



Once again a very happy and successful assembly of our Ballarat Diocesan Pastoral Support Group took place at Halls Gap from October 22 – October 24. This year the group welcomed some new faces, Carolyn Stanhope from Hamilton, Michael Ryan from Ballan and Sisters Tirsa and Manuela from Horsham. The twenty-three attendees enjoyed the comfort and tranquillity of the Pinnacle Holiday Lodge with our hosts Barry and Mimie.

On Sunday evening we enjoyed a BBQ in the grounds of the Lodge. After being well nourished by the food, drink and company we gathered in the Conference area for our introductory session led by Sr Jacinta Rice. Sr Margie Abbott rsm, our Guest

Speaker for this year, introduced herself to the group and whetted our appetite for Monday's presentation. We then made use of the chance for all to introduce or re-introduce ourselves and concluded the evening with reflective prayer.

On Monday we were privileged to have Margie as our guest speaker. Margie held us in awe and wonder as she told us the Universe Story. She used a variety of ways to enthrall us into the story – a labyrinth created by her own hands using finger knitting. The labyrinth was studded with cards naming events of billions of years. Margie's enthusiasm for her topic and her use of visual images, drama, poetry, story, music and scripture drew us into the interconnectedness of all that is. Her emphasis on caring for our common home provided for us the link between *Laudato Si* and the Universe Story. Monday evening's meal at the Quarry Restaurant was a true celebration of our time together.



Tuesday morning was a time to make plans for our gathering in 2018. Mary Lancaster agreed to join the executive group of Geraldine Malady, Maree Holt and Clare Arundell. This group will arrange details and the guest speaker for the gathering in 2018.

The gathering closed with a prayer where we draw together our new learnings in a spirit of praise, thanksgiving and blessings.

We thank our Bishop, Paul Bird and the CDF for supporting us in this venture. Thanks also to Pauline Books and Media for their continued support.

We thank God for this time of learning and reflection, a time of appreciation for the interconnectedness of all that is. Where better to gather than in the beauty of Halls Gap!!!

*Claire Arundell*

