

ANSD



Australian Network for Spiritual Direction Inc

For people engaged in Godly Listening . . .

www.ansd.org.au

August / September / October 2015

The year is winding down to its close and everyone around me seems to be winding themselves UP in the rush to tie everything up into a neat (we can hope!) and tidy bow, so they can move forward into the blessed relaxation of Summer.

And once again, in the midst of this packing up, and putting away we enter Advent, with its invitation to open our hearts anew and unpack God's gift to us in Jesus.

As we pause, take stock, and take our rest before the new year calls us back to work, may you experience God-with-us in new and surprising ways.



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National Office Bearers

President: Sally Longley
E: sallylongley07@gmail.com

Secretary: Liz Anne Smith
E: lizannes24@gmail.com

Treasurer: Elizabeth Palmer
PO Box 158
Dubbo NSW 2830
E: sdmail194@gmail.com

Statutory Secretary:
Adrian Jones
13 Aanensen Court
Montmorency, VIC 3094
P: 03 9439 1545
E: amjones7@bigpond.com

Regional Representatives

Queensland: Denise Brosnan
Denise Brosnan
P: 0439 675 571
E: ansdqld@hotmail.com

Canberra & Region:
Susanna Pain
E: susanna.pain@gmail.com

Sydney: Mary Hagan
PO Box 288
Quakers Hill, NSW 2763
P: 02 9626 2899
E: mhbethany@bigpond.com.au

Victoria: Margaret Burt
E: revburt@outlook.com

W.A. : Beth Robertson
bethr@inet.net.au

Tasmania: Denise Stephenson
3 Drew Street
East Devonport, TAS 7310
P: 03 6427 8548
E: svpilgrim2@gmail.com

South Australia / N.T.
Caroline Pearce
5 Stour Street
Gilberton, SA 5081
P: 08 8344 4357
E: chpearce@adam.com.au

Editorial Information

Newsletter Editor:
Denise Stephenson
3 Drew Street
East Devonport, TAS 7310
E: svpilgrim2@gmail.com

Items for inclusion in the newsletter can be sent to the Editor at the above address (email is preferred).

Your contributions are very welcome.

Next Edition
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(SA, WA, Canberra & Region)

Copy Deadline:
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ANSD PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2015

This past year as president of ANSD has been one of rich engagement with the ANSD community and in particular with the exec as we have met via teleconferences regularly to discuss, imagine, share dreams and visions for ANSD and to plan events.

The 2014 conference in Sydney, had Dr Andrew Mayes as the main speaker, and we had over 90 people attending.

It is fitting to pay tribute to Mary Hagan and her team whose organisation was outstanding and they were able to create a wonderful space for engagement, deep listening, conversation and reflection.

It was at this conference that in conversation with Beth Robertson, the possibility was flagged of having our conference for 2016 in WA. When this was put to the ANSD gathering with the idea that there could be a desert retreat or some other possibility attached to the conference, we asked for a show of hands of those who may be interested to go. There was an overwhelmingly positive response. So we took that up and ran with it.

In visioning the future, the twin trajectories of *wisdom* and *witness* seemed to set their course before us, as I mentioned in last year's President's Report.

So we are thrilled to announce that the 2016 conference is in May in WA, with the speaker being Belden Lane, who has written – "the Solace of Fierce Landscapes", and just recently published, "Backpacking with the Saints". "Wisdom and witness" will be embedded in the direction Belden will be taking us in. Belden will be looking at spiritual direction and the desert... with desert retreats held at New Norcia and at Koora.

Beth Robertson and her team have put together what is sure to be an extremely wonderful opportunity for the ANSD community. Urge you to start saving.

The Regional groups of ANSD around Australia have been offering interesting programs for ongoing professional development and are in 'good health'.

Spiritual direction formation training programs are also swelling and producing fine spiritual directors.

With all that is in the news and the current atmosphere of fear expressing itself in the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, as it applies to refugees, the good guys/bad guys, I feel it is appropriate to speak about spiritual direction as peacemaking.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION as PEACEMAKING

Love for Enemies Matthew 5:43-45

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of God.

When Jesus said "**Love your enemies**", did he really mean it?

It is a nice ideal, but are we really called to love someone who has hurt us, abused us, or is even now threatening us in some way? And what do we do when it is not a person but an institution, structure or clan that is causing the pain – who or what do we love then when we move into this landscape of enemy territory?

I suggest that as pilgrims on the journey of spiritual direction, we are all addressing in some way our enemies within and those without, rather than being swept along with the dominant culture around us that says “You have a right to keep your resentment toward that person or that institution after all they have done to you”. And so we are in the business of learning the slow work of loving our enemies, and holding the space for our directees as they too try to navigate their way to such a place of freedom.

There is the temptation to stroke and nurture our wounds keeping them open and raw, ready to be shown to yet another person who will again reinforce our own position. That can seem much easier than choosing to work with the pain, examine how we feed on it, and with gentle honesty begin to move toward making peace first with our own interior responses, and then discerning what a wise and healthy response to this enemy might look like. This is indeed uncomfortable territory. But it is our territory – the landscape of spiritual direction. And it is also territory in which Jesus is to be found, for this too was his stamping ground, he has tramped these valleys of vitriol, the sinking sands of being misunderstood, and the searing deserts of betrayal. It is familiar to him, and he is a worthy guide through such rugged country.

The well-known line from **Matthew 18:20**, “**Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst**” is so often used to comfort a small band of depressed faithful attending a discouraging and wilting prayer time.

But it has nothing to do with prayer. Rather the context is that of resolving conflict. The verse is sandwiched between conflict in the church and the question regarding how many times we need to forgive.

(And Jesus' response is basically – how many times do you want to be healed and set free? 70 X 7? More?)

In other words, it is saying, where two or three are gathered in my name (seeking the way forward to a place of resolution of conflict, of wrestling with issues of forgiveness...) there I am in the midst!

Spiritual direction is about getting to know our own interior landscapes, and exploring God's invitations to us as we chart our territory, and read the calligraphy of our own story. And as we do that, it enables us all the more to be able to sit with others as they discover the wisdom within that will guide them into places of greater freedom.

And so we inch forward in the journey towards loving our enemies. And when we do so, we find ourselves on the road toward integrity and authenticity and becoming peace makers in our own contexts, wherever that might be.

However, some of us settle for peace-keeping rather than peace-making. But all that lies at the end of this road of trying to “keep the peace” is only a mirage of peace. In our attempt to push the issues underground, to pretend that “things aren't so bad”, “I don't (can't, shouldn't) really have an enemy” and “it doesn't (shouldn't) really bother me ... much”, we forfeit truth for a quick fix, and trade integrity and depth for superficial niceties. How much truth has been sacrificed on the altar of ‘niceness’?

Spiritual direction holds the space for peace-making – a deeper healing work than peace-keeping.

Our own Inner work needs to be done in order to walk the paths of peace building. **Matthew 5** has a few clues for us that provide very practical signposts that are useful to keep in mind both as we negotiate our own inner journeys and as we walk as spiritual directors alongside others in their journeys.

“You have heard it said ... but I say to you”

This is like a sign that says – “GO BACK! YOU ARE GOING THE WRONG WAY”! The word for such a turnaround is *metanoia* – it is a turning away from and a turning toward :

- a new way of seeing,
- a new way of breathing,
- a new way of living.

It is a wonderful invitation to begin to turn away from

- old ways, old voices, old de-fault positions, old ways of reacting to enemies;
- To turn away from how things may have been done, the ‘shoulds’ the fast flowing current of the predominant culture around us – including the expectations embedded within institutional structures such as the media, and the church ...

To let go of the hope of a better past and instead embrace the hope of a better future.

Matthew 5:38-48

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Many have understood this passage to give as a recipe for being a coward or a doormat, letting injustice reign supreme, staying in an abusive relationship, putting up with bullying. So if Jesus is a guide through this territory, what kind of advice IS this?? Jesus certainly cannot be described as either doormat or coward – so what is happening here?

What does Jesus mean when he says not to resist?

Does that mean we take anything that is dealt to us without complaining, without standing up for ourselves and even asking for more?

The word that has been translated as resist is *anthistemi*, a military term meaning to 'respond in like', with violation or force, or "to set against especially in battle".¹ So the meaning here is, if someone does evil toward you, don't respond with like, with evil. Don't let them set your agenda for you, thus becoming like them. If someone is about to shoot you, and you take your gun and shoot them first, you have let them set the agenda. You have become like them.

Rather we need to respond from our own place of conviction, our own true centre.

So What *is* our own conviction, our own true centre? I think we come to Spiritual direction to find our own compass for this.

Continuing with this passage,

To turn the other cheek, is to give an example of how to respond with profound dignity!

Walter Wink² points out that to be struck on the right cheek in a society where the left hand is not used for anything except "unclean tasks", requires that the perpetrator gives a back hand slap with the right hand. This shows clearly that the intention here is not so much to injure the person physically, but to injure their sense of personhood. A backhand was a way to demean those of lesser status. So to respond by saying, "If you are going to hit me, then let me turn my other cheek to you so that you hit me as an equal", would have been an unheard of response with a great sense of dignity, and refusal to accept the humiliation of being treated as a lesser being. Or as Wink puts it, one is saying "Try again. Your first blow failed to achieve its intended effect. I deny you the power to humiliate me".³ This is powerful! If the striker obliged, and hit the left cheek, he would be accepting that this person IS an equal! And we remember that the audience to which Jesus was speaking belonged to a culture where there was institutionalised structural evil and inequality, and where shame and honour were central to their world; (a bit like ours!)

This act by the one who has been hit, robs the striker of their weapon. AND becomes an icon for us, of one who – in the presence of their enemy, is able to find their deep centre, and stand courageously in their own their true "I Am" which is embedded within the Great I AM.

As Spiritual Directors this is our stuff - we are intentionally nourishing our sense of who we are, who I am, discovering our emerging own true centre, and allowing our interior furniture to be rearranged by the gentle work of God. Finding our own I am... in the centre of our Guide, the great I AM, in whom we live and move and have our being.

1. Liddell-Scott, Greek-English lexicon, in Wink

2. "Beyond Just War and Pacifism: Jesus' Nonviolent Way" www.cres.org/star/_wink.htm

3. Wink, p4

The current world climate of fear and hostility pours into our living rooms and if we are not vigilant, into our hearts as well. As seek to face and love our own enemies, those within and those without, and as we yearn to be peace makers in a world where violence and might is assumed to be right, the ministry of Spiritual Direction is relevant and desperately needed.

May we then, as a Spiritual Direction community, be increasingly a community marked by our capacity to be the kind of community Paul urges:

Romans 12:14-21

Bless those who persecute us; bless and not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. To not be proud, but willing to associate with people of any position.

To not repay anyone evil for evil. ...

If it is possible, as far as it depends on us, live at peace with everyone.

**"If our enemy is hungry, may we feed them;
if they are thirsty, may we give them something
to drink.**

May we be a people who embody in our very beings the joy and peace of God.

Amen.

Sally Longley—ANSD President



Emu Valley Rhododendron Gardens, Tasmania—photo: D. Stephenson

ANSD



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For people engaged in Godly Listening . . .

**CONFERENCE
2016
PERTH
MAY 13-15**

***Renewing the Great
Conversation:
Spiritual Direction
and the Natural World***



with Dr. Belden Lane

**Professor Emeritus of
Theological Studies, Saint Louis**

**Author of *Solace of Fierce
Landscapes* and
*Backpacking with the Saints***

ANSD WORKSHOP

New Norcia

Sun May 15 – Wed May 18

The Desert Fathers and Mothers: Exploring Wilderness Spirituality

Belden Lane will lead a retreat focusing on Wilderness Spirituality in the iconic monastery town.

Accommodation in the Monastery Guesthouse and New Norcia Hotel - both twin and single rooms available.

Transport costs included in the workshop fee – pick up after the Conference for the drive to New Norcia, and return to Perth Wed.

Cost: \$385

(Early Bird before March 1 - \$360)

Registration Form:

www.ansd.org.au

or Email: bethr@iinet.net.au

Phone: 0411 043 928

Why have people been so drawn to wilderness places in the history of spirituality?

How does the “wildness of God” fascinate us—comforting and challenging us at the same time? The workshop offers opportunities for wilderness wandering, exercises in meditation, small group work, music, storytelling, and rituals drawn from the natural world.

Optional Retreats on offer in W.A. before and after the conference

There are 3 retreats available in Western Australia which are not associated with ANSD, but which may be of interest to those planning to attend the ANSD Conference.

Pre- Conference Koora Desert Retreat

Sunday May 8—Thursday May 12, 2016

Belden Lane will accompany Anna Killigrew in offering a wilderness experience in outback Western Australia. Koora Retreat Centre is located 450km East of Perth, near Southern Cross. This will be a unique experience to sojourn in the desert environment with people who are passionate about Wilderness Spirituality and the Australian landscape.

PLACES ARE LIMITED. For more information, and bookings go to www.kooraretreat.com.au.

All costs and Train fare details to Southern Cross are available on the Koora website.

Post- Conference Koora Desert Retreat

Sunday May 15—Thursday May 19, 2016

Anna Killigrew will offer a wilderness experience in outback Western Australia, at Koora Retreat Centre. Details as for the pre-conference Retreat (see above).

* Transport from St. John of God Retreat Centre to East Perth train station following the Conference. Email bethr@inet.net.au if you wish to book a bus ticket to the station.

In My Element 3-day Post-Conference Breather

4.00pm Sunday 15— 2.00pm Wed May 18, 2016

Retreat at the Nuhra Community Retreat Centre, Barrugup (20mins south of Shoalwater Bay). Nuhra offers modest shared accommodation in a cozy, homely atmosphere with a wood fire. Situated on a 5 acre bush block, it includes a chapel and labyrinth for meditative practice.

A semi-structured program, balancing time and space to be at ease in Nature with short talks, guided exercises and deep relaxation.

Cost: \$300 Transport provided.

Further details: Anne Zevis zevis123@gamil.com 0423 114 929

LOOKING BACK

Looking back,
do you see some daft moments
when you must have totally
lost the plot and had a
brain freeze?

Looking back,
do you wish you'd had the insight
to know you were barking
up the wrong tree
without a prayer?

Looking back,
were you too impatient
to see the big picture;
driven to distraction with
fleeting fancies?

Looking back,
you can't change a thing and
'the benefit of hindsight'
is poor consolation for
your mistakes.

Looking back:
what's the point?
All you'll really get at best
is a sore neck or at worst
a pillar of salt.

dtw 2013



Emu Valley Rhododendron Gardens, Tasmania

EARTHED IN EARTH

Earth, teach me your wisdom
Earth, grant me your humility
Earth, gift me your inclusion
Earth, hold me in your compassion

Earth, forgive my invasion
Earth, pardon my exploitation
Earth, love me into wholeness
Earth, enfold me in completeness

Earth, move me into loving
Earth, thank you for my being
Earth, be reason for my living
Earth, prepare me for my dying

('Earth' can be exchanged for
'God', 'Holy Spirit', 'Jesus')

DTW Anzac Day/St Mark,
Mary MacKillop Centre, Sydney 2009

David Thornton-Wakeford