

From talk given by Vivienne Nelson on 17 January, 2014

The Sunday before Christmas here at the Cathedral, the sermon touched on the “God moments” we have in our lives. They make us say, “Ah, that’s where that comes from!” or “Where did that come from?” Later that same morning, Mel and I were having coffee at Bank Corner Cafe and I was reading Saturday’s Herald where there was a picture of the cathedral and the Dean in an article headed, “*New lease of life for park*”. The article, which set out some of the history of Cathedral Park, told of the shipwreck in 1866 of an iron paddle-steamer, the Cawarra, in which 61 people drowned near the former island of Nobbys. 31 of those people were buried in a mass grave at the lower end of what was called the “Old Burial Ground.

Reading this shocked me as, a few years ago when I was doing a series of eight paintings from east to west of the views from the north side of the cathedral, I became aware of an atmosphere of sadness at that same end of the ‘park’ that disturbed me. I think this feeling comes out in my painting of the row of trees with what artists call “negative spaces”



between them (Image of my painting shown). The row of trees I painted have since been removed.

One of the themes in my work is the spaces between things. I think that God can often be found in these spaces, or in quiet or silence.....it’s a bit like the Leonard Cohen song, “There’s a crack in everything, that’s how the light gets in.”

Anyway, back to the Herald article I was reading - I asked the cafe owner if I could keep the newspaper and told him why and he said, “Sure, it’s yesterday’s paper, and I think you both need another cup of coffee!”

We have Quiet Mornings at the Cathedral about 6 times a year, and at one the theme was “God as a cloud”, with the idea that a cloud can be a metaphor for God....as in the medieval writing “The Cloud of Unknowing” and in “The dark night of the soul” by St John of the Cross, both about the darkness of God and examples of what is known in Western Christianity as the *via negativa*. Many painters have used clouds to signify God’s hidden presence, as have a number of biblical writers.....

At one of these Quiet Mornings we looked at the poetry of Kevin Hart, a contemporary Australian poet. I liked his poetry so much I asked Mel for a book of his poetry for

