

“Only unwilling change catapults us into what we did not plan to do. Only unwilling change really matters to the molding of the soul, to the stretching of the self beyond the self. Willed change is what I seek and shape. Unwilled change is what seeks and reshapes me. The spiritual offshoot of discontinuity, however, is evolution. It grows us. It cracks us open to God in whole new ways. Creation goes on creating in us.” **Joan Chittister**



The Thresholds of  
Departing & Returning:  
“consenting to lose sight of the shore”

**Maree Aldridge - Artist, author, poet, workshop facilitator, Doctor of Ministry/Adelaide College of Divinity**

Maree worked as a community artist from 2004 till 2016. Her public installations and exhibitions invited conversation, reflection, healing acceptance and conscientiousness-raising regarding what she calls “the subtext of social injustice” (disconnection, marginalisation and objectification), in a quest for remedies and liberation. Through the mediums of visual arts, story, poetry, sound, and environments of co-creative co-learning, Maree presents the yearning for wholeness personally and asks searchingly for the inclusion of difference/strangeness and meeting the difficulty of the human experience with empathy.

Maree was the Artist in Residence from 2011 to 2015 at the social service agency, Anglican Action, in Hamilton. She was inspired out of a sense of justice for the plight of women who found themselves in broken places to write Letters to a Missing Woman in 2014 as an empathic response. From the story, an art installation was created and resided at Anglican Action in 2015, then for six months at the College of St John’s the Evangelist in Auckland in 2016. Maree has facilitated many Letters to a Missing Woman workshops of various kinds and for women, men and people helpers since 2014. Her Doctor of Ministry thesis (2018) focused on writing a sequel which she has named The Return. This extends and deepens the story that began in 2014 bringing it full circle as Poet T.S Elliot describes, “the end of all our exploring, Will be to arrive where we started, And know the place for the first time.”

Weaving mythic stories, parable, poetry, visual art and creative ritual, Dr Maree Aldridge facilitates **The Thresholds of Departing & Returning** workshop. Drawing on the content from her Doctor of Ministry thesis, and her other creative works Maree quests how welcoming life-altering liminality will bring us to the thresholds of departure and return. These expansive movements can renew individuals and community if we will only inquire and surrender to how “creation goes on creating in us” individually and collectively.

**Exploring Together:**

*An understanding of ‘departing’ and ‘returning’ thresholds and the regenerative void/ecotone between the two*

*Images of Life in its natural form of continuous change and growth - “creation goes on creating in us”*

*Journey towards “True Self” (truest sense of self) being “[cracked] open to God in whole new ways”*

*The ‘departing’ and ‘returning’ movements of DESCENT, ROOM TO THRIVE, DISCOVERING THE NEW ORDER OF THINGS*

*“Return and back are not one and the same”*

*The challenging implications and gifts for community when it’s members “[consent] to lose sight of the shore”*

*“It is the willingness to risk herself...that transforms Maree from artist and storyteller to becoming the art and the story. This is the power of her work.”*

**Karen Morrison-Hume – Missioner, Anglican Action, Hamilton, New Zealand.**

*“What makes Maree’s work unusual is not that she reframes a sense of human lostness as an odyssey, a journey of searching, but that she does so by combining a collection of strong, moving and meaningful poetry and story, with gorgeous collage and images that engage with the text and vice versa.”*

**Mark Pierson – Author, Worship Curator and Baptist Pastor, Auckland, New Zealand.**

