

# The Grail Newsletter

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it's 3:23 in the morning  
and I'm awake  
because my great-great-grandchildren  
won't let me sleep  
my great-great-grandchildren  
ask me in dreams  
what did you do while the planet was plundered?  
what did you do when the earth was unravelling?  
surely you did something  
when the seasons started failing?  
as the mammals, reptiles, birds were all dying?  
did you fill the streets with protest  
when democracy was stolen?  
what did you do  
once  
you  
knew?                      Drew Dellinger

## CONTENTS

<b>AN ABUNDANT LIFE</b> .....	3
<b>NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE</b> .....	7
North Queensland.....	7
Brisbane .....	8
Sydney .....	10
Melbourne.....	14

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## AN ABUNDANT LIFE

**Janet O'Sullivan**

*Walter Brueggeman*, an American Protestant theologian, observes in the world around him today that, where people have a wealth of material resources and an abiding appetite for acquiring more, a 'myth of scarcity' becomes a pervading narrative that can develop into 'a demonic spiritual force among us': 'I (we) do not have enough'. What results is a lack of hospitality, a refusal to share, suspicion of strangers, fear of loss, increasing security measures.

In Australia, we have seen how easily the myth of scarcity can be used to support the Federal Government's 'border protection' policies against refugees and asylum seekers arriving in boats: 'They will take our jobs; they will overcrowd our cities; they will drain government budgets; some of them could be terrorists', and so on. The Biblical God of the Old and New Testaments is always a God of abundant gifts and blessings, a God of incomparable generosity who, as Karl Rahner reminds us, is not only the giver but also the gift. Those wanting relationship with this God are called to have a mind-set, not of scarcity, but of abundance: open to inclusive, appreciative relationships with others, grateful for God's gift of creation and caring for its well-being, living in truth and justice with a peaceful heart.

*Janet O'Sullivan*, economist and one of the leaders of the Christian Meditation Movement in Australia, spoke at the Grail Centre in Sydney on 'Abundance'; and what follows is an edited version of the thoughts she shared with us that evening. Janet advocates a 'steady state economy' with limits to growth, i.e. an economy that is stable, or mildly fluctuating, and does not exceed ecological limits.

*(Alison Healey)*



*Photograph by Nour Barcha*

**‘I have come that they may have life...abundant life.’ (John 10:10)**

We are given the gift of life, the supports for life which the earth provides for us and the promise of life in the Spirit. Yet we find ourselves in a time of crisis. As expressed in the Earth Charter, ‘We stand at a critical moment in Earth’s history, a time when humanity must choose its future... as we are destabilising our earth home by our excessive use of the earth’s resources’.

From the Greek ‘oikos’ (meaning ‘household’) three familiar words are derived: ecology, economy and ecumenism. When we do not connect ecology and economics and under-stand the economy as a subset of ecology, when we do not accept limits, we see our world through a distorted lens. Our dominant economic system does not recognise limits to growth in an ecology of a finite planet. And so an urgent re-examination of our lives and our place in the planetary house-hold is needed.

What is the meaning of true abundance? What is an abundant life? Do I have a sense of abundance in my life and so live gratefully? What is true wealth? It will help to look at the origins of these words: *abundance* is derived from the Latin *abundare*, meaning *to overflow*; *wealth* is derived from the Old English *wel* or *wela*, meaning *well* or *well-being*.

An economy sustained largely by consuming to meet artificially created needs is not a goal we probably aspire to, but it is close to what we have, where unlimited choice is regarded as abundance; and we lose the value of

the concept of 'enough'. If we cannot value 'enough', we cannot understand the beauty of scale, harmony, balance, the discipline of limits. Artists know this. Nor can we see how the eco-systems of the natural world elegantly and spontaneously observe limits. Limits are not about deprivation, but right relationships.

*Brother David Stendal Rast* writes of the importance of living gratefully: 'Life is given to us...the only appropriate response therefore is gratitude'. He uses the image of the cup to explain how gratitude flows from a sense of abundance and how both are connected with the value of 'enough': 'the smaller my cup (of needs and wants) the sooner the overflow of gratitude, which I can share as blessing with others'. He compares this to our economy which operates by always trying to make the cup bigger, so that the joy of overflow is kept from us.

We live in the immense mystery of God's self-giving, 'in God we live and move and have our being' (*Acts 17:28*). We humans are harvesters of grace; we live in a state of grace. We are challenged to rest in it, to trust it, to appreciate it. In a world sacred because of God's presence, 'being human needs to be defined by communion rather than consumption' (*Rowan Williams*). Life is about relationship with one another, with our Source and with the whole of creation. We are made for community, we are part of the earth's ecology. The fullness for which the human heart longs is always available, but we cannot grasp it. It flows into us in the measure in which we let go. Spiritual practices and disciplines, such as meditation, help to free us from our ego-centred patterns. God's love is the primary energy and we are called to be channels of it. Love is a renewing energy; it increases as it is used. It is the energy necessary for an abundant life and for facing and embracing the challenges of our times.

When we live in the spirit of abundance, we are a liberating and empowering force in the lives of those with whom we interact. Together, we can then create new lifestyles, new patterns of community and social organisation, based on cooperation rather than competition. As envy, greed and defensiveness flow from a mindset of scarcity, so compassion, service and hospitality flow from a spirit of abundance. We begin to experience the value of social capital, natural capital and spiritual capital – all relational – relational than merely financial capital.

‘To see a world in a grain of sand  
And a heaven in a wild flower,  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,  
And eternity in an hour’

*(William Blake)*

Slowing down, being more aware of the holiness, beauty and fragility of the earth, more attentive to our place within the whole community of life – in this way we are awakened to our responsibilities as carers for our common home. ‘Life to the full is possible, but not without choosing it moment by moment...one small action at a time’ *(Judy Cannato)*.

We are called to a new consciousness, a new way of seeing and being: ‘Ye that seek after God, let your heart live’ *(Psalm 69:32)*.

*Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life – for the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, for the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace. Let ours be a time remembered for the joyful celebration of life and a time for giving hope to those coming after us.*



## NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE

### North Queensland

From a moving-somewhat-slowly way of life in April, I have been in galloping mode since!

Announcing my leaving Townsville has given me some quite humbling experiences, including a Civic Reception hosted by the Mayor, Jenny Hill, and the newly elected Townsville City Council. At that event I was given Honorary Life Membership of Townsville Little Theatre Inc. This was, of course, a very special moment for me but the Theatre also had its own milestone in July with the production of the world premiere of *Murderous Revenge*, written by Terri Galea-Thorne, who is a local Townsvillian playwright.

Since the last Newsletter, I have driven north to meet with Margaret Tranter and Roberta Michna for an enjoyable weekend on the Atherton Table-land at Margaret's home. Margaret and Andrew and Roberta and Paul are all four assisting in the Malanda Information Centre, a very interesting place with lots of facts and figures about the Tableland. They volunteer several hours each week restoring and nurturing native vegetation on and around their properties. They are all now far from home: Margaret and Andrew with other family members are spending quality leisure time in many parts west, as far as Broome in Western Australia; Roberta and Paul are in Canada on a 'long overdue visit to Paul's family', as Roberta describes it.

The latest news from Deborah Pennington is that she and Cheryl are now scheduled to return to Australia in November.

A delightful 'farewell luncheon' organised by Saints Catholic College at the University turned out to be a great reunion, not only for me, but for many of the guests as well. They included College staff, graduates from the earliest years of St Raphael's College through to more recent ex-residents who proudly call themselves Raphaelians, Diocesan staff and members of the House of Prayer community.

I was deeply moved by the speaker's comments, the informal and comfortable environment and the overwhelming hospitality of the occasion.

Many, many thanks to Saints College Council and staff for that generous event.

Another special reunion for me was the visit of four women from Cairns, Mackay and Townsville. They were all residents of St Raphael's when I was there and together have given approximately 60 years of their professional lives to educating Queensland high school students. They spent a few days and visited the College, reliving their student days. Their phone-cameras flashed constantly as they wandered the corridors and grounds.

Thanks to Fr Mick Lowcock, Diocesan Administrator in the absence of a Bishop, for inviting me to the priests' Jubilee Dinner and for the kind words and good wishes extended to me there.

With the sorting, discarding, distributing, delivering and packaging almost finished, I leave Townsville on 3rd August, exactly 20 years since I moved into 2/105 Goodwin Street, Currajong. You will find me in the

Sydney Centre from mid-August.

*Sheila Hawthorn*

## **Brisbane**

*Blessed are the Peacemakers: How faith informs women as peacebuilders.*

Janet Galos and Ann Aboud attended this session of the Women and Theology Conference at Grace College, University of Queensland. An international and interfaith panel of peacebuilders featured Malala Yousafzai; Shirin Abadi, a human rights lawyer in Iran; Mary McAleese, former President of Ireland; Joy Balazo, from the Philippines; Yasmin Abdel-Magied, Muslim, engineer in Australia; Valarie Kaur, Sikh activist; Melodye Felman, Jewish, founder of Seeking Common Ground; Wendy Flannery, Mercy nun in Brisbane, co-founder of Believing Women for a Culture of Peace; Nora Amath, co-founder of Australian Muslim Advocates for the Rights of All Humanity; Leymah Gbowee, Christian, instrumental in bringing women together to achieve peace in Liberia.

Jill Herbert, Maggie Jenatsch, Helen Jeffcoat, Ann and Janet drove to Janet's brother's house in the country, which he built himself, to see if we could have our retreat there in November. Jill's gallant Kluger only faltered at the last hill. Languid white cows and calves questioned our presence and wallabies fled in our wake. Birds shrieked and huge boulders loomed over us. *Picnic at Hanging Rock* seemed all too believable and I would not have been surprised if Helen had vanished into the bush! We looked over the valley and felt at peace with the world – ideal for our retreat. Maggie stuck some mimosa in her hair on our wander and after a hearty lunch we left – wrestling the gate closed and disturbing the cows who heaved themselves out of our path with great reluctance.

Sheila stayed in Brisbane for some days on her way south to Sydney and 12 of us gathered for a meal. Jill said grace and we read a *Christian Prayer in Union with Creation*. Jill et al had prepared a *Babette's Feast* of food. We interviewed Sheila, who gave us a potted account of her knowledge and experience of education in Papua New Guinea (PNG). One of the most fascinating stories was of Bishop Arkfeld SVD who advised young women who wanted an education opposed by their families to stand close to the door, with no bags, and then make a dash for his plane just before take-off. We'd call it kidnapping – but for a good cause. Sheila spoke of her involvement in the Pacific Summer Schools. We were intrigued to hear of the Grail's connections with Maria and Rosemary von Trapp and Mary Mennis' friendship with Maria in Boroko. Mary has written several books about PNG and Catholic missionaries there. Clearly, Sheila has made a great contribution in PNG, St Raphael's College and among the Townsville refugee community.

Consy Sakaria was in Brisbane in July. Her visit was connected with her work at the Torture and Trauma Centre in Townsville. Some of the Grail women here were able to meet her for dinner after work. We have made a commitment to stay in touch with Consy and Mary Anne Baillie and other members to our north.

Sadly, Carol Cranwell, Caresse's mother, died after a long, long illness which she bore with inspiring courage and grace and was laid to rest on 28<sup>th</sup> June in Pottsville, south of Brisbane across the border in northern New South Wales. Helen, Elizabeth Lancaster and Ann drove down together and

were met there by Mary and Darryl Nelson. Carol's large family gave a lovely tribute to their mother and grandmother and spoke of her great contribution to their well-being and to the wider community. The young members of her family said that Carol never judged them, 'she just listened'. Caresse read a poem she had composed for her mother. We assure the Cranwell family of our sympathy and our abiding admiration of Carol.

Lily Aboud, Ann's granddaughter who is studying medicine at James Cook University in Townsville, has received a humanitarian award from All Hallows College, Brisbane –\$5000 to spend on a worthy cause. She is going to Uganda to give it there.

We have talked in earlier Newsletters of the *Days for Girls* kits. This is a women's project of which we are a part, providing sanitary products for young girls which enable them to attend school without interruption. It is already well-organised in Ethiopia and is extending to Uganda, Myanmar and the Solomon Islands. Ann is travelling to Ethiopia in October to deliver kits we have made and see the extent and impact of the project first hand.

With best wishes to all,

*The Brisbane Group*

## Sydney

It is not often that three women in the Sydney group are overseas at the same time at three different International Grail programs. Tricia Gemmell is still in Europe and is due to return in October. Tricia was invited by the Portuguese Grail to give a series of lectures on the theology of creation and of human care for creation in a summer study program. She will also participate in an international meeting on formation in Portugal. Tricia has relatives in France and three of her adult children are overseas at present so she will have the joy of being with them in the weeks between the two meetings. Meanwhile, her husband, Geoffrey, has taken a break from his legal practice to make the pilgrimage to Compostela. Kay Hunt, as a member of the International Formation Team, is a co-convenor of two formation meetings this year. She has not long been home from the first of these held in Durban with Grail women from South and East Africa and will be going in October to Portugal for the second, where she will meet up with

Tricia. (Andrea Venier from Melbourne will be there, too.) Christine Reynolds took a break from teaching English as a Second Language to young refugees and migrants to join an international Grail group on a guided trip to parts of the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium. They visited key places in the story of the Grail in the Netherlands, as well as centres of activity in Germany and Belgium, such as the work among immigrants in Hochfeld and against human trafficking in Antwerp and Brussels.

Sonia Mrva was another traveller during this period. She spent three weeks in Mexico with Hilda, a dear friend from student days in Lima, Peru, now seriously ill with cancer. Together for a while on the same side of the Pacific, it was a blessed opportunity for unmediated expressions of their enduring care for each other.

At home here in Sydney we have had an eventful four months. We visited the Lindfield-Killara parish to promote our Prison Journal project. The people and their pastors were generous and encouraging. Several hundreds of journals were sold enabling us to provide the same number as gifts to men and women in the State's correctional centres. We have only enough left now for one more parish promotion before this second edition of the Journal will have been fully distributed.

The Book Club, convened by Sonia, will celebrate its 10th year in November. We have reflected on and discussed over a hundred creative works of literature, an enriching experience in itself, but also treasured are the abiding friendships that have put down strong roots and flourished over this time. For the remainder of the year we are reading *The Burial* by Courtney Collins and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer. In November, we will nominate and choose titles for 2017.

Before she left for Europe in July, Tricia convened a series of reflection mornings on women mystics and we completed our group study of Elizabeth Johnson's *Ask the Beasts*, which we began towards the end of last year. Wednesday evenings continue to be devoted to *lectio divina*, 7.30 – 9 pm. All are welcome to come at any time. At present, we are delighting in all that we are discovering in the Gospel of John.

Our collaboration with other groups has kept us busy. Anne Day represented us in a conference of Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH). The Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network (AFTINET) is intensely engaged in campaigning and making submissions to Government on several so-called 'free trade' agreements, especially the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER-Plus) involving Australia, New Zealand and the small Pacific Island nations. These agreements contain clauses that put the maximising of corporate profits above citizens' rights and well-being and need to be changed or opposed. The Grail has been represented in AFTINET's Working Group since its inception.

The Christian Meditation Movement's 'Meditation and the Environment' was an uplifting experience for the many hundreds of Australians and New Zealanders who gathered for several days in the Kincoppal hall at Rose Bay. The Faith and Ecology network (FEN), a multi-faith initiative administered by the Columban Mission Institute, is holding its major annual event, prepared over several months, on Sunday, 25th September, 1.30 – 5.30 pm. The theme is 'Living Waters – Run-off, Rivers and Reefs'. Finally, the annual Abraham Conference which brings people of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths together around a common theme, took place in the Parramatta Uniting Church Centre this year. As advocates of unrestricted free speech seek to dilute the nation's laws on racial and religious vilification, it was timely to choose *Hate Speech and Violence* for this year's theme. It was an excellent afternoon of respectful exchange and strengthening of cross-cultural relationships.

On 10th September, *Moving together towards a culture of non-violence* was the topic of a day-long seminar-workshop at the Grail Centre. Claude Mostowik, MSC, National President of Pax Christi, spoke of a recent international meeting in Rome and its call for a critical review of Just War Theory and a papal encyclical on peace and non-violence. Uniting Church minister in Gordon, Michael Barnes, gave an enlightening presentation on the non-violent Jesus. Gill Burrows from Pace e Bene (a non-violent education and training program) and Ruth Crowe facilitated some small group discussion and activities and Anne Marie George showed a video she had chosen demonstrating a process for non-violent action for social change.

It was a day rich in content which, it is hoped, will be repeated in various locations to spread its central message.

In the second half of August, we welcomed Sheila Hawthorn into the 'Avila' household. As reported in the North Queensland news, Sheila will no longer live permanently in Townsville but her care for the people of North Queensland will go on. Another new addition to 'Avila' is Kendall Benton-Collins, who works a few hours a week as an administrative assistant and brings to the task a willingness and capability that we appreciate. We thank Elsie Tanudji, who filled this role before Kendall and was a delight to work with, and wish her and her husband and daughters well in the years ahead.

Illness and death have visited us in Sydney in the last few months. Words fail to express the deep, painful shock of the sudden death of Mary and John Robertson's second daughter, Trish, who was so full of the love of life. We continue to pray for Paul, her husband, and for all of Trish's family and, particularly, Mary who is also suffering serious illness. Ann Miranda and her husband, Dave, are also troubled with ill health. We hope the pace-maker Ann is due to receive brings her renewed energy.

It is a few months now since we farewelled Bidy Kennedy, sister of Philippa Green. It is rare for a woman of over 100 years to have a full church of people present at her farewell Eucharist. Bidy was widely loved and admired - a strong but gentle woman, faithful,

Hospitable, courteous, wise. And now, as I write, we have news of Isabel McDearmid's death, another extraordinarily admirable woman of a similar age to Bidy. Both passed out of this world peacefully and we thank God for this and for their good lives among us.

Till we greet you again in our next Newsletter, may you go well,

*The Sydney Group*

## Melbourne

As well as a couple of significant regional events, there have been quite a few changed circumstances since the last newsletter. We have seen comings and goings at 'Hesed', the Grail house in Balwyn, and continuing concerns over members' health.

Firstly, the Melbourne participants (Dinny Culican, Kathy Wayland, Barbara Erskine, Carol Webb and Andrea Venier) would like to acknowledge the Sydney team for their organising a most rewarding National Retreat. The ecological content was varied and mean-ingful, and the ambiance reflective. Helen MacAuley's Tai Chi, Jillian Morrison's meditations and the presenters on Australian Grail history added to the depth of experience, and Consy Sakaria's commitment in the Grail was a highlight. Thanks also to the staff of Mount St Benedict's in Pennant Hills, Sydney, for their hospitality.

Inspired by the Sydney event, the Melbourne group held an Ecological Reflection Day on Sunday, 10th July, at the Kildara Centre, Malvern. There were thirteen of us – a mix of members and interested new people. Dinny, Kathy and Andrea initiated the sessions of meditation, reflection (including 'mindful eating' at lunch) and discussion, which seemed to be appreciated by all those present. Ann Niall also did a wonderful job with the catering. Despite the bleak weather, we managed to get in touch with our environment and to learn about and renew our ecological responsibilities. We are grateful for the continued support of Sisters Catriona and Ursula at Kildara.

Between the above events, we held a Biggest Morning Tea for the Cancer Council on 26th May at 'Hesed' with a 'mellow yellow' theme. Irena and Kevin Dunn kindly hosted the more than twenty guests, including distant travellers, Mary Nelson and Barbara Erskine. As well as taking substantial donations, we prayed a poem for cancer sufferers and others suffering illness and trauma and provided information on the Grail and coming events. Mary went home to Queensland with her raffle winnings, a box containing 'yellow themed' items!

In late April, June Ryan and Andrea met to discuss designs for creating some Grail greeting cards. We appreciate June's artistic talents and look forward to seeing some designs in the near future.

We 'farewelled' Irena and Kevin from 'Hesed' in mid-June and they are now settling in to their new abode at St Joseph's in Hawthorn. We are grateful to have had their calming presence in the house over the last year and thank them for the many improvements they have made. The same week that they moved house Alison Healey arrived to spend a few days with us. As well as visiting Joanna Waite and Pat Sheeran, Alison joined us for a *lectio divina* and a pleasant Sunday lunch. We discussed some furniture rearrangements for the arrival of our new tenants and the further re-pairs needed to the electric wiring.

Then, in early July, Lauren Porter and Mark Lockwood drove from Sydney to take up residence in 'Hesed'. Andrea met them there and after lunch, some busy re-organising had them practically settled in! Lauren had been a resident at 'Avila' in North Sydney for two years, while completing her Masters in Clinical Counselling. At the same time she undertook pastoral care training and worked part-time at L'Arche with people with intellectual disabilities. Mark has recently moved from Portsmouth in the UK, where he was working with a business ethics charity, doing computer training for the elderly and completing a social care qualification. Lauren (now Lauren Porter-Lockwood) married Mark in February in Sydney, a lovely account of which was included in the April newsletter. Both Quakers, Lauren and Mark will be joining one of the Melbourne Quaker meetings. They are interested in permaculture, spirituality, care for the environment and craft and are hoping to join a local choir. Lauren has just taken up a position with Benetas and Mark has been interviewing for positions. He will also be running a computer skills workshop for the Melbourne group and a session on accessing the Grail Australia website in coming weeks. Individual lessons can also be arranged. We look forward to spending time with Lauren and Mark, and benefitting from their input and skills.

Each week we continue our *lectio divina* and we have welcomed Kathy, Lauren and Mark as new participants. We are finding *Prayers of the Cosmos* a rich resource. In early August, we were invited to meet in Irena

and Kevin's home and marvelled at their lovely apartment and new community facilities.

We are pleased to report that Dinny had a most rewarding experience singing with the Melbourne Lyceum Club choir on their recent tour in Scotland. It was an opportunity to have a reunion with many members of her extended family.

I mentioned earlier concerns about members' health. Since our last report, Joanna Waite has had a stint in hospital with a foot fracture, but thankfully has recovered well and is back at Eva Tilley Retirement Centre. We are grateful to Mary McCormack and friends for supporting Joanna so well. Alice Ley is improving after the insertion of a pacemaker, as is Rita Flipo. Kevin Dunn has had the skin graft he and Irene were waiting so long for, with largely positive results. Some infection still needs regular treatment. In the last few months we have seen the deteriorating health of Pat Sheeran. As a result of breathing problems and worsening dementia in the weeks following her birthday, Pat needed to be moved to high care at Corpus Christi Centre for the Aged in Clayton. She is now using a wheelchair and her condition is more stable. Although finding communication difficult, Pat still enjoys having visitors. Jo Flynn, Genny Grabau, Ann Niall and Clare Price have been regularly supporting her.

Dawn McGann's cancer worsened over recent months and the chemotherapy was not leading to positive outcomes, so Dawn, her husband, Paul, and their three sons took the difficult decision that she cease treatment and to go into palliative care. After only a few short weeks, Dawn died peacefully and her family and friends gathered in St Carthage's church, Parkville, on 8th September to farewell her. She was buried in Bairnsdale in Gippsland the following afternoon. We assure Paul of our continuing friendship and support.

Thanks to Dawn's inspired suggestion, we are currently planning our second Ann Woodruff Memorial Lecture, which will be given by Jo Flynn in November, as part of our celebration of the Grail in Australia's 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Former residents at 'Tay Creggan' may remember Bill Clements, whose three sisters lived there at different times. Our group is planning to visit an exhibition in September of his sculptures and other works with the title, *Epic stories in bronze and other media*.

Finally, we have just heard of the death of John Cowburn, SJ, and a long-time valued friend. We remain grateful to John for the many prayerful liturgies, challenging lectures and stimulating conversations we have shared with him over the years. He was buried from Mary Immaculate Church, Hawthorn, on 12th September. Joanna who knew him well was there to represent us.

With peace and blessings to all,

*Andrea Venier*



*Photograph by Elizabeth Lee*