



Graeme & Sallie Cordiner

'The Heart of Change'

is written for ...

... those of all faiths and none

'God' or 'Higher Power' can be read as 'God of your own understanding'.

... individuals, home groups and workshops

Every two pages represent one 'step' along a journey of change.

Consider, for individuals, taking a step a day as a basis for reflection.

For groups, within a confidential setting, read a step together; reflect in silence; then share.

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with gratitude to:

those who contributed stories

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lofC team, Sydney, Australia

Why this booklet? ...

In brief, to capture for today the moral and spiritual transformation experienced by the founder of Initiatives of Change, Frank Buchman. As the world in the 1930s tried to avoid war, Buchman observed:

"We have all wanted peace. We have sought it in pacts, in alliances, in economic and dis-armament conferences, and we have sought in vain. We have wanted peace, but we have never paid the price of peace: the price of facing with God where we and our nations have been wrong, and how we can put wrong right."

I first met the idea of 'change starts with me' at the Initiatives of Change (IofC) Asia Plateau centre in India. As a student searching for meaning to life, I accepted that challenge. I put right what I could then see. I was honest with my parents, told my university I had faked illness in an exam I could not do, and apologised to a leader in an opposing student faction.

The result? – a spiritual awakening. I can describe it in no other way, a power and presence and direction in my life that was just absent before.

However ...

What I had not grasped was that my initial change, real as it was, was not a destination. I was not then aware of the generational dysfunction and trauma passed on from my family and my culture, buried wounds that kept surfacing, sabotaging my best intentions. The four moral standards of IofC were useful guides on my journey of awareness of the trauma fallout on me, and on my nation, and then, no longer chained to the past, to begin to walk the path of transformation.

Decades later I found myself back at Asia Plateau, this time with my wife. Day by day we offered our ongoing life lessons to interns from many nations, giving a roadmap for long-term change we wished we had had.

We may want to build a better world, yet 'change starts with me'! My hope is this booklet may shed more light on that journey of change, that you might recognize the 'still, small voice' within, listen to it, follow it, and so begin to realise your own deepest life's dream and purpose.

Graeme Cordiner, Sydney 2023



Frank Buchman

founder, Initiatives of Change (IofC)

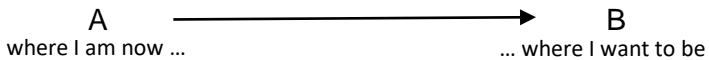
Frank Buchman was caring for poor boys in Philadelphia, USA, but felt thwarted by a stingy board. Frustrated and exhausted, Buchman resigned. Bitter at the collapse of his dream, he became ill. His doctor recommended hot then cold showers and a holiday. Buchman took the unusual advice but remained 'plain miserable'.

During this period Buchman, a Lutheran minister, became aware that though many had praised him for doing such a noble work for God, in fact his real motive was all about him – *his* success, *his* importance.

Buchman unconditionally accepted his wrong. The six board members may have been unjust, but Buchman had moved beyond blame. "I was the seventh wrong man," he said. He saw his resentments as 'tombstones in my heart'. He acted promptly, writing to each board member asking for forgiveness for his resentment and pride.

This foundational experience led to an incredibly productive life, where his initial goal of helping disadvantaged boys grew to embrace the world.

Life is *not* a straight line!



'Success in life is setting worthy goals and going straight for them.'

Really?

Buchman tried that approach. Like him we too can find B elusive, obstacles impossible, or reach B only to find the emptiness of an inadequate or wrong goal.

The IofC logo below can be seen as the path Buchman walked to reach 'B'.



- A to X awareness** of all the things in me that are sabotaging my life goals.
- X acceptance ..** unconditionally of my character flaws and my need to grow (up).
- X to B action** based on that awareness and acceptance, one day at a time discovering my life's purpose.

This A→X→B journey of change is the forgotten factor, the missing heart, of 'success' - both personally and corporately (for our communities, organisations, nations).



Mahboba



Afghanistan

“While I live and breathe I will work tirelessly to protect, heal, and educate the women and children of Afghanistan.”

‘Mahboba’s Promise’ is now an international charity, providing food, shelter, education – and love. Central to its ethos is that money raised goes directly to the orphans of Afghanistan, the fulfillment of a dream when as a teenage refugee Mahboba was shocked to see aid money lining the pockets of those in power.

However the path between the dream and its realisation took decades. Mahboba’s charmed early childhood began in an Afghanistan which no longer exists. When the Russians invaded in 1979 she became a student leader in protests. Forced to flee to Pakistan, then India, she later emigrated with her new husband to Australia.

After so many losses – her parents’ separation, her country, scattering of friends and family – with the birth of a son then a daughter, plus the material security of Australia, life seemed secure at last. Then in a freak accident her son drowned along with other friends and family. Mahboba went into a dark place of sustained grief, compounded after the birth of a second son when her husband left her.

It took several years to accept her son’s death. She grew bitter against her husband. Her health suffered, badly. One day her brother told her she had a poisoned arrow in her heart. *“The moment you pull this arrow out ...you will start to heal.”* After he left Mahboba looked out the window and saw him on the street outside, crying.

That was the start of a long journey of recovery. Mahboba reached out for help. She went to grief counselling, then met a lady who led her deeper spiritually. She turned wholeheartedly to God. As a Muslim she had always prayed, but now God became personally real to her, her ‘closest friend’ and her source of inner strength.

Mahboba began to look at her own character defects, putting a list on her fridge door. With God’s help and hard work one by one she sought to overcome them, letting go bitterness towards her former husband. She also reached out to Sydney Afghan women, creating initiatives to overcome isolation and build up their self-esteem (and her own).

Following a trip back home Mahboba raised money for a few families, selling her own once precious possessions. In time others joined her, working from her garage. Then a retired uncle decided to return to Afghanistan to help orphans and widows, setting up orphanages and schools. Mahboba did the fundraising, a work that has grown – and grown. Her greatest reward is seeing the faces of hundreds of children who have been given love and new hope, and who now call her ‘mother’.

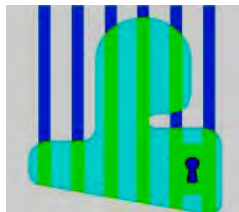
Mahboba first met IofC not long after her son’s death. Today she sponsors young Afghans to attend the IofC centre in India as interns for training in life-skills.

Change starts with *me*?

Prison of our own making

What has happened to our life's dream?

I can wish people or situations would change so my closed doors in life can open. But could it be I am in a prison of my own making, that the gaoler is myself, and the key to the prison door is in my own pocket?



In the words of psychoanalyst Carl Jung:

“Jesus has told us to feed the hungry, visit the imprisoned, forgive our enemies – but what if the hungry, the imprisoned person, the enemy at the door, is myself?”

Freedom

If we are the obstacle, we can change; if others, we can change the way we respond, victim no longer.

Buchman did not say the men on the board were right. What he identified, and accepted, was that the seventh wrong person was himself. **Then** he was free.

Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness, Love

Moral principles signpost the way the universe is made. Ignore them and we unravel. Follow them and we find we are in harmony with ourselves and the planet, our new life-integrity within able to overcome any negativity from without. Buchman identified four moral values as keys to opening his own prison door:

‘How honest, pure (of heart), unselfish (in motive), and loving am I?’

Absolute standards

Buchman wanted a concept bold enough to cut through the self-justification he himself had engaged in. He called these universal moral principles ‘absolute standards’ to act as a practical reality check on our life’s direction.

The heart of change ...

... is about humility, becoming an authentic, loving human being. In this quest, absolute standards help heighten our awareness of our own inner moral and spiritual compass.



Progress, not ‘perfectionism’

Perfectionism is our self-centred forever trying never to make a mistake. Of course ‘absolute’ is impossible to reach – we never ‘arrive’. To love with a pure heart we need daily help – God’s and others’. Each day is a day of growth. Each day we see how much more we need to grow.

Zooni



Zooni met IofC in 2004. She is based at the IofC Asia Pacific (AP) centre in India, facilitating intern programs and conferences with workers, management, the army, police, government, teachers, students, and bureaucrats.

"My father is a teacher. Some of his students had been to the Indian IofC centre. They came back very changed. My father then sent me and my brother to an IofC youth camp. That is how my journey started.

"I was 16 then and looking for a more meaningful life, a life where I could be happy and share that happiness with everyone. I wanted to be someone who could change things, really make a difference in whatever little way possible.



"In a session on relationships, something from within told me to apologise to my brother. I had not spoken to him for two years because of a fight. I apologised, and he apologised back. Things changed. My brother and I talk like brother and sister now. I realised I felt superior to him because I always thought I was wiser and knew more. I had to see his part of the story as well, how difficult it was for him. Now both of us acknowledge each other's struggles. Freed of this big burden on my heart, it made me believe things can change if I do something about it.

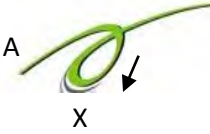
"I started experimenting measuring my life against moral standards in 2008, and became more aware of my actions - but they were not absolute standards. My true experiment began after I became an IofC intern in 2011. A letter to my father was my first BIG step. The standards became absolute thereafter. 😊

"I realised later that the only way I can help anyone change is by loving them. At times it's a struggle, right up to this moment, but I am holding on. With my parents we don't argue anymore. There is much more patience and understanding.

"The standards of (absolute) purity, honesty, unselfishness and love changed my life completely, giving meaning to my life. I started walking an extra mile in doing something for others, and then reached a point where I could genuinely care for others. I am now aware of my intentions. I ask myself - what is the driving force? When I recognise this I experience an energy shift every time. I love more.

"I was born Hindu. I have a cross around my neck, a Muslim name and a kada (a Sikh bracelet)! My faith is compassion and is what guides me in every step. There is a lot I need to learn. I seek to have a deeper connection with God, to understand him more, to really be his instrument. I practice a quiet time every day. I write down my thoughts and read them often to make sure I obey them.

"These corrections have made me a free person. I feel empowered now. I know now that change in the the world starts with the family but does not end there, hence both are equally important. I feel a lot more hopeful and passionate about things in society that need to change. I used to think I had no skill to give until I realized that I can love, really love unconditionally."



A to X ... journey into awareness - 1

To begin the journey of awareness, honesty and purity are our moral guides, our moral compass.

Honesty

Change begins with the willingness to be humbly honest with myself:

Where have I cheated others of time or money or the truth - or of my love?

Where do I need to make amends to my family, my friends, at work?

And to myself? (I can be my own worst critic, my own least reliable friend.)

Such simple (and radical) steps are the small hinges upon which large doors swing. Yet is there a still deeper journey of honesty to be made?

"The unexamined life is not worth living." Socrates

Nursery history



is telling ourselves 'how fine my life is, and always has been'. With this attitude we remain babies when it comes to understanding what is really motivating us.

To maintain our nursery version of who we are, we can engage in many good things that reinforce that illusion. Others caught up in the same unreality often club together, all avoiding going deeper - the masks we can wear, the games we can play!

"Lying to ourselves is more deeply ingrained than lying to others." Dostoevsky

What, *really*, is running me?

Buchman

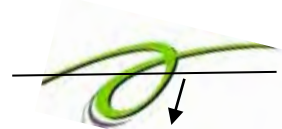
Before his change Buchman was blind to what was actually driving his life. As a tireless religious worker he felt above reproach, telling himself it was God, and others, at the centre of all he was doing. This self-deception was encouraged by 'friends' who praised him for his 'selfless' work, saying: '*Frank, how wonderful!*'

Awareness of our life agendas

Awareness begins with an honest search below our busy surface life. It is the recognition of our true life-motives and their (childhood) roots that is transformative.

Childhood and cultural patterns run deep, often subconscious.

To separate out the good from the destructive we may need outside help.



Don & Marie



United Kingdom

"In my twenties I was searching for a purpose in life. Weekend football and films were fine but Monday morning adding figures was like a brick wall. An IofC film gripped my interest and a new friend suggested we be quiet and listen to God."

Don wondered if he would hear a voice in the ceiling, but when he obeyed the 'ordinary' thoughts he had, he experienced something completely new - 'God's power at work.' Through honesty with his father and a work colleague, his pride and fear of people started to break up. With war service abroad, he became captivated by the idea God had a part for ordinary people in building a new world.

However ... *"Looking back I realise I didn't go deep enough. I hadn't seen the need to look into my own motives: my desire for people's approval and the pursuit of success in this new venture of faith. My accounting background had trained me to look for other people's mistakes. In marriage this was a recipe for disaster."*

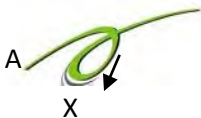
Marie, his wife, was very deeply hurt by his criticism of her one day in front of others. He later 'apologised', and they both got on with life, the matter 'forgotten'. *"Neither of us realised how it had caused a build-up of mistrust which caused a drifting apart in spirit, leading eventually to things going seriously wrong."* Years later a friend asked Marie if she would like peace of heart. For Marie this was when 'the bluffing ceased'. The friend suggested a time of quiet with God. Marie felt a divine love, *"forgiving the past and giving purpose and vision for the future."*

This led Marie to write a play about forgiveness that included nearby West Indian, African, Asian and the English host communities. In producing the play over the next five years, Don and Marie recognised their 'inbuilt we know best' attitudes, and accepted help from the cast with their 'pride and unconscious superiority'.

Their friend had kept in touch, and one day said something which touched on yet more unrecognised and unhealed hurts. As Marie poured out all she felt, Don said nothing because of the guilt he felt. The friend turned to Don and asked, *"But do you see **why** you said those things?"*

"He did not try to 'help' but sat in silence. Marie and I were both in tears and we noticed our friend too wept out of compassion. This was a watershed. I knew I had to take a straight look at myself. It didn't happen overnight but I started to recognise my self-righteousness and ambition. As I was honest about these deeper things in my nature, I began to find freedom."

Don and Marie then went to live in Zimbabwe, which included two years in a black Harare township. 'Absolutely not' was their first reaction to the invitation, but in being honest about their fears, they accepted, reassured by their new neighbours who said, *'we never want you to feel isolated living here. Tell us if you ever feel like that.'* Their discovery? Their lives were 'greatly enriched'. And in sharing their past failures and experiences of God's forgiveness, others were also deeply impacted.



A to X ... journey into awareness - 2

Purity

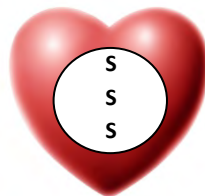
A pure heart, able to love even the unlovely.
We all want it but how do we find it?
What exactly is a pure heart?

Hole in our heart

The hole in our heart represents our longings to be loved, to feel secure, to make a difference in our world. These give us our sense of:

Self-worth, **S**ecurity, and **S**ignificance.

We all have that hole. None of us is self-sufficient.
Our human longings need to be met. The question is,
how pure is my heart? ...



From where and with what am I trying to fill the hole?

Where am I finding my sense of self-worth, security and significance?

Heart cravings

God-shaped hole

This hole in our heart has been described as the 'God-shaped hole', designed to be filled from within.

Black hole

To compensate for feeling unlovable, insecure, or unimportant we can try instead to fill the hole from the outside.

Buchman tried to fill the hole with work, giving him his sense of self-worth and importance. To that end he became a willing – and exhausted – workaholic.

Whatever we feel fills the hole, we will crave. Like a black hole, enough is never enough ... as advertisers know all too well!

Feeling unloved?

we can crave popularity, approval, appreciation ...

Feeling insecure?

we can crave money, possessions, marriage ...

Feeling unimportant?

we can crave power, status, being in the inner circle ...

Still empty?

fill the hole with food, alcohol, sex, gossip, gambling, pills, news, shopping, work, video games, social media ...

Still empty!

more, more, more to numb our inner loneliness/pain.



Our cravings (for 'good' things or bad) with their short-term satisfactions are powerful and addictive, blinding us to their inevitable long-term fallout. Only a pure heart can discern the cultural disguises under which our cravings masquerade.

Tianethone

Tianethone grew up in a devout Buddhist family in Laos. However ... *“as I was growing up I didn't realise that craving is the source of human suffering. It was more important to be known, to be recognised. It was a mistake in my life.*

“When I got married I thought being a bread-winner was enough. I worked hard and was involved in many social and welfare activities. But I spent more time with my workmates and friends than with my wife and children, driven by a craving for more success and recognition. The harder I worked, the less happy I was inside. My wife was lonely and made very unhappy by my behaviour. I kept asking myself why I was unable to bring happiness and harmony in my family.

“In 1957 I attended a world conference of IofC. It was the first time that I realised human nature could be changed, that my habits and motives could be changed if I knew how to listen to my conscience or inner voice based on the four absolute moral standards, and that I should start with myself and not wait for others.

“One evening I saw the face of my wife in the darkness. I thought clearly of something I had done behind her back, which had caused her great suffering. My craving for more popularity and success had led to unwholesome actions and had blinded me through all these years. I had never admitted my mistakes and wrongdoings, hiding them from family and friends.

“I wrote asking for her forgiveness. It cost me my pride to post that letter. The saying ‘big doors are opened on small hinges’ was brought home to me. That letter of apology was the ‘small hinge’ which opened my heart to others and to the world.”

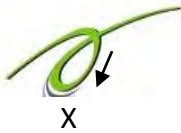


Tianethone & Viengxay share their story in 2013

Tianethone became Secretary of State of Laos in a coalition government. In 1975 the communists were poised to take over, and moved to arrest him.

“When your survival is at stake you can become almost irrational. The only thing we could do was to turn to the discovery we had made years before, that in the silence of our hearts a wisdom greater than our own can speak. We sat down and prayed for inspiration. We began to conquer our panic.” Taking clear steps of action, the family fled across the Mekong River into Thailand. Later they learnt that fifteen minutes after they left their house, the soldiers arrived.

“To lose our country is something we have to overcome. When we heard of our relatives being killed in Laos we went through agony, but we knew we could never move forward without overcoming our bitterness and resentment. We have witnessed many situations where individuals hating one another for years have had the courage, through forgiveness, to break the chain of hate and revenge. Sharing our experiences and sufferings has helped in opening people's hearts to each other. We have great hope for the future.”

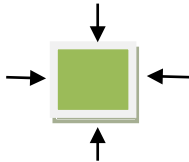


X ... the place of acceptance - 1

'X' is where the rubber hits the road ...

...where we come to the end of ourselves, of our self-justifying; where we accept 'mea culpa' (I am responsible); where we forgive others (and ourselves); where we grieve (well) our losses, and 'let go and let God'.

The fifth column



A general is asked how he plans to capture a city. 'I have four columns, but it is my fifth who will defeat them.'

'Where is the fifth column?'

'Inside the city.'

The fifth column is our own inner self-sabotage.

Living a lie

Crazy to self-sabotage, but in our denial living a lie becomes 'normal'.

Growing up we found unhealthy ways to quench our thirst for self-worth, for security, for significance. Though toxic, even as adults we dare not give them up.

We need to ask ourselves some straight questions:

Do I have peace of heart, able to find joy and serenity in the present moment?

Do those nearest me suffer from my (unintended) neglect?

A tale of acceptance ...

One day a man found his way into the basement of a beautiful palace where he discovered people living in the squalid semi-darkness. "Follow me out into the light," he urged them, "on your knees through that low door called humility."

No-one moved. He was puzzled. Sitting in several small groups, he pleaded with each in turn. Each had their own excuse: 'too busy'; 'in the light our dirty state will be exposed'; 'we are too afraid to change now'; 'forgive?- after what *they* did!'

One group, busy praying in a dark corner, said: 'Oh, we are already in the light'. Others, all ill, said they had a secret supply of sugar they could not give up. Most hostile were those in the inner circle: '*us* - get down on the same level as *them*'?

The man came back every day for a year. Yet still they refused to accept his offer of freedom. At last, on the very last day, some from each group stood waiting by the low door. "Why now?" he asked. "We were too terrified to risk letting go. But your love has shown us there has to be more to life than what we have."

By the low door of humility, they went out into light and life beyond their imagining.

Sallie



Scotland

Sallie is a community aged care worker and teaches piano.

"Though born into an lofC family, I missed finding the heart of change. When I was four my parents went away overseas on lofC work for 18 months, leaving me behind. Later this happened again two more times. Although they later apologised – it had been hard for them also – nevertheless it left deep insecurity and fears. Choosing to conform to my parents' good approval, on leaving school I joined lofC work. However my cravings for approval developed into full-blown addictions of people-pleasing, perfectionism and performing. In denial, meanwhile I was still trying to pass on something I didn't have.

"As a child I had always dreamed of marriage and family. Married at 30, with me at the centre the dream turned into a nightmare. Though I would never admit it to myself, I really thought I was the godly one, that I knew best. I could perform for others, but behind closed doors my addictive behaviours kept spilling over onto the very people I wanted to love. Acting out from an unhealed place of generational trauma, when my husband challenged my behavior, I had all the moods and dramas of a frightened child inside an adult body. Finally at 52 I got down on my knees and asked Jesus to please manage my unmanageable life.

"Since then many layers of denial have been confronted and uncovered – an ongoing journey of change. I know now real love costs – there are no short-cuts.

"Why have I taken so long? My pride. Also, in my shut-down I couldn't bear the pain of owning the truth about my life. But in this disowning, I also shut down to feeling into the pain I was meanwhile causing those nearest.

"Now in fronting up what do I find? A forgiving Father who stands on the other side of all my emotional dysfunction. As I humbly ask him, he is gradually healing the deep places I cannot. He is with me through all my insecurities, fears and pain. Now I understand that my very dysfunction is precisely the imperfection needed to find God - for 'perfect' people don't need God. He alone can restore my soul to emotional sobriety and sanity. In him I am slowly finding self-acceptance, love – and approval.

"Bit by bit the authentic person buried beneath the addictions is being recovered. I love gardening, writing children's stories, swimming – also music, at last using my husband's wedding gift of a guitar in my morning devotions to get to know God more.

"For 14 years I've been privileged to work in community aged care. Most of the frail aged will never know how much they've helped, confronted and inspired me to change – including those now in tough circumstances due to their earlier life choices: you reap what you sow. From them, and from the gift of God's grace and my husband's forgiveness that means we are still together, I feel so grateful to be able to start again each new day. Watching my garden, I realise that to live life – to really live life – means to keep on changing, to keep on growing (up) towards God."



2012 - helping campaign in remote northern Australia elections



X ... the place of acceptance - 2

We can say we want to be free. But do we really? Freedom means self-responsibility, walking the road less travelled.

Puppets!

We can all be 'addicts', to 'good' things or bad. The insanity of addiction is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a better result - the way much of our world operates!

Manipulation

We (people/ nations) can be manipulated through our addictions, thinking we are OK when we are but unwitting puppets to negative forces around us – and within us. The nature of seduction is I never feel /am the one being seduced.



Signs of addiction ...

<i>Excess</i>	all or nothing, over the top and over-reacting.
<i>Obsessed</i>	by yesterday's hurts and tomorrow's 'what ifs'.
<i>Running on empty</i>	unable/ unwilling to stop and as a result driven, restless, anxious, isolated, dissatisfied ...

Why does it usually take a major life crisis – work, family, financial, health or other loss - to admit that our life strategy, however 'noble' or ignoble, is bankrupt?



Spiritual awakening - Buchman

Why? - probably our pride. For Buchman:

"I was in Christian work ... but my work had become my idol. I was at the centre of my own life. That big 'I' had to be crossed out."

Precipitated by his own health and career crisis, Buchman saw his 'big-I-crossed-out' as the place where he had come to the end of himself, the place of surrender of his pride, of 'God's will, not mine, be done'.

Buchman's experience was that when 'the big I' is crossed out a spiritual awakening follows. He came to see this experience as applicable across all faiths and none.

In 'pouring contempt on all my pride', he felt 'a strong current of life' within him. Following the will to surrender, *"there was no longer this feeling of a divided will, no sense of calculation and argument, of oppression and helplessness"*.

The result of such a surrender was a reality, integrity and love in Buchman that was not there before. Now a freed personality, others were impacted as they in turn identified their own life 'idols', and similarly chose to let them go and 'let God'.

Bob



Australia

Bob's life-passion was the plight of the poor. As a younger man he built up one of the largest communist youth leagues in Sydney but later felt 'stabbed in the back' and left. Married with family, he went on fighting for better conditions for workers.

However, "*my weight grew to about eighteen stone. I was smoking heavily and drinking more frequently. A specialist told me I would be dead in twelve months if I did not stop drinking and smoking and lose weight. This I did for twelve months, stopping smoking permanently. My weight dropped to twelve stone but I was to drink again.*"

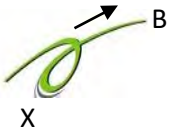
Bob later called this his 'dry drunk' period, not drinking but 'with the big I still at the centre'. It did not last. With stress at work, he became "*an alcoholic as bad as those you see living in the park, but in my case it was in the privacy of my own home. I had reached an all-time low. I preferred death to the way I was.*"

Bob said this 'bottoming out' was essential to find recovery. Until then the more his life was in excess, the more he asserted *he* was the one in control of his life. Now accepting he needed help, Bob found his way into Alcoholics Anonymous (AA).* "*The first step of AA is to admit that we are powerless over alcohol, that our lives are unmanageable. It had taken me a long time to deflate the ego sufficiently to tell the truth from fantasy.*"

AA 'steps' encourage an ongoing rigorous self-honesty, and a willingness to daily surrender our lives and wills into the care of a loving Higher Power. For Bob AA was more than stopping drinking; it was a wholly new way of life. Every day he spent time in reflection and meditation. "*This is the gateway into the spiritual side of this program in which there appears a depth of caring and sharing that transcends any normal form of living, and one can only liken it to finding a God of your personal understanding. In my experience diligent following of the basics set down by all faiths will produce a way of living that goes beyond the ability to put words to.*"

In AA Bob made friends from all levels of society, at last finding a true classless society. "*When we gather together, completely equal, humbled and levelled, I begin to see that my misfortune in becoming an alcoholic has in fact brought me full circle in that the aspirations from my boyhood days – the 'brotherhood of man' – are indeed alive and well, and will no doubt be eventually fulfilled.*"

*The Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) 12 step movement was an early offshoot of Initiatives of Change (originally called 'The Oxford Group'). The Oxford Group prior to WW II launched a program of 'moral and spiritual re-armament', the name by which it came to be known (shortened to Moral Re-Armament, or MRA) until becoming 'Initiatives of Change' in 2001.



X to B ... journey into (true) action

Honesty and purity lead us to X, but X is not our destination.
Unselfishness and love are our moral guides to reach B.

Unselfishness

How can I 'un-selfish' my life? Where can I go to escape myself, my restless activity, my negative self-talk?

Our self-centred (false) self cannot 'un-selfish' itself!

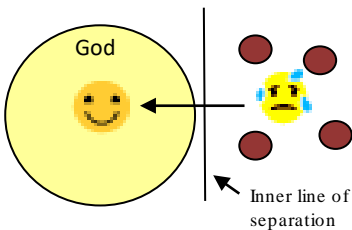
Unselfishness is re-centering our identity in who we truly are (our true self), not in what we do.

With our self-centred self no longer central, concerns shrink to manageable (more enjoyable) size.



Surrounded by our life concerns, with self at the centre - we worry!

'Quiet Time'



We discover who we truly are as we learn to let go (the illusion of) control. Instead of forcing solutions, we can 'let go and let God'.

In abiding in God ...

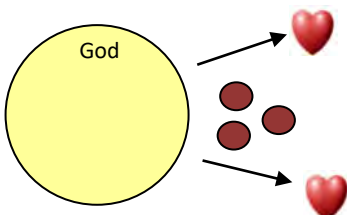
I know I am loved, secure, and important, whatever others say or do. This is filling the hole in my heart from within - the only way to 'un-selfish' my life.

How?

By meditating on scriptures, 'being' in nature, talking with God, journaling thoughts, imbibing inspiring books or music, gardening, enjoying a hobby, pursuing my life's dream ...

It is in the silences we are truly creative ...

In the silence we can listen to – and trust – the whisperings of the inner still, small voice of truth, of God, speaking to us about who we are, and what actions, or not, to take. This 'quiet time' is a daily discipline. Neglect it and all too soon we find our default I-know-best 'big I' reasserting itself.



With less stress and more effective lives

we can see past our own life concerns without feeling we alone have to 'save the world'.

Why?

I am not God. Or even God's deputy!

In harmony with who I am, I can rest in God's loving will for me for today, trusting God to do for others – and for myself - what I cannot.

Basil & Muriel



Zimbabwe

Basil was a white farmer in Zimbabwe. The black workers called him 'Nkomo iyahlaba', the bull that charges. He had stomach ulcers, and a marriage on the rocks. His doctor told him he would soon be dead if he did not change his ways.

Basil and Muriel met IofC through a play, 'The Forgotten Factor'. The cast suggested they have a 'time of quiet' about their situation. Basil had run out of options. As Muriel recalls, "*The first thought my husband wrote down was to apologise to Peter, a black boy he had beaten for letting cows get into the barn. But then he thought of the lost prestige if he apologised, of the boy laughing about it. It took him two weeks to decide to obey, but that obedience transformed his life, and mine too.*"

Creative initiatives began to blossom out of their now daily morning time of quiet together. Their marriage was rebuilt into a life-long love story. They gave workers better food, let families stay on the farm, and later built a school for what became 280 children. Basil also formed a land conservation committee, serving on that committee for thirty years. Such initiatives were radical, and some former friends rejected them. Basil and Muriel felt the rejection but did not let it deter them. Sometimes they felt they were to blame, trying to convert others to their new way of thinking.

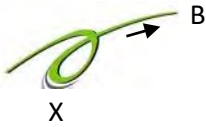


50th wedding anniversary

Over the years Basil and Muriel's 'circles of concern' continued to widen. Passing on their own story of change, they met with people in industry, education and politics. Basil also travelled widely to rural areas showing 'Freedom', a film on reconciliation between races and tribes. Always he shared his story of apology to Peter. Many whites left after independence, but Basil and Muriel chose to stay on, "*because we realised what our people had done to the African people, and we wanted to help in the development of this land we love.*"

All this happened despite Basil having had much of his oesophagus removed due to cancer. He lived for more than thirty years on many mini meals a day, often just plain biscuits. His doctor said every check-up, 'Basil, you are a miracle.' His workers agreed, now calling him 'Mahleka', the man who always laughs.

For Muriel, "*My husband often said to me that a quiet time and obedience to the thoughts that come from the Holy Spirit are so important. Right to the end he tried to write down thoughts. God in his mercy brought us the ideas of God's guidance and the 'quiet time', and those four standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. We got a new concept of what we were living for. Our lives were enriched.*"



X to B ... journey into (true) love

"If you judge people you have no time to love them."

Mother Teresa

Love

When all else passes away, love will remain. Anger, fear, greed are self-destructive. Only love is sustainable. Only love lasts.

What love isn't ...

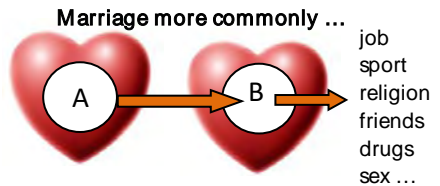
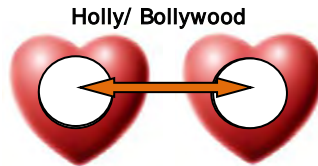
The most universal addiction is to people. 'Care for others' can in fact be a counterfeit love, using others to fill our own emptiness - OK for TV dramas, but not for a sane life.

Co-dependency ...

is depending on another person to complete us. No-one can do that for me. No-one else can fill my own inner emptiness, my own 'God-shaped hole'.

Signs of co-dependency

- * Allowing others' needs to overrule my own.
- * If you're 'up', I'm up; if 'down', I'm down.
- * Minding everyone else's business.
- * Trying to 'fix'/control/'help' everyone/thing!



A demands love from B.
 B fills their hole from elsewhere.
 The more A demands, the more B escapes - or retreats.

What love is ... Authentic love is generosity of heart to others ... and to myself.



Love starts with me

If I am in debt, unfit, stressed, how can I be generous?

Authentic love is forgiving others ...

possible to the extent I also accept, and reflect, (God's) love and forgiveness for myself.

Love is ...good boundaries

Authentic love is friendships without agendas ...

no trespassing allowed into others' lives. Nor into mine.

Authentic love is 'tough love' ...

learning to say 'no', refusing to accept the unacceptable - in myself, then with family, friends, community, nation.



Fences, not walls

No boundaries: we get walked on, and resent it.

Walls: lock others out, and lock us in.

Fences with gates: allow access with mutual respect.



Yayoi



Japan

Yayoi met IofC as a homestay student in Sydney. She is now an elementary teacher in Osaka, working with special needs students.

"My autistic students don't 'talk' like us. Language is sometimes useless, so we communicate through our hearts. Then we become closer. For me, they are like my family. So I just love them.

"Autistic children need the same routine, exact procedures in every little thing. When they can't follow their usual ways, they'll have anxiety and get frustrated. I know that very well, but I often try to make them follow 'our' way. It is very difficult to deal with, but I always regret what I've done to them, and I feel sorry for them. They teach me a lot. I try to understand what they feel, what they are thinking."

For Yayoi teaching came as a surprise. *"I was supposed to work at a company, but just before my graduation, they told me that they weren't able to employ me. I decided to register as a temporary teacher. A week before most graduates started working, I got a call from a special needs school. I didn't want to be a teacher, but I had no choice. It was hard work but gradually I found it very interesting.*

"As a teacher it is important for me to take care of myself. If I don't feel happy, I won't be able to be nice to others. I work very hard, but once I get out of school, I read books, watch TV, have dinner with family or friends and play tennis, and spend time with my cockatiel bird. He makes me very happy. And prayer helps me a lot.

"This is an awful thing but when I was young I didn't care about special needs people. I made fun of them. Terrible. Then I met very nice people who gave me love and taught me what was important. And I met God. They have changed me.

"I also used to blame my family for my situation. I often fought with them. And then I blamed myself for causing my mother's problems. Now I know those problems are her problem, not mine. And I think I can help my parents with God's power. I now thank them for raising me. So I've grown a lot. Not enough though. I keep praying to God so God will help me. But I often fail to be nice to them ... I know what to do, but when it comes to family, it is difficult. I'm still on the way ...

"I feel everything in the past was God's plan. Planned by Someone. I lost a job, and became a teacher unexpectedly. It seems everything is connected. So I believe God has a plan for me so that I don't need to worry. But I still do worry about my future and many things. I'd like to be connected to the world and to help with my skill - and to get married and live in the countryside with a big dog and kids!"



A → X ... journey into nations - 1

"History despite its wrenching pain cannot be un-lived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again." Maya Angelou

The whole truth of our histories

Buchman was an American, and a Christian. He saw in nations and religions (as they can be practised) the same need for change as in his own life, and that to attempt such change by bypassing X - the place where we accept the *whole* truth of our histories - is insufficient, ineffective, and in the end counter-productive.

My nation's flaws are my own

As my nation is – as my class, my race, my faith community, my group is – so am I. My national journey of change is first of all that journey within my own heart.

The journey of awareness ... as perpetrators.

Apathy → sympathy → empathy

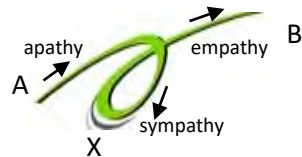
As perpetrators of wrong our journey is learning to take full responsibility for the fallout of our actions, to feel again in order to heal.

Apathy... is shutting down to my own pain – and then, in turn, to others' pain.

Sympathy... is often about helping 'them' with 'their' problems, filling my own need to be needed, or easing my uneasy conscience.

Empathy... is imagining the world through the eyes of those who have suffered from our actions (however unwitting), asking:

'What if this were to happen to me, to my family, my children?'



Denial

Denial runs deep. Who wants to see ourselves as a perpetrator? No-one! So we choose to remain blind, for then we cannot repent of what we do not (want to) see.

'How great we are and have always been' nursery history also applies to nations, using the good in our national/religious/ethnic histories to cover up the bad. Remaining children in understanding the true nature of conflicts, action on problems on the table is sabotaged by the 'problems' sitting around the table.

In Ireland one most responsible for the famines was Charles Trevelyan. His personal morality beyond reproach, he was a pillar of English society and church, helping set up the modern Civil Service. His Christian conviction *was* sincere, yet in 1847 he said the famine fallout should 'not be too much mitigated' as it was 'the operation of natural causes ... a judgement of God to teach the Irish a lesson'.

Joan



England



Northern Ireland

Joan lived for eighteen years in the Northern Ireland hotspot of Derry/Londonderry. Not that Joan was Irish. Joan was English, a lover of Shakespeare, of the Anglican Church, of the patriotic English Establishment having worked all her life in Government Service in England.

So how then did this patriotic English lady in her sixties end up there, suffering the pain of being told what the British had always done wrong in Ireland, instead of spending her well-earned retirement in comfort?

In response to a Northern Ireland radio program, Joan decided to go beyond the 'occasional wishful prayer' the violence would stop and find out what was actually happening. On her first visit a Catholic headmistress told her why she thought the whole situation was England's fault. Joan just didn't believe it. Back home however she read further, coming up against, as she puts it, 'English brutality, duplicity and callous indifference'. However this too she still mostly dismissed as 'propaganda'.

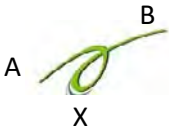
Even so, Joan went back to Ireland again. She 'greatly admired' the courage of the mothers from a tiny village where nine had been killed by a bomb, creating 'loveliness for their children'. She also visited a display that all too clearly implied England was to blame for the famines and emigrations where so many had died in the 'coffin ships'. Still, she reasoned, *'It must be left-wing propaganda'*.

The next day Joan visited a Roman Catholic Church with a picture of Pilate washing his hands of responsibility for Jesus' death. With a shock she saw Pilate as the *'prototype of officialdom – well-meaning but brushing aside the truth for expediency – typical of many in the Establishment and my own wilful blindness'*.

Joan knelt and asked God's forgiveness for herself and her nation, and for the courage for whatever God wanted next. This led to selling her beloved home in England and living for what would become eighteen years as a humble, listening English woman in Northern Ireland.

"Admitting one's country's mistakes is sometimes regarded as unpatriotic. In fact admitting the harm our history had inflicted on Ireland and the desire to make some small reparation sprang from the love of my own country ... To me England will always be Shakespeare's 'precious stone set in a silver sea', and the criticism of her past does not come easily. I long for a rebirth of patriotism with the courage and vitality shown by our forefathers, but with truth - not reputation - as its lifeblood".

Joan grew to love Northern Ireland and its peoples. And they her. When opposition did come it was not from Catholics, but the Protestant community. In her eighties when she returned to England, Joan met with new opposition, new pain - the indifference of many in her town to her Irish journey.



X → B ... journey into nations - 2

"Hurts not transformed are transferred."

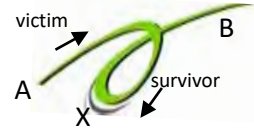
Niketu Iralu

Journey into love ... as victims

Victim → survivor → wounded healer

As victims of injustice our identity is shaped by what we suffered. We may survive but our abusers still have power over us. We, not them, carry the (generational) burden of past pain.

We end up becoming prisoners of our own unforgiveness.



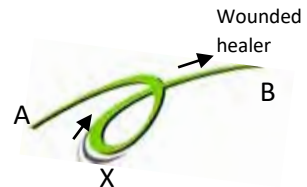
Forgiveness is a journey

We learn to insist on good boundaries, so the abuse cannot continue.

We learn to see perpetrators as people who themselves are prisoners of the past. We learn to accept also we are not without some responsibility, if not in creating conflict, then in perpetuating it.

Free, even to love our enemies

This is not 'forgive and forget' - we cannot forget our own wounds, the need to own our own pain. This is forgive and change the way we think. Lest history, yet again, repeat itself.



'I' cannot forgive ...

The big I-at-the-centre self (our self-centred self) cannot forgive. Only the I-crossed-out self (our true self) can forgive.

Forgiveness is the doorway out of the prison of unforgiveness into a much bigger place, the place of Love - even of our jailors, who we now come to see as people who themselves are in the ones in the prison of their own making.

This can happen even in situations of total injustice, of awful evil. This incredible prayer was found on a scrap of paper beside a dead child in Ravensbrück concentration camp:

" O Lord, remember not only the men and women of good will, but also those of ill-will. But do not remember all the suffering they have inflicted on us; remember the fruits we have bought, thanks to this suffering – our comradeship, our loyalty, our humility, our courage, our generosity, the greatness of heart which has grown out of all this, and when they come to judgment, let all the fruits which we have borne be their forgiveness."

Irene



France



Germany

Irene Laure was a French Resistance leader in WW II, an MP and Secretary-General of two million French Socialist women. In 1946 she responded to the vision of an IofC conference for rebuilding Europe in Caux, Switzerland.

Irene however had not anticipated meeting Germans. Her son had been tortured by the Gestapo, and when she heard German being spoken she left the room. Irene decided to leave the conference. At that point Buchman challenged her: *“How can you rebuild Europe without the Germans?”*

For three days without food or sleep Irene struggled to let go of her hatred. In those decisive post-war years when competing ideologies were seeking to fill the void left by the collapse of Nazism, Irene first at that conference in Switzerland, and then over and over in Germany itself, spoke a message of forgiveness. Incredibly her message was not ‘I forgive you’. Irene *asked for* forgiveness - for her hatred. Germans expecting to be condemned and ready to defend themselves, instead found themselves defenceless before this unconditional act of grace.

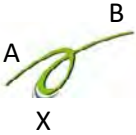


Madame Irene Laure and German trade union leader, Dr Heinrich Strater, at Caux, following her apology.

Irene said she could not forget but she could forgive. *“I had a great hatred of the Germans. Facing facts, I was right. I suffered a lot from the war and I hardened myself so I should never weep again. Even when I heard one of my sons had been tortured, I did not weep. I hardened my heart and said, ‘They’ll pay for it.’ They did pay – but I felt ashamed and I asked their forgiveness, because **no nation makes war alone.**”* As Irene’s husband, Victor, concluded of France’s own colonialism: *“We have been blind. I have been blind ...it is the same blindness that made me see my country the way I wanted to see it ...this blindness, I am convinced, comes from man’s being too proud and arrogant to admit that there is a superior power to guide him.”*

In Berlin as part of a wider IofC initiative to reach out to the German people, Irene saw women clearing the rubble with their bare hands. The woman who had vowed she would never weep, wept for these women. She felt deeply ashamed. This destruction was the very thing she had once wanted to see happen. *“I think of the ruins I have seen – French ruins, German ruins. Whose victory was it? There was no victory; we were all defeated – by evil.”*

Few today know this remarkable post-war reconciliation between centuries-old enemies, and which laid the basis of the European Union, had this spiritual foundation – recognised at the time by both French President Schuman and German Chancellor Adenauer.



A → X → B ... journey into nations - 3

"There is enough in the world for everyone's need, but not greed."

Gandhi

Buchman believed that personal moral change was too small a goal. His concern became how to 'save a crumbling civilisation'.

National black holes



Societies starved of love ...

become places of material scarcity. Filling our 'more, more, more' black hole with endless bigger-is-better growth has led to the disaster of climate change, to a world of haves and have-nots, to global financial crises, to the economics of an empty heart.

"All that endless progress turned out to be an insane, ill-considered dash into a blind alley. A civilisation greedy for perpetual progress has now choked and is on its last legs."

Solzhenitsyn

Societies showing love ...



regain their sense of nature's abundance – the economics of a complete heart. There is no need to over-consume, to stress the environment. Filling our global hole sustainably means a world which respects the interconnectedness and preciousness of all life.

Ancient futures

The path to the future passes through our past - personal, family, religious, ethnic, national - not only to confront past wrongs, but also to recover lost values.

Indigenous cultures, our mirror

We long for genuine connectedness in our societies, to each other, to nature, to our own spiritual being. Ironically these aspirations are often embodied in traditional values of indigenous cultures, the very ones we have side-lined in our pursuit of materialism.

Global civilisation



Australian author Inga Clendinnen writes of Australian Aboriginal people:

"There remains a scar on the face of the country, a birth-stain of injustice and exclusion directed against a people who could so easily provide the core of our sense of ourselves as a nation, but who remain on the fringes."

Graeme



Australia



Aboriginal flag

"My Australian Aboriginal journey began at a rural University when somehow I volunteered to tutor young Aboriginal children. Week after week unbidden questions were forming – who are these people, where do they come from – for I had had no idea. My Australia until then was Sydney, a white world with blue eyes, part of the quarter of the world coloured colonial pink.

"The next decades were an unfolding Aboriginal discovery, once working with an Aboriginal pastor in his community – he gave our wedding blessing. Other times I withdrew. I had enough pain in my life, and their story has so much pain ...

"My discoveries were startling, seeing things I passed by before. My aunty was Aboriginal, though we were blind to it, as was she. I wonder now what it did to her spirit, morning by morning to look in the mirror and deny who she was. It was around then I discovered too that my eyes are Celtic grey-green, not blue.

"One 'nursery' story we Australians can tell ourselves is we are the land of a 'fair go for all'. True, class distinctions of Europe were largely left behind, but not for non-Europeans. We were 'White Australia'. In our relentless pursuit of wealth the Aboriginal people were massacred (until the 1940s), followed by the removal of children (until the late 1960s) - and much else that was, and still is, 'unfair'.

*"Since 1998 I have been involved in the Myall Creek Massacre Memorial. This site is significant not for numbers killed but as the only one in hundreds ever brought to justice. In 2000 an Aboriginal descendant of a child who had survived embraced a descendant of a perpetrator. This was a watershed. In that all-encompassing embrace I finally understood the sitting Prime Minister who could say: **"We** committed the murders, we took the children away ... we failed to ask what would it be like if this were done to us". In my denial I too am a perpetrator, repeating history with policies that never did work.*



"This was also the key to my own elusive Australian identity, to my belonging here. It was astonishing in that the Aboriginal embrace is for me free, an unconditional 'welcome to country' gift of forgiveness. But not without cost - the cost being borne by the giver, a cost beyond reckoning, a cost hardly yet recognised.

"Today I am seeing more and more how much we have impoverished ourselves from all that richness of Aboriginal culture and values, a connection we crave but often reject, values essential not only for our identity as a nation, but also for our long-term survival. Aboriginal people are like the canary in the coalmine. When the canary stops singing, we are all in deep trouble.

"In 2007 our nation apologised for the 'stolen generation' of Aboriginal children ... 'sorry, sorry, sorry'. But not yet for the massacres when the blood went into the ground and cried out for justice, the key to realising our true 'fair go for all' dream.



X → B ... a life-long pilgrimage

X

"Things of fundamental importance cannot be purchased by reason alone. They have to be purchased by their suffering." Gandhi

Put simply, lofC can be understood as:

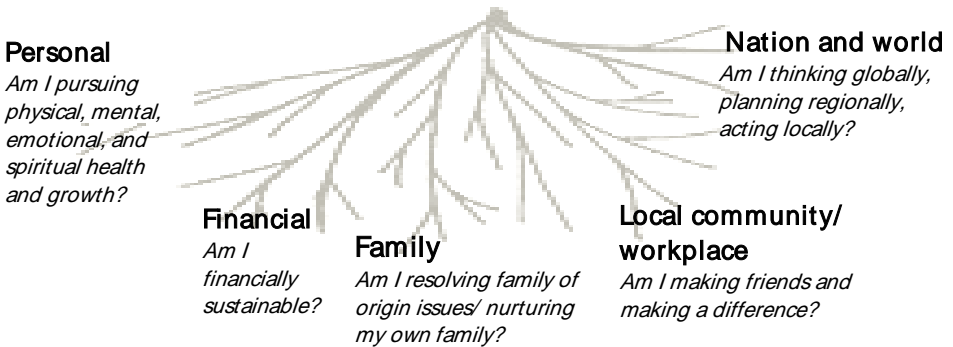
Change starts with me

There is a larger (divine) purpose for my life

This purpose unfolds day by day as we obey the 'still, small voice', recognisable by its authenticity, and discernible as we quiet all other voices claiming our attention. Pressures to conform are immense – from our own generational trauma patterns; and from our culture, our peer groups. How do we resist? By...

Putting down deep roots of lasting change

"God has created you as originals; don't let society turn you into copies." Sparre

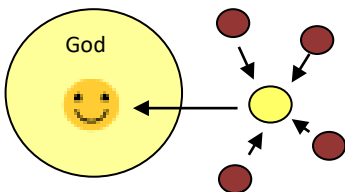


Success ...

Of course we all seek success in our life goals. However our 'successes', all we have built up over many years, can be later undone. Ultimately there is only one unblockable life goal - our growth in character, our own closer walk with God. No-one can take this from us - except by our own consent.

'Life is not prosperity as we are led to believe, but the maturity of the human soul.'

Solzhenitsyn



Courage on the journey of change!

Buchman had constant opposition. It comes to all who question the herd, who dare to chart a new path.

Whilst learning to respect contrary views, we also need to find our final confidence in God.

Jim



Australia

Jim was apathetic as a Melbourne waterfront worker. Reserved by nature, he was anyway fully occupied with family and building his own home. A new neighbour, who had met IofC, happened to work in port management. He gave Jim the vision that if he wanted to improve the unjust working conditions, he needed to start with himself - which Jim decided to do, returning some items of 'borrowed' cargo!

Jim went on to become President of the union for 25 years, and was awarded the Order of Australia for his contribution to industry, farming, and prison work. Jim was also a key player in the reform of the Victorian Labor Party. This was not some long-term plan. As he went through one door (often in trepidation), in time the next opened. Starting with becoming a job delegate, his union involvement really began with his apology to a Catholic faction leader for his Protestant prejudice.

Jim sought to work on the basis of 'what is right, not who is right'. Antagonisms within the union, and with management, lessened under his leadership - and friendship. New trust saw new solutions. The tide began to turn despite ongoing opposition from some within the union, management, and government committed to confrontation for their own agendas. Discouraged at one point, Jim questioned what effect he was having. At that very point a fellow 'wharfie' stepped up alongside Jim and became a close colleague in the cause.

After he retired Jim saw much of what had been built up over decades dismantled due to the new union leadership and a hardline government industrial policy. His 'hands-on' prison work also ended due to prison privatisation. Even so his connections with the waterfront - and also with farming and prison people with whom as President he had built much goodwill - continue. Jim recently published his story in his autobiography, 'Proud to be a Wharfie'.



Jim signing copies
at his book launch

For Jim, *"To expect a change in society by changing human nature may be an act of faith, but to expect one without a change in human nature is an act of lunacy ...for change to happen we must begin with ourselves. My wife and I have found that by taking time each day to listen to that inner voice for guidance, we can be challenged to do things differently. In this way we can make a difference, no matter how small ... God can inspire and use a very ordinary bloke to make a difference.*

"We sometimes end up heading in directions we would not necessarily choose for ourselves. It is at these times we need to hold onto our faith. We don't control the journey, we learn to trust and move with it. My life ...has been blessed by a deepening knowledge that some divine force is guiding the whole journey."

I have walked that long road to freedom.
I have made missteps along the way.

But I have discovered the secret that after
climbing a great hill, one only finds
there are many more hills to climb.

I have taken a moment here to rest,
to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me,
to look back on the distance I have come.

But I can rest only for a moment,
for with freedom comes responsibilities,
and I dare not linger,
for my long walk is not yet ended.



Nelson Mandela
1918 - 2013