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## The spirituality of community:

*'A community derives its coherence  
from the Creator'*

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IT'S ALL VERY WELL to talk about community development, but it's another thing to do it well.

Michael Kendrick says: 'We seem to have an ability as human beings to invest hope in whatever seems to be other than what we have right in front of us.' He contends that community needs to be seen as something that is right in front of us, warts and all. Unfortunately, 'right now community is made to look romantic. . . but community is not going to be able to escape the evils that human beings can do.'

He insists that 'we need to look closely at our idea of community and try to develop one that will stand the test of time; that is not just a fad, but will have real benefit for people. We need an idea of community that is based on a realistic vision of what human beings are like — people who are (quite often) not at their best. But we need to have ideals for community that challenge us to be our best. We need to cultivate in ourselves the desire to love one another [and] we need to encourage specific examples of mutual sacrifice and sharing.'<sup>1</sup>

The sociologist, Thomas Caplow, in his assessment of the utopian movements — community development is one of these — says that it is obvious that ordinary groups of people can take up the challenge of becoming what Kendrick calls human beings 'at their best' — human beings who not only 'love one another', but also 'lay down their lives for one another' in order to make their dreams of community come true. But, Caplow says, it is equally obvious that, while many can do so, very few do. Caplow asks himself the question that many of us ask when he enquires, 'Why, in the face of repeated demonstrations that segments of society are perfectible, is there so little interest in perfectionism?'

One answer to the question, Caplow says, might be the matter of scale. 'A utopia cannot be very large if its members are not to have competing affiliations. The utopian formula is applicable only to small settlements, although these may combine into larger federations.'

Another answer to the question, Caplow says, might be the matter of cost. 'The time and energy spent by the utopian organisation on its own maintenance is disproportionate to its resources. The rituals, the convocations, the ceremonies are all very costly.'

Still another answer to the question, Caplow says, might be the matter of efficiency. 'Aside from the direct costs of internal maintenance, utopian organisations tend to be inefficient because achievement is not stressed. The problem of maintaining voluntarism at very high levels takes precedence over problems related to achievement.'

But the answer to the question, underlying all the

rest, Caplow suggests, is a matter of faith. 'A utopian organisation needs an overwhelming incentive. It is misleading to discuss utopia in terms of structure alone. Their members are animated by a powerful faith. . .'<sup>2</sup>

Caplow is not alone in suggesting that our problems in society, and the possible resolution of those problems, are essentially matters of faith.

The philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre, argues that without faith there can be no values, and without values we do not even have a framework for recognising our problems, let alone resolving our problems. In *Existentialism and Humanism*, he wrote: 'The existentialist finds it extremely embarrassing that God does not exist, for there disappears with [God] all possibility of finding values in an intelligible heaven.'<sup>3</sup>

The existentialist, Albert Camus, argues that if there is no faith, there can be no hope for us and, if there is no hope for us, then we are all doomed to despair. 'Up till now, everyone derived their coherence from their Creator. But from the moment that [we] consecrate [our] rupture with God, [we] find [our]selves delivered over to the fleeting moment, to the passing day and the wasted sensibility.'<sup>4</sup>

Fritz Schumacher, the noted proponent of community development in the twentieth century, summed up our contemporary sense of 'wasted sensibility' by saying, simply, that it showed that 'the modern experiment to live without religion has failed'.

Schumacher believes that our only chance of any success in developing the communities we need for survival is by getting back into religion and reconnecting

with others, through the Other, once again. According to Schumacher, our problems are not essentially political or economic. They are relational. The problems with our political economy are a consequence of the unresolved conflicts in our communities. According to Schumacher, there is no hope for community development unless we, individually and collectively, begin to deal with our alienation from God, from one another and from ourselves by rediscovering our capacity to:

1. 'act as spiritual beings — that is to say, to act in accordance with [our] moral impulses as human beings'.
2. 'act as social beings — that is to say, to act in accordance with [our] communal impulses as human beings'.
3. 'act as persons — that is to say, to act as autonomous centres of power and responsibility'.<sup>5</sup>

✧ THE PROBLEM WITH RELIGION:  
*'It can turn entire civilisations into cemeteries'*

Saul Alinsky, the community activist whom Jacques Maratain considered one of the few great men of our century, wrote in the preface of his infamous *Reveille for Radicals* that, as far as he was concerned, the main job of the community organiser was 'organising people so that they will have the power to realise those values of equality, justice, freedom and the preciousness of human life' that he identifies with 'Judeo-Christianity'.<sup>6</sup>

For many people, Judeo-Christianity is the 'gospel' and, for them, what Saul Alinsky says is 'good news'.

However, for many of us who have suffered at the hands of fundamentalists, what Saul Alinsky says is 'bad news'. I can almost hear the agony in the voice of Joachim Kahl, echoing in the groans of many people in my neighbourhood, when he cries out, in *The Misery of Christianity*, 'What to me is [Christianity] but the sado-masochistic glorification of pain?'<sup>7</sup>

Many studies in psychology and sociology would justify Kahl's complaint. They prove that many religious people are actually often less humanitarian, not more humanitarian, than their non-religious neighbours. Allport and Kramer have demonstrated that many religious people are more ethnocentric.<sup>8</sup>

Rokeach has demonstrated that many religious people are more dogmatic.<sup>9</sup>

Wright has demonstrated that many religious people are more judgmental.<sup>10</sup>

Stouffer has demonstrated that many religious people are less tolerant of political dissent.<sup>11</sup>

And Kilpatrick has demonstrated that many religious people are less charitable towards disreputable minorities.<sup>12</sup>

Richard Stollaway contends that 'religious belief has more frequently accommodated, rather than transformed society'.<sup>13</sup>

Take your average church (temple, mosque, synagogue or mandir), for example. 'A congregation may tolerate a minister's stand against injustice only for as long as the issue does not affect them personally. The more popular the congregation is, the less likely it is to advocate unpopular causes. The more established a

congregation is, the less likely it is to advocate change. The more a congregation is seeking to establish itself in a community (through recruiting members, raising funds and building facilities), the less likely it is to take on issues in the community that require the advocacy of change.<sup>14</sup>

Jacques Ellul has pointed out that 'whenever the church has been in a position of power, it has regarded freedom as an enemy'. He explains: 'If one turns to history, it is surely apparent that Christians have more often imposed restraints than championed liberty. Freedom finds little place in the church's history. It has been a veritable catastrophe.'<sup>15</sup>

Take the history of my church in my country, for example. According to social historian Brian Dickey, 'The history for evangelical Christians in welfare [in Australia] has been conservative in most ways. The recipients of aid have been treated [as] recipients of aid, probably with a load of opprobrium thrown in, combined with a dash of social control.'<sup>16</sup>

The Australian commentator, Phillip Adams, speaks for many cynical Australians in his acerbic but brilliant critique of religion, appropriately entitled *Adams versus God*. According to Adams: 'All religions are just a psychological projection of an external father figure. . . They are bedtime stories to ward off the darkness, to soothe us in our fear of death.'

He finds a certain ambiguity in his attitude towards religion. 'I can understand, and even respect, the yearnings that produce religion, the troubled turbulent doubts that people call faith. What I do find loathsome are the

internicene wars, the faction fighting that turns church into a charnal house. At its best, religion has lifted spirits and raised spires. At its worst, it has turned entire civilisations into cemeteries.'

It is his contention that: 'Religion is not the "opiate of the people". Opium suggests something soporific, numbing, dulling. Too often, religion has been the aphrodisiac of horror, a benzedrine for brutality.'

Of all religious groups, Adams considers the fundamentalists the worst, holding them accountable for the worst atrocities done in the name of religion. Fundamentalists are 'a humourless bunch' who see God as a grumpy old man. He contends that their churches are nothing but 'small totalitarian societies with a library of just one book'. The missionaries these churches send out practise 'a scorched earth policy' in their proselytisation, 'a cultural uprooting of local faiths from which many societies have never recovered'.

Phillip Adams concludes by saying, rather whimsically, but perhaps rather wistfully, too: 'If there was a God, I think he would dislike fundamentalists as much as I do.'<sup>17</sup>

#### ✱ THE POTENTIAL OF RELIGION:

*'It is a means of either enslavement  
or emancipation'*

Aloysius Pieres says in his *Theology of Liberation* that: 'Every religion, Christianity included, is at once a sign and a countersign of the kingdom of God; that the revolutionary impetus launching a religion into existence is both fettered and fostered by the need for an ideo-

logical formulation; that its institutionalisation both constrains and conserves its liberative force; that religion, therefore, is a potential means of either enslavement or emancipation.<sup>18</sup>

Many studies in psychology and sociology exemplify the point that Pieres is trying to make. They prove that while some religious people are actually often less humanitarian than their non-religious neighbours because of their religion, some religious people are actually often more humanitarian than their non-religious neighbours because of their religion.

Peter Glew-Crouch has shown in a recent study that the relationship between religious beliefs and humanitarian behaviour is not a simple linear one, but a more complicated curvilinear one, which no doubt when drawn would take the form of a bell graph. His study demonstrates that people who don't get into the ideology of an institutionalised religion are less likely to be prejudiced, for example, than those who do. But his study also demonstrates that people who get beyond the ideology of an institutionalised religion are less likely to be prejudiced than either of their religious, or their non-religious, neighbours.<sup>19</sup>

A review of the contemporary research on 'voluntarism' by David Gerard demonstrates that the most significant difference between those who are prepared to give themselves freely to work with others in the community and those who aren't is a degree of religious devotion to the Other that transcends their egocentricity.<sup>20</sup>

A review of the contemporary research on altruism

by Craig Seaton demonstrates that the most significant difference between those who are prepared to give their lives, sacrificially, to save the lives of others in the community and those who aren't is a degree of religious devotion to the Other that transcends their ethnocentricity.<sup>21</sup>

Scott Peck suggests that there are four distinct stages of growth in religion. The first stage is antisocial confusion. The second stage is institutional conformity. The third stage is individual nonconformity. And the fourth stage is communal spirituality.

For people who have been 'confused', no doubt the clarity of religious 'conformity', of one kind or another, can be quite helpful. But if people do not grow beyond acceptance of 'conformity' to a respect for 'nonconformity', they can get stuck at a stage of religious development where they get so locked into their dogma that they simply can't relate to an Other. Community development becomes a sheer impossibility. However, if people grow towards a stage of 'spirituality' where they acquire the maturity to be able to facilitate unity and diversity with an Other, regardless of dogma, religion can play a very creative role in community development.<sup>22</sup>

According to a survey conducted by S.J. Samartha, this type of spirituality is actually playing a vital part in much of the community development taking place in many of the new movements happening around the world today. 'One emphasis in all new movements,' Samartha says, 'is a more satisfying human life here and now. Another emphasis is the search for new forms of

community, partly as a protest against traditional, petrified forms of community that stifled freedom and partly because of the pressures of modern life that demand new groupings and new relationships.'

'Seeking renewal,' Samartha says, 'movements of innovation go back to the spiritual core. . . back to their original resources. . . to discover a framework of meaning in which the person has a vocation to discover community.'<sup>23</sup>

As the sociologist of religion, Oscar Maduro, says: 'The true role of religion is to enable people to transcend the dominant ideologies of the day and to encourage the people, so empowered, to criticise the *status quo*, catalyse change in the system and create communities in which they can overcome the evil with good.'<sup>24</sup>

#### ✱ A ROLE FOR RELIGION:

*'To create communities which overcome evil with good'*

I think I learnt most about the role that religion can play in the development of communities when I lived in India.

As I've already said, Ange and I lived for many years in a multifaith community, known as Aashiana. Aashiana was a small group of some twenty to thirty young people who had got together, from various religious backgrounds, to try to discern what it might mean to practise the compassion of God, exemplified in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, in New Delhi.

At the heart of our spirituality were six emphases that were central to our apprehension of community:

#### □ The *process* of prayer

Prayer, in Aashiana, was the process of 'developing an awareness of, and availability to, the Other'. It involved a conscious 'waiting upon the Other' and a 'willingness to yield to the Other'.

It was essentially a 'creative response to life in the light of the love of the Other'.

#### □ The *place* of prayer

Prayer had an important place in the life we shared together. It was considered to be the centre of the community and the catalyst for community development: the still point around which the life of the community revolved; the point of integration where the conflicts in the community were resolved; the starting point at which people began to live again; and the point of departure from which people began to experiment and explore another way of living.

We emphasised the importance of prayer because we believed that community begins and ends with the Other and, in prayer, we could meet the Other who is the beginning and the end of the community development process.

It was in encounter with the Other that we believed that all that is good could be defined and affirmed, all that is evil could be exposed and opposed, and our task for the future outlined.

It was in encounter with the Other that we believed a vision of justice could be revealed and an infusion of grace could be realised.

It was in encounter with the Other that we believed

we could develop discernment in the midst of disorientation, energy when we had exhausted our ability, and endurance where we would have otherwise withdrawn.

It was in prayer, therefore, that we felt we could begin to engage, with the Other, in the struggle for the salvation of the world.

### □ The *inspiration* of prayer

It was in prayer that a vision for justice emerged. This is what I wrote elsewhere about this experience:

It was a vision of *equality*, in which all the resources of the earth would be shared equally between all the people on earth regardless of nationality, colour, caste, class or creed.

It was a vision of *equity*, in which even the most disadvantaged people would be able to meet their basic needs for good water, adequate food, sufficient clothing and secure accommodation, with dignity.

It was a vision of a great society of small communities interdependently cooperating to practise political, socio-economic and personal righteousness and peace in every locality.<sup>25</sup>

And it was in prayer that we began to feel the inflow of an infusion of grace to enable us to realise our vision for justice:

[It was] an infusion of grace that enabled us to begin to deal with the reality of our limitations and contradictions.

[It was] an infusion of grace that enabled us to move beyond angry reactions to just actions that transcended those limitations and resolved those contradictions.

[It was] an infusion of grace that enabled us to respond, if not always with courage, at least with conviction, compassionately, constructively and productively.<sup>26</sup>

We knew that there were many who pray but do not act and many who act but do not pray. But it seemed to us that such people had misunderstood the meaning of both prayer and action.

Prayer, for us, was the inspiration for action.

When we prayed, we came into the presence of a Love so profound that it challenged all our plans, opinions and prejudices, and called us to a cause of pure compassion.

In the presence of that Love, we had to act with love. Because to do anything else seemed utterly absurd.

In the presence of that Love, we were set free from a preoccupation with meeting our needs for a vocation of seeking peace on the basis of justice for all.<sup>27</sup>

Thus it was, through prayer, we developed a concern for the people in our city. And it was, through prayer, we developed a commitment to the people in the slums. And it was, through prayer, we developed contact with the Kanjars, the so-called 'Unclean Ones' that lived across the road.

The Kanjars were a tribe of a thousand people who migrated to the city in search of food during a time of famine and ended up eking out an existence ever since in one of the city's slums.

It was a very precarious existence. They lived in 200 little huts with thatch roofs, supported by bamboo poles, that consistently failed to keep out inclement weather

— the cold in winter, the heat in summer or the rain in monsoon. Each hut housed a family of five or more — a grandparent, a couple of parents and two or three children in the space of a tent fit for two in a tight squeeze.

Around the huts, the dusty ground was covered with bits of trash, different kinds of refuse and faeces. Pigs rooted through the rubbish, searching for titbits of excrement to snaffle. The only water was a smelly, stagnant pool nearby that bred mosquitoes, carrying malaria round the settlement. There wasn't a single tap or pump that supplied any drinking water. If people wanted a drink, they had to beg for it.

They tried to survive on a diet of rotten fruit and vegetables that they scavenged from the waste bins in the neighbourhood. Disease was rampant. Death stalked the encampment. It seemed like someone died in the slum every week.

They lived with tremendous dignity. But behind the smiles, there were always tears. The joke was always on them. They were outcast, illiterate, illegal squatters, always being hassled by the public and harassed by the police.

We were determined to join them in their struggle for justice.<sup>28</sup>

### □ The *pattern* of prayer

In our struggle with the Kanjars, we began to see that prayer was not just a means of doing justice, but that it was the *model* for doing justice. To do justice to them, the process of community development needed to not only conform to the pattern of prayer, but actually become a form of prayer itself:

Community development is usually a form of intervention.

In any intervention, we tend to take on the concerns of others as our own. And we tend to depend on ourselves, and our capacity to help, to facilitate the resolution of the problems in the community.

This means we will only tend to work with people we think we can help and we will only work with them as long as our help is facilitating the resolution of the problems in the community.

If we had approached the Kanjars on these terms, we probably would have never started at all. But if by some strange turn of events we had, we certainly would not have stayed with the process very long because, as far as we were concerned, the situation was simply impossible.

It was only as our notion of community development was transformed in prayer — from an act of *intervention*, which depended on the expertise we had, into an act of *intercession*, which depended on the power God had to do something about the situation that we obviously could not do — that we were able to begin to engage in the struggle for justice alongside the Kanjars.

Right from the start, we realised that to do justice to them as people we would need to act with more regard for the process and less regard for the outcome.

We realised that if we acted with an eye on the outcome, we would tend to only select actions that were potentially successful and would tend to only concentrate on activities that would make us successful.

[This] seemed fair enough, till we realised that, in the process of focusing on success, we were most likely to exclude people from the project who were least likely to be successful; we were most likely to try to control the project and the people in the project for the sake of our success.

So, in order to avoid adding insult to injury, we tried to approach the process of community development with the Kanjars as we would approach prayer — that is, in



a spirit of openness and responsiveness, being willing to do our bit, without any expectation of ever controlling the outcome.

When we began to visit the Kanjars, they were very suspicious. They had no visitors who were friends — no-one who just wanted to spend time with them, relate to them, talk with them, listen to them, or struggle with their concerns in an open-ended manner. The only visitors that ever made their way to the slums were politicians, who came looking for votes to collect at election time, or proselytizers, who came looking for souls to convert to their particular sect. So they were very suspicious of visitors who said they wanted to be their friends.

However, over innumerable cups of tea in the ensuing months, we were able to develop reciprocal relationships with real mutual regard. They were able to put us to the test, find us more or less trustworthy and transcend, if not suspend, their suspicions enough [for them] to be able to relate to us with a remarkable degree of vulnerability, which we did our best to reciprocate. So before the year was out, we were able to start to share our aspirations with one another.<sup>29</sup>

### □ The *power* of prayer

Hope of justice, for people without any hope of justice like the Kanjars, could not possibly develop on the basis of their experience. Their experience, characterised by a continual litany of one injustice after another, may make hope imperative, but it also makes it impossible. We all knew there was no 'quick fix' for the Kanjars.

The only hope they had was in the construction of an alternative future that would be in total contrast to their present situation and a total contradiction of their past history. But to be able to even begin to try to

construct an alternative future, the people needed to discover the power to act against their conditioning, while the personal, social, cultural and political circumstances in which they were conditioned were still the dominant and dominating realities that circumscribed their lives.

And that they felt was, quite literally, beyond them. So the only hope of any hope for the Kanjars depended on their capacity to access a power beyond themselves:

We were aware that there was a power that could be released in prayer that could be explained in terms of psychology and sociology.

'A self-therapy takes place,' Jacques Ellul explains. 'There is the giving up of anger and aggressiveness, a validation through responsibility and meditation, a recovery of balance through the rearranging of facts on successive levels as seen from a fresh outlook.'

But we were also aware that there was a power that could be released in prayer that was beyond the capacity of contemporary psychology and sociology to explain. Ellul calls it 'the effectual, immediate presence of the wholly Other, the Transcendent, the Living One'.

We knew that if we were to access enough power to break the bondage of our conditioning so that we would be free to think and talk and work towards an alternative future with the community, we not only needed as much self-therapy as we could get, but we also needed something 'wholly Other' than anything we had ever tried before.

It was in the early days of our involvement with the Kanjars when it happened. . . The people were still quite nervous about any innovations. But, more out of desperation than anything else, they had decided to go ahead with a primary health program.

They built a hut for a clinic and a medical student

volunteered to help the people with sanitation, nutrition and basic health care. For a while it seemed as if the program might not only empower the community to deal with their dysentery, but also with their despair.

But at a critical stage in the development of this program, a child fell seriously ill. She was brought to the clinic for help. But there was nothing that either the medical student or the other doctors she consulted could do to help. The diagnosis was tetanus. The prognosis was death.

We sensed that, if this child were to die, with it would die not only the hopes of the parents, but also the hopes of all the other parents who had hoped against hope that, at long last, their lives might be different.

So we did the only 'Other' thing we could do at the time — we called the community together for prayer.

Even though we all prayed for the child to live, I think all of us expected it to die. But it didn't. And that made all the difference — because it proved beyond doubt that things could be different. And that belief, that things could be different, unleashed the latent confidence in people that they could be different, in spite of their conditioning. And that confidence that they could be different became the foundation of all the work that the Kanjars have done to develop the community since that day.

I remember talking to Ramu, a Kanjar leader, before I left India. I asked him what he thought were the most significant changes that had taken place in the Kanjar community. I shall never forget what he said. He said: We have changed in many ways, *Daud bhai*:

- \* We believe God is for us. Not against us.
- \* Though we are little people, we are no longer afraid of big people. We are prepared to stand up for what is right — like the time we marched to the Office of

the Lieutenant Governor of New Delhi to demand *hamara* [our own] land and *pukkeba* [permanent] houses.

- \* We work things out better now in the community council. We do not have as many fights. Remember the fights we used to have, when we used to throw those big bricks at one another?
- \* These days us men spend less time taking drugs and getting stoned. We work in the garbage recycling co-op we have set up. We are able to bring in enough money — two or three times more than we used to get before — to meet more needs at home. Our wives are happier. Our children are healthier. And not so many of us die so young any more.
- \* Not everything is good. Many things are still bad. But it's a whole lot better than it was before.<sup>30</sup>

#### □ The *practice* of prayer

I have never forgotten the lessons I learnt in India about the part that prayer can play in community development. And though it does not seem to come as easy in Australia as it used to in India, I always try to remember to put prayer at the heart of the process of whatever I'm doing in the community I'm working with.

Let me suggest a few ways of praying that a lot of people in our community, which is not particularly religious, have found very helpful:

- \* *Be glad to be alive.* I try to make sure I get enough sleep each night; that I can wake up every morning, not groggy, not grumpy, but glad to be alive. As I wake, I try to be aware of the Life around me that is welling up within me and give myself over to the joy of living.
- \* *Let the grudges go.* In order to prepare myself

for the day, I take a bit of time just to sense the tensions in my body that signal things I am uptight about. Usually these are grievances, real or perceived, of ways that people thwart my plans. I note the issues that they raise that I need to address. Then I let them go.

- \* *Let the love flow.* Once I let my grudges go, I can begin to let the love flow. I try to do this by bringing to mind all the people that I am connected to in the locality, then one by one picture their face, speak their name and pronounce a blessing upon each and every one of them, friend and foe alike.
- \* *Deliberate on the locality.* I often leave my house in a hurry and I'm on the move from morning to night. But at regular intervals throughout the day, I always take the time to stop, look and listen, to deliberate on the activities, conversations and undercurrents in the locality.
- \* *Meditate on the community.* Every now and again, I go up to the top of a hill which overlooks my locality to put that reality into a bit of perspective. I meditate on the community as it is and as it might be. I imagine all the things we could do to bring people in the neighbourhood together.
- \* *Contemplate responsibility.* Because there's so many things I *could* do, it's very difficult to figure out exactly what I *should* do. I am often confused. So I seek clarity by listening to the still small voice inside me. I keep listening until I

hear a word that is just right for me. Then I take that word to heart.

- \* *Discern a direction.* I take it to heart. But I don't go for it on my own. I run it by a group of people whose opinions I trust. And together we decide what we are going to do about it. I meet with a bunch of people in my neighbourhood each Monday morning, just to discern the direction we ought to take, on the basis of consensus.
- \* *Reflect on actions.* Even if I get the direction right, it doesn't mean I get the action right. I actually get it wrong far more often than I'd like to admit. So it's really important to be a part of a group that can help us evaluate our progress. I meet with a bunch of people in my neighbourhood each Wednesday morning to reflect on our actions.
- \* *Celebrate an achievement.* When I reflect on my actions, I am brought face-to-face with my failures as well as my successes. And if I'm not careful, I can let my failures discount my successes. It's really important to be a part of a group that can help us validate our progress, through success and failure. I meet with a bunch of people in my neighbourhood each Friday morning who celebrate any sort of achievement that any of us has managed to accomplish, no matter how big, or how small, it may be.
- \* *Consecrate the movement.* Every Sunday night, up to a hundred of us gather for community

worship. It's a time when a whole lot of us can get together, share our stories, confess our struggles, sing our songs of hope and despair and consecrate the movement, be it ever so faltering, towards the realisation of community in our ordinary everyday lives.

Every time we meet, a different person organises the liturgy. But barely a service goes by without someone using a prayer by Michael Leunig. Michael Leunig, Australia's foremost cartoonist, writes prayers for the *Sunday Age* as his contribution to what he calls 'this wonderful, free-form, do-it-yourself ritual of connection and transformation'.

So, it is probably fitting that we finish with a prayer by Michael Leunig that is a favourite of ours:

God help us to change.  
To change ourselves,  
    and to change our world.  
To know the need for it.  
To deal with the pain of it.  
To feel the joy of it.  
To undertake the journey  
    without understanding the destination,  
    the art of gentle revolution.<sup>31</sup>