



DECEMBER 2021 NO. 314

Dear Friends,

As we come to the end of a busy year, I wish you all the very happiest of festive occasions. It is time to relax and celebrate with family and friends; to draw breath again; to reflect, pause and gain clarity and strength from nature around us.

It is with enormous gratitude that I thank you all for your support and for the wonderful contributions you make in change for a better world.

This being our final Newsbrief for 2021, please read on to discover more of what IofCA has achieved over the past months.

In our final National Monthly Meeting, led by bauble-bedecked Cynthia and Ron Lawler, they posed a final question: What brings you hope? In the delightful sharing that ensued, Lesley Bryant read a poem by Michael Leunig that somehow seems to encapsulate IofC.

"God help us to change.
To change ourselves and to change our world.
To know the need for it.
To deal with the pain of it.
To feel the joy of it.
To undertake the journey without understanding the destination.
The art of gentle revolution.
Amen."
- Michael Leunig

We are looking forward to seeing you all in the new year, where we continue the 'art of gentle revolution.'

Cheery blessings,

Marg

Executive Officer, IofC Australia

FROM OUR COMMUNITY



Creative You! Gala Night

Rob Wood reports:

As we look back on the *Creative You!* Gala Night held on 27 November, there is a lot to give thanks for – a wonderful team to host and share in the presentation, an audience of all ages and backgrounds who were lively and responsive throughout, a tastefully arranged stage set with lights and sound that ensured the message of the *Creative You!* group would get across both to those in the well-filled Armagh ballroom and the large group watching and listening on Zoom.

The five months of preparations for the night have been challenging to say the least. Covid lockdowns meant in person rehearsal had to be cancelled, but the amazing creativity of the groups of art, drama, film/video, writing and music continued unabated with practices being moved online.

The chief guest for the Gala Night was the chairperson of the Victorian Multicultural Commission, Vivien Nguyen, who was a valuable contributor on our change-maker panel at the last *Life Matters* Workshop. She was accompanied by Commissioner, Lizzy Kouth of South Sudanese background who spoke at the end and said, '*Personally I was touched by all the creativity. I was taking notes for myself - what a wisdom inner listening is – I will keep it in my life. What I am learning is that it's wise to shut out all the background noise and really be in the moment. It was a privilege to be here.*'

A feature of the night was also the showing of a short film on the plight of refugees in Australia, created by IofCA staff member Alex Childs. The film highlighted the care being offered by Alex and others to a group of refugee men who have been indefinitely housed in a downtown hotel. Her message was – '*if you want to demonstrate what you feel for the plight of so many in these circumstances, make a friend of one such person.*'

Close to \$6000 was raised on the night. A big thank you to everyone who joined us!

Creators of Peace (CoP) Circle

Tanya Fox, Kay Hunt and **Joyce Fraser** facilitators of the last CoP circle report:

At the CoP Circle held in November 2021, six women whose roots come from Iran, Chile, Sri Lanka, UK and Australia entered into heartfelt discussions on peace, forgiveness, inner listening, and listening to each other. We three facilitators accepted the challenge of conducting our first peace circle on Zoom and enjoyed the information provided by the UK Creators of Peace and the insights from the Draft Manual which expanded our thinking.

The participants had meaningful experiences to share through their life stories and evaluated what this had given to their lives.

'I think we can all give ourselves a big pat on the back for creating an atmosphere of mutual support, safety and respect enabling us to share so much and learn from each other in many personal and profound ways,' - Participant.

With a reunion taking place in January 2020, some were interested in what else COP and IofCA had to offer, and others were keen to use the experience in their own networks to enrich the process.



In Memoriam

Rev Dr Ian R. M. Parsons 22.6.1935 – 11.11.2021

Rev Dr Ian Parsons was a minister of the Uniting Church in Australia. Meeting MRA/Initiatives of Change in the 1970s when he was Chaplain at La Trobe University in Melbourne, he resonated with the concept that 'if you want to change the world then start with yourself,' and the idea of having a morning time of quiet listening to the Inner Voice – a practice which he did as a daily discipline for the rest of his life.

Ian married, Karin, a Swedish full time volunteer with MRA and in between ministry appointments in Australia they spent time in Europe at the Caux Centre for IofC for two years, as well as in Sweden and Moldova. After Ian retired in 1999 they continued their visits to Europe and also visited the newly liberated Eastern Europe countries of Ukraine and Estonia as well as Finland and Russia. They particularly connected with the young people who were looking to the ideas of IofC to make freedom real in their countries.

Many messages of gratitude for Ian have come from Australia and around the world to Karin and her son Erik and wife Cristina (a graduate of the Life Matters Course). Erik and Cristina together with their two children have now moved from their home in Moldova to live in Angaston, South Australia.

In lieu of flowers in memory of Ian, the Parsons family asked that gifts be made to IofCA's First Nations Fund as part of its Trustbuilding Program with First Nations people in Australia. IofC Australia is very appreciative to all who have contributed to this. Gifts through the IofCA website donations button can still be made.

- John Mills



Life Continues to Matter in Mannar

lofCA member **Jeremy Liyanage** writes from Mannar, Sri Lanka:

In August 2015, a lively team of lofC'ers led by Rob and Cheryl Wood and Nigel Heywood parachuted into war-

affected Mannar in northern Sri Lanka, where they ran a context-sensitive version of Life Matters. This laid the foundation for some serious youth work.

Six years later the context is entirely different here in Mannar. The smart phone has introduced levels of vice and immorality that MRA /lofC founder Frank Buchman would have shuddered to comprehend. Failed schooling, addictions and violence, combined with no clear future pathways or aspirations, have led a growing number to take their own lives.

This destruction of a generation has forced our hand and hearts; our fight-back is a program called, *Fighting Fit* – a fight for the body and soul of Mannar's youth. It is a multipronged response to a complex 'wicked problem'. We have opened two gyms for young men and run dance and yoga classes for young women. A drive for the 'body beautiful' is starting to regulate addictions; the 'inner gym workout' series of interactive workshops is alerting young people to the importance of less screen time, more sleep, understanding anger, analysing the influence of social media, and strengthening the higher self; and teaching young people peer counselling skills, so that they can support family and friends to face up to troubling times, are all steps toward regaining their humanity.

Fighting Fit – a ten year initiative – is a reincarnation of Life Matters and a living ode to Frank Buchman's quest for a moral revolution.

A Seasonal Message

A poem submitted by lofCA member, **Ted Holmes**, 'Remembering that Christmas is more than about traditional festivities.'

A Worker's Carol

*Who is this Christ, this Son of Man, invader from beyond,
who comes to teach, to heal, redeem, God-with-us Son of God?*

*His outreach to a fallen world, to lift, its burdens bear,
is fraught with mercy, righteousness, supreme beyond compare.*

*The Torah know and live, fulfill with justice, mercy, faith;
you have received: now pass it on, the least to serve with grace.*

*We labour on t'wards mastery: to teachers, learners be,
the old, the new to model, meld as in God's Trinity¹.*

*And thus as Christmas rounds again – our Being stirred, renewed –
God's purposes to own, fulfill with love divine imbued.*

1 Matthew 13.52

Introductions

Saheem Wani, our new Marketing and Communications Manager, has worked extensively in the field of communications and project management, delivering large transformational programs in the fields of organisational change and marketing. Her work experience of over 10 years includes working for leading charities and businesses in Australia and in India. Saheem brings with her a wealth of knowledge to lead and support IofC Australia's growing marketing and communications projects. Welcome on board Saheem!



Farewells

Keegan Brice leaves the role of Event Coordinator at IofCA this month to pursue his passion of working in the area of refugee welfare. Thank you Keegan for all your work coordinating events, especially for engaging new volunteers, at a very busy time for IofCA. All the very best to you for the future.

We say a fond farewell to **Leela Gray** who volunteered with IofCA as the Instagram coordinator for the last six months. Leela enhanced our social media presence with her creativity and insights. Thank you Leela, and all the very best to you in your studies and work!

LATEST ON au.iofc.org



Cultivating Allies in Turruk

'Growing a community of practice in trustbuilding can be likened to cultivating pearls,' writes Trustbuilding Project Manager, Sarah Naarden. 'You explore the voids, nooks, benchmarks and barriers and within it you see the emergence of "pearls of wisdom" that then you string together. Just as the pearl emerges from the grit of the sea floor, the courage to be vulnerable unravels the layers in each other's truth telling.' Read Sarah's reflections [here](#).

Soul Food – A Community of Practice

The Creators of Peace community in Sydney has continued to support each other over the years. Gatherings with shared lunch, talks, discussions and working groups have been a regular feature. Above all it is the friendship and support that they give each other in times of need that is most valuable.

[Read more](#)



In Conversation: Carol Vale on *Makarrata*

'If more people understood the graciousness of the *Makaratta* process that was handed over, it would change minds about what needs to be done to enable it.' Carol Vale, a Dunghutti woman from Armidale NSW was the guest speaker at the Creators of Peace Monthly Speaker series in December. Carol shared deep insights into the origins, purpose and meaning of *Makarrata*; a gift of Indigenous trust, to heal and make peace after facing the facts of past wrongs and then live again in peace.

Read more about what she said and listen to a recording of her talk [here](#).

SEE ALL NEWS

SAVE THE DATE

- **Creators of Peace Speaker Series**

Saturday 5 February 2022 2–4 PM AEDT

The monthly CoP speaker series will continue in the new year with the first session in February. Details of the speaker for the session will be available in the new year.

- **Creating Space February 2022 Gathering**

Monday 7 February 2022 7–8.30 PM AEDT

A monthly gathering for learning, journeying and sharing together will recommence for 2022 in February.

- **Life Matters Workshop**

Friday 11 March – Monday 14 March 2022

The first LM workshop for 2022 takes place at Armagh. This is a three-day residential workshop that gives

participants the tools and drive to make positive change in their lives. Find out more about Life Matters [here](#) or email [Rob Wood](#). More details of how to register for the workshop will be available in January.

• **Australian Aboriginal Art Auction 2022 – Sharing Stories of Reconciliation**

Thursday 24 March 2022

This immersive event celebrating the world's oldest living culture, will highlight works of art by indigenous women artists from Central Australia's Utopia region, including Gracie Morton Pwerle, Kathy Petyarre and Bessie Petyarre, and will raise funds for Initiatives of Change Australia's Trustbuilding Program. The event will also feature a smoking ceremony and welcome to country by Uncle Shane Charles, *Djirri Djirri* dancers, and indigenous food. More Information will be available in mid-January. **Save the date!**

SEE ALL EVENTS

JOIN US

Show up. Take part. Volunteer. Give.

Help us build momentum for change.

Join our monthly Creating Space sessions for mindfulness and mutual support. **Take part** or help out with an upcoming program or event. **Follow us** on social media: more people will get to know us when you share and comment on posts—we want to hear from you!

You can always [contact us](#) to learn about opportunities to volunteer.

DONATE



Our new project Tailoring Tales will help empower Hazara women in Australia's Afghan community, and you can help! Your donation will support Hazara women to build confidence and independence, and promote social inclusion.

You can also continue to donate to our project with First Nations communities—Our Uluru Response, Trustbuilding Project.

Please donate [here](#) or contact the [Treasurer](#) to send a cheque or make a bank transfer. Check out the options on our website—you can specify where you want your contribution to go.

Every donation, no matter the size, makes a difference.

DONATE NOW



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Newsbriefs is published by Initiatives of Change Australia (ABN 22 004 350 789)

226 Kooyong Road, Toorak, VIC 3142, Australia, au.iofc.org.

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