

ANSD



Australian Network for Spiritual Direction Inc

For people engaged in Godly Listening . . .

www.ansd.org.au

Summer 2016

Welcome to the first newsletter for 2016. Summer is on the way out, and the mellow colours of Autumn are just around the corner.

Already the year is well underway, and it is only a short time until we meet in Perth, W.A. for the ANSD Conference. For those who have not already registered, you will have to wait until 2017... the 2016 Conference is fully booked!



The notice of the Annual General meeting is in this edition of the newsletter, on page 10. Please read the Agenda and take note of the process for accepting nominations from the floor at the AGM. Contact the secretary (details on the back page) with any questions or nominations.

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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: Autumn
Sydney / Tasmania Region

copy deadline: 5 June 2016

Autumn shed its last colourful leaves.
The expected apprehension and reluctance
to face the cold, the wind, the rain,
the heaviness of the coming long winter
did not catch me in its embrace.

Autumn itself had begun as a time of darkness,
pain, grief, deep questioning,
developing into a time of pruning, cutting,
unexpected growth arising.

Remarkably I survived the autumn of darkness
due to an unexpected, surprising, divine revelation.
Beloved Birthing, Life-giving Mother God
revealing her nurturing nature in the midst of the darkness.

I felt her warm embrace, cradled in her love, her hand guiding me on.
Recognizing her wisdom, grace, joy, life began to change.
New opportunities, amazing invitations
unexpectedly appeared, seemingly out of nowhere.

Where was the courage and joy coming from
to accept, to trust, to change, to seek more,
enthusiastically embrace all with love?
From the breath of her Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God.

With the arrival of this winter I welcomed solitude, quietness.
Relished more pruning, cutting – more freedom!
Room for new life, enticing possibilities,
delicious blessings, deeper trust.

Freely dancing my way through winter, laughing more,
playing , dancing in prayer.
Remaining open to the God who loves me so deeply.
Who keeps calling me on!



Deciduous beech (*Nothofagus gunnii*), Cradle Mountain.
Australia's only cold climate
winter-deciduous tree
photo D. Stephenson

*You the Centre at which all things meet
and which stretches out over all things so as to
draw them back into itself:*

*I love you for the extension of your body and soul to the farthest corners of creation through
grace, through life and through matter.*

Teilhard de Chardin, *Pensee 1. Hymn of the Universe*. (London:Collins, 1965), 76.

A shimmering, deep within my being, stirs and awakens my awareness of a gentle longing. The pining of the eternal yearning infuses me, rousing, gathering, softening, calming, centering me, in the unfathomable ground of Love's intimacy. Silence flows in waves of luminous light. I breathe in the infusing. Darkly, I know I touch the tenderness of the divine Presence caressing and *oneing*. Silence breathes. All is One.

Reflecting later, the eloquent words of Bede Griffith's flowed into my memory:

Love giving itself, losing itself and finding itself in love, and Love returning to itself, giving itself back in love - this is the eternal pattern of the universe. Every creature in the depth of its being is a desire, a longing for Love and is drawn by Love to give itself in love. This is the coming into being, this response to the drawing of Love. At the same time it is continually being drawn to give itself in love, to surrender to the attraction of Love, and so the rhythm of the universe is created.

Return to the Center. (Springfields: Template, 1976), 61.

In this prayer, I found myself lost in this alluring attraction of Love, "giving, losing, and finding myself in Love". Within the depths of my own heart, I intuitively sensed, the infinite pouring out of Love's Trinity, the incarnational presence of Love en-fleshed in the Christ and the foundations and potential of the universe evolving into life. Moreover, what was expressed in my heart is within every human heart. I wonder at the gift it is to be a spiritual companion who accompanies others as they, like me, become more consciously participative in giving, surrendering, centering in and becoming Love.

Centering

Earlier this year, I attended Cynthia Bourgeault's teaching retreat on *Centering Prayer* in Adelaide. We intentionally gathered from many paths, to accompany each other in returning to the Centre of Love's unfolding and deepening our awareness of Love returning to itself to give itself back in love. Through the practice of *Centering Prayer*, we inspired each other to be still, to centre, to stabilise in the ground of the heart and awaken a non-dual consciousness. Cynthia invited us to become attentive to Love's desire, to come home to our heart, and turn more deeply into Omega, into the centre where all things meet, into fullness of Love. She urged us to harness the energies of the loving of this communion of hearts gathered together and intentionally intensify the morphogenic field with compassion, caress the suffering of the world and heal the pain-body of our planet.

Cynthia encourages in her most recent book:

Our human task at this stage, ... is simply to sink our hearts more and more deeply into the Holy Substantiality of that Oneness itself and learn to live in this more diaphanous reality.... We are in fact converging on oneness, hurling towards it... For the first time in history... a critical mass of people seems to be attaining the capacity for non-dual consciousness - that is the capacity to perceive from oneness, to think from the whole to the part...

The Holy Trinity and the Law of Three. (Boston:Shambhala, 2013), 213-214.

Cynthia poignantly reminds us that sinking our hearts more fully into the diaphanous Oneness of Love, sensitizing our capacity to yield beyond the confines of our minds into the ground of Love, perceiving from oneness, and attending to the *oneing* (as Julian of Norwich would say), is our current evolutionary task. She opens up how, *Centering Prayer*, (along with many other meditative practices), prepares our hearts for this wonderful expansion into the luminous spaciousness of the oneness of all things. It cultivates the ground of a unitive imagination and sows the seeds for the arousal of non-dual consciousness, also identified as mystical consciousness (Bernard McGinn), Christ consciousness (Richard Rohr), divine awareness (Thomas Keating) which I like to identify as "heart-awareness." Centered in love, heart-awareness sees from the wholeness of oneness. It looks for and seeks unity.

Heart Awareness

As we sat together in Adelaide in a beautiful glass chapel enfolded in trees, the stillness and silence became palpable. We met each other's hearts in the rhythm of meditation, as night birthed into day which softened into night. As we prayed any sense of isolation melted. Heart opened to heart and our acceptance of each other became tender. We relished our oneness with all creation.

Cynthia elaborated on the expansion of heart-awareness that *Centering Prayer* cultivates. Drawing on the seminal work of Thomas Keating, she showed how centering enables "ordinary" awareness to open into "spiritual" awareness, into "divine" or heart-awareness. In centering in our heart in the pure awareness of our heart, Wisdom infuses us in the realization that deep within our heart there is no subject/object boundary between our self and God. God is our own subjectivity. We are endlessly one in Love pouring into Love.

Intention Consent Surrender

Furthermore, *Centering Prayer* invites us to settle in desire, consent to the divine presence and actively surrender into the centre of our heart. It is a very non-intrusive way of prayer. The one who prays, simply enters into the heart, draws on a prayer word to pierce through thoughts when they arise as a distraction, and returns to centered loving. The word acts like a shaft of light piercing through a cloud. It draws awareness beyond all ways of knowing, deeper into the inner heart.

Our Intention is powerful. A "naked" intent (in the language of the Cloud of Unknowing) to be totally open, beyond thoughts, feelings, senses and memory, cultivates an interior spaciousness. It sets the mood, creates an atmosphere, detaches and frees us from needing to do or be anything, but Love. Intention opens us to the Spirit yearning within us in "sighs too deep for words" (Rom 8:26).

Centering teaches us the art of consenting to Love. It fosters a capacity to yield, to be soft, flexible, malleable and able to surrender our egoic consciousness into the divine desire. It enables us to disconnect from the chatter of the mind, let go of sticky thoughts, gather our bodily knowing, draw all our awareness into our heart, and release into the luminous divine ground.

Implications for Spiritual Direction

Nurturing a capacity to centre in the heart, recognizing ourselves in God and awakening the eye of love that sees from oneness, is at the heart of spiritual direction. As we sit with our directees, follow the stirring of desire, and consent to the Loving in a participatory being with, we discover ourselves in communion, listening, touching, tasting, smelling, holding and seeing the presence of Spirit in the directee's story through the one eye of Love. I am coming to notice more and more, how three qualities that *Centering Prayer* cultivates, intention, consent and surrender are inherent in spiritual companionship.

Naked Intention in spiritual companionship creates spacious presence as it sensitizes us to the divine desire. It enables us to discern the source of our companions yearning and realize that our deepest desires are the divine desire. Following the stirrings of our yearning in spiritual direction centres us in Love.

As we consent to the magnetic drawing of the Centre of centres, meet heart in heart, awaken heart awareness and gaze from oneness with our directees as they share their sacred story, our understanding and interpretation of experience shifts. We see through the divine eyes. We behold in love. We consent to choosing life. We discover a gentle way to be in chaos. We know we are never alone in suffering. We learn how to experience the absence of God as another form of presence, knowing that all that is, exists within the one ground of Love.

In the grace of the spiritual direction encounter, surrendering over and over again into the luminous ground of the center, we come home to the oneness of the gracious Trinity of Love, always shining in and through our experience. Ilija Delio's words inspire us:

...The way forward is the way inward—to recover the mystical dimension of life beginning in the human heart as that heart extends into the cosmos. We need to find the Omega centre within us, that depth of love that makes each of us unique and distinct, that God-centered love which holds us together moment to moment and constantly creates us anew.

The Unbearable Wholeness of Being, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2013), 182-3.

The Centre of centres stirs, alluring, showering, enfolding, infusing, *oneing* us, into the fullness of one evolving Love. We meet, heart in heart. We know that we are all mutually indwelt and indwelling Love's divinity and have the power to release desire and compassion into our planet. Centering in Love, seeing from oneness, we live in the newness of the fertile ground of hope.

Kerrie Hide

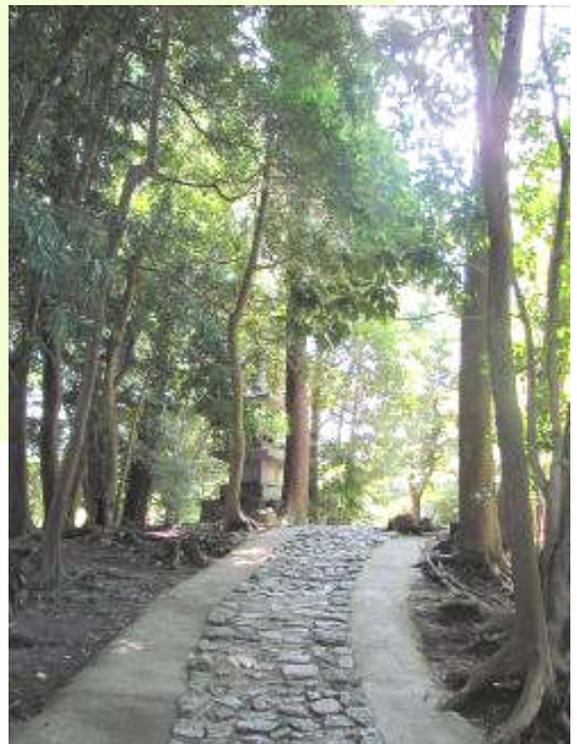
I struggle with thoughts
she invites me in deeper
it is hard to let go.

Silence entices
until she seduces me
I rest in her arms.

She invites me,
inside myself I listen,
wisdom emerges.

Susanna Pain

Canberra



Genkyu-en Garden, Hikone Japan

*Sunkissed creek pond
dragonflies hover
crickets chorus
unwary frog springs.
A flash of azure blue
the kingfisher dives deep
just a rippling outward
to my muddied still feet.*

I wrote this poem after reflecting on a recent Contemplative Quiet Day with Art in the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra, led by Susanna Pain. While sitting with Monet's "Waterlilies", I became fascinated by the painting's illusion of water without boundaries. With no horizon or natural bank, spatial cues simply dissolved. I felt as though I was *in* the pond, was as one with it.

When I was ready to step outside the painting, I instantly recalled the similar, though more powerful centering experience above which I had as a six-year-old child — gazing into the creek pond located on the edge of dense bushland, just below our home in Turrumurra, Sydney.

Later I discovered that Monet had actually sought to create his waterlily paintings as a meditation experience for the viewer. The painting in the Canberra gallery is one of a series of 250 waterlily paintings, all done towards the end of his life when cataracts threatened his vision. Perhaps Monet's inner eye was more intensely directed to the mystery of Presence embodied in all creation. He once declared, "one instant, one aspect of nature contains it all".

Alice-Anne Macnaught, Canberra ACT



Nymphéas (Waterlilies), Monet 1914-1917, National Gallery of Australia

ANSD



Australian Network for Spiritual Direction Inc.
for people engaged in 'Soddy Listening'

CONFERENCE
2016
PERTH
MAY 13-15

Renewing the Great
Invitation:
Spiritual Direction
and the Natural World

- no further registrations are being accepted

The conference is full



with **Dr. Belden Lane**

Professor Emeritus of
Theological Studies, Saint Louis
Author of *Solace of Fierce
Landscapes* and
Backpacking with the Saints

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

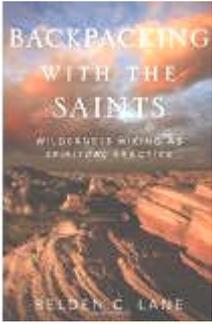
Retreat at the Nuhra Community Retreat Centre, Barrugup (20mins south of Shoalwater Bay). Nuhra offers modest shared accommodation in a cozy, homely atmosphere with a wood fire. Situated on a 5 acre bush block, it includes a chapel and labyrinth for meditative practice.

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

Book Review: **Backpacking With the Saints: Wilderness Hiking as Spiritual Practice—Belden C. Lane**



I started reading Belden Lane's fascinating book on the day I began walking-in my new bushwalking boots. Sitting with my wet boots draining nearby (the quickest way to get hard boots to fit is to soak them in water and walk them dry) it seemed, well, appropriate! Like Lane, I have hiked some trails in my time, but I have never considered taking the saints with me.

For Lane, wilderness is a place of retreat and solitude, where earth itself is ancient teacher and spiritual director. Backpacking as a form of spiritual practice is, as with all spiritual practice, "a highly tactile, embodied, and visceral affair" (p4). It goes beyond exercise or escape, becoming a place where he and God connect at a place of deep physical and spiritual intimacy.

Lane takes the writings of the saints with him on his journeys into the back country. Being a bit precious about books, I found the idea of putting a book in my pack quite confronting! What if it get's dirty, or even worse, wet? But as I followed Lane into various remote places, each time with a saint as his companion, I was intrigued. The saints read outdoors—St Cuthbert, we are told, read the Psalms each morning standing waist deep in the Northumberland surf! I find it easy to believe that a "book assumes a fresh life in the offbeat, unpredictable place." (p17).

However, this spiritual practice is more than simply reading books in unlikely and unsettling places: it is about allowing the 'texts' of wilderness, the saints, my own body, mind and spirit to speak, to converse with each other, inform and challenge in a place where the usual rules of life do not apply. Lying in a tent as a thunderstorm rolls overhead, or sitting on a sunlit rock in a meadow, Belden Lane expresses the new depth that is tapped as he reads familiar words in these unfamiliar settings. Unhooked from daily routines and concerns, hidden fears and desires are brought to attention and he realizes how lightly he can travel, in the wilderness and in life. Whether this wilderness is filled with sunshine and delight or is a place of darkness, failure and death, carrying the wisdom of those who have travelled before helps us find our way home.

As a bushwalker, *Backpacking with the Saints* resonated with me deeply. It has prompted me to consider more solo walking—to take hold of my fear of doing so and step into the wild. But it has done more than this—it has challenged me to change the way I walk. Whilst I have never been a summit-bagger, I can be a destination-getter... I can forget that the journey itself is home. Belden Lane encourages me to walk with mindfulness, with courage and with expectation: God is present in all things—even the stones speak.

Even if you have never put a pack on your back, and would never consider bushwalking, this book has much to offer. It draws on the places of wilderness within us all and invites us to consider taking a step further into that wild place, whatever it may look, sound or feel like. And may the saints go with you.

Denise Stephenson

With her husband Mark, Denise has been walking in the Tasmanian wilderness for over 25 years. She is doing the Overland Track for the 3rd time in April and deciding which saint to take along for the journey.

*Twisted Lakes—Cradle Mountain National Park
photo: M. Stephenson*



ANSD Inc. Notice of A.G.M.

ANSD AGM May 14, 2016

To be held at St John of God Retreat Centre
Shoalwater Bay WA. at 4.30pm

AGM AGENDA

Ordinary business:

- Welcome
- Present
- Apologies
- Confirmation of Minutes of last AGM
- Receipt and consideration of Executive Report (President's Report)
- Receipt and consideration of Financial Report
- Election of:
 - President
 - Regional Representatives (at least 5)
 - Membership Committee (3 members not on Executive)

Nominations will be accepted from the floor of the meeting, but prior consent to nomination must have been obtained from anyone nominated but not present at the AGM.

• **Specific business if any:**

- Brief Regional Reports (written can be handed to/or emailed to secretary)
- ANSD Conference 2017

Following the decision taken at the AGM in September, we have now moved our banking from the Commonwealth Bank to the Suncorp bank.

The new details for direct depositing are:

BSB 484-799 and **Account no 054 307 690.**

The name of the account remains the same i.e. Australian Network for Spiritual Direction or ANSD for short.

These details are also printed on the application form on the website if you need them for future reference.