

Catalyst for Renewal Incorporated

Engagement with Younger People

- a project for 2023

At the CfR NSW Members' meeting held in October, there was discussion around the age of Catalyst's audiences. It was recognised that people who attend our activities are ageing and that, in general, younger people are not being drawn in to our forums for conversation. The broader context of this is the overall decline in religious affiliation revealed by the latest national census and the loss of credibility churches since the revelations of clerical sexual abuse and the problematic response.

What do we mean here when we say 'younger people'? I suggest that there is no need for a firm definition, but that some parameters can be suggested. First, I'd suggest that people of school age and undergraduate university students are not our concern here. There are larger and better resourced organisations who have more direct access to these cohorts. Secondly, there is not a single audience and therefore perhaps not a 'one model for all' solution. People in their 20s, 30s and 40s will have different needs and interests to those in their 50's and 60s (in general).

Nonetheless, a basic conviction is that human beings are transcendent creatures, constantly reaching beyond themselves and living life in relationship. Regardless of one's level of religious conviction or even awareness, all have a spiritual dimension. With the decline of formal religion, opportunities to engage in the spiritual pursuit may be diminishing. There may therefore be opportunity to provide a space where people can meet to converse about the fundamental questions of life.

So can we who have come to know the love of God and to have faith in its vivifying power provide a platform or anchoring point for the explorations of others? The objective is not to impose any particular religious framework, rather to focus on spirituality and companionship, with openness to mystery. If some are lead to a deeper search, that is to be welcomed.

The October meeting resolved that we will conduct a round table discussion to explore the potential for Catalyst to offer a new forum for conversation that might be attractive to groups in any of these cohorts.

Proposal

Limited discussions to date are pointing us towards:

- a face to face round table discussion;
- perhaps at the Ron Dyer Centre, North Sydney;
- involving (it is suggested) 10 to 12 people¹;
- on a Saturday morning (~~aiming for Saturday 18 February 2023, but we need to be nimble~~);
- aimed at identifying one or more models of conversation that may be attractive to a particular cohort²;
- with a report back to the next NSW Members' meeting in ~~early March~~ May.

Notes

1. Possible participants:

Joey Wehbe; Luke Smith; Michael Patton; Tricia Gemmel; Ellen Mueller (Pauline's daughter); a few Catalyst members (from a SIP representative; a Call To Be program representative; Julie Thorpe; Susanna Gorman; Richard McLachlan; Frances Doherty; Michael Gill, others?).

2. SIP provides one model of conversation that Catalyst could propose, however at this stage our aim is to listen and ask the participants how they might see it working.

Bob

19 January 2023 (revised 19 February 2023)

On 24 January 2023 Michael Gill commented:

“Hi Bob, thanks for the draft which I really appreciate.

The word which caught my attention in a negative way was audience.

I am sharing a few links with you which I hope open up the prospect that our call for connecting with youth is not one of presenter to audience but rather walking together in our respective journeys of life. My experience of them is that language is important.

...

I feel we need to go down this path with a humble acknowledgment that we have much to learn from them and much to share with them.

Peace and joy
Michael”

Michael also provided links to bits from Pope Francis:

We Need a New Way of Looking at the Aging Process

<https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fsixtyandme.com%2Fwe-need-a-new-way-of-looking-at-aging-pope-francis%2F&data=05%7C01%7C%7C35a4623eac8b4b61410c08dafa65296a%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C638097609667842949%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6IjEhaWwiLCJXVC16Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=n1TKGsatr3S7Fj%2BeFK6va8irjeJNv3T1GqeRQNI3EG0%3D&reserved=0>

Pope to grandparents, elderly: We must lead revolution of tenderness

<https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fangelusnews.com%2Fnews%2Fvatican%2Fpope-to-grandparents-elderly-we-must-lead-revolution-of-tenderness%2F&data=05%7C01%7C%7C1d15e8b65cad465ca1c008dafa64dcc5%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C638097608388953248%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6IjEhaWwiLCJXVC16Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=1N1cDMs0odroRYoN%2FBj2RkeM23pK4Nws7rHo%2B7kReoA%3D&reserved=0>

Old age is time of grace, Pope Francis tells elderly peers

<https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.catholicregister.org%2Ffaith%2Fitem%2F30863-old-age-is-time-of-grace-pope-francis-tells-elderly-peers&data=05%7C01%7C%7Cfe72bf4e9b154e77ee5b08dafa648d15%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C638097607060644523%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6IjEhaWwiLCJXVC16Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=z3czGhnlapzjP2QRyE6vrwrkJXamsYltoHsOOPgAz8U%3D&reserved=0>

No church for old men: Cardinals called to be grandfathers, pope says

<https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ncronline.org%2Fblogs%2Ffrancis-chronicles%2Fno-church-old-men-cardinals-called-be-grandfathers-pope-says&data=05%7C01%7C%7Cc2d001991c23453bb2ae08dafa7482ff%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C638097675587434798%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6IjEhaWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=xhdog5iA%2BToBXboiX%2BAhup15OuzTHqaMY3M4dwyvC2s%3D&reserved=0>