



chrysalis seed trust



Untitled, anthology cover photo by Stefan Roberts.

Poetry book launch: *With Our Eyes Open*

Book Launch Review by Eric Mould - Poet

One of the first events for the 2002 *Books and Beyond* festival was the launch of *With Our Eyes Open* a poetry anthology of works by 11 Canterbury poets, edited by Kathleen Gallagher and Peb Simmons.

A crowd of about 80 people of all ages filled the Hurst Seager room in the Arts Centre to celebrate the launch of the anthology on the 29 May. Musician Andy Thompson provided original music on entry while we mixed and mingled. [A nice touch was to be handed home baked 'poetry cookies' at the door, fortune cookies containing poems from the book – now that's eating our words!]

11 poets provided the poems for this collection: Jennifer Barrer, Peter Crothall, Kathleen Gallagher, Michael Harlow, Eric Mould, Dianna Neutze, James Norcliffe, John O'Connor, Peb Simmons, Jane Simpson, and John Weir. Photographer Stefan Roberts took the photographs in the book. John Stringer as host gave us an introduction and nine of the poets provided readings of their own work, two by proxy. Andy Thompson entertained us with a selection of his songs midway through the readings. Then a cake was cut by Peb and Kathleen (I still don't know how the book's cover ended up as icing!) which was distributed amongst the crowd.

The closing remarks by Peter Crothall acting in his capacity as one of the founding directors of the Chrysalis Seed Trust even made mention of someone named Jesus Christ. This was appropriate, as *With Our Eyes Open* is a diverse collection that speaks "to different experiences from the understanding of a common faith." Some of the poets are published at an international level, others are just finding their place nationally among their peers.

This collection is the result of an invitation to the contributing poets to give something of their own creation. They didn't have rules to abide by, just a request to share the fruit of personal reflections and to reach out to others with the gift of poetry. Their resulting work is generous and brings delight to the reader, as they find their inner space touched.

With Our Eyes Open began with the vision of the Chrysalis Seed Trust, to explore ways of resourcing the arts community from a Christian perspective. Out of that vision a group of committed poets (The CS Poets, formerly the Urban Astronauts) began to meet regularly. An invitation followed to various poets to work on a collection; to open their eyes through poetry to the joys, beauty, wonder, history, suffering and intimacy of the human event called life; hence the title, With Our Eyes Open. (Ed.).



Half of the contributors to *With Our Eyes Open* (left to right) poets Dr Jane Simpson, Eric Mould, James Norcliffe, John O'Connor and editor Peb Simmons at the launch, 29 May.