2012-04-24 Book Launch speech by Sir Lloyd Geering

"You who delight me: poems of love and words of spirit and faith" by Bronwyn Angela White (publisher Steele Roberts)
Tuesday 24th April 2012
St Andrew's on The Terrace, Wellington

I'm Lloyd Geering, I'm very privileged to a small part in the launching of this book but must confess, when on holiday in Cromwell, when I received a draft of it for maybe some kind of a recommendation, I asked myself, am I really the person for this?

You see, I see myself as a very prosaic sort of person, ideas are my cup of tea, I'm not a poet and I envy the ability of poets to find the right word to express something higher than ideas, their emotions, and their feelings; and as I thought of this problem, I thought of a problem I had over 30 years ago when I was invited to launch one of New Zealand's novels. I mean, I know nothing about New Zealand literature, but I was invited by the representative of the Oxford University Press to go to Nelson and launch Maurice Gee's *Plum*, and I've been very proud of the fact that I was to be able to do that, because I found—as I learned only a few nights ago on TV—that novel is now regarded as one of the great New Zealand novels, and I had a little part in it.

Well, I hope that Bronwyn's book, perhaps cannot expect to find just quite that reception, but will be enjoyed by its readers, even as I have enjoyed some of the things in it even though I am not exactly a poet as I said.

For example, I greatly enjoyed her poem, "Some ex-lovers", and what particularly attracted me was, it's very like some of the parables of Jesus, you get to the last line: what a surprise you get.

"Overheard on the bus", Bronwyn in that poem has just picked up the flavour of an experience so many of us have as we listen to others speaking in our vicinity.

But what of course took my attention most, in this draft, was her liturgies. After all, no one publishes liturgies. After the first few liturgies were written after the Reformation, that's where it stopped, more or less, and they became more and more dull and traditional. And it's only in this modern world when so many of the traditions of the Christian church are breaking down and are no longer attractive, that people are responding to the occasion, as Bronwyn has done, as we have heard her here at St Andrew's on The Terrace, writing new liturgies, liturgies whose poetry can bring forth from us a response of wonder and mystery and fellowship in our worship.

So “liturgies” is really a new field in many ways, and this book in some respects is breaking new ground by bringing to our attention, and of course, offering to all who might care to use it, material which can in turn inspire others.

You see, religion is more connected with poetry than it is with science or factual knowledge. And the best theologies really reflect that, because poetry somehow rises above our ordinary, prosaic, factual, doctrinal essays and books and can lift our spirits And here, Bronwyn has offered to us some of her creations in this respect that we can share. In fact, [my wife] Shirley tells me she's already picked out something she's going to use at her grandson's wedding next year.

So hopefully, this book will be spread more and more widely in the future. Thank you, Bronwyn.