

# CONFERENCE OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS AUSTRALIA

## Newsletter March 2025

### From the National Chair

#### Rare spiritual alignments in 2025

##### **Year of Jubilee 2025 & Maha Kumbh Mela**

The pilgrims of hope theme for the Year of Jubilee aligns remarkably with the *Maha Kumbh Mela*, a Hindu pilgrimage which takes place every 12 years. Both these major events call their members to a deeper connection to faith, and both events symbolize hope.

##### **Lent and Ramadan – a shared season of reflection and renewal.**

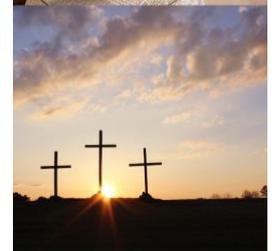
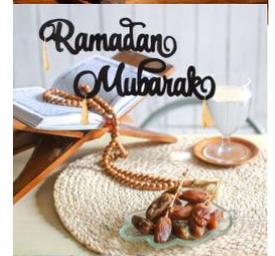
This year, Lent begins on March 5, and Ramadan is expected to have started around the evening of March 1, making their overlap particularly significant. This rare alignment offers an opportunity for interfaith dialogue, mutual understanding, and shared reflection. It's a powerful reminder that, despite differences in faith, people of all backgrounds seek spiritual renewal, self-discipline, and a deeper connection with the divine.

##### **The alignment of Easter**

This year, the alignment of Easter between Catholic and Orthodox churches is a significant event too. The unity in this celebration highlights the common roots of Christianity, offering a unique opportunity to come together in worship, feasting, and joyous Easter traditions.

As we minister and listen to people of all faith traditions, may we continue to find similarities in our own traditions, and celebrate the diversity.

With every blessing on your ministry  
Rita Malavisi rsj  
National Chair



# CSD Australia News

## A Joyous Gathering of Spiritual Directors in Melbourne

In early February, spiritual directors from across Melbourne came together for a heartfelt and inspiring gathering. It was a wonderful opportunity to move beyond the screen, connect in person, and share stories and experiences. The afternoon was filled with warmth, deep conversation, and a renewed sense of community. Recognizing that not all times suit everyone, those in attendance agreed to meet again on May 19th at the Heritage Centre, Melbourne East. For further enquires contact [Karen](#)



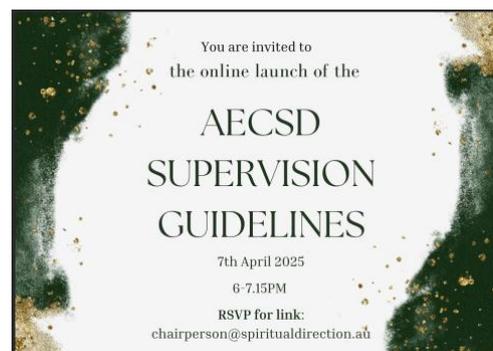
## Congratulations to Margaret Wiseman

We are delighted to celebrate Margaret Wiseman, who was recently honored by Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP with the inaugural Lifetime Achievement Award at the annual CatholicCare staff awards ceremony. This prestigious recognition reflects Margaret's unwavering dedication, compassion, and lifelong service to those in need. Her presence has touched countless lives, and this award is a testament to her extraordinary contributions. Congratulations, Margaret, on this well-deserved honor!



## AECSD Online Launch of the Supervision Guidelines

Invited to an online launch of the AECSD Supervision guidelines on April 7th at 6-7.15pm. Please contact [chairperson@spiritualdirection.au](mailto:chairperson@spiritualdirection.au) to register attendance. The Supervision Guidelines are the result of a project conducted by the Australian Ecumenical Council for Spiritual Direction (AECSD) over several years. For the first time, the spiritual direction community has articulated its expectations regarding supervision of spiritual directors.



The Australian Ecumenical Council for Spiritual Direction (AECSD) serves the spiritual direction community of Australia. AECSD believes that the ministry of spiritual direction is a sacred trust which calls for the highest standards of formation, practice and accountability. Life-giving, ethically responsible spiritual direction is fostered when spiritual directors have access to supervision. As the AECSD Code of Ethics affirms, supervision can support them to maintain a contemplative focus and attend to the needs of their directees.

# CSD Australia Members

## Profile of a Member

### Andrea Grant

My introduction to Spiritual Direction was through Campion Centre of Ignatian Spirituality, where I made the Full Spiritual Exercises. I went on to train as a Spiritual Director in the Kardia Heart Wisdom program. My background is in education, and I believe Spiritual Direction has much to offer that profession, in support of teachers and leaders experiencing the challenges of accompanying young people on their education journey. I also have a developing interest in working with school leavers – young adults navigating post-school life with all its questions of identity and purpose. Spiritual Direction is a privileged ministry, and I feel blessed with each opportunity to walk alongside people who have the courage to ask questions of themselves and their world attuned to God's presence.



I am currently studying a Doctor of Professional Practice with a particular interest in Celtic Spirituality, exploring how ancient wisdom can speak into the Spiritual Exercises.

**Favourite Scripture:** Acts 17:28 For in him we live and move and have our being

**Favourite Book:** Tough question - Pride and Prejudice is my favourite classic but I loved Ann Patchett's 'Bel Canto' and have returned to it several times

**Favourite Movie:** A Few Good Men - this is a family favourite and it makes me laugh to hear my sons quoting the lines together

**Memorable Moment:** In 2019 I led a pilgrimage to Ireland and visited Brigit's Garden, a centre for eco-spirituality in Galway. The Garden is shaped around the Celtic seasons and the Winter Garden contains a sculpture of a woman made of bronze leaves, curled over in hibernation. During this time I was moving through my own formation as a Spiritual Director and giver of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises and the sculpture reminded me of my own experience of praying with the lifeless body of Jesus in the tomb on Easter Saturday. It was an experience that sparked my interest in studying Celtic Spirituality more deeply and a growth in awareness of God's presence alive everywhere in all things at all times.



## Lorna Fisher

I began the course for Spiritual Direction in the year 2000. A 6 year course with Sr Carmel Street ( a Josephite Nun ), She would travel from Townsville to Mount Isa every few months, so hence the extent of the time period... The awareness of Spiritual Direction came into my life at the right time, as it has deepened my relationship with Jesus.

I am a widow of 2 and half years, after 46 and half years of marriage. I have 4 adult children and 9 grandchildren. All a huge blessing in my life.

Spiritual Direction is a huge privilege to witness the presence of God working or "not working" in another's life. Just to listen, to enable the other to share and unwind their story.



**Favourite Scripture:** The Prodigal Son

**Favourite Book:** Ten Evenings with God by ILIA DELIO,( OSF )

**Favourite Movie:** The Sound of Music

**Memorable Moment:** My most Memorable Moment was sitting next to the bed of my now late husband, when he was not expected to live. And hearing the words of Jesus " I will heal him"

## Christine O'Connor

My name is Christine O'Connor. I am a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of St Joseph Lochinvar. I was born in Sydney but I have spent most of my life around the Newcastle area. I gained a Certificate in Spiritual Direction from the Centre for Religious Development at North Sydney in 2002 and qualified as a Supervisor of Spiritual Directors in 2022. I have had directees in Newcastle from 2002 till 2008, then a number in the Kimberley region of Western Australia from 2009 till 2016. I now see a number of people at a Centre at Tighes Hill in Newcastle. Spiritual Direction has been a blessed time in my life, a time of growth and learning for myself as well as my directees!



**Favourite Scripture:** Jn 10:10 I have come that you may have life and have it to the full.

**Favourite Book:** Pride and Prejudice

**Favourite Movie:** Dead Poets' Society

**Memorable Moment:** Being with children in the Kimberley

## Helen Glen

I am a mum of a large brood (7 children) and Oma to 6 grandchildren. (my grandchildren have been my invitation to learn how to play again!) I am married to Philip and we celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary in 2024. I love reading, podcasts, history, walking/hiking, all things water and laughing. I love to read about the mystics and am attracted to all things mystical. I have enjoyed working in the non-profit space for many years. I started to try to slow down my life in 2015 and have been on a quest for a 'slowed down spirituality' ever since. I love that Spiritual Direction offers a place to deeply listen to the whispers of God's divine presence (or absence) in an unhurried space. My two core values are spirituality and curiosity. I believe a lot of people are looking for Spiritual Direction but they don't know it exists! I am so grateful that I have been introduced to a network of contemplatives in the last few years. My life is rich and full.



**Favourite Scripture:** 1 John 4:16: "God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them"

**Favourite Book:** I love reading, so its difficult to choose just one book. I do love Tolstoy & Dosevesky because of their great insight into humanity. Poetry is also a place a find solace.

**Favourite Movie:** Difficult to choose just one... but Sophie's Choice, influenced me greatly in my early 20's largely because I have always hoped I would be a 'rescuer' rather than a perpetrator or onlooker

**Memorable Moment:** In 2024 I walked the Camino. The photo with the light coming down on me was from a photo on an i-phone and both Phil and I didn't realize until looking over the photos at night that the light beam was on me! The Camino had so many gifts for me, one of them being staying with Benedictine monks in a small village in Rabanal Spain for a week. Joining these monks and other pilgrims in their ministry of hospitality, Gregorian chants and prayers (in Latin) was heaven on earth.



# CSD Australia Professional Development

You are welcome to join all or any of the monthly sessions planned for 2025. There is no cost or need for members to book. A zoom link will be sent to all members in the preceding week. If you would like a friend to join, who is a non-member - please use the TryBooking link listed below.

## Hearing the Audacious Call to be Pilgrims of Hope with Mark Walsh

Saturday March 15th 9.30am - 11.00am (AEDT)

Join us for a morning of reflection centered on the theme of the Year of Jubilee 2025: Hearing the Audacious Call to be Pilgrims of Hope, facilitated by Mark Walsh.

Together, we will explore hope as a companion on our journey to the divine (*Spes Non Confundit*, #5). Inspired by Thomas Merton's words, "How do we embrace the possibilities and challenges offered by the present with courage, faith, and hope?", we will reflect on our role as companions to others and our own posture as pilgrims of hope.

This gentle, reflective process invites you to consider your personal journey in hope and how you might accompany others along the way.

For non-members please use this [link](#) to register.



## Save The Dates

### AECSD Supervision Guidelines Launch

Monday 7th April 6 - 7:30 pm (AEDT)



We are invited to an online launch of the AECSD Supervision guidelines on April 7th at 6-7.15pm. Please contact [chairperson@spiritualdirection.au](mailto:chairperson@spiritualdirection.au) to register attendance.

The Supervision Guidelines are the result of a project conducted by the Australian Ecumenical Council for Spiritual Direction (AECSD) over several years. For the first time, the spiritual direction community has articulated its expectations regarding supervision of spiritual directors.

## Soul Murmurings with Andrew Kennelly

Saturday 17th May 9:30 - 11:00 am (AEDT)

Join us for a reflective morning with Andrew Kennelly, based on his latest book, *Soul Murmurings: Living with Grace, Humility, and Integrity*. With over 40 years of experience in contemporary spirituality, Andrew brings a deep understanding of the connection between lived experience and the inner life.

Rooted in the spirituality of the Franciscan Friars, where he was a member for 12 years, his workshops and rituals invite participants to explore this profound link.

Andrew has served as Director of Pastoral Care at the Mater Hospital, Brisbane, and has worked as an educator, high school assistant principal, and counsellor. Don't miss this opportunity for thoughtful reflection and spiritual growth.



## Book Review

**Every Day is New by Michael McGirr**

Reviewed by Mark Needham

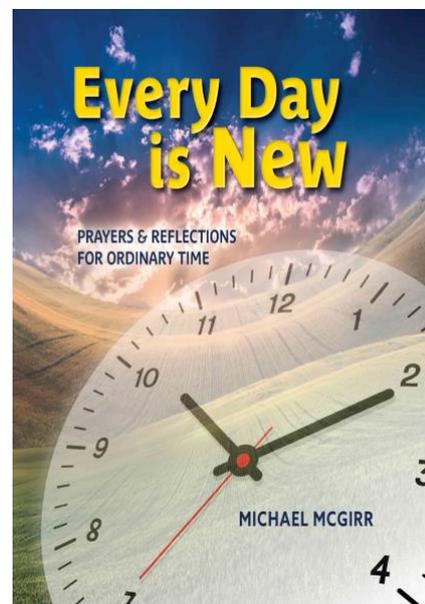
McGirr's book offers reflections on the gospel reading for weekdays in Ordinary Time. Its layout is simple - a brief overview of the week's readings, a visual of graffiti or street art, a short reflection on each day's gospel and a short prayer for each week. In this regard, it is very good for people who are time-poor with very little reading each day.

His Introduction and Ways to use the book are at once informative and somewhat provocative. Essentially, though, McGirr is constantly encouraging and inviting the reader/user to be curious and to use our imagination and to be open to ways in which God may be speaking into their own life experience. For example, he says, "there is something profound about the very experience of

ordinariness" (p.2). ordinariness that may not be the ordinary. In week 3, he quotes a sign posted near Mary MacKillop's birthplace. It says, "please be awesome." McGirr goes on to say, "it's also an invitation: to truly be oneself is to inspire awe in others." It reminds me of Eckhart Tolle's emphasis in "The Power of Now" to live the present moment because that's all we can ever live. McGirr also says "Happiness is about the experience of hope in the present moment, not about loading up a credit card to pay off in the future." (p.94)

On other quote to hopefully whet your appetite. It comes from Thursday of week 16 "Jesus explained that he used parables because the life of faith is full of mysteries. The use of imagination and stories help us to explore those mysteries and understand with our hearts. Many saints were people of rich imagination and wonderful dreams. We, too, should enjoy the adventure of faith, often without knowing all the answers."(p.66) I think it was John Shea who said "God created human because God loves telling stories", stories like each of us.

This book is easy to read and use in short daily bursts but extremely rich in what it offers us as we journey through our lives in faith.



## Other News



### The Living Well Centre

Australian Pilgrimage on Country July 26th to August 3rd 2025

This is an invitation to be on Country amidst the silence of stunning landscape and to be immersed in the ancient wisdom of our First Nation peoples. We will spend time at Alice Springs, Kings Canyon, Simpsons Gap, Hermannsburg and Stanley Chasm as we make our way towards Uluru, heartbeat of Australia.

Your hosts are Cath Connelly and John Stewart from the Living Well Centre, Melbourne. We have led pilgrimages across Palestine/ Israel, Ireland, Spain and Australia and look forward to sharing this unique experience with you.

[For more information](#)

### Heart of Life

Reflection Programs



*Heart of Life*

Centre for Spiritual & Pastoral Formation

#### Lenten Reflection: Journey with Jesus to the Cross

*6 x Thurs, 6, 13, 20, 27 Mar & 3, 10 Apr, 7:30 – 8:30pm, online*

Join us on Thursday evenings during Lent for a time of reflection. Each week will feature guided meditation, quiet personal reflection, dwelling in the word and an opportunity for group sharing.

#### Come Away to a Quieter Place

*4 x Saturdays, 22 Mar, 21 Jun, 13 Sep, 6 Dec, 10.00am-4.00pm, in person*

Come away to a quiet place at our retreat series. Each session is centered around a particular season of the year, drawing wisdom from its unique gifts for our spiritual journey.

[For more information](#)

### Contemplatio - Pregnant with Nothing: Apophatic Prayer



Saturday 9th - Sunday 10th August 2025

Santa Casa Spirituality Centre, Queenscliff, Victoria and Online

This course is lead by Kerrie, who will draw on the mystical teachings of authors such as Denys the Areopagite, Meister Eckhart, Marguerite Porete, the Helfta Mystics, Jan van Ruusbroec, the Cloud of Unknowing author, John of the Cross and many more. Attention will be given to how spiritual directors may be naturally at home with apophatic language and create an atmosphere in the spiritual direction encounter that enables apophatic knowing to arise into conscious awareness without limiting its ongoing revelatory power.

Two days full of teaching, meditation, prayer, opportunities for heart dialogue plus follow up sessions.

[For more information](#)

## Spirituality Ministry of the Sisters of St Joseph 2025 Retreats

Nation wide, various retreats

We all need time to renew and refresh—and sometimes, those we accompany are seeking retreat opportunities as well. The Spirituality Ministry offers a diverse range of retreats across Australia, providing space for reflection, renewal, and spiritual growth. Explore their 2025 Retreat Booklet and discover the opportunities available.

[For more information](#)

## Lenten Resources

The Lenten season is upon us, and we've gathered a few resources that may be helpful for personal reflection or to share with your directees.

## Garrett Publishing Lenten Series

Online 4th March - 8th April 2025

Garrett Publishing presents a series of Lent talks by three Australian biblical scholars from Yarra Theological Union, a College of the University of Divinity. Each week this group of accomplished guides will work together to explore the readings for the week. Speaking to us from their own area of expertise will be: Prof Mary Coloe PBVM, Dr Mary Reaburn NDS, Dr Chris Monaghan CP. This is the perfect opportunity to enrich your Lenten Journey.

[For more information](#)



## Take Heart Lent 2025

Online Resource

For ten years, the Free daily Lenten Series by the Ignatian Solidarity Network has offered thoughtful written reflections to thousands of subscribers - now available in both written and audio format.

This Lent, writers from the Catholic network, including Fr. Greg Boyle, S.J., Jeannie Gaffigan, Fr. James Martin, S.J., and Sr. Norma Pimentel, M.J., will guide us as we allow our hearts to be made tender to bring more mercy into our broken world.

[For more information](#)

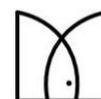


## Sacred Space Pilgrims of Hope

Email / Online from Wednesday 5th March

Journey with us together through Lent, using the Gospel of Luke to pray the scripture and reflect on how hope can be part of our daily lives. Let us take a few minutes each day to find new hope and peace in the Lord, as we read about the story of Jesus' life, ministry and ultimate sacrifice for us. Now is the time to renew our faith, hope and love, and to experience what matters most in our lives.

[For more information](#)



**Sacred Space**

Your daily prayer online