

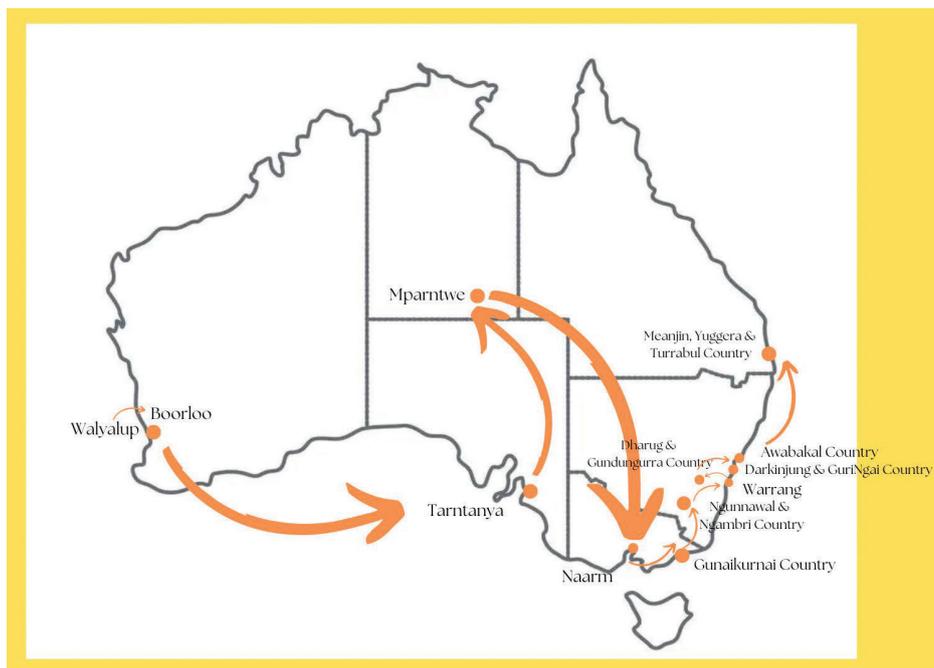
The Newsletter of the Wellspring Community Inc • An Australian Community inspired by the Iona Community

## Care for Creation - A Listening Pilgrimage

“Unless you put your bare feet on the land  
you can’t experience the spirituality of the land.  
So come and walk gently on this land.  
It holds our story.” Brooke Prentis.



*Brooke Prentis and Ruth Harvey walking together on Country at Wadjemup (Rottne Island)*



At the invitation of *Wellspring Community* Ruth Harvey, leader of the Iona Community, walked gently on the lands now called Australia.

This month-long pilgrimage was shared with Lisa Wriley, and Joy Connor as co-leaders of *Wellspring Community* and with Brooke Prentis, an Aboriginal Christian leader and Wellspring member. Together, they spent time listening, learning, and sharing reflections on the theme of Care for Creation.

# Introducing this Special Edition of Pipeline: 'Care for Creation – A Listening Pilgrimage.'

Geoff Stevenson

In 2019, a group of UCA leaders gathered in Alice Springs to reflect on ministry, mission and faith. I had wondered why we were gathering in a place that was 'out of everyone's way.' The first session drew us together for a smoking ceremony, in which we participated, gathering particular strips of bush and joining in the story and the lighting and waving of smoke, as we followed our Indigenous leader's directions. She led us through the land and told stories, inviting us to touch the earth beneath us, embrace the trees and listen for the flowing underground water, to hear the birdsong and pay attention to the trees, shrubs and flowers.

Over the next few days, we learned to stop and listen, slow down and pay attention, although too often I found myself retreating into headspace, trying to locate meaning in ideas and thoughts. There was a constant struggle to let go and simply 'be' in the midst of this strange beauty and wonder. The sun shone hot and proud through the large blue sky that radiated out, interrupted by mountain ranges and gums growing tall. Deep underground rivers flowed beneath sandy creek beds that became raging rivers when waters flowed south from the big wet up north or the rains finally arrived.

I remembered this place from a previous trip, the raw landscape of red earth and blues skies, or olive gums and sandy creek beds. I remembered the waterholes, places of different life and deep beauty, a photographer's dream. The flora and fauna, so different from the urbanised landscape of home, where everything is contained and neat, or hidden behind fences and buildings. Standing on the raw earth in a place that is different opened my eyes, my heart, my spirit and I felt the Spirit in this land. The stillness and silence that descended was filled with

the still, small voice of love slowly penetrating my hardened ears and softening my heart to embrace life in a new way.

The wisdom of the elders, of generations who have lived and loved this land and show me its hidden beauty, its truth and the life it has for all of us, is a beautiful gift. I and the land are one, united in this Trinity of Love that holds, sustains and loves all creation into being. *EnChristo*, says Paul (164 times!) – 'In Christ!' All is in Christ and Spirit-wisdom comes to us when we learn the art of stillness, of standing barefoot on the earth, and open to the voice of wisdom in the wind, the rain, the flowing creeks, the birds and animals or glimpse it in the sky and sun, the moon, the stars and the beauty of the world around.

The Care for Creation: A Listening Pilgrimage reflections reinforce the concept of Spirit-wisdom. The voice and presence of Christ in everything invite more profound reconciliation, relationship, and life. The words and experiences shared in this edition of Pipeline reveal deep wisdom!

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# Care for Creation: A Listening Pilgrimage – An Overview

John Connor

*Wellspring Community's* Care for Creation pilgrimage reminded me of Aboriginal peoples' spirituality of the land. This spirituality is reflected, for example, in Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann's understanding of Dadirri, that inner deep listening and quiet still awareness of the land and all that is within it, on it, and above it.

So, too, there are over 2,500 references to the land in the Old Testament and 250 references to the New Testament. The prophet Joel, for example,

declares, "Yahweh is jealous on behalf of his land, the trees bear fruit, the vine and fig tree yield abundantly".

There is also the Celtic Christian appreciation of the Divine in the created world. Among the vast collection of the Carmina Gadelica, some poems stand out.

"There is no plant in the ground

But is full of his blessing,

There is no thing in the sea but is full of his life

There is nought in the sky

But proclaims his goodness..."

And so the poem continues in praise of the Creator.

Again, Thomas Berry writes, "An absence of the sense of the sacred is the basic flaw in many of our efforts at ecologically or environmentally adjusting our human presence to the natural world. It has been said that "we will not save what we do not love". It is also true that we will neither love nor save what we do not appreciate as sacred".

## Reflections from each location . . .

### Wadjemup/ Rottnest Island and Mooro Katta/ Kings Park

29 - 30 September 2023 — Reflection by Ruth Harvey



A ferry port, a crowded boat with excited day-trippers and holiday makers, white sandy beaches, and blue-turquoise sea. So far, so familiar. The island of Wadjemup (also known as Rottnest Island) is a 30-minute boat ride from Boorloo/Perth, on Noongar Country, Western Australia, in the Indian Ocean.

This island, inhabited by many hundreds of Quokkas (small marsupials mistaken as rats by the first Dutch sailors to land here in the 1600s, hence the name Rottnest

or rats nest in Dutch), was also the destination of around 4,000 Aboriginal men and boys incarcerated here until 1930 in the purpose-built prison, for minor offences. Many were held in dark dungeon-like rooms, ten at a time, with capacity for no more than 4. Around 400 of these men and boys died in custody, some while trying to escape. Their burial site was, for a while, a camping ground.

We were welcomed 'to Country' by Uncle Neville Collard, Noongar Elder and guide, who led us in a 'smoking

ceremony' where we were bathed and cleansed in the smoke of the fire, then invited to offer thanksgiving to all of Creation by throwing sand into the sea.

The generous, open-hearted welcome of Uncle Neville onto land inhabited by his ancestors over millennia stood in stark contrast to the hostility of more recent settlers/invaders/colonisers. After what was a deeply spiritual welcome, I was struck by Uncle Neville's comment that 'we don't have religion – we have culture and law, or lore.' In what he offered, there was a deep sense of what I would understand as the fullness or





sacramentality of all: an integration of ritual and welcome, story-sharing and campaigning for justice, honouring of past elders while pointing to hope in present and future leaders – all of this and more was the sum of the wholeness of Creation.

Back at Boorloo/Perth, we met the next day at Mooro Katta/Kings Park for a time of yarning and singing on Country. The generous, open-hearted ‘Welcome to Country’ offered by indigenous Aboriginal women Della Rae Morrison and Brooke Prentis is becoming a familiar ritual of the peoples of these lands.

We sang together with the ‘Madjital Moorna’ choir, who through song offer ‘learning, healing, bringing cultures together’. We drank tea and ate cakes and scones prepared by a local indigenous catering company (Kuditj Kitchen). We swapped stories of faith and care for Creation.



Mooro Katta Gathering

If day one was a day of opening our hearts to the pain of the past, day two was a moment of healing amongst friends and strangers.

The backdrop to our yarning and singing circle was a mural of a tree prepared by Lisa Wriley, co-leader of the *Wellspring Community*. Each of us was invited to share examples of how we care for Creation on a cloth leaf to be pinned to the tree as signs of hope. We were then invited to write in a book about why we care for Creation. In due course, these will be written into the trunk of our tree mural. And so, as we journey across these lands, we hope that through sharing time and space with one another, we will continue to weave a pattern of understanding and inspiration in our care for Creation.



Pilgrimage Banner beginning

## Tarntanya, Kurna Country (Adelaide and Surrounds)

30 September – 6 October 3 — Reflection by Ruth Harvey



Conversation around the campfire at Colebrook Reconciliation site

Since the first settlers/invaders/colonisers arrived on this already populated, sophisticated, cultivated, flourishing land, much wrong has been perpetrated.

In Tarntanya/Adelaide, on Kurna country, Uncle Allen Edwards

welcomed us to the Colebrook Reconciliation Park, one-time site of the Colebrook Home where between 1943 and 1972 around 450 Aboriginal children, including Allen’s mother, were removed from their families to be ‘assimilated’ within a white culture.

The ‘Grieving Mother’ statue and the ‘Fountain of Tears’ are poignant reminders of the pain of that policy.

Later, we visited Raukkan, an Aboriginal community where Uncle Clyde and Auntie Rose Rigney shared



Grieving Mother Statue

with us their deep sense of calling to pray for healing and peace in their community through, in particular, the pain of addictions to alcohol and to drugs, that has blighted the lives of so many indigenous communities where land, livelihood, culture and dignity have been robbed.

In each encounter, we were graciously encouraged to put care for creation at the heart of our lives and to forge relationships as the core of our work for reconciliation.

Bishop Chris McLeod, Aboriginal Bishop of the Anglican Church in Australia, encouraged us to “share

### Reflection by Lynona Hawkins

What a relief when our guests Ruth Harvey, Nick Austin, Brooke Prentis, and Lisa Wriley touched down in Adelaide from Perth late on Saturday, 30 September. The following morning, Ruth shared in worship and gave the message at Blackwood Uniting Church. Brooke preached at Brougham Place Uniting Church, and Lisa and Nick attended the Leabrook Friends Meeting with Jane Pitman.

In the afternoon, we gathered with others at the Colebrook Reconciliation Park. Sited where Colebrook Home once stood, this place has been transformed with sculptures such as the Fountain of Tears and the Grieving.

### Monday 2 October

Twenty-four gathered at the Living Kurna Centre for a trip down the coast with Kurna elder Uncle Frank Wanganeen as our guide. After introducing us to some amazing old trees, each with a story to tell, we went by bus; the first stop was Kingston Park Tulukutangga. Here, Uncle Frank introduced us to the creator hero, Tjilbruke, who carried his nephew Kulutjuwi, slain for killing an emu against tribal law, from the spring on the beach below Kingston Park down the coast. At each of his

the glory of your land”. The shame and ongoing sorrow of the history of colonisation here and across the globe is real. The call from our indigenous

friends is clear: care for creation here and in your homeland; honour and deepen relationships for the sake of the world.

God of torrents of tears,  
God of weeping mothers and stolen children,  
of earth marked and scarred, of communities addicted  
and elders unseen, unheard,  
gather us in to listen deeply, share intently, understand so fully  
that our differences become starting points and  
our points of intersection become rivers of connection  
flowing more deeply than all that divides.  
In the name of the One who calls us to be one beyond borders. Amen

camp along the way, his tears became the springs and water holes of the Kurna coastal hunting grounds. We were blessed with a lovely sunny day. We valued Uncle Frank’s knowledge.

### Tuesday 3 October

The afternoon found us at Adelaide West UC for a Wee Sing. Uncle Nelson Varcoe is a Ngarrindjerri/Narrunga man who is an Aboriginal Christian Leader and singer. He shared some of the songs he had written. Then Ruth Harvey introduced us to some of Iona Community’s shorter songs, and we even sang some in harmony. Some songs written by Australian songwriters were also included.

In the evening, we held a forum with a panel comprising Ruth Harvey, Brooke Prentis, and Bishop Chris McLeod, the Aboriginal Bishop of the Anglican Church in Australia. Lisa Wriley chaired the meeting. They shared their personal stories of connecting with nature, and we reflected on our insights in small groups.

### Wednesday 4 October

Seventeen travelled by bus to Raukkan on Ngarrindjerri country, located on the shore of Lake Alexandrina. Uncle Clyde Rigney was our host, along with

his wife Rose, Uncle Ken Sumner and some young folk who treated us to cups of tea, coffee, and biscuits with Bush tucker flavours. Uncle Clyde was an amazing speaker as he shared the story of mission people who thought they were doing the right thing in pushing for assimilation and banning people from speaking their language. He also spoke of the pain of locals returning after service in WW1 and then ignored. Raukkan is also the home of David Unaipon. The \$50 note features his face and the Raukkan church.

### Thursday 5 October

While the above events ended the SA leg of the pilgrimage, some of us were fortunate to attend the Polkinghorne Oration before the flight to Alice Springs. Rev. James Bhagwan, General Secretary of the Pacific Islands churches, shared the dire effects of climate change on the island communities.

He spoke of the Pacific metaphor of weaving a mat big enough for all to sit on to explain what is necessary to address the challenges of climate change. Could this image be one we adopt for climate change, reconciliation, and even resolving conflicts?

# On Arrernte Country, In and Around Mparntwe/Alice Springs

7 - 12 October 2023 — Reflection by Ruth Harvey

You might think the desert would be the last place on earth to enjoy a campfire. The hot, dusty land, with dry heat and the red, red rocks of Arrernte country around Mparntwe/Alice Springs, was our home for five nights in early October, where we shared in deep conversation with friends on retreat as part of our pilgrimage. We were staying at Campfire in the Heart, a glorious retreat space for 20 or so guests, with a warm welcome

and energy of the Holy Spirit flows through her and out to the world.

This deep connection with an incarnate God was powerfully mirrored back to us in a tender encounter later in the week with Dr Kathleen Wallace, indigenous Arrernte Aboriginal scholar and artist who shared with us the story of her remarkable painting, now a prominent stained-glass window in the Roman Catholic Church in Mparntwe/Alice Springs.



*Above: Descent of the Holy Spirit at Iona Abbey*

on the story of Jacob and Esau as told in the book of Genesis. The brothers fight, fall out, live in exile from one another for many years, and then tentatively come back together again. I close with a prayer from the desert, holding all engulfed in violent struggle in heart and mind.



*Stained Glass Window in Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Catholic Church*



and a glorious campfire space where the glow of the embers offset the cool of the desert evening.

We had time to go deep together, to move close to one another through living in community – a profound experience so much at the heart of the life of the Iona Community, writ large here in an oh-so-different part of God's great Creation.

In worship, I shared with our friends in Mparntwe/Alice Springs the deep connection we share as people of faith with an incarnate God – a God born of a woman, born of a Creator who took an incalculable risk to send a child to earth. I illustrated this connection with the image of the Lipchitz Sculpture from the Abbey – a glorious, stunning bronze image of the Holy Spirit hurtling through Mary, who stands with her feet firmly rooted in the midst of Creation, arms wide open, eyes blind, as the power

In it, Mary and Jesus are depicted in full ceremonial paint as Aboriginal people. Mary is bare-breasted and, with Jesus, is 'standing on a sandhill on the earth. Jesus' hands are open to give light to the world. The light is there for all people to follow.' There are three circles towards the top of the painting/window. Dr. Kathleen told us, 'My grandfather, through his ancestors, was given a dream of three circles. The circles are Arrenge, Akngeye, and Utnenge – grandfather, father, and totem spirit. I realised later when the Sisters of the Sacred Heart read to us from the Bible, it was like the Trinity – Father, our Creator, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.'

Our connections do indeed run deep through the power of the incarnate Christ and the magnificence of the woman, the mother Mary.

On the final full day together at Campfire in the Heart, before our last sharing around the fire, we reflected

God of soft sands and desert rocks.  
God of deep sleep, of  
stone-sand pillows where dreams  
unfurl, where balance is restored, and  
where perspective is found.  
So grant us times of  
deep-dreaming-rest,  
of reverie and revelation,  
where pathways to peace may open wide,  
and roads to reconciliation will unfold.  
This song of hope  
we lift to you, bird of peace.  
Amen.



## Where Are You, God?

Jan Sutch Pickard

God of justice and mercy – God who sees the sparrow fall –  
where were you when pitiless men  
broke down the doors of safe rooms that were no longer safe?  
Where were you God?

Now, as Rachel weeps for her children, where are you?  
As those in power exact terrible revenge, where are you?  
When brutalized generations grew up as angry children  
in an unsafe world – while power games played out –  
where were we?

When whole peoples were moved about like chess pieces on a board,  
where were our governments?  
When huge profits are made from arms sales  
Where are our protests?

Now, when students and exiles near us watch the news in fear,  
wait for the calls that don't come, and ask 'Where is God?'  
Well, where are we?

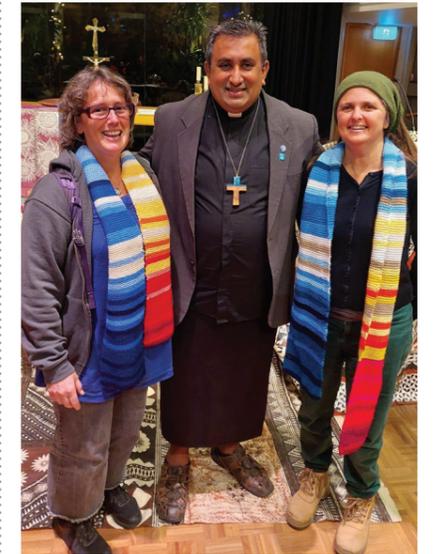
When families are crushed in the rubble of their homes,  
where are you God?  
With drones and rockets overhead, is there pity in the skies?  
As the tanks roll onward, stopping only to fire, what are they defending?  
How can we watch from afar without asking –  
where are you, God?

God help us, we cannot bear to see these scenes of devastation...  
we cannot bear to hear raw stories of loss...  
we cannot imagine smelling death on the desert air...  
we cannot taste such huge despair...  
We cannot reach out to touch  
these fellow human beings who suffer so much.  
Where are we, in this crisis, in all its complexity?

Yet you are there –  
so we cannot shut our eyes or our minds  
but must find ways to be present, to keep watch, to listen,  
to share your vigil – just, compassionate and still-suffering God.

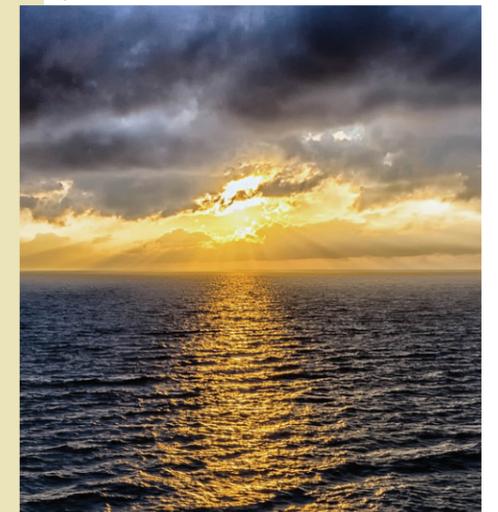
Give us grace and courage, words, and actions to bear witness,  
here and now.

We are here! Amen



*Ruth, James Bhagwan, and Lisa*

A throwback to the Polkinghorne Oration from our last night in Adelaide, where Rev James Bhagwan, General Secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches, presented on the topic 'Oceans of Justice & Rivers of Fairness – A Pacific Voice in the Wilderness.'



**Reflection by Heather Eckersley**

I travelled from Meanjin (Brisbane, Queensland) to participate in Wellspring/Iona retreat on Arrernte Country. These are my reflections from the first afternoon and evening together.

On the afternoon of Saturday, October 7, to begin our retreat, we participated in Streams@Atherreyurre (the original “Alice Springs”) near the Old Telegraph Station. Our visiting group was welcomed into this regular monthly event of Streams in the Desert, an ecumenical local group that cares about discerning Christ here: in this land, this history, this people and at this time and listening to God through Scripture, the land and each other.

We learned that this place was not a permanent waterhole but a ‘soak’ where water was often underground. We heard from our retreat leader, Celia Kemp, and from Shirleen McLaughlin, an Arrernte woman.

We learned from these wise women some of the history of this place. Much harm and abuse had occurred here. We were encouraged to “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” And to wander and find a still, listening place to hear what this land had to teach each of us.

This land holds much ancient wisdom and echoes the deep pain of dispossession. I found myself beside an old Eucalypt, touching the sturdy trunk and feeling into the sadness and harm this tree had witnessed.

We came back together and shared what our experience had shown us.

Then we shared a lovely feast in the dry riverbed .... a varied group, Indigenous wise ones and later comers to this land now called Australia, sharing stories,



*Above: Celia and Shirleen. Below: Atherreyurre – the place now called Alice Springs*



food, and time together on Arrernte Country. Listening.

*Now flowing in the country's heart  
The pea flower tells  
of dead who lie and cry goes up  
First Nations' blood soaks and grieves our soil  
Fiery memory lost to shame.*  
*Excerpt from Poem by Hazel Davies. The Poppies and the Peas. 2015*



*Desert Pea – Lest We Forget.  
The Frontier Wars*

**Reflection by Celia Kemp, Alice Springs Co-ordinator**

I just wanted to say that the time here was... very rich and good. It felt like many golden threads coming together and that something that mattered

happened. It was a wildly diverse group and a wildly diverse range of input and so it crossed many of the fault lines of our time but, but it

held together, and it was live, it was catalytic and very meaningful in so many ways. And it was a gift to here and the community here.

**Naarm, Wurundjeri and Boonwurrung Country (Melbourne),  
GunaiKurnai Country (Gippsland)**

14 - 18 October 2023 — Reflection by Ruth Harvey

The emotional and political fallout of the Voice Referendum hit hard this week in Australia. It's not straightforward. Boarding a flight pre-Referendum to Mparntwe/Alice Springs with a 'vote yes' banner, one of our team was confronted by an Arrernte Aboriginal woman. She was offended by the banner. In her opinion, a 'yes' vote was buying into the (unsubstantiated) story that the United Nations would, with a 'yes' result, take back land from local custodians. Misinformation, rumour, and fearmongering have been rife in this process. The 'no' result was not a surprise. The scale of the no vote, however, is a reminder of the deep divisions and levels of racism still at play here.

Despite the shock of the result, there have been tender moments. Worshipping with the congregation at Wesley Uniting Church in Melbourne the day after the referendum was one of these. There were many tears and a sense of shock. There was also a sense of regrouping under the 'Uluru Statement from the Heart' banner – and a renewed energy for voice, truth, and treaty.

As we tried to move through Melbourne to catch our bus east, towards Gragin/Raymond Island, we were stopped by a mass protest – plenty of Aboriginal flags, mixed in with Palestinian flags too – people hurting by years of oppression, with little political voice. All were protesting against violence. We missed our bus – a gentle reminder of the violent disruption to daily lives felt by millions in the face of war around the globe.

Disruption and discomfort have been a grieving theme as we have travelled. Arriving on Raymond/Gragin Island later that evening, we were transported



*Image: Pilgrimage on Gragin*

into the theme of Creation Care, perhaps most fully since the pilgrimage began. This island, the size of Iona, within the “Lake District” of Gippsland, is home to hundreds of Koalas, Kangaroos and Kookaburras.

We learned from the local rangers and church folk of the developing plantations of native trees to sustain the Koala population and a regular care programme that removes many of the Koalas annually to be re-housed. We learned of the concerns about island erosion and the delicate balance between eco-system and tourism. Off-island, we visited The Keeping Place, a cultural centre in Bairnsdale set alongside an education and a health centre for local Aboriginal peoples, where the story of some of Australia's bloodiest massacres is told. We heard of the destruction of an ancient tree nearby in 1987 by neighbours intent on keeping Aboriginal groups off the land,

Living together in community at Campfire in the Heart and at The Abbey on Gragin has allowed us to share some of the complex, uncomfortable conversations: how the interruption of a continuous First Nations culture and society destroyed so much wisdom, language

and lore; how the violent massacres and ripping apart of families have left generational trauma; how some feel the binary language of indigenous/non-indigenous is dehumanising; how the cry for Creation Care sits uncomfortably alongside ongoing reliance on, even addiction to carbon consumption in the form of flights and massive ongoing coal extraction in Australia.

**Reflection by Linda Turton**

Two thoughts (among many) gained during the Gragin pilgrimage regarding caring for creation:

1. The importance of being part of a community whose members have a spiritual life in common for initiating and sustaining action for care for creation. This care is for all of creation - land, fresh waters, sea, plants, and animals including people. Models of such communities are Wellspring and Iona: groups welded together through worship, openness to learning, motivated by a desire to seek justice.
2. The significance of Indigenous involvement for care of Country. Indigenous Ranger programs have been a success story in Australia. What I observed during the pilgrimage was the commitment and positive approach of the First Nations people

in care for Country, their joy in what they were doing. Co-design that prioritises Indigenous knowledge and dedication every step of the way brings positive results as evident on Gragin. As well as promoting healthy, ecologically thriving land and sea environments I believe it nurtures self-esteem and a sense of being truly 'in place' in the Indigenous rangers. I sensed this in the Indigenous workers we met. I would think this has a

ripple effect on their families and Nation members. Linda Turton Blue Mountains friend of Wellspring  
**Reflection by Marilyn Obersby**  
 I learned more about the great things the GunaiKurnai people are doing for the care and restoration of the environment in Gippsland, and about their way of walking the earth lightly. I enjoyed meeting Shay and Cathy from GLaWAC (GunauKurnai Land and Waters Corporation) and Rob

from Land care, learning from them how they worked together to restore the Land from degraded swamp using knowledge from the elders of the vegetation that was here before.  
 I felt the worship morning and evening helped anchor and focus each day's activities and learning. I learned more about how Rev Aunty Phyllis and Rev Kathy integrate their Christian faith and priestly ministry with their First Nations spirituality.



**Poem by Deborah Ruiz Wall**

**Written the Night of 14th October 2023**

The red soil at Nyinyikay softly crumbling in my hand,  
 The gleaming rock I touched gently at Uluru,  
 The delightful turquoise colour of Roebuck Bay that caught my eye,  
 The stories Redfern elders generously shared with me, a new dweller, who arrived on their ancient land, Feeling heartily embraced by the spirit of the earth, Welcomed to its hearth, and gifted  
 A home for my wandering soul.

Lurking shadows danced on grave sites to blot out sins of colonial past,  
 But the embers of truth refused to die, Ancestral Voice reverberated from generation  
 To generation imprinting Remembrance on rocks and trees and waters,  
 Oceanic tide unceasingly flowed in and out, In and out unrelenting until we all  
 Get to recognise Mother Earth,  
 Blind to colour and might, embracing  
 All who come to live on the land.

Healing comes from Remembrance of time immemorial  
 Of stories of weeping down the ages, of the frontier wars, of the snatching of children from mothers,  
 Of the unwelcome conquest  
 Of unceded land where we now all live.

'Sorry' the State pronounced to the Nation, and the descendants of old believed Mother State thinking that change had come at last,  
 But no, not yet we all must wait for the grace, of rain to come, to refresh the sweltering ground  
 Of misunderstanding, disputes, and faithlessness.

The soil is fertile now for reckoning,  
 For deep listening to the yearning of first peoples. We have exiled to the margins,  
 One day, Truth will prevail for us all  
 To truly come together as one people.

We await that day of reckoning.

**Ngunnawal And Ngambri Country (Canberra)**

20 - 22 October 2023 — Reflection by Ruth Harvey

Many birds have accompanied us on this pilgrimage. We've met Ibis and Lorikeet, Kookaburra, Magpie, Black Swan, Crow, and Pelican among others. Each time we've met a new species, someone in the team has told a story, shared a dreaming, or pointed out a characteristic of that bird that we may learn from. The crow squawking throughout one introduction was clearly understood by our host as having an important part in the conversation.

Other birds from my world have travelled with us: the dove speaking peace, the wild goose snapping – keeping us on the move, flying in formation, roles adapting and shifting according to the climate.

First in Canberra, then in Sydney, it's been a week about faith meeting politics. Brooke Prentis again showed us the Climate Scarf, illustrating stitch by stitch the last hundred years of climate statistics. This time, she brought the next scarf, showing the next hundred



*Ruth Harvey with Uncle Pastor Ray Minniecon and Wellspring Community Members at Scarred Tree Ministries.*

years of climate statistics. The future seems bleak. We spoke and prayed in the chapel, which is orientated to face Parliament, where a mural of the White Owl, symbol of the holy spirit, adorns a wall facing in the same direction. Words, prayers, learning, and actions travel between people of faith and people with political power, holding one another to account.

In Canberra, around 90 of us were hosted by the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, where we heard the pleas of Torres Strait Islander Christian Leaders to listen to the heartbeat of the Creator through the experiences of local indigenous peoples whose homes, livelihoods and whole islands and populations are threatened by rising sea levels.

**Reflection by Liz Jackimow – ACC&C Canberra**

Being part of the Care for Creation pilgrimage when it visited the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture was an honour and privilege. For me it

affirmed that when caring for Creation, it is so important that we listen to a variety of voices, particularly indigenous voices, on what caring for the land means

to them. It is by listening and learning from each other that our relationship with Creation, and the way we honour and care for it, deepens.

**Reflection by Roger Fitzgerald: Caring for Creation movement – Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn**

The time in Canberra was very much valued by the locals. Marjorie's and Marian's sterling efforts in welcoming and hospitality is particularly appreciated. Thanks.

Our movement very much appreciated the opportunity to be part of this pilgrimage along with Brooke and

Ruth and the entourage. I thought Brooke's talk at ANU was particularly powerful and Ruth's descriptions of thin places really resonated with me as former resident in the Goibols tenements in Cowcaddens in the 1970s and with weekend trips to Iona and places. I am aware of a 'thin place' in the Holy Land also being

the lowest spot-on earth was also the place where the heavens had opened up twice – with the colocation of the baptismal site and the hillock where Elijah ascended on high.

For more details on Brooke's work go to [www.brookeprentis.com](http://www.brookeprentis.com) or find on social media@brookeprentis.official.



## Warrang, Eora Nation (Sydney), Dharug and Gundungurra Nations (Gedumba / Katoomba)

21 - 26 October 2023 — Reflection by Ruth Harvey

We joined the congregation at St. Stephen's Uniting Church opposite the parliament building in Sydney. We heard about the Sydney Alliance, a network of political, citizen-led, and religious organisations mobilising for radical change across various issues in the city. Later that day, Uncle Pastor Ray Minniecon welcomed us to Scarred Tree Ministries, "a community where Indigenous people can integrate their rich heritage and culture into their walk with Jesus," supported by the local Anglican Church.

Uncle Ray expressed disappointment while representing First Nations people

at COP26 in Glasgow. The last-minute wording change in the final resolution saw India win a proposal to alter the wording from 'phase out' to 'phase down' coal and other fossil fuel production. He spoke of the horror he felt as this immediately gave Matt Canavan and other Australian representatives the green light to sanction a new batch of coal mines in the name of industrial and economic progress.

Just before the close of our public conversation in North Sydney, Uncle Ray grasped my hand and invited all present to bow our heads in prayer for the people of Gaza and Israel.

Through all the turmoil of the climate catastrophe, including the massive bio-diversity loss, through the desperate need to raise the voices of the First Nations communities, there is a deep bond that unites us across political and faith boundaries – it is the bond of our common humanity that sees injustice and grasps the hands of those around us as we learn, pray and act for a more just and peaceful world in the name of Christ.

The dove, the goose, the white owl: may they all keep us learning, praying, and moving.

### Reflection by Rev Dr Uncle Ray Minniecon, Co- Pastor of the Scarred Tree Ministries, First Nations Christian Leader, Australian First Nation Representative at the COP (Conference of the Parties) Climate change consultations

What does Caring for Creation mean for me? It means that for 60,000 years, we Aboriginal people have been part of Caring for Creation. We have been caring for creation since time immemorial. I can't go past John 3:16 when I think of caring for the creation. It says God so loved the

world that he sent his son to redeem it back to himself. That's mind boggling!!

There are so many practical things that we can and need to do for creation.

How will this pilgrimage impact on your actions for justice in the broader

community? I will continue to fight for climate justice.

Has the pilgrimage had any impact on the spiritual life of your broader community? Need more regular meetings, workshops, studies, awareness seminars...

### Reflection by Joy Connor Co-leader of *Wellspring Community*

At the Gedumba (Katoomba) event, there was a great atmosphere at the Yarning between traditional owner and bush regenerator David King,

Ruth Harvey and Brooke Prentis. This event brought the community together. Activists, hippies, artists, Buddhists, Druids, musicians and

church people were united in their concern for Creation.

### Reflection by Auntie Beryl Oploo Kamilaroi elder, educator, chef/cook (Indigenous cuisine) and deeply respected in Redfern – Speaker at the Pitt Street Event

My journey has been a long one. I come from a small country town, and I arrived in Sydney really scared off the train where my cousins met me and took me to their place on The Block. On The Block at the age of 16. We had no rights then, the elders looked after us but I'm not going to count the times that went wrong for me because

I was an Aboriginal person. It doesn't do any good.

The time has come for us to share and to come together. Things are going very fast. Money mining... all those things that are destroying the earth. These things get in the way of the community coming together. We got recognition in 1967 but the time has

come for us to come together sharing and caring for each other. To see us as people real people. To love each other. Aboriginal people are sharing and caring – that's their nature but we still need respect and recognition that we were the first people in this land, and we want to share. It is the Land that brings us together, but we still need respect and recognition.

## Darkinjung Country And GuriNgai Country (Central Coast), Awabakal Country: (Newcastle)

28 - 29 October 2023 — Reflection by Ruth Harvey

This final leg of our travels in Australia took us from Eora/Sydney up the east coast, through Central Coast, Awabakal/Newcastle, and Meanjin/Brisbane.

### Darkinjung Country and GuriNgai Country / Central Coast

Nick and I stayed for one night at the Narara Eco Village, a model village sitting on land once belonging to the Gosford Horticultural Institute. Set up in the early 2000s with a vision for an environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable world, they aim to create a sustainable ecosystem to demonstrate this vision. Having completed phase 1 with around 120 residents living in self-build eco homes, they're ready to launch phase 2. Narara follows a leadership and governance model of sociocracy, where circles of members make autonomous decisions within their sphere of influence.

Equally inspirational, if on a smaller scale, was our one night in the wi-fi free hut-hermitage of John and Joy Connor, Wellspring Member, and co-leader, in the garden of their Blue Mountains home. A day spent walking on-country with Tim Selwyn in and around Lisa Wriley's unique and inspiring community eco-garden

at Kariong was followed by a glorious weekend of hallowing celebrations in Awabakal Country/ Newcastle, NSW.

### Awabakal Country / Newcastle

Helen Weavers has been a long-time Associate Member of the Iona Community. During COVID-19, Helen, an active Member of the *Wellspring Community*, joined the Iona Community's New Members Programme. She and her cohort have been surfing the wave of what it means to become a fully global and radically dispersed community. This Creation Care pilgrimage and Helen's enthusiasm and guidance have meant that relations between Wellspring and Iona are strong and deepening. We

are now working out how to support one another further as parallel, values-aligned communities that remain distinct while also sensibly converging some of our structures to conserve and focus our energies.

Leaving Newcastle, it's hard to ignore the huge coal mounds or the heavily industrialised port. Traversing these lands now called Australia, dependent on both the consumption and export of coal, where petrol costs half the price of that in the UK, while on a Creation Care pilgrimage, itself dependent on flying, throws up many uncomfortable paradoxes. There may be few simple answers to life's perplexities. Living the questions and working towards a sustainable world is a start.



Image: Helen Weavers and Ruth Harvey

## Meanjin, Yuggera and Turrabul Country (Brisbane), Quandamooka Country (Redlands)

30 October – 1 November 2023 — Reflection by Ruth Harvey

Arriving in Meanjin/Brisbane, we were reunited with Brooke Prentis, who introduced us to Aunty Jean Phillips. A senior Aboriginal Christian leader for decades, Aunty Jean is famous for her work on supporting those living in poverty, bringing to light the need for better housing and employment, and raising awareness about the truth

of Australia's history. Her work has significantly contributed to building bridges between indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Aunty Jean, now in her 80s, spoke powerfully to a packed church gathering in Brisbane about the need for leadership training programmes for young Aboriginal Christian leaders.

Our last full day in Australia meant an early start and a ferry from Victoria Point to Kutchi Mudlo/Coochiemudlow island. Home of Heather and David Eckersley, Wellspring Members, this island on Quandamooka Country has a chequered history. We were taken to the home and studio of Merrett

Keech, who had arranged a personal viewing of her powerful artwork for our Wellspring/Iona visit. Taking the flags of Australia, the Aboriginal peoples, and Torres Strait Islanders, her paintings blowing holes visually in the colonial notions of identity and belonging threw us into a deep conversation about flags, collective power, and the potency of symbols to encapsulate a sense of identity.

Coming from a land where the individual flags that together make up the Union Jack are themselves variously and individually used to

induce both powerful pride and vicious violence, I found it unsettling to see that Union Jack nestled so deeply within the colonial project. Being with our friends in the community, some of whom had been with us for the previous five weeks, meant that the tears, the listening, the depth of sharing and, however small, the sense of collective strength was profound. This has been the most remarkable experience of community on the move. It was a great pleasure here to again meet Rev John Martin the founder of the *Wellspring Community* in Australia.

### Final reflections from Ruth Harvey on these lands now called Australia.

Throughout this pilgrimage, we have felt the presence of (and been regaled with stories of) Members such as Peter Millar, Jan Sutch Pickard, Kathy Galloway, John Bell, and others who have, over several decades, brought to Australia a powerful story of community building, inspirational living, and a generous faith as a counterpoint to all that was deathly about the colonial period.

## Co-Leader's Letter – Lisa Wriley

Dear Friends,

I feel the Pilgrimage continues for me every time I am in the company of good folk caring for the planet and First Nations' justice and as I write this I am surrounded by many fellow pilgrims (even if they wouldn't call themselves that! Fellow Human beings).

Worimi Elder Aunty Theresa Dargin welcomed us to Country here in Mullumbinba (Newcastle), reminding us to connect with Mother Earth. She spoke of her childhood when her grandmother would use coal in the fire to cook fish and crabs. They would only take what they needed. She contrasted that to the greed of fossil fuel companies that take as much as they can. She said the coal should stay in the ground.

This gathering is Day One of a whole long weekend called 'The People's Blockade of the World's Largest Coal Port.' About 3500 people are expected over the weekend. I have come with my kayak, penguin onesy, climate scarf and *Wellspring Community* banner. I watched hundreds of activists take part in the Smoking ceremony, respectfully accepting the cleansing. Aunty Theresa said Spirit told her we will be fine. We come with good intent. Stopping coal

ships for 30 hours is no small thing in itself! Apparently, it prevents 500,000 tonnes of coal from being processed. Well, it delays it and inconveniences the companies costing them money, so should get some attention around the world.

Today we have had briefings from all the Rising Tide team leaders – welcome tent, transport, kitchen, art, kayak marshals, police liaison, legal observers, media liaison, Action Coordinators and sessions on Non-Violent Direct Action, Rising Tide strategy and philosophy, and social media.

Late this afternoon there was a panel of First Nations People speaking on

'No Climate Justice without First Nations Justice'. I am reminded of my fellow Pilgrim, Brooke, who spoke of this truth with us many times during the Listening Pilgrimage. I learned a lot from Brooke as we travelled and shared events and I continue to put it into practise.

During the Pilgrimage, I created a cloth mural shaped like a tree. Along the way, I invited others to write how they cared for Creation on a cloth leaf. I also asked them to write in about why they did so. These leaves and comments will be sewn into the mural.

Christmas blessings as we await the Christ child this Advent.



## Co-Leader's Letter – Joy Connor

As we reflect on a pilgrimage journey across Australia, other people across our planet are on journeys of desperation forced, by war and violence, to leave their homes in search of safety. It lays heavily on my heart.

The image at right, of refugees fleeing Afghanistan, is a powerful reminder that Christ shared their plight as his family fled the violence of the powerful, 2,000 years ago. Christ is Emanuel, God with us, weeping with us, suffering with us and comforting and enabling us, by the Spirit, to speak truth, defend the powerless, care for the dispossessed and celebrate joy, love and life.

This afternoon I am looking forward to a celebration of love and life at the wedding banquet of two refugees. I first met the bridegroom while visiting the Detention Centre 7 years ago. Thanks to the machinations of the

powerful however, he still hasn't got access to a permanent visa but he is full of love and gladness to have found a bride who loves him.

This Christmas, "May the Angel of Joy stir your heart to be alive to the sacred around you... May the Angel

of Wildness unsettle you and connect you to Country ...And may all the Angels of the Gadi (Grass Trees) be your sheltering and empowering guardians this day and always." Josephine Inkpin, inspired by John O'Donoghue, Brooke Prentis, and the queer angels from Gadigal land.



## Painting by Kathryn Dodd Farrawell, Gangari Artist



Painting by Kathryn Dodd Farrawell, Gangari artist (grinding stone), Birri language, NQLD Kaanju, Cape York/Birri/Wirri Woman

**Kathryn wrote...**  
*"The Blue Waters flowing in the Sands of Time. Connecting us all with Our Mother Earth. Birthing us in Her many Colours to grow Together. Under the Sun, Moon, and Stars. The two good Spirits look at the Heart of Our Mother Earth, Listening to the Harmony of Song whilst Dancing in Life's Poetry. To Listen with Care, Love and Justice to Act with Creation and Peace".*

# The Saints who have gone before us. We remember with sadness the loss to our immediate presence of:



**Elaine Telford, NSW**

Elaine enriched the lives of many both in Australia and overseas through her commitment to faith, justice and community. She empowered poor communities, inspired the formation of activist groups for reconciliation, loved creativity, initiated community celebrations, delighted in her family and believed that differences are crucial for the world to spin.



**Marie Standen, OAM, NSW**

Marie was inspired by her Christian commitment to a life of service and the defence of Human Rights. She was fierce in her advocacy and actions for just and compassionate treatment of refugees, the rights of women and as a High School Principal and U3A supporter, quality education for all. She raised 4 children as a single mother all of whom speak highly of her love and support.



**June Hillier, SA**

Michael Hillier has been a member of Wellspring for many years. June, his wife of 35 years, died in mid November after a short illness. June was a wonderful primary teacher who really understood and cared for children. Her love and generous nature were a rich blessing to her husband and wider family and friends



**Alan Matthews WA**

Alan lived a life of quiet service to others, appreciating every good thing that came his way. On retirement he and Betty bought a duplex one side of which was used to provide a home for a refugee family for whom their friendship and support was transformative.

## WELLSPRING COMMUNITY INC.

Wellspring Community Inc. ABN 81 293 869 355

Co Leader	Lisa Wriley	0429 431 889	lisaw0508@gmail.com
Co Leader	Joy Connor	02 4784 1819	j.j.connor@bigpond.com
Deputy Leader	Diane Speed	0499 777 580	dianespeed1@bigpond.com
Secretary	Vacant	0420 936 190	
Treasurer	David Eckersley	0401 212 913	hdecks17@gmail.com
Ecumenism and Interfaith Faith	Doug Hewitt		doug.isabel35@gmail.com
Peace and Social Justice	Mark Hurst		m5hurst51@gmail.com
First Nations Justice and Reconciliation	Brooke Prentis		brooke.prentis@gmail.com
Refugees	Julie Brackenreg	0401 516 482	jbrack1350@yahoo.com.au
Spirituality and Worship	Helen Weavers		kweavers@bigpond.net.au
Sustainability	Lisa Wriley		lisaw0508@gmail.com
Admin Assistant	Warren Talbot	0466 310 243	admin@wellspringcommunity.org.au
Communications Officer	Fiona Green	0481 452 027	fionagreen236@gmail.com

Visit our webpage at: [www.wellspringcommunity.org.au](http://www.wellspringcommunity.org.au) • Follow us on Facebook

### NEXT ISSUE:

Pipeline Committee: Geoff Stevenson, Heather Eckersley, Fiona Green, Neil Holm, Joy Connor.

**Deadline for material:** Friday 16th February 2024 (to [geoffs81@gmail.com](mailto:geoffs81@gmail.com))

Against the background of conflict in our world, we will explore 'Peacemaking and Reconciliation in our World.'

We will provide some material to stimulate the conversation and questions and invite responses for the next edition by February 16. Please keep articles under 750 words.