

# Australian Network for Spiritual Direction Inc.

A00492951

for people engaged in Godly listening

## This Edition

We appreciate the contributions offered by the Sydney Region for this edition of the newsletter. Thank You.

Apologies to Patrick Oliver for the incorrect formatting of his article "Fingerprints of Resurrected Life" in the previous edition of the newsletter. It is re-printed in this edition.

Australian Network for Spiritual Direction Inc.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

will be held at the  
National Conference  
Ibis Styles, Canberra, 203 Goyder  
Street, Narrabundah, Canberra ACT  
September 14, 2013 at 5.20pm

*Agenda details on page 9*

As I prepare this newsletter I am sitting beside an open fire, listening to the hiss of the logs as they slowly burn. Outside my window a black bird is washing himself in the birdbath—no doubt glad the ice has finally melted! We really have winter here in Tasmania.

I hope the articles within warm your heart and ignite the spirit within you.



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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.

*If* you've become aware  
that every fibre of your being craves to cling  
to that with which you've grown familiar –  
so much so  
that fear's fog prevents you  
from seeing what's in front of you ...

yet you sense a still, small voice that resounds  
like a familiar footfall's echo in your heart,  
and it holds and heals the ache  
that had sprung from the dread of  
separateness ...

**then you're embodying  
Mary Magdalene at the tomb** (John 20:11-18)

*If* ever your wounds of hurt,  
rejection and disappointment  
have locked you into endless rounds  
of ambiguity and anxiety,  
and culminate in an internal vow by you  
to never risk again, start again or trust again ...

and then you gingerly accept an invitation  
to touch and be touched  
by the wounds of another ...

these wounds can begin  
to melt the frozen feelings;  
they can soften the solidified soul and  
unbolt shut-tight eyes to the presence  
of faithfulness, Mystery and mercy.

If you've experienced this thawing,

**then you're embodying Thomas  
after the resurrection** (John 20:24-29)

*If* fear has ever plucked you up  
and dropped you into the wilderness of failure,  
the wasteland of folly  
and the quicksand of self-loathing,  
and all you can hear in your ear  
are the saw-toothed shrieks  
of criticism and condemnation –

but then in a moment of transparency  
you hear a truer song of your soul that tells you  
not only what you really desire,  
but also that *you're desired*;  
not only what you really wish to choose,  
but also that *you're being chosen*; and  
not only that there's one  
to whom you really wish to give your heart,  
but also that this one  
has *already given their heart to you* ...

If this makes you ready to meet any twist of fate  
because you know you're *truly loved* ...

**then you're embodying Peter  
after the resurrection** (John 21:15-19)

*If* you've ever been privileged  
to have been held by another's listening heart,  
you may suddenly sense your soul aflame –

because what you previously regarded as  
random  
and formerly discarded as dross  
actually is woven together with a cord  
which caresses your splintered spirit,  
and which connects you with the larger story  
of broken and blessed humanity.

If this has been a part of your pilgrimage,

**then you're embodying the Emmaus journey**  
(Luke 24:13-35)

*If* you've ever let the veils fall  
and you've realized  
that even though the old ways of meeting life  
have served you well,

almost without recognizing it  
something has taken you  
past the need to cling

*to accustomed habits  
to favoured rituals  
to people you thought you couldn't live  
without  
to situations you thought you couldn't do  
without  
to perceptions you surely couldn't  
function without  
to what you were sure you couldn't  
possibly surrender  
to the fear of letting go, so you could  
learn that real presence  
can be experienced through absence*

## Fingerprints of resurrected life (cont.)

If you find you've ascended in these ways –  
not through your own cleverness  
but through a grace-ful surrender  
to a higher intensity of seeing –

it becomes impossible to go back  
to where you were living before ...

you begin to see all of life –  
the trees, the ants,  
your next-door neighbour, your enemy –  
as dwelling places of the divine,  
and you know in your deepest cells  
that the divine heartbeat and yours  
are and always will be  
the one heartbeat ...

If you can identify with such a gift,

**then you're embodying the spirit  
of the Ascended Jesus** (Mark 16:9-20)

*If* you've ever noticed that your heart's doors,  
which previously had been deadlocked

*by the dread of the different  
by the terror of failure  
by the fear of disparagement  
by the ache of inadequacy*

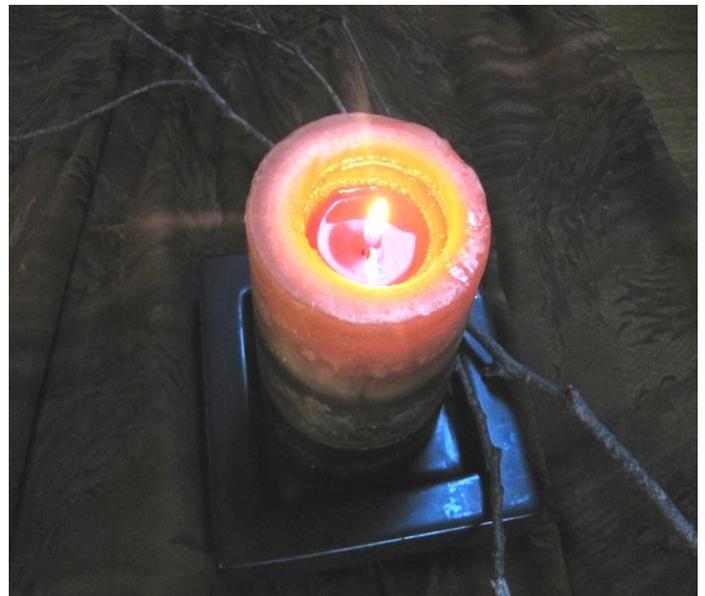
are now being opened wide to the world ...

If you've become aware of an inner fire  
that has been burning there for some time,  
and it is giving you a desire and energy  
to fully come home to yourself –  
you'll discover that

*reticence is outloved by daring  
distrust is outloved by faith, and  
narrowness of vision is replaced  
by seeing what is most truly human  
and most truly divine in all whom you meet.*

If you've found this fire has burned within you,

**then you're embodying  
the spirit of Pentecost** (Acts 1:1-47)





*Bronze entrance door to Santa Maria del Angeli, Rome*

'Verily, verily, I say unto you. Except a kernel of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit' (John 12:24)

The Resurrection imbues our most human struggles with powerful transcendent meaning. Through the mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ we can enter the mystery of our own painful 'small dyings' where it seems that the spirit is taxed almost beyond endurance, and where we feel that it is only by God's Grace that we manage to struggle through the darkness towards the light of new life and greater fruitfulness. In this place of pain, we may see our struggle mirrored in Christ's journey and catch just a glimmer of His truth ... if only 'as through a glass darkly.' (1 Corinthians 13:12) Only by moving beyond the wounded self, is there the possibility of growth, and the fulfilment of Christ's promise: 'I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly'. (John 10:10)

These crises are of a different magnitude and nature from the common ordeals of daily life, for however difficult these may be, they at least leave our existing frameworks of meaning intact. But a crisis marks forever a turning point in our life. A sense of self, and of the past, present and future can be called into question and familiar structures disintegrate. It may happen as the result of the death of a loved one, the ending of relationship or job or the pain and fear of illness, exile, war or natural disaster. But it may also befall us in the shape of new and undreamt of possibilities in relationship and vocation that shatter previously held beliefs, understandings and expectations.

Dame Julian of Norwich in her Revelations of Divine Love ... speaks of the 'firmament, the very earth itself, beginning to lose their nature with sorrow'. We too may experience this 'loss of every kind of comfort, except the deep, quiet keeping of God' as we await our own rebirth in joy and hope.

Sarah Bachelard, (Experiencing God in a Time of Crisis, p 57), defines the characteristic suffering of all crises as the collapse of the very framework which could have helped us make sense of the experience. We may find ourselves crying with Christ 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34).

And yet the way we cope with the struggle has something to do with the whole issue of what it means to be a spiritual person. The journey is from pain and destruction to hope and resurrection. As Joan Chittester says 'Life forges us in struggle and we move forward with new insights and a new heart.' (Scarred by Struggle, Transformed by Hope, Preface, p X)

St Paul knows 'that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us'. (Romans 5:1-5)

And the words of Dame Julian offer gentle encouragement: 'If there is a lover of God anywhere on earth who is always kept safe from falling, I know nothing of it – for it was not shown me. But this was shown – that in falling and rising again we are always held close in one love.... and in exchange for this little pain that we suffer here, we shall have a high endless knowledge of God, which we could never have had without it.'



*The Holy Spirit in the church of St Peter and Paul, Stockholm*

**September 13-15, 2013**

The Ibis Styles Hotel—Narrabundah, ACT

“Spiritual Direction: The Time is NOW”

After a time of crisis we never resume our lives in quite the same way. We are transformed and can now recognize the fragility of the props which never could fully protect us. We learn that in the ‘twinkling of an eye’, all we depended on for our sense of meaning can be swept away. We can disintegrate into anxiety and despair, darkness and death, or we can move into a new place of reintegration where we can leave behind our delusions of security and enter a new freedom which comes from having passed through the abyss ... and having survived. This death to our former self and resurrection to new life paradoxically brings freedom and release – ‘death’ no longer has dominion over us as we have moved beyond fear. ‘For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.’ (1 Corinthians 1:18)

Ann Bergman

**References:**

**Bachelard Sarah, ‘Experiencing God in a Time of Crisis’, Convivium Press, Meditatio, 2012**

Chittester Joan, ‘Scarred by Struggle, Transformed by Hope’, Wm.B.Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2003

Norwich, Julian of, ‘Stations of the Cross, A devotion using The Revelations of Divine Love of Julian of Norwich’, St Laurence Press, CCSL, Sydney, 2007)



Lucy Abbott Tucker and Sue Dunbar are the joint speakers. They will situate the ministry of spiritual direction within the context of the new cosmology and reflect on the implications for ourselves and our work as spiritual directors. There will be opportunities for discussion and personal reflection with several options for creative processing being offered on Saturday afternoon. This promises to be a challenging and thought provoking conference.

Presenters

**Lucy Abbott Tucker:** Lucy is a popular and gifted workshop presenter in the USA, where she has been part of the Institute for Spiritual Leadership in Chicago since 1984. She is often a presenter at Spiritual Directors



International conferences as well as offering retreats and workshops in the USA, Canada & Europe.



**Sue Dunbar:** Director of Barnabas Ministries Inc, an ecumenical agency offering spiritual care and nourishment for those on the journey of faith. Sue is director of two training programs in spiritual direction and is an experienced spiritual director, supervisor, and workshop presenter. Sue is a past President of ANSD.

**Cost:**

Live in - full conference Single \$590.00

Twin Share \$470.00

Live out – full conference \$225.00

Live out – conference only \$180.00

**For more information or to receive a registration form contact:**

Local ANSD Rep: Rev Vicky Cullen

P: (02) 6255 3191 / E: vicky.cullen@bigpond.com

Never mind what went wrong and how I come to find myself on the outside of a life being lived 'on the inside'.

It's irrelevant now.

What is relevant is the space that exists not only between my husband and I (large physical space with its razored jagged edge, steel doors, grey ground) - but also between You and I.

'You' being the rest of us.

It's a space that lies heavy between us- it becomes larger and exposed when one of you politely asks me

" So- is your husband around? What does he do? "

The answer lies waiting. I've rehearsed my lies so many times. *Get the story straight.* A silence always falls before I venture forth with the story chosen for that day..

To say :

" He is away at the moment "

-makes my husband seem busy, unavailable, uncaring and absent. ( which he is not). Perhaps he is a hardworking professional? Overseas a lot- that will pass for a while- until you get to know me then, " gosh, he really is away a lot isn't he...?? And so it goes on. You see him as distant, must be having an affair ... The lie is grossly untrue and I feel sick saying it.

But to say

"Oh, It's just me and my daughter" puts me under the judgemental gaze that is so often cast upon the single mother - yes, even today- I feel it – not a sympathy vote , more of a " oh, she couldn't keep her man.."

But he hasn't left us and it's not true and it makes me sick to say it.

To even say

"Oh, we're having a trial separation"

brings forth cool judgement again( oh, they have a baby... How COULD they? They're not trying hard enough) (which we are)

I can hear you thinking- why doesn't she just tell the truth?

The Truth? Why don't you try my truth on next time someone asks you where your husband is- I dare you to say

"oh, he's in prison"

Now watch the horror it brings forth –horror thinly disguised as shock.

Now feel that polite, dark intrigue within you all... *What did he do???*

It doesn't matter if I dare utter he is innocent. Your ears have become closed at the mere mention of the word gaol. It was a definite full stop in your head.

*You don't believe me.*

"Silly woman, she's in denial" you all think- Of course he is guilty. The jury said so- 12 people can't be wrong, " and some of you laugh.

Somehow, in the utterance of those few words I have become tainted in your eyes, somehow 'less than you'- someone to steer clear of- *after all you don't want your children to come in to contact with someone in gaol do you?*

And so the space between you and I grows larger and quieter. Sure there's a few of you who want to know all the gory details- and others of you who feign sympathy "that must be hard" you say- simply to fill the space.

But the space keeps on growing. Some of you mean well, but the space is empty... you stop phoning. You don't bring your kids over to play. You talk about me not to me and I am left behind.

So this is why I choose not to share it with you. Because this space, no matter how large- is also private.

It's my secret because it has to be.

This space, this private space that is also so public is fragile. I keep it close to me- because I fear your judgement.

Your eyes hurt me. Your absence silences me.

I don't expect you to understand.

I wouldn't have.

*Before.*

So I keep it close to me to keep your whispers, your sniggers, your retreating footsteps, your changing gaze, your dwindling presence -from harming me further.

If only your eyes were open.

If only your eyes were open.

And seeing.

I, we, have done nothing wrong.

If you could see me you might hear me.

And if you heard me, you might see me

- as a woman, a wife, a mother.

A woman with a husband and a child.

ANON

Christine Valters Paintner's in her recent book *Eyes of the Heart: Photography as a Christian Contemplative Practice* describes photography as "Writing with Light". She sees it as a way of holding the sacred moment indefinitely so that it can be reflected on and integrated more deeply into the life of the individual or group.

At the May meeting of the Sydney ANSD group we explored a little of the way we could use our own photos in contemplation and ways in which we could invite our directees to do the same. The group were invited to bring their digital cameras to the meeting and did so. It turned out we had a continuum of photographic talent. There were one or two who had never used a digital camera and, at the opposite extreme, some marvellous photographers who had a wealth of wonderful photos and photographic skill. One had brought along a photographic book she had designed and set up with reflective text accenting each photo or group of photos. She generously shared this with the group. When the photos were taken that afternoon, however, even beginners produced some amazing shots.

Our group began using the reflective process Paintner calls *Visio Divina*. This way of praying is adapted from *Lectio Divina* and uses images to focus the reflection process. For this section of the session we used "Shadow Cards from St Luke's Innovative Resources. Each image in this set contains some incongruity which can startle the person praying into deeper awareness.

### The process of *Visio Divina* is as follows:

1. Each person in the group has an image (a card or their own photograph). They close their eyes and enter a period of quieting down through breathing, allowing any tension or stress flow out of them. They are invited in this space to become aware of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Light's presence within.

Pause

2. When ready the leader asks the group to open their eyes and focus on the whole image in front of them. They become familiar with the photo. As they gaze on the image each one allows any thoughts, feelings or connections to arise and accepts all non-judgementally and compassionately.

Pause

3. The leader then offers reflective questioning at this point:
  - a. Is there an invitation being offered to you?
  - b. Is God inviting you, via this image, to move, reflect on, to be part of something new, to be aware of life in a different way?
  - c. What response is being asked of you now?
4. Sit in gratitude for what has happened for you during this reflection.
5. Now once more allow yourself to look at the image. Is there anything else speaking to you?

### Bring the reflection to a close.

After the reflection the group discussed two specific elements of photography. The first was the importance of light and shadow in photography as Rumi said: *You must have shadow and light source both*. The second was the Japanese concept of *Wabi-Sabi: beauty to be found in imprecision and decay*. Each then took their own photographs exploring the latter concept in particular. Even though the area was limited the resulting photos, shared in small groups and discussed were amazing.

Photography can be a deep prayerful process as opposed to much of the way it is used in our press today. Paintner's small text offers a wealth of ways of deepening our awareness and mindfulness of the world in which we exist as co-creators with God. It offers us a true way into the sacred and we discover the truth of the following text of Revelation 3:8 *Behold I have left an open door before you which no one else can close.*

Colleen O'Sullivan rsj

As one who is drawn to imageless contemplative prayer, after the pattern of 'The Cloud of Unknowing,' it was helpful to be introduced to a visual way of praying through the way of 'Visio Divina'. Colleen O'Sullivan introduced us to this experience at the May ANSD meeting of our Sydney ANSD group. As with Lexio Divina it is a way of praying that involves the use of the imagination. It includes noticing 'what memories, images and feelings are being stirred within us.'

I chose to practice Visio Divina while sitting in the hermitage at the back of our garden in the Blue Mountains, overlooking the Australian bush. I did not use a camera. My 'soft gazing' was directed through the hermitage window to the garden and bush beyond. Let me move now into the present tense as I describe my experience.

I follow the direction to move inwards, closing my eyes. Becoming aware of my breath, I seek to call to mind the image of the Spirit of God, breathing life into me.

As I breathe out I allow my 'body to relax and release into this moment of time.' As I engage in this gentle rhythm, I feel myself relaxing and being drawn through the Spirit into the present moment. This is a movement I find both challenging and helpful as I come from the 'head space on the enneagram.' So I seek to move with the help of the Spirit and the breath from the head down into 'the heart centre'. I am aware of feelings of relaxation and peace as I stay with this experience.

I now open my eyes and 'cast a gentle gaze' through our hermitage window to the landscape beyond. It is a very wet landscape as it has been raining through the night and into today. It is mainly a landscape of native Australian vegetation that I see, with many eucalypts, grevillias, banksias and ferns. In the valley there is a rich green floor, characteristic of Blue Mountains 'hanging swamp'. In the foreground there are non natives - a hazelnut bush, a 'temple tree', and growing on the verandah post a virginia creeper. All three of these deciduous plants are devoid of leaves as we are now in midwinter. In the far background there are some very tall eucalypts gently swaying in the wind.

I am drawn to the deep green of the valley floor, with a few emergent gums. It is beautifully green and verdant. I am also drawn to the contrasting dark browns of the deciduous trees that have now lost all their leaves.

As I allow these two contrasting elements of the landscape to unfold in my imagination I am reminded of earlier lovely glades – of a photo of an English glade that 'soothed my fevered brain' when studying for the School Leaving Certificate when I was a teenager. Also of such glades seen in other parts of the Blue Mountains and on journeys in the UK. Contrastingly the browns of the deciduous trees bring memories that are less strong but as I gaze at them they do stir feelings of loss and sadness.. As I reflect on my life now these trees and bushes remind of the realities of the ageing process and I am again conscious of my very real mortality. I am now in my seventies and have only a limited number of years left in this world.

The green of the valley floor brings to mind the contrasting energy of life and of God's creation and deeper still the warmth and energy of the Spirit of God in all of life. It draws me, too, to the wonder of the ongoing life of the soul beyond the darkness of death.

So what is the invitation that comes to me in the midst of this Visio Divina. It is to be present to the realities of my life now and to nurturing an openness to the Spirit of God in all that I see and experience – to nurturing the life of the soul. It is a call also to me to come into the present moment, that present moment when the Spirit seeks to reveal God's love and life to me.

So once again I connect with my breath; with breathing in divine gratitude for all that the Divine Spirit has revealed to me in this experience. I close my eyes, release these various images that have come to me and return to the contemplative stillness of being in the presence of God, opening my Spirit to God's loving presence, drawn by the 'sharp dart of longing love.'

John Connor

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

National Conference

Ibis Styles, Canberra, 203 Goyder Street,  
Narrabundah, Canberra ACT

September 14, 2013 at 5.20pm

**AGM AGENDA**

**Ordinary business:**

Welcome

Present

Apologies

Minutes of last AGM

Executive Report (President's Report)

Financial Report

Election of

    President

    Secretary

    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 as indicated below:**

Notice of Motion

***To comply with the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012, the Constitution of the Australian Network for Spiritual Direction Inc. be amended as proposed.***

Brief Regional Reports

ANSD Conference 2014

\* Notes on the proposed amendments to the Constitution follow on page 10.

## Notes on amendments to Constitution

- In 2012 the Act covering incorporated bodies in Victoria was amended and in the light of this our constitution has to be amended. I have worked on the constitution to address the matters required and the amended constitution will be presented to the AGM for approval. If approved by the meeting the constitution will be forwarded to the department of Consumer Affairs for ratification. Our existing incorporation details are not changed. Our certificate of incorporation is still valid.

The principal areas that have to be addressed are the following:

- The office of Public Officer ceases to exist. Under the new legislation the role they used to perform is now covered by the Secretary. The secretary unlike the public officer under the old legislation does not have to reside in Victoria.
- The Statement of purposes will be considered part of the Constitution and not set out as a separate statement as previously.
- The financial arrangements have changed. The executive have to have the financial statements prepared one month after the end of our financial year, ratify them and then present them to members at the AGM.
- As well as the above, the new rules or constitution must address the following matters:
  - ◇ Members' rights and obligations
  - ◇ Defining in more detail office holders and their duties
  - ◇ Procedures for resignation and cessation of membership
  - ◇ The process for the appointment and termination of the secretary
  - ◇ Preparing and keeping minutes of general meetings
  - ◇ Provisions for members to access and obtain copies of minutes of general meetings, including financial statements submitted at a general meeting.

With the agreement of the executive I am sending with the notice of the AGM a copy of the DRAFT amended constitution for members' information and consideration.

**I ask that individual members and regional groups consider this constitution and contact me with comments/suggestions or enquire from me if you have questions. With the benefit of input from members, I can then make changes to the constitution which will be presented at the AGM.**

Of course you can visit the Consumer Affairs website at [www.consumeraffairs.vic.gov.au/associations](http://www.consumeraffairs.vic.gov.au/associations)

Thanks in anticipation of your involvement.

Adrian Jones  
[amjones7@bigpond.com](mailto:amjones7@bigpond.com)  
03 9439 1545

\* A copy of the DRAFT amended constitution has been mailed to all members. If you have not received a copy of the constitution, please contact the Public Officer, Adrian Jones at the above email address or phone number.

## for people engaged in Godly listening



The Australian Network for Spiritual Direction, an ecumenical endeavour, is committed to fostering spiritual direction and to the training of spiritual directors in the Christian Community.

We believe spiritual direction to be a vital ministry in the continuing transformation of all people. It is one of many ministries by which people are set free to take their share in God's ongoing work. It is a ministry of guidance taking many forms, and is exercised by women and men, lay and ordained.

The challenges and benefits of spiritual direction are both personal and corporate in nature. This historical ministry is an effective tool for helping people address the complex issues of our time.

The Network is committed to:

- encouraging spiritual directors in their work
- offering opportunities for care and nurture through regular gatherings and communications
- supporting national, regional and local training programs

We welcome to membership and involvement in the Australian Network for Spiritual Direction all who desire to support this work.

*This Statement was adopted by the original committee in Canberra in 1989*