

CISTERCIAN ASSOCIATES of SOUTHERN STAR ABBEY

Newsletter Sept 2021

“Community amongst Associates is:

- nourished by a common spiritual life;
- celebrated in friendship and the Eucharist;
- fostered by continuing formation in the charism;
- expressed in prayer for one another and for the monastic community;
- framed by monastic Hours of Prayer;
- embodied in annual Associates Retreats and regional groups;
- informed by regular newsletter.”

The Handbook of the Cistercian Associates of Southern Star Abbey, Kopua.201



From the National Coordinator

Mike Stone

In recent times there has been a resurgence in local Matariki expression. Matariki for many Iwi in New Zealand is the mid-winter time to;

1. Recall the dead and the year just past.
2. Celebrate the year past with the wider community.
3. Plan for the year ahead.

As Aotearoa Cistercian Associates, this would be an appropriate and beneficial model.

1. Recall the Associate year past.

The death of Brother Tony Brown was strongly felt by the Kopua community. His faith and 25 years at Kopua were remembered and celebrated. I recall his heartfelt Christmas message to Associates in December 2019 that was posted on the Associates Facebook page.

This time (July 11th) is also a time to recall the contribution of Saint Benedict to the modern world. His influence is extensive through history. My daughters joined the local St John Youth Division and in researching its origins I found its beginnings at a Benedictine Monastery in Jerusalem. The Maltese Cross used within St John, with its eight points, represent the eight beatitudes.

The preventable deaths worldwide in the last year is also a reminder of the need to search for ways of working together better to resolve complex issues just as St Benedict suggests in his Rule. (RB4, 34). The Covid period that we live in now reduced our face-to-face interactions both internationally and nationally, but this has nudged many to explore new online communications and resources.

2. Celebrate the Associate year

Many have found new on-line inspiration or "deep pools". I have found the website Internet Archive (archive.org) interesting. This is free access and includes books normally held only in Monastic libraries. Our local library also gives access to a Cloud library app and the recordings of Thomas Merton as he discusses with his novices in the 1960's such topics as "Vatican II" and "Cistercians-Sages of silence". The website "ocso.org" also, I think, has some interesting information especially under the Formation heading and references in a newsletter about "Schola Cisterciensis" or Cistercian Great Courses.

The 2020 survey of Associates gave a clear voice as to what was important for Associates to focus on. Associates wanted to learn more about contemplative prayer, more about Cistercian writers and their writings and ageing well.

In the first newsletter this year Associate Philip Bewley reminds us that God is the hub of the wheel of life. And that we can receive much from spending time at a monastery just as Henri Nouwen did. In the second newsletter Associate Henry Resink reminds us of St Benedict's advice that prayer is to be short and pure but be open to longer prayers under the inspiration of grace and to stand firm not to escape the reality of the place we are in.

In this issue Bishop Peter Cullinane, who has had strong links with Kopua monastery over many years writes about the spiritual journey and the stages or "hinge points". The title of his article was inspired by a comment made by Father Kieran Hynes in the monastery car park. "The spiritual journey is no more no less than a search for reality." So, we have past writers and writers in our midst who journey with us and can illuminate our own paths.

I would like to acknowledge the many Associates who contribute to our community through participating in our prayer cycle, contribute to regional groups, our retreats, our newsletters, our leadership team and in many other ways. I am also aware of the legacy of all our previous coordinators.

3.The Associate year ahead.

This issue also features a couple of book reviews by Associate Anthony Kriechbaum that cover the "aging well" topic extremely comprehensively. There may be a strong focus on this content in the year ahead.

We are actively seeking opportunities to source and share more resources in the months ahead especially through regional groups and a new website.

The leadership team is seeking external financial support for the development of a more accessible and multiple-use Associate website.

This new website will:

- enable; enquirers to find out more about the Cistercian Charism in New Zealand;
- be a platform for providing resources to assist in the formation in the Cistercian charism, efficiently in a variety of forms;
- be a depository for Associates only information (eg. A few Associates have completed, and others are working through the Te Rau o te Huia questions. These profiles will be able to be shared within the new website);
- essential and archived documents will be more available;
- and it is the expressed need emerging from Chapter.

The Associate's **current website** contains materials intended to be helpful to Associates in their spiritual journey. Feel free to take a look. Contact me if you need help with navigating the site.

The Associates website can be accessed at: <https://nztassak2015.wordpress.com/>

Invitation to contribute koha annually at Matariki. It would be most helpful for Associates to forward any Koha for usual running costs at this time.

To give, you can pay direct into our bank account (Name: The Associates of Southern Star Abbey, Kopua. Number: 02-0506-0067608000). A recent meeting I had with our new treasurer (Anne) has indicated an amount of \$25 would be appropriate. There may be a request for a one-off amount towards new (website) services and platforms later in the year.

Minutes and reports from the recent Chapter. will be circulated to Associates soon.

An initiative we have announced is a working bee in early September at Kopua. This will be an opportunity to work on a range of indoor and outdoor projects in and around the environs of the monastery. There will be a menu of light and heavy manual work to do. We will begin this on the Thursday afternoon at 1pm and will join the monks at prayer of the sixth and ninth hour. If this initiative is successful, then we are likely to follow up with a summer working bee. (Possibly in the week before the Feast of the three founders of Citeaux (January, 2022) and with another group) . To book to participate in this please contact Sybil. Her email is guestmaster@kopuamonastery.org.nz

Kind regards and Cistercian blessings,
Mike Stone

Some key Associate dates

- Associate Retreat 2 2021. This will be a three-day retreat from Tuesday 1pm till Friday 1pm 3rd -6th August, (led by Anne Cave and Judy Youmans.) Limited space available
- Working Bee @ Monastery Any day/s from Thursday 2nd till Sunday 5th September. Space available for some or all of this time.
- Associate Retreat 3 2021 This will be a five-day retreat from Monday 6th -Friday 1pm 6th-10th September, (led by Henry Resink and Tim Mapplebeck.) Space available.
- Deadline for contributions to the next newsletter is 21st November (a week before the beginning of Advent 28th November)
- 2022 (Wednesday) September 14th The Exaltation of the Holy Cross. This feast day also commemorates the 20th Year of the Associate Community.

Just a **reminder**; Kopua Monastery policy is that the Monastery is open to Guests when all of NZ is on Level 1 or below; so, if any part of NZ is on Level 2, 3, or 4, the Monastery is closed to the public. We suggest people re-confirm their booking with us by texting 0223809490 the day before they are due to travel to Kopua.

Mike Stone stonem@xtra.co.nz 021703024



From the Monastery Sybil Gibson

Dear Associates, greetings from Kopua where winter is in full swing and we're grateful that everyone is well and we have a warm, dry home.

The Monastery has been busy since our short closure while Wellington was on Level 2, and the Guesthouse is fully booked now through until the end of 2021. We are well into booking for 2022 so if you have an idea about your retreat dates for 2022 now would be a good time to book.

Interestingly we have had a real increase in bookings from people new to Kopua and there's an increased sense of searching and people wanting to reconnect with God, and I wonder if that is one of the many immeasurable side effects of COVID19.

We have made two changes lately – supper for Guests (home-made soup and toast) is now self-serve in the Guesthouse anytime from 5pm onwards, and, while lunch is still taken together in the Day Centre, we follow Monastic culture and eat in silence. Feedback from Guests about these changes has been very positive.

Next week the Monks are on their own annual retreat and that always brings a different flavour to the life of the Community – things are quieter than usual!

We are all looking forward to the Associates being here on retreat from Tuesday August 3rd to Friday 6th; there are two double rooms still available for that retreat and it's not too late to book.

Blessings to you all, and to your families, for good health and well-being.

Sybil

Commemorating – with gratitude and joy – 60 years ordained

By this letter, I am saying to fellow travellers: know the journey you are on, be nurtured by it, and ready to share it.

1. Waking up to what is real.

We are being drawn to God who is present in all creation. This happens even when we are not fully conscious of it. Living spiritually happens in earnest when we do become aware of it, and allow ourselves to be drawn to God.

Becoming aware is a process of self-transcendence. In one way or another, we are attracted to beauty and goodness and truth; our being drawn in this way is deep and real, but never quite fulfilled. Somehow, there is always more beyond us. This is what led St Augustine to exclaim: “O God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts cannot rest until they rest in you.”

To expect fulfilment from anything less is to dream; it would leave us unfinished. Waking up to this is when we start the journey from what cannot fully satisfy to what can. It is a different way of seeing. It involves wonder. It leads to adoration. It's a way of living to be prayed for and practised.

*It was real life recycled in elusive vignettes;
we move, ghost-like, from one to the next,
amid people and places we've seen before, though
why they are still there, we are not sure.*

*Life's hill-tops, valleys, sharp bends and mists
all seem to say something but the meaning we miss.
Unless we awaken we'll never know:
in dreams we see only the after-glow.*

*Most of us spend most of our time
skimming the surface thinking that's fine;
we see without seeing, taking for real
what deep down we sense is only surreal.*

*When all is still, somehow we know
there's more to it all than words can say.
Look again, look intently, in awe
at what really is - here, and now, and 'you'.*

*Now you're standing on holy ground,
stillness, silence, and wonder mingling.
Break free of what dumbs down –
the noise, the hurry, borrowed thinking...*

2. A different way of seeing, a different way of being:

This different way of seeing translates into a different way of being. It is the journey of becoming our true self – through being “for others”, walking with them, and they with us. It means loving as we have been loved – without conditions, unearned, undeserved... “Mystical language expresses the gratuitousness of God's love; prophetic language expresses the demands this love makes.” (Gustavo Gutierrez).

It is above all the language of action. It involves all the ways we need to work to make human relationships more truly human. We are personally diminished if we settle for social, economic or political systems which don't fully respect human life and human relationships. God's own agenda is human beings, truly human and fully alive. It

belongs to our relationship with God to have the same agenda. “There is no new humanity if there is not first of all new persons.” (St Paul VI)



*A new way of seeing, a new way of being;
accepting truth, wherever from,
allowing compassion to break us open;
new eyes, new heart, new song.*

*To see why the world was made, look
at a child's smile or a lonely weathered face;
to know yourself see in them
what only God could make.*

*Yet such as these, night after night,
cry into their pillow – or cardboard box;
the market place determines their worth:
- if not God, who else, why not?*

*Goods, by right for all, reach only some;
'the system' requires human sacrifice.
We're all in this picture somewhere,
who's that passing by on the other side?*

*Through prayer, reach those you cannot reach
In any other way. In the Spirit
manaakitanga has no limit, reaching
round the earth, Heaven too, and back to you.*

3. The Journey into Reality

Becoming our true self – creating right relationships - is a process and takes time.

A 'spiritual life' is not a life running alongside our 'ordinary life'. Spirituality encompasses every aspect of our life – bodily and social as well as interior. St Paul's distinction between "spirit" and "flesh" does not involve a split: it is our whole self and 'ordinary' life that are either orientated to God (according to the "spirit") or away from God (according to the "flesh").

God invites us to enjoy life. The joy people can experience together is a powerful witness to God's purpose in creating us. We do not disdain material reality or its pleasures, which belong to what God created and saw was "good", in fact, "very good". Asceticism has to do with the transitoriness of our present life – knowing how to let go of what cannot last; becoming more free. It involves acting on the belief that this life cannot fulfil all our hopes; we can afford to know our present life is "not fair".

Allowing God to be God means giving up the illusion of self-sufficiency and the shackles of self-concern and self-justification. It means entrusting ourselves to God. This involves shedding whatever is not real, and taking responsibility.

*So we set out, walking together
hearing more, seeing better;*

*"Let go the baggage of self-concern,
the map of our journey we'll draw as we go.
You'll change to be true to who's really you*

by shedding the who that you're not.

*What we are not is what we try on - masks,
illusions, distractions, excuses,
wishful thinking, the need to be right...
none of them real, all of them useless.*



*Illusions unmasked, reality heals deepest,
where ego lets go, in crises and weakness;
we take the hand that reaches out:
our transformation, 'God's work of art'.*

*First steps guided by other's expectations,
then hard choices forge inner convictions:
they don't stay cocooned who want to fly;
to have a harvest, seeds must die.*

*What could or should or might have been
is not the point, not where the journey starts.
What was and is – reality - is what matters.
New life, where from but out of ashes?*

*Falling from grace, and into a mess,
it's a very old story – intended to bless!
The scriptures depict it, history repeats it:
God's mercy transforming unfaithfulness.*

*Our desert life can seem both full and empty;
so too, God, both near and far; for prayer
no need to feel you're in God's presence,
enough to know you simply are.*

*'Blessed are the poor' with wisdom and insight
less easily known from a greater height.
Bless too the night that deepens
our longing for the light.*

*Recall the moments that seem to tell
what you've been made for; that all will be well.
Savour the memories that bring smile or tear,
and let your heart speak for you.*

*Beware a darker foe disguised,
not true light – father of lies –
'anti-humanity' his name and his brand,
confusion his footprint; pretending wise.*

*When battered by unruly fears,
stand where history ends its course,
when "thank you God" you'll want to sing
"for all that will be, and all that has been".*

4. "Through Christ our Lord".

The “hinge points” of spiritual living considered thus far are accessible to all who are awake to God’s presence in the natural world. Having this common ground with natural religions is part of our own spiritual living. Prayer belongs in all religions because prayer is whatever happens next when we become aware of God’s presence.

But our awakening enlarges when God reveals how much more there is to be awakened to. God’s love, hinted at in nature is made explicit in salvation history, and fully revealed in the person of Jesus of Nazareth – the visible “image of the unseen God” (Col 1:15). Looking at him, we know what God is really like (Jn 14:8,9). In Jesus we receive God’s invitation to trust God’s love; and to love in return. We who know him as the risen Christ are not less blessed than those who knew him as Jesus of Nazareth: “I will not leave you orphans; I will come back to you. In a short time the world will no longer see me, but you will see me...” (Jn 14:18,19).

Living spiritually is not, after all, a matter of making room for God in our life; it’s about what God is doing, and our being drawn into God’s life. We see this in the events of “salvation history”, where saving deeds always come from God’s initiative, and point to a salvation beyond the limits of our present lives. It is still so. In the liturgy, it is Christ who acts in the Eucharist and the other sacraments; Christ who speaks when the word is proclaimed in the assembly; Christ who acts in the ministry of the ordained minister; and Christ who is truly present among those gathered in his name – the congregation. (2nd Vatican Council, Const. on Liturgy, 7). Our prayers made “through Christ Our Lord...” - united to his - are always heard. There are reasons aplenty for not being part of the liturgy. But much to lose.

*Becoming ourselves through being for others
a mysterious peace comes to us.
Discern the One who promised this,
and is the gift He promised.*

*Raised on the cross (evil did its worst),
raised from the tomb (worsted it was):
here’s the love that “changes everything”,
everything that’s raised up with him.*

*His saving power in past events
becomes in liturgy present tense.
Now it’s us he calls and sends,
telling us “I’ve called you friends.*

*It’s a joy to belong and be called his own;
he’s not yet drafting the sheep from the goats –
the call to be holy can take some time.
If you don’t like sinners, you won’t feel at home.*

5. In the power of the Holy Spirit:

The Holy Spirit enables us to know who Jesus really is - “Lord” (1 Cor. 12:3). What Jesus did for us, the Holy Spirit makes ours, by and drawing us into the life of the risen Christ. This sharing in the life of the risen Jesus is the communion we share with all who are “in Christ”.

We witness to this communion, whether by the “silent witness” of an authentic life (St Paul VI,) or “with power, conviction and the joy of the Holy Spirit” (1 Thessalonians, ch..1)), or by working to renew the Church or promoting unity among Christians. By uniting us to Christ, the Holy Spirit unites us with Christ’s mission.

The whole of creation is being made new through its union with the risen Christ, in whom it finds its ultimate unity (Eph. 1:3-14). Each of us is unique and personally loved, but also part of the planet! Our activities, loving, laughing, singing... are all from the fibres of the planet. Our ‘interior’ lives are just as much part of the universe as are the

atoms, planets and oceans. They are the 'inside story' of the outward events that are this evolving creation. By the choices we make, we contribute to what God is making.

Right relationships with nature are part of right relationships with one another and with God. Here, too, it is ourselves who are diminished through wrong relationships.

*The Spirit still drawing order from chaos
now in us, through us, around us -
kaitiakitanga through cultures, sciences, arts...
reaching into all creation, first with our hearts.*

*All that's precious now
'we shall find again
cleansed and transfigured';
what matters now still matters then.*

*All this and more
is what we sign up for.*

6. To the Father:

The journey into reality starts within God's own life of love and joy, and God's desire to share that with us. "...You will be able to share the divine nature..." (2 Peter 1:4) It was for this that the Son and the Holy Spirit were "sent". Through them we go "to the Father". This is the journey that unfolds in the humbleness of our ordinary lives.

*Ecstatic love and joy is where
the journey started, and where it ends.
Along the way our tiny steps
loving, trusting, train for perichoresis.*

*None of this had to be – God didn't need it;
but wonderfully, it is – because God chose it.
Since nothing is ours as if by right,
all is ours as gift and blessing."*

*As we journeyed we hardly noticed
the mist had lifted, the sun had risen;
things that seemed dim when we dreamed,
now in the sunlight beautifully gleamed.*

*Graced, buoyed up, free and forgiven,
gifts received are now gifts to be given.*



Two book reviews by Anthony Kriechbaum

Richard Rohr – “Falling Upward – a spirituality for the two halves of life” 2012 SPCK

An 167 page book, with thirteen (13) chapters. The bibliography is large with six pages of bibliography, and with an extensive 14 page alphabetical index.

- (a) William Shakespeare – “All the World’s a Stage” (from “As You Like It”) - describes the seven stages of the life of human-kind.
- (b) Erik Erikson (disciple of Carl Jung) describes eight (8) stages of human (psycho-social) development – namely:- (1) trust vs distrust (12-18 mnths); (2) independence (self-autonomy vs shame; 18mnths to 3yr) (3) initiative vs guilt (3yr to 5yr) (4) industry vs inferiority (5yr to 12yr) (5) identity vs role- confusion (12yr to 18yr); (6) intimacy vs isolation (18yr to 40yr); (7) generativity vs stagnation (40yr to 65yr); (8) integrity vs despair (>65yr)
- (c) Richard Rohr – Summarises (condenses) Erik Erikson’s eight (8) stages to essentially two (2) life tasks (life-stages):- (A) childhood, adolescence and young adult-hood (Erikson stages 1 to 6, and early stage 7) leading to the building of the adult nest (the adult container, the house, the homestead) (B) Erikson stages 7 and 8 (as “miner-forty-niner adults” , to quote the Australian folk song “Clementine”) – generatively caring for the contents (the children, youth and young adults) of one’s house//one’s home – i.e. creating and maintaining the “hearth”, the “well-being”, the health and education - of one’s children (grand-children).

“Fr Richard Rohr offers a new understanding of one of life’s most profound mysteries: how our falling can be the foundation for our ongoing spiritual growth. Drawing on the wisdom from time-honoured myths, heroic poems, great thinkers and sacred religious texts, the author explores the “two halves” of life to show that those who have fallen, failed or ‘gone down’ are the only ones who understand ‘up’. The heartbreaks, disappointments and loves of the first half of life are actually **stepping stones** to the spiritual joys that the second half has in store for us.”

“With sage-like wisdom, Fr Richard Rohr leads his reader on a voyage into the mystery and beauty of healthy spiritual maturity.”

Joan Chittister - “The Gift of Years – Growing Older Gracefully” 2008 DLT

A 222 page book; with 41 chapters, and with 4-6 pages in each chapter. (a) Each chapter is introduced with a quote from a “sage”; (b) each chapter ends with two summary statements (*) ‘the burden of these years’; (*) ‘the blessing of these years’. (c) Each chapter is definitely a “study” in its own right - of the issue (the topic) that the chapter explores.

Joan Chittister has provided extensive pre-testing of her original text – see her acknowledgments – including (a) a goodly number of Joan Chittister’s fellow Benedictine sister colleagues; (b) a generous number of priestly doctoral associates (colleagues) (c) one Denise Robison – past deputy secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Aging and current member of the Pennsylvania Council on Aging.

Joan Chittister is an internationally-known author and lecturer, and the executive director of “Benetvision: A Resource and Research Centre for Contemporary Spirituality”. Her many books include “*The Friendship of Women*”; “*In search of Belief*”; “*In the Heart of the Temple*”; and “*Wisdom Distilled from the Daily*”.

Abbess Joan Chittister writes with absolute mastery and with great and very readable scholarship, exploring the spirituality and the psychology of aging well – of “growing older gracefully”. In the “Eriksonian sense”, the book provides absolutely excellent insight into, and a most thorough exploration of, the eighth (8th) stage of Erik Erikson.

July 11th, 2021.

Abrahamic visit to the monastery Nick Polaschek

On the last weekend in May a group from the Abrahamic Council of Wellington visited the monastery.

Made up of a group of Jews, Christians and Muslims, the Council seeks to promote understanding and acceptance between members of the three faiths that trace their roots back to our common father Abraham, and also tolerance of all faith communities within the wider New Zealand society. Having heard from me about Kopua at one of our meetings, several Council members were keen to come to the monastery, as this particular form of spiritual life is not present in their traditions.

While at Kopua they attended several of the Offices and the Sunday Eucharist. One even got up for Vigils. They meditated with the monks after Vespers and in the morning before the Eucharist, a shared spiritual practice in silence that transcends the symbolic framework of each faith tradition. They spent some time with Fr Niko before breakfast on Sunday. Around a warm fire in evening in the peaceful atmosphere of the Guest house common room we had time for a full conversation with each other in a way that is not feasible at our regular meetings. We all appreciated the Halal vegetarian food the cooks had gone to the trouble of providing for us.

The visit highlighted certain similarities in the faith practice within the three traditions. All share, in their own style, the rhythm of prayer throughout the day. Each involves, in their own form, ascetic practices to become responsive to God as the source of our lives. All are based on devotion to God through response to the gracious divine Word that is heard, in its own way, within each of the Abrahamic traditions.



Appreciating what we share with each other as Abrahamic peoples not only helps us to understand others from different traditions, but also appreciate more deeply the divine gift we have been given.



Contributions for sharing with fellow Associates via the Newsletter most welcome.

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