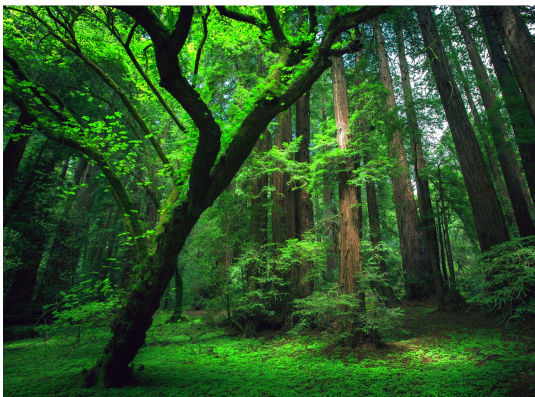


RAINFOREST

The forest drips and glows with green,
The tree-frog croaks his far-off song.
His voice is stillness, moss and rain
drunk from the forest ages long.
We cannot understand that call
unless we move into his dream,
where all are one and one is all
and frog and python are the same.
We with our quick dividing eyes
measure, distinguish and are gone.
The forest burns, the tree-frog dies,
yet one is all and all are one.

Judith Wright (1915 – 2000)

Australian poet, environmentalist and social activist



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NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE

Melbourne

Our usual erratic weather in Melbourne has broken records this Spring from hottest nights ever in October and November to winter weather in November and December! Such events are being replicated around the country as we keep in mind the disasters of droughts and bushfires.

In October, Andrea Venier attended the Boroondara Catholic Deanery seminar, 'Women in the early Church-implications for today', with four inspiring female speakers, from biblical scholars to social justice activists, discussing their insights on women in the Church. Not long after in November, and on similar themes, Dinny Culican Ward and Andrea attended a number of sessions at the *Voices of Hope and Challenge* Conference held at Yarra Theological College (YTU). The conference was sponsored by YTU and John Garrett Publishing to enable speakers and participants to contribute to the discernment of the *sensus fidei fidelium* – the sense of faith of the people of God in Australia. As well as the many issues of concern for us all in the Australian church, some presentations left us concerned about the current processes in pre-paring for the Plenary Council. However, there was also hope and determination to achieve renewal and reform in the Australian Catholic Church.

Dinny and Carol Farmer attended the National Retreat in Sydney over the November 1st weekend. Dinny's reflection follows:

'Two of us from Melbourne were fortunate to attend the Retreat at the very comfortable Peter Canisius House in Pymble. Under Liz Lee's expert guidance, we had generous time for reflection and prayer. It was good to be present at the commitment of Judy Brown and Mary Mennis from Brisbane and to catch up with so many others. Highlights for me were the Cosmic Contemplative Walk and the group discussions, especially the very symbolic Nate's story of rescuing whales, which Fran Warner read to us. We all had different interpretations of the tale and a variety of views on the Church today. I thought Alison got it right with her thoughts on the role of the whale in its being turned around from the beach. I did enjoy watching the

enthusiastic way that Ann Aboud kneaded the bread we had mixed. Thank you for the peace and spirit.'

The NBN was successfully installed at 'Hesed' in October and, over recent weeks, some maintenance jobs have taken place. The garden has been tidied and plans are underway with an architect (recommended by a builder friend of Carol Webb) to improve the bath-room. In the meantime, Sophy's presence on and off at 'Hesed' is most welcome.

Our *lectio* numbers have been depleted over the past two months because of continued illness of members, some of which involved hospital procedures. We have begun to study 'God is Good for You' by Greg Sheridan, and have other books planned for next year. Our gatherings are always valued experiences for the group. We will be having a break over the holiday season.

Joanna Waite inspires us with her positivity and calm. Alison visited for a week in October which is of great comfort to Joanna. Dinny and Andrea spent a short time with Joanna the week before our final celebration for the year. We gave her a copy of our Mass booklet so that she could join us in spirit on the day. We had a most enjoyable chatty afternoon with her, which included some quiet time for prayer.

The End of Year Celebration, held at June and Laurie Ryan's home on the First Sunday of Advent, was a jovial event. Following a 'light-filled' Eucharist led by Michael Mason CSsR, we enjoyed a shared supper with members, old friends and new. We thank June and Laurie for their continued hospitality, especially since Laurie has also been unwell recently. We wish all members, especially those unable to attend, better days ahead.

We pray for a safe holiday season and a respite from the bush-fires and drought. With blessings to our members and families and our many readers for a peace-filled Christmas - 'Let us walk in the light of the Lord'.

(Andrea Venier and Dinny Culican Ward)

Sydney

Our news is long, as we have had a very full schedule of programs and events these last months. They were full of interest and, with Edith Piaf, we

regret nothing, but are keenly looking forward to having no deadlines in the summer break.

The Tuesday morning reflections for this year on Judy Cannato's *Field of Compassion* have come to an end. Tricia Gemmell who leads this program will continue it in 2020 beginning on 18th February; the book chosen is *The Universal Christ* by Richard Rohr.

The Book Club closed down for the year at the end of November with a Thanksgiving dinner together. Each of us brought, in addition to food and wine, something that expressed the theme of the evening –an image, a poem, a story – which we shared during the meal and which had the enriching effect of building the spirit of gratitude among us. The most memorable book we read in recent months was Behrouz Boochani's powerful and poetic *No Friend But The Mountains*, written from Manus Island, Papua New Guinea, over several years when our Federal Government refused him refugee entry into Australia. We next meet in late January. A big *thank you* to Sonia Mrva, our faithful and caring Convenor.

None of us who meet at the Grail Centre for *lectio divina* on Wednesday evenings like to miss the nourishment that comes from the reflection and sharing of insights. We began pondering Luke's Gospel in the later weeks of 2018 and were still one chapter short of the end when we met for the last time this year! We've yet to decide what next in 2020.

The Peace Circles group convened by Ruth Crowe will continue its program in 2020.

Nine years ago when Pope Benedict XVI named John Henry Newman 'Blessed' we hosted at the Grail Centre a lecture in his honour by our good friend, Edmund Campion, priest of the Sydney Archdiocese, church historian and Newman scholar. He titled his lecture *A Cardinal for our times?* On October 19 this year, the day of Newman's canonisation, our meeting room was filled to capacity again when Ed generously agreed to speak for a second time about this great man. Introducing our speaker, Alison Healey mentioned some reading she had done of the English-speaking international press covering the canonisation. She came across this striking characterisation of Newman (1801-90) by one of his

biographers, Ian Ker: ‘the great theologian of post-Vatican II Catholicism’, which echoes the theme of Ed’s first lecture. She also found these moving words of Pope Paul VI speaking of Newman’s spiritual journey:

Newman, in full consciousness of his mission and guided solely by love of the truth and fidelity to Christ, traced an itinerary, the most toilsome, but also the greatest, the most meaningful, the most conclusive, that human thought ever travelled during the last century, indeed one might say during the modern era, to arrive at the fullness of wisdom and of peace.

This year, Ed chose to speak of Newman and his collaborative relationships with several women, drawing on his letters in particular to reveal his vision, wisdom, loyalty in friend-ship, care and kindness towards those in need. Not only a great cardinal and theologian for our times but a great human being.

We chose to mark this season of Advent with two evenings of reflection on the theme, *Deep Despair and Ferocious Hope*. The flyer advertising the series reads: *Many feel desperate as they reflect, for example, on the state of the world in the shadow of the ecological crisis, or the state of the church in the wake of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Childhood Sexual Abuse. Yet what-ever situation we each face, whatever over-whelming challenges we encounter, we can choose our response.* Dr Jason John and Robert Fitzgerald AM invited us to choose action in hope.

Our engagement with the Plenary Council scheduled for 2020-21 is precisely this – an action in hope. The Catholic church in Australia is now in the second phase of preparation – discernment - for the 2020 meeting of the Council after the initial wide consultation of the people of God. Tricia Gemmell, a leader in her own parish, facilitated a process of discernment among a group of Grail women in mid-December. We are also involved in one of several groups in the parish of North Sydney.

Our year of public events ended on 14th December with the installation of a plaque at the front entrance to the Grail Centre acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land and their elders and expressing respect for their spirits and ancestors. Karen Smith, Education Officer at the Northern Beaches

Aboriginal Heritage Centre, made the Acknowledgment of Country; then there were three readings from the poetry of the well-known Aboriginal poet, Oodgeroo Noonuccal; and a concluding presentation on the indigenous culture and heritage of the region from Karen.

Two programs originally scheduled for September and November have been postponed and will be rescheduled in 2020:

- The two presenters, Susan Connelly RSJ and Sheelah Treflé-Hidden, of the series exploring the relevance of French philosopher René Girard's writings to our world today had to cancel because of illness and are looking forward to coming on a Sunday afternoon in early 2020.
- The seminar, *How can we make our society more civil?* to be led by Eva Cox, well-known sociologist, feminist and activist, will now take place on Saturday 14th March, 10.30 am – 3.30 pm. Eva has written something of the rationale for what we consider a vitally important topic:

In 1995 I delivered the ABC Boyer Lectures on 'A Truly Civil Society', which identified social capital - trustworthiness of strangers and of those in power - as the basis for a Good Society. However, 24 years later, our society seems to be even less civil. We are suffering from an increasing trust deficit, not just here but globally, as distrust of Others grows, and democracy is seen failing to create fairness. Decades of over-emphasis on economic self-interest have been steadily destroying the social links we need to live well. How can we fix it? Some ideas for creating optimism and trust!

From 1st to 3rd November, Grail women from Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales gathered at the Jesuit Re-treat Centre in Pymble for our National Retreat, facilitated by Liz Lee, to whom we owe many, many thanks for her generous leadership of those three nourishing days. On the evening of All Saints, Mary Mennis and Judy Brown formalised their commitment in the Grail in a welcoming ritual of prayer and reflection and song. (See Brisbane news.)

The Archives team continues to convene on Tuesday mornings, still enjoying what they do. Recently, after some detective work on line, they

have dis-covered some unpublished research by Karel Duivenvoorden (priest of the Cairns Diocese) on Andrew G Tynan, the Bishop of Rockhampton who con-vinced the Grail to establish a centre in Mackay, concerned as he was for the well-being of young women in the region. With this document, the team feels ready at last to produce the history of the Grail in Mackay in 2020.

The Faith and Ecology Network (FEN) is a multifaith network; the Grail has been represented in the Core Group since its beginning. In Spring, FEN held one of its Enrichment Days at St Antony of the Fields, Terry Hills. Sheila Hawthorn writes: *Sitting in that tranquil bush setting was a blessed opportunity for physical and spiritual renewal. While on guided walks with volun-teers from Landcare, quiet wandering, listening and reflecting helped us to identify some of the many species of trees and grasses. Three guest speakers gave us much food for thought on the theme, 'Re-imagining land as beloved companion'. Rev. Chris Dalton has written a book titled 'From Terra Nullius to Beloved Companion'. In it, he proposes that Christians prayerfully reflect on the parable of the Good Samaritan replacing the wounded person with the land'.*

In late November, FEN gathered 18 representatives of the many faith communities in our society to plan for 2020. It was hugely encouraging and produc-tive, thanks to the dedicated work of Convenor, Anne Lanyon. Next year's theme will be wonder and the first action in the new year will be a multi-faith public prayer vigil in the city.

The Women's Reconciliation Network (WRN) held a pre-Christmas event in the Redfern Community Centre with the theme, *Honouring, listening and celebrating everyone's stories*. Sheila and Ruth Crowe were there. The stories told of dedicated service, artistic achievements, cultural inter-actions, cultural survival, indigenous suffering, inspiring resilience. Sheila spoke of Erykah Kyle, late Aboriginal Grail member in North Queensland, and was surprised and touched to hear Aunty Ali Golding, an indigenous elder, exclaim, 'I know her!' When Erykah was in Bible College in NSW in her teens, Aunty Ali's family took her into their home in Dubbo every term holiday, since Palm Island was so far for her to travel home. Speaking of women 'with fire in their belly', Aunty Ali added, 'Erykah was one of

them'. Aunty Beryl van Oploos, who has a catering business, provided a delicious lunch to conclude a joyous and Spirit-filled celebration.

Lucy Kelly came home from England for a short family visit to celebrate the 70th birthday of her older brother, Martin, and Alison caught up with her at the party and together they visited Joanna Waite who was delighted with the surprise of this.

In the month when we are especially attentive to the Communion of Saints, Judith Watkins, a much loved Grail member in Sydney, joined 'the blessed ones' enjoying the fullness of God's love. She had celebrated her 100th birthday in June in the retirement complex for veterans at Narrabeen; her Requiem also took place there in the chapel. Judith met the Grail in the early 1940s. She enlisted in the Women's Air Force in the Second World War and then became a social worker, highly esteemed by her peers.

Another Judith, this time Judy O'Dwyer, younger sister of Margot Harrison, and so closely associated with the Grail since her schooldays, also died peacefully in November in Melbourne. And we joined Mary Robertson in a warm farewell to her kind brother, Des, soon after. We thank God for these fine human beings who lived such good lives among us.

God's blessing on everyone this Christmas and in the New Year.

(Alison Healey and Sheila Hawthorn)

Brisbane

As we write this news, our thoughts and prayers are with those who have been and are currently being impacted by the ongoing Australian bush fires. Brisbane was covered frequently in thick smoke as the strong winds carried it from northern NSW and the Queensland border ranges. No doubt between the fires and the drought there will be many more Australians who will be doing it very tough this coming year.

On Saturday, 28th September, the Brisbane Grail group sponsored and staged their largest event of the year, *New Wineskins: Reshaping Our Responses to the Faith Challenges of Today* – 'an innovative and timely topic', Helen Jeffcoat described it. This was a day seminar (8.30 am – 4.30 pm) which made demands on the physical and intellectual stamina of its

participants and presenters, yet the exchange among the 95 present was vigorous to the end – and beyond. The very competent planning group consisted of Judy Brown, Janet Galos and Gary Everett. Gary moderated the day. The six presenters, Alison Healey, Fr Bill O'Shea, Fr Orm Rush, Kevin Treston, Janet Galos and Lyn Horner gave us many things to challenge our thinking and Christian living.

While Alison was visiting, she and Elizabeth Lancaster attended an outstanding presentation by Br Kevin McDonnell on 'Care for our Common Home - *Laudato Si*', Changing Minds and Hearts' at the Upper Mt Gravatt / Wishart parish, concluding a series of sessions in a program of parish education in the Brisbane Archdiocese.

Elizabeth Lee from the Sydney Grail led a much appreciated full-day workshop on cosmology and spirituality at Women's College at the University of Queensland. More than 30 people from a variety of organisations and parts of Brisbane attended.

Ann Aboud, Janet Galos, Elizabeth Lancaster and Jan O'Donoghue have been participating in the second phase of preparation for the Plenary Council 2020 in their various parishes. This is a time for listening and discernment calling the laity to prayer, contemplation, thought and sharing of thoughts on how the church may renew and reform itself to become more Christ- centred. The preparatory process for the Council goes on into the new year and we encourage everyone's participation. Summaries of the discernment outcomes are being posted in parish newsletters.

Elizabeth also represented her faith community and social justice group at a half-day conference, *Common Good*, organised by the Queensland Community Alliance at the Australian Catholic University (ACU), Banyo Campus. Her theme was '*Safe and Connected Communities*'. A representative of ACU also spoke about the university's work on improving their community engagement.

Jan O'Donoghue attended the Royal Commission on Aged Care on the day that Anne George, the chairperson of the social justice group in which Elizabeth is active, presented the findings of the group to the Commission. A similar report was sent to the Queensland State Government inquiry into

aged care, end-of-life care and palliative care; and in August *The Catholic Leader* published an outline of the group's responses to these issues.

Janet Galos and Judy Brown attended the launch at Happy Haven in October of Mary Tinney's book, *When Heaven and Earth Embrace - how do we engage spiritually in an emerging universe?* Mary had spoken of this pending publication during a series of Grail seminars held at Delamore.

With Maggie Jenatsch, formerly from Papua New Guinea and a member of the Brisbane Grail, members visited the Marian Valley shrines to celebrate the feast day of Blessed Peter To Rot, a Tolai village chief and catechist who was killed by the Japanese military in 1945 protecting his community.

Bernadette McLay organised the annual 'Ballybrac' luncheon this year for the end of November at Trish Daley's house. All ex-residents of this Grail Centre in Mackay (1955 – 84) are always warmly welcomed to this enjoyable reunion.

A true highlight to end the year was the commitment into the Grail of two Brisbane women, Judy Brown and Mary Mennis. This took place on the Friday evening of the National Retreat in Sydney. Ann Aboud was present to represent Brisbane. For Mary (née Eccles), the Grail has been in the background of her life since she was a child. Judy's first contact was in Townsville, particularly with Sheila Hawthorn, and she has been active with the Brisbane Grail for several years. We are delighted to have them among us. Early in the year, Mary and Judy attended three intensive induction days in Sydney. In Judy's words: 'November 1st dawned. With Alison's patient assistance, we had prepared together a very pleasing ceremony. Tricia Gemmell led the day having us focus on some of our individual sources of inspiration along with those from earlier Grail women of vision. Mary and I, supported by Ann Aboud, made our Grail commitment. The warmth with which we received welcoming hugs was very supportive. Time will tell what we give to and through the Grail and what we receive by being one with its vision. It's so good, this belonging! Thank you - on behalf of Mary and myself.'

May the blessings that Christmas brings be a comfort to all and hope to those in need.

(Elizabeth Lancaster and Jan O'Donoghue)

North Queensland

With the academic year at James Cook University, Townsville coming to a close, again the Saints Catholic College Valedictory Dinner was a special event for me - full of laughter, beautiful music, singing from the College choir, vibrant conversations and a delicious menu of food and wine. It was a pleasure once again to witness the Valedictorians from diverse cultural backgrounds, some with proud families and friends.

I found myself sitting between Bishop Tim Harris and Fr Peter Giles. When I introduced myself to Bishop Harris he responded with 'Yes, I know about the young women of the Grail.... indeed I do'. I took it as a compliment. It was heart-warming to hear that Peter Giles remembered Sheila Hawthorn; it seems their paths had crossed in a Melbourne bank in 1952!

I had a very enjoyable evening and am grateful and proud to have again represented the Grail at this occasion of the presentation of the annual Grail Award to a resident student who had made an outstanding contribution to the community life and spirit of the college. This year I presented the Award to Aneesha Gosh. The Deputy Principal wrote the citation, which is summarised here:

Aneesha has been a College resident for the last 2 years and is studying for a Bachelor degree in Medicine and Surgery. Aneesha has been very active in and dedicated to the College community, serving as a Residential Assistant (RA) this year. As a result of her commitment and her leadership abilities, she has been selected by the College Administration to be one of the Senior RAs for 2020. Aneesha has demonstrated remarkable pastoral skills not only among the residents on her floor but the entire College and is an admirable role model. Among her many other contributions to the College are her music to our weekly Eucharist celebration; her encouragement of fellow residents to join in community activities, her ready assistance with large groups of visitors in the College and her artistic talents and leadership of the College dance group in the James Cook University Inter-College Music Competition. We are extremely proud to have such a generous and helpful young woman, full of vitality, representing our College.



Unfortunately, a number of commitments, including travel, prevented my going to the National Retreat in Sydney, and Helen Morlin, who attended the Pacific Region Resource Program in Townsville in 2017, had to withdraw with ill health. However, Juliet Walker took the long trip south to participate in what she described ‘a special experience’. She was glad to be able to meet up again with Anne Marie George and Nour Barcha, who had led a short Grail formation program in the House of Prayer in Townsville in 2014.

(Consulata M Sakaria)

INTERNATIONAL

Papua New Guinea (PNG)

In a recent letter, *Monica Liumene* told us about the Flexible Open Distance Education (FODE) program, of which she is the Co-ordinator, at the Edmund Rice Centre in Kimbe, capital of the West New Britain province. FODE is an Education Department program ‘which offers subjects to disadvantaged students who need a second chance to get education and be able to live a sustainable life’. It offers a curriculum for Grades 9 – 12. Monica has been working in this project since 2017, and the program is only now undergoing the process of formal registration with the Education Department. Consequently, up till now there has been no government financial assistance and, ‘as the needs are very high’, the staff have pushed ahead, relying entirely on whatever fees from students have been available. This means that teachers and administrative staff, including Monica, sacrifice much to serve the needs of their young people. We know this is true of many others working in projects throughout PNG – and other countries.

The announcement of the untimely death of Paula Paimé in The Grail in Wewak, East Sepik Province, came as a shock. The Grail women in Wewak sent us a memorial tribute to Paula, for which we are very grateful:

‘Our late sister, Paula Paimé, came to know the Grail in 1992 when she attended a Pacific Arts Festival in the Cook Islands. Sheila Hawthorn arranged for nine Papua New Guineans to join her in Raratonga and Paula was one of them. She showed a keen interest and, after she returned to Wewak, she participated in spiritual formation and other pro-grams offered by the Grail and made her commitment in the International Grail movement. In 1995, Paula and Elizabeth Waken spent three months at the Grail Centre in Cornwall, New York State, in further international formation.

In 1996, Paula was elected the PNG representative on the International Council (IC) and attended her first IC meeting in Tanzania in 1997. In 1998, she was one of PNG’s delegates to the International Assembly in Portugal. In all the international meetings she attended Paula presented well the good works of the Grail in PNG; and whatever inter-national projects or actions were decided, she saw that they were implemented in PNG.

Paula was again elected as PNG’s IC representative in 2014 and attended the IC meeting held in Sydney in 2015. In 2017, she resigned this role when she was elected President of the Catholic Women’s Association.

Paula was very strong, vocal, energetic, vibrant. She was a good organiser and saw through projects in the Grail with determination. When the HIV/AIDS crisis hit PNG, she played a key role in the wider community, counselling, training and leading awareness programs, travelling widely through remote areas of the province.

Paula was born on 3rd March 1959 and died on 6th November 2019. She will be sadly missed by all of us; and cherished for all she gave of herself among us.’

The Grail in Australia mourns with our dear friends in the PNG Grail the passing of Paula. At the same time, we all take comfort in the knowledge that she is now among ‘the ‘blessed, happy ones’ who ‘stirred God in their time on earth with sincere striving and just works’.(Hildegard of Bingen)

India

It was good to receive a recent email from Pearl Drego bringing us news of her continuing work in teaching and counselling in India. From 29th November to 1st December, the 46th National Transactional Analysis (TA) Conference, with the theme, *Spiralling Human Endeavour*, was held in Kochi, a major port city in Kerala, and Dr Pearl Drego gave the Opening Keynote Address and led a number of workshops for participants. The Conference is organised annually by the Institute for Counselling and Transactional Analysis (ICTA), the largest facility for TA in the world, and brings together the best minds and practitioners in the field. Based on humanist values, TA offers theories and techniques for personal and institutional growth.

Pearl wrote that she had ‘a very good experience’ at this conference. We wish her a year of blessing ahead.

