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Elm Grove Sanctuary Trust Newsletter - Autumn 2024

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

Recent news on the work of our Trust

Elm Grove Sanctuary Trust has an exciting new Committee

Our EGS Trust board has a new committee of committed local people who are taking a shared hope and vision forward under the auspices of our Trust. ***Narooma District Educational Support Committee*** held their first meeting last week and appointed Tony Agnew as their Chairperson. Committee members are Kevin Bird, Steve Payne, Tony Agnew, Linda Tucker, Sean Burke (EGS Director) and Angela Young (EGS Associate Member). The committee will have up to eight members. We extend to them our sincere congratulations, appreciation and ongoing support.

Their committee member, Kevin Bird has written this report.

Narooma District Educational Support Committee

Following the outcome of the Voice Referendum in 2023, the Narooma and District Community 'Yes' Volunteers decided rather than fade into the mist that discussion was needed on how the energy and empathy of the Volunteers could be utilised in the future.

At that time, community awareness was rising on the flow-on issues facing communities following the Covid 19 2020 / 2021 shutdowns and the closure of schools in favour of 'Home Schooling'.

Evidence based data was starting to show the issue of low levels of literacy and numeracy competencies, poor social and behavioural skills of young people, school attendance and attending refusal now within the school environment.

It was perceived that the skills, backgrounds, and life experiences of many of the 'retiree Community' resident in the Narooma District, might be utilised as Community Volunteers (Refer - ABS 2021 Census Community Profile for Post Code 2546) as many had wished to be involved with young people with identified Literacy & Numeracy

competency challenges to be 'student mentors / support' with a focus on enhancing individual students Lit/Num competency levels.

Initial discussions with Executive staff at Narooma High School were very supportive and embraced the concept and, if the proposal materialises, they would provide training for Community Volunteers, identify students requiring Lit / Num support and oversight the program once imbedded within the school. The Executive staff have provided a strong 'Letter of Support' for the program.

Discussions with the Elm Grove Sanctuary Trust Board resulted in the formation of the 'Narooma District Education Support Volunteers' as associate members of the Elm Grove Sanctuary Trust.

Under the guidance and auspice of the Trust's Board members, a funding submission has been submitted to the Federal Department of Social Services under the 'Strong and Resilient Communities Activity Community Grants'. We await an outcome from the Department on the funding proposal.

- The program, on advice from Narooma High School staff, will focus on selected students currently in Years 7, 8 & 9.
- An initial ten (10) Community Volunteers would be selected and undertake initial training provided by Narooma High School. Volunteers would have approved Working with Children and DoE Probity Clearances.
- Volunteer Mentors/Student support would attend the school, initially twice a week mentoring a student, on enhancing their Literacy and Numeracy competencies.
- It is projected that 20 students would initially participate each commencing Term 3 2024.
- 2023 NAPLAN results will be used as the base starting point of student competency and 2024/25 NAPLAN results of individual and group progress (Refer - My Schools – Narooma High School - 2023 NAPLAN results)
- An element of the funding submission is to engage a Program Co-Ordinator to oversight the program and to provide open communications with school staff, selected students, parents / care givers of the selected students.
- Selected students would in the main, be from family settings that are within evidenced based 'disadvantaged' environments.

high-risk morning). This follows through on completion of breakfast in identifying if the student has brought either a packed lunch or money to purchase lunch from the canteen. Staff intervene in a non-embarrassing way to arrange lunch should this be needed.

1. In 2023 we averaged 18 – 20 students per morning – so far this year we are averaging 30- 35 per day. Multiple reasons lie behind this!
2. Purchase of the food is undertaken by staff and funding comes from a range of 'shavings' from a range of sources within the school. In 2023 average purchase costs was \$50.00 - \$60.00 and currently it is now \$80.00 - \$90.00 per week.
3. Food is purchased from Narooma Woolworths who offer a 'discount'.

If you would like to make a small regular or one-off donation in support of this program this can be made through our **Elm Grove Sanctuary Trust Project Account -**

BSB: 032-766

Account Number: 13-9061

All donations are tax deductible. Please indicate that the funds are for the Breakfast Club program.

To enable us to receipt your donations please send an email to egstrust2@gmail.com



Our Board of Directors continue in their many wider personal commitments and practical actions in caring for people and our planet. Continuing what we started in the first newsletter, this time our profile is on **Michael Reid**.

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.

Our Profound Need for a New Paradigm

On the first Sunday of each month a small group of our Trust's Associate Members meet together for a shared lunch. It is a time for sharing the stories unfolding in our lives.

These stories are a gift of precious time as we know that we are with trusted friends with whom we can share our challenges, our concerns, our joys and our deeper spiritual experiences that our everyday lives too infrequently accommodate.

We then take time in silence together to offer in prayer and meditation all that we have been speaking of and longing for in our lives, and for our wider world.

In reflecting upon how valuable and cherished these times are for us all I realise that the thing that is so important is the ability to freely share our stories. Our stories are so very important as they connect our human hearts to hope, to the certainty that we are more than what life and our culture seeks to form us into. It connects us to the love that is within each one of us that was implanted at our creation.

In the publishing of our book [‘The Elm Grove Story’](#) both Edwin and I knew that we were taking quite a risk by sharing the awe-inspiring things that were happening in our lives. We knew that what we were

sharing was going to challenge a lot of people. We also knew that our credibility was going to be questioned. However, it wasn't our story as we knew beyond any doubt that it was the story of God alive and actively leading us that moved fear of sharing it away from any personal power games, ego or need for personal acknowledgement.

Our journey to this understanding and trust wasn't an easy one. It was fraught with many mistakes, challenges, self-doubt but it led us to the place where we could trust beyond what our normal human limitations might have allowed. It challenged the very customary culture that we had both grown up with, and it challenged our family connections, and our friends, as they watched on in doubt and likely with concern for our sanity.

Since our story was published, we have seen that it has enabled those people who have had their own personal experience through a grace bestowed upon them, now being able to share these with someone whom they feel will understand and realise the deeper mystical level to their story. It has opened up a trust and connection on the level of the heart. This enables something precious to be shared and valued.

This depth of experience moves our consciousness beyond learnt theology, organised religion, to the discovery of where God resides. So close, within us, but so overlooked due to the teachings of an external and far-off God. The duality of formalised religion that does not lead us to the Divinity within us. The love that Jesus expressed in his teachings being the very paradigm from which we might start for this is what will give energy to our world, our faith and our hope. It is the only hope for the future of our world to find peace.

We were all created in communion and in the image and likeness of God. So just what is God? And why do we reject such a concept? Why are people so afraid to share their own deeper mystical experiences of God moving in their lives?

Douglas Edison Harding was an English philosophical writer, mystic, spiritual teacher and author of a number of books, who taught the necessity for a non-duality of consciousness.

My valued friend, **David Oliphant** recently shared with me his profound thoughts:

'...Institutional religion which seems tongue tied and trapped in their clichès – who and what we are as human beings has never been a

more urgent question! We need a new and more inclusive story to contain us all.'

Fellow Franciscan, **Richard Rohr**, challenges us to look at our human culture and formalised religion and where it has led us in our human failures. Our failure to see what connects us all, as we follow the old paradigm into judgement of a 'them and us'; the other, as we entrench ourselves further into distrust, hatred and war believing that this is the only solution.

'If we're honest, culture forms us much more than the gospel. It seems we have kept the basic storyline of human history in place rather than allow the gospel to reframe and redirect the story. Except for those who have experienced grace at their core, Christianity has not created a new story, 'a new mind' (Romans 12:2), or a 'new self' (Ephesians 4:24). The old and tired win/lose scenarios seem to be in our cultural hard drive. The experience of grace at the core of reality is much more imaginative and installs new win/win programs in our psyche, but has been neglected and unrecognized by most of Christianity.

Up to now, Christianity has largely imitated cultural stories instead of transforming them. Reward/punishment and good people versus bad people have been the plot lines of most novels, plays, operas, movies, and conflicts. It's the only way a dualistic mind, unrenewed by prayer and grace, can perceive reality.

As long as we remain within a dualistic, win/lose script, Christianity will continue to appeal to self-interested moralisms and myths. It will never rise to the mystical banquet that Jesus offers us. The spiritual path and life itself will be mere duty instead of delight, 'jars of purification' instead of 150 gallons of intoxicating wine at the end of the party (John 2:6–10). We will focus on maintaining order by sanctified stories of violence instead of moving toward a higher order of love and healing, which is the heart of the gospel.

The great traditions give name, shape, and ultimate direction to what our heart inherently knows from other sources. This is not new or unorthodox but exactly what Paul taught: 'Ever since God created the world, God's everlasting power and divinity—however invisible—have been there for the mind to see in the things of creation' (Romans 1:20).

Similarly, as the Hebrew Scriptures say, 'It is not beyond your strength or beyond your reach. It is not in the heavens, so that you need to ask,

'Who will go up to heaven and bring it down to us?' Nor is it beyond the seas, so that you need to ask, 'Who will cross the seas and bring it back to us?' No, the word is very near to you, it is in your mouth and in your heart' (Deuteronomy 30:11-14).

We must honour the infinite mystery of our own life's journey to recognize God in it. Or is it the other way around? It seems that God is not going to let us get close unless we bring all of ourselves—in love—including our brokenness...'

'This deep flow is then the pattern of the whole universe, and any idea of God's 'wrath' or of God withholding what is an infinitely outflowing love is theologically impossible. Love is the very pattern with which we start and the goal toward which we move. It gives energy to the entire universe, from orbiting protons and neutrons to the social and sexual life of species, to the planets and stars. We were indeed created in communion, by communion, and for communion (Genesis 1:26) calls it being created in the image and likeness of God.'

So, as we reflect on God as the 'Ground of our Being' as the true mystic knows – we only have to live this knowledge and breathe it. It creates within us all the intimate knowledge that this is where love resides, it is where we meet our God, by whatever name we know the Divine Being, but it is also where we find the truth of our divinity and connection with all other created life.

This can be our new paradigm and surely our only hope as we go forward as a human race together. Let us be courageous as we share our stories as this is where we meet love and communion that binds us together.

I would like to invite our readers to share something of their own journeys through stories shared, to link us up on the level of the heart. If you feel prompted to do so, perhaps it being the very first time that you have told of your own experience of something that has occurred in your life which brought awe or a deeper understanding. We would respect immensely the importance of your story. It will be a gift of grace that you will share with others. If you would feel so called, then please contact me on egstrust2@gmail.com.

Others might feel to begin a similar lunch group with those whom they share a heartfelt connection. In sharing our stories, it nourishes and

blesses us all. It shores up our faith, and our hope for human possibility at this time of immense grief and tragedy in our world.

Laurel Clare Lloyd-Jones LFSF



Photo by Peter Sands

Douglas Harding and Modern Spirituality

I had mentioned once to Laurel my interest in the ideas of Douglas Harding. So, when it came time to think about the next edition of the Elm Grove Trust Newsletter, Laurel wrote *'I think that an article about Douglas Harding would be excellent as I only have a limited knowledge of his teaching and writing but his comments on non-duality and our need to re-discover our innate connection to everything closely aligns with my own (and also Edwin's) journey back to self where we met the Eternal Christ that is within us all. The culture that we grow up in embellishes the ego and our structures within organised religions/ faiths have mostly seemed to have missed the message that Jesus offered regarding finding God within ourselves and in all creation'*. Laurel already has the central gist of Harding's teaching. It is about experiment and experience not doctrine and dogma. I can only scratch

the surface in a short article like this, and what follows is very much my take on Harding so far, largely in my words.

Douglas Harding was a modern day mystic who discovered a practical and experimental way to feel one with the world again, something we had first experienced when we were born but had lost because we believed others knew better who and what we are and so we had adopted what they told us. It came after many years of exploring all this for himself.

The first step is to recognise that who others, as observers, see us to be depends on where they are in relation to us. If they are anywhere between a few metres and say 100 metres, we appear as human beings. That is how we appear to them. If they come up very close to us, we are skin and hair. If they were then able, presumably through microscopes or other scientific equipment, to come even close we are cells, then molecules, atoms, sub-atomic particles and so on. In the end we are nothing, just empty space between particles. They can never get to 'ground zero'. That is the view only we can have as 'I's.

The process goes the other way as well. If the observer is looking at me as he flies over Tilba I am inseparable from Tilba. Further away still I am inseparable from Australia, Planet Earth, the Sun's Solar System, the Milky Way, to the nothingness of intergalactic space. I am nothing again in my appearance to an observer at such a place. So if an observer is asked who or what I am he would say I have many, many appearances. As close as he can get, and as far away as he can get my appearance is 'no thing', nothing. But as close or as far as he may be he cannot be me. He cannot actually 'see' from my point of view.

What can I 'see' from my point of view? Well, if my sense of 'I' is largely what others have said about me I am seeing the world through their eyes in effect. I have their 'face' on, not my own. I am not 'seeing' the world for myself. I am not the 'author' of my own world. I have not yet stepped up to my own authority. I can do that by literally seeing the world as I might once have seen it as a child, without the input of others. The most dramatic thing I 'see' is that I have no head. Other people have heads, but not me to myself. From where they are they claim I have a head, but not from where I am. I seem to keep my head in mirrors but not on me! What I have instead is the world seen through a single eye into which my chest and my arms disappear. Have a look. So here we have an extraordinary fact. As close as anyone can possibly

get to me, I am nothing. For me however I seem to be 'capacity for the world'. No division. One with Everything. Consciousness.

Harding developed his approach both intellectually and practically. Practically he developed a series of experiments to make it easier for people to 'see' that they are headless while at the same time being 'no thing' to someone else up really close. When we accept that we are nothing we actually become open to the world, to the All, call it what you will. The first 'seeing' can be quite dramatic. I am capacity for everything, including nature, other people, God, the Whole. This is who and what I am. I feel it and know it. The outer world is my inner world. We are each other in that we all share Consciousness and can know we do. We become not just persons but Seers. We find and live our own authority from what we 'see'.

After the first 'seeing' there is then the discipline and commitment needed to make headlessness our way of life. This is the challenge, just as there is with any paradigm shift in how we see things. We develop what he called 'market place meditation' alongside more traditional meditation. His talks about his ideas and experiments are entertaining and engaging.

Intellectually he connected headlessness with the mystics of all traditions, lectured in comparative religions, and made his case philosophically. He did this with reference to the three personal perspectives that we all intuitively know through our language, 'I', 'you' and 'he, she, it', the 1st, 2nd and 3rd person perspectives. Observers look at us from the 3rd person perspective, other persons we are in communicating with see us from the 2nd person perspective, and we in our own private experience from the 1st. Headlessness helps us re-discover who we are in the 1st person perspective.

His most popular book was **On Having No Head: Zen and the Rediscovery of the Obvious**. His **Religions of the World: A Handbook for the Open Minded** was a set text in schools at one stage. One of the last books he published was entitled **The Science of the 1st Person: Its Principles, Practices and Potential**. On the cover he included a quote from Kierkegaard: 'The majority of men are curtailed 'I's; what was planned by nature as a possibility capable of being sharpened into an 'I' is soon dulled into a third person'. He died in 2007 at the great age of 98. His work has been carried on by one of his main protégés, **Richard Lang**, who founded a trust and publishing house which are very active.

There is an excellent website headless.org and many videos on YouTube. The story of his life in some detail is told as a comic book,

The Man with No Head: the Life and Times of Douglas Harding.

Although he moved in Buddhist circles for some time, he identified with religion generally as a human being. He 'belonged' to them all in some sense. Being human was his prime identity. He had little to do formally with the church, having left his family's fundamentalist church as a young man, but his headstone shows him looking out at the All from his headless body, with the words The Kingdom of God is Within You written underneath.

I was attracted to Harding's approach for a number of reasons. I have long been interested in working with the three personal perspectives in trying to understand life. Harding does this more fully than anyone else I have read so far. In my own spirituality I have become very interested in the sense of Presence the world presents in its different forms. I have been 'seeing' animals, trees and rocks and other people in ways that feel directly connected to my inner life. Flowers speak to me personally as if they are revealing something to me. I told this to a friend and he said 'There is a pill for that sort of thing!' I feel movement in my inner life as I 'see' wind in the trees. So, I took to his experiments quite easily and had definite moments of feeling I am 'capacity for the world'. It felt wonderfully whole. But I am a neophyte in being headless without effort. And so far, although I have questions and even concerns, headlessness has complimented other ways of understanding being nothing or dead to self so I am alive to God that I find in Jesus's teaching including 'the kingdom of God is within you' and St. Paul's 'I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me'.

David Oliphant



'I have come to love petunias. They have 'presence' for me and quietly reveal themselves to me. I am falling in love with nature all over, and I think Harding's exercises have helped that.' David

(Photo by Angela Young)

Director Profile

Michael Reid

I'm the second of 5 children, and was raised in Sydney in a loving family. My parents were very involved in the community, and my father particularly was a great inspiration in his very long life. My mother suffered with some mental health issues later in life, but dad was always a great support.

I went through the Catholic system of schooling, but finally rebelled in my teenage years and refused to go to church any more. While this was difficult for my parents, it was the beginning of my spiritual journey, as I felt that the church was not meeting my spiritual needs.

After working for 7 years in TAFE, I took a year off with a mate and we travelled around Australia in 1979. This was the beginning of some major changes as I became a vegetarian, and started living with friends

John and Sandi in the Shoalhaven area who ran a retreat centre at Tapitallee. John was a TM teacher, so this started my journey with meditation in 1981. I came across a One Earth magazine from the [Findhorn Foundation](#), an international spiritual community in Scotland, and it spoke to me. I said to Sandi that I would love to go and visit Findhorn, and she said "What is stopping you?". I realised that nothing was, so off I went.

From 1982 I lived as a member of the Findhorn Foundation for 3 years. This was a most life-changing and fabulous experience. I worked in various departments of the community, and ended up co-leading workshops for about the last year.

When I arrived back in Australia (for a visit I thought), I went to a talk in Sydney by Eileen Caddy, one of the founders of the Findhorn Foundation. In one of life's great "mysteries", I happened to sit next to an unknown person called Laurel Lloyd-Jones! Well that was the start of my next journey.

Shortly after this meeting, I moved to Elm Grove Sanctuary at Goobarragandra in March 1986 and stayed for a bit over a year. I have such great memories of this time, working the property, group meditations at the outdoor chapel, meeting guests (including Peter and Krista Sands), playing music with Ed, so many shared meals & fun working bees with the many visitors.

I then moved to Wagga Wagga and Brisbane, but came back to Elm Grove in September 1989 for about 2 and a half years. This was a very interesting and life-changing period, as Ed and Laurel decided to go to the Omega Foundation in the UK for almost a year, so I was left in charge! When they came back, we went to an Omega week-long retreat in Sydney. The night before we attended, I had a dream in which I met my partner, which I shared with everyone at Sheila's place the next morning. Later that morning at the Omega retreat, who should walk in the door but my beautiful wife-to-be Rita, and I instantly knew she was the one!



I proposed to Rita a week after we met, and Rita joined me at Elm Grove after we were married there 5 months later under the elm trees in March 1991. We lived with Ed and Laurel in community for 9 wonderful months, and then we decided to move to nearby Canberra as Rita was pregnant with our first child Clare, and we needed to set up our family home.

Back in Canberra, our son Julian was born in 1998, and over the next years we sent Clare and Julian to the Orana Steiner School for a more rounded education.

Over the years we have continued to keep in touch with Elm Grove and Ed and Laurel, through many visits and special times. It has been an absolute privilege to work with Ed and Laurel over so many years, I am in awe at their journey and dedication. They are two of the most beautiful souls I have ever met.

I guess I could also mention a couple of interests of mine, which are photography - <https://mreid.org/> - and music - <https://michaelreid1.bandcamp.com/>

Following is a photo from when the family visited Uluru in 2008 in one of our many caravan trips.



Photo by Michael Reid

Love

For mine eyes have rested too long on the dusty road

And now to rest them in pastures green.

We see each other o'er time and trial

And come together in harmonious embrace.

Like the petals of the flower with leaves so green.

We embrace and cry out our love for all to see.

A love that seeks never to chastise but only to take you

In my arms and love you.

For you are unique in this world of worlds.

Do you hunger for me? Then replenish yourself.

Drink from my heart for I have only love

To succour Thee. Thy thirst shall be quenched

From my life's blood.

You and I, together, for all time.

Be with me in heart and soul

For I love you will all the atoms of my being and beyond.

Thou knowest not what foretells

But I, who am your Guiding Light, take hold of you

And lead you ever onwards

Towards the Home Coming of Love.

You and I have travelled many paths together

And in the leading you see the form and wonder of it All.

Rejoice in this time for time stops still at special moments

Memories linger on, long after the moment has passed.

Love and be Loved in Peace and Harmony.

(From Br. Edwin's Prayer Journal 13th February 1987)



Photo by Laurel Lloyd-Jones

This excerpt from '[The Elm Grove Story](#)' co-written by Edwin & Laurel Lloyd-Jones:



The Imbala dance group

Sue told us that the Indigenous 'Imbala Dance Group' from Cooktown in Northern Queensland was coming to perform in Tumut for the annual '*Festival of the Falling Leaf*'. As we had had a cancellation in our retreat house we were able to extend an invitation for them to be accommodated with us during their visit. While with us, Imbala offered the local young Aboriginal men and boys a teaching day of corroboree dances and expressed a keen desire to hold this at Elm Grove. We were more than happy to make this available and it was a significant and enjoyable time for everyone. I found it fascinating to watch the Imbala people working with the local Koori men and boys and by the end of the day Elm Grove had its very own corroboree circle formed by the stamping, dancing feet of these young men.

Birri, the oldest member of the group told Sue Bulger '*this place, Elm Grove, is a very sacred place*'. Cecilia, one of the wives, told us that she did not ever want to leave, '*this place holds so much spirit*'. Laurel and I enjoyed long talks with Birri, William, Matthew, Louis and Donald who made up the group and it was evident that the visit had been as special for them as it was for us. They left us a parting gift of a pair of clap sticks and the materials that they used for their fire making rituals. Fond memories and some delightful photos hold those moments many years later

Before leaving, Imbala invited us to a Corroboree they were holding for the local Kooris that afternoon at Junction Park, a beautiful, peaceful park at the junction of the Goobarragandra and Tumut Rivers. About fifty people from the local Koori community came along and many from the former mission site at Brungle. A long trench had been dug and a fire lit within that now held hot coals. Meat and vegetables had been wrapped in foil and placed above the coals before a covering was placed over it. With no suitable large wet leaves available foil became the substitute.

The dancers were dressed in red loincloths and wore red headbands. Their bodies, painted in white clay made a striking effect. Louis, one member of the dance group was playing the didgeridoo and William and Matthew were driving the rhythm of the dancers using two pairs of boomerangs. I wondered if Mother Earth was stirring as strongly and deeply as the emotion being felt by us spectators that day.

Long silent in this place by the river, these sounds and the ceremony now being performed, drew forth a deep longing within us all. The symbol of this place, where two rivers become one, defined the yearning in our hearts for the coming together of our land's indigenous and non-indigenous people so that we might walk forward harmoniously as one people.

At the conclusion of the dances the fire trench was opened and the aroma of the feast brought an enthusiastic response. In watching the various family groups sitting in circles eating, talking and laughing together it brought to mind just how much white settlement had disrupted the long-established traditions of these people and their ancestors. Over thousands of years, scenes such as these would have played out regularly. This realisation brought up a deep sense of regret for all that they had lost. I gave thanks for this moment and for all that it held, grateful for the invitation that had been extended to Laurel and me to be part of this special occasion.



Photo by Peter Sands

The Soul of Nature

Earth Spirituality

The ecological theologian Thomas Berry (1914–2009) reflects on our much-needed connection with nature:

What do you see when you look up at the sky at night at the blazing stars against the midnight heavens? What do you see when the dawn breaks over the eastern horizon? What are your thoughts ... in the autumn when the leaves turn brown and are blown away ... [or] when you look out over the ocean in the evening? What do you see?

Many earlier peoples saw in these natural phenomena a world beyond ephemeral appearance, an abiding world, a world imaged forth in the wonders of the sun and clouds by day and the stars and planets by night, a world that enfolded the human in some profound manner. This other world was guardian, teacher, healer—the source from which humans were born, nourished, protected, guided, and the destiny to which we returned....

We have lost our connection to this other deeper reality of things. Consequently, we now find ourselves on a devastated continent where nothing is holy, nothing is sacred. We no longer have a world of

inherent value, no world of wonder, no untouched, unspoiled, unused world. We think we have understood everything. But we have not. We have *used* everything. By “developing” the planet, we have been reducing Earth to a new type of barrenness. Scientists are telling us that we are in the midst of the sixth extinction period in Earth’s history. No such extinction of living forms has occurred since the extinction of the dinosaurs some sixty-five million years ago. [1]

read more...<https://cac.org/daily-meditations/earth-spirituality/>



Out and About

A place for all of us to share some snippets of what we have been up to lately....

Get
up off
of your knees.
Come out of your
churches, your mosques,
your temples. God can hear
your prayers for peace, justice,
and hope in this broken world just
fine while you're out creating peace,
working for justice, and giving hope to
this broken world. When are we finally
going to realize that humanity is the solution
to inhumanity? When will we finally understand
that we are all drops of the same ocean, hurting
together, healing together, hoping together?
So don't just pray for hands to heal the hurting.
Pray with hands that are healing the hurting.
Don't just pray for arms to help the helpless.
Pray with arms that are helping the helpless.
Don't just pray for feet to respond to need.
Pray on feet that are responding to need.
Don't just pray for someone to do something.
Be someone who does something.
Don't just pray for answers.
Be the answer.

L.R.Knost



From Laurel Lloyd-Jones

A win/win situation

With my current workload administering our charity, EGS Trust, along with the limitations that have come with age, I realised that I was no longer able to maintain our vegetable garden. Gardening is something that is so dear to my heart and it has brought me great pleasure over many years. I felt saddened to see that the veggie patch was being neglected due to my physical inability and limitations on my time to manage this.

Thinking about this I realised that there might be someone who loves to grow veggies but doesn't have the space within their current living accommodation. I put a notice on our local 'Buy, Sell & Swap' social media page and within just a couple of days I had over 180 responses. It was astounding and the most amazing messages kept flowing in. People remarked: *'Fantastic thinking...there may well be a few situations like this in the area' * 'Such a great idea' * 'What a lovely suggestion! So thoughtful, practical and altruistic. Let us know how you go with this, as I could well consider a similar arrangement' * 'I would love to share my backyard with others even though it isn't large * What a great idea' etc. etc.*

I knew that I had hit upon something that was resonating with the positive and generous hearts of people and I saw that this could well catch on for others so that needs might be met. Too often our world seems beset with a focus purely upon acquisition and consumerism that seems to have gone mad. Anything that builds better relationships and sharing really does come from a much healthier space as it enriches us all.

We now have a lovely woman, who is studying horticulture, and who loves to grow her food, who is working on the garden within her own timetable. This is a win/win situation for us both and it seems to express true community. What a true blessing we can each be for the other.



Photo by Peter Sands

From Michael & Rita Reid

Food Pantry update

As mentioned in the first Newsletter, our weekly Food Pantry has continued over these last 10 months to offer fresh food to those in need. We set up our tables out in the open, which gives us the opportunity to meet curious passers-by, as well as be welcomed on arrival by our "regulars". We love this connection to our "family".

Recently we have been delivering our excess bread supplies to a very worthy organisation [Companion House](#), which serves those in the Canberra community who have sought safety in Australia from persecution, torture and war related trauma. Their service is free of charge. We have also been able to organise bread deliveries on 2 other days each week to Companion House from another community service.

We understand that the bread is greatly appreciated by those who attend Companion House and are in need of this support.

Alchemy Chorus

Rita and I attend [Alchemy Chorus](#), which "brings together people living with dementia, their relative or close friend, volunteer musicians and singers for a morning of music-making, story-sharing, laughter and fun." Rita is on the dementia journey, which certainly has it's challenges, but we find this choir such a joyful, loving experience that it is the highlight of our week.



Photo by Peter Sands

Recommended books, and articles from our readers

Bishop George Browning's latest Blog article -

Israel and Judaism part company

.....

'Judaism is founded upon covenants it believes have been forged with God and through which certain privileges have been assured, on the basis that accountabilities are adhered to. What follows is not my understanding of this covenantal relationship, but the understanding of the loved and much-revered late Rabbi, Lord Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain.

.....

*Lord Sacks points out there are specific covenants in Hebrew scriptures that relate to Israel and its future, notably covenants with Abraham and David; but preceding them is a universal covenant with the whole created order, made at the conclusion of the Noah flood narrative, which finalises the pre-history creation narratives. The point Lord Sacks makes is that **any specific covenant must always be understood and implemented in the context of the universal covenant with the whole created order and specifically with all humankind.***

Read the full article [here](#)



Photo by Peter Sands

A Unifying God of Love Beyond Culture

By Anne Coutts

I have always felt that God, being a God of love, and the source of love, must speak to every one of us no matter what religion or none, in countries where there are churches, mosques or synagogues, or none.

I have read **John Hick** in 'More than One Way'. John Hick was an English philosopher and theologian and arguably one of the most important and influential philosophers of religion in the second half of the twentieth century. I have read about **Simone Weil**, and I even started to write a paper on this question ages ago.

I remain a Christian, as did John Hick and others, remaining a faithful follower of Jesus' teaching. So, what **Richard Rohr** writes makes sense to me <https://cac.org/daily-meditations/the-good-news-story/>.

I experienced profound love from my father in my early years and although I was crushed by his death in the war, I didn't lose it because the sources he drew my attention to were the beauty of flowers, then all creation, the communion possible with animals, the delight I had in particularly his presence and that of his mother. Where I experienced love, I knew God was part of it.

I now experience that fundamental love more widely, and particularly when I can be of help to others. I was very sorry when the Pastoral Care Team I was part of was dismissed by the Hospital when Covid broke out.



Finding our Souls

- Richard Rohr

While everything has a soul, in many people it seems to be dormant, disconnected, and ungrounded. They are not aware of the inherent truth, goodness, and beauty shining through everything.

My spiritual father Francis of Assisi spent many days, weeks, and even months walking the roads of Umbria and letting nature teach him. Francis knew and respected creation, calling animals, sun, moon, and even the weather and the elements his brothers and sisters. Through extended time in nature, Francis became intimately connected with non-human living things and came to recognize that the natural world was also imbued with soul.

While calling ourselves intelligent, we've lost touch with the natural world. As a result, we've lost touch with our own souls. I believe we can't access our full intelligence and wisdom without some real connection to nature.

Many human beings simply haven't found their own blueprint or soul, so they cannot see it anywhere else. Like knows like! When we only meet reality at the external level, we do not meet our own soul and we have no ability to meet the soul of anything else either.



Photo by Peter Sands

Indigenous people with their Rites of Passage and ancient forms of thinking in relationship with nature, so long neglected by our modern world, is addressed in Steve Doepel's article 'Creation Spirituality'.

Creation Spirituality

- Steve Doepel

"If you look at the disasters happening on our planet, it's because the cosmos is not understood as sacred... a way out of our difficulty is a journey into the universe as sacred." These are the words of **Professor Brian Swimme**, a trained mathematician, who teaches **Evolutionary Cosmology** in San Francisco. He is at the forefront of a movement that integrates science and spirituality and his approach is deeply inspired by the ideas of **Teilhard de Chardin** and the theology of **Creation Spirituality**. This is an ancient way of thinking that was all but neglected by the Christian Church for over a thousand years, but which was re-invigorated in the late 20th Century.



Photo by Peter Sands

At these challenging times we are hearing so many people express the need to distance themselves from news reports in order to remain positive in their daily lives. This can be a real challenge for us all.

With Easter almost with us, our Associate Member, **Anne Coutts** has sent her notes on Pete Greig's book 'God on Mute'.

God on Mute

Author: Pete Greig

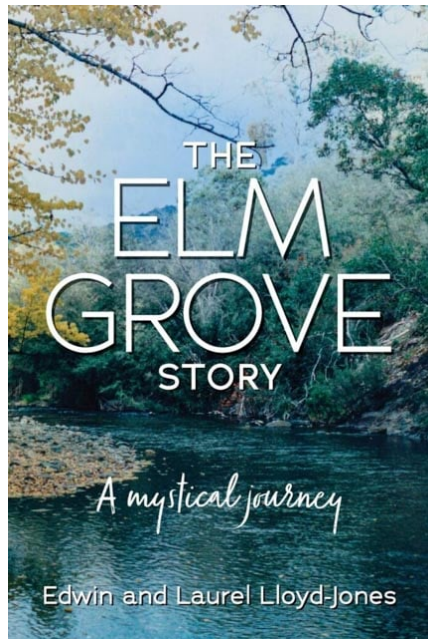
Notes by Anne Coutts

These notes are mostly quotes that I felt important. I have not given extracts for the last half of the book. I encourage you to buy or borrow a copy!

In his enthusiastic foreword Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, describes this as a profound book.

Chapter 1 opens with “If your deepest, most desperate prayers aren’t being answered, if life sometimes hurts so much that you secretly wonder whether God exists, and if He does whether he cares, and if He cares, why on earth He doesn’t *do* something to help, you’re not alone. Surprisingly, The Bible reveals that Jesus – even Jesus suffered the silence of unanswered prayer. ... and Unanswered prayer is only a problem for those who believe. For others, it is simply a confirmation that they were right all along.”

Read the full article [here](#).



The Elm Grove Story

Our [book](#) has now been released and is available from many book suppliers, for example:

[Amazon Australia](#), [Booktopia](#), [Dymocks](#), [Fishpond](#)

Elm Grove Sanctuary Trust
2 Emma Close, Dalmeny NSW
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