



*The Committee of PCNetSA
would like to wish
all of our members
Happy Christmas*

Looking for something different this Christmas?

Try the Advent Conspiracy website for lots of resources

<http://www.adventconspiracy.org/church-resources/>

or Fred Plumer's "A Mystical Christmas"

<http://progressivechristianity.org/resources/a-mystical-christmas/>

PROPOSED PROGRAM for 2017

- **Book Study: SURVIVING the 21st CENTURY** Based on Julian Cribb's highly acclaimed book. Five sessions in Lent based on the 10 chapters (extinction, or a resurrection of the planet?)
- **Lenten Study: INTERVENTION and RECONCILIATION** *In the Light of the Cross*, with Janeen and Jonathan Barker. Five sessions at Morialta Uniting Church in association with PCNet. (repeat of earlier series)
- **Friday Forum 23rd June: PRINCIPLES of UNITARIANISM** *Appreciating one of the great dissenting traditions.* (Light meal of soup and rolls.)
- **Friday Forum 22nd September: CHARLES STRONG - GREAT PIONEERING PROGRESSIVE** *Preparing for the centenary in 2018 of his Armistice day peace declaration.* To be led by Rev Dr Norm Habel. (Soup and rolls.)
- **Annual Networking Day, November: AN AUTHENTIC SPIRITUALITY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY** *Is it "Religious not Spiritual" or Spiritual not Religious"?* Possibly drawing on the wisdom of Thomas Berry.
Dates, speakers and topics to be confirmed in the new year

PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY NETWORK of SA

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Committee Members 2016

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| Jonathan Barker | Maureen Howland |
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Transforming for Human Survival - Colin Cargill

Summary of a presentation by Dr Bob Douglas at Morialta Uniting Church - reproduced by permission



We live in uniquely challenging times. There are at least 10 existential and connected threats to the continuing existence of life on earth. In the right combination they could lead to the extinction of all life on the planet during the lifetimes of our children or theirs.

They include:

- progressive collapse of the ecosystems on which our lives depend;
- growing depletion of the planet's resources;
- proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction;
- uncontrolled pace of human induced global warming;
- extensive poisoning of our environment by man-made toxins, chemicals and pollution;
- growing human population and the expansion of cities everywhere;
- marginal security of the human food supply system;
- prospect of pandemic disease spreading through huge centres of overcrowding and poverty;
- clever technologies being developed that we don't fully understand and which we are uncertain how to control;
- the extent to which we delude ourselves that we do not need to change because we will stumble on a mechanism for surviving the limits to growth.

An important measure we can use is the concept of the human ecological footprint, a well-developed and validated measure of the demand that humans are making on nature's ecosystems. It estimates how much biologically active land and water an individual or a population uses to support its life-style. It also measures the bio-capacity of the planet – that is how much biologically productive area we have available. Currently humans are using the biologically active land and water available at a rate 50% greater than the planet can replenish. Hence by 2050 we will need two planets to sustain our population.

Currently the world's population is 7 billion people and this means that each of us has around **1.8 global hectares** of biologically active land and water available to us. However we are using **2.7 global hectares** per person and the human population is growing. The **15%** of the world's richest nations are using **6.4 global hectares** per person of biologically active land and water. The **48%** who live in middle income countries use **1.9 global hectares** per person and the **37%** living in poor countries use an average of **0.8 global hectares** per person. Australians use **8.2 global hectares** per person, **6.4** above our share.

However, there is good news. Nearly half of our footprint relates to greenhouse gas emissions and if we are serious we can make significant reductions. Another substantial component of our footprint relates to the kinds of foods we eat and the way we manage waste. So footprint shrinkage is both feasible and essential. But first we must all recognise that shrinkage of the human ecological footprint is imperative and urgent.

What has been the human response to this news? There are ideas and proposals, but not yet a coherent global response. Many people and most governments are either in outright denial or seem ignorant of the situation, even though the scientific consensus has been mounting for decades. Publications as early as 1968 (the population bomb), 1973 (The limits to growth" and 1993 (Planetary overload) have been largely ignored by most people.

Two recent important publications are the 2015 papal encyclical *Laudato si* and *Surviving the 21st Century 2016: Humanity's Ten Great Challenges and How We Can Overcome Them* by Julian Cribb.

Laudato si, which has received inadequate attention from Catholics, Christians, and non-Christians alike, is a remarkably readable document of six chapters and 246 paragraphs. It challenges us to rethink the way we live and relate to the planet, to other humans and to all creatures. In closing the Pope says "many things have to change course but it is we human beings above all who need to change".

Julian Cribb paints a very pessimistic picture but points to two extremely hopeful developments. The first is our emerging ability to think as a species, by sharing knowledge, values and solutions through the Internet. The second is the emergence of women as leaders in all walks of society.

If we accept the validity of the analyses presented by the Pope and Julian Cribb, that change is necessary, how will we go about it?

First we must challenge the concept of anthropocentrism, which assumes that the world was created for humans to exploit and we must shift to eco-centrism, which is the recognition that human survival depends absolutely on an ecological balance between humans and complex planetary eco-systems. Also we must heed the injunction of the Pontiff about the gross injustice in the world, especially inequity of access to resources. We must share those resources with each other and with every other species.



Fourth Common Dreams Conference

Report from Rev Christine Garner

reproduced with permission from the October Morialta Vision

The fourth Common Dreams Conference – “*Progressive Spirituality: New Directions*” was held in Brisbane from 16-19 September at Somerville House in South Brisbane. Previous conferences were held in Sydney 2007, Melbourne 2010 and Canberra 2013. The seeds of Common Dreams were planted in the wake of the Cronulla riots in 2005 when a small group of like-minded people came together to discuss the idea of a National Conference. Greg Jenks, who was part of that discussion, describes it thus:

“Common Dreams is intended to be an interfaith and ecumenical project to promote, protect and expand the role of reasonable and tolerant religion in the public space. The significance of “Common Dreams” as a name is its potential to invite us beyond differences derived from culture, ethnicity and religion into a shared space where we have common dreams for a better future.”

Common Dreams 4 drew together people from Australia, New Zealand and other parts of the world to explore ways that religion can enhance human life rather than diminishing it.

The Pre-Conference Gathering began with an overview of the history and aims of Common Dreams; making sense of Progressive Christianity as a movement not a dogma; some personal reflections from several delegates on what Progressive Christianity had offered them; and, an opportunity to explore and reflect on why I had come.

The program was so full and varied it is impossible to comment on each part. Three evening lectures presented by Val Webb, *Always Progressing; but from what to where and how and why?* Diana Butler Bass, *Spiritual Revolution: vertical no more*, and Pamela Eisenbaum, (a Jewish scholar) *The End of the World as we know it? The future of Scripture Past*.

The keynote presentations included:

Fred Plumer – *Where have all the Millennials gone?* (Millennials - those born between 1980 and 2003.)

Saara Sabbagh (a Muslim) – *Living with faith in a faithless world*

Jana Norman – *Progressive Spirituality as a reservoir for the reinvention of the human being in the Ecozoic era*

Michael Morwood – *A new template for religion;*

Deshna Ubeda *Transforming Festivals – the ancient meets the future.* (This was about Millennials and their spirituality);

Diana Butler Bass – *Sacred Web: Nature and Neighbour as the stage of the Divine.*

Panel presentations reflecting on spirituality included:

Lorraine Parkinson – *God’s treasure hunt; encouraging us to find the meanings of existence*

Pamela Eisenbaum – *Religious versus Spiritual: Personal reflections on Jewish Spirituality;* and

Margaret Mayman – *Jesus is not my boyfriend; a spirituality of Christa Community.*

Each was followed by a break-out session where small groups were able to discuss the presentations with the presenters, before a plenary session.

Simultaneously there was a special programme for emerging generations (Gen Y/ Millennials) but open to interested others, *Exploring future forms of sacred community.*

cont.

Common Dreams 4 Report: *continued*

We could choose to participate in 2 of 9 simultaneous electives.

1. *To whom it may concern: prayer beyond Theism.*
2. *2. Political Lobbying from A Progressive Christian Perspective.*
3. *3. The Beyonding Project.*
4. *4. Spirituality from a Unitarian-Universalist Perspective.*
5. *5. Bunjil is the Spirit of Relationship .*
6. *6. Progressive Spirituality: A congregational conversation.*
7. *7. The journey of life: basics to new directions for Spirituality.*
8. *8. The conscious Muslim.*
9. *9. Is a radical church possible?*

We were entertained by 2 Artists in Residence (Alexandra Sangster and Ian David) with impromptu songs and mimes that were liberating, inspiring and awakening for those who are spiritually hungry but anti-institutional. There was a bookshop for quiet browsing and the launch of a documentary film, "Let me be Frank; the traitorous turnabout of an evangelical heir apparent."

Morning and afternoon tea and lunch was provided with ample space and time to meet new people, catch up with old friends, and to reflect on our experiences. The venue was excellent, the local volunteers were marvellous, the catering was good, and the weather was kind as well. It was a completely different experience to that of Common Dreams 2, where I felt we were lectured to, rather than participate in the events. So at the end, I was replete, full of information, challenges, memories, and much more. Some of the ideas I was already aware of and some were completely new. I was full to overflowing, but two things have emerged that I will think on more. Firstly, I have been challenged in my own journey of faith and spiritual integrity. I find myself uneasy with inherited doctrines as I explore the issues raised by modern scholarship and new perspectives. Where to from here? I think Diana Butler Bass may be a key to a way forward in my personal journey. Secondly, I was fascinated by where the Millennials are finding spiritual connections outside the traditional church and I want to explore this further and hope to write something on this for the next issue of Vision.

Audios of most lectures and keynote presentations are available on http://www.commondreams.org.au/index.php/brisbane-info?id=ARTICLE_61

2016 has been a productive year for PCNetSA

- **Feb 17 - 23 Lenten Study with Rev Dr Jonathan Barker:** "A Theological and Sociological Reflection on Intervention and Reconciliation
- **19 February Friday Forum with Andy Chambers of Seed Consulting Services:** "Climate Change: What can I do and how can I make a difference?"
- **20 May - 3 June Winter Warmers Book Study with Janeen and Jonathan Barker:** "Born Bad" by James Boyce
- **8 October at Morialta UC with Prof Bob Douglas, ANU:** "Maintaining the Momentum to Act in Response to Global Environmental Change (co-sponsored by SA UC synod's Environmental Action Group and Urban Mission Network)
- **12 November Networking Day The Scriptures: Relevance for the 21st Century** with Rev Dr Amelia Koh-Butler, Rev Sean Gilbert, Rev Dr Norm Habel, Rev Christy Capper

Will you join us for more in 2017?



KEEPING IN TOUCH...

Would you like to be listed on the PCNet database to receive the newsletter electronically or would you like to update your details? Do you know of anyone who might like to receive the PCNet newsletter? Phone the Effective Living Centre, 8271 0329 Tues, Wed or Fri, 10am-3pm or email contactpcnetsa@gmail.com with your contact details.