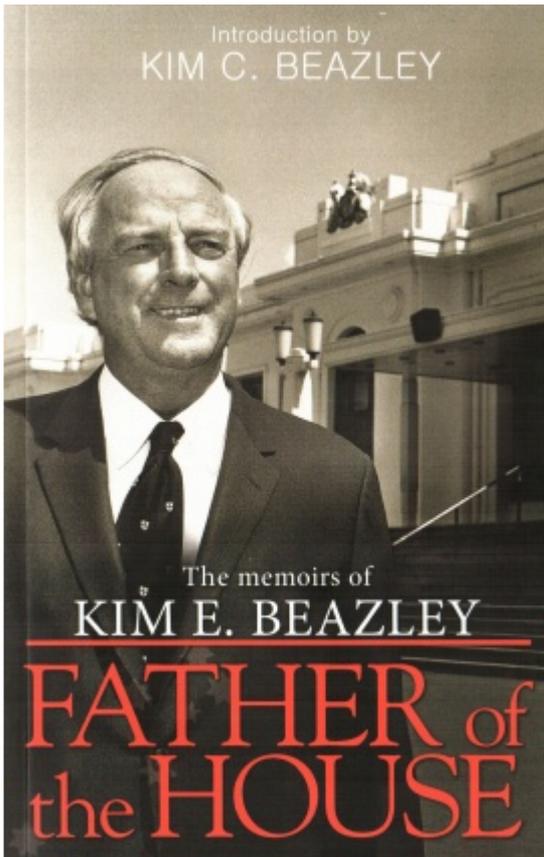




Initiatives of Change

## Proof that politics and principle can mix

Since being launched in the Australian Federal Parliament on 11 February, *Father of the House*, the memoirs of the late Kim Edward Beazley, has attracted several major reviews highlighting the inspiration that Beazley drew from Moral Re-Armament (as *Initiatives of Change* was then known). Mike Lowe reports:



his political views and in the way he conducted himself”.

“As Minister for Education,” said Faulkner, “Kim Beazley oversaw the ending of the funding divide that separated private and public schools, and the introduction of free tertiary education...”

“The story this book tells is a remarkable one. But more remarkable is the way that it reveals, in his own words, Beazley’s convictions, his conscience and his courage in the – sometimes unpopular – defence of both.”

Two days earlier the book was launched in Beazley’s home state of Western Australia in the presence of former State Premier Alan Carpenter, Labor MPs, academics, family and friends. Dr Peter Tannock, Vice Chancellor of Notre Dame University, spoke of Beazley’s

two great passions: for recognition and support of the Aboriginal people, and for education.

In the *Australian Book Review*, former West Australian Premier Geoffrey Gallop wrote: “In many ways, *Father of the House* is a personal account of the relationship between politics and religion as seen through the eyes of a believer. Beazley dwells on the powerful influences of ‘conscience’ and ‘reconciliation’ as driving forces in politics.... He concludes that ‘civilisation only advances when individual consciences become more sensitive to the needs of others’....

“This takes me to his commitment to Moral Re-Armament and its belief in the power of reconciliation. Beazley speaks openly of his conversion experience at MRA’s headquarters in Caux,

Switzerland, in 1953. He explains that it lifted both his Christianity (the goal of absolute purity) and his politics (the goal of honesty) to new heights. ‘For me,’ he writes, ‘honesty meant a decision that I would not play the political game of making cases, suppressing everything inconvenient to my own position and playing up everything convenient.’ What matters is not who is right but what is right. He worried too much about the personal and social consequences of power ever to be one of its great exponents.”

Another major review in *The Australian Literary Review* by Ross Fitzgerald entitled “Proof that principle and politics can mix” expands on Beazley’s faith and commitment.

“Beazley reveals that before the distractions of the day he was taught to ask God ‘to speak my thoughts, then write my thoughts down and test them by God’s standards of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love’, then to carry out actions that met those standards.

“Elsewhere in his memoir, Beazley repeats that, after joining the movement, he made a decision to concern himself daily with the challenge of living out God’s will. As he put it: ‘to turn the searchlight of absolute honesty on my motives. To try to see the world with the clarity of absolute purity. To take absolute love as radar through the fog of international affairs.’

“Above all, he had to learn to apply these ideas in practice. What is absorbing is how, armed with these precepts, Beazley attempted to negotiate a high-level career in federal politics.”

Beazley entered parliament in 1945 at the tender age of 27. By the time he retired in 1977 he was the longest serving member of the house of representatives, the “father of the house”. As Minister for Education 1972-75, Beazley was responsible for some of the most enduring reforms of the Whitlam Labor Government.

The book launch in the Federal Parliament was held in the Labor caucus room, packed with many government members and senators, ministers, the Speaker of the House, the President of the Senate, and family, including son Kim Christian Beazley, the recent Labor leader (before Kevin Rudd).

Giving the main address, Senator John Faulkner spoke of the “central role” that Moral Re-Armament played in Beazley’s life and the “enormous impact it had on

*Father of the House* is available in bookshops, or from Grosvenor Books, 226 Kooyong Road, Toorak, Victoria 3142. Price \$25 plus postage and packing.

# Life Matters 2009

The 18th Life Matters Course took place over nine days from 30 January to 8 February at Armagh, the Initiatives of Change centre in Melbourne. John Mills and Mike Lowe report:

The 19 participants came from around Australia and the Asia Pacific region. There were students and young workers, teachers and others in professional life. Attending from Uganda was Emmanuel Kiiza, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bunyoro–Kitara. Stanley Vutiande from the Solomon Islands came for training because his government has requested he organise with IofC further reconciliation workshops for some of the victims and perpetrators of the civil unrest of some years ago.

The course aims to help young people find a purpose and a path for life. The participants explored issues around identity and destiny, personal growth and community development. Interactive sessions, in which participants ask deep questions of themselves, were combined with a chance to learn from the experience of individuals and groups who are making a difference. Summing up her experience of the Course, Vipiano Sanyu from Melbourne said, “I’ve had a chance to heal through sharing my story and hearing other people’s stories. I’ve reconnected with my faith. I go on with a purpose now which is very much entwined with the world’s needs.”



## **Emmanuel Kiiza, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bunyoro - Kitara, Uganda**

The Life Matters Course has been beyond my expectations.... There is anger in [our] youth that stems from a deep hatred emanating from the Colonial period. (Our Kingdom was severely punished for opposing the colonial power and the pain and hurt transfers to each generation.)

The question I have been wrestling with is whether we can ask our people to forgive for these past wrongs? I return to Uganda believing that forgiveness is the way forward to enable us to move out of the dark shadows of history. The next step is to see with the leadership of the Kingdom how this can be implemented.

This will include the development of a leadership training centre where the young people can come and have an experience of living fully in the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation.

## **Sarah Gul - New Zealand**

Before participating in the Life Matters course, I was your average superficial girl who cared only for cell phones, cars, money and designer clothing. I came to Armagh at that point in life where “now what?” seemed to be the million-dollar question. The course forced me to delve deep and find the root of why I am the way I am. I met, I listened and I learnt a lot. I'm no longer a little girl lost but a

young woman with my suitcase packed, ready to journey into the unknown, ready for change and ready for life.

## **Paulini Vesikula - Fiji**

I have learnt that time is precious and that no minute should be wasted; to be on time and to organize myself by writing everything I need to do in a day and, once completed, tick them off, one by one.

I have learnt the importance of my beautiful island, Fiji, and to protect my environment. I want to clean up my nation beginning from my own backyard – cleaning my compound and teaching my siblings to be clean citizens.

*(Paulini took her first steps immediately she returned home to clear up the rubbish at her place. Her brothers and sisters assisted her.)*

## **Akhmad Hairul Umam - Indonesia**

Every morning, during a time of quiet, I reflected on the question of what life and God means to me. I received the answer that life is worshiping and serving others. Since then I apologized to God, since I have quite often complained to God rather than giving gratitude to Him and accepting who I am unconditionally. I strongly believe God has a plan for every single human being, including me, to do good. I have decided to surrender my life to God, to give everything to God in obedience and trust him for my future





life – career, education and even a life partner.

**Afif Fauzi - Indonesia**

I personally learnt how important it is to listen to our Inner Voice by having time in quiet. It is a way to sharpen our sensitivity to God as well as to people around us.... My life has often faced conflicts. I have had bad relations with my father. My sisters and brothers and I all feel he has been unjust to us. I now understand that the hatred deep in my heart has completely closed my eyes to the real truth. I'll improve my relations with my father and make my brothers and sisters try to understand my father's needs.

**Rory Gordon - Australia**

Being such a multi-cultural course we learn about other people's values and traditions and ways of life. In doing this we can really reflect on ourselves and learn what is important to us. It gave me a great confidence in my capabilities towards change in my life and world.

**Dang Thai Son - Vietnam**

In Armagh we eat together, drink together, and play together. I have a feeling that we are a multicultural family. We come from 13 different countries but we seem like brothers and sisters. There is no distance between us.

When I come back home I will do exercise in the morning, play sport, work harder, study harder, do quiet-time daily and share the course with my family, friends and the IofC team. I realise that there are many things I need to change to make my life and my community become better.

**Ouk Vichet - Cambodia**

Through the course I have gained a lot. I have been inspired to do something to correct my past mistakes, such as

writing to my ex-girlfriend asking for forgiveness, writing an email to my family to express my wish for a reunion, including my brother who has been apart from the family, and telling my Mum "I love you" for the first time.

*(Vichet has already taken action on these and his brother has agreed to join a weekend get-together with the rest of the family.)*

**Stanley Vutiande - Solomon Islands**

In 1998 a tribal war broke out. Many people were killed. Thousands were displaced. Guns ruled the streets. Working as a para-medical helping with the Red Cross relief efforts, I was abducted, taken prisoner and was to be killed. God saved my life.

In 2008 I organised a workshop on peace-building, forgiveness and leadership for commanders of one of the groups of former militants. This year we are planning to have four more workshops and these will include perpetrators and victims. I realise I need to approach the man who tortured and tried to kill me during the conflict. I need to tell him I forgive him for what he did to me. I think this step in reconciliation will be an example to others as we seek to re-unite our people.

**Sarah Mitchell - Australia**

I loved being part of a passionate, inspiring, and highly motivated group of people that made me feel unconditionally accepted and listened to. Being involved in the Life Matters course gave me a strong sense of inner peace; I believe I felt this because of being around such positive, happy and hope-filled people.

I felt moved by the generosity of the organisers, facilitators and volunteers who gave their time and knowledge selflessly to empower and give greater direction to the lives of all the members of the Life Matters course.



# Creators of Peace News

In the past months Creators of Peace Circles (CoPC) have been introduced in many new parts of the world from Scandinavia to Papua New Guinea, north India, Malaysia, Korea and Taiwan. In Australia, CoPCs continue in the build up to the conference to be held in Sydney, 30 September – 4 October 2009.

On 21 March, a fund-raising event was held at Armagh, the Initiatives of Change centre in Melbourne, to help

two women from Papua New Guinea attend the conference. It was a chance to hear from people who had participated in a Creators of Peace Circle and from other women engaged in creating peace. An excerpt from one of the speeches is given below:



PHOTO: RAHUL KAPADIA

Anjali Brown speaking at a Creators of Peace fund raising event held in Melbourne at Armagh - March 2009.

## Peace and the environment

Perhaps climate change is the best opportunity we have ever had to create a culture of global, lasting peace. It is so evident that we all face the same challenges together; where the action of one affects the outcomes for all.

A central tenet of IofC and Creators of Peace is that “change needs to start with me”. I can condemn people for their actions against the environment, but another environmentalist could just as easily accuse me of hypocrisy.

While doing environmental education in Vanuatu, I highlighted that changing our environment for the better started with each one of us taking action. Yet I

had just flown a long distance in a highly polluting aeroplane and was buying lots of bottled water, contributing to water scarcity and waste generation.

At home I struggle to never drive my car, to buy only unpackaged, locally grown food or to keep wintry morning showers short.

While I would love to detach from my city lifestyle and build a sustainable farm far away, I know that I can be most effective bringing change in the city. My struggle to be at peace with my own less-than-perfect behaviour should help me rather than hinder me in building relationships with others. We are each

on a continual path to peace. My journey of seeking lasting harmony with my environment and with myself is my tool for change.

*Anjali Brown is an environmentalist currently working on water conservation projects. She is completing a Masters of Environment from the University of Melbourne and has recently returned from a trip to India and a placement in Vanuatu, where she was working for an environmental education NGO.*

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## The art of life-changing

*In June last year, Ian Parsons gave a talk on "Servant leadership" in Visby, Sweden, as part of a series of events to mark the centenary of Frank Buchman's conversion experience in Keswick, England. This is a short extract from the full talk, which can be downloaded from [www.iofc.org/reflections](http://www.iofc.org/reflections)*

I never met Frank Buchman, the initiator of IofC, or heard him speak. But, as Ecumenical chaplain at the new La Trobe university in Melbourne, Australia, I found his way of working with students fascinating. His aim was to get the gifts people possessed out into the flowing stream of history.

We did many things that he inspired, but the most important was the use of the ‘quiet time’. People would come to talk, to unburden their hearts and minds of problems, fears, hopes or general confusion about life.

Many were wondering about the direction of their lives or what they would do when they left university. We made

many friends from different countries, different political persuasions, from different faiths or no faith at all. We tried always to have a quiet time, if possible, with each person.

Often, I would start with a question like “Do you believe in God? In conscience? In an ‘inner voice’? What sort of values do you believe in? Honesty, for example?” (People almost invariably believed in honesty, respect, selflessness and love, especially for everyone else!) “These are guidelines, if you take them at 100% (eg total honesty); a test for what you are looking for. Things may look difficult at the moment, but major on the positive side of things!

“Would you be willing to make an experiment now, and listen for the deepest thing inside you, to see what light there is there? Here is paper. Here is a pencil. Let’s be quiet and write our thoughts down. Yes, I’ll do it too!”

People, both staff and students, would almost always find a suggestion for their own problem. Sometimes it would come to me as a question or thought to share. If they followed the idea, they might come back and thank, but very often not at all. It might not have been a great “mass movement” in reaching the whole university, but it was a work in progress.

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All contributions of items, news, comments are welcome. Next deadline: Wednesday 27 May to **The Editor, NEWSBRIEFS, 226 Kooyong Road, Toorak VIC 3142**  
Fax and Phone: (03) 9822 6871 E-mail: [mike.lowe@iofc.org](mailto:mike.lowe@iofc.org)  
New subscriptions and address changes: **NEWSBRIEFS, 226 Kooyong Road, Toorak, VIC 3142**

**Initiatives of Change**  
MORAL RE-ARMAMENT ABN 22 004 350 789  
[www.au.iofc.org](http://www.au.iofc.org)