

# NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE-SSCS<sup>1</sup>

## NEWS FROM IRC MEMBERS AROUND THE WORLD

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July 2020 – No. 2

### From Phil Daughtry, Australia

**Youth Spirituality.** Earlier this year I published an article on engaging youth spiritualities in the Australian context in the *International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society*. In this paper I draw from the insights of a long-term sociologist of religion, Gary Bouma, and use his idea of ‘shy hope’ as a lens through which to view the phenomenon of youth spirituality and engagement in a variety of Australian contexts that I refer to as ‘portraits’. The primary argument of the paper is that we need to take spiritual formation as seriously as we do other forms of education and that observations of good practice provide clues as to what kind of education is both needed and appropriate. In response to the paper I have been pleased to receive approaches from three different projects in youth spirituality inviting consultation. One of these projects is seeking to develop a more culturally relevant alternative to ‘Youth Alpha’. Another is a vibrant youth engagement program in the socio-economically challenged northern suburbs of Adelaide. The project manager is exploring what it would mean to facilitate spiritual community and formation amongst his volunteer group and also to extend this to the disadvantaged client group. The third project involves a discussion with the Western Australian branch of YMCA who are exploring what it means to become more intentional about the ‘spirit’ element in their body/mind/spirit matrix of holistic youth and community wellbeing. It is exciting to me to consider actual, practical work with young people in conversation with the field of spirituality studies.

This year I have been working from Tabor’s Perth campus in Western Australia (I am normally based in Adelaide, South Australia). I have continued to teach spirituality subjects this last semester with about 60 students in my *Exploring Practices for Spiritual Formation* class within the applied social science curriculum. The student body was spread across the two geographical locations, (approx., 2,700 kilometres apart) and also included an online only cohort in various places around Australia. During Australia’s relatively brief COVID lockdown we were all online and the movement into Zoom platform classes was seamless. The class offers a contemporary induction into a contemplative way of being and offers permission for students to slow down, explore the authentic nature of their unique spiritual sources and motivations in an open and respectful dialogue with Christian faith. The stories of healing and liberation that

emerge from this process are quite profound. I do hope in due course to capture and interpret some of these within an appropriate methodology but for now it is simply wonderful to be immersed in this kind of teaching process. My paper published in 2020: ‘Portraits of the “Shy Hope”’: Engaging Youth Spiritualities in the Australian Context.” *The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society*, 10(1), 13–27. <https://doi.org/10.18848/21548633/CGP/v10i01/13-27> Last year I also published a small book under the ‘shy hopes’ banner that functions primarily as a devotional, everyday contemplative text. See, <https://www.elephanthousegroup.com/product-page/portraits-of-our-shy-hopes-by-phil-daughtry>

Tabor College, Adelaide and Perth, Australia  
Pdaughtry@adelaide.tabor.edu.au

### From Chris Morris, Australia

**Evolving Methodologies in Melbourne.** In March 2020, three scholars of the University of Divinity who presented papers at the ‘Evolving Methodologies’ conference in Rome, September 2019 offered a symposium entitled “Evolving Methodologies” at Catholic Theological College Melbourne, a college of the University of Divinity. The scholars and their papers were: John R. Dupuche, *A Spirituality of Pleasure, and Its Methodologies*; Denise Goodwin: *Qualitative Studies in Theology: the Spirituality of War-Affected Children, Social Science Research Design and the Mutual Critical Correlational Method*; Bernadette Miles: *Ethnographic Spiritual Direction: A Methodology for Researching Spiritual Experience in Leadership and Organizational Development*. [papers available at *Mystrion.it*, see p. 4] It was hoped that the “Evolving Methodologies” symposium would be the beginning of further meetings and investigations by scholars of Spirituality at the University of Divinity to explore methodology in spirituality. However, this has not happened due to the Covid-19 situation. Alternative approaches such as remote meetings are being considered at present.

**Significant publication on interfaith dialogue.** Associate Professor Rev. Dr. John R. Dupuche, scholar of Kashmir Shaivism and leader in interfaith dialogue in Australia published in February, *The Rivers of Paradise: A Spiritual Autobiography*, (Floating World Press). The book draws on complementary ideas from Christianity and Hinduism and

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<sup>1</sup> Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality

offers a wellspring of spiritual insight and inspiration for the twenty-first century. It shows how openness to contrasting traditions can lead to new levels of spiritual awareness.

Catholic Theological College, University of Divinity,  
Melbourne  
Christopher.morris@ctc.edu.au

### From Diana L. Villegas, Colombia

**Peer reviewed, open source Journal, Javeriana University.** This Jesuit University in Bogotá publishes the open source, peer reviewed theology journal, *Xaveriana Theologica*. It is widely indexed including in ATLA. Articles come mostly from Latin and Central America and are published in Spanish, Portuguese, English, Italian and French. [SSCS members may wish to consider this open source journal.]

I reviewed articles in 5 of the bi-yearly issues of the journal, from 2018 to the present. Each issue had an article relevant to Christian spirituality studies, two on traditional spirituality texts, John of the Cross and Meister Eckhart. Related to the Colombian reality are two articles. One offers a Biblical Studies take on a spirituality for the pastoral care of those with chronic severe diseases or terminal illness. See the article by Manuel Tenjo Cogollo from the Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios (Minuto de Dios University), Bogotá, “Acompañamiento a enfermos de difícil cura a partir de Lc 23,39-43”. *Theologica Xaveriana* 186 (2018): 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.11144/javeriana.tx68-186.aedc>.

A research group funded by the theology faculty at the Luis Amigó Catholic University, published a piece on religious experience from the perspective of the interdisciplinary specialty of neurotheology. See, Juan Carlos Múnera Montoya. “Neuroteología y la naturaleza de la experiencia religiosa”. *Theologica Xaveriana* 187 (2019): 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.11144/javeriana.tx69-187.nner>.

**My article on the spirituality of the Colombian civil war violence survivors** based on interviews conducted on location in a village caught for years between guerrilla, paramilitaries and government troops has been published in an open source journal. (I described this work in last year’s newsletter). See, “Spirituality and Beliefs of Colombian Internal Conflict Survivors,” *HTS Theological Studies* 75(4) 2019, a5642. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i4.5642>, <https://hts.org.za/index.php/hts/article/view/5642>

Manizales  
dianavilsa@gmail.com

### From Annie Yi Jung PAN, Hong Kong

**Ministry in troubled Hong Kong.** During the epidemic of COVID-19 and since the news about the National Security Law from the National People’s Congress to Hong Kong,

Annie was invited to give over 20 public lectures on different occasions. While these new challenges have brought suffering they also serve for renewal of Christian spirituality.

This year Annie is offering a course to help students appreciate and understand the various art forms in spiritual formation and their significance for the expression of faith according to the liturgical year. She is supervising two postgraduate theses on Christian spirituality and Arts.

**Recent publications.** Annie’s new Book *Companionship in Spiritual Journey* 《靈程同行者》 Hong Kong: Christian Communications Ltd, 2020, was published in March. Her two articles “The Feminine Spirituality of St. Teresa: Ascending to God by Descending in Humility,” *Asia Pacific Mission Studies* (APMS) Vol. 2, No. 1 (2020):78–100, and “Transforming Christian Spirituality: Hermeneutical Method and Methodology,” (available in *Mysterion.it*, see p.4), have been separately published in Asian and European context. Another Chinese article “The Paradox of Trial: Mother Teresa’s Spiritual Experiences,” 《弔詭的試煉：解讀德蘭修女的靈性經驗》 *HILL ROAD* 《山道期刊》 45 (June 2020) will be published in Hong Kong in July.

China Graduate School of Theology, Hong Kong  
yijung.pan@cgst.edu

### From Michael O’Sullivan, Ireland

**New SpIRE Library.** Michael O’ Sullivan and Bernadette Flanagan are co-founders of SpIRE (Spirituality Institute for Research and Education) which launched the SpIRE Library on 5 March 2020. It is a specialist and unique library for the study of applied spirituality; the catalogue is available online at <https://spiritualityinstitute.ie/spire-library/>. It is hoped that in time this library will receive visits from international spirituality researchers and educators. The library was launched on World Book Day by Dr Larry Culliford, co-founder of the Spirituality and Psychiatry Special Interest Group of the Royal College of Psychiatrists and former Chair of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland. Larry’s paper, ‘Journeying with Psyche and Soul in Spirituality,’ has been published in *Spirituality Studies*, an online journal, and can be found at <https://www.spirituality-studies.org/dp-volume6-issue1-spring2020/2/>

**Publications.** Two of the 2018-19 graduates of the MA in Applied Spirituality programme, for which Michael is the director, had books published in June of 2020. Anita Maryam Mansingh published *Art Disperses the Darkness: A Spirituality of Healing*, Amazon, where she focuses on the use of painting and poetry in spirituality. She proposes to make a journey through key elements of our inner life: awareness, longing, recognition, acceptance and moving beyond. It is not an ordinary academic path; suggestive ideas are interwoven with personal experiences and original perspectives. Furthermore, the author shapes her path as a healing journey where artistic expression and creativity are

not only tools at hand but also the ground that makes healing possible.

Diane Jackson in *Spirituality at the School Gate: the Importance of Encounter*, Wipf and Stock, shows that, unlike the everyday location of the workplace or the home, the school gate, which is primarily populated by women, is an overlooked, under-researched locus of spirituality. Her book sheds a concentrated beam of light on what proves to be a site of rich, embodied spiritual practice. It will encourage readers to approach their daily school-gate experiences with more intentionality and appreciation of the presence of God in the everyday.

Michael O'Sullivan gave a paper at the American Academy of Religion in 2019 on the martyrdom of Ignacio Ellacuría, SJ, the Rector/President of the Jesuit University in San Salvador, and his Jesuit companions. Entitled 'Ignacio Ellacuría: Martyr of Liberation,' it marked the thirtieth anniversary of their martyrdom and was published in Patrick Carberry, ed., *Jesuit Lives at Home in the World* (Dublin: Messenger Publications, 2019), 134-43.

Spirituality Institute for Research and Education, Dublin  
spiremos@gmail.com

## From Tim Geoffrion, Myanmar and Minneapolis

**From Myanmar to Minneapolis in time of crisis.** Tim Geoffrion writes that he had to return from Myanmar to his home base of Minneapolis due to the pandemic, only to find himself in the city where George Floyd was murdered triggering the protests that have become global. He is writing a series of reflections on racism and injustice, entitled, "What Does God Expect from Us Now?" which can be found at <http://www.spirit-ledleader.com>. Tim writes: As a professor and minister, I've been searching for how to best respond to these crises, both personally and professionally. What I'm finding is that, though the challenges are unprecedented in my lifetime, the spiritual course before me is the same as ever. Staying connected to God and seeking the Spirit's leading, as opposed to my normal reactivity and compulsive attempts to try to fix or do something significant, has been essential for my own mental health and ability to minister. The more I have been able to let go of what I cannot control or change and focus instead on the opportunities that are available to me, even if it is just to engage and stand with others who are afraid, uncertain, and outraged, the more peace and equilibrium I experience. From that spiritually connected and grounded place, I'm seeing that I have plenty to offer others, even if I cannot teach my classes or meet with my students. It's who I am and how I am experiencing God that I can still offer in multiple ways (e.g., writing weekly essays, Zoom meetings, reaching out, email correspondence) that seems to be making the most difference for me and for others I care about.

Myanmar Institute of Theology, Myanmar  
Faith, Hope, and Love Global Ministries, Minneapolis  
tim.geoffrion@gmail.com

## From Christo Lombaard, South Africa

**Interculturality and faith experience.** In our internationally unfolding post-secular era, the *experience of faith* comes to stand ever more centrally. This study helps us foundationally to understand this Christianity-in-development. *Strangers in a Familiar Land. A Phenomenological Study on Marginal Christian Identity* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock's Pickwick Publications, 2020) by James Blumenstock takes an anthropological-phenomenological approach to study the negotiation of Christian identity in a Thai Buddhist setting. Based on a Missiology dissertation, Australian-Thai colleague Blumenstock here sets the sociocultural environment, describes the formation of Christian identity in the fully non-secular Thai context, and then theorises around the observed phenomena of Verticality, Emplacement, Displacement and Negotiation. With interview excerpts that provide the beacons for the interpretative-reflective sections of this volume, the concrete experiences of religious converts are brought to the fore. Both in fully religious geographies and, though differently, in contexts where the formally a-religious nature of the public sphere is receding, understanding the way religious experience is negotiated, remains ever important.

At times numbers do... *well*, count! It seems, the more so when the Spirituality publication is *on* numerals.

**"Spirituality in mathematics"** is namely the title of Volker Kessler's 2019 article in *Journal for the Study of Spirituality* (9/1, 49-61)

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/20440243.2019.1581384#aHR0cHM6Ly93d3tudGFuZGZvbmxpbmUuY29tL2RvaS9wZGYvMTAuMTA4MC8yMDQ0MDI0My4yMDE5LjE1ODEzODQ/bmVIZEFjY2Vzcz10cnVlQEBAMA==>. This publication was the most downloaded article of the year from the prestigious *Journal for the Study of Spirituality*. This is not the first time ventured into these thematics by colleague Kessler, who holds doctorates in Mathematics and in Missiology, and is professionally attached in both Germany and South Africa. A year earlier he had published in the University of Pretoria based journal *HTS Theological Studies* (74/1, 1-7) "God becomes beautiful ... in mathematics"  
<https://hts.org.za/index.php/hts/article/view/4886/11245>

Dr Annemarie E. Oberholzer (RN; DCur), Research Fellow in **Spirituality & Health**, University of South Africa (UNISA) reports on spirituality and treatment of COVID-19 patients. The International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care (IAHPC) defines spirituality as "Spirituality is defined broadly as a 'dynamic and intrinsic aspect of humanity through which persons seek ultimate meaning, purpose, and transcendence, and experience relationship to self, family, others, community, society, nature, and the significant or sacred. Spirituality is expressed through beliefs,

values, traditions, and practices.” Based on this definition IAHPHC recommends “the practice of interprofessional spiritual care based on a generalist-specialist model of care: providers address spiritual concerns and work with spiritual care specialists in treating spiritual distress. Receiving a diagnosis of COVID-19 can raise intense questions regarding one’s mortality, resulting in spiritual distress.” The Briefing Note on *Interprofessional Spiritual Care in the Time of COVID-19* (Puchalski et al. 2020) <http://globalpalliativecare.org/covid-19/?show=global-palliative-care-organizations-special-series-on-covid-19-and-palliative-care>

University of South Africa UNISA  
ChristoLombaard@gmail.com

## From Celia Kourie, South Africa

**Spirasa, the Spirituality Association of South Africa**, founded 15 years ago will meet via Zoom later in the year, hoping to include our Dutch colleagues. Spirasa offers opportunities for both academic and more practical presentations in the field of spirituality and meets at St Augustine College in Johannesburg.

My main work is in the field of **Interspirituality/Inter-faith dialogue**, both at an academic and pastoral level. I am a member of the *SACBC (South African Catholic Bishops Conference)* Department of Ecumenical and Inter-faith dialogue. Dialogue and meetings (currently on Zoom) continue as an outcome from an Inter-faith Symposium held under the auspices of the SACBC last year. I am also a member of an independent interspirituality community, open to all, with monthly meetings (currently on Zoom). My last two publications are: 2018, ‘Abhishiktananda (Henri le Saux, O.S.B) 1910–1973: Pioneer of Interspiritual Mysticism’, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 74(3), a5132. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i3.5132> and, 2019, “The Transformative Effect of a Mystical Reading of Scripture.” *LitNet Akademies* 16(3).

University of the Free State  
celia.kourie@gmail.com

The [PDF of the \*\*Proceedings of the Rome Conference on Evolving Methodologies\*\*](#), September 2020 is available at the website of the online journal, *Mysterion* (see link below). In this publication you will find the papers of IRC members Michael O’Sullivan and Annie Yi Yung PAN, as well as the concluding addresses of Rossano Zas Friz and Gilberto Cavazos. [Anno 12 numero 2 \(2019\)](#)

**Editor: Diana L. Villegas**

Comments, suggestions or critiques are welcome.  
(dianavilsa@gmail.com)