

## ANSD President's Address Tasmania, 2017

*We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. <sup>23</sup>Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as children, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup>For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. (Romans 8:22-25)*



The whole of creation is groaning, and the whole world is in turmoil. In these times the ministry of spiritual direction surely has a prophetic edge.

What happens within us as we read the news from around the world and see the images that come with it? And as we accompany some of those who come for spiritual direction who are suffering greatly, what emotions do we hold within ourselves and what space can we hold for them?

Archbishop Tutu was once interviewed about his views of the Middle East, and was asked, was he optimistic? Tutu is known to have responded by saying he was definitely NOT optimistic, and went on to say, "I see no evidence to give me reason to be optimistic. But I HAVE HOPE because I am a follower of Christ, and so I hope against hope!" It is indeed hope that we each need: the Biblical kind of hope that rests in the character of God, a God who is completely just and at the same time completely loving. It is a hope based on what we cannot see, and we wait for it with patience. As spiritual directors, we seek to tap into this wellspring of justice and love as we accompany others through life, some of whom are on the margins, perhaps homeless, people who have survived abuse, those who are suffering profoundly, and those who are venturing more deeply into their faith, hope and love of God.

In a small way, ANSD has also sought to embrace the outlying areas of our vast continent. In the recent past we have had our conferences at main cities: In 2014 we had Rev Andrew Mayes as the guest speaker in Sydney and Mary Hagan and her team did a brilliant job pulling that conference together. In 2015 we had the joint AECSD conference in South Australia where Denis Edwards reflected on the wisdom for spiritual directors from *Laudato Si*. In 2016 we had Belden Lane in Western Australia – and Beth Robertson and her team opened up a great landscape of events and it was altogether very wonderful. It was the first time for many years that ANSD had a conference in Western Australia. And now in 2017 Elizabeth Liebert is with us here in Tasmania, and our deep thanks go to Denise Stephenson and her magical team who have brought us all together in this beautiful town of Launceston. And this is the first time ANSD has had a conference in Tasmania.

Our desire is to embrace those regions that often don't get the opportunities brought to them locally of the rich interchange that conferences such as these provide. In turn, we are enriched by what these regions give to us. The ANSD

executive has a desire to continue to facilitate an embracing of outlying areas and also those who we often refer to as 'dwelling in the margins'. To this end, we are looking ahead. 2018 is the AECSD joint conference in Canberra in September. So where to for 2019? There is a possibility it may be in Dubbo, but this is not yet finalised. So watch this space!

Some changes are happening on the exec: **Regional Reps:** Margaret Burt, Victorian rep stepped down we do give thanks for her and her involvement in ANSD. Her replacement is Pamela Richardson whom we welcome warmly.

Mary Hagan after 10 years as Sydney rep bringing it from almost nothing into a vibrant group which continues to grow. Thank you Mary for all you have given – the hidden ministry that you have ploughed into the Sydney earth has born much fruit. Blessings upon you. [And we welcome Liz Lee into this position – Liz was elected after the conference]. And in Canberra Alice-Anne Macnaught has been confirmed at the rep after stepping in to replace Suzanna Payne.

### **Other changes**

**And we have a new Regional group join us from the Northern Rivers** which is very exciting. So we welcome Robyn Fitzgerald onto the executive committee as their first regional representative.

**As we grow I also want to honour our wise elders** in ANSD – some of whom are with us now. In wisdom you gave birth to this fledgling network and we give you thanks for your continued involvement and support. In 1989 the registrar of St Marks' Theological College had been reading Eremos journals – and wanted to think about possibilities for spiritual direction in Australia. He talked to many people and found some folk who were connected in some way with this ministry, and invited them to come to a weekend in Canberra to discuss possible ways forward.

A group of 9 folk came together and some of those folk are with us here today Sr Linda Mary; Vicky Cullen and John Stewart. Philip Carter sends his greetings. We hope there will be an article coming out soon describing these early days! We also want to thank Adrian Jones for his many years of service as statutory secretary. He is not going!! We just wanted to acknowledge the hidden ministry of one of God's faithful servants for the ministry of ANSD and present him with a small token of our love and appreciation.

**The exec has been looking at the concept of 'value-add'** for those who take out membership with ANSD. At present, your membership enables us to keep afloat, to provide opportunities for networking, spiritual formation and professional development relevant to Spiritual Direction.

But we felt we have the capacity to offer more. So we are now venturing out and next year we will offer a Symposium : **What's Rising: Current Issues in**

**Spiritual Direction Practice.** This will be held at The Hermitage Mittagong – April 27-29,2018

So here is one 'value-add': if you are a member, you are able to present a paper or workshop on anything that is rising for you that you would like to bring to the spiritual direction community for exploration. Anyone can come, but being a member opens the opportunity to bring an offering. Papers will be printed afterwards as a compendium and made available. So this is a great opportunity if you have had something cooking away on the back burner and nowhere to go with it. This is the place to serve it up!!

Other elements of the value-add to membership now include the **Provision of a brochure:** "What is SD?" "What is ANSD?" Both are available on line to members to download and print.

**Another possible venture is the producing of a Journal. This would enable** members to contribute, or others by invitation, and would step up our profile as ANSD. The Journal would be aimed at midway between a newsletter and the SDI peer review journal; it would be quintessentially Australian; and complement Eremos.

But this will only get off the ground if there are expressions of interest from this spiritual direction community who would like to be involved in the editing and production of this. If so, please let the secretary of the ANSD executive know **in writing**. We have two members already keen to be involved, and we need at least two more folk. **Please contact the secretary of ANSD as soon as possible if you are interested in being involved.**

We look forward with delight at all that God is doing in and through ANSD and the spiritual direction community in general. As we continue in this valuable ministry of accompanying others, may we all be given the capacity to hope for what we cannot see, and to wait for it patiently.

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