



Through Ageing to Sageing



spirituality for an emerging vision of growing older....

Walk around feeling like a leaf.

Know you could fall any second.

Then decide what to do with your time.

- Naomi Shihab Nye -

The *Through Ageing to Sageing* programme is for those wishing to integrate a contemplative dimension into their lives.

There are a myriad of images and stereotypes inviting all possibilities of ageing¹ for the baby boomers and the generation before...from retirement village brochures with photos of very energetic late 60 years olds, to T shirts saying that 'ageing is no excuse for growing up', to people losing their retirement savings in mishandled deals, to experiencing physical diminishment, and some for whom ageing may mean greater isolation, loneliness and depression. At the same time there are images of people out on the golf courses, attending the University of the Third Age, redefining retirement from work – in fact not retiring as we have traditionally known it, people raising their grandchildren.

Whatever image we may have or hope for ourselves, ageing is always going to remind us of our fragility, vulnerability, what impact we have had on others, our loves and losses, and the shortness of time to live to, and in our fullest human potential.

For the purposes of this programme I am using Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi's definition of sageing, *"... a process of approaching ageing as a positive journey filled with wisdom, learning and spirituality. It affirms the importance of the elder years and teaches how to reap life's wisdom"*. I would add 'continuing to be transformed, living with greater understanding and compassion and leaving a legacy of 'all of who we are'.

Our spiritual capacities and gifts naturally flower as we grow older, and yet there aren't always coherent opportunities for these to be formed, explored, celebrated and embodied. There may be short opportunities for a day's reflection, a weekend retreat or an on-going group to meet around specific issues or causes, but there is no longer transformation programme. Many people want an opportunity to more specifically, and individually, reflect on what sageing means, or could mean for them.

Who Might Be Interested in This Program?

This program is for anyone who feels a fit with the above definition of ageing or sageing, is drawn to contemplative spirituality, and who:

- Wishes to develop or deepen a consistent spiritual practice
- Is keen to explore and learn within a broad ecumenical Christian framework, enhanced by the wisdom and creativity in their life so far, and what is to come
- Lives, or wants to live the spirit of Naomi Shihab Nye's verse on the first page
- Acknowledges that it is not so much *what* we do, but *how* we do it
- Longs to be a forming and supportive presence in their family and/or 'community'
- Wants to share this 'journey' within the collective wisdom of a group and with guidance of a spiritual companion.

¹ I am using the term 'ageing' to denote people who are considering how they want to live their last few decades or remaining years. This isn't always age related as a person of 30 with a known terminal illness may go through the same process.

Program Components

The programme will be five days:

- On the 18th April, 13th June, 29th August and a non-residential two days on the 14th and 15th of November
- Three individual sessions of spiritual companionship

The content will include themes such as:

- Visions of sagehood and designing our own...
- Applying the harrow and the harvester
- Saying more clearly yes and no
- Understanding and experiencing the qualities of intuitive knowing, joy, peace, spaciousness, and compassion
- Contemplative practices such as:
 - lectio divina
 - prayer as silence, stillness, softness, savouring, smiling
 - mentoring
 - pilgrimage

In addition, exploring qualities and activities such as:

- solitude, simplicity and beauty
- wildness, wilderness, wonder and awe
- reading for transformation not information
- the creative spirit in poetry, art and music

Understanding and practicing a more contemplative and simple lifestyle can require guidance and support of a kind easily read about but not easily available. The *Through Ageing to Sageing* programme offers an accessible and flexible program of personal exploring, learning and practice to develop a contemplative perspective, and taking steps to imbed that perspective in your life.

There are no prerequisites for this program, however if you are interested you can get an Interest Form from Pip. **To reserve a place on the programme I would indicate to Pip as soon as possible that you are interested.**

Programme Leader

Pip Nicholls has had many influences in her life with not the least being cradled in the beauty of Wellington and the whole of Aotearoa, New Zealand. Other formative places, people and events have been the Erskine College chapel in Island Bay, being a member of the Aubert, Baxter, Merton, Kirk community in Featherston since 1975, meeting Thinly Norbu Rimpoche and Mother Theresa, returning to Catholic roots through the teachings of Tessa Bielecki (now a hermit in Colorado) and being involved in contemplative practices and studies from her early 20s. In addition, she has worked 25 years in senior positions within the disability sector and became a Spiritual Companion in 2006. She is a member of the Contemplative Network, Aotearoa and the NZ Association of Spiritual Directors.

Fee: \$750 (plus gst). A \$100 deposit needs to be paid with the Interest Form no later than the 7th March 2012.

The fee can be either paid in full or in three, six or nine month instalments beginning in March 2012 – contact Pip to discuss which method you would prefer. If for any reason the fee is prohibiting you joining, please contact Pip to discuss some arrangement.

Start Date: The programme runs over eight months and the times are 10am to 4pm at:

St Marks, 58 Woburn Road, Lower Hutt

Information: If you want to find out more about the programme or to get an Interest Form please contact Pip: on (04) 562 6364 or: pip.nicholls@xtra.co.nz

‘Tis curious that we only believe as deep as we live.

Emerson, *Beauty*