



Initiatives of Change

Climate change and Initiatives of Change

As this issue of Newsbriefs reaches you the nations of the world are meeting in Copenhagen in an attempt to find a common strategy in the face of global climate change.

For some decades there has been unease among scientists, philosophers and other thinking people about the damage being inflicted on the natural world by growing numbers of human beings seeking to live in wealth and security.

Thirty years ago Kenneth Belden in a book on Initiatives of Change* wrote in the final chapter about an emerging crisis, "global and inescapable, a crisis of a magnitude never before encountered by the human race... We face not only the exhaustion of resources but the possible breakdown of the life support systems of the planet itself, through pollution and overuse."

We are starting to see that the brilliant achievements of technological civilisation can have a dark side, and that some of our material prosperity has been built on borrowing from the future - the future of our children and grandchildren. This debt may prove more significant than the debt structures that last year threatened the global financial system with collapse.

'A new climate in human relationships'

Eighteen months ago at an IofC conference on the Baltic island of Gotland, not far from Copenhagen, it was suggested that the challenge of the earth's climate would demand a new climate in human relationships.

Initiatives of Change is a relatively small global movement but with a big idea: that human behaviour can and does change and that that is the avenue through which human civilisation can survive and advance.

A crisis may be viewed as economic, ecological, cultural or political. IofC's approach has always been to look for the human and moral factor in a crisis, where personal responsibility operates and decisions are made. The IofC website's new climate change page:

<http://www.iofc.org/climate-change> offers an approach to that issue summed up in the age-old but often ignored

principle: there is enough in the world for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed.

IofC has its vital contribution to make - and like many bodies in the world community is now starting on the road of discovering how to relate it to the new global situation.

Attending the Copenhagen conference - the UN Conference on Climate Change - will be a number of figures associated with IofC including Geoffrey Lean, the veteran environmental journalist, now Contributing Editor at UK's Daily Telegraph (see November *Global Update*). He also edits the UN Environmental Programme's magazine *Our Planet* and says success at negotiations like the Copenhagen conference hinges largely on achieving trust.

Others will be there from the Environmental and Economic Workgroup set up at the 2009 Caux Forum for Human Security - amongst them Tom Duncan from Melbourne (see his article in October Newsbriefs). Tom will attend as part of the ANPED delegation

(Northern Alliance for Sustainability, a Norwegian-based NGO).

The group will work to build relationships of trust and collaboration and will report through a blog on the IofC climate change web page.

After Copenhagen a long road lies ahead, as the nations of the world continue to seek how to work together to manage an evolving situation.

Belden ended his book with this hope: "[Initiatives of Change's] most valuable contribution to the troubled century we are moving into may be the thousands of people across the continents who have come to understand and accept change, and know how to pass it on to others... we may yet set in motion the creative planning, the scientific inventiveness and, above all, the readiness to move unitedly across the globe with new ways of doing things, which will be called for."

- Peter Thwaites

* K.D Belden: *Meeting Moral Re-Armament*. Grosvenor 1979.
(Moral Re-Armament became Initiatives of Change in 2001)

CoP conference - ripples and waves

In the weeks since the Creators of Peace conference in October, a number of women have written reflecting back on it, or telling of flow-on effects and activities. So the ripples continue to spread out and contribute to waves large and small of hope and change.

Jenny Fodera from Sydney writes:

Our family was fortunate to host Filomena dos Reis from Timor Leste before the event.

Several points have stayed with me since our conference:

- How much trust and empathy is needed to participate fully.

- The power and inventiveness of women when they feel determined to challenge and change an unhappy situation.

- The love and compassion needed to truly make and find peace and forgiveness.

Ann-Lone Uhrenholdt Thwaites remembers the "impossible forgiveness" of some stories shared - by any religious standard the most radical thing that could be demanded of you, to forgive and love those whom you would naturally regard as enemies.

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CoP conference - ripples and waves cont...

There was an atmosphere of sisterhood, which enabled many of the 250 women there to share such personal stories of abuse and suffering. For some it was the first time they had been able to lay open the pain they carried because of rape, incest, racism, the loss of home and family. For others, what burdened them was the shame of belonging to the people who had been the perpetrators of conflict. Most encouragingly some could share how their own suffering had become a catalyst for good.

Judy Schroeder, a farmer from the Mallee, writes:

I was given a flyer at a dinner in February. I knew I needed to be at the conference.

I almost didn't make it because I have a sick husband at home recovering from back surgery. I left him plenty of food and set up good support from friends and family and with his blessing I was able to attend. On arrival at the conference I had a wonderful sense of belonging.

One woman shared that it was "the next step in her ongoing journey of healing".

One of the Sudanese women, Carla Tongan, spoke about not feeling welcomed in this country. I said: "I can really relate to her comments. I am a fifth generation Aussie living in rural Australia and I have lived in my husband's community for thirty years and can count on one hand the number of people who have invited me to their homes." I shared my story with Carla. She put her arm around me and said: "Together we can change that."

I thought about what I am contributing to the culture of my community and on my return planned to invite my friends and neighbours for a community meal at my home, instead of being a victim and feeling sorry for myself.

I have been shown a deeper sense of belonging to this land through my

friend from the Pitjantjatjara Lands, and through the welcome and acceptance from Ngarrindjeri women who live at Camp Coorong, SA.

After the conference South Australian women met at Camp Coorong. Bek Brown takes up the story:

Young Ngarrindjeri woman, Edie Carter, suggested that we hold a Creators of Peace Circle weekend at her Ngarrindjeri Community's Centre in the Coorong.

Still buzzing from the CoP conference, twelve of us travelled to this beautiful part of the state, and were warmly greeted by Ellen Trevorrow, Aunty Rita, Aunty Alice.....and Edie. An intensive weekend full of tears and laughter followed.

Two of the women expressed their conviction to start Peace Circles in Murray Bridge - a community of over 60 nationalities, with underlying tensions. One woman shared that it was "the next step in her ongoing journey of healing".

Julie Walpole from Sydney booked a picnic shelter in Kuringai Chase National Park. She advertised in the local community and about 50 women from different backgrounds gathered there including a bus with 15 new migrants brought by Rosemary Kariuki. There was a barbecue, damper and billy tea and a quizz about Africa.

"My hope is that some form of regular meetings can be started between local and migrant women to make migrant women feel more at home. We are trying to put news of this in the local press."

Zhanna Petrukovich returned to Moscow after the conference and then visited Romania, where a friend was starting a CoP Circle.

We started a Peace Circle in Baia Mare for 12 women. It is interesting to think about the needs of people with a past like theirs, living in an unfree society for many years. Participants finally started to share their life stories. That changed the mood of the group. There are some emotions regarding their survival in those years and I am discovering some history unknown to me before. One of the most powerful sessions was about forgiveness where we used the apology of Kevin Rudd to Australian aboriginal people, as well as other stories. There were tears in women's eyes.



Rosemary Thwaites from Canberra tells a personal experience:

I am a new resident here after many years in Sydney. The players in the weekly tennis group I have joined are new to me but well known to each other.

Last week my female partner and I were trying to beat two men and I was discussing the score as we changed ends. Hearing me, a woman from the next court called out loudly: "We don't keep score here, Rosemary!" (ie, I was too competitive for a social game.) Stung, I replied: "I do!" "We never have," she said. "We don't do that here."

I felt hurt and even tearful for a moment and thought: "I'm not coming back to this group again, I'm an outsider."

We did not look at each other for the next half hour. Then I remembered all the women at the conference with major tragedies and hurts. Although I am already a grandmother I decided to put my feelings aside and grow up!

Then she and I were put to play together. I greeted her warmly as she walked onto the court. She responded: "I like your hat. It's cute!" And a few minutes later - "Good shot!"

Maybe she had been reflecting too.

"On arriving at the conference I had a wonderful sense of belonging".

Some of the women on this page appear in the conference report; copies can be requested from the IofC office, Email: armaghoffice@dodo.com.au or Phone: 03 9822 1218

'Making a date with God' - Angles on the quiet time

Ever tried to explain the experience and practice of 'Inner Listening' to another person? At the recent lofC Australia National Gathering people pooled their ideas on: ways to describe it; what it does: its effects and uses; how to talk to another person. Here is a collection of suggestions, serious and lighthearted, from the whiteboard (and elsewhere).

Ways of describing Inner Listening:

Making time for Silence. Waiting. Making a date with God. Quality time with God. Discipline...it takes perseverance. Being reflective, not reactive. Not drifting. Letting go. Taking time to settle, and let the deepest things rise up. Writing thoughts down, but not needing to write. Logging onto the "InternalNet". Googling God. Care of the internal environment.

Its effects and uses:

A circuit-breaker and stress-breaker. Connection. Correction. Direction. Inspiration. Being aware of what is happening within and around. Awareness of a purpose and design. We are not random happenings. Daily use of the "four absolute virus checkers" (honesty, purity, love, unselfishness). A decision-making time.

How to talk to people about Quiet Times:

First discover who you are talking to, where they are at. Live deeply into another person's life. After a conflict, suggest a Quiet Time. After this, listen to each other. Our own experience shared; working through struggles; continuing the journey. Tell your own experience of having a Quiet Time and the result. Sharing your "quiet time thoughts" with them. The best way of learning is to actually have a Quiet Time, sometimes in a group.

What some others say:

The Quakers talk about creating a space for God to work within.

Lines from a poem by Nobel Peace Prize winner

Mairead Corrigan Maguire:

Take time to listen to the birds,

The waves,

The wind.

Take time to breathe in the air,

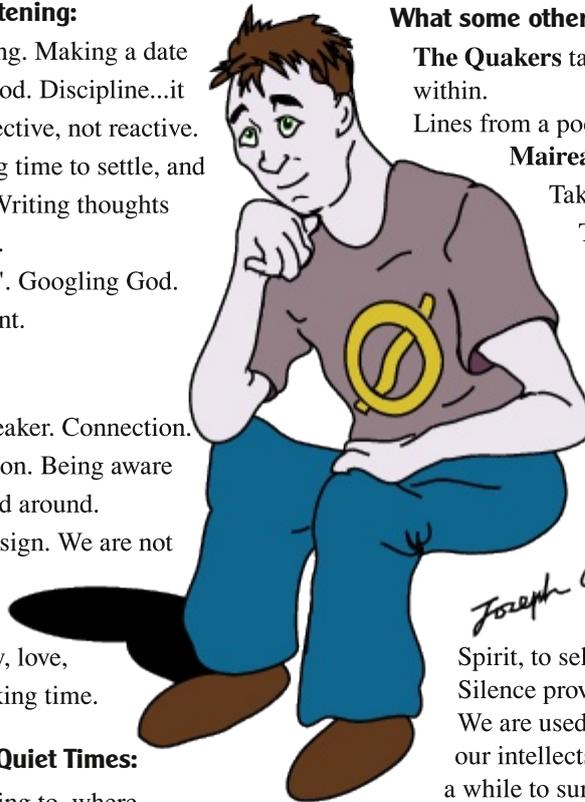
The earth,

The ocean.

Take time to be still,

To be silent,

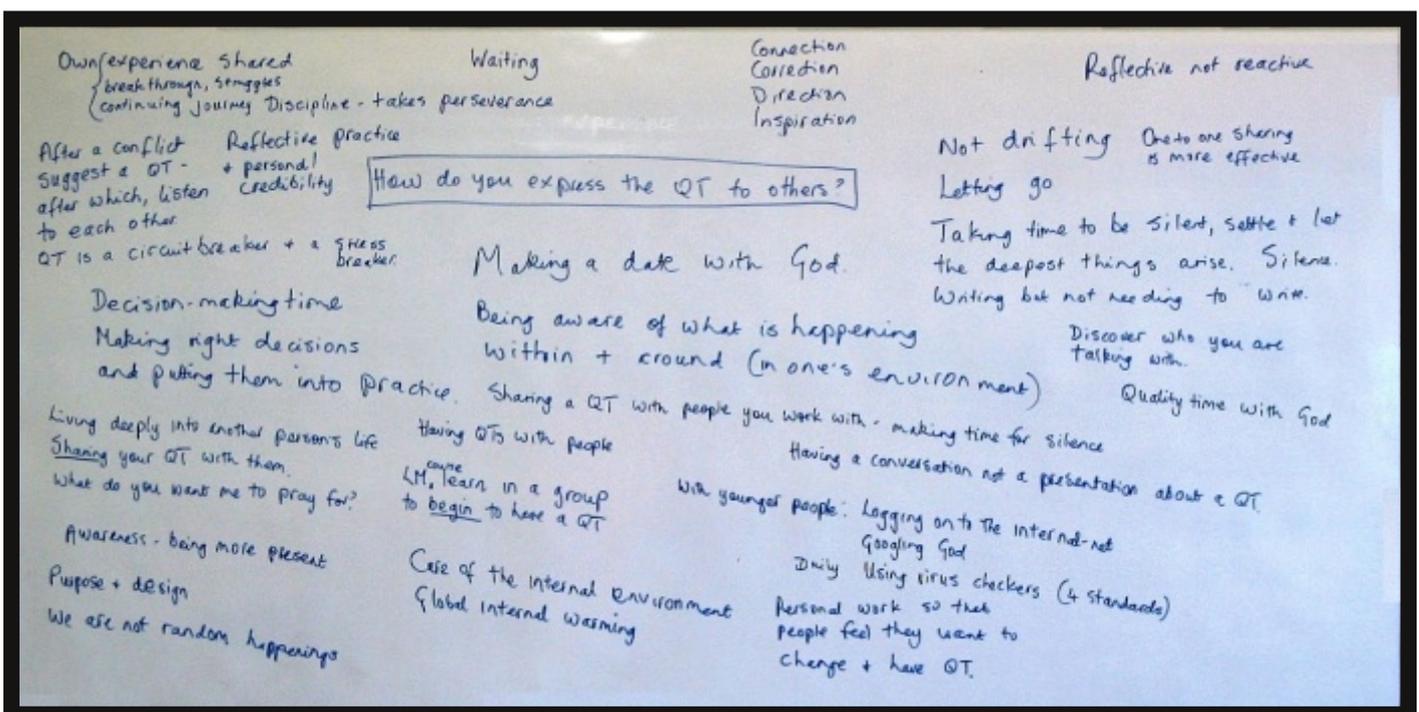
To allow God to fill you up...



Joseph Adams

Kay Lindahl says:

Listening is being fully present - to the Spirit, to self, to others. Listening is a sacred act. Silence provides time for our souls to be present. We are used to being present in our heads, our minds, our intellects. The innermost self may take a while to surface. It is in silence that we begin to know who we are.



The whiteboard

Banking on micro finance

When I decided to leave my paid job to work with Initiatives of Change, I worked with John and Jeanne Faber in the UK and India for three years.

In India John met a student, JS Parthiban, who was participating in an Initiatives of Change musical. Later Parthiban was accepted for a bank job despite not having qualifications. The manager had seen the musical and knew that Parthiban would be an honest worker.

Becoming a branch manager, Parthiban got to know many street vendors and encouraged them to save by taking out bank accounts.

He made micro financing available. In one village families, by obtaining a loan,

were able to buy buffaloes. Today they are selling milk and converting buffalo dung to bio gas, instead of cutting down trees and brewing illicit liquor. The loans are repaid.

When John died in September 2009 he was working on the idea of a documentary about Parthiban and his work for India's poor.

At John's funeral £4,000 were donated which enabled the filming to go ahead. One of the film crew said that the work has been a transforming

experience. One commented on the "stunning visuals" in the first edit.

There will be further production costs (total budget is £7,000), so I have decided to have a financial part in the venture. If others wish to do the same, I am happy to coordinate any gifts.

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You can read more at:
www.guardianweekly.co.uk/?page=editorial&id=1058
- Joyce Fraser

Gold Coast interfaith lecture

"Reconciliation of Spirit - The Path to Inter-religious Dialogue" was a lecture given on the Gold Coast (Qld) on 1 November by Dr Gerard Hall, Assoc. Prof. of Theology, Australian Catholic University, and sponsored by Sea of Faith in Australia and IofC.

The great majority of people who came along were new faces to us, and ecumenical Christianity was well represented.

Several copies of the Imam and Pastor DVD were sold, and there are ongoing discussions about interfaith and Peace Circles.
- Lesley Bryant

Leadership workshop

A day-long National Youth Volunteering Symposium in Parramatta Town Hall was organised by Kuranda Seyit of the Helping Hand project, aiming to attract youth groups, of predominantly Muslim background, towards the area of community service and leadership.

Initiatives of Change was invited to be one of 23 "stall holders". Three hundred students aged 15 and 16, from the area's high schools, flowed through the hall. There were many conversations.

Caux Reports and Creators of Peace Conference Reports were snapped up. In the afternoon we ran an interactive Change and Leadership workshop for 50 of the students.
- Jane Mills

Imam and Pastor study guide

With sales of the DVD The Imam and The Pastor extending into schools and colleges in Australia, as a former teacher I felt there would be value in a supporting document/ study guide.

Many chaplains, teachers, Imams and pastors purchasing the DVD have little extra knowledge of the Nigerian situation or about the two men portrayed.

A copy in a college library could be borrowed by staff or students with even less knowledge or connection.

The A5 four-page guide based on previous writings of Howard Grace and Musa Aliyu and Interfaith Youthcare succinctly addresses these needs.

It also guides the facilitator in setting up a safe place for discussing some key questions fostering deeper understanding of this challenging story. Hopefully it will assist positive action in interfaith dialogue and peacemaking.

- Adele Dingle

The guide can be downloaded from the Australian IofC website at:
www.au.iofc.org/publications

Book Talk

"New Ambassador to the USA records father's memoir," says an announcement from Fremantle Press.

"Australian Ambassador to the United States Kim C. Beazley has recorded the audio version of his father's memoir *Father of the House* for the Association for the Blind - Guide Dogs WA.

"Beazley, who also agreed to be the Association's Ambassador, spent nine weeks recording the memoir. In the Association's media release Beazley said the process was exhausting.

"I was very surprised at how difficult it was. My father was a very modest man; audio recording his book required intense concentration and was very confronting for me," he said." See: www.fremantlepress.com.au/news/101

New Books available this December are:

- Michael Henderson: *No enemy to conquer* \$30 including p&p
- Hennie de Pous-de Jonge: *Reaching for a New world* \$30 including p&p
- Kim Beazley: *Father of the House* (new printing) \$25 including p&p

For orders please contact:

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email: grosvenor.books@optusnet.com.au