

Respondent to Forum I - Mary Klasen:
“Mosaics & Mystery; Pastoral Care, Clinical Supervision
and Public Health”

Gillian Henderson – Acting Clinical Supervisor

Thank you Mary, it is a privilege to be invited to respond to your paper.

Your paper feels like an embodiment of Boisen’s ‘Living Human Document’ as you have taken us on a journey of your rich experiences in response to the question; is there a Promised Land? You suggest that desert and Promised Land can co exist. An apt description of what we have faced and continue to face since the beginning of 2007 in particular. When someone phoned the Repat Pastoral Care department last year to inquire about supervisors I was surprised to find that in almost every CPE Centre listed in the directory there had been at least one change.

It seems that the CPE Mosaics are forever changing/evolving – the patterns and rich colors. When CPE began there were mostly men. On a number of occasions of late we have been mostly if not all, women. 40 years is a long time.

I was very taken with your mosaics image Mary. And the illustrations you have used in your power point presentation seem to be of contemporary mosaics. I was struck by how little space there is between the shapes – and that seems congruent with what is happening today. Little space to do all that needs to be done. We have to find a new way forward.

And the future looks good when you are prepared to be part of the planning to take Pastoral Care, supervision and public health to a new place – to create a road where there hasn’t been one, as was done by Roy 40 years ago. I needed to be on the Eastern Freeway yesterday and came to the end as it is at the moment at Springvale Rd. The progress with the extension of the Freeway is amazing – where they are making a road where there hasn’t been one. The time, effort and planning that has gone into that is enormous – and it has required a remarkable team – working together to ensure that what initially appeared on the drawing board actually works. It will extend beyond what has been there and worked well for the last decade.

I valued your awareness of the danger of connections – I became a grandmother for the first time in January and when someone alludes to that role in their life I need to work hard to be present to the other because my own story of joy can get in the way.

Our daughter Emma gave birth to her daughter Billie in the Family Birthing Centre at the Mercy – not far from Mary’s Pastoral Care department.

I won't forget the difference the trainee midwife, who journeyed with Emma for the 9 months, offering continuity, and the skilled midwife who assisted Emma to birth her baby made. During Emma's final stage of labour Belinda, the midwife noted panic in Emma's breathing. Calmly and quietly Belinda encouraged Emma to breathe naturally through the contractions and gave me the thumbs up across the room when Emma took on Belinda's wisdom and it worked. Soon after, Billie was born well. It was the most awesome experience to see this new life come into the world and her parents Emma and Jim so blown away by the event. How can this be?

The generations continue in the life of CPE – I counted 40 supervisors in total over the last 40 years since Fr Roy Bradley began here at the Austin, all people I admire for different reasons. It is a privilege to be part of this remarkable mosaic and mystery.

The fathers and mothers of CPE, the children and grandchildren and on it goes, but forever adjusting and changing, evolving and reshaping - so often in transition. We feel it keenly at Austin Health with Rev Dr Graeme Gibbon's departure, as the Mercy did with Sr Julie O'Brien's leaving – but there is hope that life will flourish again as it is Mary, with planning to run a unit from your CPE centre at the Mercy later this year - there is indeed a promised land.

Rather than panic during this time of transition – of birthing new life into CPE may we listen to those with skills and experience and breathe well through the transition – remembering that breath/Ruach is Spirit.