



Christmas reminds us that a faith that does not trouble us is a troubled faith.

A faith that does not make us grow is a faith that needs to grow.

A faith that does not raise questions is a faith that has to be questioned.

A faith that does not rouse us is a faith that needs to be roused.

A faith that does not shake us is a faith that needs to be shaken.

Indeed, a faith which is only intellectual or lukewarm is only a notion of faith.

It can become real once it touches our heart, our spirit, our whole being.

Once we let the star of Bethlehem guide us
to the place where the Son of God lies,
not among kings and riches, but among the poor and humble.

Address of Pope Francis to the Roman Curia December 21, 2017

WISHING YOU A BLESSED CHRISTMAS AND JOY IN THE NEW YEAR

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PUBLICATIONS

Global Justice Overcoming Poverty Bulletin

4 pages of short up-to-date reports and articles. Issued bi-monthly from January.

To receive a copy, contact info@grailaustralia.org.au

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Pacific Outlook

4 pages on economic, social and environmental issues of the small island nations of the Pacific. Issues bi-monthly from February.

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NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE

Sydney

Over the last three months we have been planning for 2023, trying to establish our priorities for action and reflection. What we had in mind for this last period of 2022 has been thwarted by a new surge of COVID-19 infection, preventing the Advent program we had hoped for.

Meanwhile, a number of regular programs ran their course using *zoom* as needed. The advantage of *zoom* for the weekly practice of *lectio divina* (*Food for the Soul*) on Wednesday night is that women from other States are able to participate and so the group now has participants from Queensland and even Western Australia. The Tuesday morning reflection group has been able to complete its sessions of deep reading and conversation, using Sally Longley's book, *Conversations with Silence*. The Book Club finished the year with its usual dinner of thanksgiving for the gifts of the year past and will meet again on the last Friday of January to discuss *Elizabeth Finch* by Julian Barnes.

2023 will see The Grail continuing its commitment to a successful referendum in support of enshrining an Indigenous 'Voice to Parliament' in Australia's Constitution.

Finally, we had two very welcome return visits to Australia recently of Carol Webb (USA Grail) and Lucy Kelly from Dorset, England. Carol has dual citizenship, as she worked here for several years in the union movement, and returns from time to time to be with friends here. Lucy has timed her visit to celebrate the birthday this month of her sister, Janet, while spending time with family after the prolonged illness and death of her husband, Murray Pearson, some months ago.

Lucy is a daughter of Marjorie and Denis Kelly, pioneers of the Grail movement in Australia

Alison Healey

Brisbane

At our first meeting in Brisbane after the National General Assembly (NGA) in Sydney, Helen Jeffcoat, Judy Brown and Ann Aboud honoured their commitment to nominate for the National Team – appreciative of their nominators and seconders. In leadership roles or not, we in Brisbane are committed to 'opening doors' for the Grail for the future. Some of us had approached the NGA with a sense of existential dread, which changed into a sense of endless possibility as happiness overtook us and the camaraderie, wisdom and support of Grail members encouraged us to think that anything and everything is possible. We particularly valued seeing and hearing from our Melbourne members and look forward to seeing them in person in future.

Jill Herbert and Helen arranged for us all to meet in December with Liz Lancaster, living with her sister-in-law at Park Ridge, and with Jan O'Donoghue at Canossa in Oxley. Liz is recovering well and will continue to be involved in Grail activities. We filled them in on NGA news and enjoyed their company and their on-going contribution to the Grail's future.

Jill's son, Dominic, who has been waiting keenly to go to the Antarctic for a year of work, is finally there and very happy with his duties driving machinery and, we're told, sleeping out in the snow to train for avalanche survival. Ann's daughter's family are off to Malta for a brother's wedding, to the Dolomites to ski and

Puglia to explore. Judy has proudly published a lovely book about her mother, Kay, which features chapters by her siblings. Kay was a writer and artist, and the book is illustrated with some of her work – paintings in watercolours and oils, and black-and-white sketches. James Cook University, Townsville holds records of Kay's work in its Special Collection.

Maggie Jenatsch is keeping us tuned in to Papua New Guinea and updating us on Peter To Rot's journey to canonised sainthood. Mary Mennis is writing up her interviews with eminent Grail women. Helen, having survived the NGA, is busy with Brigidine College's end of year events.

The 'Ballybrac' Lunch, organised by Berna MacLay and hosted by Trish Daly, was held in November and enjoyed by all the former residents of the Grail Centre in Mackay who attended. The jacarandas are doing their job of lifting up our hearts and are a feast for the eyes – adorning every vista with their lavender blue blooms.

Four of us, Mary Nelson, Janet Galos, Judy and Ann participated in Earthlink's September meeting, the 'Voice of Creation', at the Mt Kuta Falls in the land of the Tuurbal People. Mary Tinney, Earthlink's founder, led us in prayer and contemplation, leavened by some home-made damper, honey and wine. A few lines from Jeremy Geffen's poem will help the reader to imagine the wonderful experience it was:

O Mystery. It lives, in the seed of a tree as it grows. You hear it if you listen to the wind as it blows. It is there in a river as it flows to the sea. It's the sound in the search of someone becoming free.

Experiencing the nature around us, we read David Whyte's 'The River Cannot Go Back' (in 'Solace: The Art of Asking Beautiful Questions'):

It is said that before entering the sea, A river trembles in fear.... She sees an ocean

so vast, that to enter... (is) to disappear forever... (but) ...it's not about disappearing ...but becoming the ocean. Let our history then be a gate unfastened to a new life and not a barrier to our becoming.

Not to be outdone, on her birthday at the next Earthlink meeting, Mary Nelson gave us cards, adorned with photos of roses that Darryl had taken at New Farm Park, and filled with wonderful words:

We will recover our sense of wonder and our sense of the sacred if we appreciate the universe beyond ourselves as a revelatory experience of that numinous presence whence all things come into being. (Thomas Berry. 'The Great Work: Our Way into the Future', Harmony/Bell Tower, NY 1999).

But let Teilhard de Chardin have the last word:

We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience. (Quoted in 'The Joy of Kindness', Robert Furey, Crossroads Publishing, NY 1993).

Ann Aboud with help from Grail friends

Townsville: re-settlement, empowerment and advocacy

We acknowledge the Bindal, Wulgurukaba of Gurambilbarra and Nywaigi peoples as the Traditional Custodians of this land that we work, live and play on, and we pay our respect to their cultures, their ancestors and to the Elders, past, present and in future generations. We also acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to disproportionately bear the effects of systemic racism and the effects of trauma today in this city and throughout Australia. We recognise too, that these experiences are common ground for First Nations People.

Humans anywhere in the world, but especially those having to flee from violence and resettle in a new home, need healing, belonging, thriving and justice. The Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT) delivers its services in the framework of the core values expressed above:

1. A Central African cohort, a newly arrived community group to Townsville, like other groups before them, requires a lot of support and advocacy as its people resettle into their new home. With the group, we focus on craft, connection and empowerment, in cooperation with other services, such as, Queensland Health, Queensland Police, the Women's Centre, North Queensland Women's Legal Service and the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT). As a result of the work of empowering and advocating for women, there is now a women's leaders' group that has formed independently, and will meet together on a regular basis.

2. The Townsville Community Leaders Network came together for their first collective meeting on September 29th 2022. This network consists of Muslim and Christian faith leaders and natural leaders from the various communities including women representatives. The

community groups, with QPASTT, created the network to enable wider exploration of issues, better communication of needs and ideas and stronger advocacy and lobbying of governments and other institutions. It connects, for example, community groups in Townsville with both Cairns and Brisbane. For most, it was the first time they had met with other community groups and had conversations about needs they had separately identified. They also realised how similar were the experiences of those newly arrived to those of people who settled here 20 years ago.

3. Counselling (individual and family). This work provides the space and support needed for effective advocacy and empowerment, as well as for individual and community health and wellbeing. In my work, I have connected with individuals, with family groups and with the community. And so, I have been able to build relationships and gain the trust of the communities and services that I work with through QPASTT programs.

It is very high-level-intensity work which can cause a lot of stress but, importantly, QPASTT also provides the resources to help support workers. I am thankful that I have been gifted to work in this field and in QPASTT. It is truly a humbling journey. I wish everyone a happy Christmas!

Consulata M Sakaria – Lopa



The *Australian Women Preach* podcast, launched 20 months ago, has had such an encouraging response that planning is underway to produce an edited book of reflections by the women preachers.

To be published early next year by *Garratt Publishing* the book will celebrate two years of the project and chronicle this exciting achievement. *The plan is to launch the Australian Women Preach* book of reflections on International Women's Day, Wednesday 8th March 2023. As *Australian Women Preach* has been an initiative of both *Women and the Australian*

Church (WATAC) and The Grail in Australia, with financial support from both organisations, the logos of both organisations will appear on the back cover of the book, with further information in the book, including links to each organisation.

The aim in printing the book is to further the goal of raising women's voices in preaching the Gospel. Any proceeds received will contribute to the funding of *Australian Women Preach* and similar future projects.

From a letter, 8th November, 2022, Tracy McEwan, member of Executive, WATAC.

NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY (NGA), SEPTEMBER 2022

We wrote of the National General Assembly in the September Newsletter. Now that the Assembly Report has been produced, we can add a little more information here, thanks to Fran Warner who recorded every session for the Report.

The keynote speaker at the Assembly was Sister Jan Barnett who spoke to the Assembly's theme: *On the threshold – in liminal space*. Jan's reflections were immensely helpful, offering support and affirmation on the one hand and challenge on the other. We agreed that we needed to ponder the wisdom of her words further and share them with those not able to be present. Jan had earlier facilitated a weekend of discernment with Sydney members. We are deeply grateful for her generous assistance.

The work of each day we grounded in prayer. The work itself was attentive listening to one another and open-minded consideration as individuals and working teams presented reports and proposals, made recommendations and raised questions and problems. Some significant, hopeful changes resulted,

- The Brisbane group stepped forward to take major national leadership roles for the next four years.
- We have new, capable leadership also in finance and communication
- The Melbourne group, having decided to change their way of operation, which does not require the use of the Balwyn unit, sought and received approval to sell the property. This will be done in March 2023
- The Sydney group is committed to continuing discernment of its priorities for future mission and implementation of a plan of action as soon as this is achieved.

We left the Assembly, grateful for the spirit of hope that prevailed throughout and grateful for the commitment of Australian Grail women.



NATIONAL ELECTIONS 2022

In recent months, Mary Anne Baillie and Jill Herbert (Grail Queensland) have very efficiently administered the election process for the roles of National Leadership Team (NLT) and National Treasurer.

Heartfelt thanks are due to the outgoing NLT – *Tricia Gemmell, Carol Farmer* and *Helen Jeffcoat* – for their generous and competent leadership during the previous four years (for Tricia, who accepted re-election in 2018, it has been eight years). We were fortunate in the gifts and capabilities they collectively brought to their work. *Anne Day* has carried the responsibilities of National Treasurer for many years longer and we are all immensely grateful for her wise and conscientious management of our finances and her care and support for the Grail women in Papua New Guinea

Who will take over these national roles for the coming four years? *Margaret Hetherington* (Sydney) will become the new Treasurer. *Helen Jeffcoat* has accepted a second term in the NLT and she will be joined by *Ann Aboud* and *Judy Brown* – all three from Brisbane. They will decide how they will share the work, including representing Australia in the International Council.

We rejoice in this outcome of the election process and pray for God's blessings on Margaret, Helen, Ann and Judy and, indeed, on the future Grail in Australia.

TREATING TRAUMA DURING PREGNANCY, BIRTH AND THE FIRST YEARS OF LIFE: FROM DREAMING TO BECOMING

The title of this article is the title of *Norma Tracey's* new book. Norma (Grail Sydney) is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist, who has been working with women with children for more than two decades with a particular concern for Aboriginal mothers. During that time, she also initiated programs in speech therapy, nutrition and gardening for children in 20 Aboriginal pre-schools around New South Wales. The book is due off the press in January 2023 and is, in her words, 'a condensation of my life's professional work.'

Dreaming into being is not a cognitive approach to trauma treatment, rather it is a personal, emotional commitment to be in the pain with the patient until the pain can be borne and processed. This book brings hope as well as inspiration to health workers, social workers, teachers and therapists alike. It also provides a model for working with Indigenous people who have a history of cultural and societal abuse as well as histories of intergenerational trauma. Norma Tracey's passion for healing is revealed as is her faith in the ability to heal

even for the most traumatized and difficult-to-reach patients. Her work with traumatised mothers and babies as well as fathers and mothers is truly remarkable. Faith in the analytic process is revealed in these stories of broken lives re-claimed.’ (Judy Eekhoff, Northwestern Psychoanalytic Society and COR Northwestern Family Development Center, Seattle USA).

In Aboriginal culture, going back maybe 50,000 years, the physical place where the young Aboriginal woman was pregnant and gave birth to her baby was sacred ground, always revered by her and her community. The young pregnant suburban Aboriginal woman of today must reclaim that place, but now, instead of being land, it is the space of her body, mind, and emotions. She needs to reclaim this space from alcohol, drugs, and violence and declare it once more a sacred place of holding life and giving birth — the sacred land of new beginnings — not only for her infants, but for herself and her community.

At the core of the personality is a particular psychic space, which I describe as the pre-creative, primordial abyss. It is the nothingness, nowhere space, enunciated in most religions as the primary black void. It precedes all creative psychic living, all ambivalence; it is “before is and is not”. It is not a static space, for there is a dialectical movement to and from it in every living experience, as old patterns of being are surrendered to allow return to the abyss but paradoxically for the first time, and from that be born psychically anew. I propose this dynamic as a continuum from birth to death, from womb to tomb, and as an integral part of living experience in every moment of our lives. In the primordial pre-creative space is the potential of life, risk, surprise, fear, danger, along with the possibility of the joy of creativity.

Norma Tracey

A RESEARCH JOURNEY TO REIMAGINE HOSPITALITY

Maybe I am crazy, maybe I am not. At the age of 62 I have commenced a research journey, or should I say recommenced this journey. Forty years ago, I was working on a PhD in medical microbiology, from which I withdrew after three years. Since then, I have had a rich and varied career across a broad range of disciplines, including more recently as prison chaplain and in pastoral care among those living with homelessness. Now I offer Spiritual Direction, Pastoral Supervision and retreats. And I find myself as a novice theological research student having written a minor thesis this semester, at the University of Divinity (Pilgrim College) following up with a PhD in 2023. I am keen to reimagine hospitality in faith communities through a trauma-sensitive lens.

Faith communities frequently aspire to ‘welcome all’ and proclaim to be inclusive, compassionate and respectful of all people. However, this hospitable desire is legally and pastorally problematic when welcoming a person who has engaged in criminal sexual behaviour – a Person of Concern (PoC). This can be particularly challenging when the community includes people with lived experience of sexual abuse or other trauma histories.

One of the outcomes of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse was that churches have reassessed how they respond to the challenges that emerged during the inquiry. In particular, Recommendation 16.57 states:¹

‘Where a religious institution becomes aware that any person attending any of its religious services or activities is the subject of a substantiated complaint of child sexual abuse, or has been convicted of an offence relating to child sexual abuse, the religious institution should:

¹ “Final Report Recommendations,” The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Childhood Sexual Abuse, accessed 27 August 2022, https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/final_report_-_recommendations.pdf.

- assess the level of risk posed to children by that perpetrator’s ongoing involvement in the religious community;
- take appropriate steps to manage that risk.’

So faith communities have introduced safeguarding policies and procedures. In this way, the need to protect children and vulnerable people is addressed while upholding the right of individuals to maintain the practice of worship and so balance the duty of care to all parties.

However, such policies and procedures present other challenges for congregants who have been harmed by sexual and other traumatising violence and the wider congregation. In addition, it impacts broader missional objectives. While such approaches may be legally adequate and compliant with the requirements of insurers, there is a need to evaluate this approach theologically and pastorally. Is there another way?

I am taking a constructivist, participative, contemplative feminist, theological approach to the research. Through theological action research, I will examine the perceived barriers and underlying theologies associated with hospitality in faith communities. As such, I will be researching ‘with’ people rather than ‘on’ people. Congruent with who I am, how I am in the world, the research will itself be a contemplative practice, incorporating *lectio divina*, contemplative dialogue and discernment circles.

My approach is feminist. While it can be argued that there is no such thing as a feminist methodology, this research shares characteristics with other feminist scholars. It serves those whose voices are silenced or ignored, drawing on their experience. It is concerned with social change, social justice and abuse of power, and challenges traditional paradigms.²

The research will be trauma-informed and trauma-sensitive, drawing the work of three feminist theologians such as Jennifer Baldwin, Serene Jones and Shelly Rambo.³ Karen O’Donnell argues that if trauma itself causes ‘rupture’ then a ‘hermeneutical lens of trauma’ can intentionally rupture current theologies and create a ‘space for the construction of something new and fresh’.⁴

In these ways, the research honours a God that never ceases to make God’s self known. I am aware that my life experiences inform this research. My childhood experiences, silencing within and beyond the church, and my ministry as a Prison Chaplain and among those living with homelessness, have been and will continue to be formative, informative and transformative. This research offers me yet another opportunity for transformation.

Maybe I am crazy, maybe I am not, but I sense that this is my work to do in the prime of my life.

Elizabeth Lee

² Phillips, Porter and Slee. “Introduction,” 1-20. Also O’Donnell and Cross eds, *Feminist Trauma Theologies: Body*, xix-xx. Both of these sources draw on the work of Andrea Doucet and Natasha Mauthner.

³ Jennifer Baldwin, *Trauma-Sensitive Theology: Thinking Theologically in the Era of Trauma*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018.

Serene Jones, *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World*. Second Edition. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2019

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Shelly Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds: Living in the Afterlife of Trauma*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2017.

⁴ Karen O’Donnell, *Broken Bodies: The Eucharist, Mary, and the Body in Trauma* (Theology London: SCM Research, 2018), 13.