cats who welcomed each small boat home and competently sneaked a mackerel each as the baskets were carried ashore.

Our host had casually commented that there was 'a hermitage' up on the cliff. So, early one morning I picked my way through the damp grass, watching for the little sunny faces she had put as signs on the track. Gradually I climbed up above the cottages until I came to an area which formed a snug, natural sitting space - rock behind, rock beneath, rock before, sea swirling below.

Thousands of miles away from the other HERMITAGE full of riches and the pinnacles of artistic expression, I sat out of the wind, looking down on the simplest of dwellings and a lifestyle which was basically unchanged for generations. These fisherfolk lived a life attuned to the tides and rhythms of the sea, to the natural forces of wind and rain; they lived an apparently uncomplicated life, one which driven city-dwellers might idealise in moments of tension and overwork.

I sat for a while and wondered about the solace available in silence and solitude. What a temptation it would be to somehow stay apparently-

out of reach of the world's troubles,

out of sight of the demands of others,

out of touch with the realities of daily struggle.

But in talking to the retreat house owner a little later, I learned of the realities of the local people: the family with a disabled child; the burly fisherman adjusting to the 'coming out' of his gay son; the couple who were struggling to meet medical costs of elderly parents No matter how remote or idyllic the location, human challenges remain part of everyone's life.

I knew that the gift of this 'hermitage' was the invitation to stay connected with people, wherever and whoever they might be. The very solace I sought in the heart of God would, in reality, lead me closer to the world's problems and the needs of others, rather than farther away. For contemplative prayer does not disconnect us from our environment but reconnects us more strongly with all that God holds dear.

my hermitage

A thousand thoughts and a million heartbeats from Russia and Cornwall, my interior hermitage waits quietly, patiently, for the touch of the hand of God. This hermitage of the heart - in God's eyes a place of beauty and riches still undiscovered - is gradually being explored as I learn about myself, about my God and about my calling in Christ.

Dag Hammarskjöld wrote 'The longest journey is the journey inwards'. Not a pilgrimage to be undertaken lightly, but with the sure and steady hand of our fellow pilgrim, Jesus the Christ, to hold and steady each step.

THE ART OF TRAVEL: Some insights from de Botton *by* Warren Deason

Iain de Botton's recent television series "Status Anxiety" sparked in me a desire to explore some of the other writings of this young philosopher and social commentator. I found one of his earlier books had the intriguing title *The Art of Travel* (published in 2002).

I felt his observations about why it is we travel, what we seek by doing so and whether our lives change in some way because of it, linked in a significant way to the image of faith as journey. I think most of us find the image of faith as journey a helpful and engaging one. We identify with ideas of movement, exploration, landscapes encountered and struggles, as well as delights, on the way.

So I wanted to ask whether de Botton's book offered any useful commentary on the faith and life journey - the art of travel. Indeed it did.

In each of the book's chapters he talks about his experiences of visiting a particular location in the world and he offers for each of these a particular guide or travelling companion (an artist, writer, poet or philosopher) and through their work and experience reflects on his own.

Every journey requires a beginning and in the first chapter De Botton introduces a rather eccentric character from a 19th C French novel. The Duc des Esseintes lives alone in a vast chateau on the outskirts of Paris. His desire for isolation is so strong and his dislike of other human beings so great, that he hardly ever leaves his home. On the one occasion he does decide to travel he eventually persuades himself that one can have the experience simply by reading about it and so remains for the rest of his life within his chateau.

Yet by contrast we are invited to experience the faith journey itself. Somewhere, somehow we actually need to set off. To place our feet on the road. To take this risk of beginning. Faith is entrusting ourselves to the God of the journey. The experiences of others may help us, guidebooks and maps may be useful, but somewhere the journey must be begun in our shoes.

In the section **Landscape**, De Botton recalls a trip to the Sinai desert. One of his guides for this journey is the writer of the book of Job in the Hebrew Scriptures. "I set out for the desert," de Botton writes, "in order that I may feel small." I thought that those words were quite tantalising. Why would one want to embark on a journey in order to feel in some way diminished? For the religious person shouldn't the faith journey build our sense of self and our sense of being just "a little lower than the angels?" (Ps 8).

But de Botton suggests that the awe-inspiring landscape of the Sinai with its vast deserts and raw rugged mountains offers us a perspective of ourselves that can be helpful in our life journey.

They are symbolic of realities in our lives that are greater than us, of forces over which we have no control, that we are small in the reality of the universe, that we are frail and temporary and limited.

It's not surprising, therefore, that he finds the speech of God in the book of Job a salutary companion for our journey. God addresses none of Job's complaints and offers no justification. There are things that he will never understand. Along side the forces and power of nature he is puny. That Job sees no logic doesn't mean that there isn't any. Life does not have to fit our logic or expectations. There will be things that we cannot achieve or overcome, that we cannot make any sense of. There are difficult and painful events in our lives and aspects of our journey that will baffle and bewilder us. Bad things do happen to good people.

Understanding this will give us perspective, will perhaps make us a little more accepting and less anxious.

Yet in spite of our ignorance and our lack of understanding God still holds us.

In the section entitled **Art**, De Botton talks about his experiences in the Lake District, Madrid, Amsterdam, Barbados and the London dock lands. His travelling companion this time is the 19th century art and social critic John Ruskin. This fascinating chapter reminded me of the importance of the contemplative nature of the journey. How do we make discoveries and hold on to them? We begin to do this by really learning to observe. Ruskin was not just a remote art critic, he had a passionate desire that every person be taught how to capture the world around them by learning to draw. He never believed that everyone would be an acclaimed artist, but he did believe that everyone could learn the art of noticing. "Now remember gentlemen," he wrote, "I have not been trying to teach you to draw, only to see!"

So how does this relate to the art of travel? It suggests to me that we learn to travel rather more slowly and deliberately than we often do. We can learn a more slowly paced engagement with our life and faith journey and learn to notice the detail and find beauty there.

"Drawing brutally shows up our previous blindness to the true beauty of things," de Botton writes.

Ruskin also encouraged people to "word-paint". To use language to engage with our experience of something. Again he wasn't interested in our becoming an established and widely read poet, but that we develop the art of noticing when we are invited to describe something in words. Those of us who keep journals will know the value of this.

The art of description and reflection can enhance our life and faith journey.

The book's final section **Return** brings us around full circle. The location is Hammersmith, London and the guide Xavier de Maistre.

De Botton returns home from his journey to Barbados and finds a grim, wet, grey and depressing London landscape.

"I felt despair at being home, I felt there could be few worse places on earth than the one I had been fated to spend my existence in."

The book's finale helped me reflect on the gift of the ordinary in our journey. A reminder that in fact most of our lives are spent in the presence of the familiar, a familiar that can easily become tedious and boring.

De Botton quotes from Pascal, "The sole cause of a man's unhappiness is that he does not know how to stay quietly in his room."

How do we deal with the gift of the ordinary and the familiar in the journey?

De Botton's travel guide is the lesser known 18th C French writer Xavier de Maistre, a who wrote a book with the captivating title of "Journey around my Bedroom." It was the idea that the attitude we travel with is as important as the destination. That we could approach a journey anywhere, even to the most familiar, with an attitude that would help us derive pleasure from it.

De Botton tries this out in his own neighbourhood (as he feels his own bedroom is a bit limited), he tries to look at things in a new way, to see the familiar as unfamiliar, as though seeing it for the first time, to see everything as an object of interest and fascination. To try and engage more actively with what was around him.

Overall he concludes,

“Dressed in pink and blue pyjamas, satisfied within the confines of his own bedroom Xavier de Maistre was gently nudging us to try, before taking off for distant hemispheres, to notice what we have already seen.”

We tend to both admire and feel intimidated by heroic faith travellers. Those whose journeys seem of great significance, who have embraced exotic and exciting experiences of God. Yet the ordinary faith journeys of each of us matter just as much. We are invited to reflect on God's presence in the ordinary and familiar as much as the spectacular. We may discover that there is as much wonder there and that awe is born in us for what we had always seen but never noticed.

PILGRIMAGE - Obedience to the Nudgings of God *by* Christine Renner

As the plane taxied out from the Auckland City Airport, I felt sick to the pit of my stomach. No, not due to a fear of flying, but because I had a one-way ticket and I did not want to leave. How did this come about? How could I say that I chose to be there, yet regret it so deeply?

Several years before I had made a deliberate and specific commitment to do only what I thought God wanted, and to go only where God seemed to be leading. What I hadn't counted on was that God might nudge me along a path so distasteful to me; that God's choice and mine could be so far apart. My first retreat experiences of being so in love with the God who is so in love with me, gave me a deep assurance that I could trust God with my life - literally. It was a natural and easy response to feel that I could willingly follow Jesus wherever he might lead. Yet when I got the first inkling that God was calling me to leave New Zealand and go back to Australia I was startled. Where was the love in asking me to do something for which I had no desire?

When I visited Nowra to check out the town I felt God was indicating, it was just another coastal city, with nothing to particularly delight me and tempt me to move there. In fact, my initial response was, 'who would ever want to live in Nowra?' I wrestled with God while driving through some of my favourite New Zealand countryside, and suggested several alternatives. I would move. I would do what God wanted. But couldn't it be within New Zealand? I knew the answer before I asked the question. Arriving at my physical destination, I also arrived at my 'spiritual' one. Deep within me, I found a minute spot, just the tiniest of places, where I wanted what God chose in preference to my own way. I was rather ashamed of how small this place was, but relieved that it did exist.

So my spiritual journey took on a physical aspect. Sorting, sifting, culling and packing possessions meant being ruthless and parting with treasures, family heirlooms and sentimental favourites. Our three sons and their wives are also our friends and leaving them was, in the words of one of them, 'like a death'. After years of being identified primarily by my roles as Peter's wife and mother of our three sons, I had reached the situation of having networks of relationships and ministry where I was known for myself. That too would be left behind.

And there we were in Auckland ready to go. We had no job to go to, no home waiting, nobody to greet us on arrival. What lay ahead? Was this pilgrimage? Nowra isn't in the pilgrims' guidebook, nor was it in my computer spell-checker, with the suggested alternative being 'nowhere'! It seems just an ordinary town with its mix of great qualities and drawbacks. It does not seem a holy place 'where the membrane between this world and a reality beyond is especially thin, where a transcendent reality impinges on the immanent.'¹ I didn't go there to find meaning for my life. I went because I had given myself no other choice. The process of yielding to God's nudgings on this outward route was revealing inward routes I needed to clear and travel. This was my pilgrimage.

During a time of meditation some years earlier, I had sensed Jesus indicating very clearly that to walk with him would mean I would need to take up my cross, although what that meant

specifically was not clear. I could stay where I was, but if I chose to follow Jesus, his road led to Calvary. Sharing that with someone her response was, 'You seem to have a hard Jesus!' No way! I knew without a doubt that this was not true. Jesus had proved over time to be the most loving and generous friend I had ever known. In following his wisdom I had been liberated from unhealthy ways of living and come to a place of contentment and well-being I had never imagined possible. Yet, while I wanted to be where Jesus was, I was wary of the cost involved. Although Jesus said '*Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self,*'² I struggled with the process.

In order to live well and happily in Nowra I was forced to resolve this issue. To move beyond my grief at what I thought I had lost, I had a further choice to make. Had God stopped loving and caring for me? Not at all! Could I believe that this request of God's was consistent with previous ones; that this too was lovingly conceived for my good, even though I could not see how? I wrote in my journal, '*I need Nowra more than it needs me.*' It was not about Nowra, but about me being taken away from my wants and my self-centredness.

By choosing my attitude, and trusting the love of God, I was able to appreciate Nowra and what it offered, especially the special friends who enriched our lives.

By travelling this road I have been able to observe a number of things:-

- My wants and desires can easily loom large, but in satisfying those I can ignore my true inner hunger. When all my props were taken away I was able to prove that my relationship with God is my greatest treasure, and it is this that satisfies the core of my being.
- Worship of God is both the means and the end. Following God 'is not about implementing a plan, but by being so intimate with God that we can hear the whispers of the moment'.³ This can be done any moment of any day in any place.
- When events do not turn out how I hope and expect them to, it does not mean God has not lead me there, nor is it the end of the story.

About a year ago, I received an abrupt and surprising direction to leave Nowra and come back to New Zealand. In many ways we have come back with nothing, to nothing. After seven months, with our future here no clearer, and with our household effects still in storage, I am trying to apply the lessons I have learnt over the past five years. The Russian Pilgrim whose story is told in 'The Way Of the Pilgrim' discovered the treasure of The Jesus Prayer. For me it is the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples, the one we know as The Lord's Prayer. Since reading the version in The Message Bible, it has become more and more the prayer to which I return. It sums up what is important to me, and I am especially captivated by the words '*You're ablaze in beauty! Yes. Yes. Yes.*'⁴

The God who nudged me from my comfort and security is not a hard God. He is the One who has walked the journey with me, keeping me safely on the path. I wish there was space to tell the stories about it all - like the day that I recall as the darkest and loneliest of my time in Nowra. Someone I had met only once came to the door. She had me on her mind, but didn't know why. In the course of our conversation she made a comment that, unknown to her, was for me an answer to my heart-cry prayer to God that morning. This was one of many incidents that assured me of God's attentive love and care, despite the anguish I felt at times.

In the preface of my copy of The Way of the Pilgrim, Helen Bacovcin writes: (*Pilgrim*) *knows as few of us do that a wholehearted response to the message of the Gospel is the only one that makes sense and satisfies the very core of our being. . . . He knows the secret of interior freedom. . . . He knows that the cost of discipleship will never begin to measure up to the rewards that await the faithful disciple who does the will of the Father, both here and hereafter. . . He knows how ABSOLUTELY WONDERFUL God is in His love and mercy to all his children but especially to those who unconditionally open their hearts to Him.*

YES!! YES!! YES!!

- 1 Robinson, M. Sacred Places, Pilgrim Paths, p2
 - 2 Luke 9:24, The Message Bible
 - 3 From a tape by Gordon Cosby, Church of the Saviour, Washington DC
 - 4 Matthew 6, The Message Bible
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JOURNEY TO THE CORAL CASTLE by Jenny Harrison

It is always more interesting, and perhaps more accurate, to explore life events through the retro-spectroscope! The stories of crises and celebrations are often clouded by emotions that blur chronology, muddle participants, confuse memories and select responses. This was certainly my experience at the beginning of last year!

I'd noticed this slight discoloration on my left breast while changing for swimming one morning in November. "I'll watch that" I thought, and I did, watch the slight discoloration become a marked dent over the next eight weeks. "I'll wait until after Christmas" I thought, "that way, I won't spoil the holidays. I'll go to the doctor then or, maybe I'll have a mammogram. It's probably nothing... .. I hope it's nothing."

By late January, there was a palpable lump so the procrastination about the trip to the doctor came to an end. I hadn't told anyone what was going on or how scared I was feeling. I made the appointment and went for a mammogram. I could see by the look on the radiographer's face that she had found something. Maybe if I hadn't been a nurse for as long, I'd have missed the cues: "I'll just check this with the Doctor. We may have to do another film" and "Do we have all your contact details in case we need to contact you?"

I'd only been at work about an hour the next day when the call came: "Mrs Harrison, we'd like you to come for another film. Is there someone you would like to bring with you to the appointment? Could you come today or would tomorrow morning suit you better?" It was amazing how calm I felt. It was as if, now that the 'not-knowing' was out of the way, I could begin a new journey of knowing.

Integrating information and feelings was difficult and I could not imagine telling my husband and my son. John and I have only been married four years and in that time, we seem to have faced more life crises than most couples ever need! I knew he'd be supportive but I did not want to need support. I did not want to face yet another potential crisis! All my anxieties about rejection, body image, abandonment, loss of independence and financial security came to the fore. I realised, however, that most of these feelings were comfortable old friends masking a deep fear of illness and loss of control. Buried even deeper was a sense of resentment that the time John and I have together might be curtailed. I practised in my head what I would say to John, how I would tell my son. I tried to imagine how I would hold onto my two jobs, the parish work I was involved in, and my studies.

Somehow, in the midst of all of this, I barely thought about God or Spirit or prayer. I went for a swim on the morning of the appointment at the Breast Clinic. En route, I found myself in deep conversation with God asking all the 'why me?' type questions. I swam my usual lengths and drove home. The storm of planning that had been happening in my head stilled and I felt calm and prepared and found myself saying out loud: "I suppose I know that I'm not in this alone. God, help me to remember this."

The radio was on in the car - the concert programme, in the midst of Mozart - when suddenly, the music was interrupted by birdsong. The announcer apologised: "sorry about that folks, but

this morning's bird is the very persistent kingfisher." I stopped the car, feeling an overwhelming sense of the presence of God. For years, I've carried around a tatty photocopy of the following prayer given to me by my spiritual director during a time of great change in my life.

Prayer is like watching for the kingfisher.

All you can do is be where he is likely to appear and wait.

Often, nothing much happens.

There is space, silence and expectancy - no visible sign.

Only the knowledge that

He's been there

And may come again.

Seeing or not seeing cease to matter - you have been prepared.

But sometimes

When you've almost stopped expecting it

A flash of brightness gives you encouragement¹.

For a brief moment, I felt held, and loved, and blessed - still scared, still angry, still fiercely independent, but not alone. I resolved to find a kingfisher to serve as a talisman on the days when I could not access a connection with God. (I could hear the words 'transitional object' in my head as I considered this!)

The next few days are a bit blurred as I processed the information about ductal carcinoma in situ in my left breast. This is not, in and of itself, a problem. The concern was an invasive cancer, smallish and clearly margined, that needed removal. I was advised to have a partial mastectomy and removal of lymph nodes as soon as possible and warned that I would require radio-therapy and possibly chemo-therapy.

Waiting for surgery was an interesting time. Everyone I knew, knew someone who'd had a mastectomy. It seemed as though I heard everyone's breast cancer story - the stories of healing and all the others. My close women friends were amazing. Many of them live in Christchurch and, for the next two months, one or another rang each day. Flowers and cards arrived and my sense of being held and loved continued. I resigned from one job and had some spare time for the first time in years. I swam often, walked the dog and felt my soul still. The storm of planning and worrying in my head had clear calm moments and I could no longer use 'storm' as a means of avoiding my fears of mutilation, of becoming dependent, of dying. I knew with great clarity that it was not so much death that I feared but dying. My years of palliative care nursing and hospice chaplaincy meant that I knew intimately the in-between period between life and death. I can say with great conviction that: "I'm not afraid of death, I just don't want to be there on the day!"²

I began to feel as though I was travelling to a new and unexpected destination and that I needed to learn a new language. The language was deeply interior as I began to name feelings, sit alongside fears, explore anxieties. It was as though my exterior world both slowed down and became smaller while my interior world expanded in both depth and capacity. Some of my questions had no answers and I could sit still in the midst of them. Some fears could not be named and I could sit in the discomfort of that. My capacity to 'control' even some of the basics of my life diminished as I became reliant on hospital waiting lists, nursing care and recuperation time. What I could control was language and my attitude. I resolved to use language of integration rather than adversity - living with breast cancer rather than 'battling' with or 'fighting' it. I resolved not to 'survive' cancer but to heal and grow from it. I visualised wholeness and light and energy and made time each day to focus on healing. Most days, I could see a future as I lived fully in every moment.

The surgery and radiotherapy now feel like the least invasive of all the processes. While there were discomforts and things I'd rather NOT have experienced, a few months down the track, the memories of physical events have faded. I feel well most days and go about my daily life in pretty much the way I did before. I catch myself in the stillness, sometimes, feeling afraid. Can I

analyse the fear? No, not really. It is very complex. I'm both afraid of being sick and afraid of feeling well. "I felt well before", I rationalise "and look what happened then. I should be prepared". That argument is soon countered by "think positive - you'll make yourself sick worrying: stress doesn't help."

I see kingfishers, often. They sit near traffic lights while I'm driving home. They appear on magazine covers in the hospital waiting rooms, they appear in my dreams. They help me to remember my new language. The new language feels as yet unspoken - I'm currently learning a grammar upon which to hang the words. As I struggle to give voice to what is within me, I am greatly comforted and challenged by these words:

*I built my house by the sea
Not on the sands, mind you,
Not on the shifting sand.
And I built it of rock.
A strong house by a strong sea.
And we got well acquainted,
The sea and I.
Good neighbours.
Not that we spoke much.
We met in silences,
Respectful, keeping our distance
But looking our thoughts across the fence of sand.
Always the fence of sand our barrier,
Always the sand between.
And then one day
(And I still don't know how it happened)
the sea came.
Without warning.
Without welcome, even.
Not sudden and swift, but a shifting across the sand like wine.
Less like the flow of water than the flow of blood.
Slow, but flowing like an open wound.
And I thought of flight, and I thought of drowning and I thought of death.
But while I thought the sea crept higher until it reached my door.
And I knew there was neither flight, nor death nor drowning.*

*That when the sea comes calling you stop being good neighbours
Well acquainted, friendly from a distance neighbours.
And you give your house for a coral castle*

*And you learn to breathe underwater.*³

Carol Bialock Chile, 1975.

And, every now and then, I find a coral castle and actually breathe underwater.

1 I have tried to find a reference for this prayer without success.

2 This saying is attributed to Woody Allen, actor and director of melancholy movies. I am unable to accurately source the quote.

3 Cassidy, S. (1991) Good Friday people. London: Darton, Longman Todd. 108-109.

In 2001 I had the opportunity to travel as a photographer with a pilgrimage of thirty seven pilgrims to Rome, Lyon and Paris and then journey throughout New Zealand with other groups of pilgrims, bringing the remains of Bishop Pompallier, the first Roman Catholic Bishop back to New Zealand. Bishop Pompallier had arrived in New Zealand in 1838 and left for the last time in 1869. He died in 1871 and was buried at Puteaux, Paris. Maori have never forgotten him and remembered him annually on the 13th of January, the anniversary of his first mass in New Zealand at Totara Point.

When it was recognised that he was buried away from his family and at a place where people did not know him, the desire to bring Pompallier's remains back to New Zealand grew over many years. The pilgrimage, Hiko Tapu, was organised over some years to bring his remains back.

There were many moving places and events on this journey which took nearly four months. For the participants there were many layers of meaning and challenges as they visited the sacred places which had shaped the life of Pompallier and now in turn shaped their lives. Travelling from marae to marae and visiting church and schools the story of Pompallier was told and retold, as was the story of the pilgrimage up to that point. Pompallier had made an impression on Maori that won many of them to the gospel. Despite his weaknesses and failings, his charisma drew people to the sacred - to God. In death, brought back for a much delayed Tangi, his story and example was inspiring. Among many layers of meaning one, which was often repeated by people met along the journey "He chose to come here leaving his family because he loved us, now we choose to bring him back."

For me personally there were many moving moments on this pilgrimage. I recount only one. My background is in the protestant tradition austere in its use of visual art as a means of creating a worshipful attitude or drawing one to God.

In Lyons at Notre Dame de Fouvriere I encountered a magnificently decorated church which just moved me to call out "Glory to God." But this was only the beginning. Our guide led us to the highly decorated altar. It was almost too much. My gaze moved up into the apex of the canopy high over the altar. There at the very top were the Hebrew characters YHWH the Hebrew unpronounceable name of God, perhaps best translated as "I will be who I will be." I was stunned to awe and then excitement. I pointed it out to my fellow pilgrims and guide who was not aware of its meaning. This is what pilgrimage is about. Silenced, I sat down and wandered in my thoughts over history. There were Christians in Lyons seventeen years after the Crucifixion. Bishop Irenaeus was the second Bishop. The first Bishop had been martyred. I meandered in my thoughts over the history of the church and then to New Zealand. I stayed quietly with my thoughts for some time. It was an hour before I could take a photograph. I wanted to share it with others.

A selection of the photographs I took was exhibited at Auckland War Memorial Museum and at Russell Museum. While printing these photographs I thought much about the nature of pilgrimage and did some reading on the subject.

Pilgrimages have been an important aspect of spiritual change and growth over thousands of years. The pilgrim motif is strong in the hymns we sing and the language we use in talking about our faith. The Christian faith was once "the way." The Exodus tradition is seen as a pilgrimage. The Moslem pilgrimage to Mecca, Hindu pilgrimages to Benares, India, Japanese Buddhist pilgrimages to China, among others; indicate the importance of such pilgrimages in other faiths.

Durkheim, the sociologist wrote that we declare as sacred symbols of the highest values we aspire to at a particular time. We declare certain places sacred because the events, usage and symbols we associate with them embrace values which can bring us to an experience of God - the numinous - the sacred. Incorporated with these sacred sites there are rituals. Rituals are transition events which get us from one state of being to another. Worship incorporates various rituals. Normally we go through a sequence of rituals such as approach, the word, response and dismissal. Within that ritual we hear the sacred words and make a response in which we may join

in a sacred meal which joins us with the divine - the sacred- the numinous. Our contact with our faith is renewed. In a way this is a pilgrimage - we journey through a liturgy.

The more usual use of the word pilgrimage is when we travel as a group or as individuals on a carefully planned journey which will put us in touch with sacred places to which we may not have been before. There are rituals along the way. Those who receive us at the sacred places have their ritual which they take us through. There may be new learnings which heighten our sense of the sacred. We discover new ways of doing things, which bring us into contact with the sacred in new ways. Or it may be that away from the normal humdrum we experiment, try different rituals and look at objects which we do not normally experience as sacred. As our horizons are stretched, we learn new things and experience new things. Pilgrimage is about the growing edges of our spiritual journey. We are cross fertilised with new ritual, ideas and experiences from the sacred places.

We are challenged by our fellow pilgrims' perspectives as they share their experiences of the sacred.

We want to have access to these experiences again and again and may purchase mementos, write diary notes and take photographs to remember the place and the associated religious experiences. Part of the process of a pilgrimage is sharing the experience with others who we meet on the journey and those at home who may vicariously be touched by the sacred through our experiences. The pilgrimage enriches more people than just the pilgrims who travel.

At a pilgrimage workshop held at St James, Auckland we became aware that one does not have to travel far to go on a pilgrimage. At the conclusion of the first day of the workshop we planned a pilgrimage for the following Saturday morning. A large number of potential sacred sites were suggested by the group. Eventually a selection from these sites was made and a person volunteered to speak about how a site was sacred to them. It was agreed that a period of silence would follow their presentation. The sites chosen included, Mt Eden, the War Memorial Museum and Bastion Point/Savage Memorial. We travelled by bus from site to site. We stopped for coffee and people sent post cards as a reminder of their experience.

For me it was a discovery of the sacred - of God in the midst of Auckland. As individuals told how they experienced a site as sacred was a moving experience. We finished the morning with a communion service at Savage Memorial. For me the pilgrimage did not finish that morning. There are now places in Auckland that speak to me of the numinous - of God. I also have pictures to share as I talk about the experience with others.

I am not the same person who set out on these pilgrimages. My horizons have been stretched. I guess that is the nature of pilgrimage.

THE WALKING WOUNDED by Alan Leadley

Now that I am a (recycled) Hospital Chaplain, this title appealed to me as a description of what life's pilgrimage is all about. When I walked the path of St James in France and Spain ("El Camino de Santiago") in 2001, I journeyed over mountains, through small isolated hamlets and large cities, across the extensive tableland of the Meseta and through vineyards, wheatfields and forests. I visited opulent cathedrals, churches Romanesque, Gothic and Baroque, passed through Roman and Moorish occupation and drank water from 2000-year old fountains. I marvelled at the storks bearing their young in lofty church belfries and enjoyed the camaraderie of fellow pilgrims along the way, and in the refugio (refuges) and taverna where we ate our meals together. The scallop shell and yellow arrows marked the pilgrim route, along deserted paths and busy highways. Pilgrim stone cairns symbolized the significance of building on each other's experience, efforts and wisdom.

A walking pace view of the world afforded ample time to reflect on my journey of life, my ministry and where God's spirit may be leading me in the future. Sharing with fellow pilgrims has enlarged my horizons and I was often moved by their stories and experiences. In every way we were com-panions together, pilgrims sharing bread. Often at the table there would be 10 or more nationalities represented, but out of the many languages, there emerged a common understanding, often larger and richer than the spoken word.

I felt along the Way that I was walking through a history book spanning two millennia: crossing Roman bridges, witnessing sites of Moorish invasion and Catholic King re-conquest, worshipping in 11th century churches small and great, following the footsteps of Francis of Assisi and Theresa of Avila. Most of all, however, the pilgrimage honoured the history/legend (I don't think it matters) of St James the Apostle who evangelized Spain after Jesus' death and the pentecostal empowerment. James was martyred in Jerusalem, and his body was said to have been brought back to Spain and buried at a compostum (graveyard) at Iria Flavia, the capital of Roman Galicia. In the Middle Ages the Camino de Santiago (Road of St James) was one of the most famous and popular of all pilgrimages. Recently, it has undergone a huge renewal of interest.

When I finally walked into the Cathedral at Santiago de Compostella, I placed my hand in the handprint indented into the marble on the Jesse tree and marvelled at the number of pilgrim hands it has taken to make such an imprint. I hugged the statue of the Apostle and viewed the silver casket, under the altar, where James' bones were said to have been laid to rest.

The pilgrimage of St James is also a metaphor for an inward journey. For me the pilgrimage was primarily a spiritual experience, a journey in which I made deep connections with other people and special places. I will always recall the Prayer of Blessing over the pilgrims at the Roncesvalles Monastery:

*"O God, be for us
a companion in walking,
a guide at the crossroads,
a relief in our weariness,
a defence against danger,
Shelter on the road,
Shade in the heat,
Light in the darkness,
Courage in our dismay,
Firmness in our uncertainty;
So that following you,
We may arrive safely at our journey's end."*

Originally Christians were referred to as people of the Way of Jesus. For me the joy and fullness, simplicity and fascination of Jesus' Way has been confirmed on the Camino. The journey was both pure magic and deeply human. The scallop shell, universally used and recognized along the Camino will always be an important pilgrim symbol to me. Wesley's Coat of Arms features the scallop. So do many parishes, such as St Albans Chartwell, when we use a scallop shell to baptize new members of the Church and when we place a candle in a scallop to signify the light of the World.

The pilgrimage was a people-centred event, simple in its concept, deep in its outcomes. In many ways the pilgrimage seemed separate and distant from the highly-charged political ritualistic role of the wealthy church in Spain.

What often appeared to me to be a pompous and powerful organised religion was far away from the unconventional, humble origins of Christianity and the One who trudged the paths of Palestine. This was clear by the way in which the Church infused with nationalistic fervour was able to reinvent the image of James from that of a gentle preaching pilgrim to that of a Moor-

slaying patriot. But then institutionalised religion has always contained the capacity to abuse power. True pilgrimage acts as a counterpoint to this religious control.

My observations are those of a brief visitor but it seems to me that in Catholic Spain, the real fellowship is in the taverna not the Church; emotional release happens at bullfights and soccer matches not at worship, and TV aerials/Satellite stations have replaced sacred shrines on hilltops. Despite my frustrations with organized religion however, the pleasure and personal growth of the pilgrimage will abide.

It's no wonder therefore that the Camino is sometimes referred to as "la ruta de la terapia", the therapy route. Most of us as pilgrims who "connected" along the way were dealing with issues of transition, loss, grief, spiritual enquiry. I was in that transition zone between midlife reflection and retirement, a "critical life-gap". I knew what I had left behind, but didn't know what I was seeking, other than an opportunity to explore my inner world. I'm glad I kept a diary. The journey is the truth, not the destination. The goal is in a real sense the road itself, not the refuge (refugio) at the end of the day's walk. Everyone along the road had a story to tell - a Belgian man who had just lost his wife, a Dutch chap whose wife had leukaemia, a Finnish therapist who was contemplating religious orders, a young English mother whose son had died a year before.

The 800km walk was physically challenging - I suffered somewhat from shin splint and blisters, cold and thirst ... and yet in a strange way, this (minor) suffering brought me greater insight into my own coping mechanisms and mental stamina. Walking wounded ... and the satisfaction of feeling fully alive, pain and all, is an integral element of "Walking the Way".

The author of one Guide Book on the Camino has described the walk in four parts, symbolic of life:

- "the juice of mashed grapes" (Navarre & La Rioja) crushing our life with many things until we learn to drink the wine of reconciliation with God
- the austerity and humility learned by crossing the Castillian Meseta (parallels the life of Christ)
- the hills and passes between Leon and El Bierzo reminding the pilgrim of the Passion of Christ, with its solitude and wayside crosses, and finally
- the fourth part, Galicia, marking the Joy in Christ, where the ups and downs of the journey are understood in terms of the Resurrection.

The pilgrim prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, yourself the Way, the Truth, the Life, grant to us who tread in your earthly footsteps, a sense of awe, wonder and holiness. May our hearts burn within us as we come to know you more clearly, love you more dearly and follow you more nearly.

BUNYAN AND IMAGES OF PILGRIMAGE by Andrew Dunn

grew up on a strong diet of John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress! We had a pictorial version of it as young children and later I was given E. Palgrave Davies' simplified version as a Sunday School prize. The images, stories and pictures made a deep impression. Then at the age of eight I went to a Scripture Union after school programme in our Church hall where the presenter (Salisbury by name) showed us magic lantern slides of Christian's journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City (the week was too short to include Christiana's journey with her children).

The snippet that stands most strongly in my memory was the part where Christian with his burden of sin and pain securely tied to his back walks up "the hill somewhat ascending" to the

foot of the cross where he kneeled and the burden fell off and rolled down the hill into the bottomless pit. That afternoon our leader taught us the chorus

At the Cross, at the Cross where I first saw the light, and the burden of my heart rolled away, it was there by faith I received, my sight and now I am happy all the day.

Something like that happened to me that day and I rose, went forth and have followed Jesus to this day. Quite profound really.

Bunyan wrote his work at the end of 12 years imprisonment for his religious independency - the first edition published in 1678, the tenth in 1685. Since then many versions have appeared (for families and children as well) in over 100 languages. It's couched in the form of a dream (albeit about 300 pages long!) in which he uses "similitudes" (likenesses, images), a term borrowed from Hosea (12:10 A.V.), to tell the story of the Christian pilgrim's progress from one crisis of faith to another, one temptation and allurements, attachment and challenge to the next. In a sense it sounds quaint to our ears today but it remains both a spiritual classic and a literary gem of the English language, on a par with Milton's works.

Many of his terms and names for places and people met along the way have entered our language and our spiritual understanding as richly descriptive of the challenges and people Christian met and we meet. More of that later.

What are the specific insights of the journey that Bunyan saw? They are many. Here are a few of them.

For one thing Bunyan has a **panoramic view of the Gospel** and the faith journey and its difficulties and delights. In the midst of our current journeys that's encouraging. For another, the notion of Christian setting out on a journey to the promised land is invaluable. For too long we had lost the sense of faith as a journey of discovery and growth, of intrinsic value in itself quite apart from the destination. The book keeps us earthed in reality and saves us from ignoring the present dilemmas for the heavenly vision. Yet it holds out the promise that at journey's end rich meetings of eternity await. Those who venture forth he names *pilgrims*.

His accurate **knowledge of human nature** and the ways people tick gained from his years in the army, working as a tinker and as a pastor and preacher as well as his years in prison endow his writing with a sense of reality, real things happening to real people.

The insightfulness of Bunyan's understanding of life. At the Slough of Despond "they wallowed in it" and began "to sink in the mire", very apt insights into desolation and depression. He describes this slough as the collecting place, the drainage hole of sin and its products!

Bunyan's biblical knowledge is apparent on almost every page with references and allusions drawn from scripture and applied to each situation. He obviously steeped himself in the written word to help describe what it was like to follow the living Word as a pilgrim. And Christian walked with a "Book" open in his hands seeking the way.

The clear understanding of the place of **the cross of Christ** in the pilgrim's progress - a place of encounter, relief from the burden of sin and pain, of renewal and the discovery that the Christian life is not to be lived bogged down with the past. As Bunyan put it, "... then felt Christian Glad and lightsome..."

Bunyan's variety of landscapes and topographical features through which the pathway from the narrow gate that leads to life wends its way are evocative - The Hill of Difficulty; "pleasant Mountainous Country beautified with Woods, Vineyards, Fruits of all sorts, Flowers also, with Springs and Fountains, very delectable to behold"; the Valley of Humiliation; By-path Meadow; rivers and streams, woods and plains, clouds, darkness and daylight and all kinds of weather. A rich variety of features through which the pilgrims travel - a wonderful device to describe the richness and starkness of faith's journey.

Reading this work again I'm struck by **the emphasis on companionship**. Bunyan uses it to describe both shorter and long-term relationships that encourage and strengthen. They are named for our discernment of similar encounters ourselves - Hopeful, Passion, Patience, Help, Hold-the-World, Evangelist, Prudence, Great-heart, Piety and many others. He can also see that some relationships are threats to his journey - Flatterer, Despair, Money-love, Ignorance, Atheist, Apollyon.

He could see **the dangers of acquisitiveness** and the side-tracks of security. Mr Money Love and Mr By-Ends' dialogue on poverty and wealth is a gem. Says By-Ends, "I am for Religion in what, and so far as, the times and my safety will bear it. ... I am for him when he (Religion) walks in his Golden Slippers in the Sunshine, and with applause"!

Bunyan also has **some perceptive insights into the journey itself**. When Giant Despair imprisons Christian and Hopeful in Doubting Castle they remember the key they hold, the key called Promise by which they can unlock the doors of doubt and escape. Scripture promises always nourish and strengthen the heart and offer escape from the Jurisdiction of Despair and other hopeless situations.

Beyond all the liveliness of the descriptions there is **a challenge for us today**, and that is to do for ourselves what Bunyan did in his day. We can't simply stay with his images and terminology - we need to do it again, as it were, in our context, world and faith view.

What could we use to describe the loneliness of our age, the devastation to faith of the abuse suffered by many whether spiritual, sexual, economic or corporate? Or the loss of faith and the *apophatic* time we live in? For many of us doubt is not just a castle we enter and escape from with a promise but a stage of faith itself, one side of the coin of belief. Or the loss of trust in institutions, the church included - what then for the Body of Christ, the company of believers? How would we describe the impact of sexual identity issues, marginalizing of minorities and the devastation of unemployment upon faith in God and experiences of grace? And how could we depict the challenge of caring for this good earth as faith-full stewards of God's creation?

What topographical images could we create from this fair land? How about some decent mountains to climb, wilderness and desert places to explore, or some marine metaphors to embrace? Or wetlands and swamps instead of sloughs? What could we do with birdsong and sparkling streams?

What about describing the parts of the journey with terms drawn from our society - rich suburbs, poverty stricken areas, cultural diversity, cities, countryside, or casinos, brothels and escort agencies? How about electronic images drawn from I.T. and internet, cell phones and texting?

There's no shortage of issues and experiences that many believers wrestle with today, that's for sure. What metaphors, words, images could we, do we use to describe what they are like for people of faith?

Yes, we have some excellent examples of this process in the verse of Baxter, Sam Hunt and others, the art of McCahon and the writing of novelists like Patricia Grace and Witi Ihimaera, the work of film producers like Nikki Caro and Peter Jackson. But as with Bunyan's work we can't depend on them for our own descriptions either. That's up to us - and what an exciting challenge it is to find fresh images of life and faith as we experience them on the road, here and now that resonate with the Good News for today's pilgrims in Jesus Christ.

So, how about it? What images tell your story of grace abounding for you? I must take a retreat day and draft up some more of my own.

*"In each of us dwells a pilgrim. It is the part of us that longs to have direct contact with the sacred."*¹

"All our journeys are rhapsodies on the theme of discovery. We travel as seekers after answers we cannot find at home, and soon find that a change of climate is easier than a change of heart."²

Soul/Spirit calls, even pushes us to sacred journey, to slow down, to listen afresh, to open the eyes of our hearts and minds and connect meaningfully with life. So pilgrimage could be described as a transforming journey of reconnection and renewal leading us to the land of our longing - "God, the Ground of our Being". Whether we 'leave home' and journey in search of our familial or faith ancestral roots in other lands, whether we take time for a lengthy retreat or treat ourselves to daily micro-moments to renew our spirits we can engage in the art of pilgrimage, the search for spiritual meaning.

Today this search needs to engage humanity in an ecological spirituality that challenges us to move from a surface appreciation of beauty to an empathy with all the elements of nature. Romans 8 is a classic source for the idea that we are not only pilgrims in creation but with creation - implying a mutual influence and interdependence between creation and created humanity in our on-going journey through time. Thomas Berry extends a popular saying: 'We will not save what we do not love' with: *"It is also true we will neither love, nor save what we do not experience as sacred... The difficulty is that the natural world is seen primarily for human use, not as a mode of sacred presence primarily to be communed with in wonder and beauty and intimacy. In our present attitude the natural world remains a commodity to be bought and sold, not a sacred reality to be venerated."*³

An authentic ecological spirituality challenges and shapes our behaviour. It invites us into reverential action and increased awareness about the relationship between human behaviour and wellbeing - both planetary and human. It confronts us with collective sin that disrupts the proper relationship with ourselves, our Earth and the Divine, and calls us to 'green' these relationships with integrity and healing compassion. It invites us to examine the theological, spiritual and cultural lens through which we make our pilgrim journey as Earthlings, as *"EarthMaker's Child"*⁴, and to experience God's ongoing creative love pulsing through the whole of creation, inside, immanent to every detail, not simply as an external creator.

For centuries, mystics, poets and prayerful people have intuited that we are all part of one amazing whole, shimmering with Divine Energy. Joy Cowley expresses this beautifully in her psalm celebrating *The Variety of Being - (Psalms for the Road)*. Scientists and cosmologists now confirm that everything is interconnected, everything is kin, everything is in communion with everything else. True pilgrimage contemplatively links us with past, present and future expanding our world-view, and our self-knowledge, so we may celebrate our connectedness and interrelatedness, value diversity, and weave relationships that challenge modern society's distorted myth of progress and counter the consumptive abuse of our primary relative, Earth.

*"The message of Jesus shows us that the dignity of the human race is not found in its ability to control and dominate the Earth, nor is it found in the marvels of technology. Rather, it is found in our intimate loving relationships within and among ourselves and with the whole community of species. His preaching models a love of nature, as is evident in his frequent use of the earth and seeds and animals in his parables. Jesus' focus on the reign of God can be interpreted to mean that to live in tune with the universe is to live in tune with the reign of God."*⁵

The reign of God is a universal reality that is found in the whole cosmos. No wonder Jesus invited us to look around and see the Kingdom of God at hand! Pilgrimage is an invitation to contemplate God's presence at work in the world in all the processes of Earth, indeed all the processes of the universe, and to know God is more than the universe, but also inseparable from it. To be pilgrim in the Earth today requires us to live a planetary spirituality, one that cherishes

Earth as 'Home', the place where God dwells intimately. "... *the world is God's most personal work, therefore something for us to know and admire and revere, to take part in, to contribute to creating - since it is made as a self-creating universe. This is participating in the divine life...*"⁶

1. *The Art of Pilgrimage*. Phil Cousineau, 1998 Conari Press Boston M. p. 92
2. *Ibid* p. 13
3. *When The Trees Say Nothing*. Thomas Merton. Foreword by Thomas Berry, p. 18-19
4. *Singing My Soul*. (CD) Kathy Sherman 1996, song: Earthmaker's Child
5. *Jesus in the New Universe Story*. Cletus Wessels, 2003 Orbis Books, p. 224
6. *God's Ecstasy*. Beatrice Bruteau, 1997 Crossroad Publishing, p.10

THE CARPENTER AND THE UNBUILDER by David M Griebner

Once upon a time there was a man living in a certain kingdom who received an invitation from his king to come to dinner. Something inside him was excited as never before by the invitation. Something was afraid as well. Would he have the right clothes to wear? Would his manners be good enough for his lord's table? What would they talk about when they were not eating? Above all, the man was frightened by the long journey to the king's castle.

So what did the man do? Well, he spent one month deciding what to wear and buying the clothes he did not already have. He spent two months learning the rules of etiquette and practising them as he ate. He spent three months reading up on all the latest issues faced by the kingdom so he would have something to say.

Finally, he faced the journey itself. By trade the man was a carpenter. He built small houses and extra outhouses and garages better than anyone else. After he had packed the clothing and food he thought he would need for the journey, he had room for only a little more. So he decided to pack a few tools, enough to permit him to build adequate overnight shelter on the journey. Then he started out.

The first day he travelled through the morning and early afternoon, stopping only to eat a bit of lunch. Then he set about constructing a rough shelter to spend the night in. After a few hours labour he had a small, safe, dry place to sleep. The next morning, as he was about to start out again, he looked at the shelter he had built. He began to notice places where it could be made better. So instead of resuming the journey right away, he began to make improvements on his little dwelling. Well, one thing led to another, garage to kitchen to study and indoor plumbing, and so on. Soon he had pretty much forgotten about the journey.

Meanwhile, the king began to wonder about the man. And so, as kings are able to do, he arranged for another person who was also travelling to the dinner to stop by and see how the man was coming along.

When he found him, the carpenter was living in his second house. He had sold the first one to someone, remembered the invitation, and moved on for a day or so. However, soon he had settled in and built a bigger and better house on the profits he had made from the sale of his first house. The carpenter was only too happy to invite the visitor in for lunch, but while he was content to accept the offer of food, the visitor preferred to eat out in the yard under a tree.

"Is there a reason why you don't want to come in?" asked the carpenter."

"Why yes" replied the other. "You see, I am on a journey to have dinner with the king of our land. It is important for me to stay on the journey. Perhaps after lunch, you would like to come with me?"

"What you say sounds familiar to me," said the carpenter. "I think I too received an invitation to have dinner with the king, but I have been a little bit uncertain of the way."

"I know" said the stranger, "I was uncertain once as well, As a matter of fact, once I was a carpenter just like you. I too wanted to build safe places along the way to stay in. One day, another fellow on the journey helped me to learn how to unbuild instead of to build. He helped me to leave the home I had been living in and trust the journey itself. I was worried about following the right path. He told me there were a number of paths that would lead to the dinner. The king had set it up that way, and the king had also set up warnings along the wrong paths. The important thing was just to continue to put one foot in front of the other with love and trust. I was also worried about what I had left behind. To this he said that the king had seen to it that everything worth saving would be at the castle waiting for me."

"What you say is certainly of comfort. It helps to know that you have been just like me," said the carpenter.

"Well then, why don't we let go of this house and get on with the journey?"

"I don't know. Maybe. Can I sleep on it?"

"I suppose."

"Can I fix a bed for you?"

"No," said the visitor, "I will stay out here under the tree. It is easier to notice the wonderful things the king has put along the way when you aren't looking out from inside something you have erected to protect yourself."

The unbuilder waited outside all night. The next morning the carpenter had indeed decided to resume the journey. Together they prepared to set out.

"Well," said the carpenter, "which way will we go?"

"Which way seems right to you?" asked the unbuilder.

"I'm not sure."

"I'll tell you what. Let's just sit here for a few minutes and think hard about the king. Remember the stories you have been told about him. Remember how much he loves you. Remember how much you love him. When you have remembered as clearly as you think you can, consider the paths that lie before you and see which seems to best satisfy your longing for, and remembering of, the king. Let your desire to be with the king become more powerful in you than your uncertainty and fear about choosing the right or wrong path."

Silently they sat through the morning in the carpenter's front yard. Slowly it began to seem as though they were already on the journey. As that feeling grew and grew, it suddenly didn't seem like any decision needed to be made. It just happened. With a deep sense of freedom they were off.

Many of the days went just like that, new steps out of silent beginnings and pure desires. They simply waited until the sense of journeying wrapped around even their waiting, and then they were off without worrying overmuch whether they were on the "right" path or not. In the stillness of their hearts they made room for the path and the path seemed to come to them.

Of course the carpenter still felt the need to build a home from time to time. The unbuilder made sure he understood what he was doing and then let him do it if he really wanted to. While the carpenter laboured, the unbuilder, his guide and friend, would continue to practice the silent waiting in the yard, under the tree, and soon they would unbuild yet another house and begin the journey again.

In the meantime the king kept the food warm, which he was very good at doing.

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PILGRIMAGE AND MIGRATION *by Peter Lineham*

The journey to New Zealand was a profound spiritual experience for settlers. It brought them so many thousand miles from the land where their spiritual and community values were rooted. Stories of those journeys suggest that many people lost their traditional spiritual values on the journey.

If one looks at the shape of the New Zealand churches, one has a sense that the churches were intended to recreate a sense of home. They wanted to develop a sense of the world that had been lost. This is not to say that they didn't see value in making the long journey. Yet it was not to discover something different: they believed even more strongly after the long journey that they were western people or Britons. They came to discover better things for themselves; for personal achievement and prosperity. They easily moved on to another land if they were disappointed with what they found. Sometimes when they achieved success then returned 'home', to live on the good things they had achieved in the new country.

The result of this approach is evident in their attitude to the environment in the new country. All immigrants are typically exploiters of their new land. They regard it as a place that can be used, that the bush can be felled, the land re-contoured, new species introduced and an exploitative approach generally used. It was only when they changed from being emigrants to being settlers that they gained respect for the land as it was.

There is something very different about immigration and pilgrimage. In both, the land is desired and hoped for. But in the one case the land is visited, it is respected, it is precious in itself, for what it can impart spiritually. But only as a visitor.

By the nineteenth century this approach was not unfamiliar. As Geoffrey Hindley has described in *Tourists, Travellers and Pilgrims* (1983), by the nineteenth century travel had become a search for the exotic and the extraordinary. Whereas the immigrant comes to stay, to exploit, to grow rich and successful.

So the journey itself has a different quality. The pilgrim views the journey as itself having some value although it is hard. But for the migrant the journey has no significance except that it must be endured. It is a process of abandonment, of shedding that which one dislikes in the home country; of developing new relationships and approaches.

And indeed this is the history of immigration to New Zealand. Consider this remarkable account of the voyage that Samuel Edger, the spiritual leader of the abortive 'Ambertland Settlement' in Northland, (himself deeply spiritual), who did indeed hope that New Zealand would be a spiritual utopia.

[26 July 1862]

We have been followed all this week by large quantities of Cape birds, adding much to the interest of this part of the voyage but I regret to record my deep sense of the wanton cruelty of too many of our passengers by shooting them for the mere low fun apparently of maiming them, and I record my still deeper sorrow that in this and some other discreditable things some professing Christian members of churches who in England would have been loud in their talk of the religious character of this emigration movement, are here the greatest promoters of an irreligious feeling &c.

(Source; Mitchell Library, Sydney, MS B 1507, (copy held by Alexander Turnbull Library), Letterbook of Samuel Edger, 1862-3, pp.15-16)

The truth is that spirituality was hard pressed in the colonial environment.

And this is confirmed in many respects by accounts of early colonial life. For while there were those people who like Mrs Barker found opportunity to meditate under the open sky, and gradually there was a tradition of poets and painters who explored the spirituality of the atmosphere, this was often the exploration of a spirituality of vacancy, of loneliness, of 'man alone', unless they learned to accommodate Maori traditions. More usually the bustling colonial world, the lack of privacy, the mutual dependence upon one another for basic sources of life and food led people to feel quite desolate in their spirits, quite 'worldly' in their outlook, as secular survival and success were predominant in their minds. These values have been explored more in the Australian context, where there is a rich literature including David Milliken's *The Sunburnt Soul* (1979) and Bruce Wilson's *Can God survive in Australia* (1983). John Bluck in his *Long White and Cloudy* (1998) and *Waking up in a Strange Place* (1999) evokes these issues from a New Zealand angle, and Maurice Andrew's *The Old Testament in Aotearoa New Zealand* suggests ways we might read the Bible in the Pakeha world. But read in a certain way, our literature is full of the disconnectedness of our spirituality from our place, and of our lives from our traditions which belong to another time and another location. Unlike Australians we have lacked the confidence to make the land fully our own, either, in the face of Maori whose belongingness feels more strongly based, and so we remain forever homeless.

But what if like the Pilgrim Fathers and Mothers in America, the long journey was a journey of faith, and it generated hope and purpose and identity. What if like Maori coming to Aotearoa, we shaped our identity by our canoe trip. (The word Maori and the unifying of the people occurred in this place). I think we could do it, even re-reading the story of our alienating journey as a pilgrimage.

*'A cold coming we had of it
Just the worst time of the year*

*For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep, and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.'*

*With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.*

*Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation,
With a running stream and a water mill beating the darkness
And three trees on the low sky....*

*All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again,*

*We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,*

*With an alien people clutching their gods
I should be glad of another death.*

(T.S. Eliot, Journey of the Magi).

Our discovery may be as low-key and quiet as this, finding faith in gospel halls and pioneer families, in the courage of discovery, as they begin to acknowledge that the secular struggle was not enough; that there is hope in the journey.

The Bible is very helpful for such a journey. I think most significantly of Jacob, for if ever there was a secular pilgrim it was he, returning to Haran in search of wealth and marriage and to avoid a sticky setting, but then realising that the secular blessing was in fact the gracious provision of God - the 'lucky fellow' who is the classic colonial type - many a colonial would enjoy wrestling with God (but the churches were too respectable to encourage that).

THE POWER OF LISTENING by Alan Jamieson

"Let them tell their own story - they may not have heard it before."

Until we are heard we cannot hear! This is especially true for people hurt and disoriented in their faith. People for whom church and faith have become filled with doubt, questions and confusion. Supporting someone in these upheavals of faith and church participation begins with a genuine commitment to try and understand their position and their feelings. We cannot underestimate the power of such listening as a helpful even healing role in people's faith journeys. When listening is non-judgemental and accepting it provides the context in which pains, abuses, questions, confusion, doubt, and heartache can be verbalised and most importantly heard.

In trying to companion and support church leavers the power and significance of listening has been highlighted for me. Again and again through groups for people struggling with faith questions and people's experience of spiritual direction the power of non-judgemental listening has been emphasised. Listening is a powerful tool. It is perhaps the greatest tool we have to support people in difficult places of faith, evangelism and orienting church to the needs and concerns of real people. It is a tool that is too easily under rated. People want and need to be heard but they want to be heard in particular ways. What are the qualities of such listening?

Non-judgemental Listening -

It is crucially important that the listening be non-judgemental. The majority of people struggling with church and faith have significant questions or hurts about church, the bible, prayer and God and they need to talk about these. The listening they require is non-defensive. The kind of listening that does not try to defend the church, the bible or even defend God. Each gathering of a Spirited Exchanges group begins with a short introduction in which some ground rules are explained. One of these is that 'we let God defend God'. In other words we are not going to present alternative viewpoints, quote scripture or attempt to refute any of the things people might say. On the contrary people are encouraged to verbalise what they feel and believe. If they are angry let them talk about their anger. If they are hurt let them describe that hurt and what it has done to them. If they have questions and doubts we let them put those 'out there' so they themselves and others can see them objectively.

Face-value Listening -

Each person's story has to be taken on face value. At times comments are made about church leaderships or bible passages or failed prayer that appear 'over the top', exaggerated, only half the story or simply untrue. At such times the kind of listening that is required is a listening that accepts that this is the truth as it is experienced by this person right now. It is their truth and

whether or not others might agree it is the truth they are acting out of. It is true - at least in its consequences. Therefore we need to take their perspective and experiences at face value. In the long run more is gained through this approach than through trying to alter people's perception of the truth.

Provisional Listening -

The corollary to face-value listening is provisional listening. It means accepting that this is the person's viewpoint, feelings or understanding at this point in time. They may well; and probably will, change with time. The freedom of provisional listening allows, even invites people, to verbalise alternative viewpoints, contested feelings, experiences and thoughts that may lead to contrary conclusions.

Listening for what isn't said -

Carefully watching body language and noticing emotions as well as arguments, pauses as well as words are essential to the listening art. Probing an emotion and acknowledging a feeling may open up deeper understandings for speaker and listener.

Long-term Listening -

People's faith questions are not resolved quickly, their pain is not healed instantly and their confusion does not clear in the first conversation. Therefore the kind of listening that is required is long term. Long-term listening is both hugely daunting and very life giving. It is hugely daunting because it reminds us that to really be a companion for this person then a substantial amount of time is required. It is life-giving because it reminds us that no matter how dark, angry or confused the person may be when we meet them and no matter how inadequate our responses may also be one conversation never provides 'the answer'. Each conversation is simply part of a long journey of many conversations.

Incarnational Listening -

It is significant who listens. One of the reasons spiritual direction and discussion group's work is that there is someone listening who represents the Christian faith, and /or the church. As people raise their doubts, anxieties, past hurts and abuses they are being listened to by someone who represents, at least to some degree, the organisation, the faith, even the God who they are questioning, railing against and attacking. The following quote is taken from someone who has gone on a hugely difficult and grief filled journey of faith:

Even more valuable to me over this time was being able to talk with someone about all of it. Not just the big questions about God but also the horror and sense of abandonment that was the cause of it all. A person I trusted and came to highly respect, and who freely gave me their time on a regular basis. This church figure gave me the freedom to say what I needed to say without judging and without trying to provide all the answers. Without suggesting I needed to return to church in order to find what I was looking for, they provided options and caused me to think about things in new and different ways.

Notice the person listening was a "church figure". This person's position as a person of faith and a 'church figure' added a quality to the listening. The fact that the person didn't suggest they needed to return to church is important. The fact that the person who said it was a 'church figure' increased significantly the power of the comment.

Painful listening -

Finally the listener must really hear the pain of the other person. Their role is simply to absorb the others pain. Not minimising it, but sympathetically; if possible empathetically sharing in their pain and confusion. This is the kind of listening that hears the cry of the other person, takes on something of their pain and offers that pain in prayer to God.

Researching and listening to church leavers and people in the darkest of faith's journeys over the last ten years has led me to believe that listening, of the type described here, is the most powerful tool in our tool box. A tool that opens up space for the Spirit of God to work in both our lives.

MEDITATION IN A SMALL WORLD *by Clarice Greenslade*

"It's a small world," they say. And they're right.

In our inter-faith meditation group, the Pakistani Moslem woman turns out to be a neighbour of mine in the small harbour village of Governors Bay.

The Buddhist monk, with her long robe and shaved head, is a pakeha woman, and we discovered we had been in the same group at Christchurch Teachers' College 50 years ago.

Oh yes - it's a small world.

The speed and ease of air travel, and the instant connections no-matter-where of IT, have made us into a global village. Through TV, the starving people of the Sudan and the earthquake victims in Turkey daily inhabit our living rooms. 9/11 and other international acts of terrorism have taught us that there is no longer safety in distance. We are vulnerable now to the farthest "enemies".

"We must love one another or die", as W.H.Auden prophesied half a century ago.

After 9/11 and the U.S.invasion of Iraq, we decided at Christchurch Cathedral - for the week of prayer for world peace - to hold an inter-faith silent meditation. 20-odd people came to it - Christian, Moslem, Baha'i, Buddhist, Jewish... - and it was decided to make it a monthly event.

So we meet for three-quarters of an hour on the first Friday evening of each month.

A different person leads each time with introductory and closing readings or prayers from their own tradition. The main part of our gathering though, is the half-hour of shared silence. It is so good. Full of love. Full of God.

There is no wish in this gathering to find some lowest common denominator sort of religion. People here are deeply nourished by their own traditions and hold to them strongly.

In our shared meditation, what I am practising is the ancient Christian tradition of contemplative prayer. I know that my neighbour is probably doing, silently, the beautiful Sufi chanting she did aloud in introducing one session. There is no barrier between us in that. Each in our own way, but together, we are all being still in the presence of God, and in that presence things that could divide us fall away.

Our meditation times seem graced, and very much on the side of harmony and understanding and peace on this small planet earth.

THE PILGRIM'S VISION *by Harold W. Button*

The Living see beyond themselves and their own desires.

The Living see the basic needs and hopes of others as the same as their own.

The Living know that even dead men walking can turn away from Death toward life.

The Living recognize and practice a community of life.

The Living know good and evil tendencies are in every human being.

The Living practice repentance and forgiveness.

The Living are peacemakers.
 The Living seek justice for all.
 The Living are informed by history.
 The Living see beyond their generation into the future.
 The Living seek the same opportunity for others that they seek for themselves.
 The Living respect, conserve, and share the resources of the Earth.
 The Living serve the spirit of love.
 The Living would rather build than destroy.
 The Living seek truth instead of lies and illusions.
 The Living choose trust over suspicion.
 The Living celebrate life:
 In the smile of a child,
 In the loving touch of hands,
 In the sharing of food and drink,
 In the healing of the sick,
 In the unique quality of each individual person,
 In shared laughter,
 In shared work,
 In the beauty and sternness of nature,
 In song, dance, and story.

Bruderhof Community

REVIEWS

A SPIRITUAL DIRECTION RESEARCH PAPER: DIRECTED LIVES by Anne Chrisp

We commend Anne's research paper on the impact of spiritual direction on people's lives, attitudes, theology, church involvement and engagement with issues of the day. It's an excellent piece of work on the pilgrimage that takes place in our lives and faith journeys when we give ourselves to the deepening process of spiritual direction.

Instead of editing it for inclusion in Refresh it is best to read the whole paper which you can find on this website - [click here](#). A printed copy may be ordered from Carole Hunt for \$6.50: The Administrator, 1A Ogilvy Tce, Plimmerton, 6006. Ph. 04 233-0714. Email: sgm@clear.net.nz

* * * * *

Spirit in a Strange Land - a selection of NZ spiritual verse
Editors: Paul Morris, Harry Ricketts & Mike Grimshaw
A Godwit Book. 2002. pp 200. \$39.99.

Reviewed by Clarice Greenslade

This 2002 "selection of NZ spiritual verse" was made largely for modest and practical reasons - to fill a gap and to be useful. And it is wonderfully useful, a must-have resource for worship and retreat leaders. The thematic approach to chapter divisions serves this well - Godzone, Holidays and Holy Days, The Land, Jesus, Rebels and Recluses... The poems on Christmas, for instance, simply demand to be used in an all-Kiwi Carol Service.

But more than this, Spirit in a Strange Land is an important book. Its selection of verse, with the valuable introduction and concluding essay, make a significant contribution to our self-understanding as a people - our identity, our culture, our spirituality.

A main feature of this collection - and I suspect of Kiwi spirituality - is the questioning, struggling side, expressed in an emotionally low-key way, without histrionics, quite often with a hint (or more) of wry humour, or else in simple unpretentious verse, as in Basil Dowling's An Apology for Atheism.

If there's a god, then he must be
 A monster of depravity,
 Or else a god who strives in vain
 To vanquish evil grief and pain.
 Therefore it seems more charitable
 To say there is no god at all
 Than blame one with godlike powers
 For having made a world like ours.

This struggling aspect is present too in Maori response to the coming of Christianity. Hone Tuwhare's Mauri

when the gods were fused
 to an angered one
 all-seeing, triple faced...
 (with) sour and honeyed strength...

And in a number of the earlier poems there's the sense of dislocation of the colonists, as in M.K. Joseph's Easter in the South.

Inverted on the other side of the earth
 Easter and Lent, its harbinger, take new meanings...

These are struggles that do belong to us here, in the emerging of our own culture and spirituality.

Another basic and genuinely representative strand is the nature spirituality. Spirituality of place. While we are not a noticeably patriotic people, we do have a deep love for and sense of belonging with our land, our landscape. A spirituality of mountain, river, lake, bush and beach recurs endlessly in this volume.

Sam Hunt in his Oterei Rivermouth writes:

I get to think that God
 is somewhere there between the rivermouth and sea
 glistening
 helplessly
 with only a broad sky a bored dog and me
 listening.

Or James K Baxter in Winter in Jerusalem's ending:

Peace is the language of the punga on the hill
 Not growing for any gain.

My favourite in the collection is Owen Marshall's South Island Prayer, because I live far south of the Bombay Hills, and because it is such a classy little poem - so clever and so funny.

God
 Don't let me die in Auckland
 Rotting in the heat before your
 eyes are closed: a greasy take
 away after the soul is gone.

Jesus, no.
 Let me go with the old Southerly
 Buster: river stones in the grey
 flecked sky and that white wind
 to keep your chin up.
 Christ, yes.

As I notice the sense of land and place, and the struggling, along with the critical eye on our national character and our society, and the lack of stridency or flamboyance or fanaticism, I find myself thinking affectionately, "Yes, this is us".

Here is an Aotearoa-NZ "vernacular of the spirit" for our emerging "home-grown spirituality". Anyone interested in spirituality, or in our NZ culture and identity needs this book.

* * * * *

Conversations: A Forum for Authentic Transformation

Reviewed by Sheila Pritchard

Conversations is a new journal which aims to "provide spiritual accompaniment and honest dialogue for those who long for radical transformation in Christ." Its executive editors are: David G. Benner, Larry Crabb and Gary W. Moon. Some of the other names on the list of consultants and contributors will be familiar to many *Refresh* readers: Dallas Willard, Richard Foster, James Houston, Basil Pennington OCSO, and Jeannette Bakke to name a few!

The issue I read was Vol 1/2 Fall 2003 entitled "True Self / False Self: Are You Stuck?" The substantial journal of 71 pages contained many very good articles on the theme. Naturally I related more warmly to some than others - and that in itself bears out the stated intention that the target audience be broad. While I bristled a bit and wanted to offer a different perspective to one contributor, I also took notes from another article and intend to seek out that person's book!

One of the particular strengths of the issue I read is that it comfortably accommodates conservative evangelical writers alongside an interview with Basil Pennington and work from Thomas Merton. I got the feeling the guiding principle of "unity in diversity" was more important than a common theological stance.

Two particular highlights for me from this issue were: First the full colour print on the cover of Rembrandt's *Return of the Prodigal Son*, accompanied by an excellent article by Juliet Benner. The article gave background information and guidance about how to meditate on the painting in a deeply contemplative way. The second highlight was an interview with Gray Temple who was correctly introduced to an audience as a "Charismatic Episcopal priest from Atlanta Georgia". But just as people were settling in to listen to a theologically conservative address Temple told them: "He forgot to tell you that I'm also a liberal and I'll probably be saying some stuff that will peel the wallpaper in this room." That combination had me hooked and I was not disappointed!!

Conversations is published twice a year for an annual subscription of \$US 21 for overseas subscribers. The website for further information is: www.conversationsjournal.com

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The Freedom Walk by Anna Johnstone

Published by Johnstone Photography. 2004. 80pp. \$25.00.

Available from the author 2/143A Manuka Road, Glenfield, North Shore City, and from Pleroma, Epworth and The Leprosy Mission in Auckland.

Reviewed by Warren Deason

Considering the theme of this issue of *Refresh* is Pilgrimage, it seems very appropriate to be reviewing Anna Johnstone's latest collection of reflections: *The Freedom Walk*.

A visit to a prison sparked the following reflection:

Jesus
 you're the only one
 who gives us freedom
 the inner sort
 nothing to do with
 bars and cells
 restrictions and time
 inside and out

Anna has once again provided us with a superbly produced volume of meditations and reflections on Scripture. Photographs taken by her and husband Kerry and some dazzling calligraphy by Margaret Wollett supplement this. The images themselves are of such a quality that they can stand alone as objects for reflection, especially for those who find the visual their primary connection with the sacred.

Anna engages with the Scripture passages in her own thoughtful way.

As we saw in her last collection, *The God Walk*, Anna is able to find God and dialogue with God in the everyday. She always seems to be able to find an arresting connection between the Scripture and familiar encounters. On Ps 29 she begins:

They smashed the concrete
 in the burning sun
 Parts of the steep driveway
 had been cracked, uneven
 and other users decided to replace it

Or Ps 139,
 Personal trainers
 are the in-thing right now
 no self-respecting gym bunny
 complete without one

If you want to follow where these lead you will have to buy or borrow the book. But it's worth it.

Most of the reflections have a biblical source - so would be ideal for users of the lectionary. The other reflections are not linked directly to any Scripture passage but are tied to Anna's own experience of the freedom walk.

Walk with us
 through roads of truth
 Courage us till every mask
 lies stripped
 discarded
 powerless
 as we move on
 your peace filling
 our eyes
 our hearts

our lives
with new beginnings

The freedom walk embraces our freedom to create and Anna has done this, in the words of Cole Porter,
"delightfully" and "deliciously".

* * * * *

Journeying in Faith
In and Beyond the Tough Places
by Alan Jamieson. SPCK, London. 2004 166 pp. \$29.95.

(Also published in NZ as Called Again: in and beyond the deserts of faith)

Reviewed by David Crawley

Many readers of *Refresh* will be aware of Alan Jamieson's first book *A Churchless Faith*, based on his PhD research into the stories of people who have felt compelled to leave evangelical, Pentecostal and charismatic (EPC) churches, but who in many cases have continued the journey of faith in God.

Journeying in Faith, as the title suggests, focuses more closely the way such people find themselves negotiating the trackless terrain of postmodern and - for many - post-church spiritual life. Recently I spotted this book on the coffee table of a friend who earlier this year resigned from ministry in an EPC church. "What did you think of it?" I asked. "It's the most positive thing I have read since I moved out!" was the reply. The warmth of that response (and others I have heard) suggests that this book will prove helpful to many in just the way its author intended :

"This book is for those in the dark and desert places of faith. It attempts to articulate their concerns and provide support for their journeys ... Our concern is to point to the possibility of robust and genuine Christian faith in and beyond the deserts of faith." (p. 12)

To offer positive spiritual support while fully acknowledging the realities that people struggle with in their faith is a demanding and delicate art. Alan Jamieson handles the challenge with impressive clarity and wisdom. Personal accounts (including sequels to stories told in *A Churchless Faith*), biblical imagery and contemporary research are all brought skilfully to the task of discovering hope and resources in seemingly inhospitable places. The paradoxical gifts of the darkness and desert are hinted at in chapter titles such as:

"Seeing In and Beyond the Dark"

"Prayer In and Beyond Words"

"Alleluia In and Beyond Agony Absence"

"Growth and Grace In and Beyond Failure"

In addressing these issues, the author draws on a rich variety of traditions, authors (from St Teresa of Avila to Paul Ricouer to J. K. Rowling) and models (such as Fowler's Stages of Faith). The updates on people who featured in Alan's research help to ground the ideas in experience and give this book a welcome local flavour.

I warmly recommend *Journeying Faith* to those who find themselves wandering in dark and desert places, not as a manual on "how to get out", but as a companion that offers reassurance and resources for the journey "in and beyond." Spiritual directors and others who accompany people on the spiritual journey will also find this a particularly useful book.

Travelling Birds (Movie)

Galatee Films 2003. \$39.95

Reviewed by Andrew Dunn

documentary film about bird migration around the world might seem a bit ho hum. After all we know a bit about it ourselves with the movements of silvereyes, oystercatchers, wrybills, gannets, albatross and the shining cuckoo. But this film isn't *about* birds migrating. It's going with them, accompanying them, flying with them from their various departure points on every continent out to their nesting and feeding grounds for the summer and the return journeys. It's a bird's eye view of the world and the world of billions of birds on the move around their earth. We go along for the ride, as it were, and that's got to be unique - never done before.

The focus is always on the birds (geese, ducks, cranes, storks at the large end of avian life to small waders at the other end and many in between), the landscapes they cross (with stunning photography), the challenges of weather, navigation, food supplies and predators they face en route. Courtship, mating, and nesting are covered including the most remarkable shots of pairs of grebes running/skittering across the water in better time than synchronised swimmers at the Olympics - and many other unique glimpses as well.

There's very little commentary and what there is is apt and informative. The musical accompaniment is unobtrusive but the greatest audible impact is the sound of the bird's wings and the calls of the flocks as they fly.

This is the third wildlife film by Jacques Perrin and runs for 95 minutes. With film crews in various parts of the world (yes, New Zealand and Antarctica as well) using all the equipment at their disposal, including microlight planes to fly with the birds they had bonded with, remarkable sequences are filmed. The one gap I could see was the flights of the waders (godwits, sandpipers, whimbrels and the like) from their feeding grounds in estuaries all around our coasts to their nesting grounds in Siberia and Alaska, the longest migrations of all.

Inevitably the questions surrounding all pilgrimages are raised - how they find their way out and back again. The current theories include the birds use of the magnetic lines of force around the globe, navigating by the stars, moon and sun, and genetic imprinting from one generation to the next. However it happens, the mystery of it captivates and leaves a sense of wonder and delight at having participated in something unique. I took my grandchildren to see it and it held their attention too - well, almost! We used this film on a recent retreat as an introduction to contemplation and it worked a treat!

Released in 2003 and now available for hire and for purchase on video and DVD.

RESOURCES

Websites

Exploring Pilgrim's Progress and other assistance for pilgrims today: www.pilgrimsprogress.org.uk

Two websites for the Bruderhof Community: www.dailydig.bruderhof.org
www.dailydig.bruderhof.com

Anne Hadfield's website. www.soulscape.co.nz

The Cenacle in NZ. www.cenacle.org.nz

The Ground of Faith. A bi-monthly e-journal exploring science, mysticism and human experience together. Edited by Michael Cocks and based in Christchurch.

www.thegroundoffaith.orcon.net.nz

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Books

Liz Babbs. **The Celtic Heart.**

Lion Publishing 2003.

Includes a free CD of evocative music by Simeon Wood.

Philip Cody. **Seeds Of The Word.**

Nga Kakano o te Kupa.

Steel Roberts Ltd. 2004. paperback \$29.95. 176 pp

Explores the seed of the Gospel and the seedbed of Maoritanga, examining the differences and similarities between Maori spirituality and Christianity.

Paul Harrios (ed.) **The Fire of silence and Stillness**

An anthology of quotes for the spiritual journey.

Darton, Longman & Todd. 1995.

Alan Jamieson. **Called Again in and Beyond the Deserts of Faith.**

Philip Garside Publishing Ltd. 2004. pp167. Also published in Britain by SPCK as *Journeying in*

Faith. "For faith wanderers who sometimes feel lost or whom others would describe as lost ... for those who find themselves inextricably drawn beyond the confines of institutional *Churchianity* toward unknown horizons of Christian faith".

Anna Johnstone. **The Freedom Walk**

Pub. Johnstone2Photography. 2004 \$24.95 + \$3.00 p and p. 80pp

More reflections and photos on scripture and life journey themes.

Belden Lane. **The Solace of Fierce Landscapes.**

Exploring the Desert and Mountain Spirituality. Oxford UP. 1998

Gordon Lynch. **Losing My Religion.**

Darton, Longman, Todd. 2003

About moving on from Evangelical faith.

Gerald May. **The Dark Night of the Soul.**

A psychiatrist explores the connection between darkness and spiritual growth. Harper. San Francisco. 2004

Philip Morris, Harry ricketts & Mike /Grimshaw (eds). **Spirit Abroad.**

A second selection of NZ spiritual verse. Godwit, NZ. 247pp \$39.95

Joyce Rupp. **Little Pieces of Light.**

Paulist Press 1994. On darkness and personal growth.

Ian Tarrant and Sally Dakin. **Labyrinths and Prayer Stations.**

Grove Books, UK 28pp \$12.95

Dan Via and Robert Gagnon. **Homosexuality and the Bible.**

Two views. Fortress Press. 2003. pp 117. \$29.95 from the Anglican Resource Centre, Box 12002, Wellington. resource@wn.ang.org.nz

An Evangelical Lutheran Church of the USA publication. "This is an excellent contribution to a debate which is set to run and run in most parts of Christendom. I know of no other finer presentation of all the main issues." Graham Stanton. "This book presents the key arguments,

pro and con, with clarity, reasoned thought, and for the most part with civil discourse". Walter Brueggemann.

Roger Walsh. **Essential Spirituality.**

John Wiley and sons. New York 1999. Useful in working with non Christians.

Robert Webber. **The Younger Evangelicals.**

Baker Books. 2002. A resource for spiritual directors working with people from an evangelical background.

Peter Price. **Playing the Blue Note.** - journey into hope.

DLT 2002 ISBN 0-232-52476-9

Jazz as an image of pilgrimage!

Libraries

The Mercy Library, 19 Caledonian Rd, Christchurch, Phone 03 366-4911, has 12000 titles for borrowing, including videos and tapes. Joining fee is \$3.00, and 30 cents per book. Contact: Sr Hilary Swanson for details, joining and for a bookmark outlining the themes and areas covered.

St Benedicts Library, housed in The Crypt at 1 St Benedicts St, Newton, Auckland. Ph. 09 379-0624. 16000 volumes. \$5.00 per year. Open Sunday mornings 11.15 - 1200, Tuesday and Thursday mornings 10.00 - 12.00.

Music

Oran - *I Saw A Stranger.* CD Wild Goose \$44.95

Words adapted from the Carmina Gadelica by Alexander Carmichael.

Pleroma Christian Supplies. 0508-988-988

Celtic Worship. CD \$16.95 A new collection of 12 current hymns and worship songs in Celtic musical styling, with vocals. Pleroma Christian Supplies 0508-988-988

Celtic Hymns. 3 CD's \$29.95. 50 tracks. A wide range of hymns presented in Celtic style. A boxed set. Pleroma Christian Supplies 0508-988-988

Dream Catcher, a new CD by Secret Garden. 18 tracks from their first three CD's, now available in NZ music shops.

Robert Card. Double CD - *The Ancient Faith.* Music and lyrics exploring biblical themes in three sections: *The Beginning* based on themes from the Pentateuch and Patriarchs; *The Way of Wisdom* draws from wisdom writings and Psalms; *The Word, Recapturing the Imagination* based on the OT prophetic writings.

Audio Tapes

Sr Eileen O'Hea C.S.J. **Silent Wisdom - Hidden Light**

Christian Meditation and the Transformation of Consciousness.

Medio Media Ltd. London. Available through WCCM NZ.

Faith Development

A four day series at Carey College for pastors, spiritual directors and counsellors, April 14-15, May 12-13 2005 led by Alan Jamieson. For credit or audit. Registration details and costs from Neroli at Carey College, Phone 09 526-0340.

SGM NEWS

Andrew Pritchard (Convenor)

It is late October as I write this edition of SGM news. I have just added the last details to the 2005 Programme which Carole has compiled, sent it off to the printer and you now have the finished result. Carole tells me that there are some 1700 people on SGM's mailing list and as I have worked with Carole in compiling the Programme I am very aware of how many people are involved in facilitating the opportunities presented within it.

What is Spiritual Growth Ministries?

Spiritual Growth Ministries is an organism, a network of people committed to promoting the growth of contemplative Christian spirituality in Aotearoa-New Zealand and beyond. This means being committed to growing ourselves, being praying people who seek to live out of our relationship with God. It means organising, promoting making available and participating in a variety of opportunities to learn and experience, to pray and to listen, to be nourished and to live fully and faithfully.

Spiritual Growth Ministries is a vehicle for others. Our programme includes many events sponsored and run by other organisations, retreat centres, Churches and individuals. Our aim is to resource, to make available and to make known, not to compete or to own.

Spiritual Growth Ministries is a network of people who form and train spiritual directors. Sue Pickering makes a huge contribution to this, interviewing applicants, running workshops, revising course notes, marking assignments and supervising some participants. She does not do this alone but co-ordinates other interviewers, presenters, writers, markers and supervisors throughout the country. Others contribute through the Formation Programme Advisory Group that evaluates the programme and brings fresh and varied perspectives to keep it developing.

Spiritual Growth Ministries is an organisation. We have a Workgroup that oversees the work, that prays, plans, listens ... and manages finance, receives reports, has employment contracts ... and an efficient administrator who communicates, remembers the details and ensures that things run smoothly.

One thing that inspires me as I reflect on SGM at the end of 2004 and beginning of 2005 is the evidence of renewal. By this I mean seeing people inspired and nurtured in their own spiritual growth living out the consequences of that in ways that include offering opportunities for inspiration and nurture to others. People who perhaps tentatively attended retreats or workshops some years ago or who struggled with triads and verbatims, wondering if they would ever grasp the art of spiritual direction now leading retreats and offering workshops. People accompanying others through spiritual direction or now contributing the fruit of their experience as they supervise others. This cycle, people drawing on the resources that SGM and others provide and people contributing the fruit of their learning and experience to others, is an encouraging and healthy sign.

Thank-you for your contribution be it participation, interest, prayer, financial support ... I finish as I began deeply aware of the number of people associated with SGM, contributing to and impacted by this ministry. Thanks be to God.

CONTRIBUTORS

Anne Chrisp lives in Palmerston North, where she juggles life as a mother to three teenage daughters, as a wife and as a chaplain at Ucol (the local polytech).

David Crawley is a lecturer at the Henderson Campus of the Bible College of NZ where he heads up the spirituality programme and is an SGM Workgroup member.

Warren Deason is pastor at Albany Presbyterian Church and member of the SGM Workgroup.

Andrew Dunn lives and works at Oasis Retreat and Study Centre, Albany.

Margaret Dunn is a poet, a retreat giver, spiritual director and supervisor from Albany currently learning quilting as an interest.

Marjory Edwards is a lifelong artist recently moved from Nelson to Whangarei. In her later years she continues to pursue an enriching interest in spiritual journeying, poetry, writing and gardening.

John Franklin's diverse ministry includes spiritual direction and ministry supervision. He is a teaching assistant in HRD at Massey University, Palmerston. He also works with preachers and with Koreans learning NZ English.

Clarice Greenslade is an Anglican priest, now retired from parish ministry, who works as a spiritual director. She lives in Governors Bay near Christchurch.

Jenny Harrison is currently co-vicar of St Peter's, Onehunga. Recovery has encouraged her interior pilgrimage as she seeks the heart of God and her daily pilgrimage in Christ's footprints to the margins of the community.

Alan Jamieson is a writer and Baptist pastor working in Wellington.

Alan Leadley is an ordained Methodist minister who has worked over the last 37 years in parishes in Christchurch and Hamilton, as a Principal of a Christian Education Centre in Rabaul, Papua New Guinea, and as a Chaplain at Waikato Hospital.

Peter Lineham is Associate Professor of History at Massey University, Albany Campus, and an extensive writer on the religious history of New Zealand.

Karel Lorier is a self employed supervisor and professional photographer. He particularly enjoys meeting people from all walks of life while taking their portraits. He lives on the North Shore and enjoys walking the beaches and bush.

Mary Maitland is a Sister of Our Lady of The Missions who is a spiritual director and retreat companion at Parua Bay, Northland.

Jo O'Hara is a Christchurch artist and sculptor and has again contributed the artwork for this issue.

Sue Pickering is an Anglican priest, co-ordinates the SGM Spiritual Director's Formation Programme and is a spiritual director, retreat conductor and writer.

Andrew Pritchard is a spiritual director, supervisor and facilitator. He convenes SGM's Workgroup and lives in Shalom Christian Community at Paraparaumu.

Sheila Pritchard enjoys a self-employed lifestyle offering spiritual direction, supervision and retreats, with seminars and a bit of teaching and writing thrown in. Since moving to Auckland's North Shore she enjoys walking the East Coast beaches.

Christine Renner, wife, mother, nana and friend, delights to find God's presence wherever she is, currently living in Hamilton.

Graeme White was a tussock country scientist and a life-long pilgrim and disciple who lived in Christchurch. His poem *Touched by Life* was used at his funeral earlier this year and contributed by his wife Erika.

Thank you to all contributors for the material written for this issue, and to those who have scanned their shelves and screens for resources. It all makes this a rich resource for many. Our theme for next Refresh is grace and we invite writers to submit material for consideration - or if you have an idea for an article suggest it to the editor. Copy required by April 30th.

FOR REFLECTION

TOUCHED BY LIFE

*energies sapped
strengths dissipating
body raped by cancer*

*cry my heart
cry in passion
cry for your former self*

*Yet observe also
that life still touches you
and passionately so
and know*

*that a cry dissolved
by a nurturing touch
yields a spirit unbreakable*

*Life-enabling Spirit
you connect pain
with a touch of wholeness
be my courier beyond the pain*

Graeme White - Nov. 2003

* * * * *

I have heard modern Iona dismissed by its detractors simply as a mecca for 'spiritual tourism'. It is true that many of those who make the short crossing from Mull probably fall into the category of tourists but there is a very thin dividing line between tourism and pilgrimage. Among the island's visitors are many bearing pain or troubled with doubts and anxieties - contemporary pilgrims and penitents reaching out for healing and wholeness.

Ian Bradley

* * * * *

Who honours courage here,
 who fights the devil?
 who boldly faces fear,
 who conquers evil?
 We're not afraid to fight!
 we'll scorn the devil's spite:
 Christ gives to us the right
 to be his pilgrims.

Some may be terrified
 by Satan's testing,
 but faith is verified
 when we're resisting.
 There's no discouragement
 shall cause us to relent
 our firm declared intent
 to be his pilgrims.

Though evil powers intend
 to break our spirit,
 we know we at the end
 shall life inherit.
 So, fantasies, away!
 why fear what others say?
 We'll labour night and day
 to be his pilgrims.

after J. Bunyan (1628-1688)
 © Michael Saward (born 1932)
 Tune: Monk's Gate.

Hymns for Today's Church. Hodder 1988 No. 537

* * * * *

*Do you see what this means -
 all these pioneers who
 blazed the way,
 all these veterans
 cheering us on?
 It means we'd better get
 on with it.
 Strip down, start running - and never quit!
 No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins.
 Keep your eyes on Jesus,
 who both began and finished this race we're in.
 Study how he did it.
 Because he never lost sight of where he was headed -
 that exhilarating finish in and with God -
 he could put up with anything along the way:
 cross, shame, whatever.
 And now he's there, in the place of honour, right alongside God.
 When you find yourselves flagging in your faith,
 go over that story again,
 item by item,
 that long litany of hostility he plowed through.*

That will shoot adrenaline into your souls!

Hebrews 12:1ff.

Eugene Peterson - *The Message*. Navpress 2002

* * * * *

There are no successful churches. There are, instead, several communities of sinners gathered before God in towns and villages all over the world. The Spirit gathers them and does his work in them. In these communities one sinner is called the pastor and given a designated responsibility in the community. The pastor's responsibility is to keep the community attentive to God.

Eugene Peterson

* * * * *

Dear God, we pray for another way of being: another way of knowing.

Across the difficult terrain of our existence we have attempted to build a highway and in so doing have lost our footpath. God lead us to our footpath: Lead us there where in simplicity we may move at the speed of natural creatures and feel the earth's love beneath our feet. Lead us there where step-by-step we may feel the movement of creation in our hearts. And lead us there where side-by-side we may feel the embrace of the common soul. Nothing can be loved at speed.

God lead us to the slow path; to the joyous insights of the pilgrim; another way of knowing: another way of being.

AMEN

Leunig. The Prayer Tree. HarperCollins 1998

* * * * *

We know that in all things
God works for good
for those who love him,
who are called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:28 NRSV alt.

* * * * *

Prayer is
hard and sharp, soft and loving,
deep and inexpressible, shallow
and repetitious, a groaning and
sighing.
A silence and a shouting,
a burst of praise digging deep
down into loneliness, into me.
Loving.
Abandonment to despair, a
soaring to heights of ecstasy...

-Michael Hollings & Etta Gullick -

A CREED

I put my trust in God.
I believe that we live constantly
in the presence of an Eternal
Lover, whose patience never
wearies and whose blessing is
inexhaustible.

I believe that this world with all
its grandeur and beauty, its
fertility and fruitfulness, is the
gift of the Eternal Lover whose
Holy Spirit cherishes and sustains
all things.

I believe that Jesus of Nazareth is
the authentic Child of the Eternal
Lover, and that in his life, death
and resurrection there flows a
saving grace that cannot be
defeated.

I believe that in life and death this
God believes in me, and God's
faith shall not be in vain.
I put my trust in God. Amen!
I put my trust in God!

Source Unknown

BUSHED

Margaret Dunn

When the pathway ends and
the track peters out
And the direction to go is unclear,
I need a light, a beam to guide,
A homing signal on which to
set my route.

When the terrain is rocky and
strewn with stones
And the lawyer snatches at
hands and face,
I need to step very carefully and slow
Before the way opens out and becomes clear again.

When the horizon closes down on me
And the undergrowth tangle blocks the way,
When the only view is the sky above

I need some help to find my
way through.

When my landscape turns
to a wilderness true
Without any landmarks or
path to follow,
Without any footprints to
show the way,
How do I journey toward my home?

You, Jesus, are the only way I know
That brings me to life and to truth.
Only You who travelled
this route before
Know the way to bring me home.

* * * * *

Jesus said,

The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, "Look, here it is!" or "There it is!" For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you.

Luke 17:20-21 NRSV

* * * * *

God who sets us on a journey
to discover, dream and grow,
lead us as you led your people
in the desert, long ago;
journey inward, journey outward,
stir the spirit, stretch the mind,
love for God and self and neighbour
marks the way that Christ defined.

Exploration brings new insights,
changes choices we must face;
give us wisdom in deciding,
mindful always of your grace;
should we stumble, lose our bearings,
find it hard to know what's right,
we regain our true direction
focused on the Jesus light.

End our longing for the old days,
grant the vision that we face -
once we've started on this journey
there can be no turning back;
let us travel light, discarding
excess baggage from our past,
cherish only what's essential,
choosing treasure that will last.

When we set up camp and settle
to avoid love's risk and pain,

you disturb complacent comfort,
pull the tent pegs up again;
keep us travelling in the knowledge
you are always by our side;
give us courage for the journey,
Christ our goal and Christ our guide.

Joy Dine 1937-2001

Faith Forever Singing. No. 32

NZ Hymnbook Trust 2000

Copyright Joy Dine. Tune: Hyfrydol

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Jesus said to his disciples and the crowd,
If any want to become my followers,
let them deny themselves
and take up their cross and follow me.
For those who want to save their life
will lose it, and those who lose their life
for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel,
will save it. For what will it profit them
to gain the whole world
and forfeit their life?
Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?

Mark 8:34-37 NRSV

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