

Centre for Spirituality of Care and Community

Report from the Chair

for the First Annual General Meeting

Sunday 18th October 2020

It has been three years since Roy Bradley died, and 18 months since a small group of us - friends, colleagues and family - founded a new organisation to promote a greater understanding and awareness of the spirituality of care and community inspired by Roy's life and work. Since that small beginning, we now come together for the first annual general meeting of this organisation, Centre for Spirituality of Care and Community (CSCC).

We would have had this AGM 6 months earlier if not for the COVID-19 pandemic. Many aspects of our personal and collective lives have been derailed by this most unexpected, rapidly-spreading, viral infection. It is creating havoc around the world and, together with the public health response to control it, is having a devastating economic and psychosocial impact that will resonate for a long time to come. Given the circumstances, we are meeting through an online platform as Melbourne is still under a lockdown which restricts group gatherings.

We were fortunate to have launched this organisation in February last year (which seems a long time ago). Several months later, in May, the first Roy Bradley Oration was delivered by Bruce Rumbold, on the topic of *'Spirituality and Compassionate Communities'*. It was attended by almost one hundred people, and many were inspired and encouraged.

Just prior to the lecture, the author, Cate Kennedy launched our first publication, *'The Mystery of God and the Power of Redemptive Relationships'*, with a deeply reflective speech. This book, edited by Stephen Ames and I, consisted of a collection of essays, inspired by Roy's distillation of what pastoral care meant to him: "... the art of keeping open to the mystery of God through the power of redemptive relationships". The authors of these essays agreed to transfer copyrights to CSCC, and we are pleased to report that we have received royalties of approximately \$500 for over 300 books sold.

Those first few months were a remarkable beginning for CSCC. We had plans for seminars and meetings to explore several topics that relate to the spirituality of care and community, such as the 'spirituality of aging' and 'spirituality in schools'. These plans had to be put aside when the COVID pandemic struck. I am pleased to report that Helen Austin, a founding member of our committee, has been able to resume planning a half-day seminar on the theme of 'spirituality of care and community for the elderly' to be held on 16th February next year.

I am also pleased to be able to confirm that the 2nd Roy Bradley Oration will be delivered by Rev. Tim Costello, formerly Executive Director of World Vision, on *'Ethical leadership in times of personal risk'* on 22nd November through an online platform. A flyer for the 2nd Roy Bradley Oration accompanies the documents for this AGM. Our letter of invitation to Tim, noted, *"We have in mind your long and extensive experience in caring and advocating for those marginalised in our society, as well as millions more around the world deprived of the most basic needs. We would also appreciate your leadership in helping us to reflect on the*

place for a spirituality of care and community in our world today, the sense of global unrest and how the Covid-19 pandemic is laying bare our struggle to consider the greater good over our own.”

We have been encouraged, not only by the interest in our activities, notably the book and the Oration, but also by the support we receive for the organisation itself. We are most grateful to have support of 22 Foundation Members and 14 Friends at this early stage. We are very glad to have the Australian and New Zealand Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ANZACPE) and Association for Supervised and Clinical Pastoral Education in Victoria (ASACPEV) join us as Foundation Members since Roy was instrumental in setting up these two organisations and participated in their activities for many years.

The financial support of our members and friends has enabled us to establish the necessary administrative elements of an incorporated association, with infrastructure such as post office box, insurance and website, and the cost of hosting the Oration. Our first website is not sufficiently equipped to accept online registrations for events such as the Oration and seminars, to apply to join as Foundation Members or Friends of CSCC or to purchase copies of the book. We are in the process of building a more sophisticated website that will enable us to engage with the growing interest in our activities. This brings us to the need to be clearer about our vision and develop a strategy to achieve what we have in mind.

We began with the idea of establishing a basic organisation to host the annual Roy Bradley Oration on the spirituality of care and community. Over the short time of our existence, we have come to be aware of a need and interest in raising awareness about this subject in a wide range of settings, professional and common-interest groups and, in our everyday lives. Importantly, we join a handful of non-religious organisations that highlight the spiritual dimension of our lives. In contrast to most of these non-religious organisations, we do not focus on a specific professional group, such as pastoral care providers, nor do we have a specific social justice or welfare agenda. I would like to suggest that our focus is the ‘spiritual dimension of care and community in our work and everyday life’. While it might sound like a misnomer to talk about ‘focusing’ on something so broad, it is necessary to focus on aspects of our personal and communal life that we are often too busy and distracted to pay attention to, or that we take it for granted because they are too common. What would it be like, I wonder, if ‘care’ were not seen as something outsourced to professionals or services that ‘use’ or ‘consume’, but simply a way of life. What if community was not just a ‘leftist concept’ that needed to be deliberately structured and practiced, but was also a way of life, spontaneously celebrated and found to be necessary if ‘care’ is to be sustainable.

As an organisation, we do not claim to have expert knowledge in the spiritual dimension of care or community; our stated mission is ‘to promote a greater understanding and awareness’ of this aspect of life. We are not an academic or research organisation, but we can support a ‘greater understanding’ through facilitating dialogue and exchange. We can also raise awareness and promote dissemination of the knowledge gained. I would like to invite our Members and Friends to discuss the aim, vision and mission of the organisation during this AGM.

Once we are clearer about what we would like to achieve and how we might achieve it, we will need to consider how we might fund it. We have initially set a target of a hundred Foundation Members and many more Friends, who will help to build up an endowment

fund of at least \$100,000 to support the CSCC's activities. Given the low return of such a fund for the foreseeable future, and if we are to extend our activities beyond the Oration, I wonder if a \$500,000 target is more reasonable. Our fundraising plans will need to include encouraging supporters of CSCC to be benefactors and securing Tax Exemption and Deductible Gift Recipient Status.

On the other hand, we could remain focused only on hosting the Roy Bradley Oration and retaining a limited vision and mission. The COVID pandemic has, however, challenged us to think about our need for care and community. There is, I think, a need for non-religious leadership to bring into greater awareness the spiritual dimension of this aspect of our personal and collective lives, for the benefit of all of us, religious and non-religious. I believe CSCC has a role to play.

Eugen Koh

25.9.20

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