

# PRESENCE

NEWSLETTER OF THE CANBERRA AND REGION CENTRE  
FOR SPIRITUAL CARE &  
CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION INC.

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Farewell to Ethel	1	<p>Ethel Gavin, well known and loved friend, pastoral carer, member of CPE Centre Committee and SCA, has decided to retire to warmer climes and will leave us early November.</p>  <p>Ethel, we thank you for your dedication and commitment to pastoral care and for the many ways (and committees) you have served and given so much of your time and energy. You will be missed.</p> <p>We wish you happiness and good health as you venture forth.</p>
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ALL CONTRIBUTIONS BY MEMBERS ARE WELCOME



# FROM THE DESK OF MARY

Recently I found out that the biologist Wangari Maathai, the first African woman to obtain a Nobel Peace Prize, had died. She founded the Greenbelt Movement and showed the relationships between trees and soil, war and peace, and the human body and spirit. I have listened to her voice on American Public Radio and experienced a remarkably gracious woman. I am most taken by her connection and understanding of the **'roots'** and **'traditions'** that **matter in life today**. She opened the world's awareness to the Kikuyu culture of her family's ancestry. Traditionally the Kikuyu people worshipped under trees and honoured Mount Kenya as the place that God inhabits. When understood technically that mountain is the **source of most of Kenya's rivers**. And the fig trees, believed to be most sacred by the Kikuyu, had the deepest roots, bringing water from deep below the earth to the surface.



In a radio interview in 2006 the interviewer, Krista Tippett asked Wangari Maathai to talk about her image of God. She began with two concepts of God that stood in some tension in her early childhood - the Christian God as He is depicted on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, and the God of Kikuyu culture who lived on Mount Kenya. Here is how she continued: ***"I tell myself that of course now we're in a completely new era when we are learning to find God not in a place, but rather in ourselves, in each other, in nature. In many ways it's a contradiction, because the Church teaches you that God is omnipresent. Now if He is omnipresent, He's in Rome, but He could also be in Kenya. His shape, His size, His colour...I have no idea. You are influenced by what you hear, what you see.***

*But when I look at Mount Kenya - it is so magnificent, it is so overpowering, it is so important in sustaining life in my area - that sometimes I say yes, God is on this mountain."*

When I hear stories of extraordinary people and the deep traditions that undergird their life – **Wangari Maathai's life literally changed the landscape, hearts and economies across our world** - I am moved to learn to live closer to my own experiences of life. I set out to tenderly embrace and see deeply into each experience, just as it is and find that it is that simple! - and that hard!

I am reminded of these words of the Dalai Lama which I have always found intriguing: ***"Suffering is nothing but experience enslaved by ignorance"***. I look at this saying against today's culture of economic difficulties and war and ask myself what a phrase like this offers to my life as a pastoral care practitioner. We are fortunate to hear the deep cry of peoples fear: ***'It's not fair!'***. ***'Why me?'***. ***'I can't stand this'***. ***'Why is life so hard?'*** ***'It shouldn't be like this!'*** ***'I can't carry on any longer'***. These are the questions and statements that liberate a person to vulnerability. How do I walk the path between vulnerability and responsibility as a pastoral care practitioner? Are these your questions also? I believe that between us there are many and varied conversations around our work as pastoral care practitioners. I would be pleased to offer time and space to further the dialogue that understands a philosophical stance for pastoral care in our region. As Wangari Maathai stated: ***"we're in a completely new era when we are learning to find God not in a place, but rather in ourselves, in each other, in nature"***.



# WHAT'S HAPPENING

## INTERNATION PASTORAL CARE DAY SEMINAR

### Pastoral Care: "Shared Voice – Ears to Hear"



THURSDAY 27TH OCTOBER  
A Seminar for all Chaplains and  
Pastoral Care Practitioners  
in Canberra and Region

#### Program

- 9.00am Registration,  
9.15am Welcome and Introduction
- 9.30am *Presentation:* Ms Rhian Williams
- 10.30am - 11.00 Morning Tea
- 11.00am – 12.00pm  
*Presentation:* Ms Rhian Williams
- 12.00pm – 12.45pm Lunch
- 12.45pm – 1.15pm  
*Feedback from SCA Committee*
- 1.15pm – 2.30pm  
*Presentation:* Mr Hong Sar
- 2.30pm – 3.00pm:  
*Dedication Service: for all pastoral carers*

Cost \$50 members  
\$55 non-members

#### Profile of Workshop invited speakers:

Ms Rhian Williams

Rhian, has been working in the area of facilitation, mediation and conflict resolution for over 20 years in workplaces, government & statutory organizations, and facilitated in public policy disputes.

She conducted a very popular presentation a year and a half ago for our SCA Branch's members regarding Emotional Intelligence. On this day she will combine didactic teaching with experiential learning on our chosen theme of "Shared Voice - Ears to Hear" with a focus on developing good rapport with our clients and patients, building our personal capacity in cross-cultural communication, and bridging gaps with persons different than we are by "listening" with all of our senses.



**Hong Sar's** afternoon input and interaction will complement these themes. He is originally from Burma but has lived and worked in the Canberra community for over a decade. He is a staffer at Companion House, now based at the former primary school in Cook. Companion House is a non-profit community based organisation working with people who have sought refuge in Australia from persecution, torture and war related trauma. Most are asylum seekers or from a refugee background who are newly arrived and some are longer term settlers who need support.

International Pastoral Care Week, has increasingly become an important part of the annual calendar within health and community care throughout the world.

#### Enquiries:

Ethel Gavin: 0409 608 641  
Susan Henderson: 6258 9622

# WHAT'S HAPPENING

The Canberra & Region  
Centre for Spiritual Care &  
Clinical Pastoral Education

Inc.

Warmly invites you to the

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday 27th October  
2011

Australian Centre for  
Christianity & Culture  
Blackall Street, BARTON  
Afternoon tea 3pm  
followed by meeting at 3.15

The Annual General Meeting will be  
preceded by the  
Pastoral Care Day and the  
Annual Service of Dedication  
to which all Centre friends are invited.

RSVP 6244 2261  
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or lyn.kelly@act.gov.au

Website address: [www.pastoralcareact.org/cpe](http://www.pastoralcareact.org/cpe)  
Applications for membership  
can be obtained from Lyn

SPIRITUAL CARE  
AUSTRALIA  
CONFERENCE 2012

*Where Words Meet  
Silence*

### Connecting through Pastoral Care

Silence in Encounter  
The Silence of the Voiceless  
Silence in Contemplation

Keynote speaker: David Augsburger,  
USA, renowned lecturer, author and  
Fuller Seminary Professor. Areas of  
expertise include pastoral counselling,  
conflict management, cross-cultural  
issues, forgiveness and reconciliation.

The Speakers Committee have called  
for papers for:  
Workshops  
Elective sessions  
Poster presentations

Details can be obtained from  
[http://spiritualcareaustralia.org.au/  
website/home.html](http://spiritualcareaustralia.org.au/website/home.html)  
Or [Mary.Waterford@calvary-act.com.au](mailto:Mary.Waterford@calvary-act.com.au)  
Or [Debra.McCarthy@calvary-act.com.au](mailto:Debra.McCarthy@calvary-act.com.au)

DIARY DATE:

APRIL 16-19 2012  
SPIRITUAL CARE AUSTRALIA  
CONFERENCE

# YOUR 'VOICE' OF PASTORAL CARE

Each newsletter we will publish reflections, poems, responses that give voice to your experience as pastoral carers. Please pass them on to us.

I visit with a patient today in the ward and notice a couple of staff going out as I go in and conversing outside her door so I comment to the lady that its busy in here today. The staff continue to chat outside her room and I wonder if they plan to come in again.

The patient, Lisa, has a sling on and looks a bit **edgy and tense and I wonder if it's related to the staff who continue to talk outside her room. I ask her how she's going and she says okay but her voice doesn't match that and she breaks down in tears and tells me that she has to have another surgery today to fix damage done after an x-ray tech rolled her the wrong way and popped her surgery repair out. So, from expecting to be going home, she now is facing a second round of surgery.**

It appears she has also had nurses in that morning, jollying her into having a shower when all she wants to do is sleep and close her mind to the fear of another big operation. The nurse in question is a particularly loud and cheerful nurse when what Lisa needs is some quiet listening. She does not need to be jollied or **cajoled into an "everything will be alright"** frame of mind. She needs someone to hear her real fears of a second round of surgery in less than a week when she should have been preparing to be going home. She does not need to be thought of as a malingerer or a whiner for refusing a shower but as someone dealing with real fear at facing the unknown.

On a purely practical level, the hospital could save itself a potentially huge lawsuit by just giving her some time to listen and be heard rather than push her through the system in the hope of fixing the damage before it gets too much worse. As a pastoral carer, I sit with her and give her my time to listen to and hear her

fears. She tells me she is alright in the first minute but my intuitive sense knows she is not and in my lingering for a moment I find my sense is right as the dam bursts and all her anxieties come tumbling forth. I cannot fix her problems but I can hear her pain. I can debrief with the head of the ward and **suggest that if she listens to Lisa's fears then a small input of her time now might save the hospital grief further down the line.**

Yet again, this encounter teaches me that the gift of time is one of the greatest gifts that Pastoral carers can bring to the people they see.

Submitted by: A pastoral carer working in a Canberra hospital.



## FULL TIME CPE UNITS

The Introductory full time course begins on Monday 28th November and is each day until Friday 2nd December this year.

The Basic Full-Time Unit will follow the Introductory, commencing on Monday 5th December and finishing February 23rd.

# THE PLATFORM OF IDEAS

*Questions that stir the  
pastoral imagination*

## **Responses to last month's question**

*How many days would you last in solitary  
confinement and how would you do it?*

Solitary Confinement  
Cold damp walls  
Silence  
Madness

don't think I would last a day.

Marie James

Assuming I had nothing more than a bed,  
bathroom and a small high window where I  
could see the sun and the moon: 14 days.  
Seven days to sleep, rest and de-stress, and  
seven more to reflect, pray, exercise and  
revitalise my spirit. What bliss!

Marilynne Read

I can go on silent retreats for 10 days without  
talking to another human or using a phone.

**But Solitary Confinement is another story. ...**

A high level of self-discipline, self-denial and  
self-**pride... would be the key for me to  
survive solitary confinement....I would keep**  
my mind active by reading the Bible aloud. I  
**would ...keep company with my mind ... [and]**  
keep telling myself that my body is just a shell  
that stores my soul.

**Then... after 5 days I would be ready to get**  
out.

Christine Simons

**This month's question:**

Wangari Maathai led people to plant 45  
million trees - her simple response to a  
world issue. Planting trees was both  
dramatic and effective. It re-established a  
simple connection that had been out of  
order between human beings and the land  
on which we live. Wangari Maathai had  
been away from Kenya and when she  
returned, she saw with fresh eyes that "*the  
earth was naked. For me, the mission was  
to try to cover it with green.*"

In the manner of Wangari Maathai as you  
look at the world with *fresh eyes*: what do  
you see and what would your *mission* be?

Answer this question for yourself in  
three sentences or less and email your  
response to Lyn Kelly (CPE Centre  
Administrator) at lyn.kelly@act.gov.au.

With your permission we will include  
the most interesting answers in the  
next newsletter.

**Looking forward to the December Issue:**

News from the International Council  
for Pastoral Care & Counselling  
Conference, attended by Mary, Sr  
Debra and Clair and held in New  
Zealand.