



# WORDSMITHS NEWSLETTER

21.2

May, 2021

Welcome to the May edition of the Wordsmiths newsletter. How quickly the year is progressing. Only yesterday it was summer and now we're already into the last month of Autumn. For me, the one reliable aspect to Melbourne's weather is that we have four distinct seasons (even if they do all happen in one day!) Each season brings change and these changes are reflected in our clothes, lifestyle, culture and writings.

I was recently invited to join a committee to help plan a women's retreat in May. The retreat theme is 'For Everything...a season' (Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8). I wasn't sure what I could contribute to a committee of people I was yet to meet, but it soon became apparent that my suggestion of using poetry for discussion and reflection, fitted the program exactly.

When I started to look for suitable poems to fit the theme, I realised anew just how perfectly poetry reflects the seasons of the year, of life, of culture and of faith. Another member of the committee read up on Indigenous seasons – many more than just the four known to our culture. In all cultures there is a season for everything and in poetry we can describe in well-chosen words our personal journey through the seasons.

The committee will select from my suggested list which poems they feel will be most appropriate for reflection at the retreat. For some participants, poetry will be a new experience. For others familiarity with poetry will be a comfort. Poetica Christi Press has provided copies of past anthologies so that retreat participants can take a book of poetry home with them at the end of the day. Hopefully those who have never written a poem before will be encouraged to pen some words of hope, faith, love, or just joy in celebrating and acknowledging their seasons.

Leigh

## MEETINGS

Unfortunately, the February Wordsmiths meeting had to be cancelled due to a 5-day Covid lockdown called by the Victorian Government.

**Maree Silver** led the March meeting which was held at Jean Sietzema's home. Eleven poets attended and Maree read a selection of poems by former Wordsmiths, including Aileen Kelly (*Another Station*); Mary McDonald (*A Voice Sang*); Kathryn Hamann (*Tapping at the Well; Return*); Joan Ackland (*Clair de lune*); Don Helmore (*Beach; Suds; Roses and Ahead*).

**Jean Sietzema-Dickson** led the April meeting. Jean provided background on Dame Mary Gilmore and read nine of her poems to give the group an idea of how diverse Gilmore's poetry is. Gilmore was born in 1865 and died in 1962 at the age of 97. She wrote thousands of poems and was still writing at the end of her life. Gilmore was a member of New Australia – a Utopian socialist settlement in Paraguay founded by the New Australian Movement. Her first collection of poetry was published in 1910. Jean read *My Bonny Love; Kissin'*; *War; Nationality; Of Wonders; Old Botany Bay; The World of Dreams; Toll and Remembrance*.

## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Month	Leader	Afternoon tea
May 8	Peter W	Cath, Cecily, Daryl
June 12	Carolyn	Florence, Rebecca, Greg
July 10	Florence	Maree N, Leigh, Jean

## LAUNCH OF JOY IN THE MORNING



On Sunday February 28, Poetica Christi Press launched their 53rd anthology *Joy in the Morning*.

38 people attended the launch which was held at the Box Hill Community Arts Centre.

Dr Anne Elvey launched the anthology, giving an insightful summation of the poetry she had been privileged to judge. Anne's report was printed in the 1/2021 edition of Wordsmiths newsletter but if anyone missed reading the report and would like a copy, please email Leigh Hay, [treehousepoet318@gmail.com](mailto:treehousepoet318@gmail.com)

Peter White read the winning poem by Toni Brisland (*My grandfather's blessing*) and twenty poets read their poems. Cathy Altmann and Angela Chandler entertained on violin and piano, Peter White acted as MC and Janette Fernando, Managing Editor of PCP, welcomed and closed the launch.

Thanks to a Covid-safe environment, afternoon tea was served by Roger Fernando and Graeme Silver.

For copies of *Joy in the Morning*, email Maree Silver [poeticachristi@optushome.com.au](mailto:poeticachristi@optushome.com.au)

## MEMBER NEWS

### VALE DON HELMORE

Don Helmore joined our poetry group about ten years ago. Having spent some years as a restaurateur he could find something in common with anyone he met. He spent his leisure in painting and had a keen eye for detail, which he brought to his poems. He had only started writing poetry after his wife died, but we were amazed at how rapidly his writing developed, partly because he read voraciously. Listening to his work I encouraged him to put a



collection together for publication. This he did and *Behold* sold out his first print run and more giving any profits to Prison Fellowship. Before he died, Maree Silver and Leigh Hay spent countless hours putting together two more collections of his poems: *Beyond* and *Solace*. We will let you know when we have copies available for sale.

Don was a perfect gentleman, a delight to be with and a person we will go on missing.

jmsd

## VALE JOAN ACKLAND

Joan Ackland, who died in December 2020 at the age of 100, was a prolific writer of both prose and poetry and left an unfinished biography of her father when she died.

Janette and I first met Joan at the launch of *The Whirling Spindle*, a book she edited, commissioned and published by the National Council of Women and launched at the Melbourne Town Hall. In 1991 she launched our first set of poem cards for Poetica Christi Press and two of our books. In spite of her busy life Joan was a great encourager of our publishing and spent time helping me edit my book *Sing to the King*.

Joan had a collection of poetry, *At the Wind's hand*, published in 2007. She was a keen yachtswoman and active until her last couple of years. Her going is a great loss to the writing community of Melbourne.

jmsd

## 2021 ANTHOLOGY

Now that the 2021 PCP competition has closed, we're inviting any Wordsmiths who have poems they'd like to submit on the theme SILVER LININGS to send them in to [poetica@iprimus.com.au](mailto:poetica@iprimus.com.au) to be considered for inclusion in the anthology alongside those chosen by the judge. Limit of 3 poems.

## WELLSPRING CENTRE

**Mapping the Soul with the Enneagram**  
**Thursdays: 6 May to 17 June 2021, 9am to 2pm. Facilitators: Peter Bentley and Tim McCowan. Location: By Zoom**

A spiritually-based understanding of personality which gives clues to how our spirituality speaks to the everyday aspects of our living and involvement within the world. A unit offered in partnership with Whitley College at both undergraduate and post-graduate level. Auditing options are also available.

**The Art of Listening during Pandemics: From a Poet's Gaze. Fridays: 14 May, 28 May and 11 June, 11am to 1pm**

**Facilitator: Xiaoli Yang. Location:** By Zoom  
A series of three general workshops, which may also be taken as Professional Development for Spiritual Directors. Come to all three if you can, or one or two as you are able.

Spiritual formation and companionship have entered a kind of 'new normal' as the world events of the coronavirus, Black Lives Matter (BLM) and struggles between Superpowers take place in our turbulent times. The creation is groaning and crying for its liberation. When there are so many noises in our world: economically, environmentally, politically, culturally, racially—the whole cosmos—is lamenting in great pain. How are we listening? What are the pathways and characteristics of attentive listening that spiritual formation and companionship embody? The three mini-workshops explore the art of listening during the pandemics of 2020 in the context of multi-cultural Australia. Through a poetic lens, these workshops articulate the deep listening by means of the verbal, the body and the silence during periods of lockdown. It draws the wisdom of a cultural premise of the Chinese etymology 'Ting' (Listening, 聽) and the Australian Aboriginal community's understanding of 'tapping into the deep spring' in dialogue with poetry, sacred texts, mystics, theologians and scientists. The essential issues of collective lament, ethnicity, race, culture and virtual communications are considered. In the multi-faceted engagements, we are invited to listen to God, creation, others and self in our own formation and in the companionship with others before the eternal 'Listener'.  
**Cost:** \$31.50 or \$26.50 (members/concession) per session.

<https://www.wellspringcentre.org.au>

## MELBOURNE WRITERS HUB

**The Melbourne Writers Hub** is a group of professional writers and book designers, of which Poetica Christi Press is a member. For advice on editing, graphic design and publishing, or for more information on MWH, visit <https://www.melbwritershub.com> or email [melbwritershub@gmail.com](mailto:melbwritershub@gmail.com)

## COMPETITIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

### **The Kathryn Purnell Poetry Prize 2021**

1st prize: \$200, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$125 3<sup>rd</sup> prize \$75  
Closes: Friday 4<sup>th</sup> June 2021. A biennial award for a poem of no longer than 50 lines. Open to all women poets, the award is managed by the Society of Women Writers Victoria in memory of the late poet Kathryn Purnell. Fees: Per entry – \$10 (members of SWW in all states) \$15 (non-members) OR 3 entries \$20 (members of SWW) \$30 (non-members.) For an entry form email [suzannabenson@gmail.com](mailto:suzannabenson@gmail.com)

### **The Bruce Dawe National Poetry Prize**

Entries are open for the Bruce Dawe National Poetry Prize. The 2021 winner will receive \$3000 and two highly commended entrants will be awarded \$500 each. Competition closes Friday 4 June @ 4pm. For further information : <https://www.usq.edu.au/study/faculty-events/2021/02/bruce-dawe-prize>

### **Wyndham Writing Awards**

Three categories : short story, flash fiction and poetry. Shortlisted entries will be published in the Wyndham Writing Awards Anthology 2021. Judge is Lee Kofman and entries close 30 June 2021. For more information : <https://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/writingawards>

### **2021 ACU Prize for Poetry**

Inspired by the Catholic Church's long-standing tradition as a patron of the Arts, the ACU Prize for Poetry was established in 2013. The 2021 theme for entries is *Resilience*, and a fee of \$25 per poem applies. Closing date is 5 July 2021. For more information : <https://artsandculture.acu.edu.au/initiatives-and-prizes/acu-prize-for-poetry>



## POETS' CORNER

### Autumn

As the cold chill of winter  
seeps into nature's heart  
the colourful dying of autumn  
creates a beautiful display.  
The sight of tinted mists  
and patches of damp pervade.  
Blends of browning abound  
as leaves withdraw their sap,  
the zephyr's zest is felt amid  
the slant of lowering sunbeams.

Autumn –  
a chocolate coated butterfly  
awaiting hibernation.

© Don Helmore (from *Beyond*)

### Solitude

at the end of each day  
may i come here to pray  
and at each day's start  
surrender my heart

my soul, spirit, will and joy  
for your services to employ  
o Lord,  
let us be in peaceful accord

© Peter White (from *Joy in the morning*)

### connecting

another morning spent in  
frivolously zooming  
around the world

no planes, trains, buses  
or stuffy hotels  
in my itinerary

rather the joy  
of being  
a 'baby zoomer'

© Carolyn Vimpani (from *Joy in the morning*)

### Morning's Joys

following dawn  
the joys of morning  
welcome the day

escape from  
the terrors of night  
into the light

freedom movement  
rational thought  
with self-control

join with others  
jump into  
life's activities  
morning's joys

© PG Baker (from *Joy in the morning*)

### The visitor

It is a morning without light as viral zombies  
stamp the streets  
and troopers strafe the roads with  
accusations.  
Curtains turn their backs,  
drape fear.  
You arrive with a grin  
of doorbell. I open arms  
crave for a face that speaks  
and sings, a mouth in a banner  
of rose. Our bodies press,  
hug, hold,  
not as lovers, just friends.  
Oasis of connection  
in a wilderness of never tough,  
in a desert that sizzles with an unseen beat of  
virus.  
Sun darts in that moment  
as you wend onwards,  
your bike bell waving farewell.  
And I am left to roll  
the taste of that memory  
plum-warm around my tongue.

© Graeme M Turner (from JITM)

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Send any news for the August newsletter to  
treehousepoet318@gmail.com by July 15.  
Edited by Leigh Hay & Janette Fernando