



Elm Grove Sanctuary Trust Newsletter - Spring 2023

When we seek to find our life's purpose that was imprinted within us at our birth, it is through love and service to others that we express that greater love that created us. Our shared thoughts and reflections can enhance our search and recognition.



"The river is a metaphor for life in its entirety with its calm times, its turbulence, its way around obstacles, its erosive powers, its supplying

nutrients to the land ... from its birth in rains on the mountains to eventually re-uniting with the source of that rain." - Peter Sands

Resurrecting our newsletter

Laurel Clare Lloyd-Jones (lfsf)

As we welcome spring our decision to renew our Elm Grove Sanctuary Trust newsletter, which had fallen into decline some years back, has prompted me to reflect upon what our purpose to do so might be. What has been uppermost in my mind lately has been our human relationship to our natural world and to each other.

In spring time, we see the power of nature as it awakens with new growth bursting forth. In the ancient world the coming of spring was linked to mythical tales of rebirth and renewal, that formed a basis of optimism heralding promise and hope.

Yet every day we hear further tragic news of lives lost due to events caused by climate change, vast wild fires, flooding, tornadoes, lost human lives caused by extremes in weather, earthquakes, extinction of species, never ending wars, pandemics, hunger and deprivation. We see a ramping up of militarism, warmongering, inequality, hegemony, and nuclearism that has over-turned earlier hopes for positive moves and humane governance.

How do we hold fast to hope? How do we sustain and support each other as we face these enormous challenges?

This extract from 'Lines Written in Early Spring' composed by Wordsworth in 1798, in all its sombreness reflects the personal and political disappointments that were pressing down on him in his early maturity.

I heard a thousand blended notes,

While in a grove I sate reclined,

In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts

Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link

The human soul that through me ran;

And much it grieved my heart to think

What man has made of man...

If this belief from heaven be sent,

If such be Nature's holy plan,

Have I not reason to lament

What man has made of man?

Wordsworth's words still resonate strongly today, as it has through every age. As custodians, and lovers of our natural world, our concerns are very real.

After the second world war when our world looked hopefully for a more peaceful world, we sought the road to peace through the UN, social justice, nuclear disarmament, food security, equality of human rights, responsible renewable energy, and sustainable practices to protect our natural environment. So, as we now try to assess where we are at in this moment of history, we find that most people are feeling overwhelmed by the bulwark of out-of-control power that appears to be bearing down upon us.

How do we maintain balance emotionally and spiritually in such a climate of uncertainty, how do we find hope for better outcomes? Everywhere these tragic situations are calling out to us to seek a better way to live together. If life on this beautiful planet is to continue on into the future, then we must address these things.

Presently our Australian nation is seeing the deep divide that has occurred since the announcement of the referendum to give Indigenous people a voice to address the inequality that has beset them since colonisation. Based upon widely promoted biased, non-factual and fear-based information we are experiencing just how destructive and divisive this has been.

Love is the direct opposite to fear. The Uluru 'Statement from the Heart' was born of generosity, respect, hope and love. It is a powerful statement that seeks to be a way-shower. It embraces the deep spirituality of this land's First People as they extend this generous invitation for us to walk with them into a united future.

Should the prevailing fear and confusion being spread widely dampen down our moving towards the promise of walking together in harmony, I believe that the Spirit of this Sacred Land is far more powerful. The Rainbow Serpent has arisen. The Spirit of this land will ultimately prevail and lead us ever onward towards this goal. If the goal is missed, due to fear, we will see the Spirit strengthen and expand to bring correction. Through the Spirit of us all this will be realised. It is our time to shine and show the immensity of the heart of Australia and to claim it as the 'Great South Land of the Holy Spirit'.

Today there is disillusionment and disappointment with organised religion. People have seen the hypocrisy displayed all too often within the rules and structures that have been formed. We have heard the pain of those who suffered as victims. As a result, many people fail to have any faith in a higher power to sustain them, or to offer hope for their future lives.

Yet we also see that there is a growing awareness within our society of our need to care for each other. In this caring for the greater good of others, perhaps we are seeing a new expression of that eternal and deep spiritual core that has been over-looked and ignored for too long. It likely was known by another name and was one that divided us and caused dissension. Perhaps the way forward might be to not give this a name at all. To see it purely as Love and a yearning for the Common Good of humanity and this beautiful planet.

Edwin and I have been enjoying a gathering of friends for small intentional lunches here in our home on the first Sunday of each month. Michael (a long-term director of our trust from its founding in 1987) and his wife Rita have been coming from Canberra to join us, as well as Angela, David and Trish who are more local friends and Associate members. These are gifts of time spent together in which we can share our lives, hopes and concerns as well as the opportunity to feel gratitude for each other. After our sharing meal we gather to hold the many concerns for our world in silent prayer and meditation.

In speaking with others, we are finding that other small groups of people are gathering together in a form of spiritual connection. They are becoming community for each other as they seek new expressions of faith in the power of love and caring for others and our earthly home that doesn't necessarily need to be defined by a label. Perhaps something akin to the early church that met together to share a meal and to pray together. This seems to be a growing trend and hopefully together we might build up a powerhouse of intention and belief in what aligning with love can bring forth to change situations through the Cosmic power of Divine Will.

Love that travels from heart to heart because first and foremost we care for others and seek to create ways to change destructive situations. These heart-felt yearnings change situations. They become sounding forks that hold the love and intention of our hearts enabling them to continue to vibrate and resonate within others. Some people still name these energies prayer – a term used within many faith expressions. The opposite to love is fear. If we are seeking the Common Good for all, then surely we are walking on the right

pathway. Let us bring relationship, love and hope to water those spring time flowers.



Recent news on the work of our Trust

Our Encouragement Grant this year was awarded to **Elka Wood** for her innovative program '**Celebration Days for Girls**'. Realising the sometimes lonely and confusing time during the transition from child to adult she has felt passionate about helping young people access information and to celebrate this period of their lives. These Grants are only made possible because generous individuals have offered their financial support towards these grants. We are exceedingly thankful for their generous support.

Read more about 'Celebration Days for Girls' [here](#).

Support for our fund-raising efforts to assist people who are facing major challenge in their lives at this time. We are most grateful for the financial support offered to our Trust as we endeavour to offer assistance to individuals at these times. Recently we were able to supply a second-hand vehicle to a local woman who had her vehicle vandalised which cut her off from her employment and medical treatment needs. Due to the generosity of many caring people this was made possible and we say thank you all so very much.

Financial Support for Indigenous Yuin people for their gathering to move forward their claim for their *Indigenous Fishing Rights*. It was also an opportunity for them to gather and discuss factual information regarding the upcoming *Voice Referendum*.

Counselling and Advocacy continues to be offered free of charge to people. Our Trust's primary purpose is to offer support, encouragement and hope for all people, irrespective of race or creed, at times when they face challenge.

Associate Members. We are very happy to have welcomed three new Associate members to our Trust – Anne Coutts, Angela Young and Rev. David Oliphant.

Their encouragement and support for the future direction of the Trust is most greatly appreciated. The combining of ideas and acknowledgement of a shared vision enriches us all. Should you wish to know more about our Associate Membership we invite you to check out our [website](#) or contact us at egstrust2@gmail.com.

Our Board of Directors continue in their many wider personal commitments and practical actions in caring for people and our planet. Starting from this newsletter we will be providing a profile on one of our Directors and their valuable lives. We hope that you will enjoy knowing more about these valued members of our Trust.

Newsletter Subscriptions - If you believe that your friends and associates might be interested in our newsletters, please invite them to subscribe via our website link [here](#) .

We welcome articles that promote hope and positive action taken to enrich our life on this beautiful planet. Should you wish to contribute an article for our next newsletter please send it to us at egstrust2@gmail.com.



Spring - New Life

David Oliphant

September is a busy time in the Maternity Building at The Canberra Hospital. This has been exacerbated this year because of staff shortages. My youngest daughter came to full term recently for the first time and because of her age it was important the birth was induced. But for a variety of reasons the induction was not started for some days. I was surprised how anxious I became about this. The increased possibility of still birth for older mothers is now well established. I began to pray and hold her in my thoughts. Then the induction was deemed to have failed, and an emergency C-section became important. We couldn't sleep that night much at all. I sat in her home surrounded by evidence of an imminent new arrival and felt such concern and love that I took to prayer and holding, both my daughter and her partner and their little daughter. I can't remember being so focussed in prayer, and being taken from despair to certainty that all would be well, so many times. The text from her partner around 3.15am or so that all was well was a moment of relief and joy. I felt something in me transform. I feel renewed in prayer. I know many others were holding her up as well and I hope they feel renewed.

So Spring has sprung for our family. I am believing again in real prayer from the heart. There is something about our spirits really engaging the Spirit that is at the heart of the matter, and this can't happen unless we dare to really express ourselves and open ourselves to the Spirit in actual relationship. My own ego was transcended and something in me grew, my own spirit I think. I have believed for a long time that Descartes got it wrong with his 'I think, therefore I

am'. It should be 'I act, therefore I am'. Our actions are made up of both motive and intention, feeling and thinking. Prayer is action. It is not passive. It is about active relationship.

But Spring is struggling to spring in the world around me. I have lived in my part of the world for just over 23 years. I think this is the driest spring I can remember in that time, and the forecast is not good. So I am turning my newfound conviction about real prayer not only to the possibility of rain but also to all the myriad reasons we human beings seem to be preferring the material, technical, artificial world of our own making to the natural, evolving spontaneous world that has made us.



The Divine Chalice

In the words of Sarojini Naidu the 20th century Indian writer and political activist:

"The Divine Chalice

*The hearts of true worshippers,
emptied of self,*

*form a perfect chalice,
wherein Divine power can be outpoured.*

A group of souls meeting together in some holy sanctuary of God can, week by week, form a nucleus whereby the Divine power may be captured in the empty cup of their hearts,

From this Divine Chalice can go forth a mighty power, or spiritual ray, to help this suffering world.

First the empty cup, then the divine outpouring, and then the absorbing whereby the body of Christ may be strengthened to give out to others from this Divine Chalice.”



Late Winter. Early Spring

Angela Young

Late **Winter**. Death of my Uncle. So far away.

My late mother's family, my kith and kin.

Uncle Peter's love reaches me still

across the globe. So welcoming.

I feel valued. Included.

Spring flowers burst forth.

Birds nesting. Singing, chirping.

Dry earth. Tinderbox.

Snakes moving.

A long prayer vigil. Love surrounds the ripe pregnancy. From far and wide.

Older first time Mum and loving Dad. Parents to be.

Sunday. Hardcore contractions.

Wednesday Surgery. Thursday. Baby born.

"She's perfect!" Beautiful!

Relief. Joy.

Angela and Grandpa David home again. Big sigh.

Her name: Paloma (a dove).

The funeral soon.

This morning I'm suddenly caught. Paroxysms of deep weeping,

Held in my beloved's arms.

Joined by another

In a three way hug. And another.

Open hearts. Friends together. Remembering.

Today the indigenous gathering.

biraga bunaan (big celebration)

Caring. Deeply respectful

back to country

walawaani



The Long Walk

Stuart Absalom



Michael Long, well known legendary Essendon footballer and dedicated advocate for his people, instigated The Long Walk in November, 2004. Desperate that the plight of his people was not being heard this walk turned into a mission of hope. Much loved and respected ex Central Tilba resident, Merryn Apma, was an integral part of that walk nearly twenty years ago and walked alongside Michael.

In 2023, many of the issues of 2004 still exist for First Nations people. Merryn did not hesitate when Michael asked if she would walk again, this time in support of the Voice to Parliament. Starting in Melbourne and visiting towns along the way where locals were invited to walk a short distance together there were plenty of opportunities to share information and stories. Michael's message of love with its invitation to walk together for a better future for First Nations people and all Australians is compelling.

By chance, I happened to be in Canberra so was able to participate on Day 18, walking from Ainslie Football Club to the ACT House of Representatives in Civic. It was a great privilege to walk with Michael and his team and the 200 or so people who turned up to walk. It was especially special also because I got to spend a few hours with Merryn, husband Garry and Max, their tenacious dog. Greeted in Civic by Chief Minister, Andrew Barr and Attorney General, Shane Rattenbury, it was gratifying to see that there is at least bipartisan support. Day 19, on 14 September was the last day with an early morning walk to Parliament House. PM Anthony Albanese joined the walk and a community barbecue to which everyone was invited followed the formalities. Later in the day, Michael who was in the gallery, was acknowledged by the PM, where his message of love and hope and the invitation to walk together was repeated.

Merryn asked me to pass on her hello and love to her many friends at Tilba.



The Threshold

In March this year we were fortunate to attend a new music theatre production of 'The Threshold' looking at ageing and the end of life from the point of view of women by **Judith Clingan AM** in The Chapel, Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, Canberra.

Judy is a composer, writer, artist, educator and multi-arts creator/director. She had interviewed many women aged seventy and older, asking them for their thoughts on a range of issues related to the ageing process, as well as our varying attitudes to the end of life. Their answers helped her greatly in writing the script and she composed fourteen short pieces of music for choir, strings, wind and piano, bells and singing bowls for her work, along with creating a series of visual images to amplify the shifting moods.

The ambience created brought a subtle mix of humour, grief and transcendence within the intimate café atmosphere enabled the audience to explore their own thoughts on the topic of ageing and death. This valuable and beautiful experience brought together singers, poets, instrumentalists, actors and theatre technicians who have worked with Judy across many years in many parts of Australia and the world.

These wonderful performances are now being offered to you and below are the details:

[Introduction to The Threshold](#)

[The Threshold audio](#)

[The Threshold video](#)

The audio and the video of ***The Threshold***, my music theatre piece looking at ageing and the end of life, are now ready, with an introductory video. The audio could be good for car travel, or for people with impaired vision. And it is a studio recording made by the actors on a separate occasion, reading from their scripts without having to keep on looking at the audience, and so is a faithful record of what I wrote. The video is of course lovely in its own way - we can enjoy watching the actors and the musicians, and looking at my drawings projected onto the wall - but sometimes an actor gets a bit muddled, or leaves a bit out....in other words, as a normal, fallible old person!

If you have appreciated watching / listening, I would be grateful if you could make a small donation towards the production costs. And please don't simply pass the recordings around. I would like to receive \$10 for the audio and \$10 for the video from (or on behalf of) anyone you share them with.

Here is my account:

J.A.CLINGAN

BSB: 062912

Account number: 10093287

Director Profile

Laurie Wood

Laurie is one of our Directors, and as well as his full-time employment he serves as a dedicated volunteer with the Rural Fire Service.





Spring is the time of year I love most, life is in the air – the sights, smells and noises of new things growing, learning and living. It also brings the threat of fire, as forewarned in the [Spring 2023 Seasonal Bushfire Outlook](#).

I grew up on Yuin country, joining the Rural Fire Service when I was 16. My school bus driver was the local fire captain and since leaving school I've worked or volunteered in bushfire management my whole life. I've fought fire across NSW, Victoria, the ACT, Tasmania and even deploying to Canada in

2017. Nothing could prepare me for my family property burning in February 2020, a few days before the rains came. Driving down that road that I'd known for the better part of 30 years, it looked like every burnt rural road I'd seen. Except I knew every bump, rock, tree and bend. It was visceral and haunting and beautiful and for months I drove down that road in my sleep until I spent the better part of half a year talking to a psychologist.

The lessons of the 2019/20 bushfire season are as important now as ever, as the anxiety of the first serious fire season since then is felt. Mental and physical preparedness is key – discuss with family what to do if a bushfire threatens your home, prepare your home and get it ready for bushfire season, know the bushfire alert levels and keep informed via official channels. During or after a fire or similar disaster, if you think you are, or are becoming, affected, seek help - start with a trusted friend or family member but know there are many [avenues for support](#) available.

Get involved in your local area, it doesn't have to be on a firetruck, connected communities are more resilient and have better [outcomes during disasters](#). While fires are a clear and present danger to us and look and feel scary, heat is the most lethal natural hazard in Australia. Look out for vulnerable members of our community, the young and old, those with preexisting medical conditions and of course our pets and farm animals. Get familiar with the Bureau of Meteorology's [Heatwave Service](#) and the [Heatwave Knowledge Centre](#) for information about how to understand and prepare for heatwaves.

Most of all enjoy the spring and plan for the worst, but remember to live for the best.



This heartfelt plea by **Caitlan Johnstone**:

'The biosphere is dying,
and we are hurtling toward nuclear war,
and it is so very, very heartbreaking,
and yet even in the midst of that heartbreak
nature shines as majestically as ever,
and some moments all you can do is take in the beauty
and take it as your solemn, sacred duty to appreciate it while it lasts,
and look at the trees and the bugs and the birds and the critters
who never had anything to do with this madness,
and bow as deeply as your body can bow,
and say I'm sorry.
I'm so sorry.'



Bee here now

Michael Reid

I'm sure you've noticed all of the bees around at the moment, and I got to thinking about how they serve their community of fellow bees, working for the good of the whole. Lately I am appreciating how many people there are in our community that are helping others, and often it all goes under the radar.

While Rita and I were serving at our weekly food pantry last week, I got into a conversation with one of our regular attenders, an older chap that is having his share of health struggles. I found out that he has been visiting people every week at the local long stay caravan park for a couple of years, with a couple of Mercy sisters. Even though he struggles to walk, he is out there helping others who are having their own issues.

It struck me that I am hearing about many similar stories lately of how ordinary people are reaching out to others. It is easy to miss, when we are bombarded by all of the negativity these days. But it gives me great hope that in fact we are caring and compassionate people at our heart, and there are examples all around us when we take the time to look.



Some links that might closely resonate with your heart's desiring –

A **Franciscan Renaissance** would be ecological, nonviolent, economic, and inclusive. —Brian McLaren and Patrick Carolan

We have a proposal that addresses both the crises in the world at large and the crises in the Christian church: the possibility of a *Franciscan*

Renaissance... First, at this time of ecological crisis, the Franciscan legacy is powerfully ecological.... We need a spiritual vision that integrates love for God and love for our neighbor with love for the earth....

The ecological vision of Francis was about ... the interconnectedness of all creation, so that we see every creature as sister or brother....

<https://cac.org/daily-meditations/its-time-for-a-franciscan-...>

*Cofounder of the Wild Church Network, **Victoria Loorz** introduces “**edge walkers**” who connect across faith traditions:* My personal spirituality is rooted in the Christ tradition—a term I prefer over *Christian*, which is a label I find difficult to swallow these days. Rather, I see myself as an “edge walker,” wandering along the hemlines of the Christ tradition. I stand at the inside edge of a tradition that has brought many people, including me, deep pain and has also brought many people, including me, deep joy and meaning.... I’ve adopted this term, *edge walker*, from nature writer **Terry Tempest Williams**.

<https://cac.org/daily-meditations/edge-walking-2023-09-15/>



Photos courtesy of Peter Sands, Angela Young, Laurie Wood & Michael Reid

Elm Grove Sanctuary Trust

2 Emma Close, Dalmeny NSW
Australia



You received this email because you signed up on our website or made a separate request.

[Unsubscribe](#)

