

AECSD GATHERING (21-23 Sept 2012)

Opening address

Good evening, I am Marie Thompson. On behalf of the Australian Ecumenical Council for Spiritual Direction I welcome each of you to our Third National Gathering. It is wonderful to have you here.

I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners and custodians of this land, the Wurundjeri people. I pay my respects to elders past, present and future for they hold the memories, traditions, culture and hopes of indigenous Australia. I also acknowledge our own ancestors and their contribution to the story and culture of this country.

In a few minutes we will take the time to bless this Gathering in prayer and to call attention to the sacredness of this space. It is this here that we will share our giftedness and reflect upon what it means to participate in the creative energy of God's spirit at work in the universe.

Anne Hillman in her book, *Awakening the Energies of Love*, writes:

Transformation is born at the great hinges of time-one like ours in which everything is fundamentally changing.

It is during these times of transformation that we are called to be intentional in listening for and engaging with the creative energy of God's spirit.

Like the indigenous people who nurtured this land and our ancestors who travelled here, we are called to incarnate the spirit of God at work in this time and place.

As Diarmuid O'Murchu reminds us:

The creative energy of God's spirit is within and without, and everywhere it seethes with creativity. Yet it does not overwhelm or absorb us. It works through a gentle but pervasive influence. It works through a process of transformation.

In a wonderful article entitled: Spiritual Direction and the New Cosmology, Terrance Moran points out that this holy energy that set the galaxies swirling is the same energy that spiritual directors sense in the space between them and a directee.

The spiritual direction relationship mirrors to the world that the creative energy of God's spirit is not about power or control but rather about new ways of being in relationship.

The challenge before us is to create a sacred web of interconnectedness in our world.

What is the creative energy of God's spirit wanting to say to us as a spiritual direction community at this time in our graced history?

What shape is this new web of interconnectedness taking?

Are we being called to engage in new ways of being in relationship with each other in our ministry as spiritual directors?

Who are the people in our society who are asking for our attention?

What influence will the ministry of spiritual direction have in healing the earth?

How will our future academic study and research inform our understanding of being interconnected?

These questions remind us that the creative energy of God will always propel us into the future and ask us to step into mystery.

What will we need for this journey into transformation?

I would like to suggest that as people of faith we will need to once again **re-member and be moved by the wisdom of our Christian story.**

This weekend will invite us to reflect upon our Christian story and the wisdom that Jesus offers to those who are willing to leave familiar shores.

We will also need faithful practice of and commitment to **silence, stillness and solitude.**

It is in this contemplative practice that will be able to distinguish what is truly of God as well as hear where the creative energy of God's spirit is calling us.

As O' Murchu suggests:

When we learn to trust the creative energy of God's spirit, then, I suspect, the eyes of our heart will be opened as never before. Intuitively, we will sense and know a wisdom greater than our own calls us into the future.

As I look around the room I am once again reminded that we are a gifted community with so much to share with our world.

May we be generous, courageous and creative in our response.