

Mitigation, Adaptation, Suffering and Transformation

Leaders for the Storm - a Shared Inquiry into Disaster Resilience Community Leadership

"Leadership has never been as difficult and perplexing as it is today. Having to deal with ongoing surprise, uncertainty, volatility and havoc is the new normal."
Meg Wheatley, 2010



Angela Blanchard



Meg Wheatley

"The vital lessons we've learned from such terrible disasters as Hurricanes Ike and Katrina are relevant to all organisations and all situations during this era of increasing turbulence."
Angela Blanchard, 2010

"Our world changes through local communities coming together to take action - there is no power for change greater than a community taking its future into its own hands."
Meg Wheatley, 2011

Meg Wheatley is an internationally respected writer, speaker, and teacher for how we can accomplish our work, sustain our relationships, and willingly step forward to serve in this troubling time. She is co-founder and President Emerita of The Berkana Institute, a charitable foundation that works in partnership with a rich diversity of people around the world who strengthen their communities by working with the wisdom and wealth already present in their people, traditions and environment. She's been an organisational consultant since 1973, a global citizen since her youth, a professor in two graduate business programs, and a happy mother and grandmother. Meg is the author of **Leadership and the New Physics**, **Perseverance** and **Walk In Walk Out**. In 2002, the American Society for Training and Development awarded Meg Wheatley their highest honour, dubbing her a 'Living Legend.'

Angela Blanchard is recognised for her pioneering work in community development that focuses on the human, social, economic and cultural strengths of vulnerable populations. Blanchard is the president and CEO of Houston-based Neighborhood Centers Inc., one of the top 1% of U.S.A.-based charitable organisations. Neighborhood Centers Inc. serves 250,000 clients annually through 60 facilities in the Houston and Gulf Coast regions. She has been widely praised for her innovative work in developing "a powerful transformational model" with important implications for post-natural disaster and post-economic crisis community re-vitalisation and community renewal efforts throughout the world. She has been named one of Houston's **50 Most Influential Women** by Houston Women Magazine and is formally recognised as a 'Shattered Glass Honouree' by the Harris County Women's Political Caucus.

Disaster Resilience Community Leadership: Tuesday 30th & Wednesday 31st August, 2011

RSVP: Red Cross Australia – seminar@redcross.org.au by Friday 26th August, 2011

VENUE: 9:00am - 5:00pm @ The Augustine Centre - 2 Minona Street, Hawthorn, Victoria



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Leaders for the Storm - *our Shared Inquiry*

Disaster Resilience Community Leadership with **Meg Wheatley & Angela Blanchard**



Meg Wheatley met with Black Saturday survivors in Melbourne in 2009. At this meeting, a shared commitment was made to coordinate a two-day seminar in Australia, exploring **Disaster Resilience Community Leadership**.

Meg and her colleague, **Angela Blanchard**, find disasters and crises, and our response, recovery and regeneration efforts and challenges, come to define us and our communities. They have watched people step up into new roles, have their confidence tested and find ways to persevere. They have witnessed the emergence of stronger relationships and **'storm friends'** – colleagues who would never have met, but for incredible upheavals in their lives and communities.

Floods, fires, earthquakes, tsunamis and droughts threaten our physical security, destroy our shared history and wipe away our memories. Our stories are forever changed – we now live in a new world of before and after.

Before Katrina, after Katrina. Before Black Saturday, after Black Saturday.

Before the tsunami, after the tsunami. Before the floods, after the floods.

Before Yasi, after Yasi. Before the earthquake, after the earthquake.

And at some point in the **'after'** new questions start to emerge about what is important and how to recreate the structures, relationships and connections we can't live without. We reach a fork in the road where we must make the important decisions about what to keep and what to leave behind. We come to realise we are powerless over so much that is precious, helpless to prevent so much that is painful, and often unable to fix that which is broken.

When disasters wipe out old systems and structures and disable institutions and bureaucracies, they clear spaces for new ways of working together – inspiring ways of being present for, and enabling each other, and our communities.

In coming together to share our disaster experiences and hard-earned life-affirming wisdom, we'll take time to ask ourselves some of the deeper questions that tug at us while we work. The questions that drive how we'll respond next time, how we live on undeterred in between, what we choose to bring forward, and what we leave behind.

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While each disaster has unique costs and consequences, Meg and Angela have found the themes that emerge are universal. Our seminar will seek to create spaces in which the unique and the universal can surface. We will be guided through interactive processes to enable this surfacing. We'll work at small tables and together in larger groups. We'll share learning from prior conversations with Local Government, NGO's and Community Recovery Committees. Many of the participants in these conversations will join us. We welcome others who bring valuable learning to share.

We have outlined the many questions that we continue to come back to in our work with community leaders who respond after major disasters. These are the questions the leaders we encounter pose in the quieter times, often at the end of the day, when the work is winding down and their bodies are tired, and they have to make decisions about what to do next, what to put off, what to care about, what to focus on, and what to fight for.

Our ongoing and unresolved questions frame our invitation to you to be a partner in our shared inquiry, over two days, to discuss and learn about community and connectedness, and the opportunities crises and disasters offer up.

For Meg and Angela, community is 'all of us.' We will raise issues to the global scale to help illuminate how what we have learnt can be made available to others. There will be a strong emphasis on story telling as part of this process. The intent of the workshop is to nurture and encourage community leadership. A part of what Meg and Angela have to offer is a deeper exploration of how timely community leadership transcends 'us and them' and creates a 'shared we.' We are not sure exactly where we will land as we embark on a journey into the unexplored territory of shared inquiry.

CatholicCare has initiated this inquiry process. We acknowledge that we've had far less experience in this field than many others. We have been supported throughout by the energy and commitment of our partner organisations.

We hope you will join with us, and Meg and Angela, for two days to explore emerging and universal themes.

Daryl Taylor, Community Development Worker, CatholicCare Bushfire Community Recovery Service – **0430 63 77 48**

Helen Goodman, Acting Manager, CatholicCare Bushfire Community Recovery Service – **0418 153 931**

Meg and Angela engage many of the following themes and questions in **Disaster Resilience Community Leadership Seminars** conducted throughout the U.S.A.

Times of Transition: *How do we choose to lead in our era of clashing worldviews, chilling momentum, disruptive changes and failing systems?*

- a. Our dominant worldview: political, mechanistic, and instrumental – **‘command and control’** – as far from valuing community and relationships as possible.
- b. A worldview of community: the primacy of relationships, leaders as hosts not heroes, creating health and wellbeing through greater, deeper connections.
- c. Our hard won wisdom: what have we learned from our real life and near death experiences, what do we want our children to know, to carry on, and to share.
- d. By honestly engaging and confronting our clashing worldviews, inept structures, failing systems and ways of working we can generate new leadership choices:
 - i. We can de-escalate and de-personalise all conflict. Everything we do to lower the threat and fear level improves our ability to work well together.
 - ii. We don't have to take it personally or feel that failures are all our own fault. We can practice humility, generosity, learning, dignity and grace.
 - iii. We know what to expect, rather than getting angry. We can practice fierce determination, passionate commitment and loving detachment.
 - iv. We don't have to avoid conflict. We can assertively define who we are and know clearly where we stand and how we get things done.

Bridging Leaders: *How do we act with integrity, clarity, courage and competence?*

As leaders we exercise power by what we pay attention to, what we ignore, what we affirm and what we resource. We make these choices minute by minute every day, consciously or unconsciously. Along with these choices come other choices about why, how, when, on what, and with whom, we might choose to take action or make a stand.

Part of a leader's work is knowing what to struggle for, working from clarity, and not from outrage. We will look at quick and appropriate responses to emerging issues and changing conditions, and ways of gaining what we need without aggression.

This part of our inquiry is about how we make wise choices, about how and where to invest our time and energy, staff and resources, about knowing when and how to get what we need, while maintaining our integrity and building stronger relationships.

- e. When we were at our best, what did we nurture, what did we ignore?
- f. When we reflect on our recovery and rebuilding choices, what did we choose to bring forward, and what did we choose to leave behind?
- g. How did we determine what resources we needed? Where did we seek our supplies? How did we influence the decision-makers to secure resources from the systems we experienced as unresponsive, the bureaucracies we experienced as dismissive, and the helpers we experienced as disabling?
- h. Who were we, and how did we present ourselves, and put ourselves, and our case, plans or propositions forward, in order to get what we needed?
 - i. What were the shared ethical and operational principles that allowed us to know when and how to insist on exactly what we really needed?
 - ii. How did we choose what we stood for and when to take a stand?
 - iii. How have we moved beyond **‘us and them’** towards a **‘shared we’**?

Embracing Uncertainty: *As leaders, how do we deal with profound vulnerability?*

What do we do when every way and every thing most important to us are beyond our power to preserve, and there are no longer any guarantees?

In times of unprecedented disruptions, we find ourselves searching for solid ground, trying to hold on to ideas of progress and wanting our plans and strategies to work.

Yet often what we need is to find new ways of responding, of evaluating and of moving through challenges, without the security of guaranteed outcomes.

In this inquiry, we are recalling the wisdom and the practices that sustain us and prepare us when all around us appears to be in chaos.

- i. What in our cultures and lineages can teach us how to persevere? What can we learn about prevention from our ancestors and older traditions?
- j. What patterns can we recognise from past disruptions? Are there any common strategies, stages and phases in our respective unfolding stories of preparedness, response, relief, recovery, renewal and regeneration?
- k. What are our expectations of ourselves, and others, and how are these expectations helping or interfering with our work? If '**Our New Normal is Havoc**' (Newsweek, May 2011), what then is, or needs to be, our new work?

Finding Our Way: *How do we make life-affirming choices on a long journey?*

All recovery is an unfolding cycle of grieving for what was, even as we build anew. So many of us now have faced the critical fork in the road when the full realisation finally dawns on us: **There is no going back!** Choices must be made.

The path we take determines our future. Two paths:

1. Anger, despair, abuse, futility, resignation, apathy, cynicism. All our plans and preparations didn't protect us. We're not safe and we're angry about our vulnerability and helplessness. We want something or someone to blame. We need a scapegoat. Disempowered, we begin to turn on each other. Why bother creating something better when it can all be so easily torn away? *We decide it's too hard to participate. We find we can insulate ourselves from feelings of guilt, shame, grief, loss and pain. It is much easier not to care.*
2. Joy, connection, agency, flow, creativity, discernment, optimism. There is so much we can't control or protect or eliminate, but we can be together. We can see beyond our losses, no matter how profound, as we find and forge deeper meaning together. We recall moments of grace and love, when despite all the many obstacles and enduring hardships, we were kind, patient and generous. *We turned to one another, held each other, were together, that was enough.*

***“You can start out crying and end up screaming,
or you can start out crying and end up laughing.”***

Shared Learning: *Who do we choose to trust and how do we choose to serve?*

As we learn to navigate uncertainty and change, we lay down our path by walking it. We find our way while we are doing the work. The more we trust 'learning by doing,' and grow in life experience and practical wisdom, the more we find we have to offer.

We're faced with many appeals, many calls to action and many opportunities to lead. As we face increasing choices about how and where to commit ourselves, we realise we must learn how to know ourselves and trust our judgment, at even deeper levels.

How do we build trust and discernment in ourselves, and in our relations with others?
How can we weave our webs of relationships into a rich culture of collaborative intent?

This session is about insight and prevention, about our personal and inter-personal preparedness, about our household and community preparedness; how we choose and build our leadership roles, and how we develop our physical and inner strength:

- l. What leadership roles are we brave enough to claim for ourselves?
- m. How do we develop confidence in who we really are: what do we stand for and what do we value, and what do we know and what do we believe?
- n. How do we learn from, and engage the support of, mentors and leaders?
- o. How do we continue to listen, learn and grow on our leadership journey?
- p. How do we engage foresight and prevention in community preparedness?
- q. How do we ensure our physical, emotional, social and spiritual well-being?

Leaving a Legacy: *How do we apply what we know? Where do we go from here?*

Now that we've discovered some of what we know and believe, unearthed some of our shared experiences and practical wisdom, and become clearer on who we want to be when providing leadership in these troubled times, what will we do differently?

How can we take what we've learnt and discern how best to apply it to our current opportunities and challenges, and to our looming and future crises and disasters?

What are our personal and shared theories of resilience, recovery, action and change?
What priorities can we discern that require our investment, commitment and actions?

How do we stay the course and successfully complete all the work we have begun?
What actions can we commit to now, in both the short and long term, focusing on:

- r. Our life balance and well-being: emotional, physical and spiritual
- s. Our relationships with family, friends, neighbours and colleagues
- t. Our work empowering community leadership and local autonomy
- u. Our work revitalising local economies and community enterprises
- v. Our work with landscapes and ecosystems, with energy and climate
- w. Our work with government and its institutions, with power and politics
- x. Our work with risk and uncertainty, with vulnerability and dependency
- y. Our work enabling resilience, adaptability and community development
- z. Our work on sense-making, meaning-making and on common purposes