



THE new vine

UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

Blackall Range Uniting Churches

(Kenilworth, Maleny, Montville and Palmwoods)

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

In the last edition, I asked readers to consider sharing “nudges of the Spirit”; “encounters with the holy while on holidays”; or “thin place” experiences where the divine and the holy have met, with you in the middle, at some stage in your life. And, as usual, you have not disappointed. The stories sent in are as interesting and varied as the people who wrote them. I do hope you get something from them that helps you on your life’s journey.

I included a short story of my own, but I have also cheated a little and added a couple of moments from my recent trip that are more than a few sentences long. I hope you will forgive me this bit of self-indulgence and read them anyway, and think about what they may be saying to you as well as what they may have said to me. The resurrected Jesus just keeps bobbing up and is full of surprises.

In a way, we are now entering two new seasons – Winter [in our daily living] and After Pentecost [in our liturgical or church life]. I find this interesting as it juxtaposes two quite different ideas or experiences. Winter is traditionally that season which turns us inwards – both in our homes and in our bodies. The idea of keeping snug and warm is paramount in our thinking. But, After Pentecost can be just the opposite. It encourages us to go out and spread the gospel – it talks about, and considers, all that happened after Easter and after the Holy Spirit was bestowed on the infant church – and that is not something we should keep close, but let it go out into the world.

This presents a challenge. How do we keep these two experiences, or two seasons, in balance? Do we need to? Either way, we’re moving into a time of self-reflection.

We might ask ourselves questions like:

- Where am I most likely to have an encounter with the holy – at home or out spreading the gospel in some way through involvement in the community?
- Have I felt a prompting to do something that will further gospel values within the community?
- If so, can I do this from home or do I need to go out into the town?
- If I’ve felt these urgings, and not done anything about them, why is that?
- Should I take some time out, a retreat even, where I can sit, study, contemplate the Word of God, and listen for direction? Where and how might I do this?
- How have the stories about other people’s encounters affected me? What did I hear them saying to me? Can I recall such experiences in my own life?

As we move into this time of self-reflection, may God make his will for our lives clear to us and may we have the strength and courage to respond positively.

Graham

Please Note: The Editor’s comments throughout this journal are in this font, in black and are enclosed in text boxes (the same as this comment).

INDEX

| | |
|---|--------|
| Editorial Comment | Page 1 |
| Who's Who in the Blackall Range Churches | 2 |
| O'Catherine Says..... | 3 |
| Stop Press | 3 |
| The Spoken Word..... | 4 |
| Karl's Korner – Identity | 5 |
| A Couple of Beautiful Spirit Moments | 6-7 |
| Drifting Down – One of My Holy Encounters..... | 8 |
| After Pentecost!..... | 9 |
| Who Cares? – Looking After our Ministry Agents | 10-11 |
| Prayer for Mother's Day | 12 |
| Moving into the Mystery – Encounters with the Holy | 13-16 |
| Welcome to Dornoch Cathedral – Another of My Holy Encounters..... | 17 |
| A Poem – Jesus Brings God's Love to You | 18 |
| Kids Rids..... | 18 |
| Classified Ads | 19 |
| Blackall Range Churches – Congregational Activities | 20 |

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O'CATHERINE SAYS

The nights and mornings, and now most days, are cold ... winter is upon us! We huddle in doors as much as possible and fires are burning. Right now though in the Northern Hemisphere there are soaring temperatures and people are trying to stay cool. In England on the 4th June they will be rolling and chasing cheese down hills for Cheese Day and then on the 27th June people will be celebrating Sunglasses Day, something that we seem to celebrate every day in Queensland regardless of the temperature. When days might seem dull, cold and dreary here, somewhere something bright, warm and exciting is happening.

This reminds me of verse 3 of the hymn, "The day you gave us, Lord, is ended"

*As o'er each continent and island
The dawn proclaims another day,
The voice of prayer is never silent,
Nor fade the sounds of praise away.*

We are all part of a great circle of prayer and praise to God. While we fall silent, because it's time to rest or because we are having a down day, another voice another life picks up the song and carries us through. It is important to be praying for each other.

In July our sermon theme across all congregations will be prayer. There are many aspects to prayer but the central thought is where we commune with God in an intentional and meaningful way. As part of this series we will be holding a Healing Service 4:00pm on Sunday 8th July at Maleny. This will be an opportunity to receive a physical, emotional or spiritual healing led by Rev Costa Stathakis (Glasshouse Country Uniting Church) who has had many years of leading these services.

Let us be expectant in seeing and receiving the power of God's love in these coming weeks and months, even when it is cold and perhaps dreary.

God bless,

Rev Catherine Solomon

STOP PRESS

We have been enjoying sightseeing all over London, but before we came we both hoped we might be able to get to Holy Trinity Brompton to worship on our only Sunday here. That is the Church from which the Alpha course originates. When we got our bearings we realised we were only a 10 minute bus ride away. We turned up this morning and the first person we met was a Spirit filled African lady, Judith, who insisted we sit with her, marched us down to the front row and really made us feel so welcome. She had only returned back home in London from Nairobi yesterday and her enthusiasm was infectious. The Church was packed to the rafters, literally, as there is an upper gallery; Nicky Gumbel, whom the Alpha participants would remember, led the earlier part of the Service; Toby, who was co-presenter in the Alpha series of teaching dvds, preached on Pentecost and every aspect of the Service was Spirit led and inspirational. We were very much aware of God's presence in every aspect! At the conclusion, Judith introduced us to one of the Pastors and then just disappeared before we could thank her for looking after us so lovingly. We searched everywhere for her unsuccessfully and accepted that she had been our Guardian Angel for this experience which has been enough to make the whole trip worthwhile. We were gathered together with people from numerous nationalities worshipping and praising God and the presence of the Holy Spirit was powerfully obvious as on the day of Pentecost! A precious God moment!!

[Ray and Bev James]

Karin and Ray Ellemor have a good friend who writes poetry and shares it with anyone interested. He used to write and speak on local ABC radio until very recently – now he does it simply for pleasure. At Easter, he shared this poem, and for those who have not seen/heard it, I thought it well worth repeating and Harry Donnelly was pleased to share it.

Thank you Harry.

THE SPOKEN WORD

*In days of old a bell would toll,
and folk would gather 'round.
A man would stand with bell in hand,
'til there be not a sound.*

*Then, speak the news in public view,
of what had happened...where.
With gazed intent each word was spent
on those who gathered there.*

*The crowd would then disperse again,
with knowledge of the day.
Of happenings and many things,
of news from far away.*

*'Til once there came — a gentle frame,
a man of spirit...high.
Who touched the crowd with words...he vowed,
had come from God's own sky.*

*It angered some that he should come,
and share his spoken word.
As anger rose the man still chose
to speak...but wasn't heard.*

*How dare he be for all to see,
a stranger...here to speak.
And tell of things like ancient springs,
which saved the dying weak.*

*And how — with love just like a dove,
the world could glide on free.
If each would share
God's own sweet air, how simple life could be.*

*But no...not here an angry cheer,
the frenzied crowd moved in.
They nailed the man — each caring hand,
to a cross for those who sin.*

*Then raised it high so he would die,
for one and all to see.
Through eyes of those who simply chose,
to ignore his loving plea.*

*As notice to all strangers who
have tales of love to share.
This spoken word would not be heard,
by those who gathered there.*

*Now — what we find 'cross Father Time,
not much has changed at all.
So sad but true, life through and through,
rejects loves' pleading call.*

*And so it will through time...until,
man sees his evil ways.
Replace his need for wretched greed,
with peaceful caring days.*

*But 'til that time through love sublime,
if each could spread one word.
One man, one day, had tried to say,
love finally...may be heard.*

[Harry Donnelly]

KARL'S KORNER

Identity

We are told that these days there is a lot of "identity politics" going on. But what is meant by that? What is this identity they are talking about? How do you define your identity?

I recently watched a program called "Muslims like us" on the SBS where a group of Muslim folk share a house and explore their differences. One woman dressed all the time in a niqab, was very distressed about the liberal attitudes of the other participants and expressed heart-felt sorrow at what she saw as their departure from what she felt were the standards and requirements of the Koran.

In similar vein, an Afghani lad featured in Ron Suskind's book "*The Way of the World*" who is sent on a scholarship to the U.S.A. finds himself torn between the standards inculcated in him as a child and his feelings for a young American woman who happens to be a single mother. Suskind also quotes from "*The Soul of Black Folks*" by W.E. Dubois concerning Afro-americans "his twoness - an American, a Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body" noting that "People have both searched for self-definition and had it imposed on them". And we see the same in the expressions and expectations of our indigenous peoples, our feminists, and others who seemingly define themselves in terms of some earthly characteristic.

So, are we defined by these characteristics over which, in many ways, we had no control? Are we saying we are who we are and so no one can blame us for acting in ways prescribed by our identity?

In John chapter 3 Jesus says that we need to be born again in order to see the kingdom of God and poor old Nicodemus asks the obvious "How?" question.

What do you think Jesus meant?

Was He not asking us to put on a new identity – neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, etc?

And, if so, can we really use the word "Christian" as an adjective instead of a noun?

A COUPLE OF BEAUTIFUL SPIRIT MOMENTS

This edition of *The New Vine* has an emphasis on moments in time touched by the Holy Spirit in some way. One such incident happened for me when I opened an envelope recently. It was an ordinary, every day thing to be doing, but it turned out to be nothing of the sort. I was struck very forcefully by the remarkable image on the cover of *With Love to the World* – a daily Bible reading guide based on the Revised Common Lectionary as adapted for use in the Uniting Church in Australia. For me, also being in the autumn years of my life, I was absolutely captivated by this beautiful photo.

But there was more to come - the photographer had also written a reflection inside which touched, even summed up, our theme. It spoke to me very clearly about where I was in my life.

I simply had to share both the image and the poem with those who do not use this great little resource on a daily basis – so, I sought, and was given, permission to share both with you. I wonder how they speak to you? What do you hear? What do you feel?



Leaves by Karel Reus

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The image formed the cover of *With Love to the World*, Vol. 15, No. 7.

(Continued next page)

And then the reflection followed:

Leaves from the Book of Life

*I found them on the lawn, cast down;
transformed by autumn's alchemy
and boasting new colours
in their death.*

*These leaves unnoticed
when dull green on the branch,
were pregnant with glory.*

*With uncharacteristic reverence
I lifted them—and I was lifted too
and wondered that this glory
could only be revealed in death.
Photographically I translated this deep truth
into a language of ones and zeros
that it may be proclaimed.*

*On my lawn that day
The Spirit spoke
in no uncertain terms.
In my autumnal years,
(until it's my turn on the lawn)
I will seek the meaning of my life
in God's small wonders.*

[Karel Reus]

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The Reflection appeared in *With Love to the World*, Vol. 15, No. 7.

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With Love to the World is an Australian publication produced by the Uniting Church and it uses Australian writers, and a few overseas writers who have served in the UCA at some time, who usually reflect on the readings over a two week period before changing to someone quite different. Each day has a reading, a reflection on that scripture, a thought provoking question, reference to appropriate hymns, identification of important people of faith, and a daily prayer. In fact, it is a comprehensive basis for daily devotions that I find very helpful and challenging. Perhaps you'd like to give it a try. If so, please see our very first "Classified ads" section for all the information you'll need.



DRIFTING DOWN

One of My Holy Encounters

During my recent holiday, I visited the Scottish Poetry Library in Edinburgh. It was a fascinating place – a whole library devoted solely to poetry. I couldn't help myself, and, despite return baggage weight limits, I bought a few books of verse.

I have delved into one small anthology of Scottish poetry in particular – *Whatever the Sea – Scottish poems for growing older* edited by Lizzie MacGregor. [It is available from me for loan].

The very first entry caught, and held, my attention so I have reproduced it below.

*That is a strange day
when you wake to discover
age has drifted down
imperceptibly, like dust,
and you're totally covered.*

[Alan Hill]

That is exactly how I feel about my ageing but could never have expressed it so eloquently.

I sat with this verse for a while and it started to say things to me.

I realized, we “wake to discover”, doesn't mean we have to literally be asleep to awaken – our “eyes” can open at any stage to any thing. There will be moments of enlightenment at any time, quite often totally unexpectedly, where we become aware of something for the first time or we see things in a new or different way.

I wondered, too, what else may drift down and settle on us till we are totally covered and we don't always realize it.

I thought of a mother's love [but that doesn't really fit as it is there from the beginning in full measure] - and then my thoughts turned to the love of another in our lives. Love isn't always an “at first sight” thing – it settles and grows over time until we are “totally covered”.

As so often happens after moments of deeper experience, a negative thought came to me – “Complacency and depression fit that bill too, don't they?”

They, too, can settle, grow and cover us.

Then it occurred to me to ask – “Could this relate to our faith in Jesus Christ?”

I know our experiences vary greatly, and for many of us our accepting Jesus as Savior was an immediate, and even surprising, act. But does faith stop there? Or, does it somehow, like dust and ageing, become a whole lot more embracing over time as it settles?

What happens when we substitute “faith” for “age” in the little poem?

Graham



AFTER PENTECOST!

Recently, we celebrated Pentecost together – all three Blackall Range Uniting Churches together – a creative, joyous and special time.

Pentecost, or Whitsunday as it is known in some European countries, is the holy day on which we commemorate the coming of the Holy Spirit on the early followers of Jesus as described in Acts 2. After Jesus' death and resurrection, there were followers of Jesus, but no movement that could be meaningfully called "the church". From an historical point of view, then, Pentecost is the day on which the church was started and is therefore celebrated by many Christians as the church's birthday.

In some countries it is seen as just slightly less important than Christmas and Easter and the Monday following is a public holiday – but not in Australia.

And now we enter a new church season – so very imaginatively called in The Revised Common Lectionary – AFTER PENTECOST. It lasts for over twenty weeks right up until we encounter Advent again. This season is described in the UCA lectionary as follows:

A period of time that varies in length depending on whether Easter is early or late. In this period, the Church recalls its faith in the Holy Trinity. It seeks to relate its faith as a people of God to Christ's mission in the world. It commences with Trinity Sunday and concludes with the feast of Christ the King.

'After Pentecost' is usually found in Protestant churches, while the season is called 'Ordinary Time' in the Catholic church. Whatever the season is called, it shares a common goal – it is the period when, after concentrating on the major pillars of our faith – Christ's birth, death and resurrection – we have the chance to reflect more deeply on the life of Jesus and what it means to follow him, week in and week out.

"A bit at a time, we begin to feel the great magnet of the liturgical year draw us more and more into the one clear message: in the liturgical year we live the life of Jesus day after day until finally one day it becomes our own... we ourselves become players in the great drama of bringing the reign of God to the turmoil of the world."

[Joan Chittister]

May that be our experience.

Graham

KIDS' RIDS

What is a wok?

Something you throw at a wabbit.

How do you keep an idiot in suspense?

I'll tell you next week.

Why do vampires bite their computers?

Because they like getting on to the interneck.

Why do white sheep eat much more than black sheep?

Because there are more of them.

WHO CARES?

Looking After our Ministry Agents

An item in *Our Common Life* caught my eye and I thought there might be value in following it up, so I went and had a discussion with Rev Catherine. What follows is a record of that meeting.

Editor: *Our Common Life* told us one day that Sunday 22 April was your 'rostered Sunday off'. What's that all about?

Minister: I am allowed one Sunday each quarter free from preaching duties and this arrangement is known in the church as a 'rostered Sunday off.' It is not an extra holiday but an opportunity for me to re-charge my batteries by taking in, rather than always giving out. It allows me to worship at one of our three congregations or to go to some other place altogether and just be part of the congregation and perhaps experience something quite different. The image is one of my being fed in a way.

Editor: Is this arrangement something special for ministers in their early years of ministry, or does it apply to all ministers?

Minister: The answer is 'no' to both questions. It is not a given which is part of the Terms of Settlement following Placement processes. It is something individual ministers negotiate with their Church Council – but on the Blackall Range I had to negotiate with the Joint Management Committee that has representatives from all three congregations.

Editor: That's interesting as my memory tells me that in New South Wales Synod, it is a given, and not negotiable at all. Congregations are not given a choice. I think that's a measure of how important and necessary they feel it is for all ministers. Have you felt the need for this 'Sunday off'?

Minister: Oh Yes! But it does depend on the time of year – that is, which quarter we're in. This year, two major church seasons came one on top of the other very quickly – Easter was very soon after Christmas – and both require very concentrated efforts, especially in worship, and that is really testing. I was quite tired as a result, and even though I had a holiday in the middle of it, that had little positive effect because I came back into three Annual General meetings as well a range of other pastoral issues as well.

Editor: Are you able and/or willing to share some of the other challenges of ministry that you feel support the need for this sort of break?

Minister: Yes, and they come at different levels. One would be the demands that arise from having to mediate, I think that's an appropriate word, where there are difficulties in a range of serious pastoral relations including inter-personal relationships. People, in a variety of situations, can be very difficult at times and it leaves me wondering about what is really going on for them. Another is the stress that arises from having to work across three congregations, all of which are very different in just about every way you can imagine – they have different needs; they make different demands on the minister; the communities they serve vary greatly; their approach to mission, and their missions themselves, are vastly different – and switching from one to another for the minister is very taxing and tiring.

Editor: What have you found most difficult in your transition from lay person to Minister of the Word?

Minister: Before entering the ministry, I was a piano teacher – I was my own boss – and so I was used to working alone, making my own decisions and solving my own problems. Ministry is often quite the opposite of this. I have to remember that I am a member of the body of Christ, and as such part of a number of teams and groups, and I have always to consult and often negotiate my way through things. That is both challenging and frustrating at times – but hopefully I am getting there. In this I am greatly encouraged by the Uniting Church’s ethos that we are a church that believes in “the priesthood of all believers”. That tells me we are all ministers – I just happen to have been ordained into a different place – not a higher place – a different place. My ordination simply sets me aside to serve and equip the people of God wherever I am placed. So, I don’t have to solve every issue; we’re all in this together; we’re responsible for supporting each other and I find that very encouraging.

Editor: Do you have a vivid memory of what might have been your very worst “day at the office?”

Minister: Oh yes I do. It was a Monday. We had experienced really uplifting and life-giving worship on Sunday and I was on a bit of a high and Monday really went pear shaped on me. Problems arose on just about every front – there was a death, there were people who wanted me to sort out some of their private and personal issues; and much more. Then at about 8.30 pm that night, after dinner, the phone rang yet again and I simply didn’t have the strength or will to answer it. I said to myself – “I can’t do this any more”. So I left it to the answering machine and dealt with it the next day, by which time some of the angst had gone from the situation anyway.

Editor: So, this Sunday off is one way the church tries to get parishioners to look after our ministers. Are there any others?

Minister: There are two levels of answer to this. One is what the Synod/Presbytery does and the other is what the congregations might do.

The Presbytery runs a ministers’ retreat each year over a couple of days. It will be in September this year. These retreats are usually quiet reflective times. And then there is a Synod requirement that each minister be allowed two weeks study leave each year. This allows us to pursue something that we deem important to our ministry and builds us up for the tasks we perform. Each minister is also placed under supervision that keeps track of our approach to ministry and any issues we might be facing, by meeting regularly with a supervisor from outside the local area. In addition to this, I have a spiritual director with whom I meet to monitor my spiritual life, growth, issues and so on and where I can face up to any challenges that I am experiencing in ministry that impact on my walk with God.

Editor: That covers the first part of your answer very well. Do you have any advice to congregation members as to how we might also care for you? How can we contribute to your ministerial good health – and, I guess, your longevity as a minister?

Minister: I guess, with all that I’ve said just now, I would simply hope that everyone might appreciate that it is as important for me, as it is for them, to be fed spiritually. More specifically, I’d like to point to what I might call “the generational factor”. I’m part of a different generation from most of parishioners and this can create tensions. There are times when our expectations of what a minister should do, are quite different. I am trying very hard to learn what is expected of me and I would hope that our people try to understand where my giftings lie. I’d hope also that we might all be open to understanding the others’ position. This is particularly important in visitation. There are those who see the minister’s role as home visiting regularly, yet my reading of what can reasonably be expected is that I visit when needed. I simply cannot be all things to all people and I would ask for understanding of this by the congregations.

Editor: Thank you Catherine for your openness and directness – that certainly gives us something to think about.

PRAYER FOR MOTHERS' DAY

I'm cheating again! Yet another special Scottish moment. I knew, when I went to church at Strathly Church of Scotland, that I was to take worship on Mothers' Day when I got home – and it was Mothers' Day there. The minister used this prayer and I sought, and received, his permission to use it in the Maleny service. It touched so many aspects of family relationships that I thought it worth repeating here. And I'd like to suggest that we all take a quiet moment to read it closely, think about what it says, pray over it, go over it again, and wonder what we might add to it from our own experience. Perhaps some would like to write their own prayer devoted to mothers and share it with me for publication? **I'm game if you are!**

Wonderful God. We come before you today because you created us. You gave us life and you sustain all things. We praise you, for without you, we would not be. And on this Mothers' Day, O God, we also give thanks for your gift of motherly love, both gentle and fierce, both strong and humble, both kind and true.

Where we have been so blessed, we offer you our grateful praise for you have provided loving hands that have worked so hard in rearing us, cared enough to correct us, and blessed us in ways we cannot have fully known as children.

Nurturing God, we give thanks for those who enrich our lives by their presence, who teach us about your abundant love and who encourage us to journey in faith.

Yet we know that relationships can be fragile and so we pray for compassion for every mother who has unknowingly caused pain and suffering. Lifting to you all mothers, and all children, so imperfect, who have been wounded by this world.

We bless our mothers this day, no matter what they have done or left undone. We do this because we believe in your love, and we believe that you love every mother, good or bad; we stand together with all mothers in solidarity, for we are all in need of your grace.

Where we have failed because we did not know better, help us to forgive ourselves.

Where we have seen your face in any woman who has been to us a mother, we give you thanks for they have blessed us.

We lift to you the heart of every mother across the world who has had to watch her child die of hunger, every mother who has been a victim of abuse, every mother who stands in protest against a world that massacres her children and renames them "collateral damage".

We lift to you the name of every mother who has loved and lost.

Equally Lord we pray for all those who patiently cared for us and taught us to walk and talk. Who read to us and made us laugh when we were sad. For no one delighted in our successes more; and no one could comfort us better in our failures.

Please bless our mothers, Lord, and comfort them. Help their loving hearts to continue to love and give to others. Strengthen them when they are down and give them hope when they are discouraged.

Lord, on this Mothers' Day, bless all mothers, comfort them if needed, but let them all feel your graciousness today.

**We ask you this, in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour
AMEN**



MOVING INTO THE MYSTERY

Encounters with the Holy

Back in our Autumn edition we were asked to write about our experiences of 'Thin Places' – times when the human and divine have met in our lives – or 'encounters with the holy on holidays'. As they were starting to come in, one of the daily readings from *Sojourners* had this to say:

Verse of the Day: *Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty? It is higher than heaven—what can you do? Deeper than Sheol—what can you know?*
- Job 11:7-8

Thought of the Day: *The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of true art and true science. Whoever does not know it and can no longer wonder, no longer marvel, is as good as dead, and his eyes are dimmed.*
- Albert Einstein

Prayer of the Day: *May the Holy Spirit continue to guide us into the mystery of God, inspiring our teachings, beliefs, and definitions to remain authentic pathways into this mystery.*

I thought this fitted very well with what we were trying to achieve. Why not think about it while we read the stories that follow.

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A moment in religious history: We were in a remote area of Kangaroo Island and had come across a small, unkempt cemetery. Among the graves was one that had obviously been kept apart from the rest. A small inscription said that it belonged to an unbaptized girl child, and therefore could not be included with the others. A coldness settled on our hearts as we contemplated this inhumane action, done because of a faulty view of both theology and the compassion of Jesus. Overcome for a moment, we bowed our heads, and without doubting my ordination, and using the little one's name, I baptized her in the threefold name, sure that God's grace, and Jesus' compassion, had found her there and welcomed her home.

[Bob Philpott]

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An encounter with the holy while holidaying: In 1952, I went as a student to an Australian Student Christian Movement conference. Probably nearly 200 of us. There were worship, talks and discussion groups each day and plenty of fun and visits to Canberra's special sights. There was a leader there called D. T. Niles. I was tremendously impressed because he spent each morning in private prayer and study, and then spoke to us in the afternoons. He seemed to me, as a humble student, to be really living out his Christian beliefs. Two hymns in our Australian "Together in Song" were written by him. He wasn't a white Englishman or Australian but a dusky Sri Lankan.

Hymn 164

*The great love of God
 is revealed in the Son
 who came to this earth
 to redeem everyone.*

Also

Hymn 465

*Father in heaven
 Grant to your children
 Mercy and blessing*

[From a grateful Moyra Jones]

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There have been times in my life when I have been blessed to have felt close to God, mostly when giving thanks for the beauty of creation, both here and overseas. But nowhere have I experienced "a thin place" as much as at times when walking in Kings Lane just before sunset, when the birds appear to put on a display and the countryside looks so beautiful and peaceful. This is where I experience great joy in my heart and the assurance of God's love.

[Muriel Wilson]

I was working on Murray Island in the Torres Strait when I became involved with the death of a delightful elder palliative care lady, who my Island co-worker and I had visited a number of times before she finally passed near midnight, as she deserved all the care and respect we could give her. What I am going to share happened twice and very strongly on both occasions - once when I was addressing the extended family on the verandah, explaining the process of her current grave condition, what could be expected, answering questions; and secondly in her small bedroom where she was surrounded by loving women as she was dying. The intense warmth down my body, and the goose bumps down my right arm, gave me the strong sense that God and his angels were saying "That's exactly the right words to say". On the way back to the car, I mentioned these spiritual sensations to my co-worker and he said he felt them too. So, I wondered, did those to whom we were ministering feel them too? The next morning I awoke with the tune "Be still for the presence of the Lord is moving in this place". [Helen Walker]

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There was a baptism service at our church where six people were going to be baptised. Each person shared with the congregation how God had touched their lives and why they decided to be baptised. Suddenly Jina shook my hand and asked 'Can you see an eagle there?' I said 'No'. She said there was an eagle flying above those people who were being baptised. I asked her to keep telling me what was going on. An eagle came in her vision when the first person started sharing her faith in Christ Jesus and stayed there flying over them until the baptism service had finished.

Then the eagle flew away carrying two dark bags in his claws. Jina asked the Holy Spirit, 'What were those two bags the eagle carried away?' He said, 'It was their sin and death.' Then we understood that physical acts of faith have everlasting spiritual impact and rewards. That was a great revelation for us of how important it is to obey His word. [Joseph and Jina]

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I was talking to the owner of a garage in rural Scotland. He was closer to age 70 than 60. We got to discussing travel. He told me how, in the last few years, he'd travelled by plane for the first time to see relatives in the USA. I thought that was great – but it was not as great, in my view, as what followed. He told me that on those trips he had learnt to read books for the first time. A man, well in to his sixties, had learnt to read books. His world has opened up, and this, for me, at a time when I was deep into Lenten studies and reflections. So I wondered about new life in a different way. What it must be for him to see the world through different eyes. Resurrection perhaps? [Graham Dempster]

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A moment of Grace - that's all it took for me to experience the peace of God which passeth all knowledge and understanding. For I was so worried for my Dad, as my dear mother had died suddenly leaving him living alone in Sydney. I lived in Brisbane, at the time, and had been praying to God to show me how I could care for him. I was at my work when suddenly a calmness overcame me - I was oblivious to my surroundings just aware of this beautiful feeling which filled my whole being and I am convinced God spoke to me in the moment saying all will be well, trust me and I did and my Dad survived another 15 years to love and serve his Lord. [Margaret Pow]

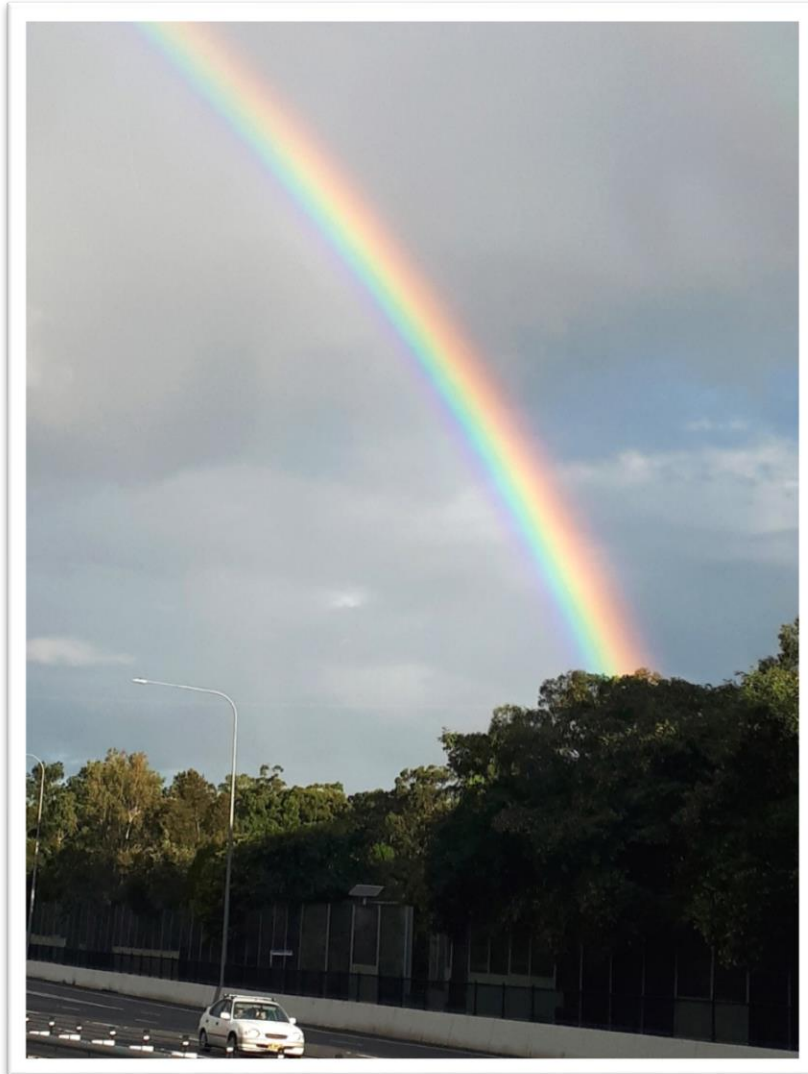
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We were on a GLOBUS "Celtic Highlights" trip, tracing historic sites in Scotland, Wales and Ireland. Just out of Sligo, in Southern Ireland but close the border of Northern Ireland, we spent time at a serene spot. It was the Tobernalt Holy Well, in a grotto in a beautiful, natural setting. In this hidden sanctuary Catholic priests used to SAFELY celebrate Mass. There was an utterly peaceful atmosphere. We immediately soaked up the significance of this "awe inspiring" place and were surprised and delighted how all of the bus crowd, quite a mixture of jovial tourists, caught this atmosphere and were silent and respectful. [Brian and Barbara Richards]

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At the Maleny wood show I met Sam, a gentleman from New Guinea who had been told to seek me out. Of Asian descent, he has spent the past 21 years helping Papuans, down on their luck, to find a vocation in life and become productive citizens. He had come, as chairman of the Human Development Institute, specifically to find someone who could help with the training of inmates of the Bomana Correctional Centre to produce craft items that would allow them to support themselves, when they left the institution. I told him I might be able to help by collecting tools he could use – but that was all. [Please see the Classified Ads section] Just then, another member of the Woodies who had recently joined, appeared, and off they went for a coffee. It transpires he may be able to go up the PNG and be involved in some actual training sessions. Sam was very happy with the outcome of his visit and I asked myself, is this just all coincidence? [Ray Ellemor]

Recently, my son Josh and I were driving back to his place on a sunny day after my first visit to Belinda in the Mater Mothers. She had unexpectedly been sent straight from her doctor's appointment to hospital at the 26 weeks scan, as it was looking like her body was getting ready to give birth to the triplets! This was a worrying time, but as we drove, suddenly a vivid rainbow the most vivid I have seen for some time.....appeared in front of us. Firstly just to the right, and then in an arc across the whole sky so that it was too big to take in without turning one's head. "God's promise" were the words that came to me. What comfort a peace! PS. She has now passed 29 weeks!



[Sue Callaghan]

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On Saturday 12th May I was blessed to attend a conference for women, which is held annually at suncoast Christian college, Woombye. "Live, Love, Laugh" is the inspiration of the wife of the Anglican Priest at Nambour and is run by a committee of women from various denominations on the coast. It has been held for the past 9 years & attracts a large number of women of all ages & denominations. The theme for this year was being trail blazers, so a lovely time of worship was followed by inspiring guest speakers who are trail blazers in their own right - each with amazing stories to tell of their lives lived in partnership with God - ladies who have stepped out in faith to share God's love and grace with women who need encouragement & friendship. We enjoyed a delicious morning tea, lunch, and received a special gift.

Catherine has encouraged us to think about who we are and I came home from the conference with a fresh understanding of the life that God desires for each of us to live. We are to be conduits of His love - knowing how deeply He loves us & allowing that love to pass through us to others.

I found the whole experience inspiring & encouraging - listening to young women speak so passionately about things God has called them to do is very up-lifting and to share the day with my 21 year old grand daughter made the day even more special.

[Bev Jones]

My husband Peter and I always took our children on lots of camping holidays. We have many happy memories of these times away, usually in National Parks and this memory I would like to share with you. One time we were in the Warrumbungle National Park outside Coonabarrabran NSW and we decided to take a walk to the Grand High Tops – a part of the park that overlooks absolutely everything – the park, Siding Springs Observatory, and surrounding farm land. When we finally reached the summit and sat down to eat our fruit and fruit cake we saw the most amazing thing.

Two eagles were soaring on the air currents then all of a sudden one suddenly dropped and flew to the side and an eaglet was left there flapping like crazy but all the time gradually dropping closer to the ground. The parent after a little while swooped in and under its little one and soared once more up on the currents only to repeat the whole spectacle once again. This happened about 3 times – we sat transfixed. So before we left to walk back down to our camp I said that I felt what we had seen was God's amazing creation – the vista set out below us and the wonderful display of an eagle teaching its chick to learn how to fly, to soar.

This was many years ago but my memory of what we saw is as fresh as if it happened yesterday.

[*Merilyn Milton*]

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I came here, 12,000 miles, to see the trees of Queensland and our Brisbane family loves the National Parks of Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. We walked the high tracks and slept in a tent dad made. We sang school songs and choruses from church – three of us were at school and one riding on dad's back on the way up. The paths were steep but we kept going.

[*Mabel Denham*]

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It was a normal day of teaching 'listening' in Brisbane way back in 2006! I had spent the day happily tutoring my delightful adult students the art of listening - being quiet, tuning in, asking questions to learn more about what was being communicated. A complex matter, loved it! Time to go home, to drive to Byron Bay.

My dear kindly Elder in charge interrupted my packing up, "Would you like to go to a conference on the way home? It is a Christian Psychologists Conference at Tweed Heads, at Twin Towers. It is on your way home, isn't it?"

"Well yes", I said, "but I'm tired, do I have to go?"

"No, but you would be doing us a favour representing ACAP [Australian College of Applied Psychology] and I would appreciate it."

Well, I left Brisbane undecided and tired - looking forward to some quiet personal space. While driving, I was pondering on listening. An hour or so later, after listening to the Angels, the Spirit, God whoever? as I drove, trying hard to listen, I found my car turning into the Twin Towers Convention Centre at Tweed Heads. Even though I had been trying to listen, it almost seemed the car knew what I had to do! Maybe the car had been listening. A nudge from the Spirit indeed! I parked, walked into the conference of Christian Psychologists and found myself listening to Gary McFarlane. I can't remember the content but sure do remember the process! He was saying 'I don't know whether to laugh or pray' I saw a light around his head.

Afterwards, I met some very interesting women; had a chat and drink; then moved into the main room and a colleague from ACAP moved a chair for me to sit on; and I found myself seated next to this Gary who had been speaking. What followed was easy, delightful conversation; sharing ideas; recognition of values of heart felt spiritual concerns, including a reluctance to join the retirement world!

Thanks be to God, one thing led to another, and we are still together twelve years on, sharing the adventure of life! Currently that is in Maleny. Blessings.

[*Jann Porter*]

A POEM

It is interesting to look back from time to time to see where you've been and what you may have done somewhere in the past. I did this recently with my Erowal files and found that, in February 2013, I submitted an article to Faith for publishing in *The Vine* which she complied at the time. It follows:

During my short reflection on John 1: 35 - 42 during a recent service at Erowal, I challenged those present to think about Jesus invitation to "Come and see" and to then write a poem about their thoughts. The next week I was presented with the following:

Jesus Brings God's Love to You *

*Come look, come see, just walk with me,
And I will show you many a way
To live a life of joy each day,
By trust in God who sent me here
To tell you of a love so dear,
With open arms to welcome you
And take away your every fear,
While Angels sing on high above
To tell you of this precious love,
It's there for all to feel and see
If you just come and walk with me.*

Sylvia Johnson, January, 2011
* Shared with permission

It brought a lump to my throat when I looked at it. Why, I wondered?

There were many reasons including:

- *It reaffirmed my belief that within each one of us, God's spark of creativity lies waiting to be ignited;*
- *It reflects, quite simply, a deep statement of faith; and*
- *It shows that God's word speaks to people in a variety of ways*

The fact that the poem was written by someone over ninety years old was a bonus.

The whole episode made me wonder what our congregations might produce if we all tried to do the same sort of thing.

Five years on, things have changed somewhat – I am no longer a Chaplain at Erowal and SYLVIA has passed from this life to another – but my basic belief in our innate Creativity has not dwindled at all. If anything, it has increased.

And I still wonder what our congregations might produce if we tried to reflect on scripture in a way that allowed the Spirit to talk to us in poetic terms.

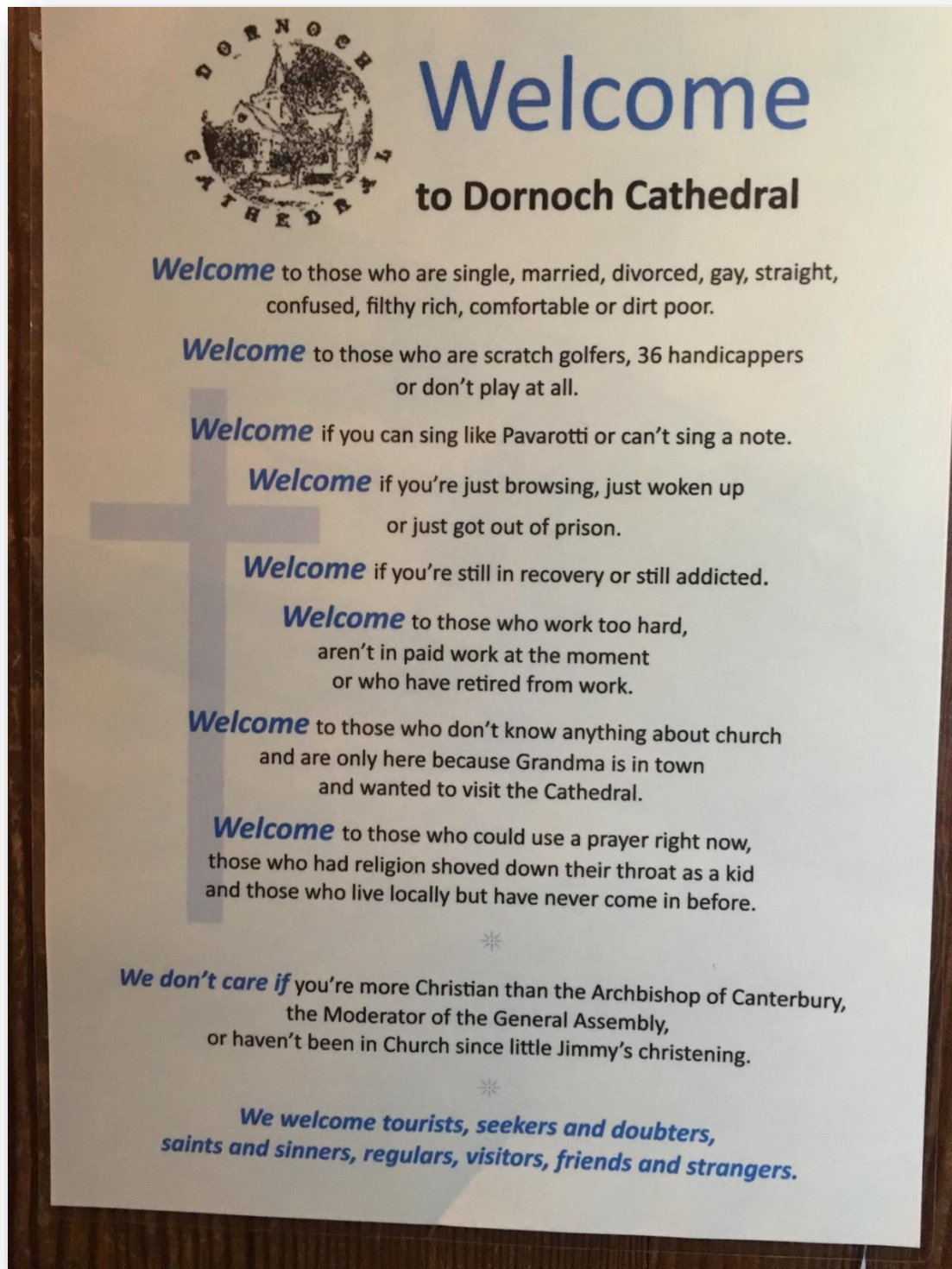
If we could just let go, and have a go.

You write, and I promise to print.

WELCOME TO DORNOCH CATHEDRAL

Another of My Holy Encounters

On the way to Edinburgh airport, we stopped at the village of Dornoch for lunch. A village of some 1200 people that boasts a top class golf course [5th best course outside the USA in 2005] and a cathedral. The welcome sign, on the fences surrounding the cathedral, and on the doors, took me by surprise – it was so uncathedral like and folksy. I sensed Jesus would have stopped there.



Interestingly, on 19 May, 2018 the cathedral minister Rev Susan Brown was installed as Moderator of the Church of Scotland.

CLASSIFIED ADS

TOOLS

**HAND TOOLS OR POWER TOOLS FOR WOOD OR METAL WORKING
FOR USE AT BOMANA CORRECTIONAL CENTRE, P.N.G.**

**Do you have any old, serviceable tools suitable for wood or metal working
that you no longer use?**

**They would be greatly appreciated to help train young men in a PNG
correctional centre.**

**If you have such items, please ring Ray Ellemor [5494 3379] who will
arrange to pick them up.**

Matthew 25: 31 – 46

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Luke 24: 25

BLACKALL RANGE CHURCHES – CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES

MALENY

Sundays

9.45 am Worship Service held weekly; Holy Communion 1st Sunday of month
4.30 pm Worship Service with focus on young people, all ages welcome

Tuesdays

7 am – 8 am Silent Prayer: weekly, Moyra Jones 5494 2661
9 am – 3 pm Church Office Open: weekly, 9.00am to 3.00pm, 5429 6995
..... Band of Brothers: 1st and 3rd Tuesdays, time and venue vary,
Roger Smith 5494 3784

Wednesdays

8.30 am Christian Meditation: weekly, Rev Graham Dempster 5494 2594

Thursdays

9 am – 3 pm Church Office Open: weekly, 9.00am to 3.00pm, 5429 6995
9.30 am Ladies Friendship Group: 3rd Thursday of month, Nancy Baker 5494 2961
 or Marnie McCallum 5499 9807
10.00 am Ladies' R&R Book Club: 1st Thursday of month, Jocelyn Brooker 5494 3693
10.00 am Ladies' MUCR Book Club: 1st Thursday of month, Karin Ellemor 5494 3379

Fridays

1.30 pm Know Your Bible Group (KYB): weekly, Dorothy Tietze 5494 2486
6.30-8.30 pm Year 6 Youth Group P1

Saturdays

9.00 am Prayer Meeting: 2nd Saturday of month, Ray Jones 0419 723 698

Other Meetings

Pastoral Care Quarterly in February, May, August and November,
Dorothy Tietze 5494 2486

Church Council Monthly, Marilyn Milton 5435 2595

Home Groups: For details, please phone Stuart and Jan Craig 5494 2990

MONTVILLE

Daily

10 am – 3 pm Reflection Gallery. Current Theme: Quiet Places by Rev Graham Warne

Sundays

8.15 am Worship Service held weekly; Holy Communion 2nd Sunday of month

Tuesdays

9.00 am "Know Your Bible" at Flaxton, Margot Stuart, 5476 3777

Bible studies and Market Days are conducted throughout the year.
Details are given in the Church Notices.

PALMWOODS

Sundays

10.00 am English Worship Service held weekly
12 00 pm Tongan Worship Service held weekly
10.00 am Combined Service held on 2nd Sunday of the month with Holy Communion
6.00 pm Dinner and chat fortnightly, Pastor Kay Nixon 5445 9035