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# Spirit of Shekinah

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## Shekinah News for December

Welcome to the summer and Christmas edition of *Spirit of Shekinah*.

I'm struggling with the concept that Christmas is only days away which means that another year is coming to an end!

I'd like to share a perspective on Christmas that I believe marries well with the concept of Shekinah and what our member organisations do.

Christmas is a time of celebration: for some it's concentrating purely on the religious aspect; for others it's a time for celebrating the end of the year with family and friends and for many others it means nothing at all other than a break for a few days at the end of the year – all good reasons to celebrate!

As Jesus Christ is central to Christmas, we sometimes perceive the familiar story in the same way each year. However, the fact that Jesus was born in a stable as there was no room at the Inn has often been understood to mean that we must concentrate more on hospitality to those less fortunate.

Let's perhaps concentrate on how Jesus was born into this world - unnoticed, outside the city, and outside of all persons and events that seemed important at the time. Two thousand years later, we can recognise the importance of that birth, but, at the time, virtually no one did.

So, if Mary gave birth to Jesus in a stable because there was no room for them in the inn, surely this is a comment on more than just the busyness and inhospitality of some ancient innkeeper. In essence, what

it is really saying is that it is not those who sit at the centre of things; the powerful, the rich, the famous, the politicians, the celebrities, the corporate heads, the scholars and academics, who ultimately sit at the centre of life. What's deepest and most meaningful inside of life lies in anonymity, unnoticed by the powerful, tenderly swaddled in faith and love, outside the city.<sup>1</sup>

If that's the case, then what we do at Shekinah hits the mark – irrespective of how we choose to understand or celebrate Christmas. We provide shelter, food, support, comfort, friendship, love and hopefully empowerment to those most on the margins of life. And without the help of amazing volunteers, staff and supporters, much of that good work could not be done as well as it is.

Well done to all of you who appear, or maybe feel, somewhat anonymous and unnoticed! Thank you all and I wish you and your families a very happy, safe and peace-filled Christmas and look forward to next year.

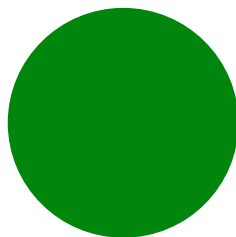
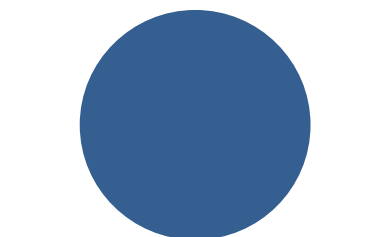
**"Help one another; there's no time like the present and no present like the time."**

--James Durst, poet/songwriter/troubadour

*Marg Casey*

Volunteer Program Co-ordinator

<sup>1</sup> Ron Rolheiser OMI No Room at the Inn Dec 2010



"Your eyes will see a home that is secure,  
a tent not to be moved, none of its stakes  
ever to be pulled up, none of its ropes  
ever to be broken." Isaiah 33.20



## Around the Network

### Bethlehem Community

In November, all the women of Bethlehem, accompanied by staff, had a 3-day holiday at Echuca. The weather was fairly kind and much fun was had by all – including a trip on a paddle steamer, a visit to the Barmah State Forest, dinner out and

the obligatory coffee shop visits!

We stayed in a caravan park in lovely comfortable cabins and the theme was relaxation – as shown in the photos below.



Happy campers!



Peeping through the wisteria!



### Corpus Christi Community

Over the past year Corpus Christi Community has continued with the development of in-house education programs for staff and for Board of Management members.

At the end of each telecast staff complete a short assessment based on the topic presentation and, if completed accurately, are given a certificate for placement in their personnel file.

Staff education has been provided via The Aged Care Channel which telecasts via satellite with 24 topics being covered in 2011. Themes addressed have included wound care, dispute resolution, falls prevention, duty of care & negligence, palliative care and OH&S: looking after your back.

Board topics addressed during the year have included roles & responsibilities of Board members, risk management, the legal environment for directors, and ethical decision making.



## Good Samaritan Inn

Each one of us has a different way of celebrating Christmas and New Year. It can be very festive, very quiet or also an opportunity to reflect on what happened during the year and plan for the new year. I share with you reflection from a volunteer which I think is really inspiring and which I hope would be a boost for all those who read it.

"My name is Suzanne, and I volunteer at the Good Samaritan Inn. On Saturday 22nd October I attended the Campion Centre of Ignatian Spirituality in Kew, to participate in the 'Reflecting on the call to Volunteer' session that Shekinah Homeless Services invited us to.

I have never previously been to one of these retreat days before so I was really interested to see what it was all about and also to meet some other people who volunteer their time. The brochure that we were emailed, described the day as being an "opportunity to reflect on the experience of volunteering in a way which will nourish and sustain you" and that's exactly what I got out of it. It was actually very nice just to sit around a circle in a warm, comfortable room with other volunteers, listen to the talks being given by the session leader and also discuss such things like where we individually do our volunteer work, why we do it, our different experiences etc. It was very encouraging and instilled in me a desire to continue to volunteer and hopefully in the future, take on more volunteering roles.

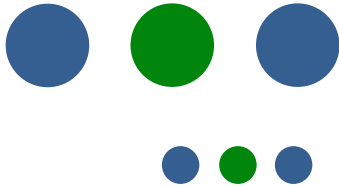
It also opened my eyes up to the many other areas where one can become a volunteer. For example, I didn't know that there were volunteers who spent their time

visiting those dying in hospitals. They're terminally ill patients, often elderly, and don't get a lot of company throughout the day. So the volunteers go in and spend time with them, watching TV or chatting together. It's even these simple acts of charity that really inspired me, and I felt a sense of pride coming away that afternoon, to know that I, and all of those I'd met that day, did something nice for others, no matter how small the act.

The Campion Centre is run in conjunction with Jesuit Social Services. The reflection day had a Christian spiritual tone to it, however it was not forced on anyone. I myself am a Catholic, but many others attending didn't follow any religion, and some were Christians of no denomination. I think everyone there though, felt unified and at peace because the day centred around the volunteering act, the gift of giving one's time, energy and love. I think for the most part, all of us volunteers are mindful & sensitive people, if not spiritual too, so the spiritual facet of the day tied in quite nicely.

I would like to recommend these sorts of reflection days to everyone. Many of us lead such busy lives, and are often stressed, so these days in particular are a great way to just pause for a moment and consider what's really important in life. In the few hours I was there, I was amazed at how mentally recharging it was. The talks enabled me to ponder such issues and how they affect my time here on this earth, and also how I can positively impact other's lives. I walked away feeling like I am a good person, and that I want to strive to always be better. Volunteering is one of these ways."





## McAuley Community Services for Women

**Regina Coeli Program.** We recently had a great family night BBQ with approximately 40 people attending. We are now gearing up for Xmas and have a Xmas dinner planned with the Young Mercy Links group. Carols will be held at Regina closer to Christmas Day. We closed Regina for our

"Big Day Out" which was loved by all and we had a great day at Sovereign Hill.

We have a full staff now and a very close supportive working group

## St Mary's House of Welcome

On Monday 17 October [Anti-Poverty Day] St Mary's hosted a free street library out the front of our building. The library aimed to allow everyone to have access to books without a library card or having to return them. Over 1,500 books were donated for the day and was a huge success. A very big thank you to all of those who donated.



**Minister Wendy Lovell assisting with serving breakfast**

Also, throughout the week, more than 30 members from both the Australian Labor and Liberal parties assisted with breakfast and lunch services at St Mary's House

of Welcome and experienced firsthand the services we provide.

St Mary's hosted their annual fundraising event **Wine Rules** on Sunday 20 November 2011 at Elwood Park.

The event boasted the Victorian wine trade battling it out in a touch footy competition to raise money for St Mary's. Everyone held their breath for good weather after a big downpour of rain on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> but it turned out to be a perfect sunny day. There were over 26 teams playing on the fields, with the team from Mount Langi Ghiran winning the trophy.

Approximately 2,000 spectators came down on the day to watch the games, listen to great live music and have a fun day out. St Mary's is looking forward to next year already!

Three of AFL's greatest names took to the road from 15 - 20 November in the spirit of charity for the **Footy Greats Charity Bike Ride**.

Legendary Ron Barassi, Peter "Crackers" Keenan and Wayne Schimmelbusch cycled the Great Ocean Road with 12 others. They finished up at Wine Rules surprising everyone with their appearances on stage in their lycra!

## Sr Francesca Healy Cottage

The front office of the Cottage is up and running again after being inundated with water when we had the huge downpour a couple of weeks ago - thanks to new spouting!

All beds will be occupied for

Christmas and we will have the usual Christmas dinner for the inpatients and will also be joined by some former patients on the day. So a Christmas day spent in a hospital bed will have some cheer!



## Briar Terrace

Briar Terrace is now open every second Sunday which is a wonderful thing for the friends who visit there on a regular basis. The weekends can be a very lonely time for those living in rooming houses, so this will provide a wonderful service to those people.

We have been very fortunate in gaining the assistance of two wonderful volunteers who have offered their time every second Sunday to open Briar Terrace. We are very lucky to have such generous people volunteering with us, and we thank them very much.



## Shekinah

The Volunteer Program has been struggling lately to get volunteers. Advertisements are always 'out there' but I'm finding that the responses are few and far between.

There has been much ink spilled lately in volunteer forums about how volunteering is changing. People are looking at volunteering for different reasons they did in the very recent past.

For example, work experience is becoming more desirable for prospective volunteers - which is fine, however, for our services it doesn't always work. We more often than not, need volunteers who are ready to make a time

commitment on a regular basis as it throws the program out - mainly because if we're dealing with people with mental illness, the constancy of relationship is a positive in their continuum of care.

Having said that, we are always willing to have the conversation with prospective volunteers and discuss their needs in relation to the needs of our service users.

If you have any friends who may be interested in volunteering, please don't hesitate to give them my number - 9462 3933 - as I'm always willing to have the conversation.

