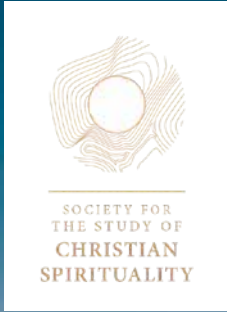


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Christian Spirituality as a Pathway for the Modern Seeker



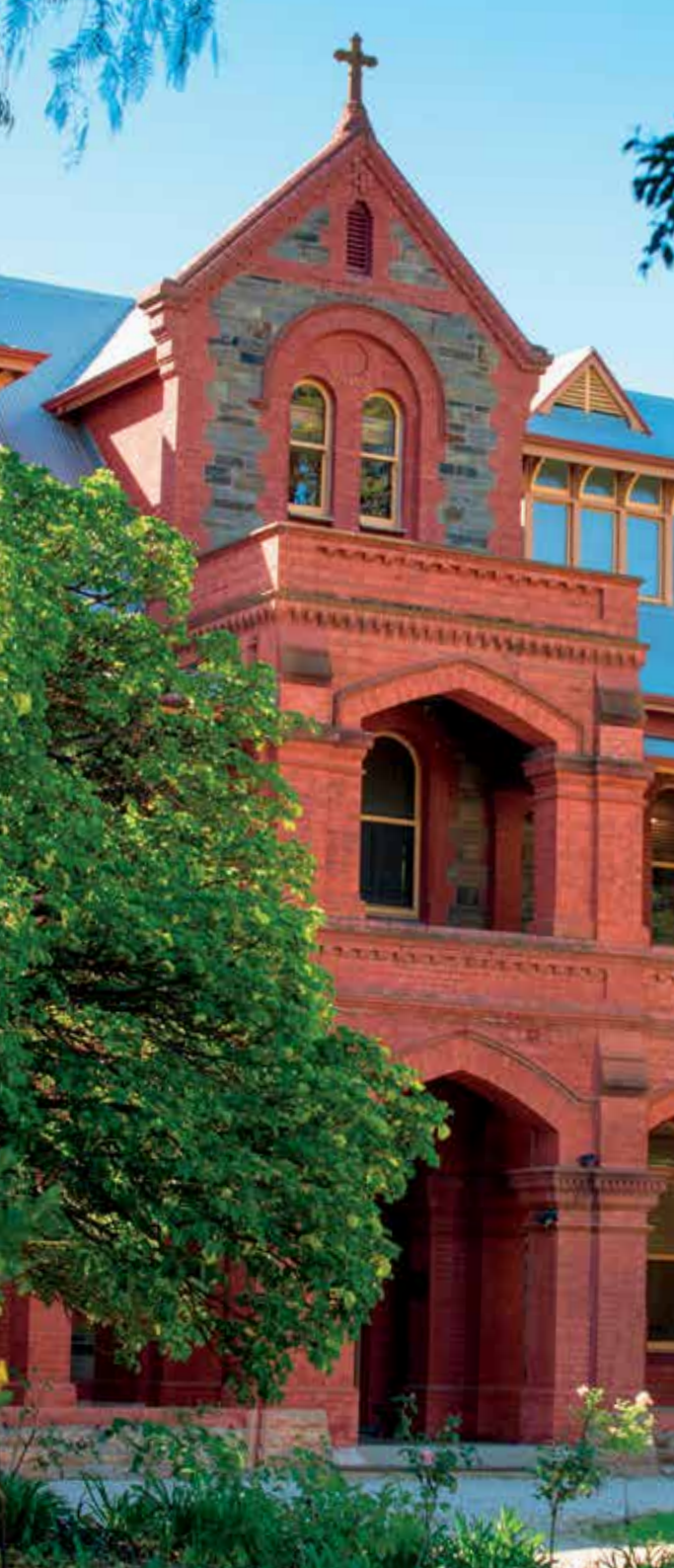
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE | 5 - 7 JULY 2023

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Welcome to Conference - From the Organising Committee



Dr Chris Morris
Lecturer, Spirituality,
Head of Department,
Pastoral and Spiritual
Studies, Catholic
Theological College
(Fitzroy, Melbourne),
University of Divinity



Dr Kirsten Macaitis:
Research Fellow |
Future of Employment
and Skills Research
Centre (FES) School of
Economics and Public
Policy, The University
of Adelaide



Dr Phil Daughtry:
Lecturer, Spirituality,
Dean of Humanities
and Social Sciences,
Tabor College

Dear colleagues and friends, thank you for taking the chance on this conference! We acknowledge and appreciate the time, care, sacrifice, and investment you have made in meeting with us in this place. It is also important for us to acknowledge that the lands we meet on are those of the Kurna people, the historical custodians of what is now referred to as the Adelaide (tarntanya) plains and broader region. We pay respect to Kurna elders past, present and emerging, and to all people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait origin and heritage.

Our hope and dream for this conference is that we might meet in respectful conversation and the meaningful exchange of stories.

That we might in our way of meeting together live out and exemplify the dream of God's way of being that Jesus so powerfully represents in his teaching, action, and resurrected presence. We are called to love God with heart, soul, and mind, and to express this love towards all neighbours, human, animal and environmental.

May this conference be experienced as a sacrament of goodness, of hope, of mercy and of an intelligent spirituality. May we grow through this conference in our capability to communicate the good news in ways relevant and meaningful to a weary society and culture in need of a new dream, an awakening to the joy of the sacred.

Please do enjoy the event, the people, the architecture, the landscape, the food and hospitality, the presence of Spirit amongst us!

About the Conference Venue and Host – Tabor College

Tabor is a multi-denominational, Christian Tertiary Institution. We specialise in the education and formation of community professionals such as counsellors, teachers, pastors, youth workers, musicians, and creative communicators. Christian spirituality has always been at the heart of the life and mission of the college. The vision for its ministry of education and formation was birthed in prayer from its beginning in the late 1970's.

The college and its faculty are delighted to welcome to the campus members of the Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality (SSCS) and all conference delegates and contributors.

The conference committee, on behalf of the SSCS, wishes to express profound appreciation to the management and staff of Tabor who have generously made the campus available and who are contributing many voluntary hours to enable this event.



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Kurna people as the custodians of the lands and waters of the Adelaide region, on which we meet today. We pay respect to elders both past and present.

We acknowledge and respect the Kurna people's cultural, spiritual, physical, and emotional connection with their land, waters and community.

Conference Contributors and Features

As well as our two esteemed keynote speakers, and the many gifted contributors for our concurrent sessions, several other talented people will grace our event with the offering of their gifts:



Michelle Krieg is a gifted and contemplative Art Therapist. Michelle will lead us in the creation of two community canvas instillations which invite the participation of each of us.



Verity Riessen is a performing artist, worship leader, spiritual director in training and an abstract, visual artist. Verity will lead the Tabor music team in two performance items as well as drawing us into song. During each keynote presentation, Verity will express her discernment of Spirit on canvas.

Conference Contributors and Features



James Baker and **Roma Waterman** exemplify the practice element of our conference theme. Roma is a contemplative creative, singer and song leader who works with those in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles. James is an entrepreneur and innovator, the founder and leader of xpLtd, a digital project designed to assist Australian young people of all faiths and none to explore the meaning of life and faith.



Towards the end of each of the two campus conference days, James and Roma will lead us in a 'blessing and benediction' that flows from their work.



Bruce Hulme is a spirituality academic, spiritual director and retreat leader. Bruce's doctoral research formed the shape of the themes for this conference. The labyrinth journey is a central motif in Bruce's work, and he will curate opportunities for delegates to walk the labyrinth in and around breaks and/or immediately before or after the two on-campus conference days.

Special Workshops

There are three special workshops being offered concurrently in the afternoon of day 1 (Wednesday) and the morning and afternoon of day 2 (Thursday). These workshops will span the duration of their respective concurrent sessions:

- **Wednesday, 2:40 - 3:55pm**
Christian Meditation Workshop (Room 6)
- **Thursday, 11:20 - 12:35pm**
Research Workshop "Can I run something by you?" Kickstarting your research ideas (Room 6)
- **Thursday, 2:40 - 3:55pm**
Art and Soul: A workshop on tactile spiritual practice (Room 4)



Conference Schedule – Wednesday July 5

8:00am: Conference venue open, complimentary coffee/tea, access to labyrinth, opportunity for informal networking

8:45 – 9:25: Registration

9:30 – 10:15: Live music and guided contemplative participation/conversation

10:15: Housekeeping

10:20: Keynote 1: Mary Frohlich, Yoked Hearts:
Christian Interiority in the Wild

11:00: Morning break with refreshments

11:20: Breakout sessions (refer to program of concurrent sessions)

12:40: Lunch and various interactive opportunities

1:40: Lectio Divina – Led by Dr Chris Morris

2:00: Keynote 2: Garry Deverell, Communion in Country:
Aboriginal ways to embrace the paschal spirituality of Christ

2:40: Breakout sessions (refer to program of concurrent sessions)

4:00: Practitioner spotlight and blessing – led by James Baker

4:15: Summary comments

4:20: Drinks and conversation, informal discussion/
reflection/ networking

5:00: Short address from SCS Vice President and President elect
– Dr Michael O’Sullivan

Conference venue and labyrinth space open until 6pm

Conference Schedule – Thursday July 6

8:00am: Conference venue open, complimentary coffee/ tea, access to labyrinth, opportunity for informal networking

8:45 – 9:25: Registration

9:30 – 10:15: Live music and guided contemplative participation/ conversation

10:15: Housekeeping

10:20: Keynote 3: Garry Deverell, ‘Wait without hope’:
TS Eliot’s Four Quartets and the experience of Aboriginal people in colonial Australia.

11:00: Morning break with refreshments

11:20: Breakout sessions (refer to program of concurrent sessions)

12:40: Lunch and various interactive opportunities

1:40: Lectio Divina – Led by Dr Bruce Hulme

2:00: Keynote 4: Christian Animism: Implications for Spirituality

2:40: Breakout sessions (refer to program of concurrent sessions)

4:00: Practitioner spotlight and blessing – led by Roma Waterman

4:15: Summary comments

4:20: Drinks and conversation, informal discussion/
reflection/ networking

5:00: Short address from the conference chair – Dr Phil Daughtry

Conference venue and labyrinth space open until 6pm

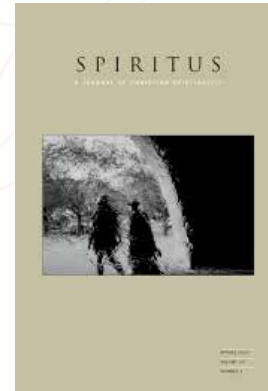
7:00 Conference dinner: The Guardsman Hotel/ Restaurant,
Adelaide Railway Station (North Terrace)

Conference Schedule – Friday July 7 (off campus for 3-day registrants only)

- 9:15:** Meet at the foot of the University Footbridge on the Southern side of the Torrens River (Victoria Drive) – this is close to the Adelaide city centre
- 9:15:** Welcome and orientation to Karrawirraparri
'Red gum forest river'
- 9:30 – 10:25:** Mindful walking on country along Karrawirraparri
- 10:25 – 10:55:** Coffee and snacks at the Cathedral Hotel
(Kermode St, North Adelaide)
- 11:00 – 11:30:** Quiet time in St Peter's Cathedral
- 11:30 – 11:50:** Interaction with the Cathedral Dean, Bishop Chris McLeod
(Lady Chapel of St. Peters)
- 12:00:** Bus trip from the Cathedral to Uraidla Hotel in the Adelaide Hills
- 12:45 – 2:25:** Lazy lunch in upstairs lounge/ balcony of Uraidla Hotel
- 2:30 – 2:45:** Bus travel to Cleland Wildlife Centre (Mt Lofty)
- 2:45 – 4:25:** Browse wildlife centre, get up close with a koala
- 4:30:** Bus travel back to Adelaide city for drop off



Look out for the Dedicated Edition of the Spiritus Journal in Spring 2024



Several selected papers from the conference have been proposed for peer review and subsequent publication within a dedicated conference edition of the Spiritus journal. If you are not yet familiar with this excellent journal, we encourage you to check it out:
<https://www.press.jhu.edu/journals/spiritus-journal-christian-spirituality>

We wish to thank the former Spiritus editor, Steven Chase, and the current interim editor, Glen Scorgie, for their encouragement and support. We also thank Stuart Devenish who has acted as conference sub-editor to enable the groundwork necessary for this publication outcome.

Access to conference papers and audio recordings: Will be managed by Tabor's Digital Learning Team. Soon after the conference a new section will appear on the existing conference page with instructions for access and a contact function for any questions.

Breakout/Concurrent sessions for Day 1 – Session 1: 11.20am

Room 1	Room 2	Room 4	Room 5	Room 6
<p>Michael O’Sullivan Jesus and the Situation of Women then and now</p>	<p>Lea De Backer Experiencing spirituality: Embodying a new life in the journey of healing from addiction</p>	<p>Beth Crisp A Stitch in time: finding God in the eye of a needle</p>	<p>Janelle Fletcher Shaping Identities through Religious Music Engagement: A Case Study of an Australian Catholic Girls’ School</p>	<p>Di Shearer Experiencing Communion Consciousness in Wisdom as Presence</p>
<p>Bernadette Flanagan How do we embody new life and bring to fruition the gifts we are given?</p>	<p>Matt Gray The Desert Forebears as Pathways out of Burnout</p>	<p>Miram Fisher Sewing and Gleaning: artistic contemplative practice as invitation</p>	<p>Audrey Strathern ‘Educating children and young people’s spirituality for democratic life in Australian faith schools’</p>	<p>Mark Reissen An invitation to the dance floor of missional vocation</p>
<p>Catherine Lambert How to Catch Courage from a Beguine?</p>	<p>Anne Pate Remembering and storying gifts received: challenges and possibilities in spiritual direction with modern seekers</p>	<p>Bruce Hulme The Emmaus Labyrinth: How a ‘Fluke’ Led to Three Invitational Themes for Meaning-Making</p>	<p>Stuart Devenish ‘Can the Christian Spiritual Tradition be a School for the Soul for Secular Mystics in the Post-Secular Age?’</p>	<p>Matthew Wickman The Path – But First, the Call: Discernment in Laura Reece Hogan’s Theopoetics</p>

Breakout/Concurrent sessions for Day 1 – Session 2: 2.40pm

Room 1	Room 2	Room 4	Room 5	Room 6
<p>Johan Roux Psalm 23 and developing spirituality for resilient leadership</p>	<p>Aizaiah G. Yong Guided by Surprise: Proposing a Contemplacostal Spirituality of Tending to Despair</p>	<p>Elizabeth Lee Exploring a Contemplative Approach to Theological Action Research</p>	<p>Deborah Robertson Leading Lament</p>	<p>Dianne Schaefer Christian Meditation workshop – prayer of the heart</p>
<p>Sean Gilbert “First be filled, then control the outpouring.” St. Bernard of Clairvaux and the courage of embodying affective pastoral leadership</p>	<p>John Dupuche A ‘Copernican Revolution’ in the field of spirituality.</p>	<p>Katharine Massam To be the leaven in the dough: the Young Christian Workers’ spirituality of action as a resource for transforming the world</p>	<p>Aaron Chalmers OT wisdom literature and discernment</p>	<p>Dianne Schaefer Christian Meditation workshop – prayer of the heart</p>
<p>Joanna Giannes Sacred stories: deepening relationships in leadership development – an organic inquiry</p>	<p>Verity Reissen Musings of a Mystic: The Desert, The Cave and The Lioness</p>	<p>Kirsten Macaitis, Ben Lohmeyer, Richard Schirmer Making space for contemplative conversations in the classroom in the context of display-averse spirituality in Australian Christian Churches.</p>	<p>Francis McAloon Spiritual Affiliation: An Ignatian spirituality approach to living with chronic illness and disability.</p>	<p>Dianne Schaefer Christian Meditation workshop – prayer of the heart</p>

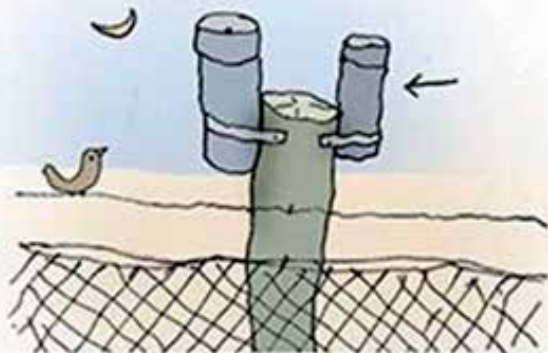
Breakout/Concurrent sessions for Day 2 – Session 1: 11.20am

Room 1	Room 2	Room 4	Room 5	Room 6
<p>Chioma Ahanihu SLW Courageous Embodiment: How do we embody new life and bring to fruition the gifts we are given?</p>	<p>Tracey Price An ethics approach to Christian spiritual work.</p>	<p>Ruth Fowler Recovering the Charism of Spiritual Authority and Contemplation as Courageous Embodiment</p>	<p>Sally Jones Contemplative Listening and Silence: In Conversation</p>	<p>Kirsten Macaitis Research workshop: “Can I run something by you?” Kickstarting your research ideas</p>
	<p>Benedict Shoup The Gospel of Darkness? John of the Cross’s Contemplative Account of the Dark Night and the Contemporary Search for Justice and Transcendence</p>	<p>Christopher Knauf Meister Eckhart on the world-shaping power of an equal mind</p>	<p>George Marchinowski Shall we dance? Choreographing hospitality as key to interpersonal transformation</p>	<p>Kirsten Macaitis Research workshop: “Can I run something by you?” Kickstarting your research ideas</p>
<p>Maxine Green 'Christian spirituality without Church' – a conversation about alternative approaches.'</p>	<p>Robyn Wrigley-Carr Courageous embodiment: Evelyn Underhill’s ‘Spiritual Ecumenism’</p>	<p>Iain Radvan Christ in creation: guiding people of all faiths and none into the experience of mystery, wonder and peace</p>	<p>Cullan Joyce How does Contemplative Research Affect a Christian Contemplative Practice? Interpreting Centering Prayer via the Psychological Sciences</p>	<p>Kirsten Macaitis Research workshop: “Can I run something by you?” Kickstarting your research ideas</p>

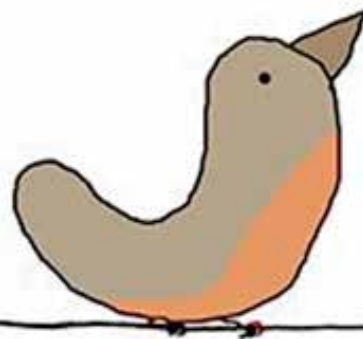
Breakout/Concurrent sessions for Day 2 – Session 2: 2.40pm

Room 1	Room 2	Room 4	Room 5	Room 6
<p>Claire Forbes Contemplative Conversations in the Classroom</p>	<p>Rachael Litchfield Restorative Reciprocity: Contemplative Conversations in Nature</p>	<p>Michelle Krieg and Phil Daughtry Art and Soul: A workshop on tactile spiritual practice</p>	<p>Mary Kantour An alternative espoused love</p>	<p>Hindreik Taavet Taimla Spirituality of Christian Hospitality in War-time Europe</p>
<p>David Rensberger The Christian of the Future: Contemplative and Countercultural</p>	<p>Sally Shaw A creative pedagogy to encourage embodied creation care action</p>	<p>Michelle Krieg and Phil Daughtry Art and Soul: A workshop on tactile spiritual practice</p>	<p>Michael Bartholomaeus Is Netflix a Lordless Power? Television and the Spiritual Life</p>	<p>Jane Foulcher A School of Peace: Christophe Lebreton's Tibhirine Journal</p>
	<p>John Bethell Kanyini, spiritual wellbeing, and the Christian spiritual tradition</p>	<p>Michelle Krieg and Phil Daughtry Art and Soul: A workshop on tactile spiritual practice</p>	<p>Kevin Goodrich, O.P.A Cultivating the Altar of the Heart: Contemplative Conversations with the English Mystics</p>	<p>Michael Wood Wherever space is opened, peace breaks out</p>

ON THE FENCE POST, NEXT TO THE RAIN GAUGE IS THE OLD HAPPINESS GAUGE.



IT'S A SMALL GAUGE BECAUSE IT RECORDS LITTLE THINGS. YOU DON'T NEED MUCH TO KEEP THE GARDEN GROWING.



IT MEASURES THE LITTLE DROPLETS OF HAPPINESS THAT FALL DOWN UPON YOUR LIFE... IN CASE YOU NEED TO BE REMINDED



SOMETIMES THE GAUGE FILLS AND ALL THE WILDFLOWERS COME UP.



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Keynote presenters and abstracts

Keynote Speaker:

Mary Frohlich, Professor Emerita at Catholic Theological Union



Mary Frohlich is a renowned international scholar in the field of spirituality having taught spirituality at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago from 1993 to 2020.

Her current research interests include the contributions of the physical and human sciences to insight into spiritual transformation, contemplative contributions to fostering ecological conversion, Christ and the new animism, and methodological issues in spirituality. She is trained as a Forest Therapy guide and frequently leads walks, workshops and retreats with ecospiritual themes.

Mary has made a significant contribution to shaping the field of Spirituality and its transformative horizon. Her contributing chapter to *The Soul of Higher Education* (2019), *Contemplative Method and the Spiritual Core of Higher Education*, is one example of her applicatory thinking and capacity to frame the relevance of Christian spirituality for broad human application in the contemporary environment of secular cultures. She also published *Breathed into Wholeness: Catholicity and Life in the Spirit* in 2019. Mary is also a noted scholar and teacher of Carmelite spirituality with publications on Teresa of Avila, Therese of Lisieux, and John of the Cross as well as on broader issues in the tradition. She served as President of the Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality in 2007-2008.

Keynote 1: Yoked Hearts: Christian Interiority in the Wild

In previous essays, I have identified interiority as a basic principle of method for studying spirituality. A criticism has been that this is too "inward-facing." In this essay, I explore interiority as embodied, whole-person participation in the deep life-networks of the Earth community. For Christians, interiority is a visceral yoking of heart with Christ, who is the living Heart of the entire cosmic community as well as of each of its participant members.

Keynote 2: Christian Animism: Implications for Spirituality

The intensity of the current ecological crisis has reopened the question of animism as a viable worldview. New understandings of animism as an awareness of relationality that can manifest anywhere in the created world make it conceivable that animism can (and should) be integrated with Christianity. This essay explores some of the ways this would reconfigure our understanding of Christian spirituality, as well as our spiritual practices.

Keynote Speaker:

Rev'd Canon Dr Garry Worete Deverell, University of Divinity and St Paul's Cathedral (Naarm/Melbourne)



The Rev'd Canon Dr Garry Worete Deverell is a trawloolway man from northern lutruwita/Tasmania and priest of St Paul's cathedral in Naarm/Melbourne.

He has worked in parish, agency and academic ministries for the past twenty-five years and is currently Lecturer and Research Fellow in the School of Indigenous Studies at the University of Divinity. He studied literature, philosophy and education at the University of Tasmania and theology at both the Melbourne College of Divinity and Monash University. He is the author of *The Bonds of Freedom: vows, sacraments and the formation of the Christian Self* (Paternoster, 2008) and *Gondwana Theology: a trawloolway man reflects on Christian Faith* (Morningstar, 2018). His current project is a book upon the Christological meaning of country. Garry is a passionate advocate for the reformation of the church to more bravely embrace the sovereignty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the full personhood of queer people.

Keynote 1: *Communion in Country: Aboriginal ways to embrace the paschal spirituality of Christ*

In this address, Garry will share some of his research on the ways in which the Aboriginal experience with and in 'country' and the Christian experience with and in 'Christ' might be mutually enriching for any who wish to lose the individual self, constructed in the midst of neoliberal capitalism, in order to gain the more communal and cosmic self promised by both Aboriginal and Christian spiritual practice. Along the way, Garry will speak to the practice of 'walking country' as an analogue of 'walking the way of the cross'.

Keynote 2: *'Wait without hope': TS Eliot's Four Quartets and the experience of Aboriginal people in colonial Australia.*

In this address, Garry will speak about the way in which the mysticism of TS Eliot's celebrated Four Quartets might be re-read and re-understood within the frame of colonial Australia and its tacit messianism regarding the 'hope' for reconciliation between Indigenous people and immigrants. The author will claim that the way forward for Aboriginal people necessarily includes a letting-go of colonial forms of Christian hope in order to embrace a grounded sense of place and sovereignty which is very much about the here and the now.

Concurrent (breakout) Presenters and Abstracts

Presenter: Sr Chioma Ahanihu, SLW

Sr Chioma Ahanihu, SLW is a member of Sisters of the Living Word in Chicago, Illinois state of USA. She was born and grew up in Nigeria and has lived in the US for the past 2 decades. Chioma earned a Bachelor's degree in Social Work from Misericordia University, a Masters in Social Work from the Catholic University of America and a Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies degree from CTU. She is a candidate in the Doctorate in Ministry Program with a concentration in Spirituality at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, IL. She has been engaged in different nonprofit organizations in Social Work field as an Independent Consultant Mental Health Therapist. She is the Director for the Center of the Study of Consecrated Life at CTU. Prior to that she ministered with Catholic Charities of Chicago Archdiocese as a Psychotherapist and Parish Social Worker. Her primary areas of interest as a Practical Theology scholar and minister are related to today's Consecrated Life, Reconciliation, Spirituality, Immigration and Racism. She loves to travel and learn about other cultures and food. In her downtime, she likes to take a good walk by the lake, bike, garden and sew her own clothing.

Paper: *Courageous Embodiment: How do we embody new life and bring to fruition the gifts we are given?*

"For centuries, black female bodies have been defiled, used, and discarded, quite literally, as refuse." (M.Shawn Copeland. *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race and Being*) In the context of such a tragic, violent history, how can Black women embody a spirituality that can shape their leadership in our world today? This paper aims to give people of color, especially Black women, the tools they need to become spiritual leaders and fully alive human beings. As a Black religious woman of African descent who has practiced therapy for many years and a Practical Theologian scholar in America, I have listened to many stories of Black people who struggle daily to stand up for themselves and their beliefs.

This paper will explore how we might change the narrative to empower Black women and communities by employing a “narrative spirituality model” by which the practitioner listens to the participants’ stories and asks biblical-based questions to help them acquire insight and accept their reality. Such a process, I will suggest, will lead Black women to understand their purpose and destiny, then surrender to God by recovering their selfhood and dignity. Such a process will lead Black women to recognize how their faith helps them get through tough times and find purpose in their lives. Such a process is ideally suited to anchor the stories of Black women in Black Christian spirituality, and so help them discover practical possibilities of embodied spirituality in leadership. Black Christian spirituality derives from the continent’s historical, cultural, and religious legacy and encompasses folktales, beliefs, rituals, and culture. African American spirituality holds that humans live in a religious ecosystem. My presentation will offer examples from my own experience of active listening to Black women to help them connect their often difficult situations to Christian faith and to the historical cultural, and religious legacy of African wisdom and spiritual wealth. Healed and integrated themselves, they will be able to lead other Black women to wholeness and growth.

Presenter: Dr Michael Bartholomaeus

Michael studied his undergraduate at Tabor before completing his doctoral studies at the University of Otago on the chilly South Island of New Zealand. His research has focused on the theology of Karl Barth, especially around questions of sanctification and discipleship.

Paper: Is Netflix a Lordless Power? Television and the Spiritual Life

John Mark Comer recently named “hurry” as the great enemy of the spiritual life. Comer came to this conclusion simply because a busy, rushed life does not have the space and time required to walk slowly with God. This, however, poses quite a conundrum for the modern seeker because time, at least in the Western world, is in increasingly short supply. A spirituality that can help navigate the challenges of our time must be one that helps us understand what is happening to our time, why we are all so time-poor, and how we might respond.

My proposed paper will explore this issue along a very particular path. This path is suggested by the fact that, on global scale, the activity that we dedicate the most time to after sleeping and working is watching TV. As an example, in 2021, the Australian Communications and Media Authority reported that Australians are watching 26.6 hours of TV and online content every week (3.8 hours per day).¹ A slightly older survey entitled the Australian Video Viewing Report indicated that Australians have, on average, 6.6 screens in their home on which they can consume this content.²

To analyse this, I will turn to Albert Borgmann’s reflections on technology which help specify just what sort of effect our commitment to TV might be having on spirituality. Borgmann is helpful because he helps us see that the real question of TV is not what we watch but that we watch at all. I will then draw on Karl Barth’s discussion of the lordless powers to work out a theological response to the situation Borgmann sets before us. Barth’s discussion of the powers is helpful both because he explicitly treats technology as a power and because his work helps us grapple with the responsibility of Christians who are threatened by these powers that have run wild in our world.

Presenter: Dr John Bethell

Dr John Bethell is a current student of Tabor College, studying spiritual direction. His interests include helping others explore the contemplative through creation, informed by Celtic and Australian Aboriginal spirituality. He has a background in medicine and school pastoral care, lives in Port Augusta, and enjoys the Flinders Ranges.

Paper: Kanyini, spiritual wellbeing, and the Christian spiritual tradition

Wellbeing is a hot topic in Western society. It is multi-dimensional, including physical, social, emotional, cognitive and spiritual dimensions of wellbeing. Spiritual wellbeing is arguably the least frequently considered and least clearly defined dimension of wellbeing in Western societies.

Australian Aboriginal culture is the oldest continuous living culture in the world. It includes a worldview in which the spiritual and physical are intertwined. European settler-invaders to Australia, from a Christian heritage, largely failed to appreciate the depth and breadth of Aboriginal knowledge and wisdom in their encounters with Aboriginal people.

Kanyini is a word in the Yankunytjatjara language of Central Australia, introduced to non-Aboriginal audiences by the late Yankunytjatjara elder Bob Randall of Mutitjulu, in a documentary by filmmaker Melanie Hogan in 2006. Randall describes kanyini as “a sacred principal of unconditional love and responsibility to all things” involving four key areas of responsibility: tjukurpa (law, belief system), ngura (land, country), walytja (family), and kurunpa (spirit, soul, psyche).

An investigative project is presented here, in which an autoethnographic exercise exploring perceived spiritual wellbeing, and a literature review of spiritual wellbeing and kanyini, engage with Christian understanding to give a three-way conversation between the “secular” concept of spiritual wellbeing, the Aboriginal concept of kanyini, and the Christian spiritual tradition. The aim of the conversation is to inform a faithful and grace-filled walk as Christians in a contemporary multi-cultural society, and contribute helpfully to spiritual discourse in the wellbeing field.

Presenter: Dr Aaron Chalmers

Dr Aaron Chalmers teaches in the field of Old Testament and hermeneutics, and is passionate about helping Christians to engage with the Hebrew Scriptures. He does this through lecturing in class, preaching in churches, and writing books which equip people with the knowledge and skills they need to be faithful interpreters of the biblical text.

Paper: OT wisdom literature and discernment

Building on the work of Christopher Wright (*The Mission of God*), this paper explores how the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, especially the book of Proverbs, might function as a resource for Christian spirituality today. It connects particularly with the first theme of the Conference – contemplative conversation.

Specifically, the wisdom literature presents a model of spirituality and theological reflection which involves a two-fold conversation:

1. Contemplative conversation with the world: the wisdom literature (in contrast to much of the Old Testament) embodies an openness and willingness to learn from the broader world, e.g., the use of the Egyptian Instructions of Amenemope in Proverbs 22–24. This stance encourages contemporary believers to step outside of their ecclesial and theological comfort zones, to critically and contemplatively engage with spiritual resources beyond the church.
2. Contemplative conversation with the Christian tradition: this is shown most clearly in the way that the wisdom literature critically reflects on certain elements of the broader Old Testament tradition (e.g., Job’s questioning of the sin-suffering nexus we find in Deuteronomy). The wisdom literature embodies a dialectical approach to tradition, modelling both a willingness to affirm the basic tenets but also call into question those claims which do not seem to align with contemporary lived reality.

In both respects, the OT wisdom literature models a “disposition for generous, deep listening in our conversations” today.

Presenter: Professor Beth Crisp

Professor Crisp has been actively involved in health and human services research for the last 25 years, initially in program development and evaluation in the areas of substance misuse, HIV/AIDS and health promotion. More recently, her research efforts have been in the area of professional development and the transfer of professional knowledge. From 2004 until 2008 she was involved in the evaluation of the new social work degree in England along with colleagues at the University of Glasgow and Kings College London. An ongoing interest which underpins Beth’s work is the need to establish measures and methodologies which form appropriate measures of evidence for the evaluation of complex programs in the human services.

Paper: A Stitch in time: finding God in the eye of a needle

In many Christian churches, textiles play an integral role in the worship experience. Often ornately decorated, needleworkers are responsible for the creation of sewn objects such as liturgical banners, kneelers, altar cloths and/or the outfits worn by those involved in the leading of worship. The finery of textiles associated with worship is often such that they are not out of place when transferred to a leading art gallery or museum. However, although textile artefacts associated with Christian worship and spirituality have been extensively documented, the spirituality of sewists, has received relatively little attention. This paper seeks contribute to building an understanding of associations between sewing and Christian spirituality by exploring the ways in which sewing, both within and outwith religious worship, can be an embodied expression of spirituality. In addition to the products created for sacred and secular use, there has long been sewists for whom this activity is inherently a spiritual activity. The rhythmic pattern of the work is said to enable mindful practice or a space to meditate on other concerns or contemplation on religious or spiritual texts. Sewing has long been a way in which women could mould their identities, often while also helping one another or making charitable donations. At the same time as strengthening connections with others, sewing can also aid processes of mourning and remembering. This paper concludes that an embodied spirituality is not just about the product but the process of creation. As such, threading the eye of the needle deserves to be recognised as a way of finding God and engaging in a life of faith.

Presenter: Mrs Lea De Backer

Lea is a registered clinical psychologist practicing in South Africa for the past nineteen years. Her interdisciplinary PhD, using IPA methodology, was submitted for examination in January 2023. As a Christian and practicing psychologist she is passionate in journeying with those healing from the bondage of addiction. She is also a wife, mother and dancer.

Paper: Experiencing spirituality: Embodying a new life in the journey of healing from addiction

Within a postsecularist framework, this interdisciplinary study explores the lived experiences of spirituality in mental health intervention for addiction recovery in South Africa. The purpose of the study includes the generating of insights for the initiation of collaborative endeavours between mental health professionals and church-based / faith-led community leaders and workers, pastors, and volunteers, in the development and facilitation of addiction recovery programmes. An interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) research design and methodology was used. In-depth analysis of the personal narratives of three participants who had attended Christian inpatient rehabilitation facilities for addiction more than three years ago, included the identification of both converging and diverging themes regarding their spiritual experiences. Five group experiential themes emerged. These included 1) Darkness vs Light 2) God and people: The relationships 3) Journey of change over time 4) Embodied experience and 5) Spiritual overflow: Living a new life.

Focus is placed on the interactive and reciprocal nature of these findings in relation to current interdisciplinary literature between Christian spirituality and mental health intervention for addiction recovery. In a proposed model based on the findings, the context of recovery groups for those struggling with both substance-use and behavioral addictions, becomes the collaborative and communal meeting place for healing. Mental health professionals with spiritual self-awareness and diverse cultural competency, and spiritual leaders / facilitators together embody and model Christian values of shared collaboration (unity) and respect, whilst the spiritual overflow of humility, gratitude and hope in a changing, new life is courageously embodied by those healing from addiction, as they seek authentic meaning and purpose in their lives.

Presenter: Dr Stuart Devenish

Stuart served as Tabor College's Director of Postgraduate Studies in the School of Ministry Practice. He has served as pastor, missionary (Philippines) and theological educator in Australia. He has taught theology, missiology and spirituality, and written widely on these topics.

Paper: Can the Classical Christian Spiritual Tradition be a School for the Souls of Secular Mystics in the Post-Secular Age?

The post-secular moment in Western culture has brought with it a renewed openness to the spiritual/ual. But the churches seem unaware of such an awakening and give the impression of being unprepared to participate in it. The defining metaphor for this paper is taken from a conversation that took place between two mothers talking about their children. One mother asked, "Why is it that we have schools for the head and schools for the hands, but no schools for the heart?" Could it be that the ancient Christian spiritual tradition that offers an illuminative and transformative experience of the self in the presence of the Divine, has something to offer the modern-day seeker? What would it take for an exhausted 21st-century Christianity to rediscover its ancient teaching mission to renew its own life while at the same time inviting its wider cultural audience to "learn Christ"? How might Christian education be redirected away from existing believers who are often disengaged from their faith and disinclined to progress in it, towards contemporary post-secular mystics many of whom are hungry for instruction and motivated to progress in their spiritual journeys? Is it possible that Christian thought-leaders might once again make the spiritual instruction and education of neophyte believers their foremost task? What forms of language, pedagogy, curriculum and delivery interface might be considered for a new catechism to be implemented? And what will it take for mainstream Christianity to become ready to share its spiritual genius with its unbelieving neighbours in a new catechetical process not unlike St Paul's School of Tyrannus?

Presenter: Rev Assoc Prof John Dupuche

Reverend John Dupuche is Associate Professor at Catholic Theological College within the University of Divinity, Melbourne, where he lectures in spirituality and interfaith relations. He publishes extensively on the interplay between Christianity and Kashmir Shaivism, an important school in Hinduism. He leads an interfaith community on the outskirts of Melbourne.

Paper: A 'Copernican Revolution' in the field of spirituality

This paper proposes that a 'Copernican Revolution' must occur and is already occurring in the field of spirituality. Its success depends on taking three steps.

Firstly, the focus is shifting away from the Tradition, the Church, and even the Christ of the first coming. These are not denied or rejected but are ceasing to be the centre of attention. Rather, interest is turning to the depths of the human spirit, to the peak moments of realization, of intense joy and of liberation beyond all limited things. These experiences can be sparked in countless ways.

However, the peak moments need to be accompanied, at the second stage, by a process of reflection that clarifies them without ever replacing them. The words to describe them – or indeed rituals which speak louder than words – may be drawn from the vast vocabulary of the world's religions. This process of spiritual theology affirms what has happened in the depths of the spirit, enabling a wholehearted assent and leading to the witness of an authentic life.

Spiritual theology involves discernment and helps avoid the "morass of subjectivity." However, spiritual experience is not subject to the judgment of academia for it exceeds the human mind and its 'jungle of objectivity.' As St Paul says, "Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny." (1 Cor 2:15)

At the third stage, the practitioners perceive the increasing conformity of their body, mind and spirit to what inspires them. In the Christian context, for example, they realize that they are becoming increasingly identified with Christ Jesus who has touched them at the heart and that he is becoming manifest in their very being. It is the coming of the Lord in glory.

Presenter: Miriam Fisher

Miriam Jessie Fisher is Lecturer in Education at Laidlaw College, New Zealand. Based in Ōtautahi/Christchurch, her teaching and research interests include creativity and the arts in educational contexts and engagement between theology, the arts, and the imagination. She has an interest and commitment to inviting artists and creatives to use their practice as opportunity for meditation and worship through collaborative projects and teaching about the value of creativity and a theology of creativity. Her recent work focuses on recovering the voices of women in the Bible through poetry, textiles, and whakapapa (genealogy), as well as creative theological expression that honours the context of Aotearoa New Zealand and all the richness of bicultural partnerships, including the use of Te Reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language.

Paper: Sewing and Gleaning: artistic contemplative practice as invitation

What does it mean for artmakers to offer new and ancient prayerful practice to a world in need of contemplative space? Could art offer sensitive, winsome, surprising invitations to the unwitting searcher?

The biblical concept of leaving the edges of the harvest for others in need (Lev 19:9; 22:23) offers the starting point for this paper on contemplative-artmaking that creates opportunities for contemplative-engagement. Art makers are contemplative 'seed sowers', the work of their hands part of the poesis of being. In their 'prayerful sowing' they create spaces for gleaning. These offerings invite others to their own moments of contemplation. In a Protestant tradition that has favoured the ear over the eye (Wolterstoff), and in a life lived at speed, choosing to stop, notice, or ponder is rare. This paper highlights stitching as a means of contemplative practice, and art making as an opportunity for communities and individuals to find moments of contemplation. The art maker 'sews/sows,' the person who sees it 'gleans.'

Through her project 'pocket wisdom' (see attached photos) Fisher looks to make stitch a prayerful act in her contemplative practice. As a discipline of meditation, she uses it as a pathway to spiritual intimacy, to slowness, to listening silence. Her work meditates on scripture, the work of others and her own simple spiritual longings; contemplation on stitched handkerchiefs. She has installed these in a public thoroughfare at her tertiary institution.

Here creative action as contemplation offers a way to worship and wonder, a way to be surprised by what the Spirit might be saying (Alves, L'Engle). From this formational practice others are invited to notice what the Spirit might be saying in the edges of their days, a gleaning offered to the time-poor, the one who is in need, the 'other' or spiritual 'orphan' among us.

Presenter: Dr Bernadette Flanagan

Bernadette Flanagan works at South East Technological University (SETU), Ireland. In 2019 she co-edited, with Prof Laszlo Zsolnai (Corvinus University, Budapest) The Routledge international Handbook of Spirituality in Society and the Professions. Currently she is working with Prof Kerri Clough, to produce The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in Spirituality and Contemplative Studies (2024).

Paper: How do we embody new life and bring to fruition the gifts we are given?

This paper will propose that the practice of pilgrimage is an embodied resource from the Christian tradition that has the power to enable individuals / communities to move forward with courage, hope and freedom. Three examples will be presented. Firstly, Margery Kempe: (c. 1373–1440) is an example of a Mid Life Pilgrim. Margery had struggled with honouring her mystical longings from early in her marriage. In the physicality of pregnancy, birth, feeding and weaning her religious experience has been born; but there was little available accompaniment for embodied spiritual intuitions. In today's context, where the overall bio-psycho-social-spiritual impact of pilgrimage and its therapeutic benefits is receiving more attention in research, the story of Margery Kempe is coming into focus in a new way. In this contemporary research we are learning that there is substantial promise in advancing pilgrimage as a transformative, healing intervention for women who today are reaching a transition point in the life-cycle.

Secondly, Moninne of Killeevy (c. 432 – 518) is an example of a person from the Celtic Christian tradition of undertaking pilgrimage so as to seek mentorship and direction in life. In today's context we see the emergence of genre of literature within pilgrimage-writing which reflects on the Camino experience as an occasion of – or opportunity for – transformational mentoring. Within the world of leadership science today, much attention is given to “mentoring” since the exercise of leadership in each distinct setting – health services, education, volunteering, or non-profit organizations – has unique challenges, for which no generic leadership programme can prepare an individual. The embodied presence of a mentor walking side by side the mentee on pilgrimage is uniquely empowering. Thirdly, Egeria (4th century) is an example of a woman undertaking pilgrimage so as to have an embodied encounter with spiritual innovators. Her account of her visit to the shrine of Thecla in Seleucia (Turkey) is vividly described as an experience of overwhelming elation in the living presence of women innovators. In that place Egeria was embraced by a community of women empowered by Thecla's memory (Par 23).

Presenter: Dr Janelle Fletcher

Dr Janelle Fletcher (nee Colville) is Music Coordinator and Senior Lecturer of Music at Tabor. Since commencing in 2016, Janelle has been passionate about developing the vibrant music program from strength to strength evident by the growth in enrollments, new music initiatives, expansion of music ensembles, and music tours and competitions. She is an active researcher and honorary research fellow with The University of Queensland, president of the Kodály Music Education Institute of South Australia, and council member with the Australian Society of Music Education (SA).

Paper: Shaping Identities through Religious Music Engagement: A Case Study of an Australian Catholic Girls' School

Imaginative Discernment This paper presents research from my recent book chapter publication and presents research into the ways both formal and informal religious music experiences in a high school setting can play a pivotal role in the identity develop of adolescents.

The philosopher Durkheim and theologians Schleiermacher and Otto (in Mariña 2009) draw parallels between music and religion, arguing that expressions of the sacred, such as those made through music, are more important than the institutions of the church in establishing religious identity. For adolescents, music is a powerful tool for making meaning and functions as a mode of symbolic transformations (Langer 2009), thus contributing to their identity work. The theologian Otto (in Strevenski 2015) also draws a parallel between music and religion, both of which provide avenues to greater understanding of the worlds in which we live. Because of these parallels and relationships between music and religion, it may be speculated that music is a shaping force in adolescents' religious identity work. This chapter explores the ways in which music functions in a Catholic girls' school and focuses specifically on students' perceptions of the ways in which music shapes their religious observance and spiritual experience.

Presenter: Claire Forbes

Claire is a Catholic primary school teacher in her sixth year of teaching and has always been drawn to the ways of the spirit in and around the classroom. In the search on how to make Catholic Education rich and wonder & awe provoking for students, Claire participated in further study at the Catholic Theological College undertaking a Graduate Certificate in teaching Meditation. This newfound knowledge ignited a passion for Catholic spirituality and contemplative practice for children and young people and is a driving force to an interest in making positive changes in our Catholic schools. In her spare time, Claire enjoys playing and watching AFL as well as filming and editing videos for fun.

Paper: Contemplative Conversations in the classroom

How do we listen and communicate contemplatively?

Insights into the modern Catholic primary classroom and the place of nurturing the spirit of the child through Christian Mediation and Contemplation.

In a Catholic primary school setting, children are taught to sit cross legged through lessons and to demonstrate whole body and active listening to grasp concepts, maintain concentration and display respect to the speaker.

Raising one's hand to add a point of view or a question is a highly regarded form of communication, especially in the often chaotic and bustling classroom. There are routines and rules formed around the acts of listening and communicating for basic human needs but often, even in this Christian setting where prayer is said to be paramount, many rooms are absent to the nature of contemplative communication and active listening. Children haven't been taught the idea of being sensitive to the movements of Spirit, nor do they identify the mysterious ways in which God works. It is vital to cultivate these contemplative conversations with children through Meditation; one of life's greatest resources. Meditation allows for deep and active listening to the self and to God, it encourages an openness to the divine often not able to be accessed in the tumultuous moments of the day. Teaching children through practices such as Lectio Divina allows the flow of practise and structure through Lectio, Meditatio, Oratio and Contemplatio, a systematic approach to prayer and contemplation. Centering Prayer can also allow children to be open to the Spirit and be recipients of the gifts of wonder and awe. This paper will explore ways to cultivate this spiritual formation and education for children can give them alternative perspectives on the contemporary life around them.

Presenter: Rev Dr Jane Foulcher

Jane Foulcher is an Adjunct Senior Lecturer in Theology at St Mark's National Theological Centre, a partner in the Charles Sturt University School of Theology, and an Anglican priest with experience in urban and regional contexts. She has particular interests in Christian spirituality, and monastic and mystical theology.

Paper: A School of Peace: Christophe Lebreton's Tibhirine Journal

Christophe Lebreton was the youngest of the seven Cistercian monks kidnapped and executed by Islamic terrorists in Algeria in 1996. He was forty five at the time of his death. On the Feast Day of St Christopher (July 25) 1993 he was gifted a notebook, which became his prayer journal over the last two and a half years of his life. This same period saw the rapid escalation of violence in Algeria, against both Algerian Muslims and foreigners, including many Catholic religious.

Consequently, the journal (published as *Born from the Gaze of God: The Tibhirine Journal of a Martyr Monk 1993–1996*) offers a window into Christophe's responses to this situation of insecurity and threat. Christophe's monastery, at Tibhirine, was 'visited' by armed terrorists just four months after he commenced this prayer journal. His last journal entry was made a week before he was kidnapped and subsequently murdered.

In a journal entry made in early 1994 Christophe writes: "Tonight the monastery is revealed to me as a school of peace." In fact, the journal allows us privileged insight into Christophe's commitment to being schooled in the way of peace. He understands the relationship between the violence in human hearts and the violence in the world, the relationship between "peace within" and "peace without." Drawing primarily on his published journal, this paper will examine Christophe's understanding of peace, and how it might be a lived reality in a context of violence. The Tibhirine story is one of courageous embodiment of the way of peace. Christophe Lebreton's work challenges us to ask, as custodians of Christian spiritual traditions, how we might cultivate schools of peace in our violent world.

Presenter: Ruth Fowler

I am a PHD candidate at the University of Divinity, Melbourne campus. I have long been involved in a daily practice of contemplative prayer, specifically via the teaching of Christian Meditation as recovered by John Main OSB and have had experience of living in Christian and non-Christian monastic settings which have been formative for me in my spirituality. I have long been committed to the comprehensive recovery of contemplative practice in Catholicism and western Christianity more broadly. My work as a spiritual director for many years and teaching within the World Community for Christian Meditation has clarified for me the importance of recovering the contemplative dimension in all its facets, as ultimately the goal of the Christian life. In my working life I was a teacher and later held positions in policy and planning for adult education settings.

Paper: Recovering the Charism of Spiritual Authority and Contemplation as Courageous Embodiment

In this presentation I will focus on the theme of Courageous Embodiment and the designated question - what resources from the tradition enable us to become encouragers to modern seekers towards transformation of the world? I shall briefly contextualise this in the spiritual guidance relationship.

I will argue that the charism of spiritual authority, which of its very nature is embodied, is a neglected key resource for transformation from the western Christian tradition. Persons with such a charism were part of the earlier Christian tradition, beginning with the desert mothers and fathers of fourth century Egypt, and can still be found in the eastern Orthodox Christian churches today.

This charism is embodied in humankind as a free gift of the Holy Spirit and is recognised by others as such. The resources from the tradition which enable some to become the embodiment of spiritual authority lie in the deep tradition of transformational practice - Christian contemplative prayer, which has been neglected for centuries. The charism of spiritual authority constitutes an embodiment of the presence of Christ. Through their deep transparency to the Divine within, such Spirit-bearers become icon like in their being, revealing Christ in their person to those with whom they come into contact and enabling others to be drawn into the Christic circle of infinitely transforming love. It is evident that western Christians have lost a sense of the possibility of such transfiguration because we have lost a sense of the Mystery accessed through the depths of contemplative prayer.

In the spiritual guidance context such persons become encouragers of transformation within those they are guiding and embody leadership from a place of interior freedom that reflexively frees others into the liberty of Love.

Presenter: Joanna Giannes

Joanna is a community and corporate leadership development specialist that builds capacity in individuals and communities by drawing from multiple disciplines such as anthropology, cross cultural practices, transpersonal psychology and contemporary leadership theories. Raised in the oral tradition, Joanna draws from her Hellenic ancestry of mythology, archetypes, elements and ancient healing ways to support people and communities to move towards wholeness.

Paper: Sacred stories: deepening relationships in leadership development - an organic inquiry

This work is the investigation of the impact of personal life stories in leadership development programs and how they serve as a catalyst in creating deeper relationships between participants. More broadly the investigation seeks to understand the impact of the use of story and narrative as a means to build more effective and meaningful leadership in organisations and communities.

The qualitative research methodology Organic Inquiry (first person research) provides the framework for examination of the sacred and transpersonal dimension to the inquiry which recognises research itself as a sacred act. Organic Inquiry values the sacred nature of our personal stories and the significant personal experience of the researcher that has an emphasis on the use, value and power of stories and transpersonal elements such as contemplation, intuition, and dreams.

The emphasis on stories of both the researchers and others are central to this investigation where the intention is for the researcher to move in and out of different ways of knowing. Contemplation reflection, and adopting a receptive stance where emergence presents itself are key areas of the research as is attention to all states of consciousness throughout the research process with a view to integrate this information in a clear and detached way. The paper seeks to understand how the use of personal life stories can be used as a broader learning approach in adult development specifically vertical development.

Vertical development is a specific aim in many leadership development programs and is an approach that includes action inquiry, contemplative activities and dialogue to expand people's consciousness and relational skills for the purpose of more impactful, holistic leadership.

The researcher draws from forty-two respondents experience in a leadership program, their own transpersonal and contemplative activities such as meditation, dream work and intuition needed to facilitate the program and will show how this approach has expanded greater perspective taking, compassion, and wisdom for the participants and the researcher.

Presenter: Rev Dr Sean Gilbert

Sean is Director of Pastoral Theology at Uniting College, SA. He has been a member of faculty since 2012. Prior to that he was a rural and city congregational minister for over twenty years. In 2019 he was awarded a PhD in which he explored the vital relationship between spiritual affections and the pastoral disposition.

Paper: "First be filled, then control the outpouring." St. Bernard of Clairvaux and the courage of embodying affective pastoral leadership

By any measure, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (c. 1090 – 1153) embodied a courageous engagement with life, faith, and his vocational calling. In a sermon preached to his monastic community not long before he died, and suggestive of a life-long experience of an embracing Grace, Bernard asks his fellow monks, "Filled by such a love as this, what boundary can be set for the seeking?"¹ In other words, what cannot be dared when one feels secure in the felt knowledge of God's goodness and mercy?

Admittedly, such boldness led Bernard into disastrous theatres of religious war and a heresy trial, but in the main it was expressed through the steady formation of Cistercian monastic centres of prayer, learning and community service across north eastern France. Indeed, by the time of his death, Bernard was one of the most admired figures in all of Western Europe.

Specifically with a conference conversational grouping in mind [and a publishable paper], I will focus on one sermon within Bernard's considerable corpus of theopoetic writings, namely Sermon 18 in his Song of Songs commentary. In what is commonly entitled, "The Two Operations of the Spirit," Bernard unpacks the spiritual principle and gifting's of "infusion" and "effusion," making wise application about the non-binary – affective and actionable – nature of Christian charity (*caritas*).

In Bernard's time, as in our day and age, the courage of a truly receptive spiritual disposition may leave itself open to the charge of non-social engagement. Bernard would strongly suggest that the affected heart is simultaneously a tangible embodiment of Christ's reconciling and liberating love to the world.

Presenter: Rev'd Dr Kevin Goodrich, O.P.A

The Rev'd Kevin Goodrich OPA, DMin, PhD, is an Anglican Dominican friar with university and ministry commitments. He is the author of the academic book, "Mystic Bonfires: Walter Hilton and the Development of Practical Spiritual Theology" and editor of the devotional volume, "The Greatest Desire: Daily Readings with Walter Hilton."

Paper: Cultivating the Altar of the Heart: Contemplative Conversations with the English Mystics

Walter Hilton, a contemporary of Julian of Norwich, describes the human heart as an altar. Hilton's spirituality is one of hope in the face of difficult times. Desire is perennially close to the seeker's heart. Today's seekers hear a cacophony of voices promising to fulfill their desires. Walter Hilton's imagery of the human heart as an altar is an invitation for every human being, seeker and disciple, to participate in the work of tending to one's altar, one's heart.

In shared conversation, seekers and disciples can mutually listen to the desires of their hearts. This paper explores how the fires of seekers' faith can be kindled through a kinship of the Spirit, one forged in story, silence, and sharing. Hilton wrote about the inward journey, the journey of desire, the journey into the true self. This is a restoration of the image of God within the soul, a reformation in faith and feeling.

Seekers desire more than doctrine: they desire experience, they desire feeling. The stories and teachings of mystics like Walter Hilton, Julian of Norwich, and Margery Kempe provide inspiration for seekers in faith and feeling today.

2023 will mark the 650th anniversary of Julian's showings, showings that still inspire people all over the world today. This same tradition of which she and Hilton are a part can continue to inspire seekers in a spiritual path of mystery and grace. This path is not imposed from above but discovered in shared companionship along life's pilgrim way. The altar of the heart is an altar of desire where we offer ourselves and dreams. Altars that can be inflamed, as Hilton writes, by adding kindling sticks. This paper explores those sticks of prayer, silence, and contemplative kinship.

Presenter: Dr Matt Gray

Dr Matthew James Gray is the Head of the Divinity Program at Tabor College, Adelaide, having taught there for over 15 years. He primarily lectures in Church history and theology, with a particular interest in the Early Church's spirituality but also in the early modern Baptist movement.

Paper: The Desert Forebears as Pathways out of Burnout

The complexities of COVID have left an indelible imprint on the souls of many leaders in our society, especially in the community service sector. Frequently, they had to "dig deep", as they offered advice and direction to those wrestling with isolation, societal discord, and mortality. They were also driven to "stretch themselves too thin", doing tasks usually delegated to volunteers, when such volunteers themselves were often struggling to an almost catatonic degree. These dynamics of leadership stress, of having to go so wide and so deep for so long, have seen burnout among such leaders increase dramatically.

While leadership burnout in this sector is certainly not a new phenomenon, the sheer scale is leading to an increase in scholarship about its implications, and ways to deal with it. Notwithstanding the able research from within the disciplines of psychology and sociology into dealing with burnout, spirituality drawn from the Christian tradition offers invaluable insights into this phenomenon as well.

This paper draws from one such aspect of the Christian tradition, the Desert Forebears. The Wisdom sayings of these men and women of the North African desert, dating back to the fourth and fifth centuries, not only offer opportunities for healing, but often strike at the underlying causes of the burnout. In many ways, they bring to light how much the COVID event simply exposed systemic unhealthiness that had crept into pastoral leadership over recent decades. This paper employs an autoethnographical and dialectical approach, unpacking the experience of such burnout, in dialogue with the Desert Forebears' often counter-intuitive sayings. Tensions will be explored, including self-sufficiency and humility; independence and community; utility and need; strength and vulnerability; legacy and time. In so doing, the paper will allow the Desert Forebears of yesterday to speak words of solace, challenge and hope to today's pastoral leaders.

Presenter: Maxine Green

Maxine has a life long interest in youth work, social anthropology and spirituality. She lives with her family on a smallholding in Suffolk, England. Her previous roles include, National Youth Advisor for the Church of England and Principal of the YMCA George Williams College.

Paper: Christian spirituality without 'Church' - a conversation about alternative approaches

Many people are aware of their spirituality and have a deeper connection with life but...are unaware of a way to develop this essential part of themselves, unable to live a life where they are 'fully human'.

As someone accompanying people on this sort of journey I struggle to find ways to signpost or help them, or indeed to articulate it fully for myself.

The church is not working – for many journeyers in the church let alone those who are suspicious of religious manipulation.

A post modern 'mix and match' approach also falls down in that the very freedom of being able to choose means that the more rigorous challenging rewards from a disciplined route are not accessible.

Maybe what we need is a virtual monastery. A place where whatever stage you are on in your journey you can find succour, guidance, and love.

There will be some that come to the door and leave with a sandwich, there will be some who inhabit the library of the monastery, poring over ancient wisdoms for their own spiritual growth and to share this with others. There will be some who come and go, receiving strength from the visit and then going back into the outside world.

Who are you – and how do those who are called to this virtual monastery build on the stones that have been already gathered?

In the workshop and in the paper I hope to start the conversation of building something strong, not 'a community' not 'a movement' not 'an alternative to church' but a flexible and loving resource which has deep spirituality at its heart. This is the time to think differently, to be creative and to allow the deep wisdom to emerge.

I wonder at the word resource and find that I really like it re-source – not simply tools or things that can help – more an invitation and opportunity to return to the source to re-source oneself. Not just for the satisfaction of the self, and definitely not for the inflation of the ego, more to enable oneself to be a positive, loving and abundant presence in the world and to help others to be the same.

Presenter: Dr Bruce Hulme

Bruce comes from country NSW, and worked in worship and family lay ministry roles for over 12 years in mainly Lutheran contexts before joining the MTC teaching faculty in 2008. He has experience in and a heart for the breadth of expressions of the Christian church. He is passionate about helping others 'talk the walk' in ways that cultivate deep, reflective, and congruent living, so they can more faithfully walk their talk. This is expressed through his teaching in reflection, formation, pastoral care, spirituality and spiritual direction; his scholarship in his recently completed PhD; his practice as a spiritual director, and as Head of Tabor's Spiritual Direction program; and his ministry as a retreat/seminar leader in spirituality, formation and care.

Bruce's approach to learning and teaching is founded upon the potency of vulnerability, hospitality and mutuality in the educator-student encounter; his hope is that others engage with not only what he knows, but also with who he is.

Paper: The Emmaus Labyrinth: How a 'Fluke' Led to Three Invitational Themes for Meaning-Making

This conference explores three key themes for meaning-making: contemplative conversation, imaginative discernment, and courageous embodiment. But where did these themes come from? This workshop offers a dynamic engagement with the resource from which they emerged: the Emmaus Labyrinth. The creative juxtaposition of the Road via Emmaus story (Luke 24) with the universal emblem of the labyrinth is an example of how resources from both within and beyond the Christian tradition can synergise to create spiritual pathways that might resonate with both mature Christians and modern seekers alike.

Presenter: Sally Jones

Sally Jones is a spiritual director, pastoral supervisor and mentor. She is currently the Deputy Program Director of the Listen into Life spiritual direction formation program (Barnabas Ministries), and a council member of the AECSD. She lives in Sydney, is married to Brendan and has 3 sons.

Paper: Contemplative Listening and Silence: In Conversation

Drawing from my thesis "How Contemplative Listening and Silence from the Spiritual Direction tradition might enrich the praxis of Christian Mentors serving within the Australian Evangelical tradition", this paper will further explore the nature of and relationship between contemplative listening and silence in spiritual conversations.

As a spiritual director, mentor and pastoral supervisor, my vocation is that of a listener. I am convinced that the act of listening – to God, to another, to self – is both thoroughly human and deeply spiritual.

In this workshop, we will together explore the dynamics at work when we are faced with the challenges of deeply listening to another person in their journey of faith formation. We What might our personal listening practices reveal about our own faith? How does the mysterious presence of the Spirit inhabit the act of listening? Finally, might the act of contemplative listening transform both the one being listened to and the listener?

Presenter: Dr Cullen Joyce

For over 20 years, Cullan Joyce, PhD has practised and researched Christian contemplative traditions and taught philosophy and spirituality at The University of Divinity for over ten years. He is a Fellow at the Contemplative Studies Centre, University of Melbourne, collaborating with Environmental and Cognitive psychologists to research contemplative practices.

Paper: How does Contemplative Research Affect a Christian Contemplative Practice? Interpreting Centering Prayer via the Psychological Sciences

This paper sets to ask a question: Can contemporary scientific research into contemplative practices support Christian contemplative experience? I answer in the affirmative. Contemplative practices such as Centering Prayer emerge from Christian contemplative traditions. However, Contemplative Science explores religious contemplative practices via lenses emerging from a combination of disciplines. The deference to sciences might seem hostile to the experiences that a Centering Prayer practitioner might have as they practice.

However, recent models from Contemplative Research are often quite aligned with how Centering Prayer is described and practised.

This paper utilises models from contemporary contemplative research to interpret the practice of Centering Prayer. The studies utilised provide a typology of meditation practices that capture some of the ways practices relate to the self. According to Dahl, some practices are concerned with A) persistent gentle attentional power, B) curating positive content about the self or the world through a practice that helps construct content. C) Some practices undertake a form of deconstruction of the self. I draw on these categories and recent work by Christian researchers (Knabb, 2010., Fox et al. 2015. Hwang, 2018.) to interpret Centering Prayer. Centering Prayer is a practice where a person applies their attention persistently and gently and, through practice and formation, is changed, through a process that is, in effect, construction and deconstruction of the person through attentiveness to God. In other words, the practice of Centering Prayer aligns with features that are, in various ways, central to how Contemplative Researchers understand meditative practices that are more complex than many Mindfulness-based approaches. I conclude by discussing some ways that Contemplative Research to Centering Prayer can help us to explore an experiential theology.

Presenter: Dr Mary Kantour

Dr. Mary T. Kantor is adjunct faculty at Merrimack College in the graduate program in Spirituality and Spiritual Direction and the Department of Religious and Theological Studies. She helped launch the graduate program, and while an associate at Merrimack's Center for the Study of Jewish-Christian-Muslim Relations created interfaith studies coursework. She is also a certified spiritual director, and a chaplain at Phillips Academy-Andover, an international residential secondary school in Massachusetts.

Paper: An alternative espoused love

This presentation aligns with the theme of courageous embodiment, drawing on ancient resources of the Christian tradition that may serve "as profoundly hopeful, transformative and relevant to everyday people (and particularly women) from all walks of life."

The ancient tradition serving a contemporary embodied spirituality is the Roman Catholic liturgical ritual, the Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity for Women Living in the World.

Dating from the first centuries of Christianity, and altered, revised, and revived over many centuries, the ritual is still in use. Over 4000 women from across 80 countries live a consecrated life that calls them to serve the Church and the world. They are doctors, law enforcement agents, scientists, and writers. They include a firefighter, a veterinarian, a United Nations representative, a ballet dancer, musicians, teachers, Church secretaries, and baristas. Overarching the diversity of livelihood and geographic setting is the common spirituality of living as a bride or spouse of Christ. This title, while also the self-identity of the Church across Christian tradition, is more than a title or metaphor for these consecrated women.

The rite names these women brides of Christ, and drawing on liturgical spirituality, where the act of engaging in liturgical prayer is seen to have implications for the living of the Christian life, I give voice to many of these women as they speak of their living out their spousal relationship with Christ. While acknowledging the eschatological understandings of this role, the longing for the life to come when they see their Bridegroom face to face, these virgins embody this role in the present-day living of this relationship. I explore and consider implications for how their experience of union with God is made manifest, as they live out their “alternative” espoused love, serving and perhaps transforming aspects of our world.

Presenter: Dr Christopher Knauf

Dr Christopher Knauf is adjunct lecturer in Christian Spirituality at Catholic Theological College, East Melbourne. He is also the College Registrar.

Chris has a professional background in pastoral ministry and educational leadership. He holds the Bachelor of Theology from the University of Auckland, Master of Theology from the Melbourne College of Divinity, Graduate Diploma in Education (Secondary) from Australian Catholic University, and the Graduate Certificate in Teaching Meditation and Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Divinity.

The topic of Chris’s masters thesis was Wolfhart Pannenberg’s argument for the necessity of metaphysics for theology. His doctoral dissertation explored the problem of human agency in the realisation of union in Meister Eckhart. Specialising in Eckhart studies, Chris’s current research interests lie in: (1) mystical theology, both in its evolving historical expressions and in its potential to inform Christian spirituality in the contemporary situation; (2) the philosophical, theological, and linguistic underpinnings of a unitive awareness of divine being; and (3) the conceptual structure of metaphoric and symbolic language in religious and spiritual discourses.

Chris has three adult children and four grandchildren. He lives in the Macedon Ranges in Victoria with his wife Dorothy.

Paper: Meister Eckhart on the world-shaping power of an equal mind

Of late, public discourse has seemed increasingly polarised and oppositional. Interlocutors nervous of nuance and suspicious of subtlety prefer picking a side and taking a stand to engaging divergent viewpoints with humility and grace. Alarming, this is mirrored on the global stage, where diplomacy has again been sidelined by sabre-rattling machismo. It’s nothing new. We’ve responded to difference this way for millennia. It’s just that for some – the hopeful who harbour visions of incremental social evolution – there were expectations of something better. The dreamers now despair that if there was ever hope of a sustainable future for our species and the complex planetary organism in which we participate, we really needed to have transcended these myopic ways of being with each other long ago. One of the great challenges of our age is surely to find a salve for this malaise. In this paper I consider one such salve, a world-shaping idea which has come down to us by way of a brief collatio, or talk on the spiritual life, given toward the close of the thirteenth century by the German theologian and philosopher, Meister Eckhart, when prior of the Dominican house at Erfurt. Eckhart was a proponent of “mystical theology” in the Dionysian sense of seeking timeless truth that lies hidden beneath the surface of the biblical text and beyond the limits of perceptual awareness.

He talks of a radical spiritual “hearing”, a transformative apprehension of the living Word in the stillness and silence of our own divine ground, and a “seeing” of the one divine essence shining forth in the true, the beautiful, and the good in all beings. In his *collatio*, Talk 6 in the Talks on Discernment, Eckhart calls this transcendental non-dual knowing “having an equal mind”. This paper explores the potential of an equal mind for overcoming the intransigent tendency in human thinking to fracture and divide.

Presenters: Michelle Krieg and Dr Phil Daughtry

Workshop: Art and Soul: Tactile Spiritual Practice

This workshop is primarily experiential and will engage participants in simple artistic work of a contemplative nature. It is designed for people of all abilities, even, or especially, those who do not think they can ‘do’ anything artistic. The idea modelled in this workshop is that the invitation to the tactile, simple, and creative expression, when facilitated within a contemplative environment, can enable people to engage the creative unconsciousness in ways not so accessible through traditional verbal/mental/religious constructs.

Michelle and Phil will include in this workshop some storytelling of their own practice over many years with art and soul practices with people from diverse ages, genders, and spiritual backgrounds.

Presenter: Rev Dr Catherine Lambert

Cathie is a Uniting Church Minister and Spiritual Direction based in Western Australia. She is currently working as Education Co-Ordinator (Ordained ministries and Perth Theological Hall Principal) with the Uniting Church in Western Australia. Cathie is also the Dean of Studies with the Dayspring Community who offer courses in spirituality and spiritual direction.

Paper: How to Catch Courage from a Beguine

The beguine mystics of the thirteenth century lived courageous lives. This lay movement forged a new way for women to live a religious life apart from the monastic orders.

A small number wrote of their experiences of God and met opposition with the hierarchy of the institutional church. As contemporary readers rediscover their stories and writings, I hear women reflect how the beguines have inspired them to be more courageous. This paper, aligning with the Courageous Embodiment stream of the conference, will examine what it means for women of the church across the centuries to have courage. Drawing upon scholarly work in women’s faith development, feminist theology and my own recent research, I will demonstrate women’s need for courage to live an authentic and life-giving faith life. The beguines will be presented as a “resource” from the tradition who can encourage and empower women in their faith lives today. I will address the question of how courage may be caught from another’s story and, in this case, how this might occur across a void of eight centuries.

Presenter: Mrs Elizabeth Lee

Elizabeth Lee lives on the land of the Bidjigal, on the northern shore of Kamay (Botany Bay), Sydney. She is a Spiritual Director, Retreat Facilitator and Professional / Pastoral Supervisor undertaking doctoral research at the University of Divinity, Melbourne. Her area of interest is “Reimagining Hospitality in Faith Communities Through a Trauma-sensitive Lens in a Post-Royal Commission Era.” She is taking a contemplative, constructivist, participatory, feminist research approach to this theological work.

Liz is passionate about being a listening presence among the fringes and fostering human connection through deep listening. She has been formed, informed and transformed through offering pastoral care among those living with homelessness and working as a Prison Chaplain.

Liz is currently on the Council for AECSD (Australian Ecumenical Council for Spiritual Direction), a member of ANSD (Australian Network for Spiritual Direction), CSD (Conference of Spiritual Directors Australia) and SDI (Spiritual Directors International).

Paper: Exploring a Contemplative Approach to Theological Action Research

Building on the conference theme “Christian spirituality as a pathway for the modern seeker” participants will explore a contemplative research methodology as a pathway for a contemporary theologian to explore the perceived limits of hospitality within a Christian community through a contemplative dialogue process. Thus, witnessing to the belief that God is in all things, including through theological research, and ensuring that the research is theological all the way through.

I am a spiritual director and professional/ pastoral supervisor. Contemplative practice is integral to my being and my action in the world. Hence, I am committed to a research process that in itself “has the potential to become a privileged occasion of spiritual transformation for those undertaking it.”

While my area of interest is “Reimagining Hospitality in Faith Communities through Trauma-sensitive Lens in a post-Royal Commission Era,” in this presentation I explore contemplative practice in my research methodology. Informed by Mary Frohlich’s ‘Contemplative Method’² and Nicola Slee’s “Feminist Qualitative Research as Spiritual Practice,”³ I propose to invite research participants drawn from a church community into a “Contemplative Dialogue” process pioneered by Nancy Sylvester.⁴ By listening to the ‘theology of the four voices,’ it is anticipated that these polyphonic conversations will reveal the theological underpinnings to perceived limits of hospitality.⁵ Further, communal discernment will attend to ‘epiphanic’ moments of insight that may contribute to the transformation of practice and theology while not neglecting conceptualisation and content.

The conference presentation will incorporate a contemplative dialogue process as participants respond to what they are hearing such that our communal ‘we’ voice, guided by the Spirit, can be heard.

Presenter: Dr Rachel Litchfield

Rachael is a spiritual director and retreat leader practicing privately and as a mission partner with the international mission agency, Interserve. She is also a supervisor and adjunct lecturer in Tabor’s spiritual direction formation program. Her Doctor of Ministry dissertation was titled “A Spirituality for Transition Grief”.

Paper: Restorative Reciprocity: Contemplative Conversations in Nature

The Black Summer bushfires of 2019/2020 awakened my consciousness to the enormity of the loss we are experiencing and contributing to as cohabitants of this wonderful planet. Engaging a spiritual practice of lament with others was helpful to an extent, but I could not live there. One morning I sat listening under a big oak-tree in Belair national park sensing the tree’s generosity. It was giving shade and oxygen to me, nutrients and protection to the smaller, younger trees under its cover and hospitality to birds and animals. The gratitude I felt, and the wonder at this beautiful complex life, sparked a longing to respond in some loving way. I gently touched the tree and thanked it for giving of itself. I felt the joy of connection, an awe which lightened my soul, and was energised to share this goodness with others.

Since February 2022, with the encouragement and collaboration of a friend, we have been meeting by some trees and a creek every Saturday morning with a small contemplative group, open to all. We call our gathering “Restore” acknowledging that our own restoration in connection with God, ourselves, others and nature leads to a reciprocity of love in our attitudes and actions towards the rest of creation. Our flyer quotes Rachel Carson “The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe around us, the less taste we shall have for destruction”.

I bring a short reading each week then we sit silently together to listen and pray, after some further silent walking or creative expression, we share together what we have been noticing over morning tea. I have been inspired by Mary Oliver’s poetry and use her three-step invitation to “pay attention, be astonished, and share your astonishment”. This expresses a simple pattern we follow each week.

This paper will explore the emerging theological underpinnings of this practice, the call to deep listening, and the restorative reciprocity that we are invited to as part of God's beautiful creation.

Presenters: Dr Ben Lohmeyer, Dr Kirsten Macaitis & Mr Richard Schirmer.

Dr Ben Lohmeyer is an Early Career Researcher, passionate teacher and experienced youth worker. His research and teaching are primarily in the sociology of youth, violence and loneliness with intersections into policy, spirituality and youth work practice. Ben is a Lecturer in Social Work (Youth) at Flinders University.

Kirsten Macaitis is a research Fellow within the Future of Experience and Skills Research Institute at Adelaide University. She is a passionate teacher and communicator, focusing on the way that sociology can help inform professional practice and personal frameworks. Kirsten is an experienced researcher in the areas of young people, sociology, spirituality and culture, and is particularly interested in the relationship between religious and cultural experiences and how we can understand spirituality in a contemporary context.

Mr Richard Schirmer is an experienced and knowledgeable academic and practitioner in the fields of youth work and counselling. His research and teaching interests focus on the effective preparation of practitioners in working therapeutically with both young people and adults who have experienced trauma as well effective preventative measures that promote well-being in young people. Richard is head of program for Youth Work and coordinator of Field Education in Counselling at Tabor College, Adelaide.

Paper: Making space for contemplative conversations in the classroom in the context of display-averse spirituality in Australian Christian Churches

Contemporary media in developed democratic nations offer a polarising political picture of the values and beliefs around central issues in sociology, including gender, race, and class.

International accounts of teaching sociology in Christian higher education contexts include stories of scholars encountering conflict and resistance from students. Yet, this literature overlooks the unique spirituality in Christian Churches in Australia and faith-based higher education in Australia. We argue that the 'diffused' religiosity and spirituality of Australian Christian Churches, elsewhere described as a 'shy hope', means the polarisation of political views is not represented in students' experiences of studying sociology in faith-based higher education in Australia. Drawing on peer-interviews with 17 participants studying sociology in faith-based higher education in Australia we explore the potential for contemplative conversations in the classroom. Students were asked about their experience of studying sociology and its relationship to their spiritual development. In the interview participants drew from religious, individual, cultural, and political discourses to integrate sociological ideas with their experience of Church. We argue that approaching topics such as gender, race, and class as contemplative conversations creates space for students to wrestle with the display-averse nature of Australian Christian spirituality. This approach opens possibilities for contemplative conversations about diverse views within the contemporary Christian Church in Australia.

Workshop Presenter: Dr Kirsten Macaitis

Kirsten Macaitis is a research Fellow within the Future of Experience and Skills Research Institute at Adelaide University. She is a passionate teacher and communicator, focusing on the way that sociology can help inform professional practice and personal frameworks. Kirsten is an experienced researcher in the areas of young people, sociology, spirituality and culture, and is particularly interested in the relationship between religious and cultural experiences and how we can understand spirituality in a contemporary context.

Workshop: I'm not sure where to go next: A Publishing/Research Workshop for Spirituality Academics

Have you got a niggling research question or publication idea that stayed on the back burner?

Have you ever wanted a space or people to bounce your thoughts with – or find colleagues that you can collaborate with? This workshop is designed to provide such a safe space. You will have the opportunity to share your ideas in a small group and hear feedback on the paper or research with like-minded colleagues. Feel free to bring a question or problem and we will offer support. Come if you've never published before, or would just appreciate a collaborative, encouraging boost.

We are better together!

Presenter: Associate Professor Francis McAloon

Francis X. McAloon, S.J., is Acting Dean and Associate Professor of Christian Spirituality at the Graduate School of Religion (GRE), Fordham University, Bronx, NY. His Ph.D. is from the Graduate Theological Union (Berkeley, CA). Currently, he is director of GRE's Doctor of Ministry (DMin) degree and coordinator of its degrees/certificates in Christian spirituality and spiritual direction.

He served on the board of directors for the Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality (SSCS). Currently, he serves as liaison between the SSCS board and the editorial board for *SPIRITUS: Journal of the Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality*. Past publications include *Forty-Day Journey with Gerard Manley Hopkins*, (Augsburg, 2009), *The Language of Poetry as a Form of Prayer: The Theo-Poetic Aesthetics of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, (Mellen, 2008), "Reading for Transformation through the Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins," *Spiritus* (Fall 2008), and "Gerard Manley Hopkins," in *The Story of the Church of England: A Christianity and Culture Resource*, ed., Dee Dyas (CD-ROM, University of York, UK, 2010).

His current research and writing includes the methods and critiques of disability studies, focusing upon the critical interpretation of social, medical, theological, and spiritual constructs of disability, as well as exploring pastoral strategies for accompanying persons living with chronic illness or disability. One trajectory of his work is proposing possibilities for spiritual affiliation among the disabled and abled communities -- through prayer, poetry, and the arts.

Paper: Spiritual Affiliation: An Ignatian spirituality approach to living with chronic illness and disability

Employing the interdisciplinary academic study of Christian spirituality, I examine the conditions of possibility for an intersectional engagement involving Christian theology, Ignatian spirituality, and disability studies. Grounded in my own experience of chronic illness and resulting disabilities, I propose that the Ignatian concepts of (1) the Principle & Foundation (Ignatian Indifference), (2) the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits and of God's will (the Election), and (3) Ignatian contemplation offer valuable spiritual practices for those living with chronic illness and disability. My intention here is to propose an integrated practice of "spiritual affiliation," wherein the lived experience of chronic illness and disability, alongside its medical, social, and theological constructs, are RE-imagined and RE-engaged through the Ignatian discernment practices of (a) perception, (b) understanding, and (c) action. For those living with chronic illness, as well as for those who journey with them in love, friendship, and social action, a practice of "spiritual affiliation" provides the theoretical, theological, and spiritual foundations for an Ignatian informed way of living with illness and disability.

Presenter: Dr George Marchinowski

George Marchinkowski is a Research Fellow working in Christian Spirituality and Spiritual practices. He graduated from Rhodes University, South Africa (BA. BD.), Columbia Theological Seminary, Georgia, USA (DMin), and the University of Free State (MTh). He is a Presbyterian minister and former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Uniting Presbyterian Church.

Paper: Shall we dance? Choreographing hospitality as key to interpersonal transformation

The icon of the Holy Trinity by Andrei Rublev (1425) is a celebration of hospitality. At first glance, it depicts the Genesis 18 story of Sarah and Abraham hosting the three pilgrims, practicing the ancient custom of accepting strangers unconditionally, as God-sent. This paper will approach Rublev's icon through Henri Nouwen's eyes and using his methodology[1], showing how Sarah and Abraham's hospitality was moved by Rublev to a deeper level, to illustrate the inner life of God. The three strangers became the Trinity, God in the perichoretic dance of love.

Rublev's serendipity was that the table is open, and humanity is invited into the dance. This paper will illustrate that hospitality, a human spiritual practice, is a key to interpersonal transformation because it is reciprocated and fulfilled in a Divine act of hospitality, an invitation for humanity to participate in the Divine Life. This paper will explore Henri Nouwen's proposition that hospitality involves "reaching out" and "creating a space" of true freedom for the stranger to become a friend. It will investigate Nouwen's unique metaphor for interpersonal transformation, a movement from hostility to hospitality, before formulating principles for the spiritual practice of hospitality as a living action and behaviour for ordinary people in everyday life. In doing so, the paper will showcase the contribution of contemporary Anglican theologian and spiritual writer, Barbara Brown Taylor, and her "Practice of encountering others". Taylor believed that the practice of hospitality begins, as all spiritual practices do, with paying attention. In this instance, however, the attention is focussed on another person, a stranger. The 'love' that is required in this practice is particular, focused and not general. The sharing of self and the vulnerable receiving from the Other is transformative and creates community. [1] as discussed in my earlier research on Nouwen's visual contemplation (Marchinkowski 2021:6-7).

Presenter: Professor Katharine Massam

Katharine Massam is a historian of religion. She writes and teaches in the area of Australian religious history, with a particular interest in cultural and theological understandings of prayer and work. Katharine moved to Melbourne to take up a position in 'Church History' in 2000, and has remained part of the ecumenical faculty at what is now Pilgrim Theological College ever since. She was previously a lecturer in the Department of History at the University of Adelaide (1996-2000), and a postdoctoral research fellow at the Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University (1994 - 2000). Originally from Perth, Katharine's doctoral work at the University of Western Australia was supervised by Tom Stannage and Patricia Crawford and published as *Sacred Threads: Catholic Spirituality in Australia* (University of New South Wales Press, 1996). She was elected as a member of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATIS) in 2017.

Attention to the 'lived experience' of faith and belief is a strong feature of Katharine's research, so that her work draws regularly on oral histories, art, literature and fragmented sources influenced especially by postcolonial and feminist analysis. She has published on the monastic theology, the history of education and on the experience of religious communities. Her collaboration since 1993 with the Aboriginal Corporation of New Norcia and the Benedictine communities of that former mission town has borne fruit in exhibitions, conferences and liturgical events as well as in a number of publications. Her latest book *A Bridge Between: Spanish Benedictine Missionary Women in Australia* (Australian National University Press, 2020) also flows from that collaboration.

Paper: To be the leaven in the dough: the Young Christian Workers' spirituality of action as a resource for transforming the world

Within the conference theme of courageous embodiment, the Incarnational spirituality of the Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne (JOC), or in English Young Christian Workers (YCW), offers a resource from the tradition that can encourage the transformation of the world.

Founded between 1912 and 1925 in Belgium, the Jocist movements spread quickly through Catholic networks around the globe. By 1966 the YCW included 4 million young people in 100 countries with a dozen allied movements, both adult and youth. Each formed leaders committed to transforming their particular, daily contexts through shared theological reflection. For the young women and men of this movement, faith lived apart from the world was no faith at all. To them, the "lay apostolate" was an extension of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ; it would form disciples in and through their own everyday context, and for that context. Starting with concrete facts of their own experience, members reflected on the Gospel and Christian principles. The contradictions between their experience of their context and the "ideal of God" called them to act to improve the situation. This process of reflection and engagement itself created a sense of shared apostolate and common commitment to transforming social and ecclesial structures, beginning from the context the workers shared. As Cardijn told members in one of his most-quoted annual lectures in 1949, true leaders were as the leaven in the dough: 'not alongside it, not even a millimetre away, but inside it. Leaders, you are leaven in the dough'.

With a focus on the mid-years of the twentieth century, I argue the liberative potential of Jocist theological method can be (and has been) decisive for ordinary people. Their disciplined reflection on experience enabled social and political activism as an attribute of Christian discipleship, and moving beyond stereotypes endorsed by both churches and wider culture.

Presenter: Dr Michael O'Sullivan

Dr Michael O'Sullivan is the Co-Founder, and Director and Treasurer of the Spirituality Institute for Research and Education in Dublin, Ireland (www.spiritualityinstitute.ie). He is the current Vice-President and President-Elect of the Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality (SSCS). He previously served SSCS as a Member of the Board of Directors, member of the Steering Committee of the Christian Spirituality Unit of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) when it was still under the auspices of SSCS, member of the Promotions Committee of SSCS, and founding member of the International Relations Committee of SSCS. He continues to serve on the Editorial Board of *Spiritus*, the Society's journal. He is also a Director and Trustee of the International Network for the Study of Spirituality, (INSS) and a member of the Editorial Board of INSS' Journal for the Study of Spirituality. He is Emeritus Senior Lecturer at South East Technological University, Ireland, and a Research Fellow at the University of the Free State, South Africa. He has published extensively on issues of Christian faith and social justice, violence against women, and the academic study of spirituality. He is a Jesuit priest and has missionary experience in South and Central America and East Africa.

Paper: Jesus and the Situation of Women then and now

I will attend to a series of biblical texts that reveal different facets of Jesus in relation to the situation of women in his time. My aim in doing so is to highlight how hermeneutical fidelity to his spirituality in our time can be transformative of the situation of women in our world where so many women continue to be maltreated. Those who are not Christian can also learn from studying Jesus by viewing him as a wisdom figure able to resource their desire for a transformed world.

Characteristics of the spirituality of Jesus in relation to the situation of women in his time include his self-effacing openness enabling him to learn from women (Mk 7:24-30; Mt 15:21-28), his sensitive and reflective presence to women's experience which is also revelatory for him of how God works in the world (Lk 15:8-10 and Lk 13:20-21/Mt 13:33); his experience of himself in female terms (Mt 23:37 and Lk 13:34); his affirmation of the giftedness of women (Lk 10:38-42); his capacity to act heroically for women (Lk 4:16-20 where, as Ben Witherington pointed out, the oppressed include women, and Lk 13:10-17 and Jn 7:53-8:11); his vulnerability which enables women to support him (Jn 12:1-8); his counter-cultural stances on behalf of women as the historical Jesus (Jn 4:1-42, Mt 23:8-12 and Lk 15:11-32) and as the Risen Christ (Jn 20: 11-18). I will elaborate on each of these facets of Jesus's spirituality in the full paper. The paper will conclude by arguing that in his kyriarchal society (men lording it over women) the very maleness of Jesus embodied a counter-cultural revelatory sign to men of how men were to view and relate to women and how women were to view themselves and expect to be related to by men.

Presenter: Anne Pate

Anne is a spiritual director and supervisor based in Melbourne. She is completing PhD research into narrative practices after the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. As Missional Spirituality Pastor at Northcote Uniting Church, Anne walks with contemporary seekers to create spaces for genuine dialogue, transformation, and hope.

Paper: Remembering and storying gifts received: challenges and possibilities in spiritual direction with modern seekers

Authentic encounter with God is generative, fostering new and transformative patterns of life and thought. Research suggests that many people in contemporary post-Christian societies have powerful spiritual experiences. However, they may not understand or articulate them in the language of the Christian tradition, which often fails to make its treasures available in meaningful and relevant ways. This paper explores how modern seekers can be encouraged to remember, ponder and respond to the gifts they have received, to bring them to fruition.

The contemplative conversation of spiritual direction has great potential to support the modern seeker in this quest. The paper draws on PhD research with five spiritual directors who have made the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius. This interdisciplinary, qualitative study explored how gifts received during the Exercises are remembered and storied over time, arguing that these narrative activities help bridge the gap between experience (gifts received) and practice (gifts given). The human sciences, and literary studies of autobiography, emphasise that the stories we tell in everyday speech, internal self-talk, or more formal autobiographical writing, are constitutive for identity. The research, however, is grounded in the theological understanding that we are not the sole authors of our lives, but are attentive to another story that is not completely our own: a narrative that has the power to transform. Just as authentic spiritual experience is initiated by God, and given so that we may grow in love and commitment, God continues to be active in us as we remember, ponder and respond to the gifts we have received. Spiritual direction, as a transformative space for storytelling and meaning-making, can help modern seekers forge new pathways with courage, hope, and freedom. Their desires and experiences also reveal a more complete picture of the story God is telling in the world today

Presenter: Dr Tracey Price

Dr Tracey Price is Dean of Tabor's Education faculty. She is well regarded for highly relational, interactive teaching that models critical and 'outside the box' thinking, and for advocacy of conversations about the relationship between spirituality, justice, and hospitable pedagogy. She contributes to a range of educational forums and published chapters and articles on these topics.

Paper: An ethics approach to Christian spiritual work

This paper champions the role of a graded absolutist theory and the biblical quality of hospitality as key components of an ethical framework that reflects and generates Christian spiritual understandings. An ethical framework invites deeper engagement with Christian spiritual concepts in a way that enables nuanced and critical understandings that positively inform our lives and work.

The key ethical concepts considered are relevant and accessible to all modern seekers of spirituality, and especially beneficial to those working in people-focused professions. Workshop participants will be invited to make connections between the concepts and to consider application to their own life and work.

The ethical concepts considered are relevant and accessible to all modern seekers of spirituality, and especially beneficial to those working in people-focused professions. This session will investigate the individual ethical nature of the characteristic (Hospitality), approach (Graded Absolutism) and skills (Discernment & Decision-Making) and allow participants to make connections between them and to consider application to their own life and work.

Presenter: Dr Iain Radvan

Iain Radvan was ordained a Jesuit priest in 1994 and spent 20 years as a chaplain and teacher (humanities). More recently he has moved into the ministry of spirituality, running retreats and giving spiritual direction and supervision. He gives the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius; his PhD was on their transformative nature for Jesuits. He is at present working at the Jesuit retreat centre in rural South Australia (Sevenhill). He has had the blessing of visiting many parts of the world. His hobbies include gardening, bushwalking and cycling.

Paper: Christ in creation: guiding people of all faiths and none into the experience of mystery, wonder and peace

Iain Radvan engages with the contemplation of God in Nature. From his experience as a retreat giver, and as a member of the Being with God in Nature ministry, he will describe how persons of all faiths and none find mystery, wonder and peace in the natural environment. This is achieved through learning about the Christian tradition of Christ in creation, with reference to Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si*, accompanied with specific spiritual exercises. Many retreatants have experienced an ecological conversion through this practice.



When the sun shines

Dreams long buried
Under permafrost of cares and concerns
Will begin to thaw
Their tendrils rising.

When the sun shines
The brittle ice
Of our secret prejudice
The hardness in our eyes
Gives way to a gentle warmth.

Hospitality to the stranger
Empathy for the struggle.

When the sun shines
Waters of mercy begin again to flow
And the cruel world
We thought so harsh and barren
Reveals its hidden treasures
That which has long lain waiting
For the first kiss of Love
The breath of Life.

When the sun shines.

Phil Daughtry

Presenter: Rev Dr Mark Reissen

Mark works full time as the Mission & Ministry Director for Churches of Christ in South Australia. His role includes being part of the Faculty of Ministry Practice at Tabor College as the Tabor Churches of Christ Study Centre Director. Mark has just completed a Doctor of Ministry through Abilene Christian University. He is married to Verity and they have three children.

Paper: An invitation to the dance floor of missional vocation

I wonder if the modern seeker has ever thought about Christian spirituality as an invitation to join in the cosmic dance of living the 'good life'? The embodiment of Christian spirituality in contemporary Australian contexts requires the courage to live a transformed life as a dance that tunes into an active and dynamic God, the world in which we live, and the tradition of the church. In Practical Theology: An Introduction, Richard Osmer proposes four tasks for practicing theology – descriptive, interpretive, normative and pragmatic. These tasks provide a framework for how we might courageously embody Christian spirituality beyond the set norms many might be accustomed to because God is on the move.

Using Osmer's tasks as a framework, this paper will explore the function and implications for how discerned truths become lived actions. This paper draws on the theological proposals set out in the canonical theism project presented by William Abraham in Canonical Theism: A Proposal for Theology & the Church. Canonical theism extends the trajectory of theological imagination to draw on the sources of the canonical tradition for enhancing a lived theology in contemporary contexts.

Our commitment to reflexive praxis, drawing on the disciplines of practicing theology, continues to shape our awareness of the dynamic of God's active presence in our lives. By nature of God's eschatological mission, the canonical heritage of the church and vocation of God's people continues to evolve as we courageously embody an ancient heritage in relevant and contemporary ways.

This paper will draw together the dynamic agency of God with the tasks for practicing theology. I will present a conversation for how we can embody the depth of the Christian tradition where transformational praxis becomes the interpretive agent for making sense of Christian spirituality today. In doing so, I will open up the dance floor to invite modern seekers to meet the master curator who shapes our imaginations for how life is lived beyond rehearsed steps.

Presenter: Verity Skye Reissen

Previously studying a Bachelor of Visual Arts and a Postgraduate in Education working as a Secondary and Primary School Teacher, Co Ordinator of the Arts and Chaplain, Verity is now completing her Master of Divinity and Graduate Diploma of Spiritual Direction. Married to Mark and mother of three children, Verity is a recording artist and songwriter who regularly performs as a singer and flautist in jazz and rock bands.

Paper: Musings of a Mystic: The Desert, The Cave and The Lioness

"To deeply listen to another, calls us into the place we most fear; the wild, untamed spaces of wilderness, the inner desert of our hearts. The tradition of desert spirituality and Christian mysticism argues that is only through the pilgrimage of struggle that we encounter our true self in God from which authentic, generous listening arises.

In this place of confrontation, revelation and transformation, our souls are left naked. The stripping away of self-deception, self-inflation, masks, expectation, and judgments leave us breathless at our own vulnerability. Yet, it is within this breathlessness, that the breath of the Spirit finds room to love the other from the inner space of our vulnerability.

This paper challenges us to consider deep listening summoning us into a journey of our inner caves. There in our own struggle, we learn to relinquish the neurotic need for people to confirm our sense of self. No longer impelled to impose our own selves, our own righteousness, and agendas upon others we learn to listen from hearts of raw authenticity and generosity.

Residing in the depths of our caves awakens the depths of another's. Our own understanding of vulnerability beckons vulnerability. We allow ourselves to unravel. We risk deeply connecting. We risk acknowledging to the other that we don't have all the answers. We risk professing that we too are modern, spiritual seekers. We thirst, we hunger, we yearn, we struggle.

The Lioness' senses awaken to her own cave of true self and the cave of the other. She knows fear, yet gripped by conviction to search out caves, the wild desert plains, the pulsating heartbeat of the other. Deeply listening beckons an ancient, wild roar; the courageous embodiment of vulnerability calling out the untamed vulnerability of another's.

Presenter: Dr Deborah Robertson

Deborah is currently part of a group working to establish a 'Spirituality Hub' in a small country town in Western Australia. She most recently worked as Director of Catholic Mission in the Bunbury Diocese. Previously Deborah was an educator from primary to tertiary level, including lecturing in Educational Leadership for Catholic schools.

Paper: Leading Lament

This presentation responds to the question posed in the conference outline, "Where is the expression of Christian spirituality being recognised as profoundly hopeful, transformative and relevant to everyday people from all walks of life?"

Within the Churches, particularly in my own Catholic tradition, the everyday people who have stayed loyal to their Church often feel beaten and exhausted from within and without – by an apparently inflexible and often insensitive leadership in their Church, along with an often vicious media that promotes every negative occurrence connected with Christianity and particularly the Catholic Church.

One pathway to hope and transformation is to recapture the practice of lament. While lament has always been part of Christian prayer and worship, the universal experience of the pandemic seems to have made the longing for lament more visible.

The need for lament brought about by sexual abuse perpetrated by those in the Church, and the inability of the leadership to adequately address it, has been evident for many years. The recent Plenary Council of the Catholic Church in Australia has also highlighted the need to lament the historical treatment of our indigenous people and to listen to indigenous voices as our first step towards healing and hope.

While identifying the practice of lament as an expression of Christian spirituality that can be relevant, hopeful, and transformative, may be helpful, the challenge remains to find a balance between learning about lament and entering into its authentic practice.

This presentation will share my experience of leading and experiencing Lenten liturgies of lament in a small spirituality centre in a West Australian country town. Those involved have been 'everyday people from all walks of life' who are seeking a contemplative way.

Presenter: Dr David Rensberger

David Rensberger is retired from 30 years of teaching biblical studies at the Interdenominational Theological Center, a predominantly African-American seminary in Atlanta. Specializing at first in the Gospel and Epistles of John, in later years he turned his attention to the Bible and spirituality, and to the Psalms. Between 1996 and 2016, he wrote 25 articles for the journal of Christian spirituality *Weavings*. Worshiping in the Mennonite tradition in which he was raised, he maintains a personal contemplative practice and a commitment to ecumenical faith and relationships.

Paper: The Christian of the Future: Contemplative and Countercultural

Decades ago, the theologian Karl Rahner presciently wrote, "The Christian of the future will be a mystic, or he will not exist at all." Circumstances today bear him out. As churches in Western societies lose influence, the catastrophic materialism and violence of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, now wielding digital implements, seem to be hastening humanity toward both environmental and cultural collapse.

Science and sociology alone seem unable to prevent this. What can awaken the personal and corporate commitment that is needed? I believe Rahner's "mysticism" can be one essential factor. The inner forming of an authentic human identity can enable people to imagine something real and true, and work to enact it. The Christianity that will persist in these circumstances must dig deep into its own sometimes neglected resources to offer the vision of such an identity, an image of God intimately connected to other persons, the creation, and the Creator.

With equal prescience, the twentieth-century mystic Thomas Merton wrote that "the basis of the Christian mission to the world is precisely that the Christian is 'not of this world.'" The Christians of the future will be countercultural as well as contemplative. On one hand, they will not have much choice, as Christian faith and thought become detached from the cultural and moral levers in most societies. They will find themselves in a position more like the Christians of the New Testament than of Christendom. On the other hand, from this outsider position they will once again be able to take up the mission of the outsider Jesus to create structures of rescue for others on the margins and offer prophetic critique to the center.

Accepting Rahner's claim, drawing on Merton's insights, and working from my own perspective as a contemplative Anabaptist, I suggest that Christianity's gospel, in a world in which it has only the gospel, will generate a mission both contemplative and countercultural. Rooted in the message of Jesus and the Apostles, it will offer both inner freedom and wholeness, and outward inclusion and compassion, creating a countercultural discipleship framed and empowered by contemplative spirituality.



It is both terrible and comforting to dwell in the inconceivable nearness of God, and so to be loved by God himself that the first and last gift is infinity and inconceivability itself. But we have no choice. God is with us

Karl Rahner, Prayers for a lifetime

Presenter: Dr Johan Roux

Johan became President (CEO) at Tabor in Feb 2016. Before that he served at CHC in Brisbane in various roles, including 'Dean of School of Social Sciences' and 'Interim President'. He has a heart for Christian Education, leadership, flourishing people and flourishing organisations. Johan is married with two children.

Paper: Psalm 23 and developing spirituality for resilient leadership

We live in the time of the modern seeker. Everywhere people are turning to spirituality for deeper answers and better ways as to how to do life and do it well. This is especially true of leaders, and even more so in regard to 'leader resilience'. Discerning leaders everywhere no longer consider mere time-management, or even energy management, or... as the answer to leader resilience, especially in times of overwhelming chronic uncertainty during events like the recent Covid-VUCA. Against this background there seems to be renewed and growing interest in insights from the domain of Christian spirituality for the modern leader seeking to lead well with ongoing resilience. This paper explores insights from Ps 23 towards developing a spirituality for leader resilience. The contention is that Ps 23, which we are very familiar with as a reading for comfort (sometimes called the Psalms that calms the soul), can also serve as distilled wisdom in its engagement with of a number of relevant principles and practices that promotes resilience on and for the journey of life. It argues that Ps 23, as ancient religious text, has much to say to contemporary leaders serious about resilience that allows them to 'stay the course'. It further serves as starting point for a basic framework (from a Christian spirituality perspective) of practices and principles and 'stances' that cultivates leader resilience. As such the paper connects with the conference theme around the category of 'Courageous Embodiment' with an emphasis on 'praxis in Christian spirituality' that focuses on 'how discerned truths (from Ps 23) move into living actions and behaviours (for leader resilience)'. It addresses the conference question 'What does an embodied spirituality look like for individuals and communities (in regards to leader resilience) in the contemporary complexities and challenges of the day?'

Presenter: Dr Sally Shaw

Sally has Doctor of Ministry from the Adelaide College of Divinity (2023) and her thesis involved developing and testing an arts-based creation care workshop with evangelical Christians. Her background includes ecotheology, creative arts, ecology and community health and development. She is a Director of A Rocha Australia, a Christian conservation organisation.

Paper: A creative pedagogy to encourage embodied creation care action

Addressing the climate and environmental crisis is increasing important for many people. Some are motivated to act from a spiritual perspective, but not necessarily a Christian spirituality. It is therefore vital the evangelical Christian church relinquish the neo-Gnostic beliefs that reject the goodness of the physical creation, and take a courageous step to imaginatively embrace creation care theology so Christians and non-Christians are attracted to an embodied faith that cares for the whole cosmos.

My research was a response to this critical issue and involved the development and implementation of an experiential arts-based workshop for evangelical Christians. Based on an extensive literature review, it adopted multiple ways of knowing with a focus on experiential approaches and analysis to challenge and stimulate an understanding of Scripture that reveals the call to care for all God has made. The workshop was with a creative and embodied pedagogy which allowed participants to discern the wisdom of the creator God and to devise practical ways to respond to the biblical command to care for creation.

Following the workshop, many participants put into practice creation care activities in their own lives and church communities. Some participated in a re-vegetation project run in conjunction with the Indigenous Ngarrindjeri people and two Christian conservation organisations, A Rocha Australia and Cassinia Environmental. A Rocha is an outstanding example of a Christian organisation that embodies an wholistic spirituality to address some of the complex environmental issues challenging Christians and non-Christians today. Its projects have resulted in a reduced environmental impact and presented a biblical message of hope.

The primary outcome of the research project was an arts-based workshop template with a focus on the biblical and practical aspects of creation care. The next steps are to implement this workshop with various churches and parachurch groups as well as adapt the workshop to make it attractive to non-Christians.

Presenter: Dr Di Shearer

Di is a spiritual director and supervisor resident in Port Elliot, South Australia. Her interest in DeepTime and Ecozoic Studies arose from research on the life and thought of Teilhard de Chardin. Her focus in this event is on the noosphere as foundation for Wisdom Circles.

Paper: Cultivating Presence in Wisdom Circles for Earth's Future

Ecozoic Wisdom Circles are a means of cultivating contemplative conversation across polarised and diverse views of spirituality in relation to the incoming era of human society. By fostering a collaborative disposition for discerning the sacred in modern life, these Circles, as designated in my work, are formed from those who subscribe to the four sources of wisdom encouraged by Thomas Berry, a Passionist priest (1914-2009) and geologist. The sources are indigenous wisdom, the wisdom of women, the wisdom of science and the wisdom of the classical traditions.

Over the past year, I have engaged in facilitating by Zoom an Ecozoic Wisdom Circle composed of four members. One is an indigenous woman in midlife from India, raised as a Catholic and promoting intentional community, one is a Jewish Life Design Analyst with an interest in Hinduism, who is a spiritual director in Eastern USA and one a retired organic chemistry lecturer of renown in Western USA who is also poet and musician. I am a spiritual director, supervisor, consultant, and educator in active retirement and come from a Christian perspective.

My concern for the biosphere and my interests in the noosphere have enabled a framework centred in the cultivation of communion consciousness. The framework points to the evolution of the biosphere from the geosphere and the need to strengthen and stabilise the noosphere through this new consciousness. Integrating science and spirituality, mining the mystics, and drawing from the deep wells of indigenous wisdom are key elements in this process.

My key idea is to demonstrate a way of experiencing Wisdom as personal Presence and mutual discernment across spiritual traditions within current community and society upheaval.

Workshop Presenter: Rev'd Dianne Schaefer

Dianne is an Anglican Priest whose ministry is in Chaplaincy at the Women's and Children's Hospital in North Adelaide. Dianne has meditated for ten years now, and in that time has been the State Coordinator for the World Community for Christian Meditation in South Australia, and has just been named as the National Deputy Coordinator for WCCM Australia. Dianne is currently studying in the Spiritual Direction Formation program run by the Catholic Diocese of Adelaide.

Presentation: Christian Meditation – the prayer of the Heart

In this basic introduction to the practice of Christian Meditation as taught by John Main, you will learn this modern way of praying from ancient roots of the Desert Fathers. This practice of meditation is taught by The World Community for Christian Meditation, a global community with groups in some 55 countries around the world.

Presenter: Dr Benedict Shoup

Benedict Shoup is a doctoral student in systematic theology at the University of Notre Dame in the United States. His dissertation is on the pneumatology of St. John of the Cross, with a special focus on how it relates to his contemplative theological methodology.

Paper: The Gospel of Darkness? John of the Cross's Contemplative Account of the Dark Night and the Contemporary Search for Justice and Transcendence

Although religious affiliation in a number of societies is on the decline, the pursuit of justice for the oppressed and of contact with the Transcendent still powerfully motivates many spiritual seekers. However, frustrating encounters with what French philosopher Jean-Yves Lacoste identifies as our "inoperativity" in the face of injustice and our "inexperience" in the face of the Transcendent threaten to suffocate these aspirations. In response to this dilemma, I argue that John of the Cross's contemplative theology of the dark night reveals that embodied practices of gratitude and constructive remorse allow spiritual seekers to uncover the new perspectives and deeper commitment to the good latent in moments of spiritual darkness.

But, as Carmelite scholar Steven Payne has recently argued, the task of interpreting John's dark night for a contemporary audience is fraught with difficulties. John generally writes for a very specific contemplative audience. Furthermore, he situates his discussions of the dark night within a highly sophisticated theological framework. These two factors make it difficult to accurately translate principles from the dark night for a broad, contemporary audience. To meet these obstacles, I mount an argument in three stages. First, I offer an exposition of Lacoste's interpretation of the dark night in terms of ethical inoperativity and religious inexperience. Second, I add to Lacoste's account by demonstrating that for John, the negative aspects of contemplative darkness are always at the service of positive desires for the good of God and neighbor. Third, I use Gustavo Gutierrez's interpretation of John to show that embodied practices of gratitude and remorse motivate and shape the desires for good underpinning both inoperativity and inexperience. This argument yields the conclusion that practices of gratitude and remorse can transform ethical and religious darkness into opportunities for gaining new perspectives and intensifying our commitment to the good.

Presenter: Dr Audrey Stathem

Audrey is a sessional lecturer in the School of Education, Deakin University (Burwood), Melbourne. She lectures in a unit in the Bachelor of Arts for undergraduates majoring in education. Her PhD is in Philosophy of Education (University of Divinity) and she researches in spirituality, democracy, education, religious education, secularity.

Paper: Educating children and young people's spirituality for democratic life in Australian faith schools

This paper argues that opportunities for children and young people's spiritual growth ought to be provided in Australian faith schools through teachers and students engaging together with the language and purposes of education. Given that Australia is commonly held to be a 'democratic' society, the link between educative growth of spirituality and the pursuit of a genuine democratic life will be explored. Democracy is understood here not as mere vote-casting but, rather, as a personal way of life. Genuine democracy depends on the presence of individuals who are disposed to participate in discussions with different points of view about public goods. In such an environment which encourages "equal opportunity and free association and intercommunication" (Dewey 2008), the "spiritual factor" of democracy can flourish. By contrast, in nominally democratic societies the spiritual dimension is stifled due to a lack of public forums and disinclination on the part of individuals to deliberate about public affairs with others who hold different views.

An education that enhances the spirituality of children and young people for democratic life therefore provides opportunities for students to inquire together with their teachers into differing views on what it means to be a 'good' person, to envisage different courses of action for pursuing public and global goods, and to be inspired to commit to living out their spirituality through enacting in cooperation with diverse others what they hold together to be valuable. This person-centred, experience-based and inquiry-led approach to education offers value for the Australian context, which is multi-cultural, multi-faith and where approximately 30% of all schools are affiliated with a religion. Implications for teachers of R.E. in faith schools are discussed with a specific focus on schools affiliated with Christianity.

Presenter: Dr Hindrek Taavet Taimla

From a young age I have pursued theological studies contributing to Christian ministry and academics. I currently pastor two churches in Estonia and teach various classes at the Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary. I have 3 special ladies at home – wife Veronika, and two precious daughters (2 and 0.15).

Paper: Spirituality of Christian Hospitality in War-time Europe

What does an embodied spirituality look like for individuals and communities in the contemporary complexities and challenges of the day?

I will explore the courageous acts of hospitality and unity through prayer that breaks racial hatred, to use the language of M.Volf "to re-discover each other as brothers" which is certainly appropriate language given the history of Ukrainian and Russian people. I will share how the Church in the Baltics has tried to foster this rediscovery.

Presenter: Professor Matthew Wickman

Matthew Wickman is Professor of English and Associate Coordinator of the Faith and Imagination Institute at Brigham Young University, where he also recently completed a ten-year term as Founding Director of the BYU Humanities Center. He is the author of two monographs and dozens of scholarly articles. His recent work explores the relationship between spirituality and the arts, and last year he published a personal book on this subject titled *Life to the Whole Being: The Spiritual Memoir of a Literature Professor*.

Paper: The Path – But First, the Call: Discernment in Laura Reece Hogan's Theopoetics

Laura Reece Hogan is an award-winning poet who also happens to be an award-winning theologian. My paper explores the relationship between these aspects of Hogan's work. More specifically, it discusses how Hogan's poetry at once illustrates and, to an extent, draws out a different facet of that theology.

The centerpiece of Hogan's theology is a spiritual program leading from Kenosis (a self-emptying to make place for the Spirit) through Enosis (an experience of "Christ-with-us") to Theosis (a process of transformation as we come to "express and confess Jesus Christ in and through [our] very being"). Her poetry, meanwhile, partly expounds the fruits of a disciplined life but also, and more vividly, enacts the force of spiritual experiences, revealing God's transformative presence bursting forth in terrestrial situations.

For example, one poem crafts a scene of late-industrial, postmodern dereliction (of a “corner gas station, snaked with dusty cars”) and converts an “astonishing coral tree” draping over “a peeling concrete wall” into an image of Christ, like this blooming tree, abiding with us, both “the ones who notice, and the ones who do not.”

Hogan’s rapturously beautiful poems compel us to notice. Through them we see and feel God at work in the world. (I’ve taught these poems; my students shared stories.) As such, the poems figure the manifold joys of spiritual experience, both contemplative and immediate, and thus exemplify a process of imaginative discernment. But they also present a slightly different theology from the one Hogan expounds elsewhere. Instead of attending to the path of spiritual formation, the poems strike readers with an eschatological force of vocation. In effect, they do not follow Paul on his apostolic journeys as much as arrest Saul on the road to Damascus.

What can Hogan’s work teach us about poetry and the arts as vehicles of spiritual experience relative to the ascetic rigors of Christian discipleship? What is the relationship between different modes of expression and the imaginative discernment they entail?

Presenter: Rev Michael Wood

Michael Wood is an Anglican priest who works as a community chaplain, professional facilitator, coach and supervisor. He is pioneering the use of Open Space Technology, Talking Circle, and Restorative Conferencing approaches in church leadership in Australia. His first book, “Practicing Peace: Theology, Contemplation, and Action” was published in 2022.

Paper: “Wherever space is opened, peace breaks out”

Jesus says, “Peace I leave you, my peace I give to you; I give to you not as the world gives” (John 14:2). Peace lies at the heart of the Christian story, and yet many people continue to experience emotional and spiritual violence in their churches and homes. Being saturated in sermons (laity) or preaching them (pastors) does not seem to correlate with the transfiguring peace of Christ in daily life.

Anglican Priest and peace-facilitator, Harrison Owen, makes a connection between spaciousness and peace, saying, “Wherever space is opened, peace breaks out”. This paper argues that the practice of Christlike peace requires a dynamic interplay of several epistemologies (ways of knowing) – Theology (the spaciousness of the kenotic Word/Logos); the spaciousness of prayer (especially contemplative prayer); and the spaciousness of embodied practices (especially dialogic practices such as Talking Circles; Open Space Technology; Restorative Conferencing). The reflection will conclude with some provocative thoughts on education and formation in theological colleges, church formation programs, and the daily life of churches.

Presenter: Assoc Professor Robyn Wrigley-Carr

Robyn Wrigley-Carr is Spiritual Care Program Director at the University of Divinity and Associate Professor in Pastoral and Spiritual Care at Whitley College, Australia. She is a spiritual director and leads retreats in Australia and the UK. Robyn is on the Executive Committee for the International Network for the Study of Spirituality and on the Editorial Board and Book Reviews Editor for the Journal for the Study of Spirituality.

Paper: Courageous embodiment: Evelyn Underhill’s ‘Spiritual Ecumenism’

Evelyn Underhill (1875–1941) was a significant spirituality author, retreat leader and spiritual director in the first half of the twentieth century. She received an honorary doctorate (University of Aberdeen), was made Fellow of King’s College London, and was the first woman to lecture in theology at Oxford University. But more important than these accolades, was her engagement with contemporary seekers through her BBC radio talks, *The Spiritual Life*. But underlying that public access point was Underhill’s courageous embodiment as a ‘spiritual ecumenist’. Rising above the quarrels and superiorities that often disfigure Christian communities, Underhill demonstrated that with eyes ‘cleansed by prayer’, we are made able to ‘read the letters of the Name, wherever found, and in whatever script’.

Even on her deathbed, Underhill prayed for Church unity. She viewed prayer as necessary so that Jesus' desire – 'that they all may be one' – could become reality. Underhill experienced the vitality of the invisible links possible in communities praying for Church unity through the Spiritual Entente, Order of the Holy Dove, and Abbé Couturier's Reunion Movement, later named the Invisible Monastery. Central to these groups was spiritual understanding rather than critique. As Couturier expressed, when we are living in the Christ who prays for unity, God unites us in the same Love. Underhill's convictions regarding spiritual ecumenism were vividly displayed through her hospitality via spiritual direction and retreat leading for people from all Church traditions.

At a time of growing secularism and Church disunity, Underhill is a life-giving voice inspiring us to pray for unity and receive the gifts from all branches of Christendom. Further, Underhill teaches us that spiritual ecumenism can help us gain the respect of contemporary seekers. A united Church is missional – 'so the world may believe...' (John 17.21, NIV).

Presenter: Rev Dr Aizaiah G. Yong, Ph.D.

Aizaiah G. Yong (he/him) has served in higher education leadership for over a decade devoting his energy to healing and advocacy work that centers QTBIPOC communities. His past experience includes working in multiple university settings as faculty, administrator, and campus pastoral staff guiding spiritual formation retreats as well as local service and mobilization initiative. His latest book, *Multiracial Cosmotheandricism* explores the lives and spiritualities of multiracial people inspired by the life and theology of Raimon Panikkar.

Paper: Guided by Surprise: Proposing a Contemplacostal Spirituality of Tending to Despair

In this paper, I will propose how a retrieval and renewal of Christian Spirituality that integrates elements of Pentecostal spirituality with elements of Contemplative Christian Spirituality might strengthen capacities of tending to experiences of despair. I will begin by considering how the experience of despair results from a breach of trust and discuss significant facets of our lives where these breaches are repeatedly felt—institutionally, interiorly, and ecologically.

I will then speculate how these repeated breaches can become internalized and re-enacted due to patterns of collective trauma and subsequently worsen the crisis. I will then offer a 21st century vision of Christian Spirituality that emphasizes surprise, creativity, experience, and relationality, (rather than confessional belief or one particular practice) and how this could help to re-establish bonds of trust and in turn, create pathways of hope and renewal. I will conclude with further questions and potential implications on how a Contemplecotal spirituality might resource efforts (by those who are Christians and those who are not) to overcome divisions and polarizations in our communal lives."




Come away to a quiet place by yourselves and rest awhile.


Mark 6:30



**Main
 Conference
 Gathering**



 **tabor
 institute of
 music**


Hub







**Room
 4**

Room 5

Room 6

Level 1



**Room
 1**

Room 2

Room 3

**Ground
 Floor**

**Chapel -
 Labyrinth
 & Quiet
 Space**


**Registration
 Meals and
 Refreshments**



**Reception /
 Library**

