



Eighty Years and Counting

Dí Shearer

Reflections on this Stage of the Journey

Eighty Years and Counting

Reflections on this Stage of the Journey

Dí Shearer

dishearer@icloud.com

I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which I live and have lived, and in which I continue to work and play – the Kurna, the Peramangk and the Ngarrindjeri nations. I pay respect to Elders, past, present and emerging. I honour the living cultural and spiritual connections of these peoples to the land now called Australia and value deeply their relationships to Country and their unique contribution to my life.

Di Shearer

Self-Published, H D Shearer, August, 2024

Photographs and Book Design by the Author

Copyright: Please seek the permission of the author for any use of these poems and photographs.

ISBN: 978-0-646-89988-6 Paper Back

Printed by SA Design and Print, Port Elliot, South Australia

Index

Spinning and Weaving my Life	3
Anticipation	5
A Poet	6
Alpha and Omega	8
Earth and Earthling	11
Emmaus Road	14
Grieving as I Age	16
Hunger and Thirst	17
Imagining Things	19
Living Christ	23
Labouring, Suffering, Thirsty, Hungry	24
Landscapes of Life	27
Moving On	31
Matter Matters	32
Old Age	35
Morning Mist	36

Haiku	37
Mystery	39
The Problem of God	40
Origin, Process and End	42
Resurrection	44
Rock Pools	48
This Little Goldfish	49
Thud	51
Too Busy	54
Today	56
Truth Surpassing Knowledge	58
Turning Sharp Corners	61
Unfurling the Fallow	65
Until I Breathe My Last ...	67

Acknowledgments	69
-----------------	----

Spinning and Weaving My Life

Spinning my life is a daily skill.

It takes pedalling at even pace,
spreading and feeding fleece to form thin thread,
holding the tension, not too tight, not too loose,
as life's fibre unravels in smooth, gentle twist.
Then plying the yarn with another.

Weaving my life takes this daily thread,
held in place by its loom, its frame –
the warp thread holding strong and firm,
the weft thread winding its way back and forth;
gently combing and smoothing each row in place,
to form an intricate, lively pattern.

Over eighty years, I've been working away,
patiently producing a life patterned
by faith, hope and love,
finding meaning in ancient values of
justice, mercy, compassion,
challenged by contemporary learning,
there's always more to discover.
This booklet is the garment I now wear
evolving uniquely from spinning and weaving my life.



Anticipation

I have no idea where this year will take me.
I do not presume to understand
 why I'm making the choices I'm making.
I experience delight in creating the plan.
I know I am choosing more than one guide,
 more than two.
I know I have access to resources
 that more than fill the space.
I experience hunger in sitting before this feast.

I don't know what I don't know about myself yet.
I don't know who will let me down,
 who nurture and advise.
I am thirsty for the finest draft of wine that will be mine.
I'm weaving together the threads of my life.
I'm choosing what I've learned bring me light and joy.
Deep insight is what I anticipate awaits me.

I'm spinning wool from the fleece of my life.
I'm looking for rhythms of daily-ness.
I want the thread to be smooth and even.
So let me give myself to the journey.
Let me learn to pray in silence and in speech.
Let me share with others whatever emerges.

So shall I be more fully and more truly me.
So shall I enter a new decade in anticipation
That there's always a finishing to every beginning.

A Poet

A poet
Speaks

And finds a way to say
What the poet already knows
But fails to fully express.

A poet
Listens

And finds a way to hear
What the poet has known before
But never fully heard.

A poet
Tastes

And finds a way to enjoy
What the poet has eaten before
But can always enjoy anew.

A poet
Breathes

The sweet air of mystery
In which the poet lives
But never fully understands.

Every human

Is a living breathing poet

Speaking, listening, tasting
Engaging in mystery
And putting it into words – or not.



Alpha and Omega

Alpha

Who are we? And where did this all begin?

Fourteen billion years ago, a hot intensity
smaller than the pricking point of a pin
flares forth in fiery foaming light.

The soup is alive, expanding, alluring.
Space-time is born.

Supernovae form, fire and light
travelling, rising outward, exploding,
producing fireworks unparalleled
amid an atmosphere of dark matter.
Dark energy still mystifying.

Then galaxies form from the debris
of exploding, dying supernovae
drawn into existence through gravity,
a force still not fully understood.
And Earth a speck in the total sea of life.

Hydrogen and oxygen drawn together
to quench the insatiable thirst
of plants, animals and humans.
Water now a rare and precious resource.

In the unfathomable future, our sun will die.
This universal ever-expanding sphere with no known edge,
centred everywhere, is now reflecting on itself
in human form
and knows anew these ancient, cosmic elements:
wet, cold, dry and hot – water, earth, air and fire.

Will space-time then cease
and the Ever-Present Origin be more fully known?

Omega.



Earth and Earthling

The voice of Earth:

At the centre I am molten, fiery, gaseous.
Granite is still forming to make my skin, my crust.
Waters cool me as the geo-genesis continues unabated.
Around me is an ocean and a thin atmospheric layer.
Within these live all kinds of Life.

The voice of Earthling:

At the centre I too am fire, molten and unstable.
Personage is still forming
 within the layers of bone, flesh and skin.
My watery body combines
 with the mysteries of inner reflection.
I live and work within this thin atmospheric layer.
I have all kinds of unrealised potential.

The voice of Earth:

You have been child for long enough.
It is time for re-birth, growth into adulthood,
time to join me in the work of biogenesis.
Together we can bring this planet to fulfilment.
You in me and I in you – evolving partnership.

The voice of Earthlings:

We respond today more consciously now.

We are beginning to see ourselves
not as spectators but as initiators.

How strange are the processes
which the spirit of the universe has begun.

Something is afoot in the vastness
as we inhabit one small planet.

What would you have us do?

The voice of Earth:

Ask me. Stop, look, listen.

Earth will guide you.

Creatures large and small know how
to build their houses, protect their young,
nurse their failing, caress their dying.

You are an essential part
of this stream of universal becoming.



Emmaus Road

A stranger joins us on the road –
the road where we share our disappointment.
Hopes dashed, dreams destroyed,
sadness, confusion and despair.

He listens as we share our grief,
takes time to offer consoling, teaching.
He restores our hope, enlivens our dreams.
His words seem too good to be true.

Then as day ends and we arrive home,
he intends to leave us, but we urge him to stay,
invite him in – since darkness will soon descend.
Meal prepared; we watch in wonder.

Those nail-pierced hands, our guest's,
Break bread for us again.
And suddenly we see, we realise
it is Christ who has accompanied us on the road.

We return in haste to our faith community.
Now his absent presence brings the energy we need.
Faith is rekindled, joy restored.
The risen crucified one is alive and ever with us.



Grieving As I Age

Today, I grieve the loss of youthful life.
I stand on the mountain ridge, a watershed –
and look back over all the relationships that formed me.
I'm grateful, yet ever ready to look to the other side,
a life ahead, the new territory of the unknown.

Today, I grieve all that can no longer be,
the active, vibrant, bright and searching me.
Within this aging body, still there is
a growing wisdom, a glowing light.
Daily I'll walk this unknown path, assured of Love.

Today I grieve friends lost, yet ever near.
I hold to faith that renews itself daily.
I yearn for the one who alone can make me whole.
I say goodbye to ambitions least fulfilled,
hold fast to all that God still intends for me.

Today, I grieve how slow I've been
to understand as deeply and fully as I might.
Content that You have held me through it all,
been pleased to nurture and bring fruit.
I taste the sweetness of my life in You,
even within this bitter grieving I now do.

Hunger and Thirst

I hunger for God.
I thirst for deeper, intimate experience of this god.
I hunger and I thirst for the one
I've been seeking all my life,
And finding.

My hunger is not for the god of the past.
The god who annihilates, who judges, who fumes
and loves.
My thirst is for the god of the future
the god who is still becoming,
whose individuation is not complete
without us.

I quench my thirst as I sink deep down into flowing light
as I know myself embraced, enfolded, entwined,
knitted in and with God.
I satisfy my hunger as I read
and absorb all that science teaches
marrying it to all that theology aspires to.
I keep seeking.

I keep knocking and wonder
as I find my own individuation unfolding
for a new decade, for the rest of life.
I partake.

So today, I ask that
whether in private devotion or public worship
I will let the God for whom I hunger and thirst
continue to absorb me,
find me and satisfy my deepest longings.



Imagining Things

The god we no longer believe in
doesn't exist.

The god we have imagined is
quite out of date.

The god of the ancient Israelites
needed re-conceiving
at least two thousand years ago.

An seemingly insignificant historical figure
disfigured and hung on a Roman cross.

He did only good.

He taught truth with a difference

His presence was full of beauty
bringing life and health and peace –
What of him?

We don't need to imagine God.

God walked the earth,
lived a limited historical existence,
spoke of a Father in heaven,
gathered men and women around him
and couldn't be contained by the grave –
Where is he?

And what of the 'not-yet' God?
The one who like us is evolving.
The one who isn't a person,
but is personal, relational, and whole.
What of the leaving behind
of religion that binds and corrupts –
How shall we now live?

For this god is yet to show us
that heaven isn't a place.
It's a form of being we can't quite imagine.
It's a way of life that goes on beyond death.
A way that leaves behind earth's limitations
takes us further into the future,
one bewildering step at a time.

I pray to that god daily
When I sigh, when I groan, when I laugh.
I surrender to someone beyond me,
beyond comprehension, that is.
And taste the sweet sense of presence
that faith of this kind yields,
within my imagining.

Come take a journey with me
into the god who is still coming to be.
Into a future we just can't imagine.
Into a world that is free
Of all its present evils, its darkness,
its desolation, its despair.
Come believe with me.

For this god lives within us
in each of us, deep within.
We're like this god in every way
despite our failing to see
that we are building the future.
The planet depends on me.
Oh, to be free –

Of the god we no longer believe in
who doesn't exist anyway.
Free to love the 'not-yet' God
we are shaping as we imagine away
the things that so disturb us
and invite truth, goodness and beauty
to be the God we can trust.



Living Christ

Jesus,

I walk with you

as you walk with the distraught and wounded
in Ukraine and Russia, in Gaza and Israel,
in Syria and In Myanmar,
in homes where one partner is violent towards another,
in institutions where inequality holds sway.

Jesus, I suffer with you

as you are stripped and condemned,
beaten and scourged, crowned with thorns
and forced to shoulder a cross for no crime of yours.
I take up that cross daily
and fall at least as often as you did.

Jesus, I feel the pain and anguish of your call,

'My God, my God why have you forsaken me?'

I feel the nails,

sense the ridicule and cynicism of the crowd,
know the thirst that nothing can quench.

Jesus, I am crucified with you.

Yet, somehow, I too live.

For you live in me, you the living Christ,
incarnate in me and in all creation.

Labouring, Suffering, Thirsty, Hungry

Labouring God,
I see you in all that I have been born into,
In all that I will enjoy this day,
In all that I will contribute
to its growth and development.

Suffering God,
I know you in all the pain I feel
in all the suffering I witness in the world
in all that I am yet to fully appreciate
of my own complicity in this suffering.

Thirsty God,
I sense you in the thirst I know each day,
in all that we, believer and unbeliever alike, long for,
in all that we aspire to,
give ourselves to, in labour and suffering.

Hungry God,
I know you in the yearning I have – to be fed,
in all that I taste this day,
in all that I enjoy
which creates an ever-increasing appetite.

Labouring, suffering, thirsty, hungry God,
give us this day the will to work,
the endurance to persevere,
a hunger and thirst for you,
that transforms our inner being,
and so transforms, develops and fulfils your divine plan.





Landscapes of Life

Jungle –

thick, green, tangled, intense, moist and challenging.

That's life in the twenty-first century.

You can't find your way for all the confusion, cacophony
of voices, perspectives, information and demand.

Wilderness –

dusty, brown, stony, scrubby, dry, and exacting.

That's life when you escape the jungle.

You can't leave behind the wild beasts that dwell there.

You scarcely feel the angels so invisibly near.

Lake –

massive body of water, sometimes stormy, at times still,
edges strewn with commitments, interests, passions.

Travelling from one to the other, gently, but
finding little integration, links or connections.

Desert –

Red, rounded, shiny, sandy, slopy and comforting.

That's life when you go inside yourself.

You know you can't grow anything there.

You simply exist, somehow, somewhere, some why.

Oasis –

Ah now you are talking – shady, sheltered, refreshing.

Find time to stop, to steer away from the clutter,
appreciate the colours of your life,
its uniqueness and value.

Find shade and shelter, safety and stillness.

Well –

Deep well of crystal, clean, clear water
fed by inner streams

of love, respect, affection, compassion.

Quenching thirst and colling life's heatedness
in the heart of the desert.

Come –

convalesce with me, be well, build strength
beside the well within the oasis of the desert.

Leave the lake, the wilderness, the jungle.

Take some time just to be.





Moving On

Break, breach, rift, split, rupture.
Suddenly a diagnosis, a death, we weren't expecting.
Consultation, surgery, radiation, rest
or funeral, burial, wake and the work of grieving loss
while disposing of collectibles and clutter.

Slowly but surely the processes unfold.
We no longer have control (as if we did anyway).
We no longer can be sure of the health
we once experienced
or enjoy in the same way
the company of the one who has left us.

So where is the invitation that heals the rupture?
How can we let go of constructing a future of our choice?
After a dislocation, we can never go back to how it was.
The past is gone forever except in memory.

We go now to wherever life invites us,
let go of the control, the certainty, the confidence we had,
welcome instead the sense of flow, the rivulets
that ripple into the river of our lives.

Matter Matters

It doesn't matter, my mother would say.
It does matter, I'd reply.
Matter matters.
Matters matter.

So, I grew into life,
a dissenter, a wanderer, a pilgrim.
My circle of lights appeared in my dreams.
I sat contentedly within them.

No-one knew of this dream of mine.
No-one would understand.
No-one loves me, not the me I really am.
I matter, at least to me.

So, when it comes to the end of life,
what matters?
Is it too late to change?
Is it important to belong?

I live within the chaos
and the circle still guides me,
floats in dark space,
holds me tenderly and protects me.

Life has been a flurry,
an adventure, a dream.
Life is now a flourishing, a fulfilling,
A fullness ...

that helps me hold my head and heart
as One.
That helps me place my yearning
where it can best be met.

The cosmic lives within me –
A Diaphony.
The 'theos' lives as me
Christic Woman.

That's not to deny that you matter too.
That's not to leave what's too hard in the basket.
That's simply tenderness, openness and mercy.
That's relationship and love.



Old Age

Old age is long and slow.
There's plenty of time for everything
just little energy.

Old age is wisdom.
There's plenty you know well enough
just little context.

Old age creeps on.
There's no certainty about the future
just more to suffer.

Old age is companion.
Plenty of memories, wondering
within an aloneness.

Old age is mine now.
Spending time in a new way.
Welcome Older Me.



Morning Mist

The mist sits gently
on water rippling yet still
I greet the morning.

Pelicans glide smoothly,
stand tall, reflect sun's bright ray.
I welcome the day.

I read the gentle sky
and hope for calm tomorrows.
May all enjoy this way.

Haiku

beyond time and space
there is neither hour nor place
I'll go there someday.

eternity is
an infinity of time
unimaginable.

heaven's not space time
it's here and now quality.
I'll meet you there.





Mystery

My God, you are an absent presence
and so often a present absence.
My God, you are everywhere and every when
and nowhere and no-when.
My God, you are all in all
and no thing.

You are Personal but not a person.
Relational but not containable.
Whole and still becoming.

Such a mystery is more than mind can fathom.
So deep a truth that no soul can plumb.
Love in the superlative, unconditional, unchanging.
Heart of all hearts. Heart of evolution.
Heart of our becoming.

I am in love with you.
I am embraced by you.
I live because of you.
I am alive with your life.
I yield to this mystery.
And await my release from space-time.

The Problem of 'God'

With the rise of ways of understanding evolution
has come a new problem.

Who will give Evolution its God?

When was the first thought I wonder?

When was the something beyond called 'God'?

When did we begin to imagine this beyond?

There are many gods

and many understandings in who or what we call 'God'.

What does our current discarding of 'God'
tell us about ourselves?

You are the transcendent source of all life.

You are its origin and its end.

You are everything in between.

We imagine you in ways that fit our life experience.

Warlord, mother, father, brother, lover.

Spirit, ethereal, cosmic and intimately part of each of us.

How shall we name you now?
We carry the insufficient understandings
from the past into an unknown future.

Come now and teach us your ways.
Show us that heaven is not elsewhere
but part and parcel of the here and now.

Let peace be our dwelling.
Let this new name for the not-yet 'God' be made sacred.
Forgive us our short-sightedness.

Teach us to forgive those who don't see things as we do.
We can't take much more of this crisis we are in.
Open the gates that will show us the way forward.

We are not sufficient in and of ourselves.
We are weak and lack lustre.
But you are gently powerful, humble
and our source of hope.

Origin, Process and End

Enclosed, wrapped, enfolded
in a luminous cloud of unknowing
Without and within.
Sinking deeply into my being,
listening for the word
that will guide my life today.

Whatever I may suffer,
whatever meets me,
may I learn to empty myself
in a way that allows for
infilling – an intimate kiss
with my divine lover.

I join Christ on the cross –
the pain but a doorway
into the joy of resurrection.
Never more aware of absence
aloneness, dejection.
Yet born aloft in hope.

Today I worship You
Holy One of the Ages,
ever forming, ever evolving
origin, process and end.
I love you, Life and Being,
lover, parent and friend.



Resurrection

Today is our celebration of the resurrection.
It's an ancient, historical term
claimed by followers of Jesus of Nazareth
to be pivotal in the explosion of monotheistic faith
from the story of a nation and its Judaic practice
to Christianity, a world-wide faith
increasingly less germane.

Today I am celebrating resurrection
Somewhat more tenuously than ever before,
and yet, also more surely, more grippingly.
Childhood faith turned to adolescent idealism.
Adult service turned to retirement growth.
All told, my faith has exploded across my life.

Yet somehow there's also an implosion.
Student, teacher, educator, spiritual director –
all roles that sprang out of a faith imbued.
Now in a crisis of relationship I turn again
to intentions of carrying that faith forward
like a cross that is heavy and unfair.

Did this human being who answered the call
as others searched for Jesus of Nazareth in that garden,
and called himself the 'Son of Man', the New Human,
to identify with all of humanity
really and truly rise with a new body –
A resurrected body still carrying wounds?

We have scant records of the events.
We have centuries of musings –
some right, some wrong, some indeterminate.
Can I continue to believe in an historical event,
a seemingly insignificant historical event, yet one
which shifted whole civilisations to a significant degree?

Have I ever been to the garden
and found the tomb empty?
Have I ever encountered the risen crucified one
and heard him call my name?
Can I bring the spiritual experiences of my life
into focus in a way that is relevant?

Relevant to a 21st century world,
where war continues, death still holds sway
And sickness abounds?
Relevant to a personal life
with only one nuclear family relative, my sister,
And an aunt and a niece and her husband,
with distant cousins?

I can hardly forsake my faith experiences
at this late stage without losing all.
I can hardly walk away from, those gatherings
we call church without creating a void.
I can hardly stop that inner dialogue
we call prayer without losing my mind.

So here today, I look for resurrection –
not of my faith, nor of my identity,
but resurrection that mystifies,
that clings to a short public life
and the scriptures that have conveyed
its power and majesty to us.

Resurrection that meets me deeply
in those hidden places where faith is strongest,
in those secret desires where love is warm and moist.
in those outward beliefs that define but don't confine me.
Oh Fire, come kindle that resurrection in me.
Let passion not consume me but inspire.



Rock Pools

Along the rocky beach
where tide has departed
small, shallow pools have formed
clear, bright and glistening.

Rock that sparkles,
heavy rock, sharp rock,
companion rocks, forming pools,
like magnets, drawing us in.

Pools full of intricacies,
tiny crabs, seaweed,
shells and coloured stones.
Pools like wombs in the rock.



This Little Goldfish

Do you see how small this little goldfish really is?
It swims all day in this glass bowl
 innately knowing it can't grow any bigger.
But see, beyond the front door,
 the pond where her relatives live.
They swim all day in their pool
 and they too have reached their maximum size.

What kind of goldfish are we, the human species?

In ancient times, we lived in small, solo villages.
We grew to our capacity,
 spent most of our energy just staying alive.
Then came an industrial revolution.
We grew in so many ways,
 spent less time working and more time in leisure.

We humans have reached a capacity
enabled by the size of our globe, our pool.

In future times, how shall we live?
As we ask questions of meaning
 within the context of an ever-expanding universe/
What kind of revolution is needed?
One that recognises our maximum size
 within a one planet aquarium.

Can we humans stop living as if growth
is the only ultimate criterion?

We humans need to stop growing,
stop finding reasons for development
based on the old economy.
Stop, ... stop, ... stop!
Get back into the fishbowl or garden pond
and learn contentment.

Who then will take care of what is beyond us?

Ancient Egyptians viewed the stars as former pharaohs.
Indigenous peoples have their unique way
of describing the constellations.
We misunderstood their stories as 'primitive'.
We need to re-learn deep time,
healthy mythologies,
balanced cultures.

Learning an inward wisdom
that both limits and expands
according to context.

Thud - a dull, heavy sound, such as that made by an object falling to the ground: move, fall, or strike something with a dull, heavy sound. Late Middle English (Originally Scots) probably from Old English 'thydda'n to thrust, push; related to 'thoden' violent wind.

Dictionary: Oxford Languages

Thud.

That dull, heavy sound,
that dull, heavy sense.

Thyddan – thrust, push
as they would say in days of yore,
as Scots would utter.

Thoden – violent wind
as we now know,
gusts beyond measure.

Thunderclap – boom, blast.
So sudden it sounds like
a shot from a barrel.

But **THUD**.

A dull, heavy sound,
a dull, heavy sense.

That's what I feel.
Its dullness weighs on me.
Its weight drags me down.

Thud.
There's no resisting.
It's there in all its intensity.

Thud. **THUD.**
A sense that not all is well.
A sense that something's out of sync.

A sense that I can't control.
A sense that captures me.
Thud. **THUD.**

How shall I lift from myself
the weight, the dullness?
How shall I regain

that normal flow of life
where all manner of things is well?
There's no knowing –

only an acceptance of
the thud, THUD, **THUD**
that recurs and weighs on me.

I take the thud into my mind.
I search for its undoing.
I lean into the wham and the whump.

Resisting is pointless.
Thud is rounded and grounded.
I'm done for.
Thud, THUD, **THUD.**



Too Busy

So busy doing, there's no time for being.
So busy living, there's no thought of dying.
So busy thinking, there's no mindfulness.

So distracted, there's no concentration.
So distraught, there's no freedom here.
So disaffected, there's no space for seeing.

So tense with worry, there's no calm abiding.
So tried by fear, there's no peace within.
So tired through busy-ness, no rest for me.

I wake up. I grow up. I remember life's purpose.
I live into this moment, less distracted, more calm.
I notice the beauty, the goodness, the truth
that embraces me, kisses me, when I let go –

of busyness, tenseness, fear and worry.
Let go to remember the space and the freedom
that's promised to those who live Loving,
and love Living today.



Today

Today
Is yesterday's tomorrow,
Tomorrow's yesterday.
Constant transition.

Today
is all there is
except for memories.
Constantly transitioning.

Today
I'm present to each moment
supercentre unfolding.
Transition unlimited and ever incomplete.

Today
will soon pass
so I hang in the balance
of life's constant transitioning.

Today
has come again
as yesterday's tomorrow.
I live in the flow.



Truth Surpassing Knowledge

Universal, infinite, eternal One,
the life that streams within this frail body
is the life that i share with eight billion others.
That life comes from you,
universally, infinitely and eternally.
We are yours.

Such a mystery is more than i can comprehend.
Such truth surpasses knowledge.

I rest today in your Presence.
I yield to the tender touching of your spirit.
I give myself to worship of you,
the One universal, infinite, eternal,
subsisting in all being, so near and yet so far.
Transcendent and imminent, total reality.

Such a mystery is more than i can comprehend.
Such truth surpasses knowledge.

You are the centre of this infinite sphere –
a sphere with no circumference.
You are that centre in the deepest parts of us
who live, and move and have our being in you,
the universal, infinite, eternal One.
Centred and seduced by you.

Such a mystery is more than i can comprehend.
Such truth surpasses knowledge.

I come to centre myself in you.
I come to hear you say: *I in you*.
I come confident that I too am in you.
Sinking deep, yet ever expanding
to the length, breadth, depth and height
of your universal, eternal and infinite Love.

Such a mystery is more than I can comprehend.
Such truth surpasses knowledge.

I yield to the mystery today.
I live my life in the light of your Presence.
I belong in the universal, the infinite, the eternal.
I belong in You.
I accept your Love
And I seek to share it wherever I am.

Such a mystery is more than I can comprehend.
Such truth surpasses knowledge.

Yet I know that you live in me.
I know that I live in you.



Turning Sharp Corners

It seems to me I am turning sharp corners
on several fronts.
Each of these is challenging.
Considered together they are
more perplexing than challenging,
a marathon where the swimming and the rowing
and the cross-country racing
are happening simultaneously.

I was aware last year that I wanted to, had a need to,
find something 'out of this world' to do or be.
Not that life was monotonous.
Just that, to be more fully me, there was a desire
to find something extraordinary, something way out
and enjoy doing it in this new stage of life.

Then as I pondered my turn from grief –
over my dearest friend's passing at the two-year limit
that such grief processes require –
and as I pondered my need to face the next ten or so years
and find, choose, the community or communities
that I wanted to belong in,
I started a process of exploring ...

Two friends accompanying
 through a small group Lectio Divina –
a lifetime desire and need for belonging
in my previous years of living catholic faith.
Since I first found faith in the Christ as a child.
I'd often used the throwaway line:
 I could always become Catholic.
I enquired about the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults,
Way opened, continues to open and peace prevails.

Health issues came to the fore as I grew lax
on strict cardiac and diabetes measures.
 The weight I'd lost in summer 2019
 came back over 2020.
Then that diagnosis of diabetes, accepted outwardly
but unconsciously causing me to let myself off,
to be less active, to be sluggish and not push myself,
 to eat what I enjoyed eating regardless.

Then the confession that a sense of pressure
in my chest might be related to my heart,
 willingness to go on to a cardiologist again.
Just for the ultrasound and stress ECG –
scarcely believing it would show much at all.
But It did. I failed, was gasping for breath
 after four and a half minutes of moderate exercise.
So gasping, that I lost control of my breath altogether.

So now another angiogram, number three in my life.
Every other time it has shown
 'There isn't anything we need to do'.
Yet somehow this one showed
 the build-up of plaque in my arteries
in spite of regular anti-cholesterol medication
 taken and injected fortnightly.
Here is another journey to take, and loss to face.

So whether I choose it or not, sharp corners face me
with their grief, fear, and the 'little death'
 that is with me twenty-four seven.
I'd rather it not be so. But it is.
And after forty-eight hours of feeling scattered
 and sorry for myself
I now face the future that is opening before me;
face the death that is imminent
 but no more so than it has ever been.

I turn again to Gethsemane, to the cross, to the grave
 and to the Risen Crucified One.
I will not turn away.
I will learn the humility that comes
 from facing one's limitations.



Unfurling the Fallow

There's something paradoxical
about this transitional stage of life,
this fallow time, this beginning anew,
this significant ending.

There's something freeing
about this change of scene,
this absent presence of my dearest friend,
this significant beginning.

Its liminality, its spaciousness,
its intentionality, its fullness
together with the emptiness
that leaves the past behind
yet garners in the learnings,
the deep hungers and yearnings,
the years of friendship with its ups and downs
that have taught me to soften, to be tender and mellow.

It helps me to invite, to enhance, to enrich.
It helps me to let go and in letting go
find treasures that can only be found
when all else is discounted, left behind.
Oh Source of Life! Oh Holy Wholeness! Oh Wisdom!
You hold me secure in silent unknowing.
I look with hope and courage to the years ahead
and then in my turn to life beyond the grave.

Your universal body has far more living dead
than we number here who are said to be 'alive'.
So I follow again, I go with you
into valleys and troughs, with their dark shadows
up mountain peaks with their sunlight and cloud.
There is nowhere that is void of your Presence.
How incredibly beautiful is relationship with you.
How intimately tender and true.



Until I Breathe My Last ...

I have spent my life working towards things,
growing in different and unexpected ways,
fighting to remove the bad and embrace the good,
eagerly pleasing myself and others.

Now I am learning that I have to confront my limits,
to work within a finiteness I don't enjoy.
refusing to ask
 what it is these limitations want to teach me.
Loss, then befriending, then reorienting.

And arising into the 'Look what this has taught me!'
So I proceed now into the next season of life.
The spring of childhood, the summer of young adulthood
and the autumn of later years are behind me.

Winter sets in with its cosiness,
 its comfort and its reassurance.
Winter brings nourishment
 and plenty of time for reflection.
Winter brings to a close the seasons of the year.
I am ready ... yet more depth ... yet more re-orientation ...

Until I breathe my last ...



Acknowledgments

I am deeply grateful for **family, teachers, guides, students, medical practioners and friends across many cultures** who have been part of my journey through these eight decades. Each has overseen my development, corrected me, stirred me and given me a strong sense of who I am and what I might expect of myself.

I am thankful that holding a sense of **the Creative Union at the heart of our universe**, I have been able to learn faith, hope and love and practise justice, mercy and compassion in keeping with a Christian and inter-spiritual perspective on life. I look forward to the culmination of our total and universal journey in the Omega Point, as promulgated by **Fr Pierre Teilhard de Chardin** (1882-1955).

In particular, for this publication, I am indebted to **Sand Writers in Goolwa** who have inspired me, encouraged me to experiment and improve my writing and given me finally the courage to publish my work.

Within that group, **Jude Aquilina, editor of Eighty Years and Counting**, has been a particular friend and mentor from the time I first joined Milang Poets and later Sand Writers, whilst I resided in Strathalbyn in retirement years.

Selections by Di Shearer in Sand Writers Publications

Elemental: Earth, Water, Air, Fire: No 10, 2023

After the Flood, p24

Breathe 1 and Breathe 2, p44

Discovering Fire and Learning Love, p98-100

Crackling Creativity: Acrylic Painting, p101

Fleurieu Past and Present, No 9, 2022

Horseshoes and Crockery, p8

The Sound of Love, p111

Thin Air, No 8, 2021, pp 84-91

Rapt in Bark – Earth, Air, Fire, Water.

Rapt in Bark Series of Acrylic Paintings.

Personal Publications:

In Search of Life, poem in *The New Ecozoic Reader: Critical Reflections, Stories, Dream Experience and Practices for an Ecological Age*, No 8, July-September 2023, p 119

ecozoicstudies.org

Rapt in Bark: Earth, Air, Fire, Water with Art Exhibition:

Stationmasters Gallery, Strathalbyn. 2010

Playful Murray Magpie, Creative Universe.

Deep Time Network ... dtnetwork.org

Professional Degrees: HD Shearer

D Min (Adelaide College of Divinity), 2014

Finding my Way, Minding my Call: A Catholic Quest

PhD (Griffith University), 2004

Intercultural Personhood: A Mainstream Australian

Biographical Case Study

Graduate Degrees in Arts, Divinity, Education, Spirituality,

Supervision, Teaching and Theology, 1966 – 2023

dishearer@icloud.com



Di Shearer has always been drawn to the everyday art of nature. In many ways these thirty reflections feel like pieces of bark from the tree of her life, fallen to the ground.



‘As Di evolves in keeping with her ever expanding sense of meaning and purpose, they form a beautiful, philosophical text on life, faith and aging.’ **Jude Aquilina**