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The WATAC Road is Made By Walking The WATAC Inc. Committee—Pam Williamson writes:

As I have embarked on a new part of WATAC's journey as a member of the WATAC Inc Committee I have felt empowered, buoyed up, stimulated by the gifts that we share as women and as WATACers. The committee believe that they have the commitment, faith and energy to steer WATAC to an authentic revitalisation and renewal. This is exciting. There is much optimism, energy and hope. At the same time I feel afraid. Afraid because we the committee cannot do this alone. Afraid because I see so much need for WATAC in our church and I know that if we do not continue to speak for women who will? If we do not raise our voices we will "collude with the powers of silence." We will be in the church and not believe all that the church can be, we will accept so much less. Afraid because there is much to do. So this is crunch time.

You have received news of the WATAC forum on the 24th of September which is the opportunity for all to contribute to the evolution of WATAC. We hope that from the forum we will gain some new insights and have our energy further augmented. We as WATAC have to do this with all our hearts or the next generation will not get the opportunity to experience church as it can be. We have the vision. Do we have the will? Yes!

Thankyou if you have responded to the invitation. If you have not indicated your intention to come please do so **TODAY**, or if you have not considered coming to the forum please do so, **everybody counts**. We have engaged the services of a skilled facilitator in Nicole Mockler. The afternoon promises to be one that is engaging and hope filled. I hope to see many of you there to reflect and share together and to plan exciting things for our future.

**“Gracious God hear us into speech,
speak us into acting and through us recreate our world.”**

I have just finished reading two books. One by Timothy Radcliff OP entitled *What is the point of being Christian?* The other *In the Heart of the Temple* by Joan Chittister is one that I know many WATACers have read or are reading. Both books are great for the mind, the heart and the soul. Both books reflect on the need for an alternative vision for the church if it is to remain faithful, and both books call us to have courage. I would like to share with you a small quote from each of these books. I have found myself going back again and again to these quotes over the last few months as I have been reflecting on my personal, WATAC and church stories. I hope that they might be useful to others.

Timothy Radcliff writes “ *We must give each other courage and renounce collusion with the powers of silence, the powers of the tomb.*” (P211). Joan Chittister says, “ *I stay in the church, a restless pilgrim, not because I don't believe what the church has taught me but precisely because I do.*”(P152)

What becomes of women in the Catholic Church will dictate what becomes of the church itself”
Angela Bonavioglia

The WATAC Road is Made By Walking—cont.

What a joy it is to be able to share with you the news that WATAC has been able to employ a part-time secretary, Jenny Frisardi. Jenny is now the contact person for WATAC; the WATAC phone/fax number is: 02.4735.5075 and the email is still watac@watac.net . Jenny is a teacher, a mother, a WATAC supporter and she is enthusiastic about working for WATAC. It seems we are on the edge of a new beginning which is very exciting.

Since Maureen Watterson has agreed to continue to be our Subscription Secretary you should continue to send Annual Subs to her: 9 Casey Close Kurri Kurri 2327, Ph: 02.4937.2019 Fax: 02.4936.1109 email: maureen@watac.net.

The next step is our gathering at St Scholastica's College, Glebe on Sunday 24th September. Make sure you "pull out all stops" to get there because WATAC needs YOU to put your thinking and energy into enabling the future.

The WATAC Inc. Committee has met several times and is carrying forward the tasks needed to enable future WATAC events to come together. These include a NCCA Women's Inter-Faith evening at NSW Parliament House on 19th September; the WATAC meeting at St Scholastica's College on Sunday, 24th September; a WATAC week-end at Mt St Benedict's Pennant Hills on 11th & 12th November and a session for Yr 11 & 12 students at NSW Parliament House on Tuesday 7th November: Women Speaking from Their Faith Tradition—a Dialogue.

REFOCUSING AND REVITALISING WATAC—A FORUM

DATE: Sunday 24th September

TIME: 1-00pm—4-00pm

VENUE: St Scholastica's College, 2 Avenue Road, Glebe

FACILITATOR: Nicole Mockler

The aim of this forum is to share the wisdom and energy you have to assist us in planning for the future. This will entail reflecting on the implications of the Survey Data and the vision of WATAC, its aim and objective and using this information to plan practically how we will proceed for 2006 and beyond.

We ask that you mark this important event in your calendar and return the following slip or phone, email or fax your intention to attend by Monday 18th September.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact Details: _____

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With Love We Celebrate Their Lives

During the month of August many of us, involved in WATAC, have been touched by the death of some of our friends and relatives:

June Skinner was a wonderful WATAC-er for many years. She came to numerous WATAC events—conferences, group meetings, luncheons at Parliament House and she attended our most recent AGM at Glebe. Sadly June died in Manly hospital recently, and one of her sons, Julian, asked WATAC to organize her farewell prayer at the Crematorium on 16th August. What a precious moment of life we shared in saying good-bye to June.

Simone Kennedy a young and truly beautiful woman, daughter, wife, mother, sister and teacher enriched the life of each of us who were graced to have encountered her. The Engadine parish and schools celebrated her life and honoured her death magnificently on Thursday, 3rd August.

Mary Farrugia is mother of Margaret Keyes who is the key person of the Engadine WATAC group. It is Marg who contacts everyone in the group regularly. Mary decided to say good-bye to her family and leave us all sad but celebrating a wonderful life which she lived with energy and joy; we gathered on Friday, 11th August to farewell Mary, and to support her family.

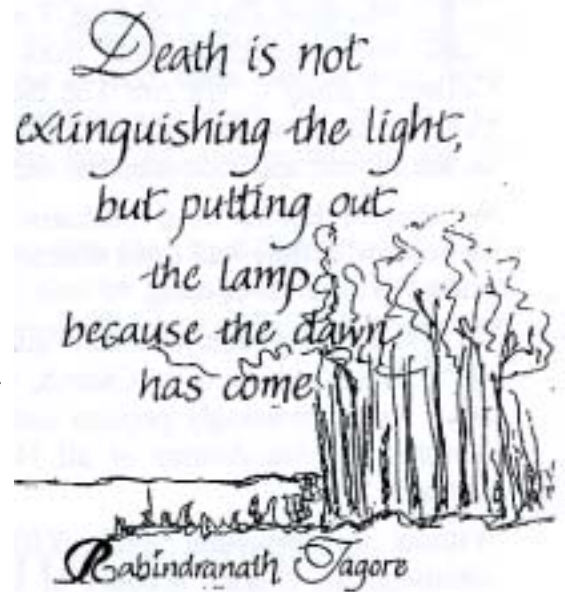
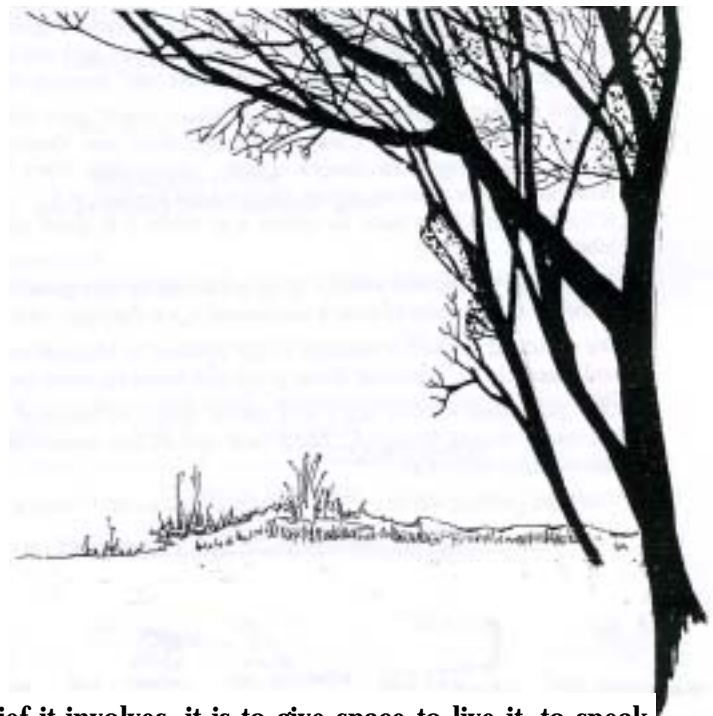
Norah Griffith mother of Veronica, a Good Samaritan Sister and long time WATAC supporter, entered into eternal life on 3rd August and she was beautifully celebrated by her family and friends.

Nicola Mudge the daughter of Gwen and Peter who have been WATAC-ers for many years. Nicola was a precious nine year old who, sadly, had an inoperable brain tumour. WATAC offers the family our deepest care at this very sad moment of life and death.

Using the words of Michael Morwood let us honour the precious life of each of these people:

*We take leave of our sisters
in the belief that they live on
in the Spirit of Life and Love
so evident in their life among us
We take leave grateful
for the many wonderful ways
they allowed the Spirit of Life and Love
to be expressed in human form.*

*In their lives we saw
the Breath of Life
become human
In their death we believe
the people we greatly loved
enter into the fullness
of the Breath of Life
May all that we loved about them
continue to find expression
in the ways we love one another
and face whatever the future holds. Amen*



To celebrate death, then, is not to deny the grief it involves, it is to give space to live it, to speak about it and even to sing of it. It is to give mutual support, looking the reality in the face and placing all in the Heart of God in deep trust. Jean Vanier

Being Eucharist for Our World

The Milton-Ulladulla group's topic this month was Eucharist and this discussion was led by Margaret Day and Kath Prendergast. Margaret commenced the morning session with a well-researched paper from Frank Anderson's book entitled *Eucharist*. We listened to Colleen Fulmer's 'We Are The Body of Christ', which set the theme very well. We looked at Paul's letter from Corinthians 11:20-26, and quotations from Mark, Matthew and Luke's gospels on the subject and compared the various readings which led us into Frank Anderson's book.

We learned that the word 'eucharist' is a Greek term translating the Hebrew word 'berakah' which in Hebrew culture had three distinct meanings, interchangeable when used and meaning either to praise, to thank or to bless.

Franks Anderson says that 'unless we recover the living richness of berakah, so familiar to Jesus and the early Church, we will never grasp the dimensions of meaning that lie under our increasingly popular use of the name Eucharist' and that... 'in some ways Berakah captures the foundations of all Hebrew faith in God: an abiding sense of appreciation and gratitude.

Without this profound grasp of God's goodness, no loving response is possible.' Anderson comments on Mark's account of the miracle of the loaves and fishes and links this event to Eucharist: 'Then he took..., said the blessing, broke the loaves and began handing them to his disciples to distribute....' Anderson says there are four verbs in this eucharistic formula. 'took, said, broke, handing' and explains these four verbs in more detail:

- 'we take 'our bread - (or our time, our talents, our possessions, our lives);
- we take such gifts appreciatively (we 'raise our eyes to heaven', and thank, or bless, God for them);
- we then break the gifts (our time, our talents, our possessions, our lives);
- we hand the gifts to others - give them - that they in turn might enjoy a life fully human.'

This changes our understanding of this whole dimension of Eucharist. It certainly means much more than just 'going to Mass' or fulfilling the Sunday obligation! The discussion during and following the excerpts from Anderson's book were very deep and meaningful. I'm sure I speak for all gathered that we learned a great deal about the 'real' meaning of Eucharist.

After breaking for another typical 'Watac' lunch (good food, wine and conversation), we read through Kath's prepared excerpts from Jean Vanier's 'Drawn into the Mystery of Jesus through the Gospel of John.' Again Jean Vanier's thoughts on Eucharist links Anderson's verbs of taking, saying, breaking and handing, to a deeper meaning of eucharist, where it's sharing and being there for others at all times, it is about giving ourselves away to and for others.

Some of us wondered if perhaps being a Catholic in days gone by was easier than it is now we know the true meaning of what it is all about! It is a challenge we have to face every day.

We ended our day with a beautiful liturgy prepared by Margaret and gave thanks for our blessings and especially our wonderful Watac group and shared the bread and wine with each other.

Our group here want to say a very special thanks to Margaret and Kath for such a thought-provoking session, Bernice for being there with us, and Annette and Helen for sharing their very special place with us all.

Our next meeting will be on 14 October and the topic is 'I dream a Church...'. *Anna Flynn*

WATAC Conference 2007

We have booked the Conference Centre at Canterbury Race Course for our next Conference on Saturday, Sunday, 21st & 22nd July 2007. Joan Chittister will be our keynote speaker on the Saturday and Mary Malone, an English feminist theologian and author will be our Sunday keynote speaker. We are very blessed to have been able to book these two wonderful women for our next Conference, so please make sure you mark the date in your diary and spread the word far and wide—we want it to be the WATAC Conference to top all Conferences.

We have agreed to share Joan Chittister, while she is in Sydney, with the Good Samaritan Sisters, who are celebrating their 150th Anniversary. Hence Joan will also be giving a public lecture on Thursday or Friday (19th or 20th), which you will be able to attend. As soon as the date and venue are arranged I will give you these details.

Wonderful WATAC Week-end 11th—12th November

Don't mess this very worthwhile event if you can possibly fit it into your busy life. We have been able to book Mt St Benedict's, Pennant Hills for Saturday and Sunday, 11th & 12th November. You can just come by day or choose to stay over on Saturday night. The formal day programme will commence at 10 a.m. on Saturday and finish at 5.30 p.m. If you opt to stay-over there will then be an enjoyable meal and an informal and fun night.

The Sunday programme will commence at 9 a.m. and conclude at 3 p.m. This brings you to decision-time and your choices are:

Saturday only 10 a.m.—5.30 p.m. Cost: \$65

Saturday 10 a.m.—5.30 p.m. Cost: \$125
plus Sunday 9 a.m.—3 p.m.

Live-in whole week-end Cost: \$150

BOOKING FORM

Return by Friday 3rd November 2006

I wish to book for:

Full Weekend with accommodation at \$150

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Saturday plus Sunday at \$125

Please tick you choice.

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“Good Catholic Girls” - Penshurst WATAC

At our last meeting there was much hilarity, as well as serious analysis, as we read together the chapter on the plight of divorced Catholics in *Good Catholic Girls* by Angela Bonavoglio. It brings to light the amazing illogicality of the Annulment process and the sadness and anger over the claim that the sacramental marriage of a couple never existed, leaving the non-petitioning partner devastated. We also read the moving tribute to Women’s Work about 12 women from diverse cultures and times represented in a contemporary setting of the Last Supper, painted by Mary Lynn Sheetz.

We have had four meetings since our last “news”. In May we met at Betty Kavanagh’s and watch an uplifting DVD about the life of a Thai Buddhist nun who had a career as a well-known model, left behind this glamorous life and became a novice Buddhist nun. She became involved with young, unmarried, pregnant women and managed to collect enough money to open a refuge (rare in Thailand) where young women would be cared for during their pregnancies. A mature nun now, she is revered in Thailand.

At our July meeting we read the article from the Newsletter and were informed and electrified by the excellent case made by Sister Elizabeth Julian, a Mercy nun, at the Bishop’s Conference in Aotearoa, N.Z., for a change of mind in Church leaders on the need for women’s full participation in the Church.

Joan Brown

“Light Years” – And The Dance Goes On

At our last gathering the Wagga group began with a ritual on the sacredness of water. I used a song from the CD Walk Lightly (Songs inspired by Catholic Earthcare Australia Louise Robards and Mark Raue). The song was called ‘Gift of Water’. This gave us time for reflection. We then moved to Clare Pettigrew’s ‘Light Years’ from *And the Dance Goes On*. Most of us found ourselves inspired by her story which led to much sharing and discussion. Our group would like to support those who have been so generous in taking up new positions. Be assured of our prayer support.

Ros Bennett

“There is Reason to Hope” NCCA Gender Commission

The recent weeks in July, August have been busy ones on many fronts, but many days have been well spent with grass-roots groups exploring their concerns, hopes, dreams and commitment to action. In late July, Alicia Simpfendorfer and I flew to Hobart to work with the Tasmanian Council of Churches on an “Audacity to Hope” Workshop. There were twenty two of us from a wide variety of faiths at the gathering, held in the Salvation Army meeting rooms.

It was a very enthusiastic group and it seems there was some energy to put into a possible follow-up meeting early next year. This is really good news.

The Gender Commission met on Saturday, 12th August to share and plan. It is always energising to share the outcomes of the Workshops we have undertaken and to catch up with our various church activities. There is to be a NCCA National Forum in 2007 so the Gender Commission is planning to develop a paper summarizing the outcomes from our Workshops which will represent a national voice of ecumenical grass-roots groups of women.

We also plan to take time early in 2007 to do a theological reflection on this summary of people’s hopes for a future church. It will be very interesting to see what emerges and we will happily share these outcomes when we have put them all together in 2007. This is very much a “work in progress”.

We have organised a Melbourne Workshop on Saturday, 21st October and two in Western Australia in November: Bunbury on Saturday, 25th November, and Perth on Sunday, 26th November.

Exploring “An Australian Theology”

Wollongong Saturday Group

At our June and July meeting we discussed a chapter from *Developing An Australian Theology* – Wendy Chew’s *Cosmology and Ecology: the way ahead* challenged us to rethink our lives as Christians living in the 21st century in Australia, and to see ourselves as ‘part of an intricate web of life, an integral part of a seamless and sacred universe’.

Some challenging questions, prepared by Elizabeth, enabled us over both months to explore the journey from our old beliefs about the earth to our current understanding and relationship. We were engaged by Chew’s three fundamental values: differentiation, interiority and communion. Ecophilosopher Henry Skolimowski asserts ‘that the most appropriate way we can worship our creator ... is to nurture and protect the Earth’.

In June we concluded our meeting with a Sacred Water liturgy – a ritual to celebrate the gift of fresh water. Using blue fabric to represent the background of a river running through the land and stones and pebbles and a glass of clean water on one side of the river to represent the small number of people who have access to the main sources of clean water, and larger stones and pebbles on the other side with a glass of dirty water to represent the majority of people whose water is unsafe and restricted. A reading from John 4:5-16 and prayers around our theme concluded our day.

In July our liturgy concluded with Bruce Prewer’s Creed for Australia.

Jan Ryan

We believe
that this ancient land,
with all its unique creatures, is a precious gift
from a loving god,
whose mercy is over all his works.

We believe
in god's care
for aboriginal people who treasure it
through unnumbered generations:
the one who grieves in their suffering
and rejoices in every noble aspiration.

We believe
in god's compassion
for the patchwork of refugees
who for two hundred years
have come to this continent
looking for a place to call their home.

We believe
in god's steadfast love
for this nation and all its children,
that god is creating a new people
from many races, colours and gifts,
to fulfill a high destiny.

We believe
that the best way forward
is the way revealed by jesus,
of faith, hope and love,
where no needy person is neglected
and no bidding of the spirit ignored.

(With thanks to CACW Catholic Women’s Weekly)

Reflecting on Thomas Merton’s Wisdom

North Sydney WATAC

It was so good for Terry, Jan, Dorothy, Merle and me to meet again last Saturday, after quite a long break, which included travel, illness (all better now!!), and family commitments. We brought along our Thomas Merton papers, which provided us with lots of interesting discussion. Next meeting, we will follow the lead of other groups and read the latest Joan Chittister book.

Jann Ohlsson

Concern for Death and Life at Broken Bay

Our last meeting was on Sunday 23 July starting, as always, with our Communion Lunch and a ritual. We explored the very inspiring and thought-provoking address to the New Zealand Bishops by Sister Julian in the recent *WATAC News*, and we had a brief discussion on Joan Chittister's chapter 'Prayer' from *The Heart of the Temple*.

Recently some of our group supported our member, Margaret Alcorn, at her husband's funeral. After a stroke a few months ago, his family had had a very sad and difficult time. Another long WATAC friendship took me to June Skinner's Requiem Mass at her parish church at Narrabeen and ended with a moving WATAC-style send-off, arranged by Bernice, at the Crematorium. June once told me that she had been waiting all her life for something like WATAC to happen and she became a very active member. She asked me to her early meetings in Manly to which she invited women from a parish spirituality group. I was impressed by her – a very feisty lady! We will miss her sadly.

Our next meeting is on Sunday, 10 September, at 12.30 at 32 Awatea Road, St Ives, 2075 – all welcome.

Margaret Knowlden
knowlden1@bigpond.com
9449 7275

WATAC NEWS

If Undeliverable return to
Women and the Australian Church (WATAC)
6 Bangalay Place
LEONAY 2750



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Ph: 02.4937.2019 Fax: 02.4936.1109 Email: maureen@watac.net

I would like to continue to receive WATAC News but am not able to contribute at present.