

## St Matthew's Anglican Church 269 Thames Street, Morrinsville

"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, in other words. And matter it does. Deeply. Willed change is what I seek and shape. Unwilled changed 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 Story of Ruth*



Weaving mythic story, parable, poetry, visual art and creative ritual, Maree Aldridge facilitates **The Return** workshop. Drawing on the content from her Doctor of Ministry thesis, Maree quests the discovery and restoring of the soul - the wild/true self. She challenges the notions of belonging/homecoming in ways that require blind loyalty and inquires how the regeneration and renewal of community is found in welcoming life-altering liminality.

### Exploring Together;

- An understanding of 'returning'
  - Images of Life in its natural form of continuous change and growth
  - Journey towards "True Self" (truest sense of self)
  - The necessity of witness
  - The 'returning' movements of DESCENT, ROOM TO THRIVE, DISCOVERING THE NEW ORDER OF THINGS
  - The challenging implications and gifts for community and the 'returner'
- The emaciated prodigal (missing) son, distraught Naomi and Ruth on the road of their respective returns add authentic life-giving conversations about the uncertainty and gifts encountered step by staggering step along the way.

Maree has worked as a community artist since 2004. Her public installations and exhibitions invite 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 various participants since 2014. Her Doctor of Ministry thesis (currently being examined) focuses 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.*"

*"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.

*"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.

### Maree Aldridge

Artist, author, poet,  
workshop facilitator  
Adelaide College of Divinity  
Doctor of Ministry Student

