

**Vol. 5 No. 2 of the
SGM JOURNAL:**

Refresh

**SUMMER 2005-2006 ISSUE:
"Intimations of Life"**

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 "Intimations of Life".



Refresh Editor Andrew Dunn

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

Refresh

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COMMENT by *Andrew Dunn*

Intimations of life, of something more, somewhat deeper, fresher, larger, beyond, somehow breaking in, further along, higher, coming into focus or just right under our noses! That's what the poems and article themes in this issue of Refresh suggested to us as we pondered them looking for a title! A strange way to work? Yes, but then we are presenting an accumulation of poems in particular that we haven't used thus far and want to share. The articles, written or contributed for this Refresh, also encourage discoveries about growth of one kind or another, so really it's an issue about growth, but *intimations of life* seems a little more enticing!

A Frederick Buechner quote touches into this. He's been writing about sacraments and says, *A sacrament is when something holy happens. It is transparent time, time which you can see through to something deep inside. ... Needless to say, church isn't the only place where the holy happens. Sacramental moments can occur at any moment, any place and to anybody. ... If we weren't blind as bats, we might see that life itself is sacramental.*¹

This territory isn't always simple, easy, or clear and certainly not linear or accumulative. Sometimes the deepest growth comes out of the greatest pain or difficulty. At other times the most delicate intimation signals fresh insights that surprise and delight. At other times the darkest times can shift us further than we could hope for. At others the steady flow of successes do little for inner life with God. Then again a fresh sense of grace received, a glimpse of beauty or truth lifts the heart with joy and delight. So often we are brought back to the delights and mysteries of life and faith, and to following simply come what may, "one foot after the other in love and trust".

We acknowledge the contributions of two men who have died recently. Brother Roger, founder of Taizé Community in France, a Swiss Reformed layman, was murdered during a worship time a few weeks ago and Andrew and Lyn Pritchard were there 10 days later. Andrew's article tells the story. Scott Peck, the American psychiatrist and writer who has blessed many people worldwide with his numerous books on personal growth and moving further along the road less travelled of spirituality in our contemporary world died recently. We thank God for them both. They have been intimations of life and hope for many.

With this issue we're introducing colour into the centrespread and two photos and to cover the cost of this reduce the size somewhat. Digital printing opens up some fresh possibilities in production and with this issue we're experimenting a little.

Last issue (*Amazing Grace*) we included two articles on Jewish and Muslim Sufi views of grace. As other children of Abraham and Sarah we wanted to see how they understand grace. In this issue we explore how an avowed atheist explores spiritual themes, and again it's very enlightening. We trust this stretching material takes us all to the uncomfortable edges of our comfort zones and sharpens our understanding of the riches we have in Christ Jesus our Lord.

PILGRIMAGE by *M. Jane Hansen*

Life -
 journey to God,
 long or short
 easy or hard,
 pilgrimage
 our life's work.

Jesus, our Brother
 travelled our path,
 shows us the Way.

Holy Spirit, our companion
 gives us strength,
 directs our feet.

God, our Father,
 our destination,
 hope of our journey,
 object of our desiring
 and deepest longing,
 priceless treasure,
 waiting to welcome us home
 at our journey's end
 and
 life's beginning.

IMPASSE by *Barbara Sampson*

Is this a dying I can feel
 raw squeezing
 contained and stuck
 a too-small sleeping bag
 grave clothes wrapped tight?

Or is this vulnerable place
 a cocoon's embrace
 womb for a new birth?

Is that a dirge I hear
 in the distance
 coming closer
 a bell tolling
 for me?

Or is that sound
 the rattling of bones
 taking on flesh
 gasping for breath
 ready to rise and leap and dance?

MAKING MY STEPS SECURE A meditation on Psalm 40
by *Sue Pickering*

All I can see
are the solid soles
of Your boots
immediately above me,
crampons jammed
into the unforgiving ice.

I dare not look below me
into the swirling mist
and dizzy depths
where death lies in wait
for the slip of the axe,
the slide of the toe.

I cannot see in front of me
for the bulk of Your Being
fills my stinging eyes,
hiding the reality,
stark or shining,
of what lies ahead.

There is only this present moment:
a chiselled intensity redeemed
by single-minded trust;
a riveted togetherness
defying common sense;
a glimpse of eternity
etched into the mountainside
like a sculptor's prayer.

(This poem was awarded second place in the Spiritual Directors International poetry competition in 2005)

EXPLORATION by *Margaret Dunn*

Come explore
Discover
Look for
 All that's giftfulness in now.
Don't compare
Want different
As before
 See the giftfulness of now.
Notice small delights
God's fine finger work
Charming the senses
 The giftfulness in now.
The slower pace
Work released
No expectations
 Enjoying the gift of now.

("Explore" from sermon on 26.6.04)

PSALM 96 A prayer for worship by *David Grant*

We sing a new song today.

We sing a song made new
by the anniversary of Christ's birth.

We sing a new song as angels sang:
Glory to God in the highest
and on earth, peace.

We sing a new song, all of us
even if the rough passage out distorts the sound,
even if we can't keep the tune;
we sing a new song.

We sing a new song
even if it is under our breath in case someone hears,
even if self-consciousness gets the better of us;
we sing a new song.

The song made new because
God is with us.

We sing a new song
old words
old tradition
old story
new song
because of newness within ourselves.

Newness born when babies are born.
Newness born when Christ is born.
Newness born when our memory and the present meet,
and conceive
new hope
new life
God with us.

We sing a new song
when Christ is born.

AMEN.

From *Grant Us Your Peace*.
Prayers from the Lectionary Psalms.
Chalice press. 1998 P.71

PSALM 22:10 by Anna Johnstone

I have depended on you since birth.
You have always been my God.
I say I chose you
when I was sixteen
asked you into my heart
gave my life to you
as if this was when
it all started
Really, it was just
another step
another page
of the story
which lived in your heart
before time began
You have always been my God

Words of truth
 painted in love
 colours so deep
 that my mind demands
 I kneel before them
 absorbing them
 into the new canvas
 of today

SUNRISE ON LONELY TRACK ROAD *by Andrew Dunn*

The dark straight road beneath my feet was hard and long and cold.

The light of dawn was breaking fast against the dark of night receding westwards firmly, irresistibly.

The air was fresh enough inviting quickening pace,
 and, as the doctor said, "Get your pulse up mate
 and keep it ticking over at 120 beats a minute -
 and that's no garden stroll or sniffing flowers at leisure!".

So breath came fast and pulse rose too, and warmth held back the cold
 as mist came in from nowhere and threatened longer views.
 Manuka, hakea and pine trees disappeared amongst the fog
 as if to hide their waking hour, coy before the rising day.

For me it was a time to say how sorry I was that dawn today was lost
 And all the usual inspiration seemed to disappear.
 But then the sun rose over Rangitoto, or was it Motutapu or the Coromandel?
 I could not see. And all the closing fog and cloud began to glisten and glow around.
 And manuka, hakea and pines lit up as back light just for them
 flicked on and lit the eastern side of morning like earthbound Aurora -
 ghostly, gleaming, the foggy light in Fangorn Forest's dawn
 or the long fireworks afterglow at Bilbo's farewell party.

A camera would have caught the moment if one had been to hand;
 but why would anyone want to try to capture this performance
 in chemicals or digitals when it was not for capture or for holding
 - but for something else it seemed, more tender, more lasting?

And anyway, it wasn't really something to see out beyond me on the road
 for as I walked I trod inside the fog and dawn-light sun's glow among the trees and bush;
 and it became so clear that here were special effects on a morning walk
 encompassing and enfolding, like theatre in the round, like *Cats* in Covent Garden:
 around, behind, above, below, in front, within, on every side - and just performed for me!
 The homeward road seemed warmer, the hills less steep, the distance shorter,
 and another pulse was pumping inside like an excitement, an expectation,
 a sense of joy and timing that no other day had brought, and there have been many on that road.
 This was the one where something special happened, unplanned, unexpected but remembered.

And the only response my heart could find was "Really?", "Of course!" and "Thankyou!"

PRAYER *by Brother Roger of Taizé*

Christ, you came to earth not to condemn the world, but so
 that every human being might find a road opened by your
 compassion.

You are the one who loves me into the life that has no end.
 You comprehend everything in me, my desire to understand
 and to be understood, to love and be loved.

You open the way of risk.

Little by little, you transfigure the no in me into eternity's yes.

Brother Roger of Taizé

TAIZÉ ... Ten Days On *by Andrew Pritchard*

When we planned to visit Taizé as part of our long awaited OE we had of course no inkling of the tragedy that was to unfold. Watching news and reading papers was not high on the list of priorities while we were away so it was an email from Kopua that brought the shocking news of Brother Roger's murder. Our thoughts and prayers turned immediately to the Taizé Community, the Brothers who were so close to Brother Roger and to the thousands of young people at Taizé.

As the time of our visit drew closer we wondered what affect such a huge loss would have on the morale and spirit of the community. Would there be a sombre mood? A sense of heaviness? A difficulty in worship? An undercurrent of questioning God? ...

We arrived on a Friday morning ten days after Brother Roger's death. As we passed through the entrance there were dozens of cheerful people milling around, engaged in conversation. We were quickly recognised as 'first-timers', greeted and taken to the welcome centre. Introductions were made, questions answered, meal vouchers organised. Only when we asked about the impact on the community was anything said about Brother Roger's death. While there was great shock and sorrow at the nature of his death there was no regret for him ... he is with the God who has been the love of his life ... his giving of himself in life appeared to flow seamlessly into his giving of himself in death ... the community of Brothers that he lead in life is strong and vibrant ... There was, however, relief that the disruptions to community life and worship caused by necessary police investigations and inevitable media interest had ended.

On this day, ten days on, the only obvious evidence of Brother Roger's death was the carpet of fresh flowers in the little cemetery outside the village church where Brother Roger is buried and the regular flow of people pausing there to pray and give thanks for his life.

Back in the community dozens of groups of young people were sitting in the sun engaged in discussion based on the bible passage shared earlier in the morning. African, Indian, western European, eastern European, American, Australian people were amongst the nationalities that we recognised and of course some kiwis! Average age? My guess would be mid-twenties. We joined with an estimated 2500 people for midday prayer in the Church of the Reconciliation. Some 30 Brothers were there. The worship was simple and beautiful ... several chants, the reading of scripture, one or two prayers, the time of silence ... simple yet profound with a deep sense of openness to God and humble receptivity.

Lunch was a joyful time of sharing food and friendship. The efficiency with which such large numbers were catered for was impressive. The volunteers serving food did so cheerfully and helpfully, their demeanour spoke of a service gladly given to God.

For us the afternoon was spent joining the song practice in the church, visiting the village church and enjoying the atmosphere of a walk in the Taizé countryside. Later we tried not to spend too much money on books, icons, CDs and pottery and then attended one of the regular afternoon workshops. "Searching for Paradise" was a reflection on heaven and eternity seen through seven paintings from ancient Egypt to the present day. This was a stimulating and informative workshop presented by one of the Brothers.

We left Taizé after Friday night prayer, hearts full, spirits refreshed. The community is vibrant and strong. The death of its founder, while tragic and shocking was met with love and humble trust by those who live on. Brother Roger has sown the truths of these simple words, and his life, well. This 'grain of wheat' who has fallen into the ground and died continues to bear much fruit. Thanks be to God.

FAILURE AS SACRAMENT *by David Crawley*

One of the things that I most value about the Christian faith tradition is its place for failure and people who fail - a welcoming place, a home. In its Scriptures, for example, almost every main character has a significant experience of failure or being regarded as one, including Jesus. The hopeful possibility that I want to consider here is that our experiences of failure may be *sacramental* - a profound means of grace in our lives.

Failure is something that many of us try to avoid at all costs. From the time we are little we learn the painful social consequences of failure. Who has not at least tasted the agony of being laughed at, shamed, mocked, or branded as a loser by the very people we hoped might accept and approve of us? Failure also confronts us with the unwelcome reality that we are not the person we liked to think we were. Jay Hanke captures it with the suggestion that failure is "a tear in the fabric of who I am":

Failure is a dark experience that tells me, even as I struggle not to know or hear it, that at some basic level of my being I am inadequate. Somewhere in my life, I have not attained my own expectations for my

*behavior, my achievement, my personhood. At some level and to some degree, my failure is not just a "goof." It is a tear in the fabric of who I am, a fissure in my sense of self, a shadow in my soul.*¹

Of course, sometimes a feeling of failure is really just the result of coming up against another person's unreasonable expectations - like a mother who feels a failure because her children fight and don't clean up after themselves - somewhere she picked up a message that a perfect mother wouldn't have children who did those kind of things! If we are perfectionists, it may be our own unreasonable expectations of ourselves that lead us to struggle with feelings of failure. We set the bar impossibly high for ourselves.

Yet there are times when even by a reasonable standard we *have* failed, perhaps spectacularly. A moment of irresponsibility, stupidity, desperation or betrayal that leads to failure and regret. And at other times failure comes out of left field, when we were really doing our best to succeed. Perhaps a business failure, a family breakup, a job loss, a character assassination that wasn't deserved. Either way the end result is often a deep sense of shame and humiliation.

Failure may rupture not only our sense of self, or our relationships with others, but also the fabric of our relationship with God. God, how could you have let this happen to me? Why didn't you warn me? Why didn't you protect me? I was doing my best to live for you and you let me fail, you let me be humiliated. I felt so utterly alone - where were you? Think of the crucified Jesus - humiliated, stripped of all dignity, stripped of reputation, his followers disappointed, his opponents mocking and taunting. *He saved others, he cannot save himself!* Three amazing years of ministry all apparently for nothing. *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*

On a recent retreat I confronted some of my own painful memories of having failed - by my own standards if no one else's. They were literally painful memories, like a knife in the guts. In my room at the retreat centre where I was staying, there was a crucifix on the wall. A familiar representation of the suffering Jesus nailed to a cross. As I looked up at the crucifix on this occasion, I found myself saying: "You know don't you? You really do know what it's like." I saw the wound in his side where a spear had been thrust in to make sure he was dead and felt a connection with the stabbing pain of memories I was re-experiencing. So I found I was not alone in my wrestling with a sense of failure and humiliation. For me, failure as sacrament first meant that in Jesus I had a companion who knew exactly how I was feeling. There was also a sense of invitation: "You know you don't have to carry this alone. Let me carry the weight with you. Find rest in me."

As the retreat progressed, another picture captivated me - Rembrandt's painting "Descent from the Cross". It is an unappealing picture of Jesus - a naked, lifeless corpse - humiliated, flopping about in an awkward, almost grotesque manner, completely helpless. It reminded me of Aslan in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. The noble King of the Beasts is bound, shorn, taunted and killed. His body is left lying on the stone table, humiliated and abandoned. Our lowest moments may also leave us feeling utterly exposed, naked, humiliated and alone in the world. It is easy to feel like an alien among those whose lives seem so normal, untroubled by the shame of failure that is tearing at the fabric of our lives.

As I continued to look at Rembrandt's painting my focus widened from Jesus' humiliated, lifeless body to those who were lovingly letting him down from the cross. I was moved by the care and effort with which they were handling his body. Others look on - Joseph of Arimathea, who had negotiated with Pilate to obtain Jesus' body and provided the tomb where it would be buried, and the women who stayed with Jesus throughout his ordeal. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, we find that Aslan also is not utterly alone in the hour of his humiliation. Lucy and Susan hold vigil, and in time the little mice who love their Lion King creep out to nibble through the ropes binding him so tightly.

The phrase that came to me in relation to the painting was "Humiliation held gently." Such love surrounds Jesus in this picture, despite his pitiful and humiliating state. I thought about the quality of love that he had shown to unlovely, untouchable people in his lifetime - lepers, people with appalling diseases and deformities, poor people, all kinds of people who in their own societies were failures and worse than failures. The quality of love that Jesus showed these people is shown now to him in his time of rejection, humiliation and apparent failure.

Humiliation held gently. A body let down gently. In his dying moments Jesus cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" "Where are you when I need you ... Why have you let me down?" We could see this picture as one of God's absence, *God's* failure to be there when needed. Yet *God is* there - in the love and care of those who attend to Jesus in his death. Within the circle of friends that attend to Jesus Rembrandt captured a special quality of light, standing out from the background darkness of the work. Is God absent in Jesus' darkest moment of utter humiliation? Has God *let him down*? No. God is present, both in the suffering of Jesus on the cross and in this loving *letting down* of Jesus from the cross. Humiliation held gently, lovingly. Failure as sacrament.

Sometimes I wonder too whether God has let us down, when I watch people's lives utterly devastated and reduced to a pitiful level of existence - through a tsunami, a hurricane, an earthquake, war or terrorism. God, why have you forsaken these people? But at such times a myriad of little loving actions can also be seen, if I look for them. Ordinary people emerge to give, go, help, pray, and weep with those who are

weeping - humiliation is held gently. The God who apparently abandons and lets people down reappears in the love of those who gently reach out to help.

I wonder who will be there for me when I find myself in a place of pitiable failure and humiliation? I think of the people who have been there at such times. I have a renewed sense of the importance of not judging others, not gossiping their misfortunes, not shrinking back in embarrassment when people make a mess of things - but rather stepping forward to be a friend, helping to hold their humiliation with care and gentleness. "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Matt 25:40)

Failure as sacrament. The reality of my own failures brings me to the cross. I rediscover the companionship of Jesus. I glimpse the presence of God just when I thought God was absent. And eventually I am led beyond self-pity to a deeper humility, compassion and practical love for others in their time of need.

CHANGING *by Laurence Freeman*

piritual growth is human development. It's the way we see meaning rather than random probability or chaos in how we change through time. Growth means becoming more conscious at every level of our humanity and when consciousness has reached a sufficient degree we may begin to speak, tentatively, of enlightenment. Even if there are sudden and wonderful experiences that illuminate our path from time to time, the deeper work, of turning the dark places in our unconscious into light, is gradual. So it is also ordinary, humble and needs perseverance - like meditation itself which serves this essential human work of growth.

So, in the Christian understanding in particular, perhaps enlightenment is linked to moral maturity. What is the point or meaning of 'spiritual experiences' if we have not become nicer people, more patient, more kind, more attentive, more truthful? The unloving know nothing of God, is the simple reply of the New Testament. It reminds us that only the moral and the mystical in harmony can enlighten our darkness and free us from the habits of darkness. It is love, meaning the single experience of loving and being loved, that is our deepest desire and joy and only the fulfillment of that desire and the celebration of that joy really changes us. Anything else is not growth but a temporary adaptation from which we eventually revert back into old habits of being.

So the spiritual journey of human growth is gradual - 'shining like a lamp in a murky place until day breaks and the morning star rises to illuminate your mind' (2 Peter 1). Yet it is also a timeless process, not of acquisition which is a tedious business, but of realization which is simply seeing and recognizing.

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SPIRITUALITY AND THE SCIENCE FICTION WRITING ATHEIST *by Adrienne Thompson*

*Only in silence the word,
only in dark the light,
only in dying life:
bright the hawk's flight
on the empty sky.*

– The Creation of Ea¹

hy introduce Ursula LeGuin to readers of *Refresh*? Partly because I have always been a passionate advocate for my author of the moment (would you like to hear about Frederick Buechner some time?). But mainly because I enjoy the flavour of the fact that LeGuin, an avowed atheist, gives me such richness of metaphor and meaning, image and story to illuminate my faith.

I first read Ursula LeGuin when I was about 12 years old. *A Wizard of Earthsea*, *The Tombs of Atuan* and *The Farthest Shore* all tell of the young Wizard, Ged and his many voyages among the Islands of Earthsea.² I adored the fantasies but only recently discovered LeGuin's science fiction books. Some are lightweight, some immensely serious, but every one I've read has given me some gift for my spiritual imagination. With difficulty and reluctance I've selected just three themes to talk about. I hope some readers will proceed from this introduction to make their own discoveries. To those who are already addicts, my contrition for all I have left out.

Light and Shadow

More than 30 years before J K Rowling invented Hogwarts Ursula LeGuin created Roke, the Innermost Isle of Earthsea.

The students at the school for Wizards were showing off. As young men will, they dared each other to ever more dangerous feats of magic. Ged, gifted and arrogant, successfully summoned a long dead spirit. But with that act he released into the daylight world a nameless shadow that tore his face.

The shadow pursued Ged. At last he sought help from his old teacher Ogion who told him that he must master the shadow by naming it. Ged stopped running from the shadow and instead hunted it. It fled from him to the uttermost sea where at last he confronted it.

"Aloud and clearly, breaking that old silence, Ged spoke the shadow's name, and in the same moment the shadow spoke without lips or tongue, saying the same word: 'Ged.' And the two voices were one voice....

[Vetch] began to see the truth, that Ged had neither lost nor won but, naming the shadow of his death with his own name, had made himself whole: a man: who, knowing his whole true self cannot be used, or possessed by any power other than himself, and whose life therefore is lived for life's sake and never in the service of ruin, or pain, or hatred, or the dark."³

Make your own connections. I won't tell you mine. LeGuin herself acknowledges her debt both to Jung and to the story teller Hans Christian Anderson. But please note that in giving this brief extract I've in fact distorted the story. Its *meaning* is only found in the long tale of Ged's quest with all its companions and encounters.

Story and Message

I've loved stories ever since I can remember. I came to the Bible first as a book of stories but it wasn't too long before I learned the 'proper' way of reading it. Here is the story. This is what it means. Once the doctrine or the moral has been distilled from the narrative, the story becomes unimportant. The abstract concept is the thing, the story merely its container.

Ursula LeGuin is a story teller who sometimes reflects on how her stories are received:

My fiction, especially for kids and young adults, is often reviewed as if it existed in order to deliver a useful little sermon ("Growing up is tough but you can make it," that sort of thing). Does it ever occur to such reviewers that the meaning of the story might lie in the language itself, in the movement of the story as read, in an inexpressible sense of discovery, rather than a tidy bit of advice?

Ah! My Bible comes alive again. It's not a book of messages, of doctrines or of instructions.

Multidimensional and mysterious the Bible can become again a world for me to live in instead of a series of moral fables.

LeGuin continues:

The complex meanings of a serious story or novel can be understood only by participation in the language of the story itself. To translate them into a message or reduce them to a sermon distorts, betrays, and destroys them. ... Reading is a passionate act. If you read a story not just with your head, but also with your body and feelings and soul, the way you dance or listen to music, then it becomes your story. And it can mean infinitely more than any message. It can offer beauty. It can take you through pain. It can signify freedom. And it can mean something different every time you reread it."⁴

'Participation in the language of story.' Isn't that, in part, what I do, as I attempt to pray the Scriptures?

Living the story with intellect and imagination allows it to possess me and transform me in a way beyond the power of sermons or "messages".

Ideas

The great advantage of writing science fiction is self evident - you can invent your own world. This means you can play with ideas and play them out in a way that would be completely impossible if you confined your characters to earth.

One of the ideas Ursula LeGuin explores is the notion of gender. What does it mean to be male or female? She invented a race of hermaphrodites and set them on a planet caught in an ice age. The people of Gethen are sexless most of the time. Each month they morph into either male or female beings for a few days. Any mature person can beget or bear a child. Any adult can be pregnant and a nursing mother for part of her life and a father in the next period of his existence. Weird? Yes. But the story can let you ask the question: what difference does gender make?

"Imagine no religion," wrote John Lennon. Ursula LeGuin did. Most of her worlds have no religion, and whenever she does describe a formal belief system it always turns out to be destructive. On the other hand, ritual, 'mindfulness' (perhaps what I would describe more clumsily as the contemplative attitude) and an ethic of respect and trust are evident in all her worlds.

Going to another planet is the ultimate exercise in crossing cultures. So as a science fiction writer LeGuin illuminates how it feels to be stripped of one's assumptions about right and wrong, proper and improper. She describes the experience of an ambassador to another planet. He explains why he has come alone: *'It's the Ekumen's custom, and there are reasons for it. Though in fact I begin to wonder if I've ever understood the reasons. I thought it was for your sake, that I came alone, so obviously alone, so vulnerable, that I could in myself impose no threat, change no balance, not an invasion but a mere messenger boy. But there's more to it than that. Alone, I cannot change your world. But I can be changed*

by it. Alone, I must listen, as well as speak. Alone, the relationship I finally make, if I make one, is not impersonal and not only political: it is individual, it is personal, it is both more and less than political.⁵ Ursula LeGuin claims no religious faith yet her books breathe reverence for life and being. By inventing fantastic worlds she amplifies my sense of this world's reality. In her stories I find wonder, paradox and truth.

A few of my favourite books by Ursula LeGuin

Earthsea Books:

A Wizard of Earthsea; The Tombs of Atuan; The Farthest Shore; Tehanu; The Other Wind.

Science fiction Novels:

The Left Hand of Darkness; The Dispossessed; The Telling

Short Stories:

The Birthday of the World; Four Ways to Forgiveness

- 1 From 'the oldest and most sacred poem'. See *Tales from Earthsea* Orion 2002, p.275
- 2 Many years later LeGuin wrote more books in this series: see the book list at the end of this article.
- 3 From *A Wizard of Earthsea* 1968. *The Earthsea Quartet* Penguin 1993 p.164 and 165
- 4 [A Message about Messages](#) by Ursula K. LeGuin. See www.cbcbooks.org/cbcmagazine/meet/leguin_ursula_k.html
- 5 From *The Left Hand of Darkness* 1969 Orbit Books, 1992 p 219

PRAYER by *Thomas a Kempis*

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

Thomas a Kempis

SING by *John Heberton*

Sing to the Maker
with voice full and vibrant

Sing of life and love and all that is
God of the song
God in the song
making us as we sing

Be filled with this song

Sing to the Lover
To she who gently cups her hand
holding the delicate tissues of life
touch spanning the aeons

Sing to the one who sweeps wild hues
extravagant living rainbow
intricate webs

Seeping sensuality
 Sing to the Keeper
 Strong earth force of being
 reliable
 permanent
 solid foundation
 Dusting the edges
 Delicately turning our sovereign song

Sing to God
 Maker, Lover and Keeper
 Sing with God
 the song of creation
 All shall be well
 And all things shall be well
 And all manner of thing shall be well Sing!

WHERE WAS GOD IN ALL THIS? *by David Moxon*

The deaths of over 200,000 people due to the Tsunami on Boxing Day 2004 filled us all with huge shock, sorrow and compassion. The tragedy touched this country in a special way, as can be seen by the response to the Christian and State Tsunami appeals.

Individual Christians as well as parish communities began responding immediately with gifts of money and practical goods. ...

How do we understand huge natural disasters of this sort in God's world? A number of answers have been given in the press from people of faith, including the idea that it may be God's punishment, or that it is simply an unfathomable mystery we can't understand or that God is not related to the disaster at all, or that there is no God because a God would not make or allow this kind of catastrophe.

Anglican theologians have often taken a different view than any of these perspectives. Many Anglican thinkers believe that God created the world and goes on creating the world with the principle of freedom at the heart of things. Wherever you look in creation you will see this essential principle of freedom, from the life of the smallest atom, to the movement of plate tectonics, to the patterns of the weather.

Above all in creation this freedom reaches its highest expression deep within the human soul: we are, to some extent, creatures of free choice because of the way God has made us; we are free to enjoy God and co-create with God. We can choose to do so. We are also free to neglect or deny our heritage under God. God will not force us or manipulate us as mindless or soulless beings without conscience. It was this environment of freedom in which Jesus made the free choice to turn his face towards Jerusalem, to restore what has been lost by the falling of humankind.

Why does God place freedom at the heart of things? Because divine love is the child of divine freedom and God is love and freedom all the way through. God creates love by love and from love: it is a free gift. It is born and grows in a world of freedom. It cannot be born or grow any other way because of the way love is. There is no love if there is no freedom for love to blossom: it cannot be contrived or manipulated if it is real love.

Because God is Spirit, God is love and God is presence; God is not a puppeteer or a magician. God does not "cause" tsunamis - the geology and physics of the earth do. This is not a perfect world where God makes everything run 'perfectly', without suffering or death, because this would be a mindless and artificial way of creating: it would not be creation at all, it would be a mechanism without relationship or maturity or soul. There would be no freedom and therefore no real love.

The nature of God's creation and the possibility of huge suffering within it, is a profound mystery: the world has experienced "fall" many times. Yet all the justice and peace and redemption in the world are created by God in this environment, through the free will of people who fall in love with what God is bringing into being and who become agents, servants and bearers of God's free purpose of justice and righteousness. The consequences of a world where freedom is so central all the way through means that the whole creation does groan and travail as a woman in labour waiting for the glorious freedom of the children of God to emerge, to be born.

And so from the plate tectonics that began the Tsunami wave, to the patterns of the weather; from electrons whirring around the free space of a nucleus, to free human consciences, the freedom of the world works itself out. God is in it and through it and above it and around it, feeling its pain and feeding its hope, quickening its life without coercion, moving with a universal grace towards the fullness and completeness of a new creation: creating, judging, redeeming.

Where is God in the tsunami? God feels its shock and agony and loss more profoundly than anyone individual because God carries the pain of the world everywhere, all the time.

Where was God on Good Friday? God in Christ was hanging on a gallows, being tortured to death, apparently powerless but making a free offering of prophetic justice and radical universal atonement: from this we know that God moves through and from all suffering and unexpected tragedy in a spirit of healing and redemption: this is what happened in Christ, who is the human face of God in this world.

As Disciples of Christ, as his sisters and brothers we are called to be the human face of God in the world, turning our faces towards those whose faces are disfigured with pain and grief.

(First published in Church Alive, the journal of Waikato Diocese in February 2005. Used with permission. The same principles hold for the disasters we've seen this year in Pakistan and the US).

GINGER - Exploring the Spice of Christian Spirituality *by Jeff Whittaker*

It was towards the end of 2004. I had been encouraging a couple of parishioners to explore the possibility of training as spiritual directors. In the course of events a comment was made that maybe these two were a bit light on a background knowledge of Christian spirituality issues. I got to thinking about ways of addressing this deficiency. 'What about a ginger group,' I thought, 'a lively group that could explore Christian spirituality through discussion of a number of relevant books.' And so the idea germinated, and grew into **GINGER: Explore the Spice of Christian Spirituality**. In a whimsical gesture, I've illustrated the material produced with a ginger cat. (Yes, I know that this is illogical. But there you are... that's postmodernism for you.)

GINGER has several parts. The main part of the programme revolves around reading a book a month for twelve months. The books I chose are:

Prayer and Meditation:

The Lost Art of Meditation

by Sheila Pritchard

The Dark Night of the Soul

by Gerald May

Prayer

by O Hallsby

Personal Growth and Development:

The Gift of Being Yourself

by David Benner

A Little Book of the Human Shadow by Robert Bly

The Voyage of the Dawn Treader by C.S. Lewis

General Spirituality:

The Practice of Spiritual Direction by William Barry and William Connolly

Secret Affairs of the Soul

by Paul Hawker

The Solace of Fierce Landscapes

by Belden Lane

Spiritual Classics:

Confessions

by St Augustine

The Cloud of Unknowing Anonymous

Life Together

by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

As can be seen, I decided to group the books under general themes. Of course, a dozen books can only ever give a cursory overview of such a huge subject area as Christian spirituality. Nevertheless, I consider the books selected to be wide ranging and challenging.

After a month for reading, the current book is discussed around the following questions:

- What do you know of the author of this book? What do you know of the book's context?
- What are the major themes of the book? Summarize the book in one sentence.
- What did you find most helpful? What did you find least helpful?
- Where would the ideas from this book be most applicable today?
- Would you recommend this book to anyone else? Justify your response.
- How does this book relate to Christian spirituality?

In conjunction with the reading and discussion of the current book, I thought it would be good to incorporate teaching each month on a (loosely, in some cases) related aspect of Christian spirituality. And

so I came up with the following as the focus of a 30 minute interactive exploration around a resource sheet prepared by myself:

Spirituality definitions

Prayer

Imagination

Resistance

Image of God

The word

Understanding myself

Absence of God

Learning to discern

Incarnational spirituality

Strange spiritual experiences

Pathways to God

The mnemonic almost worked! (Of course I had to shuffle the subject areas around to fit roughly the books being discussed.) Cheesy? Perhaps, but the mnemonic did help my structuring of the ideas. And it could be that there's still a lot of engineer in me despite my having worked as a pastor for the last fourteen and a half years.

As well as these aspects, I have also encouraged participants to seek out workshops on the Myers-Briggs Personality Type and the Enneagram. Fortunately, such events are held in Christchurch on a semi-regular basis.

GINGER 1 got underway late in 2004, with about a dozen people involved. Meetings tend to be held on the last Thursday of the month, in the evening. About half are from Bryndwr Baptist Church, with the others coming from another Baptist church and others who heard about the programme from word of mouth or to whom I had mentioned what I was planning. There has been some fallout from the programme, but for those who have persevered an exciting sense of journeying together has developed.

Sometime after beginning GINGER 1, a number of others at Bryndwr Baptist heard some gossip from those already involved. A new group, GINGER 2 sprang to life. Evening meetings were out for most of these people. Consequently, we meet at 6:30am on a Saturday morning, and share breakfast together. And now GINGER 3 is looming as a possibility.

For those involved in the two groups, a broadening of horizons has been evident. It is exciting to see reading skills develop. For example, the maxim (not always true) that any book only has one really good idea has helped people read more critically. The idea that one doesn't have to agree with all that an author says has been new to some. I wonder too if the idea that we all have valid perspectives on how books and their themes affect us hasn't been liberating for a few. Everyone, however, has been impressed. I have been accused by a couple (not involved, but watching from the periphery) of erring from the faith and teaching demonic material! I wonder if other issues haven't been at work for them. That-be-as-it-may, the general empowerment of participants that comes with wrestling with new ideas and concepts has been rewarding to witness. Overall, those who have persisted are responding enthusiastically to increasing freedoms discovered in the world of ideas.

Anyway, that's GINGER. You might like to try running it in your setting. I'm happy to share resources. Of course, this article might inspire you to design your own reading programme around a different set of books. The wonderful choice is yours.

SCIENCE AND SPIRITUALITY by *Nicola Hoggard-Creegan*

- Earlier version delivered as a sermon on June 26th, 2005
Albany Presbyterian Church, Auckland

What is the connection between faith or spirituality and science? For me the connection between science and faith has been a life long engagement, even when I didn't believe much in God. Two authors in particular influenced me greatly in my teen years. One was the obscure British novelist CP Snow. A scientist turned novelist, he argued that science and the arts were distinct cultures, but we should know both of them. The other was the French Jesuit palaeontologist, Teilhard de Chardin. He argued for a mystical synthesis of evolutionary theory and Christian faith—Christ was the *telos* or omega point of cosmic and human progression. Inspired by these beginnings I have been trying to put these different disciplines together, ever since.

Neither science, nor faith, though, is monolithic. The dialogue itself is evolving. Science is and has been a changing practice. At one end of the spectrum we find the materialists who still want to reduce everything to the flat mechanical landscape of modernist reductionist science. This science says the more we reduce

things to smaller entities, the more we understand them. Thus psychology can be reduced to biology which can be reduced to chemistry which can then be seen in terms of physics.

Reductionist science has been extremely successful in its endeavours. But how do you relate God to this worldview? Well you can. You end up adding God onto the naturalistic world. In a recent *Stimulus* article Ross McKerras said that while they were missionaries in Uripiv they came to realize that their faith was no more than a thin veneer over their Western naturalism.¹ God is the moral aspect of life, the inner feelings, perhaps something to do with life after death. There are many fine Christians who believe that the world out there is just a machine-like place, and this is God's way of doing things.

But there have always been questions. Science takes up more and more of this picture. Faith becomes a shallow extra, something added to a hugely mechanistic way of looking at the world, in which atheism is a more and more credible hypothesis. You can add God to the machine, but why bother? The closeness of the God of Scripture, the God who responds to prayer, and moves in the Spirit in creation is strangely absent. Something else is missing, though, from this science: what we call wisdom, and connection with the nature we control. In this regard I found it interesting that the stone-age tribe off the coast of Indonesia survived the tsunami by listening to the wisdom of their ancestors which told them to go to high ground after a large earthquake. The 21st century techno-people perished.

The flat mechanical world, however, has never quite convinced me, even though, like almost everyone in the West, it has settled into my deep subconsciousness. It is not that science is wrong or faulty. It has cured a lot of human misery, and gives us a unique and beautiful view of the world. It is wrong only in the way it takes over the universe, making us see things at only one level, enticing us to believe that what we understand is pretty much most of what there is. But the world of the arts, of Tolkien, of Narnia, of Teilhard de Chardin, the world of music, seemed always to speak of another reality, not just another truth. Enter another kind of science. Science these days, isn't always mechanical and flat and reductionist. The personal element in science is now sometimes acknowledged. Rather than being flat and mechanical, this science causes us to look deeper and harder, especially in physics. Postmodern science acknowledges that there are levels of reality that must be worked and known on their own terms. We are given a picture of the world that is more wonderful and more interconnected and more alive than we have believed for 500 years. While religion was side-lined in the old science, this new science seems to breathe easily in the same space.

In physics it is the world of quantum mechanics and relativity theory, as well as string theory. This is now way beyond almost all of us in terms of intuitive understanding. We only can glimpse it from aside, so to speak. In this area, faith is a willing partner. Think of the very popular movie, *What the Bleep do we Know*, or the more scholarly, but hardly more staid Brian Greene's *Elegant Universe*. These movie/documentaries portray a world of radical interconnection and fluidity, of mind and matter not reduced to each other, but interwoven with each other, a world which encourages us to look for coincidence and synchronicity.

Much of this rings true to me. It is as though we are all collectively waking up after a long night asleep. Life is mysterious. We are connected. Consciousness is powerful. Nature is alive, and if not intelligent, then the image of the intelligent mind of God. Some mysterious life-force propels matter into living shapes and life-forms.

We can probably all remember the time when we were young and the world appeared this way. We lose it because we become a part of a story that sees nature a different way. As people of faith we become a part of a story that excludes nature. Rational and critical thinking, both very important, also diminish our sense of awe. And like all other people we are connected to machines and technology that subtly eclipse nature. The new consciousness, like most other movements is fuelled in part in reaction to the old. It is reacting to the failures of science at a deep level, failures to resonate with values and deep beliefs. There is a shift toward a new understanding of old wisdom, more consistent with connection, community, coherence. In this shift faith is a partner. This is the world of the new physics—more mysterious and more wonderful that we can imagine. The big Bang, for example, is followed by the Planck Era. This Planck Era lasts 10 to the minus 42 seconds. That is the kind of language one gets in religion. The "planck era"—10 to the minus 42 seconds. And think of quantum indeterminacy. At the subatomic level the solid world of atoms and static billiards ball universe disappears. Elementary particles enter in and out of existence—or appearance. We begin to feel like Alice down the rabbit hole. More amazing still is the world of string theory, or M theory. We may live in a world of eleven dimensions and multiple universes.

But of course not just Christianity is a partner. Every type of spirituality in the marketplace is out there. It is all a little confusing really. One moment we are trying to insist that God is really there, that spirituality is more than a personal preference, that connection to nature matters. The next moment the world is full of bizarre religious claims, all of them finding wisdom within, and all of them casting doubt on the old religions, of fear and guilt.

So why do we go here? Isn't it safer to stay in the old mechanical universe, and add God on to that model? I believe this misrepresents reality, and the stuff of existence, of which we are made. The new world, however risky, presents a much bigger and more fluid and more mysterious reality than that of modernist

science. Indirectly, this world gives us a wonderful glimpse of the magnificence of God, and of the extraordinary capacities we have as co-creators.

The new science, especially in the field of human/nature relations is often speculative. Can we really cause crystals to become distorted if we hate?² Can we feel the trauma and gratitude of birds?³ What is going on in crop circles? It is tentative and it is fascinating. I tend to put it on the back burner, as possibly true, and wait to see what else is coming in. But if it isn't on the back burner at all we won't notice when other evidence surfaces. We won't notice the new connections and the wider world it is opening up.

So we have these two ways into science/faith dialogue Both are important because both exist out there. Two routes. The mechanistic one in which we are straining to find transcendence, and to place the story of God/Christ on top of the materialist world. The other the interconnected, interconnecting, community of fluidity and permeability and spirit. I would certainly opt for the latter. The issues involved in the dialogue are not nearly as insurmountable. But they are there.

This world, though it is bigger and more mysterious still doesn't give us the content of faith. We still have the scandal of the cross and the good news that was prefigured in Abraham. The good news that we are not gods, but we can become like the God who has spoken through the prophets and was incarnate in Jesus.

This way is through Jesus, through participation in Jesus. The new physics and new fluid understanding of the world helps because the world described by the Bible—in which dreams are meaningful, a world inhabited by spirits, demons, angels, in which heaven and earth are interconnecting - is much more believable in this context, not because it gives us a way to God which bypasses Scripture. It leaves us with questions, but it also leaves us with more to ponder than before. And we can ponder things without necessarily agreeing with them or affirming them to be true.

1 Ross McKerras, "Naturalism Versus Supernaturalism," *Stimulus*, Vol 13, no.2, 2005, p25.

2 This idea is discussed in the movie *What the Bleep do we Know?*

3 For this idea see the movie *Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill*

ROSE PRUNING LESSONS by Phil Wilson

For many gardeners July signals the beginning of rose pruning time. Being no different to anyone else, last Saturday was my opportunity. Taking my secateurs and wheel barrow (for the prunings) I started with the Climbers growing on the fences of our courtyard. The first thing to do is remove any dead wood. Once that was done, Shirley (reading the manual) got me to move on to the spindly branches and stems. These also must be removed completely, as even if they do produce new growth and flowers next spring, they won't do very well.

As I worked, my mind turned to Jesus words in John chapter 15. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful." (John 15:1-2).

This text came alive for me in a new way. At first it was all as expected. Just as the future health of the rose depended on the removal of unproductive branches, so it is with the church. However, as I began to work on the large strong productive branches I had my first surprise. It didn't seem fair, cutting these back as well. After all, they were the healthy ones that had grown best. But it had to be done if I wanted a properly shaped bush, one that would flower abundantly when spring came. "This is the part," I thought, "that Christians don't always understand - why sometimes it is the good things that are taken away from us." I wondered if the rose understood what I was doing. Then came the next surprise. A thorn tore my hand as a particularly fine branch was removed. It appeared that it didn't understand. I sucked my bleeding hand and smiled. How many times had I done the same - lashed out at God when what I believed was good growth was cut away? How many times had I wondered if He knew what He was doing - or even cared? "Don't you understand Lord? This program was going so well. It was for your glory, why let it fail now?" And how many times when later the Kingdom was prospering wonderfully - albeit not as I had planned, had I contritely apologised - "I should have learned by now Lord, you always know what's best." "I wonder if I'll do better next time it hurts?" I thought.

LIVING FLAME OF LOVE: A Hymn based on words by St John of the Cross

O living flame of love
so tenderly you wound
the deepest centre of my soul.
No longer do you oppress me,

no longer you afflict me;
 now, if it be your will,
 perfect in this work of love;
 break through the veil
 of this sweet encounter.

O gentle dart, O tender wound,
 O soft hand, O loving, caring, touch
 that tastes of life eternal, life eternal.
 All debts are paid;
 slaying, you changed death into life,
 slaying, you changed death
 into this fire of love.

EYES MADE FOR WONDER *by Joy Cowley*

here is an old Jewish belief that we see and hear the things we are meant to see and hear. While I hold that in an open mind, I acknowledge serendipitous moments that have been very important to me. Once, While gazing at cards in a bookshop, I saw this written by a Benedictine monk: "Prayer is not about words; it's about love." The statement surprised me with truth and my heart leaped in recognition, flinging aside all the complex manuals on prayer I'd read over the years. Without realizing it, my understanding of prayer had become structured with aids that said more about my desire for prayer than prayer itself - place, time, posture, breathing, music, candles, incense, scripture, chant. You know what I mean. Certainly those prayer rituals brought a sense of well-being. Whatever we offer, we can be sure our God of abundance will receive it with generosity. But those rituals depended on my effort, my conditions. I was missing the most important thing.

Prayer is not about words; it's about love.

Yes! my heart cried. Yes, yes! It's so simple! God has already poured that love into you. Be aware of it. Open your eyes! Some people, like Bartimaeus, respond quickly to healing touch. For the rest of us there is gradual sight, a growing awareness of the loving purpose that holds our existence, that underlies everything. Divided vision blends into wholeness. We realize that we are all little wells connected to a great subterranean river of love, and that separation is an illusion.

Prayer is not about words; it's about love.

That's it! says the heart. Let incense and music carry you to the fragrance of Love. Let the candles bring you into the light of Love. Understand that words are simply the path that take you to the place where words are consumed by God's Love. This is not about your effort. All you can do is offer gratitude.

As for the place of prayer, that becomes for us, the entire world. We discover that whenever we look at something through the eyes of love, we see God.

A PEACE PRAYER *by Theresa of Avila*

May today there be peace within.

May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.

May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith.

May you use those gifts that you have received,

and pass on the love that has been given to you.

May you be content knowing you are a child of God.

Let this presence settle into your bones,

and allow your soul the freedom

to sing, dance, praise and love.

It is there for and in each and every one of you.

Amen

THE HUT IN THE KAIMAIS *by Donna Bruce*

The clouds, purged of the hills

Forced out over the bay with no place to release its cargo

full momentous placebo grey
 Confronted by the smiling sun shining strong
 in our neighbourhood
 No job description except from the cheeks of the wind blower
 back up, in the hills

Where we spent a night
 Graced with the hut
 Tight as a drum and draughtless,
 the dust lying and laying
 the mice posits, light as litter and oblivious
 the 2:20 racks for beds
 newly upholstered in billiard green
 shiny and padded for our comfort
 an acre for mice and their wax works

Miles but none
 from the all night screaming wind lashing the alpine garden
 numbing cold
 in our clever polys and bags
 Dreams and waking of the howling scudding cloud at dawn
 tonning past the windscreen of our beds

A hut we once would have toyed
 our tent so open and fresh would have thrashed like a flag
 The hut, 'safe as houses'
 God our refuge and shelter
 Secure and crack free
 Is there dust and mice in there?

ENFOLDED by Joy Carter

Father who created me,
 Enfold me in your love
 Jesus who redeemed me
 Enfold me in your love
 Spirit who re-creates me
 Enfold me in your love.

Father who created you
 Enfold you in His love
 Jesus who redeemed you,
 Enfold you in His love
 Spirit who re-creates you,
 Enfold you in His love.

Father who created us,
 Enfold us in your love
 Jesus who redeemed us
 Enfold us in your love
 Spirit who re-creates us
 Enfold us in your love.

Father, Son, Spirit
 Here we stand
 Enfolded in your love.

REVEALINGS by Marjory Edwards

I used to think God dwelt far away
 in celestial realms of glorious proportions.
 A God projecting His immense power upon the earth according
 to His will.
 Then I came to believe God sent His Son to enter earth's experience -
 live with His creation, bring light, teach forgiveness,
 give peace even beyond death.
 Now I know the Holy spirit impregnates
 the human heart
 to sense God's presence within;
 not merely for my daily needs,
 but with every breath I breathe.
 Now I perceive the divine purpose -
 to move according to God's will,
 partnership freely given, gladly accepted to shine as a candle in a tarnished world,
 overcome oppression,
 make known God's love, far, wide,
 even unto Heaven.

LAVISH LOVE by Carol Evitt

I have looked for it, searched for it,
 struggled for it - this elusive lavish love.
 Promises of refreshing pools
 and overflowing joy and love.
 Every now and then I get a little glimpse
 in the fragrance of the rose
 or the gull soaring in the wind.
 The world has taught me to hurry,
 Try harder
 and to please,
 bigger, better, faster.
 Yes, that extra load please.
 If only I had realized what it was squashing out of me!
 My friend, my precious Jesus
 has led me through a new door,
 opened my eye skyward to the bounty that is in store.
 In the stillness and the silence
 I have found that lavish love that speaks
 of heavenly treasures,
 things from above.
 I love the gentle whisper that is blowing in my ear,
 "I'm carrying that heavy burden so you don't have to stress.
 Enjoy this special banquet I'm offering you each day
 Filled with little treasures to enjoy along the way".
 The rolling waves,
 the birds echoing from above
 or the precious smiling face to remind me of his love,
 in stillness and silence
 in the refreshing pools of rest,
 he fills me for the journey, to give his yes, his very best.
 My God who loves me deeply.

GROUNDS OF MY BEING by John Heberton

Ooo aah Coffee.
 Short black, long white,
 Decaf - what's the point?

Bowls of latte
 milky caffeine frothed;
 I love you
 Mm...mmm Coffee.
 Pour on down
 coffee thick
 coffee brown
 taste the quickening
 caffeine rush of the soul;
 I live to breathe you.
 Let me swim in you
 drown my life in you
 devote myself to the cherished plunger,
 never stray far from the prized filter;
 suffer me, staunch disciple of the bean.
 No more instant, no more poison,
 just me and my bowl of succulent grounds.
 Let me ingest this exquisite dram
 savour each luscious drop;
 I long for the real thing.
 Ooo aah Coffee.
 Robert Harris, Café L'Affare
 Trade Aid yet trendy,
 supermarket shelves filled with joy;
 I love you.

CONFIRMATION VOWS

ere are the Confirmation vows of five young people at their Confirmation Service at St Lukes, Remuera, 15th May 2005. Rather than responding to a series of set questions in the confirmation service, this Statement was composed by the five being confirmed, assisted by their youth leaders, and read aloud. The congregation responded appropriately to this statement.

Statement by those being confirmed

We are here because we have made a choice to explore our Christianity in this Community. We aspire to the way of Jesus - Jesus who taught and who teaches wisdom, Jesus who sought and who seeks justice, Jesus who healed and is healing, Jesus who disclosed and who discloses the God of compassion. We choose to journey with this God of compassion - a God of faith and of relationship, a God of grace, incapable of loving us less. We undertake this journey in response to a relationship with our creator. We seek the intimacy of the passionate Spirit of God - the Spirit of the God who is here and now, who is closer than our breathing, the Spirit in whom we live and move and have our being.

We are part of this Community and of the wider Church. It is in this place and with these people that we continue to question and challenge our faith and the world around us.

We ask our Community to support us as we commit to a journey of seeking justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with our God, life-giver, pain-bearer, love-maker.

Response by the community

We, your Community, undertake to support and encourage you on your journeys with God. Wherever you go, through all the trials and triumphs, discoveries and decisions you face we will keep you in our hearts and minds. With you, we too will continue to affirm and explore the faith we share together.

A NON LITURGICAL HOLY COMMUNION *by Jim Battersby*

his Communion format was written by Jim as a way of reaching across to people deeply committed to conservation and care of the earth, often post-church. It has been used a number of times amongst the Friends of Tiritiri Matangi Island - of which Jim is a founding member - at their Easter services on the island.

Introduction

Today, instead of the service of Holy Communion we are used to, I want us to take ourselves back to a few months after Jesus has finally gone from us.

We are a small band of Jesus' followers, still trying to make sense of all that has happened since the last Passover. We will never forget the bewilderment of that night, and the horror of that next day when we witnessed his execution. Our stomachs still churn at the memory. Nor will we ever forget our amazement on that Sunday morning, as we tried to grasp the tremendous news from the tomb, "He is not here; he has risen".

Then a week later, still terrified that we might be next, we met behind locked doors in that same upstairs room. Suddenly he was among us with his amazing words, "Peace be unto you", and our hearts echoed that peace. He was among us again, as he said he always would be.

So he is among us today. We gather to worship in his name. And here we are going to try to piece together what happened in the Upper Room that last night before he died.

(Here sat Peter who became our leader. And here John, to one who loved so much, and the rest, equally important, who also went out to tell others about Jesus in word or deed.)

The Passover ceremony had ended. Some bread remained, and still that seemingly inexhaustible supply of wine.

To remind us that we live, and love and worship together, he asked us to greet each other saying "Peace be with you". Let's do that now, and feel our oneness with him and one another.

Jesus picked up a loaf. He told us again how it came from many seeds of grain - each hidden in the dark cold moist earth; each feeling it was dying as it split open; but then it seemed to gain new life as a growing shoot emerged. And as it grew it became a stalk, bearing a head of many seeds, proudly waving in the sunlight and breeze. Its colour changed from green to gold, only to be wrenched cruelly from the stalk, ground to become a white powder. Other things were added to it. Then the pummelling of kneading hands, and the searing heat of the oven, to be removed at the right time with a delicious aroma of crisp freshness. Thus the purpose of the seed was to become bread to feed people.

He held the bread in his craftsman's hands. "This", he said, "is like my body, my very self. I have known the battering of life - and there will be more to come. But the whole aim of my life, and what is about to happen, is to give myself to you that you may feed your hearts on me as daily food, and grow strong to continue my work of proclaiming the love of God. Just as the grain of seed reaches its full development in the bread, so may you reach towards what you were designed to be, through me."

Then he lifted the goblet containing wine. He said, "Again the origin of this wine is in the soil. But the vine is new stock grafted on to vigorous old stock, with its roots reaching far down into the ground - into the past. The vine grows, leaves sprout, buds open into flowers, changing into abundant green fruit. This has to be thinned, to allow room from the fruit to mature to its best. And when fully grown and ripened, it is plucked from the vine and trampled on by many feet to extract the juice. In various ways, this becomes wine.

"The redness of the wine", he said, "is like blood. We Jews believe that the mysterious element we called life, is carried in the blood. You remember, when an animal is slaughtered for a sacrifice, its blood flows out as its life ends. So this is like my blood, the essence of my life, whose vitality I want to share with you. As you seek to live close to me, you will be like branches of whom I am the vine. This also means that I need you all, like fruit, to carry my message of Love into the world."

He then said a prayer, thanking the Father for the gift of Life and the gift of Love, something like this:

"Father, we thank you that we have been given life to grow and experience this wonderful world, and we have come to know what it is to be loved by you without conditions. We thank you we have this life and this love to share with others, and the knowledge that you are always with us, no matter what happens. We thank you for this bread and wine we are about to share, ensuring us of your newness of life available to us."

Then he said, "Let's say together the Family prayer I taught you." And feeling this special oneness, we all now joined in, each in his or her own language, "Our Father...."

Then he took the loaf of bread, and broke it into several pieces, and said, "This bread, like my body broken, is shared out among you. As you munch part of it, know that together you are feeding on me. Also think of how you are sharing my life and commission together. Whenever you do this, I will be with you in a special way". He passed the broken pieces around, and we all pulled a piece off to munch. Each ate his portion very thoughtfully.

When he lifted the goblet of wine, he said, "This is my blood, my very life, poured out for you all. As you drink this fruit of the vine, also think about how you are sharing my life together. Whenever you do this together, I will be with you in a special way". The goblet was passed round, and each of us took a sip, and it seemed as though an inner glow was just like it felt to be with him.

It is so wonderful to follow what he showed and taught us that night, especially to remember that he said he would be with us in this special way when we shared together.

We now share the bread. Remember what Jesus said, "This is my broken body given for you". (As you pass this to another, say, "This is like the body of Jesus, broken for you")

Then we share the cup. Remember how Jesus said, "This is my blood poured out for you". (As you pass the wine to another say, "This is the red wine of my blood, my very life, poured out for you.")

He said a prayer then, - something like this:

“We thank you Father that you feed each of us, and all of us together, in this special way. Help us to face whatever step in life each of us must now take, with your courage and love. And help us to love deeply those about us who are in special need, and be your hands and feet, and tongue to them.”

Then we sang a song, which our fathers, and their fathers before them sang. (*Here Psalm 103: 1-5, 21-22*)

Reaching out to one another we said The Grace together: “May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the companionship of the Holy Spirit be with us.”

While we were thus joined together, we prayed for others not with us.

And we went out onto the Mount of Olives, to face whatever lay ahead.

MY JOURNEY HOME, HOKINGA MAI! by Susannah Connolly

ia ora, ko Susannah Connolly ko taku ingoa, my name is Susannah, of Kapotai hapu o Waikare. In 2004 I was asked to be a part of documentary on church leavers, but that fell through. Then it was suggested that instead we do a documentary on finding my Marae. At this my heart leapt inside me, nerves began to flutter and I smiled a huge grin from ear to ear, and said a tentative “yes”. The journey had begun; there was no stopping the wheel of destiny, the wheel turning from its own inner core. I had to learn to trust, go with the flow, and at times, run to catch up.

My mother died in 2001, then in 2002 a sister of ours died. My eldest sister and I got together and decided that we would find our Maori roots. We had some information and were determined that within the next two years we’d find out if there was any Marae or hapu we were attached to. Dad having died in 1996 had left us with information to sift through.

Now back to the beginning when along came Steven, a young Uni Student who had a heart of creativity, grace and compassion, also his last assignment to finish, a documentary of some relevance. He chose me; he heard my heart one day pondering my story amongst my art, in my washhouse, then my art room.

Having spotted a picture of Tamati Waka Nene and asking about the story behind the picture he came up with the idea of doing his assignment on me! So, we made a documentary which has stunned hundreds of people. This was not planned, I thought it would be put on the shelves of AUT and I would watch it quietly from time to time. This was not to be, it’s now been in five film festivals and is a finalist for the Peace Awards. This was NOT planned either, this is the part where I am running to catch up.

So as I write about growth and intimations, I’ll have to start with the idea that God heard my cry, God was so totally into us finding our roots that I am still standing in awe. So, often we hear about heaven being our home but I’d begun to wander about this and whether heaven might be here on earth some how, and how this affected who we were. Also in church you hear that your heart should be heaven bound; I struggled with mine being so earthly bound I’d be no heavenly use to anyone. I desired with all my heart to know more about my human history - was I rebel or what?

The other question I had about all this was were I doing this to try and finally please my father who thought me a “.....fool” for being a Christian. However after years of working through this I knew it was for myself, there was a deep inner knowing that it “was time”. One of the deepest learning’s through all of this is that it is “time”. Time to be seen, a time to truly trust myself, time to stand up and be who I am, unashamed and extremely grateful. It also seems to be God’s time for me to be seen and heard.

I also am constantly learning that I do not have the answers to life; the answers are the questions we ask, these questions are to be pondered, and I believe they are to be gently held as if pregnant and in waiting. I am learning to trust that because I said ‘yes’ to this journey I am able to walk the road not yet traveled. This documentary has surprised me and Steven, speaking to hundreds of people in a deep and intimate way, inspiring conversations and possibilities I’d only dreamt of. Yes, I had dreamt of being able to speak out about my life but never believing I was of importance. Yet, David Whyte says, “One of the greatest blocks I see to new possibility is our inability to tell our stories with the magnificence they deserve - in other words our inability to grant magnificence to our own lives”. Even in quoting this I’m trembling with our upbringing cautions about showing off, and Paul’s words about seeing yourself as your ought! Then Nelson Mandela’s voice comes to me about being afraid not of our weaknesses but our strengths, it is much harder to remain in humility when things are going well. Humility being the true art of knowing one’s self. At the Spiritual Director’s conference in Cambridge this year I asked people “Where are you in your belonging or where are your directees in their belonging?” This was because since making this journey back into my roots I’ve met migrants and kiwi, refugees and visitors who cry when they talk of their belonging. So, my greatest learning is around the human soul and what it is that we need: we need to be heard, to be validated, to be heard again and listened into being. Jack Kornfield says, “spiritual maturity is an acceptance of life in relationship”, therefore I am discovering signs along the journey that point me in the direction of those who’ve gone before me, my ancestors’ stories are inspiring me today on both sides of my whakapapapa. “The love of others is the love of God experienced in this life” - Wendy Wright speaks here words that encourage me in my season of “being seen”.

Having been given a tremendous gift by the people of Waikare Marae (who gave us a full powhiri and karanga, who invited us over from the visitor's side to the side of belonging, who said, "Susannah and your family you have come home, this is your marae"), I now have experience of the love of others, actually the love of strangers. They were the Father to me, they were Jesus with a glass of water, they are my family now. They have joined with others in my life and have accepted me fully for who I am, a Christ like acceptance. I am silenced with the presence of God as I write, a gentle envelopment of serenity and light. On another level the things I am learning are about feeling, knowing that I belong to God even more, that somehow knowing about my Maori and Irish history is planting my feet on Aotearoa even more intimately. I have become like the mighty Kauri and am learning to stand in awe of all creation, all *imago dei*. That these happenings in our lives are gifts from God, they are initiated by Holy Spirit and offered to us in a breath-taking moment, where holiness waits with bated breath watching as to whether we will open our hands and receive. I desire to always be able to receive, to learn how to be an open vessel of new things.

REFLECTIONS ON A MAIDEN VOYAGE by Di Woods

The biennial conference of the Association of Christian Spiritual Directors in Aotearoa New Zealand met at St Peter's College, Cambridge, 29th September to 2nd October 2005, with between 60 - 70 people attending.

I began to get slightly concerned when the third person said how nice it was to see a younger person at the conference. That was the third person in half an hour since arriving at the venue. It hadn't occurred to me to ponder such things till then, but sure enough a grand total of two delegates qualified in the under 40s category! Did it matter? Not at all for the main purpose of the conference.

It was great to hear excellent speakers give thought provoking presentations with the opportunity for reflection in smaller groups afterwards. We were given ample opportunity to engage our brains, our hearts and our souls - and our stomachs once we worked out where the afternoon tea was locked up!

Having arrived in Cambridge, we travelled from impasse to generational issues, from bicultural reflections to the juxtaposition of science and religion to interfaith relationships, with icons and photographic pilgrimage thrown in to keep the journeyers well satisfied.

While some may have been concerned that their pedometers would be overworked with the dining room/accommodation and conference room separated by a 10 minute stroll, it was a blessing in disguise. Many quality conversations were had on the paths of St Peter's, and it won't be news to readers of this journal that the pace of a walked, rather than (car) driven life, has some distinct spiritual advantages. The biggest intrigue for me was the AGM of the ACSD - as a first time attendee, I came with an assumption (I know, NEVER assume!) that this would be something like a large parish AGM. Wrong. At least wrong compared with my experience of large parishes. The bits that could have been interesting were bland - and then the tedious and legalistic bits took off into a fine debate. Excellent stuff: there is life in the ACSD! As I say, a most intriguing event. I'd better not say any more...

A side effect of my condition (of being under 40, aka GenX) is that I have a perverse interest in wondering what the future of an organisation looks like. It can be a depressing side effect some days, but wonderfully full of hope on the other days. How did ACSD fare? As I chatted with others about fellow directors who weren't present, we realised the conference had been scheduled for the school holidays, and that large numbers of younger members would otherwise have been present (we hope!!). Some of us pondered an ACSD that might have a website, that would allow people to find a director online, that would correspond with members by email... It's good to dream. It's even better when dreams become reality.

Then there was a fascinating conversation about the openness to interfaith dialogue - have some of us become more comfortable with it than we are with having dialogue amongst other Christian denominations? I find the latter part of that reflection true, sad and alarming... And then there was the foreshadowing of a discussion to be had at 2007's conference about the inclusion of the word "Christian" in the Association's name. Dropping it could be considered a way of indicating that we are more interested in dialogue and relationships with other faiths than with other Christians. I for one, come from a generation that wants people to have the courage of their convictions, to stand up and be counted, to be prepared to say who they are.

What's the future looking like? Fascinating! Will it be worth going in 2007? Absolutely!

THOUGHTS ...

When I began attending church again after twenty years away, I felt bombarded by the vocabulary of the Christian church. Words such as "Christ," "heresy," "repentance," and "salvation" seemed dauntingly abstract to me, even vaguely threatening. They carried an enormous weight of emotional baggage from my own childhood and also from family history. For reasons I did not comprehend, church seemed a place I

needed to be. But in order to inhabit it, to claim it as mine, I had to rebuild my religious vocabulary. The words had to become real to me, in an existential sense.

This book is a report on the process by which they did so.

Kathleen Norris. *Amazing Grace*. Riverhead Books. 1999. 2-3

You may remember that *The Road Less Traveled* opened with the sentence "Life is difficult." And to that great truth I will now add another translation:

Life is complex.

Each one of us must make (one's) own path through life. There are no self-help manuals, no formulas, no easy answers. The right road for one is the wrong road for another. ... The journey of life is not paved in blacktop; it is not brightly lit, and it has no road signs. It is a rocky path through the wilderness.

M. Scott Peck. *Further Along the road Less Travelled*. Simon and Schuster. 1993. 13

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION RESEARCH PAPER

Bridges For Evangelicals

Journeying Into Contemplative Spirituality And Spiritual Direction by Elsa McInnes.

Available on our website www.sgm.org.nz.research and from Carole Hunt in hard copy (NZ\$6.00):

sgm@clear.net.nz

BOOK REVIEWS

A Generous Orthodoxy

by Brian D. McLaren

Published by Youth Specialities, Zondervan 2004

This review by Adrienne Thompson was first published in the Spirited Exchanges Newsletter earlier in 2005.

The sub-title says it all really. *Why I am a missional, evangelical, post/protestant, liberal/conservative, mystical/poetic, biblical, charismatic/contemplative, fundamentalist/calvinist, anabaptist/anglican, methodist, catholic, green, incarnational, depressed-yet-hopeful, emergent, unfinished, Christian.*

In the title of this book Brian McLaren pays conscious tribute to G. K. Chesterton's classic *Orthodoxy*. Like Chesterton, McLaren isn't a theologian or a biblical scholar but a thinker, and a lover of words who sees orthodoxy not as 'heavy, humdrum and safe ... [but as] one whirling adventure' (Chesterton's words). He's also described as a pastor and a leader in the emergent church movement.

McLaren begins his introduction by addressing his potential readers: people on the inside and the outside of the Christian faith, people who have left, people looking for a reason not to leave, church leaders and beginning believers. He tells them all that his goal in this book is 'to find a way to embrace the good in many traditions and historic streams of the Christian faith and to integrate them, yielding a new, generous, emergent approach that is greater than the sum of its parts.' His point, as he makes clear throughout the book, is that new discoveries do not (or need not) cancel out older learning but transcend and embrace it, as a tree grows by adding new growth rings.

McLaren begins Chapter 0 (it's the only book with a Chapter 0!) with a warning that it is 'for Mature Audiences only'. He admits that for some the very phrase *generous orthodoxy* is oxymoronic. Orthodoxy, for many people, is anything but generous, being rather a club to batter people with. Nevertheless he persists in hoping for a kind of orthodoxy (right belief) which results in and also grows out of orthopraxy (right behaviour). After all what is the value of a right understanding of the Trinity, for example, that doesn't result in loving, honouring and serving the Trinity?

After the Introduction and Chapter 0, the first section of the book explains *Why I am a Christian*. The chapter titles intrigue: *the Seven Jesuses I have known; Jesus and God B; Would Jesus be a Christian? Jesus: Saviour of What?*

The following chapters describe *The kind of Christian I am*. They address the different themes of historic and contemporary Christian faith, affirming what each has added to the richness of the feast we can be nourished by and enjoy. There were some surprises there for me - the account of the beginning of the fundamentalist movement for example. The chapter on emergence puts forward liberating new ideas carried by powerful metaphors.

I like the tone of this book. It's personal, thoughtful, relaxed and lively. It's not preachy. McLaren recognizes that many of his readers won't like some or even a lot of what he is saying. He puts forward his views with passion, yet with respect for different perspectives. The feeling of this book is not of listening to a lecture, still less a diatribe, but of participating in a conversation.

A quote from the last chapter gives a taste of the book:

"To be a Christian in a generously orthodox way is not to claim to have the truth captured, stuffed and mounted on the wall. It is rather to be in a loving (ethical) community of people who are seeking the truth (doctrine) on the road of mission ... and who have been launched on the quest by Jesus, who, with us, guides us still. Do we have it? Have we taken hold of it? Not fully, not yet, of course not. But we keep seeking. We're finding enough to keep us going. But we're not finished. That to me is orthodoxy - a way of seeing and seeking, a way of living, a way of thinking and loving and learning that helps what we believe become more true over time, more resonant with the infinite glory that is God."

Recommended.

To pursue the conversation visit Brian McLaren's website www.anewkindofchristian.com.

There's a thoughtful critique of aspects of the book available along with McLaren's response to the critique. See also www.emergentvillage.org.

GROWTH - Training Vs Trying

From the *Spiritual Transformation Bible Study Series* - No. 3.

Willow Creek Association, Zondervan Publishing House,
Grand Rapids, Michigan. NZ\$18.50. PP 131.

Reviewed by Anne McCracken

In the introduction to this Willow Creek group study guide, participants are invited to experiment with weekly spiritual exercises as well as completing traditional Bible studies. Drawing from authors such as Henri Nouwen and Richard Foster, these exercises are designed to help participants to "invite (God) into all aspects of life, even everyday routines," by "arranging (their) lives around those practices that will enable (them) to stay connected to God", such as suggestions for slowing down and taking advantage of solitude moments, a weekly or daily *examen*, *lection divina* type Scripture meditations, *simple prayer*, and waiting on God in desert experiences.

For those new to the idea of contemplation, these exercises provide a very helpful and gentle introduction to the practice of attention and awareness, two of the disciplines most basic to contemplation.

Available in New Zealand through Willow Creek Association, 63-71 Great North Rd, Auckland. 09 306-4391 - www.willowcreek.org.nz

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Sacred Space - The Prayer Book 2005

Jesuit Communication Centre, Ireland. \$29.95. 377pp.

Available from Pleroma,
0508-988-988.

Reviewed by David Hall

Last Christmas a friend gave me a copy of this book which is designed to give something to think and pray about each day through the year. Each Sunday the pattern for the week is introduced with notes on

The presence of God

Freedom

Consciousness

The Word that leads to a daily scripture and points to think about

Conversation

Conclusion.

The book follows the liturgical year but not slavishly. I think that's its strength as it gives a clear structure to pray and meditate on through the year.

An example of one week is May 22-28 when the readings focus on the times when Jesus rebukes his disciples - the introducing starts

The Hard Word - What do we do when someone we love speaks hard words? We don't like it. We feel wounded and misunderstood Later we may recognize that there was some merit in the challenge which initially seemed so hurtful and unfair.

The book has emerged from a Web site of the same name (www.sacredspace.ie) started in 1999. The book follows the same format as the Web site but the Web site does reflect real time events that a book can never do. With Sacred Space I have found a new and fresh approach to the daily "quiet time" that encourages a conversation with God without being over structured. I encourage anyone who is feeling frustrated with their current "quiet time" format to give Sacred Space a try.

FILM REVIEW

What The Bleep Do We Know!?

2004 Lord of the Wind Films

Reviewed by Andrew Dunn

Now here's something special - an attempt to explore the "continual convergence of two great modes of human inquiry - science and spirit. Quantum physics, neurology and molecular biology seem to be saying things that are in agreement with what mystics have been saying for centuries". With this starting point and the use of digital technology this low budget high content film has been produced and it has created something of a cult following. See the website www.whatthebleep.com

Part story ("Amanda" discovers there's more to life than appears to be), part documentary exploring a wide range of ideas and discoveries outside the realm of science, and part personal testimony of the mystical in life, this film raises wonderful questions and issues for, and rattles the cage of the old world of modern science.

Yes, some of it is far-fetched, and yes much of it has been challenged by "modern" thinkers, but its basic drift is very encouraging for people of faith, spirit and experience of the holy, the divine, the other.

An Einstein quote from the Bleep website is a gem: *The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mystical. It is the source of all true art and science.*

So here's a film that unashamedly, some would say uncritically, roams around in the spiritual and mystical as it looks at the ways things work and affect people and our world and universe. If it does nothing more than stir thought and reaction it will have done a very good job. But it does much more than that at this critical time of a shift in the basic fabric of our understanding and experience of reality.

The best source for it now will be video shops like Videon in Auckland a good starting point. Others like it in other centres which cater for festival and historic films would be worth approaching. It can also be purchased on the web and in some shops in NZ (Whitcoulls have it for \$29.95).

MUSIC REVIEW

Available Light

Dave Dobbyn. Epic Records 2005.

(Also available with bonus DVD including song commentaries by D.D.)

Reviewed by Warren Deason

Finale. New Zealand music awards. Dave Dobbyn onstage with friends performing *Welcome Home* - a song which gave him yet another music award, this time for best songwriter of the year. There's even Ahmed Zaoui there with a cameo role. A nice touch. Zaoui also appears in the music video that goes along with the song.

Memorial service. Tribute to another David. Lange this time. Dobbyn sings *Welcome Home*. A poignant time. Lange welcomed home by the angels perhaps?

Appropriate. A song for a man whose turangawaewae was multicultural Mangere. Dobbyn wrote the song after hearing about the march to combat racism in Christchurch : *"Tonight I am feeling for you under the state of a strange land. You have sacrificed much to be here "there but for grace..." as I offer my hand."*

We are a country of migrants. In an NZPA interview Dobbyn made it clear what he thinks about that:

"I'm an advocate for acceptance of communities beyond mere tolerance, and actually embracing other cultures and other religions. We've all got a migrant story - whichever way you look at." *Welcome Home* opens the album. Well, not quite. The brief intro and outro tracks give us a burst of cicada song and a little horn ensemble. Made me think of putatara - the conch shell trumpet. Maybe a welcome for all of us in Aotearoa/New Zealand?

This is Dobbyn's gospel album. He has made no secret of his Christian faith and images of that faith thread their way through most of these songs but never in a way that is heavy handed, trite or cloying. There are not the usual vocal pyrotechnics that have marked many of his songs. He does say that the falsetto on *You got heart* was a way of coming from a vulnerable place. Most of the songs have that sense of personal exposure and openness. Dobbyn does wear his heart on his album sleeve.

There's the struggle between light and dark -

"I get accustomed to the light and then all hell breaks loose..." (Accustomed to the light)

"lay down your darkness, step into the light ..." (*Let that river go*). (An aside: the light and dark that form a photographer's palette are here too in Dobbyn's photography which decorates the CD insert - images formed with available light. Hence the album title?)

Hope and the celebration of new beginnings: *"Wipe away my tears Lord, burn my past of constant sorrow into the fire with that bitter thorn that I may be new tomorrow born"* (*Roll away*)

"When your heart is broken and you feel no good, with your mind unspoken, drink from the river then pour the wine..." (Drink the river)

Awe, wonder and seeing with new eyes: *"Outrageous design zooming into paradise gained, outrageous design sweeping up the valley in the rain..." (Outrageous design)*

What really matters: *"What's the point of leaning on gravity, it will only bring you down..." (Pour the wine)*

But it's not just the lyrics. Dobbyn speaks of his rediscovery of the piano and most of these songs are centred around his keyboard playing. There's the hymnlike *Forgiveness* and *Roll away*, reminiscent, as he says, of past melodies heard in church in a Catholic childhood. A song where Dave really rocks in his old style is *Free the people*. Not unlike *My kinda people* from his previous album, *Hopetown*.

Dobbyn likes being out there among those people; he road-tested many of these songs in our heartland - provincial New Zealand. He's a performer at heart, he loves the crowd - he doesn't just work them, he works with them. He hopes that maybe some of these songs will become so deeply ours that they will be what we sing when we come together.

My kinda people. We are. I think Dobbyn cares about us. He cares about this place and the diversity of people that colour it and its future. A little sentence at the end of the sleeve notes: *"This album is dedicated to healing hearts."*

May it be so.

RESOURCES

Books

David Adam. **The Road to Life:** on searching and longing. SPCK, UK. 138pp. \$26.95. Stories, moods and attitudes of the many pilgrims David Adam has met during his 13 years as vicar of St Mary's, Holy Island, Lindisfarne

A New Zealand Prayer Book. He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa. 945pp. Anglican Church/Genesis. NZ. \$49.95. A new 2005 edition.

Rosemary and Peter Atkins. **Family Prayers - prayers for younger children and their parents.** Illustrated by Olivia Jackson-Mee. Published by the authors 2002. 9A Paunui St, St Heliers, Auckland 1005. \$10.00. pp32.

Phil Dyer. **Echoes of Wisdom.** Reflections based on the Psalms of David. 2005 \$26.00 from Houchen Retreat House, Houchens Rd, Hamilton. Cheques to "P. Dyer".

Eugene Peterson. **Christ Plays in 10,000 Places.** Eerdmans. 2005. \$49.95

Norvene Vest (Ed.) **Tending the Holy.** Spiritual Direction Across Traditions. Morehouse Publishing 2003 pp214.

Novene Vest (Ed.). **Still Listening.** New Horizons in Spiritual Direction. Morehouse Publishing. 2000. pp214

Eileen P. O'Hea. **In Wisdom's Kitchen.** The Process of Spiritual Direction. A Medio Media Book from the World Community of Christian Meditation. Continuum. 2000. pp108

Jean Stairs. **Listening for the Soul.** Pastoral care and spiritual direction. Fortress Press 2000. pp213.

Margaret Tooley. **A Journey with Jesus.** Meditations on Scripture for Holy Week - and a lifetime. Pub. M. Tooley 2005. 8 studies, 18 pp. \$5.00. Available from Margaret, 94 Allum St, Kohimarama, Auckland 1005. Email: mtooley@quicksilver.net.nz

Music

Singing Love

27 hymns and songs by Colin Gibson.

Singing Faith

18 hymns and songs by Shirley Erena Murray.

These are aids to congregations singing of contemporary NZ hymns who do not have resident musicians or whose musicians do not feel confident enough to introduce new music. Also useful during reflective times in worship. These are **backing tracks only** played by Colin Gibson and Roy Tankersley. Each track on the album is introduced with the melody alone being played. This enables congregations to more clearly pick the tune. Words and music are in *Alleluia Aotearoa*, *Carol our Christmas* and *Faith Forever Singing*. Produced and sold by the NZ Hymnbook Trust, Box 4142, Manawatu Mail Centre, Palmerston North. Cost: \$27 each or \$40 the pair via www.hymn.org.nz or e-mail them at info@hymns.org.nz

Sacred Treasures

Choral Masterworks from Russia.

Turn My Heart

Marty Haughen. Anthology I and II

You Are All We Have

Francis Patrick O'Brien.

Angel voices

St Philips Boy's Choir

Table of Plenty

John Michael Talbot.

No Organist? No Problem!

Volumes 1&2 with CD accompaniment for over 400 of the most popular hymns. Kevin Mayhew Publishing. Enquiries to Epworth Books, Wellington. Freephone 0800 755 355

Journals**Music in the Air**

Song and Spirituality in Aotearoa, Australia and the Pacific. Edited by John Thornley. Published by *Songpoetry*, 15 Oriana Place, Palmerston North. \$24.00 annually for 32 issues. Available at Kinder Library, St John's College Auckland.

International Journal of Children's Spirituality

Provides an international and multi-cultural forum for those involved in research and development of children's and young peoples' spirituality. Three issues a year. Published by Routledge Journals, UK. Copies in the Kinder Library.

Mystics Quarterly

Edited by Robert Hasenfratz and published by the Department of English, University of Connecticut. Research and writing on Christian Mystics in the East and West. Box U-4025, 215 Glenbrook Rd, Storrs, CT. 06269-4025. USA. Email: hasenfratz@ucom.edu Website: www.mysticsquarterly.com Available at Kinder Library, Auckland, and Houchen House, Hamilton.

Spirited Exchanges Newsletter

Available on the website www.spiritedexchanges.co.nz for an open forum for people struggling with faith and church issues. Alan Jamieson's *Off-road faith* is in the August-September 2005 issue 36.

Websites

www.ribbonwoodcalender.co.nz

For the Ribbonwood Contemplative Calender 2006 - \$10 + p & p. Greetings cards \$2 + p & p.

www.hymns.org.nz

For the NZ Hymnbook Trust materials.

Libraries

Hewitson Library, Knox College, Arden St, Opoho, Dunedin. NZ. 9001

A wide selection of print material in religions and theological subjects including rare books, world religions, Biblical studies, church history, Christian thought, ethics, missions, pastoral studies, lay ministries and spirituality. Access to the online catalogues and a *Books by Post* service: www.schoolofministry.ac.nz/library

Phone 03 473-0106.

Email: hewitson@xtra.co.nz

The Clifford Library, Carey Baptist College, 473 Great South Rd, Auckland. www.carey.ac.nz/Library On line catalogue of books and journals. Available as a reference source and for reading on site for non students. Phone 526-0347.

The Workgroup meeting in early October was encouraging and it was wonderful to have Clarice Greenslade with us again. On the other hand it was distressing to hear of Christie Carter's illness. Christie, known to many in the SGM community, is a long time contributor and an enthusiastic supporter of SGM. She has worked with energy and commitment in the Nelson Marlborough region in particular. Christie has met the distressing diagnosis of widespread, inoperable cancer and its debilitating and worsening impact with courage and quiet strength. She is receiving wonderful care and loving support from her family and she is encouraged by prayers and messages of support from friends near and far. May our loving prayers be with her and her family through this time.

The spring meeting of Workgroup usually focuses on reviewing the activities of the year and pre-viewing the programme for the year ahead.

Another group of participants will be completing the two years of the Spiritual Directors Formation Programme with their final weekend workshop in Auckland in early December. Applications and interviews for participants to commence the Programme in 2006 are in full swing. Early indications are that the intake this year may be slightly less than the last couple of years but with late applications that may well change! The spread of applicants around the country make the planning of where regional workshops will be held and interesting exercise.

On the retreats front we reviewed policies around the running of retreats. With experienced directors now in most areas of the country the vast majority of retreats advertised in the Programme are now initiated and run on a regional basis or by other groups. The one retreat initiated from Workgroup in 2006 is the Muriwai Wilderness Retreat, Reel Journeying. There is a good range of retreats available throughout the country with shorter retreats being popular because of their accessibility and lower cost.

We have been looking at ways of better supporting and resourcing SGM groups throughout the country. A newsletter for regional representatives will be circulated two or three times throughout the year. It is hoped that this will become a vehicle through which regional groups can share ideas and encourage one another. We also try to keep Workgroup membership regionally representative as well as maintaining denominational and gender balance as far as possible. Two new people will be joining Workgroup in 2006. Mike Wright, a Tertiary Chaplain from Otago completes the Formation Programme this year. Trish O'Donnell from Christchurch is a school Chaplain as well as being an experienced director. They will be valuable additions to Workgroup.

Good progress is being made on mundane but important issues of indemnity cover for our work. The SGM Trust and Workgroup is in this regard like any small business and has compliance obligations under numerous pieces of legislation. In today's world indemnity cover is a necessary overhead for prudent and responsible operation.

SGM owes a huge debt of gratitude to the Presbyterian Church in Aotearoa New Zealand. Not only was it this Church that launched SGM from its Parish Development and Mission Department some 25 years ago but it has provided very significant funding to SGM over all these years. In reviewing its own areas of ministry and funding over recent years and signalling for the last few years that funding for SGM would be unlikely to be sustainable the Presbyterian Church advised us that 2005 would be the last year that we would receive funding from them and that at reduced level. At the same time the work of SGM continues to be highly respected and appreciated within the Presbyterian Church. SGM began as a faith venture; the need for faith for spiritual growth, for resourcing and supporting others in growth and for the necessary finances continues.

I close this edition of SGM News by drawing attention to a workshop on The Art of Retreat Direction as advertised in the Programme. This is a workshop to resource the resourcers - another step to continuing the work of SGM in the years ahead.

COMPUTERS by Esther de Waal

I programme my computer

with the love of God.

God be with me now

as I call words into being.

May they make real

my work of love.

May they join

in the work of creation.

Calling from nothing,

uttered over chaos

bringing order.

From Ray Simpson's *Celtic Blessings For Everyday Life*. Hodder 1998 P.3.

CONTRIBUTORS

Jim Battersby is a retired Presbyterian minister with a great interest in the outdoors. He's "still growing at 80+" and has recently supplied at Epsom Church for four months with weekly services and pastoral care.

Donna Bruce. "I have grown from a natural love of words and language to experiencing their profound alchemy. I am seeking the discipline to create space for attending to their expression."

Joy Carter spent many years working as a teacher in East Africa with SIM and other organizations. On return to NZ she helped re-settle Somali refugees and now enjoys retirement in Cambridge.

Susannah Connolly is a Spiritual Director/creative counsellor who uses creativity in all her work. She lectures in Spiritual Formation and counselling at the Bible College of NZ. She is into dance, music, always thirsty for learning, loving her children and hubby and getting used to not having a Ma and Pa around to listen to anymore. She has her own art gallery and has just finished a Post Grad Certificate in Expressive Therapies.

Joy Cowley is a wife, mother, grandmother and writer.

David Crawley lectures in spirituality at Bible college of NZ. He also works as a spiritual director and is undertaking doctoral studies in the area of spiritual abuse.

Nicola Hoggard Creegan lectures in systematic theology. She is co-author of *Living on the Boundaries: Evangelical Women in the Theological Academy* (IVP 2005).

Warren Deason is a musician, pastor of Albany Presbyterian Church and a member of the SGM Workgroup.

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

Margaret Dunn is a spiritual director and is enjoying quilting in her semi-retirement.

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.

Carol Evitt lives in Browns Bay, North Shore, and works in mental health. She enjoys family life, home making, retreats and time with God, and attends Windsor Park Baptist Church.

David Hall is Executive Director of The Leprosy Mission New Zealand and lives in Auckland's eastern suburbs.

Jane Hansen lives at the foot of the Kaimais with her husband Jim, near the Wairere Falls where pilgrims come from around the world. It's a place to hear God speaking in the beauty.

John Heberton is an Anglican priest who heads up the national Anglican Youth Ministries, works as a spiritual director and supervisor, lives with his family in Mt Maunganui and loves coffee and God.

Anna Johnstone, author of *The God Walk* and *The Freedom Walk*, is currently finishing her third book of reflections and photography, *The Cross Walk*. Anna is a member of the Albany Presbyterian Church family.

Anne McCracken lives in Whangarei and works part time as a Needs Assessor, provides spiritual direction and is involved with local SEED Team quiet days/retreats.

Elsa McInnes of Feilding works with the Open Homes Foundation, has written two books on grief following her husband Garth's death, and is a spiritual director. She is refueled by gardening, reading and God's awesome creation.

Graham Millar ministers with Ngaio Union Church, explores new approaches to life with eight grandchildren, and contemplates the possibility of retirement.

David Moxon is Anglican Bishop of Waikato Diocese.

Sue Pickering co-ordinates the SGM Spiritual Directors' Formation Programme, and is a spiritual director, supervisor, retreat facilitator, writer and Anglican priest.

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

Adrienne Thompson grew up in India and spent much of her adult life in Bangladesh. She trained as a spiritual director after returning to New Zealand in 1999 and lives in Wellington.

Jeff Whittaker pastors Bryndwr Baptist Church in Christchurch, and lectures in Christian spirituality for Auckland's Carey Baptist College. A spiritual director and supervisor, he also contributes to SGM's Spiritual Director Formation Programme.

Di Woods is an ex air force, lacrosse playing GenX Anglican Vicar, who offers spiritual direction in the tropical Hawkes Bay. Di lives and ministers in Taradale and enjoys the fact that her congregation for the golden oldies is growing so much faster than the "contemporary" one!

Margaret Benton Woollett is a calligrapher who lives and works at Devonport, North Shore City (see centrespread).

Thankyou to all the contributors to this issue

We are now planning to work two issues ahead to give writers, compilers, the Editorial Group and Editor more time on each issue.

The **Winter 2006** issue will focus on films and the impact they have on us and our understanding of current issues, spirituality, life, and the place it plays as an art form in our society. So here's a challenge, to produce a Refresh issue on films. Again we would like articles, poems, prayers, liturgies as well as ways of using films in workshops, retreats and worship services etc. **Copy to be in by April 30th 2006.**

The **Summer 2006-2007** issue will explore creativity and some of the many ways people of contemplative faith and life use it in prayer, devotion, retreats and quiet days, and in worship and life: writing, art, sculpture, carving, photography, calligraphy, quilting, pottery, music - to name a few forms of expression. **Copy to be in by September 30th 2006.**

In the Winter 2006 issue we will announce the theme for Winter 2007.

If you have an idea you'd like to discuss email the editor at dunnzalbany@xtra.co.nz or write or phone (details inside front cover of this journal).

We are now able to use colour in the digital printing process so photos and artwork in colour and black and white are also possibilities and we invite copies (photos, scans, photocopies) of these for consideration.