



THE new vine

UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

Blackall Range Uniting Churches

(Kenilworth, Maleny, Montville and Palmwoods)

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

Hello everyone

How time flies! Lent and Easter have been and gone for 2022, and even Pentecost has passed.

We look forward to what comes next.

But is this assumption about their passing, correct?

The actual church celebrations have passed and are now part of history, but surely the impact of all three church seasons stays with us and, in this way, they all live on.

It was this thought I was hoping we would probe in our musings in this edition of *The New Vine*.

I had hoped that we would receive bits and pieces that spoke of previous experiences that are still with us, as well as our current experiences that hopefully will stay with us.

I'll leave it to readers to decide if those hopes were fulfilled.

However, as you read on, can I suggest you do it with an open mind that asks how your Lent/Easter may relate to what others have shared. Are they the same, similar, or different?

Then read the story of the men walking to Emmaus [Luke 24: 13 – 35] and compare your own story to theirs.

- They walked along the road wondering – The Risen Jesus came to them
- They were confused, sad and wondering – The Risen Jesus relieved their distress
- They invited him in – The Risen Jesus listened and revealed himself to them
- They went back to tell the others – The Risen Jesus was with them even though they couldn't see him

Can we relate to that story?

Let's all ask ourselves, where is the Risen Christ in my life right now?

Peace and blessings

Graham

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LIENA'S LINES

**RHYTHM OF RESURRECTION
(1 Corinthians 15)**

Reflecting on this past Easter, I have come to realise that the resurrection in our own lives is not always instantaneous. Somehow, with Jesus being resurrected on the Sunday, I have come to think the resurrection is instantaneous and so too, that our own resurrection and revival, and that of the church's, should be instantaneous. These thoughts have fed my expectations: I, and perhaps others, expect revival in the church to be instantaneous for all, or at least the majority of us: for members to attend prayer meetings; for members to invite others to church; for members to commit themselves; for members to step-forward into leadership positions or onto roster duties. And when that does not happen, we are disappointed.

Yet, reflecting on the resurrection, we find that the recognition of the Risen Christ, and hence of the resurrection, was gradual by the disciples and others. Not instantaneous. It was not only the doubting Thomas who doubted the resurrection of Jesus. Mary did not recognise Jesus at first. Neither did Peter, John, the Emmaus-walkers or any of the other disciples. Paul only came to meet the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus. Yet at some point, each one did come to recognise the resurrected Christ and acknowledge the truth of the resurrection and then worshipped the Risen Christ. This recognition and acknowledgement impacted and changed their lives – the power of the resurrection! And this transformation became evident with the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, the Creator spirit - to help us in transformation; to help us transform through and in the power of the resurrection.

We see this in the lives of the apostles. They were transformed from hiding behind locked doors in inner-rooms to boldly professing Christ to public crowds, before juries and governors. As we read the Acts of the Apostles (or the Acts of the Holy Spirit) we learn how the transformative power of the resurrection transformed their faith and lives. The power of the resurrection enabled them to step forward, to cross cultural and religious boundaries, to heal, and yes also to raise the dead. This is the rhythm of the resurrection.

We need to recognise the power of the resurrection in ourselves. This is a lifelong journey. A journey which we need to recognise and acknowledge. The resurrection transforms us. It transforms our understanding of God – and of Jesus Christ. It also transforms the understanding of ourselves, as human beings, and as followers of Christ.

I have come to realise that we need to be patient. But we cannot ignore the transformative power of the resurrection – or we are to be pitied more than all humans. "I die every day" says Paul. And this is the rhythm of the resurrection. Dying every day means we are resurrected each day. We need to learn to die and be resurrected every day. Each day part of the flesh needs to die, so that part of us can be resurrected in the spirit. Every day. Daily. This is the purpose of our lives – dying to ourselves and being resurrected in Christ, bit by bit, part by part, day by day.

This is the rhythm of the resurrection.

Shalom, Liena

A HELPFUL BOOK

A book I have found very helpful is "*People of the Way*" with its pray now devotions reflecting blessing and prayer activities. It is from St Andrew's Press in Edinburgh. It "comprises whole-hearted needs and exquisite answers". The book helps us discover what it means to follow Christ in our personal spiritual journeys, in our encounters with one another and with our future, God and His world."

Graham Dempster or Moyra Jones can tell you more.

Moyra Jones

THE MESSAGE OF EASTER LIVES ON

It was our long-term dream to experience the Oberammergau Passion Play. We achieved this in 2010, on 27th May. Ironically, the 2010 performances were the last time the play was staged. It was due to be held again in 2020. The season was cancelled because of another pandemic, the coronavirus.

However, the good news is that *Passionsspiele 2022* is now being performed from 14th May to 2nd October. It's on every day of the week except for Mondays and Wednesdays. The play is divided into two parts – for three hours in the afternoon and then for three hours at night. What a huge local commitment! Two different people play the part of each main character. Half of the town's 5300 inhabitants will be involved in presenting (either behind or on the stage) the 42nd Passion Play, providing they were born in Oberammergau or have lived there for at least twenty years.

The auditorium is huge and seats 4700. Prior to commencement the babble of voices from all over the world was biblical in itself. The play is not museum-like folk theatre. It is living theatre, of the people and for the people. It reaches deep into life and seeks to convey hope. It is soundly theologically based and "this play of redemption seeks to capture the fears and longings of the people and give them the kind of hope offered by faith." (Professor Ludwig Modl, theological advisor of the Oberammergau Passion Plays, 2010).



Oberammergau Passion Play Auditorium

The origin of the Passion play dates back to 1632, when, in the wake of Europe's Thirty Years War, marauding Swedish soldiers advanced into Bavaria spreading scourges like smallpox and the plague, particularly the feared Black Death. Thanks to strict watches posted at the edge of town (the first "self-isolating" strategy?) Oberammergau had remained mostly spared. However, this changed when a day labourer from a neighbouring village accompanied by his wife and children slipped through the plague watch to celebrate at a fair in Oberammergau. They brought the plague into the village. In 1633 the ensuing deaths and grief motivated the villagers of Oberammergau to vow to portray the "Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ" every ten years in hopes that the town would be freed of the plague. According to surviving sources, from this moment on there were no more deaths from the plague in Oberammergau, even though the scourge continued to wreak havoc in Bavaria. So, since 1634 the Passion play has been celebrated (in an evolving form) every ten years, making it the oldest Passion play that has existed continuously until the present day. Up to 2020, since Pentecost 1634, the Passion play has been cancelled only twice – in 1770 due to Elector Maximilian 111's general prohibition against religious plays in Bavaria and in 1940 because of the 2nd World War.

The town of Oberammergau is in a glorious natural setting in Bavaria's largest nature reserve, the Ammergau Alps. It is clean, fresh and airy, 900 metres above sea level, flanked by the Kofel and Laber Mountains, and on the alpine river Ammer. The scenery is just breathtaking. Between Passion plays it's a climatic health resort and a vacation paradise for skiing, hiking and mountaineering. Music, art and crafts abound and wood-carving is a 500 year old tradition there.

Is Oberammergau a "holy village" that sees itself as the last bastion against the rejection of the Christian faith? The people of Oberammergau would smile at these conjectures and claim that there, like anywhere else, people doubt, argue, reconcile and love – perhaps just very fervently and communally! Artists and artisans have lived and worked there for generations, making Oberammergau a centre of Alpine craftsmanship. Of particular

concern to the present population is their endeavour to achieve a sustainable combination of culture, conservation and tourism.



Oberammergau, Bavaria

(If you would like to catch “the feel” of the Oberammergau Passion Play just google Oberammergau 2022 and several short videos come up.)

Brian and Barbara Richards

EASTER TIME

*In the stillness of a misty morn
our autumn season was being born.
As quiet as a mouse, it floats across the dam
and comes to rest on the grassy bank.*

*Not a breath of air stirs the leafy trees,
not a sound to disturb my reverie
whilst the God of creation conducts a silent oration
the mists of time roll by.*

But wait!

*Easter is here, so reflect on our Lord.
What a blessing we share with one accord
in the victory of the cross, the risen Christ
redeems us and brings us to a holy tryst.*

*A piece of bread, a sip of wine
to celebrate a life divine.
As often as we take the cup
remember Jesus as we sup.*

Joyce Butterfield

AS IT HAPPENED

Life is a great teacher if we are willing to learn. In our relationship with God, it is my experience that God is always seeking to teach us new things so we might grow in love for God and each other. There are at least three things that lead us to miss out on what God is wanting us to learn.

One is that, too often we are not looking to see what God is doing in our lives and the world. We are easily distracted from our relationship with God by the things of the world. Secondly God's ways are so different from the ways of the world that we can miss what God is wanting to say to us. Thirdly God's way is often unexpected, even out of this world, so we fail to see what God is doing and saying to us. Perhaps two and three are the same thing expressed a little differently.

So, it is good to have seasons like Lent and Easter that encourage us to spend special time seeking to listen to what God is doing in our lives, in the church and in the community and to remember the wonder of God's deep love for all people. We traditionally do that at Easter by doing special Bible studies and having special times of worship. Those things happened in Montville.

The week before Easter, a group of us from Montville Uniting Church helped the RE teacher at the School do some special Easter craft with the students in two classes. Both classes went well and it was a good experience. It was a miserable overcast day. As Bernadette and I were leaving the school it started to rain so we were running to the car. A student hurried past us with his mother and said, "Thanks for religion today Sir, it was fun." How good is God? What a wonderful affirmation of the hour we had just spent at the school. It is a reminder to me that as we seek to communicate the Good News to young children it must be an enjoyable experience, even fun. It also reminds me that God speaks to us through children.

A couple of weeks after Easter we began a discussion at Montville about what we would do for a Christmas display in the church this year. I did this because I wanted to give everyone the opportunity to do some creative thinking and because we will be away for a few months leading up to Christmas. We had a good discussion and agreed that our theme would be "A Bush Christmas." There was then a lot of discussion about how we would use Australian birds and animals in the presentation. While the discussion was amicable we did not reach any agreement. I was not worried by this thinking as we had plenty of time to work it all out.

After church Bernadette wanted to look at the craft fair being held in the community hall. One of the displays was of art work of Australiana. Just the sort of thing we needed. Bernadette and I bought three of the paintings. Then we discovered that the artist was there and painting as part of a display. So we talked with her and her husband. They were Christians. When I explained what we wanted the paintings for she was willing to make some more paintings available or sell some more to us at a discount. Now you could say well that was a bit of good luck. I see God at work in things like this. It was certainly unexpected but it met a need and we were able to have a good discussion with a couple about their journey with God. Now, thanks to the paintings we acquired and the work of our resident artist at Montville Uniting Church, all the artwork and the words to go with them for the Christmas display are organized. How Good is God?

There was a special combined sunrise service on Easter morning in Montville. It was an overcast morning. A good group of people attended with the Salvation Army Band playing. Liena led the service. Peter Maher from the Range Church preached telling the story about how God had come into his life and transformed it. Towards the end of the service Liena talked about how the sun was breaking through the clouds and that is what Easter is about - God breaking through into our lives. It was a good illustration. Liena then announced the final hymn and it started to rain. This reminds me that God has a sense of humour and finds more ways than you and I can ever imagine, of breaking through into our lives.

Keep looking to see God at work in your lives, in the church and in the community.

George Woodward

A RESURRECTION JOURNEY

In Scotland, a few years ago, I visited a small port/town – Helmsdale – on the north-east coast. There was no particular purpose in my going, it was just a day out and a beautiful drive. However, part of my exploring had a profound effect on me which I would like to share.



A glimpse of Helmsdale

A trip to the local museum showed that this was no ordinary town – it was one of the places from which, many years ago, migrants left to journey to other countries around the world – particularly Canada, New Zealand, Australia and the USA. They did this as a result of “The Clearances” which was a dark period in Scotland’s past.



The Port

The Highland Clearances

In the Highlands, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the clansmen lived a subsistence lifestyle, eeking out a living in any way they could while paying rent to the clan chief or wealthy landowner, and also being part of any army that person had to raise from time to time.

Come the Industrial Revolution, landowners surmised there was more money to be made from raising sheep to provide wool for the new woollen mills in Northern England, with the result that the peasant farmers were driven from the useful land and transported to inhospitable land nearer the coast [the crofts were deliberately too small for a man to make a living from] and they were forced to take up kelp farming or fishing – all of which was foreign to them. Shepherds were imported in their stead, but they remained ‘on call’ as cheap labour when needed.

In reality, the Clearances were the result of many different factors. The combination of the Industrial Revolution, the expansion of the British Empire and the decline of clan power coincided with a change in the way that land was managed. There was a shift from smaller-scale land management systems which gave way to monopolised land ownership and the pursuit of profit.

Nevertheless, in most cases, the removals were brutal with houses burnt, the elderly and sick just herded along irrespective of their condition; some who resisted were killed. The ‘refugees’ had to rebuild their houses and villages again in groups of 6 – 7 families.

When all this started to fall apart, the landowners were prepared to pay the fares of the farming families to go and live in another country [meaning they had no further responsibility for them] and many farmers took up this offer, as nothing could be worse than the situation they were in.

Hence, the great Scottish diaspora began.

To give some idea of the scale of these mass evictions of generations of families from their ancestral homes – at the start of the eighteenth century, 30% of Scots lived in the Highlands and Islands. By the start of the twentieth century, this had fallen to just 8%. In the first one hundred years of this period, about 70,000 farmers were evicted.

And today?

The remains of some of the coastal villages can still be seen today, showing how meagre the crofts were and the sort of land and its proximity to the sea.

One such village, Badbea, lies just a little way north of Helmsdale, so, I journeyed there to take it all in.



Some of the ruins of Badbea

I experienced an overwhelming feeling of despair and hopelessness for humankind as I walked around the ruins. As I reflected on this later, I realised it was because over the centuries, we, as a society, have learned nothing. This is the same dispossession as we inflicted on our First Nations people years ago and that refugees around the world are still experiencing today – where the strong treat the weak with contempt – with almost complete disregard for their being human beings. I left feeling devastated.

I went back to town, had a coffee, and looked around and saw some flags flying in the distance [you can see the flag poles in the distance on the extreme right of the photo of the port near the long white buildings]. So, I went to explore them and as result, my spirits lifted. There was a statue – *The Emigrants* – near the flags that told another part of the story.



The flags represented the home country of Scotland and the other four countries to which the emigrees went – New Zealand, Australia, Canada and USA. The statue was of a little family of dad and son in kilts looking forwards to where they were going, and the challenges ahead, while the mother and baby were looking back to what was being left or lost. Poignant in the extreme.

The inscription on the monument, in "Gaelic" and English reads:

"The Emigrants commemorates the people of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland who, in the face of great adversity, sought freedom, hope and justice beyond these shores. They and their descendants went forth and explored continents, built great countries and cities and gave their enterprise and culture to the world. This is their legacy. Their voices will echo forever thro the empty straths and glens of their homeland."

This is a place that can move you to tears.

But when I revisited it at Easter this year, it brought wonder and joy. Here, looking me in the face, as I thought of how those Scottish immigrants had influenced the world, was a wonderful story of RESURRECTION.

CIRCUS DOGS AND LITTLE CHILDREN

As Graham has asked us to reflect on our learnings and insights arising from our Lent studies, I would like to share my thoughts about Graham's reflections on Jesus' words on the Cross "I promise you today, you will be with me in paradise." Graham indicated that he was attracted by the authority in these words of Jesus and asked the following question...

IN OUR PRAYING, ARE WE ASSERTIVE AND DEMANDING, TELLING GOD WHAT HE OUGHT TO DO, HOW AND WHEN? WHAT WE'D REALLY LIKE HIM TO DO. IS THERE A BETTER WAY?

Here are my thoughts...

Here's an analogy to think about. In our prayer lives are we like a dog at the circus or like a small child in the parent's arms?

The dog at the circus...

It is all dressed up and under the compulsion of its training. It leaps about, contorting itself and performing the tricks it has been taught in the hope of its promised rewards - the treat or the applause of the audience. Do this and you'll get that. That's the motivation and the reward.

The child in the loving parent's arms...

The parent has opened their arms to the child, inviting the child to come. The child responds with full trust and hope in the parent's love and care. The child feels free to ask, question, explore. The child isn't concerning itself with constructing correct sentences in this interaction or performing to get a reward. It is an open and loving interaction framed in full respect for the authority of the parent; part of a trusting yet unequal relationship.

Lock up that performing dog and bring on the little child! Oh! the blessed relief from pressure! As a little child, we can approach prayer with a full and complete respect for and honour of God's authority and God's plans and

ways, that certainly aren't ours. That child trusts in the wisdom and provision of their parent, with full awareness that the parent does not obey the child. The parent decides what's best and what needs to happen, in light of a perspective that is unavailable to the child.

I know, in my own life, this approach to prayer brings what would otherwise be the elusive "peace which passes all understanding" through a yielding to the reality that God is fundamentally mystery to our human minds - we know some, but there is so much that to us is unknowable. That, right there, is where trust comes in. Think of how that tiny child with the loving parent knows what they want and may be upset at not getting what they ask for, yet at a profound level that child fully trusts in the parent's care of them.

My thoughts in relation to Graham's question are that we don't need to barrage God with our demands with the notion that this is a faithful prayer practice. There is a joy and freedom in coming with our requests with a heart full of hope and trust in God's loving goodness and with an attitude of surrender to God's greatness. Here's the perspective - that what we understand and see is not all there is ... and I'm more than ok with that.

Helen Uhlmann

MOVING WITH GOD'S SPIRIT – REFLECTING EASTER

I have been touched by this prayer/poem published in the Collection of Prayers for Lent, titled *Moving With God's Spirit – Reflecting on Easter*.

"O God who loves us as we are, even when we are unlovable and unloving, unfair and hurtful, and even when we allow material things and wealth to become more important than people and relationships, we thank and glorify you for that never ending presence of unconditional love, mercy, hope and of strength that you make available to each one of us."

Margaret Pow

RECLAIMING EASTER?

Easter is central to the Christian faith, but it can appear as though the secular world's four-day holiday has usurped its significance in public thought and practice. Something to ponder!

Given that Lent and Easter are traditionally seasons for reflection, it seemed thinking about the why's and wherefores, of this state of affairs, was an appropriate thing to do. So, here goes!

The importance of Easter rests on two main events or elements – the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. For centuries, now, the church has interpreted these happenings as overtly religious in significance and meaning. In the Crucifixion, Jesus died on the cross for the forgiveness of 'my' sin and to restore my relationship with God.

With the Resurrection, Jesus overcame death in a way that allowed all believers, including me, to share in this victory and to look forward to life after death and hence eternal life with him.

In short, Easter was about individual/personal salvation, and this was the basis for a believer's hope.

But, is it possible that Crucifixion and Resurrection could possibly mean more than that? After all, they were not exclusive to Jesus. Crucifixion was a common way of dealing with 'criminals' and there are other examples of Resurrection in the New Testament. Unlike today, they were not uncommon happenings.

So, was God trying to say more than we have thought over time? As God created the whole world, and all that is in it, could it be possible that God was trying to apply Crucifixion and Resurrection to the wider world in some way?

Crucifixion, of itself, is about cruelty; mistreatment; abandonment; inflicting pain, even to the point that it results in death; power over the weak, innocent, and vulnerable; and a callous disregard for basic humanity.

Resurrection, on the other hand, is coming back to life after death; it's about new life; pleasure coming after, or from, pain; about bringing light out of, or from, darkness.

Can we see such things happening in our world today that we might interpret as Crucifixion?

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, the COVID pandemic, devastating floods around the world, and the rampant effects of climate change would all seem to fit into such a category. They all speak of chaos and needless hurt. No doubt, readers can think of many more.

And would not overcoming these things be a source of Resurrection?

If we can contemplate such things, surely Crucifixion and Resurrection can be thought of in terms wider than personal salvation. They can speak to the wider world and the whole of creation. But if this is the case, where does the believer's hope come from? How is it experienced?

Perhaps it comes from these very atrocities – unexpected acts of kindness during conflict; a refreshing cup of tea in a moment of loss; a hand on a shoulder in times of grief; a smile to an unknown person when they look

defeated by some aspect of life; giving inspiration through imagination in words and images that speak to someone in an unexpected time and place; or a sharing with someone in greater need.

All these, and many other actions, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, all bring hope to the recipient and will be recognised by God as meeting Jesus' imperative to serve the needy.



The Speaker



The burial cairn where the listeners sat

This article arose from a talk I gave to a band of ramblers on Easter Day as we explored the Torrisdale Broch and its surrounds. They were not currently 'church' people, but, they were happy to talk about these things as we continued on our way.

JESUS RESURRECTED IN VICTORIA

Catching up after covid with my sister, Joyce, in Victoria was of prime importance to me. So, using some airfares of a prior trip planned but never taken, was on top of the list for travel when the borders were opened again.

My phone buzzed, "Joyce here, I am in a meeting with my church council, and knowing of your planned trip to the south could you help us with a Good Friday service for we have not had a minister for months". Before answering, it came to my mind that Graham Dempster had produced an inspiring devotional on Jesus words to the thief on the cross, "This day you will be with me in paradise", so with that in mind I agreed to provide the congregation of the Korumburra Uniting Church with a Good Friday service, the theme being "It is Friday, but Sunday is coming". Words from an American African preacher.

While inspired by Graham's words, I was not able to reproduce them with the same drive that he had mustered with his original thoughts, yet I was able to lead people to find amongst all the Easter hype, some relevance of what Jesus had accomplished for me, and all people, in that dramatic moment some two thousand years ago.

Good Friday is only completed when united with Easter Sunday, so my next word to sister Joyce was to offer to take an Easter service, an offer which the council accepted. This is inspiring for preacher and congregation alike and means the story can be completed. The negativity of the cross leads to the glorious positivity of "He is risen indeed!" which echoes around the world on Easter Sunday, and is part of every Sunday Service. We meet because He is alive and leading us on in the journey we call life. This is what one person discovered with all its power as his body dragged at the nails pinning him to a cross next to Jesus.

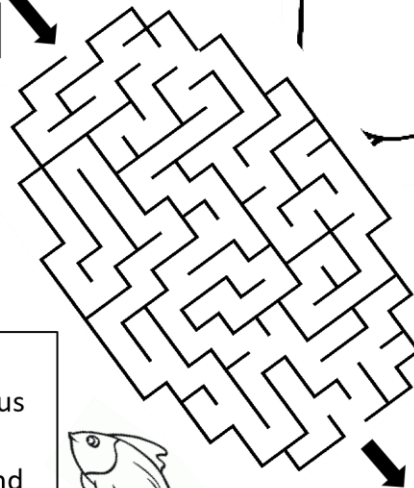
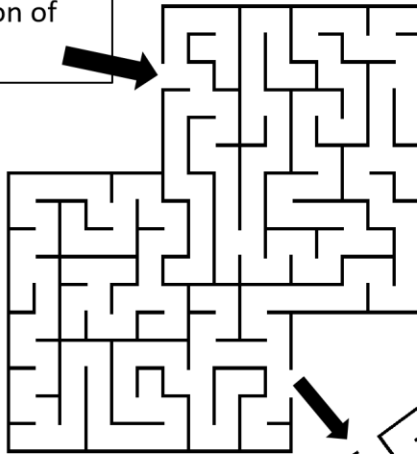
So, Graham's words got a second life and we could rejoice with the thief to hear, in the midst of death, "Today you will be with me in paradise." While our own death may be a mystery we all have to deal with, we hear again personally the words of Jesus to us, "This day you will be with me in Paradise."

Bob Philpot

After the Resurrection

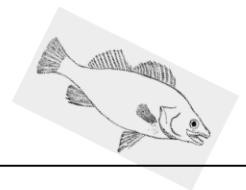
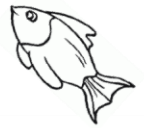
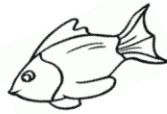
Read John 21:1-14

Go through the mazes, to help the disciples find their way, to the Sea of Galilee, after the resurrection of Jesus.



In this box, draw the Sea of Galilee with a beach where Jesus made a fire, boats with the disciples, waves, fishing nets and lots of fish.

The Sea of Galilee



THE SAME YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW???

In Mirabai Starr's new book *Saint John of the Cross: Luminous Darkness*, she highlights four major enduring themes found in the writings of John of the Cross (1542–1591).

They are:

longing,
silence,
unknowing
love.

It is an interesting exercise to try to imagine exactly what each means, and how each arises from, or in, a life of devotion to God. It is probably more interesting still for us to try to ascertain what the four major themes in our life of faith are. What would sitting and considering all aspects of our life disclose?

I tried this, on three occasions, and came up with a different list each time. I wonder what this says – about the process; about the whole idea; about me. However, I thought I should share my responses, and I do so with some trepidation:

The first time:

acceptance
questioning
mystery
grace

The second time:

companionship
unknowing
challenge
beckoning

The third time:

surprises
reliability
gratitude
sustaining

What are yours?

I expect there would be great variation if we were to put them all together which made me wonder – How does this sit with *Jesus is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow?*

KARL'S KORNER

HOW CAN WE BE SALT?

A few weeks ago, our car needed its regular service. So, I was 'chauffeured' into town to while away a few hours. I chatted with the driver and the subject of Ukraine (among others) came up and I said that I thought Mr. Putin a sad little man. It has been said that to be truly great in this world you need to be truly evil. Think of the people we have brought to mind in the media through history Hitler, Stalin, Genghis Khan, Pol Pot, Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, etc., etc. All of these gained fame by violence. Notice, however, how it seems Putin lives in fear of "invasion" by NATO. Indeed, his whole nation is ruled by fear.

So why did I think Putin a sad little man? I remarked to the driver that the Bible said, "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul?" As I was getting out, another passenger handed me a card indicating she was a Jehovah's Witness, so she obviously overheard the conversation. It has been a habit of

mine to, as the occasion allows, use the Bible's wisdom to comment on real life events. Am I trying to be the salt?

When I reflect on the Easter story, is it not also a story of the conflict between two worldviews? One which values fame, status, prestige, power, etc. and which encourages narcissism. And is this not the world's message of today? Get rich! Be yourself! Do your own thing! etc. We are exhorted to value individualism, yet, when things turn bad, we expect there to be something called "community" to pick up the pieces. But Jesus obviously had a totally different worldview. The soldiers at the crucifixion were quite right to mock Jesus with taunts tempting him to come down off the cross because they espoused the other worldview.

During my drive home after returning to my vehicle I reflected on what I had said. The church too has a history of flipping its worldviews. It seems to sometimes believe that it can force people to "believe" or follow its concepts of morality and the result is almost necessarily mockery and occasionally revulsion. So, I turned the message around too. "What does it profit a god if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul?"

For me, the Easter story indicates that a resort to force is counterproductive for Jesus. He could have come down from the cross, taken up the sword (metaphorically speaking) and meted out justice, but what would that have achieved? Where would that stop? (Shelley's "Ozymandias" comes to mind.) Instead, he allowed himself to undergo the fate of all humans because he saw a better way to deal with human failings. "For God so loved the world...".

Karl Tietze

AT THE SKULL

*No movement in the heavy clouds
The sky, it seems oppressed
Three stands of wood are there
Upright on the mound.*

*Bored soldiers standing
Sharing up the spoils.
Friends with heads cast heavily down
Others just looking on.*

*Three men, life slowly slips away
Two for their crimes it is said.
One, not for revolution
But for seeking the truth of life.*

*This is the scene at Golgotha,
On one day remembered well
But days pass on to another
And tomorrow victory will begin.*



Col Harding

DAFFODILS

It's a strange and beautiful world!

I had been to Scotland in the spring before and seen the random daffodils everywhere, including in our yard. I had carried on about them to the family, so it was decided to make a trip sometime to see them again. That happened recently, post Covid.

Since my earlier visit, I had had, running through my head, some of the lines I remembered from William Wordsworth's poem – *Ode to the Daffodils*. I recalled little bits and pieces, so googled it and have reproduced it below as I am sure most of us remember it from our Grade 5 or 6 reader at school.

*I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.*

*Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.*

*The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:*

*For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.*



A host of golden daffodils



Beauty in brokenness

The daffodils we encountered certainly filled our hearts with pleasure – but there was more to their show than that. Scotland was coming out of winter and the landscape was all brown and grey – very little green, or other colour, anywhere - quite sombre really. And every so often along the way we came across patches of daffodils – on roadside embankments; in little wooded areas; along old stone fences in villages; approaches to bridges; in orderly parks and cottage gardens. They were in clumps, long lines and solitary splendour.

This all allowed me, as a passenger in the car, to think of their significance and why they may have spoken, as they did, to Wordsworth – out of the depths of colourless winter they heralded the spring and summer in a most colourful way.

But then I remembered that the Christian church was in its Lent/Easter season, and I wondered how this natural phenomenon might be reflected there.

It became clear to me that there was a message there. Out of the depths of despair and darkness of the crucifixion, there arises hope and new life – and it can come in unexpected ways and places – but it brightens the future with promise and beauty. And I found that it was there no matter the weather – full sun, snow, wind and rain. The daffodils survived and thrived in them all.

Can that not be our experience in life?

An Easter message right there for me.

This was re-affirmed, yet again, for me later in the season. I have told some this story from my previous trip before, but it happened again. The inevitable winds came and wreaked havoc among our crop of flowers – many were broken off at ground level. But when cut and put in a vase, they became a thing of beauty inside – and brightened up the rooms they were placed in. Their resurrection became a source of continuing joy.

Is this not another Easter story? The hurt and damaged, when cared for, take on new purpose and bring joy to those around them.

REFLECTION ON EASTER 2022

This Easter Bob and I finally got down to Victoria to visit his older sister, Joyce, for the first time since Covid began. Joyce is one of God's saints in Korumburra and we love to spend time with her. Like us, she follows the daily *With Love to the World* Bible readings, commentary, and hymns. So, after breakfast each morning we shared that with her. She also invited us to pray with her for the day's events and whatever else was on our minds. It was a special time.

When we came home, we began that practice as well and I have found it both thought provoking and challenging. It has made me more aware of God's presence through the day.... It seems we are never too old to inspire and be inspired by others to a closer walk with God!

Frances Guard

Sometimes



My greatest
accomplishment is just
keeping my mouth shut.

"Some of the biggest cases of mistaken identity are among intellectuals who have trouble remembering that they are not God."