

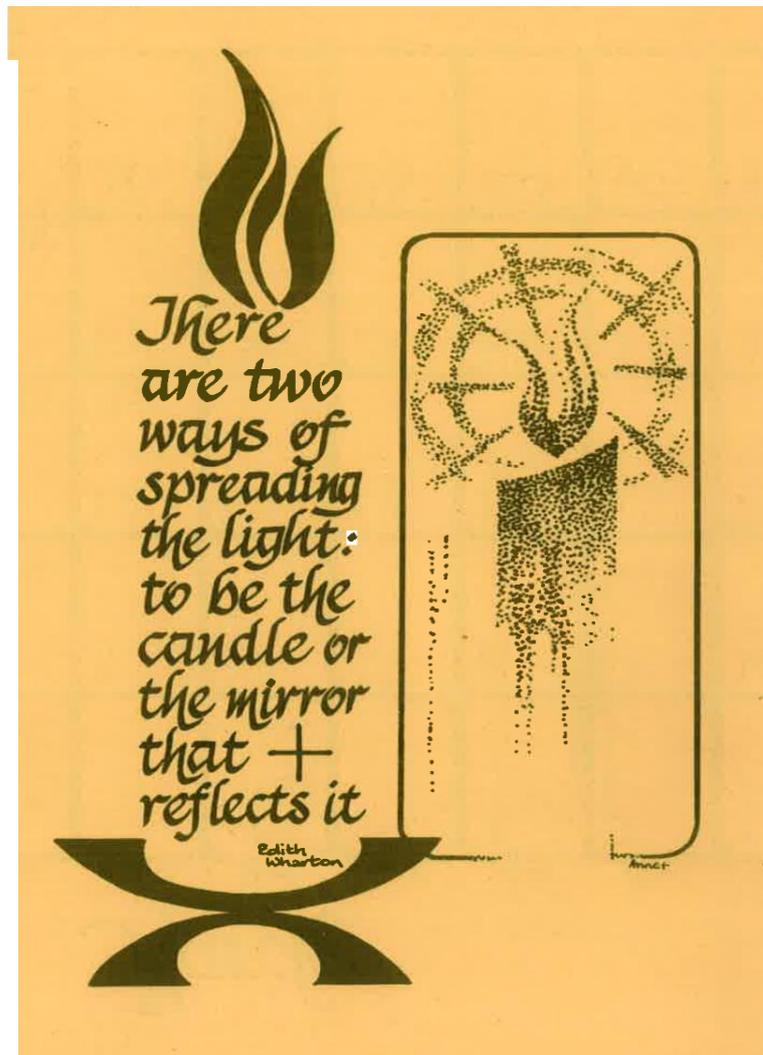
Good people,

Most royal green verdancy,  
rooted in the sun,  
you shine with radiant light.

In this circle of earthly  
existence,  
you shine so finely  
it surpasses understanding.

God hugs you.  
You are encircled  
by the arms  
of the mystery of God.

*Hildegard of Bingen, 12th C.*



**EASTER BLESSINGS ON ALL**

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# NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE

## Melbourne

The holiday season was quite eventful for the Melbourne group. The opportunity to share Christmas with family and friends, and have some relaxation time, was much appreciated. However, late December and January also revealed new health concerns for members while we are still coming to terms with the loss of Pat Sheeran and other friends.

It was not an easy holiday season for Joanna Waite who, not long after our pre-Christmas *lectio* gathering, was taken to hospital a couple of times over Christmas for some procedures. Although she is recovering, Joanna is getting more frail and it is a slow process. Mary McCormick has been Joanna's on-going helping 'angel', and Alison Healey and Helen Gomez have been visiting over the last two months, providing important emotional and spiritual support.

It has also been a sobering time to discover that Irena Dunn has been ill for weeks with some, thus far, unexplained bug and that Ann Niall is courageously and positively handling chemo treatment for lymphoma, which was diagnosed after Christmas. We ask for your prayers for all these dear members.

During January, Genny Grabau arranged for 'Hesed' to be inspected by a building engineer who was recommended by Carol Webb. We have been undertaking various smaller repairs since then and are planning a much needed renovation to the bathroom. In the meantime, 'Hesed' is still our base for activities and is at present providing short-term emergency accommodation to a couple needing regular treatment in the city. In addition, whilst staying at 'Hesed', Alison and Helen were finalising Pat Sheeran's legal and personal affairs and helping to deal with repairers.

In mid-January, Andrea Venier attended a National Team meeting in order, among other things, to continue planning the National General Assembly to be held in Sydney during the Queen's Birthday long weekend in June. Ann Aboud and Andrea enjoyed the hospitality of the 'Avila' team, Tricia Gemmell and Anne Day.

February saw the recommencement of regular Melbourne activities. Our first Regional Meeting for the year on Saturday, February 3rd, had a packed agenda and included a celebration for Genny's up-coming significant birthday. The following Monday, we reconvened for our first *lectio divina* of the year and we are happy to welcome Maureen, a friend of Ann Niall, to the group. We are finding *Ageing as a Spiritual Practice* an appropriate and deeply rewarding text.

In other news, Carol Webb has left to spend the rest of the year visiting family and friends in the USA and elsewhere. Before her departure, Helen, Alison and I spent a lovely evening at Carol's share-home in Northcote, enjoying a delicious meal of home grown produce and lively conversation with other residents.

Presently, Kathy Wayland and Andrea are preparing for our Holy Week Reflection morning on 'Receptivity' with the wise assistance of our *lectio* group. This open event will be held at the Kildara Centre the day before Palm Sunday and will combine some input on the understanding of receptivity, Scripture, *lectio* and discussion. During Holy Week, a couple of us will also be participating in the *The Last Corroboree* - a ritual meal in celebration of Christ's Last Supper, which will be held in the chapel of the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry.

May our members and friends experience some quiet reflection time and peace as we ponder the events of Holy Week. A joyful and blessed Easter to all.

*Andrea Venier*

## **Sydney**

The Sydney group reconvened in February after the summer break. Several programs proposed at November's planning meeting were ready to run.

On five Tuesday evenings in Lent, 6.30 – 8.00pm, 30 – 40 women and men gathered at the Grail Centre to reflect on the theme of **Lament**. We were grateful that Louise Campbell, Donna Jacobs Sife, Alex Nelson and Aisha Meguid accepted our invitation to speak to this theme from their particular perspective. Louise has a deep commitment to social justice and has been a strong influence in the life and work of her renowned artist brother, Richard. She is Aboriginal Education Advisor in the Office of Catholic Education in the Maitland Diocese. Donna is a Jewish writer, award-winning storyteller and peace-worker. Alex Nelson, a Christian theologian and psychologist, brings his learning from life, his spirituality and wise psychology to his work in counselling. Aisha has been delivering guest lectures and teaching in Islam and personal development with ISRA (Islamic Sciences and Research Academy Australia) for over 10 years. On each of these four nights participants were asked to make a note of their thoughts, in-sights and reflections and contribute them to what became a collective prayer ritual of lament on the fifth night. They did so generously and the result was a final evening that was rich in content, inspiring and moving.

Tricia Gemmell is leading two daytime pro-grams extending over a period of several months. The first is for women wanting to know more about The Grail and will take place on a Tuesday morning, 10 am – 12 noon, every two months from February to September,. Titled **Women of Vision** it is based on a book with the same title, published by Apocryphile Press in the USA in 2017. Marian Ronan, Research Professor of Catholic Studies at the Center for World Christianity, New York Theological Seminary, brought to publication a number of interviews that Mary O'Brien conducted with significant leaders in the International Grail. Tricia has selected some of these interviews for discussion in this program.

The second series of meetings Tricia has scheduled for Saturday mornings, 10 am – 12 noon. These are planned particularly for young women. Titled **The Grail meets Laudato Si'**, these sessions explore the meeting points of the vision and mission of The Grail and this

remarkable encyclical of Pope Francis. The first meeting was on 10th March. Others will follow on every second Saturday of the month to September (excluding June).

A day especially for young working women is being planned for Saturday, 23rd June. Elizabeth Lee, Nour Barcha and Terese Sheridan are currently finalising details.

**If you are interested in any of these programs**, please ask for further details from Tricia ([pgemmell@tpg.com.au](mailto:pgemmell@tpg.com.au), 02 9436 3447), or The Grail Centre ([grailsydney@ozemail.com.au](mailto:grailsydney@ozemail.com.au), 02 9955 3053).

Long-existing programs, such as the Book Club and *lectio divina* have begun again for the year. The Book Club met in late January to discuss Sophie Laguna's new book, *The Choke*. February's book was *East-West Street* by Philippe Sands. Some of us also saw the absorbing stage presentation of this work. Focussed particularly on the acceptance into international law of the charges of 'crime against humanity' and 'genocide', this book raises troubling questions as to what are to be judged acts committed by individuals, or against individuals; and what judged as acts for which a community is responsible, or which target a group with identifiable collective characteristics. The book for March, *The Piano Shop on the Left Bank* by TE Garhart, will be much less challenging.

*Lectio divina* at the Centre on Wednesday evenings, 7.30 – 9 pm, gave way to the Lenten program, but will resume after Easter. **All are welcome to come at any time.** No preparatory reading or regular attendance is required.

Ruth Crowe has been exploring the work of Creators of Peace Circles and reports below the positive experience she has had with this international initiative to encourage and train women for peace.

There is also a summary report from Anne Day of the work of the Australian Catholic Religious against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH).

Sheila Hawthorn has written of two events she and Alison Healey attended in February that were full of interest. The Australian Catholic Historical Society (ACHS) invited church historian, Rev. Edmund Campion to speak at its first meeting for the year in February. It was an enlightening presentation of the admirable contribution of Fr John McEncroe (1794-1868) to the quality of life in the colony of New South Wales. Deeply concerned for the poor and an advocate for workers' rights, McEncroe worked tirelessly as priest, educationalist, political activist and journalist in pursuit of a just society.

We also received an invitation from Lyn Scott to St Peter's Anglican Church in Cremorne for a morning with Lorraine McGee-Sippel, author of the award-winning autobiography, *Hey, Mum, what's a half-caste?* Lorraine had been taken from her aboriginal mother at birth and was adopted when she was six weeks old. In her book, and her talk, she explored 'the

fragility of reconnection, cultural identity and the struggle to belong'. Lorraine's presentation and the hospitality of St Peter's was memorable.

It was with deep sadness that we received the news in February of the death of Elizabeth Cain after a short period of serious illness. Elizabeth had led days of prayer and meditation at the Grail Centre and had used the room on the verandah for counselling clients over many years. In the last few years, she gave her declining energy to writing short reflective pieces, which she would send up from Wollongong to be typed in our office for distribution to a circle of people for whom she thus continued to be a spiritual guide. We shall miss her gentle strength and centred presence among us.

*Alison Healey and Sheila Hawthorn*

## **Brisbane**

It is hard to believe that Easter is almost upon us! The year is moving so fast! What happened to January and February? Lent? I hope all have been able to take some time to participate in this season of preparation for the Holy Days.

Many of us no doubt spent the Christmas – New Year period celebrating with family and friends both near and far. Others, such as one of Helen Jeffcoat's daughters, had to move into new accommodation. For her it was in Mackay before returning to her teaching position at Emmanuel College. She was ably helped by one of her brothers. Elizabeth Lancaster caught up with Mary Anne Baillie and her many involvements in Mackay. Mary Anne is still working hard with her colleagues in the Mackay conservation movement to block the potentially very destructive Adani coal project.

The Grail group reconvened for the year in February at Jill Herbert's home at Ferny Hills to plan for 2018. We were joined by three new women who had been acquainted previously with The Grail. Two of them had attended the Brisbane retreat at Bribie Island in November and would like to maintain their relationship with The Grail.

Jill prepared an opening prayer ritual in memory of those we wished to remember, including Paul Lancaster (Elizabeth's brother), who died suddenly on the 18th January in Brisbane. He was 60 years old, and leaves behind his wife, Annie, five children and a daughter-in-law, as well as a brother and two sisters. Paul was remembered also with an article and photo in the *Electrical Worker* magazine, where he was described as 'a skilled tradesman, a level-headed mate too many, respected and known as a true gentleman'.

At this February meeting, we agreed to hold future monthly meetings no longer in our houses but at Justice Place in Woolloongabba. It is a more central venue on the south side of the river with suitable rooms for meetings, workshops, and quiet reflection. We plan to advertise our gatherings more widely. However, our March meeting was at Helen Jeffcoat's home, where we celebrated her birthday. Janet Galos prepared a much appreciated Lenten reflection focussed on *Holy Saturday and signs of Resurrection*.

A number of us are looking forward to attending the National Grail Assembly in Sydney in June. Meanwhile, may we all continue to walk as children of the Light. Blessings to all.

*Elizabeth Lancaster for the Brisbane Grail*

## **Townsville**

One of our most valued and loved friends, Jack Gleeson, died in February this year after a long life of generous, faithful, honourable service to the community of North Queensland and loving kindness to those with whom he lived and worked. Jack accepted Moya Merrick's invitation to sit on the first Council of St Raphael's College for women at James Cook University. He gave wise, creative support to the staff and students of the College, championing the education and status of women in North Queensland. Jack's death was widely and deeply mourned: he was headlined as a Townsville 'treasure', as 'father' of the people of North Queensland, to whose development and well-being he consistently contributed, financially and as a hands-on volunteer. Vale, Jack. Pray for us.

Consy Sakaria tells us of her work in an important government program some of us may not know much about - the Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASIT). Consy was born in Tokelau, a small island country in the South Pacific, and came to Australia via New Zealand.

'QPASTT was established over 20 years ago when it became clear that people who experienced war, conflict and resettlement often faced similar emotional difficulties. The aim of the service is to provide a range of flexible and culturally sensitive services to people who have been tortured or who have suffered refugee-related trauma before they migrated to Australia. These services address the range of physical, psychological, spiritual and social needs of survivors of torture and trauma.

QPASTT is funded by Federal and State government departments and the children's program is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. It is a not-for-profit organisation, community based, offering free and confidential service. An agency like QPASTT can be found in nearly every state and territory in Australia. The program is managed by a committee drawn from refugee communities, human rights workers, legal and financial specialists, and health and welfare workers, who have experience in providing services to people from refugee backgrounds. QPASTT offices are in Brisbane, Logan Central, Toowoomba, Rockhampton and Townsville.

I am the sole outreach Counsellor/Advocate for QPASTT based in Townsville. I began this work in August 2011. As well as counselling and advocacy, I also provide community capacity training to an immensely diverse group of clients, working through the Local Network coordinated by the Townsville Multicultural Support Group, which is crucial in meeting the needs of our clients.

There are benefits, opportunities and challenges in being a sole worker for QPASTT in the region. It gives me the possibility of working more directly in the community and with its leaders. Townsville is small enough to be able to come to know many of its people. I can direct my own work and collaborate with multiple organisations to create change in systems to benefit clients. On the other hand, working alone is difficult in challenging situations where there is no one to bounce ideas off immediately; at times I feel isolated. However, I do have access to clinical supervision and line management which I value very much.

I am humbled each day in my work listening to the stories of clients from diverse backgrounds. It is indeed a privilege to be a part of people's life journeys from their original home to their resettlement, to recovery and the realisation of their goals in life for themselves and/or their children.

As a migrant woman myself who chose to leave my home to live in Australia, I acknowledge how complex the resettlement challenges are for women at risk with all that they have experienced in their journey to Australia. And so these words of Jacques v. Ginneken, SJ, founder of The Grail movement in 1921, resonate with me:

*Be together in special unity,  
having passed the same difficulty,  
working together for  
a great purpose with common ideals.'*

*Consulata Sakaria*

## **National**

A National General Assembly, held normally every 4 years, is due this year. It will take place over the Queen's Birthday week-end, 8 – 11th June, at St Benedict's Centre, Pennant Hills, Sydney. The National Team has chosen *Faith in the future with courage and commitment* as the theme. Members and others attending as observers will be coming from locations spread from Townsville in North Queensland to Melbourne in Victoria.

Two young women, Naome Rusera and Adita Mrisha, both graduates of Bethlehem Secondary College, Ashfield, will join an international group of their peers in Mozambique in July this year in a Women's Leadership Program organised by the Grail Link with the UN Network (GLUNN). Their participation will be jointly funded by the International and Australian Grail.

Australian Grail members, friends and benefactors will find the following news from Papua New Guinea encouraging. Joanne Pepi wrote recently to Anne Day from Manus to tell us about a formation program Mary Kewueh and she arranged and led in St Michael's parish with 30 participants. They drew on the Formation Resources and Leadership program for Grail women in the Pacific, which they attended at St Raphael's College, Townsville, in June -July 2017.

Joanne reports that the women attending enjoyed their week together and she herself found the whole experience inspiring. We don't have details of their methods of presentation but Joanne listed the themes of the week:

- Key International Grail statements on Vision, Mission and Faith
- 'Belonging' in The Grail
- The courage to care
- Global justice overcoming poverty
- The practice of *lectio divina*.

We thank Joanne for sharing this news. It is always a lift to the spirit to learn of the initiatives and developments in The Grail in our region.

### **Creators of Peace Circles**

I participated in a group program held at Sydney University in September last year. *Creators of Peace (CoP) Circles* are small gatherings of women throughout the world, who together work through material designed to deepen their friendship and understanding of their peace-creating capabilities. Workshops are given by experienced facilitators to increase peace-building skills of women in civil society. They are an opportunity to explore one's own relationship to peace. This is not an academic program, but an opportunity to integrate head and heart, as women work together on issues that can bring conflict in their communities and society. The program aims to bring deeper understanding between women across different cultures, religions, prejudices and life situations. Sharing our personal stories is important as is the recognition of our common humanity, which can lead to reconciliation and forgiveness of one's self and others.

Since this vision of CoP Circles is shared also by The Grail, in early February some members of the Sydney Grail hosted a program which included women of Jewish background and a woman with close connections with Hinduism. It was an enriching time for all. In a few months, some Grail women will train as facilitators for CoP Circles and hope to bring the program to other women's groups in the future.

*Ruth Crowe*

### **Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking In Humans (ACRATH)**

For some years now, The Grail has been welcomed in ACRATH meetings and activities as we in The Grail have endeavored to improve our support for this work of upholding the dignity of human persons. In an interview conducted by *news.com.au* and published on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2018, Dr Jennifer Burn, Director of Anti-Slavery Australia at the University of Technology, Sydney, said: 'Slavery has never been a bigger problem in Australia than it is right now'. So, what are we doing about this? I would like to share with you some of the work that ACRATH has undertaken to address this issue. ACRATH works with other groups in their endeavors to improve the life of those caught up in all forms of modern slavery.

ACRATH members from across Australia, including myself, gathered in February at Baulkham Hills for its annual conference. The 2018 conference focused on work to *Eliminate Human Trafficking, Reclaim the Vision, Plan On-going Action*. Three main issues were addressed: forced marriage, forced labour and slavery in supply chains.

### **Forced marriage**

The Assistant Minister for Home Affairs, Alex Hawke, has announced that for a period of twelve months, victims of forced marriage in Australia will be able to access support from the Support for Trafficked People Program for 200 days (formerly only 90 days were possible). ACRATH with other NGOs has been lobbying Government for some years to bring about this change. It will make a marked difference in the lives of those impacted by forced marriage. Red Cross will receive extra resources to implement this trial. ACRATH has also been working creatively in high schools, Catholic and State, to raise students' awareness and understanding of forced marriage.

### **Forced labour**

A conference session explored a wide range of issues concerning overseas workers, their conditions of entry, the areas of work most accessed and the working conditions applying to their entry.

### **Supply chains and trafficking**

Laura McManus, Ethical Research Manager for Konica Minolta, is leading this company in the adoption of an ethical business approach, including a full exploration of all the supply chains used by the various departments of the company.

Jenny Stanger, National Manager of the Freedom Partnership to End Modern Slavery (a project of the Salvation Army), spoke of the services provided by the Salvation Army, including Safe House, Referrals, Survivor Support, Rural Support and Fund of Last Resort for emergency accommodation, legal assistance, re-education and financial assistance.

### **Partnership with St Vincent's Health Australia (SVHA)**

ACRATH and SVHA have formed a partnership to launch the *Human Trafficking Project*, thought to be a first in Australia's health care sector. The project has two purposes:

- to seek to identify and respond to the needs of trafficked people, when they present at any of SVHA's hospitals Australia-wide – women who have been sexually exploited, people facing forced marriage or who have experienced forced labour;
- to investigate supply chains and try to make sure that the goods and services procured by St Vincent's are slavery-free, i.e., everything from medical equipment through to cotton sheets and gowns and chocolates sold for hospital fundraising.

### **58 meetings in 4 days**

An energetic team of 8 ACRATH members recently walked the halls of Parliament. Lobbying Members of Parliament (MPs) in Canberra has been a regular activity over 12 years. They presented their concerns about forced marriage, the need for a Modern Slavery Act for Australia and for funding for NGOs working against human trafficking. They were heartened

by the level of engagement of MPs around these issues. It is hoped that a Modern Slavery Act will come before Parliament in the latter part of this year.

**Will your Easter eggs be slavery-free?**

In January 2015, Pope Francis said that ‘purchasing is always a moral, and not simply an economic, act’. Did you know that the chocolate in Australian supermarkets may be made with cocoa beans picked by children, many of whom are enslaved or forced to work in exploitative conditions with no access to education and other human rights?

*Anne Day*

**Breakthrough**

Someday  
after mastering  
the winds, the waves,  
the tides and gravity  
we shall harness for God  
the energies of love.

And then  
for the second time  
in the history of the world  
we will discover fire.

*Teilhard de Chardin*