



ANSD Canberra & Region

AGM Report May 2020 – April 2021

This report relates to our financial year from 1 May 2020 to 30 April 2021 and also refers to events in the Canberra region since our last AGM in September 2020.

Gathering together, whether in person or on-line during these pandemic times, continues to be a great source of encouragement and enrichment, helping to deepen and widen the space within us to respond contemplatively to the reality of our world and our own personal life experiences. The long, loving look at the real, espoused by Jesuit priest Walter Burghardt, is once again a timely invitation.

The impact of the pandemic, of course, has disrupted and re-shaped our program of events during 2020-2021. Our Quiet Day, scheduled for 16 May 2020 with Dr Heather Thomson, was cancelled due to the lockdown. With a year's collective transition into Zoom delivery, we hosted our first on-line Quiet Day on 28 August 2021 in the midst of Canberra's second lockdown, effective from 12 August.

We very much value our affiliation with the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture and their on-going support of ANSD, not only for the use of their superb facilities and grounds at generously reduced rates, but also for their promotion of our events via their website.

During the year we have received a few enquiries regarding referrals for spiritual direction and we trust this is an essential part of the "slow-cooked" work of ANSD at a local level.

Quiet Days

Our Quiet Days continue to be well attended, usually attracting 25-40 participants. Quiet Days are open to anyone interested in contemplative Christian spirituality and are held quarterly, in February, May, August and November. We deeply appreciate the wisdom, gifts and energy each presenter and each group of participants offer every time we gather.

Summary of Quiet Days:

May 2020, with Dr Heather Thomson, cancelled due to the pandemic.

August 2020, "**The Poetics of Contemplation**" with Jane and John Foulcher, explored the role of creativity in the spiritual life and the mysterious art of poetry. Jane and John offered a rich and spacious opportunity to experience how the spiritual life is enhanced and enlivened by the presence of the poetic. This event was originally planned as a professional development opportunity in March and was re-imagined as a Quiet Day after social restrictions eased.

November 2020, "**Our Body in Contemplative Practice: Between Lao Tsu and Jesus**" with Peter Yuile. This event reflected on how body awareness can be a gateway into deeper contemplative presence and practice in everyday life. The day included practical experiences introducing Tai Chi (led by Dr Hilary Berthon) and Yoga (led by Dr Shirley Campbell).

February 2021, **“Beginning Again”**, with Rev Dr Sarah Bachelard, took up the perennial cultural ritual of making new year’s resolutions as an invitation to dive deeper into a renewed practice of meditation. Sarah’s reflections encouraged us to shed habits and patterns that no longer serve us, as many gum trees symbolise as they enter into the “great shedding” during late summer.

May 2021, **“Looking Deeply: A Contemplative Approach to Reconciliation”**, with Dr Heather Thomson, provided a spacious time of silence and reflection, allowing participants to make connections between our personal and national story, in solidarity with National Reconciliation Week and its theme, “more than a word, reconciliation takes action”.

August 2021, **“Compassion and Contemplation: Sisters”** with Rev Linda Chapman, from the NSW south coast, invited us into ways of practicing self-compassion, as a fundamental part of nurturing deeper compassion and transformation in our lives and communities. This was our first foray into Zoom delivery and we give thanks for the gift of technology during these times of social restriction.

Professional Development Days

During 2020, in response to feedback on viability concerns regarding our reflective workshops, we experimented with ways of fostering increased engagement of practising spiritual directors for intentional development opportunities while at the same time, encouraging the inclusion of those who don’t practice in this way.

We decided to offer a “reflective practice” day on 31 October and offered two options for participants, to either engage in developmental interaction sessions or remain in reflective silence. While successful in attracting more attendees, we sense there is still some more refining and learnings to incorporate as we plan another opportunity later this year.

Dr Sally Longley from Sydney led us in October on the theme “Conversations with Silence”, expounding a number of themes from her recent book of the same title. Having recently emerged from different kinds of silences arising through the pandemic, Sally encouraged us to explore our relationship with silence itself and the nature of “content-filled silences” we encounter when accompanying others.

Financial Report: The attached details of the Financial Report have been prepared by Canberra Region Treasurer Lyn Kelly. We are grateful for Lyn’s careful attention to detail in managing our finances and her faithful support, presence and practical assistance at all our gatherings.

Our balance as at 30 April 2021 is \$2030.01, with an operating surplus of \$1084.53, which marks a recovery in our financial position since last year (with a balance of \$945.48 and an operating loss of \$75.09). We will continue to monitor our financial position to maintain viability and a spirit of generosity and generativity.

Closing comments

We are exploring a way of sharing the convenor role by seeking expressions of interest for someone to represent the Canberra region on the regular national executive meetings.

Sincere thanks to those who consistently offer practical support for each of our gatherings, bringing food, helping with registrations and hospitality, and most importantly, to everyone in sharing a spirit of openness and intentionality as we gather to listen deeply together.

Annie Patterson
September 2021