



THE new vine

UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

Blackall Range Uniting Churches

(Kenilworth, Maleny, Montville and Palmwoods)

Articles or queries may be emailed to: Rev Graham Dempster
grandar@bigpond.net.au



SPRING EDITION, Issue No 26, SEPTEMBER 2022

EDITORIAL COMMENT

We were challenged to think about CHANGE – in its many aspects – and do something with that topic. I wondered what sort of response there would be. You can see the result for yourself.

For my part, it struck me that *The New Vine* should not be exempt from scrutiny. After all, I thought, this is the 26th edition after 6 full years of publication, – [there have been a couple of ‘special editions’] – so it is probably time to review and evaluate, and to look at questions about change in *The New Vine*.

My guess is that we will all have a view on this, so I will concentrate on just one objective I have had during its lifetime i.e. to make it ‘our’ journal where members of the congregation can have a say and contribute something creative to its content.

What follows could hardly be described as an “independent” or thorough examination, but I have tried to be objective.

The index to the very first edition in the summer of 2016 contained 16 items including the minister’s column, an anonymous poem, Karl’s Korner, a book review by Moyra Jones and pieces from 3 parishioners in answer to the question “Who am I?” So, all up, the editor provided about 70% of the copy. Hardly ‘our’ journal you might think.

The most recently completed editions – Autumn and Winter 2022 – tell a bit of a different story.

The Winter edition focussed on prayer. It had 23 articles; 15 different people contributed on a range of views about prayer; and the editor contributed just 20% of the articles.

The most recent edition in June this year was similar – 17 articles, 15 writers, lots of different types of items; and the editor did about 24% of them.

You can do your own maths on this edition as it was still being compiled when this was written.

However, from what I see, there has been change for which I am both grateful and pleased.

Of course, this is but one aspect of the whole thing. The type of content; subjects covered; overall tone; balance of story, poems, prayer, song; density; humour; length etc. are not commented on.

But should anyone believe further changes are needed, you should feel free to raise them because, to remain ‘our’ journal, it must address subjects that speak to us, and of us.

In closing I would like to say a big thank you to Karl Tietze – he has had a korner in every edition and, also, to Jing Wang who has printed and stapled more copies than anyone else.

But, above all, can I express my very deep appreciation of, and gratitude to, Muriel Wilson who has worked her magic on every edition from Day 1 with great patience and grace. Thankfully, some things do not change!

Peace and blessings

Graham

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WHO'S WHO IN THE BLACKALL RANGE CHURCHES

Blackall Range Minister: REV LIENA HOFFMAN
 Phone 0490 421 874,
 Email: minister@ourcommonlife.org.au

Palmwoods Pastor: PASTOR KAY NIXON
 Phone: 0412 539 020, 5478 9209,
 Email: kaynxn43@gmail.com

Treasurer: MR ROGER SMITH
 Phone: 5494 3784
 Email: phelan.smith@i.net.au

Church Office: 1290 Maleny-Landsborough Road, PO Box 297, Maleny

Hours: Tuesday 9am – 12pm

..... Thursday 9am – 12pm

Phone: 5429 6995

Email: admin@ourcommonlife.org.au

Internet: www.ourcommonlife.com.au

Retired Ministers: Rev Graham Dempster, Rev Bruce Johnson, Rev Bob Philpot,
 Rev Brian Richards, Rev George Woodward.

LIENA'S LINES

ECCLESIA REFORMATATA SEMPER REFORMANDA **(Church of the reformation perpetually reforms)**

I remember having *ecclesia reformatata semper reformanda* (church of the reformation perpetually reforms) stuck above my desk at one time. Perhaps it is time to stick it back up!

“New insight is not an embarrassment for the church, it is a spiritual necessity” (translated words of Dirkie Smit). Dirkie Smit, a well-known theologian, continues to say that the a-b-c of the church is to continually pray that the Pentecost Spirit will lead us into discerning more and more, what is right, what is good, what is just, what is best (Romans 12:1 ff; Philippians 1 vs 9 ff). For law is not always just and morality is not always moral.

As the church, we cannot continue to live confident (self-confident) and assured (self-assured) that former convictions are true and fast. We need to continue to grow in love abounding, and also in sensitivity, and seek a deeper and clearer understanding.

I recall when I was a child, I had to wear a hat when I went to church (1 Corinthians 11 vs 12) and I did so until I was 21! We were not allowed to sew or fish on a Sunday as we may poke the Lord in his eye. I can clearly picture the elders and deacons sitting in the front pews, dressed in black suits, white shirts and white ties, supervising the minister and policing the congregation.

And of course, women had to be silent! (1 Corinthians 14 vs 34 ff). This is of course, the word of God!

Earlier in the history of Australia, the church deemed it best to remove children from their families and raise them in orphanages. At one time a lobotomy was standard procedure for mental illness and conversion therapy a standard procedure for homosexuals!

Today, we know that we can worship God without a hat and elders can participate with informal dress and sit with their families. And I know that the Lord's eyes are safe if I pick up a fishing rod or crochet hook on a Sunday. The focus is to worship God and to respect the sabbath, as rest, is part of God's creation and our rhythm of life.

And I know I, as a female, can be a minister of the Word.

Today, in 2022, there are a myriad of questions which we need to continually seek deeper understanding and knowledge of; issues where we need to grow more sensitive and abound in love so that we can discern what is truly pure, perfect, and blameless! It is unimaginable that we will not change our opinion and conviction over what is right and moral, what is just and good.

There are questions about

- medical procedures (cloning, IVF (in vitro fertilisation) VAD (voluntary assisted dying);
- gender and transgender;
- sexuality and sexual orientation;
- marriage and same-sex marriage, divorce;
- music and models of worship – café church, surf church, inter-generational church.

And many other ethical and moral issues. And, of course, parts of the church still grapple with women preaching!

Seeking God's will in these complex and complicated times is not easy. However, *ecclesia reformatata semper reformanda*. We simply need to continue to seek deeper insight and grow in knowledge and love. And we do this together. We talk together. We seek together. Together we grow in insight and in

love. Persons of faith must be able to say: “*Earlier we thought this was right, but now we realise we were wrong. Earlier we thought this was wrong, but now we realise this is not so.*” Those who cannot change, do not yet know the a-b-c of faith. We need this basic spiritual alphabet to seek the true and perfect will of God” (Dirkie Smit).

It is not unusual to feel a loss when things change. When traditional worship is replaced by another model, we feel loss at what is known, comfortable and loved. And this is natural. Or, perhaps, we fear that the principles of a traditional marriage are under threat by same-sex marriages and we feel compelled to protect the sanctity of marriage. Yet, is the issue of marriage of same-sex persons not as sanctified as that of a marriage between a man and a woman?

We forget God continually changes our circumstances. We cannot see beyond the drought, then the rains come. We cannot see beyond the present missiles and bombs, then peace comes. We cannot see beyond the hat and black suits, then the flowing hair and casual dress becomes familiar.

We always live in a time where change is needed and when we may need to sacrifice some things. But what we have lost, is not lost. We have not lost it, we have simply sown new seeds. And though we now sow in mourning, we will reap in joy (Psalm 126).

The church needs to change. Continuously. Always. Reformation is part of the nature of being church. *Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda!* Change, new insight is a spiritual imperative. It is the a-b-c of faith.

Shalom,
Liena



Psalm 126, verse 5

TO THINK ABOUT

The dictionary gives many words for change –

VARY, ADAPT, MODIFY, REFORM, CONVERSION.

The Bible also suggests words for change –

LOVE, JOY, KINDNESS, FORGIVENESS, GRACE, WISDOM, SELF CONTROL.

And then there is –

- REMEMBERING TO OBEY GOD’S TEACHING
- TO LOVE GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, SOUL AND MIND
- TO LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF

Margaret Pow

DID HE CHANGE HIS VIEW?

The University Professor challenged his students with this question; "Did God create everything that exists?"

A student bravely replied, "Yes He did!"

"God created everything?" The professor asked.

"Yes, Sir," the student replied.

The professor answered, "If God created everything, then God created evil, since evil exists, and according to the principal that our works define who we are, then God is evil."

The student became quiet before such an answer.

The professor, quite pleased with himself, boasted to the students that he had proven once more that the Christian faith was a myth.

Another student raised his hand and said, "Can I ask you a question professor?"

"Of course", replied the professor.

The student stood up and asked, "Professor does cold exist"?

"What kind of a question is this? Of course it exists. Have you never been cold?"

The students snickered at the young man's question.

The young man replied, "In fact sir, cold does not exist. According to the laws of physics, what we consider cold is, in reality, the absence of heat. Everybody or object is susceptible to study when it has or transmits energy, and heat is what makes a body or matter have or transmit energy. Absolute zero (-460 F) is the total absence of heat; all matter becomes inert and incapable of reaction at that temperature. Cold does not exist. We have created this word to describe how we feel if we have no heat."

The student continued, "Professor, does darkness exist?"

The Professor responded, "Of course it does."

The student replied, "Once again you are wrong Sir. Darkness does not exist either. Darkness is, in reality, the absence of light. Light we can study, but not darkness. In fact, we can use Newton's prism to break white light into many colours and study the various wavelengths of each colour. You cannot measure darkness. A simple ray of light can break into a world of darkness and illuminate it. How can you know how dark a certain space is? You measure the amount of light present. Isn't this correct? Darkness is a term used by man to describe what happens when there is no light present."

Finally, the young man asked the professor, "Sir, does evil exist?"

Now uncertain, the professor responded, "Of course, as I have already said, we see it every day. It is in the daily example of man's inhumanity to man. It is in the multitude of crime and violence everywhere in the world. These manifestations are nothing else but evil."

To this the student replied, "Evil does not exist sir, or at least does not exist unto itself. Evil is simply the absence of God. It is just like darkness and cold, a word that man has created to describe the absence of God. God did not create evil. Evil is the result of what happens when man does not have God's love present in his heart. It's like the cold that comes when there is no heat, or the darkness when there is no light."

The professor sat down.

The young man's name --- Albert Einstein.

Thanks to John Benn for this gem

A PRAYER ABOUT CHANGE

On Sunday 7 August, Fran was responsible for leading the intercessory prayer in the Maleny service. Afterwards, I asked if she would be prepared to pass this section of her prayer on so I could include it here. Thank you, Fran. [The Editor]

CHANGE: an on-going conversation I am having with God. It may seem rather one-sided, but I am trusting that I can leave enough spaces and silence, and have enough humility to hear God's responses in this dialogue.

God, I really hate change. We sometimes say that 'a change is as good as a holiday', but I don't actually believe that, because holidays are just a break from our normal routines, and life goes back to 'normal' – usually.

- I/we love our comfortable, familiar lives,
- our family traditions
- our set patterns of worship
- our beliefs – long-held and treasured.

And why should any of them change or be changed?

Yet, I know that inexorably change occurs – around us and within. Some changes I have **no** control over, and I can rail against them, or I can accept them in the confidence and comfort of knowing that you, God, journey with me from birth to death.

However, other changes are in our hands, and can be seen as challenges and opportunities you offer us:

- to learn more about your incredible and diverse creation and share that with others
- to love more generously
- to serve more faithfully, alert to new opportunities in unexpected places
- to listen more to those whose voices I've never really heard – people of different ability, different race or different faith
- to accept more graciously those who disagree with me
- to enjoy more the simple pleasures of a shared meal, a walk on the beach, or in the bush, birdsong, sunset.

Hey, these changes could be life-giving, not just for me, but for everyone! So, I pray for courage to accept these challenging changes, whatever my stage of life. **AMEN**

A word of encouragement from Brian Arthur Wren: verse 4, TIS 468:

*Glad of tradition,
help us to see
in all life's changing,
where you are leading,
where our best efforts should be.*



A REFLECTION ON CHANGE

*Why can't people leave things the same?
Why do we always have to have change?
If we didn't have change, where would we be?
Still making tools out of stones and trees.*

*From the stone age to electronics, Oh, what a change
What next will be made, to add to the range?
First came television and mobile phones
Next came robots and remote-controlled drones.*

*People invent and produce new 'toys'
Such as computers to save on paper and files
Oh, what a blessing or curse it belies
Whatever the outcome, it still survives.*

*Buttons and buttonholes, then the slide zip
Next came Velcro, Oh, what a grip.
My 94 years has been a journey of change
And I must say the ride has been rather strange.*

*Having said this, I still find it hard
To keep a firm grip and be on my guard
So, I'll live my life as God sees fit
And now we're threatened by the microchip!*

Joyce Butterfield

CHANGED UNDERSTANDING?

I have always looked at the Incarnation through male eyes – it was all about God taking human form [a male form at that]. This piece I came across recently has, in a way, made me reflect a little more broadly. My initial understanding is still true, but this feminist view does have a point.

QUOTE:

Through her incarnational understanding of Mary and Jesus, writer Cole Arthur Riley honours her own embodied reality more deeply:

For me, the story of God becoming body is only matched by God's submission to the body of a woman. That the creator of the cosmos would choose to rely on an embodied creation. To be grown, fed, delivered – God put faith in a body. In Mary's muscles and hormones, bowels and breasts. And when Christ's body is broken and blood shed, we should hold in mystery that first a woman's body was broken, her blood shed, in order to deliver the hope of the world into the world...

[1] Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation, and the Stories That Make Us* (New York: Convergent Books, 2022), 57, 60.

Editor

CHANGING PLACES OF WORSHIP FOR MALENY

As most organizations are, the church is in a state of constant change. There is nothing new about change: it's been with us since time began. Take a moment to look at these photos which depict where we have come from, and where we might be headed. But let's not get too burdened down. With prayer, bible searching, conversation and Gospel risk taking, doors will be opened.



This is the first Union Church in Maleny. Used by Methodists and Wesleyans. Looks like the local Scout group was having a parade that morning. What a line up!



Horses are standing in the approximate location of the first Union Church in Maleny, in Bunya Street. Just below where the high school now stands. Pine trees at far right: primary school. Large white roofed building: Maleny Hotel



The Union Church was later moved to Myrtle Street and became the centre of Methodist Church activities over many years. The property was sold and is now a private residence/art gallery. Interesting aside: if we had remained on that site, we would be much closer to the centre of town!



2022 Maleny Uniting Church today. Constructed in 1990, it stands on land donated by the Bryce family to the Uniting Church. Many hours of voluntary work went into the construction of the building, architects, concreters, welders, dozer drivers, welders, upholsterers, wood workers, to name a few. As well as lots of fellowship, and camaraderie. Community connections!



FUTURE DIRECTIONS. Like the fellow in the arrow icon, you might be scratching your heads as to where we might be heading as a church and what it will look like for future generations: in a shed-like structure, in the park, home church, in a coffee shop, dinner church, at the local Markets, in the pub, grand cathedral, in the caravan park. The options are endless. As we scratch our heads, may we be open to the call of the Holy Spirit as we seek to respond to the words of Jesus: Go into all the world and preach the Gospel....

BRIEF SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE MISSION TASK GROUP

Our Blackall Range Church has been challenged to contemplate its future directions. This commenced at the recent AGM. Here is a summary of the recommendations that came out of the work of the Mission Task Group. It is hoped that these recommendations will be pointers to further discussion and decisions in the coming months.

Recommendation 1: Vision and Mission

That a clear vision and mission be adopted and that each worship site develop strategies to implement the mission in their different sites. These strategies should reflect the particular gifts, capacities and goals of each site.

Recommendation 2: Worship Services



That the traditional services be continued, and be open to flexibility, creativity, and new ideas. Alternative style gatherings should be welcoming spaces for those currently not engaging with 'church'.

Recommendation 3: Structure

That Church Council review the current structure taking the following into account: consultation, information sharing, giving congregations freedom to achieve mission outcomes in their own settings in ways that are sustainable and achievable.

Recommendation 4: Missional Opportunities

That each worship site select one or two specific missional opportunities for people to make a commitment to implement. Expand the use of our social media opportunities to connect with younger age groups, indeed, all social media users.



Recommendation 5: Working Group



Set up a Future Directions Group to explore and identify missional opportunities offered by the Mission Development Fund. Once approved by the congregation, the application will be submitted to presbytery by September 2023.

Conversations

As we identify the future directions of our church, its vision and mission, there will be opportunities to ponder over the changes we might see in the components represented in the icons below. There may be others that we can add, but a good start if we have conversations around these.



[Source](https://www.anthonyhilder.com) Moving Forward: Future Church Trends-anthonyhilder.com

Do YOU have ideas and thoughts on the above? Would you like to SHARE them? IF SO, CONTACT Peter Uhlmann or Murray Robertson or a member of the Future Directions Group.

[Murray Robertson](#)

DEFINITIONS OF CHANGE

After deciding that, given our churches' recent and on-going activities, the topic of CHANGE would be a suitable subject for an edition of our journal, I thought I should look at what change might be for some people, and I wondered how this might be reflected in articles received for publication. So, here are some pithy definitions from Google that I suggest we might run across our minds after we read something that speaks to us in the text. [The Editor]

- By changing nothing, nothing changes..... *Tony Robbins*
- Failure is not fatal, but failure to change might be *John Wooden*
- Nothing is forever except change *Buddha*
- Be the change that you wish to see in the world..... *Mahatma Gandhi*
- Things do not change; we change..... *Henry David Thoreau*
- Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future *John F. Kennedy*
- Some of us think holding on makes us strong, but sometimes it is letting go..... *Hermann Hesse*
- The secret of change is to focus all your energy not on fighting the old, but on building the new *Socrates*
- They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself. *Andy Warhol*
- Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced *James Baldwin*
- Life will only change when you become more committed to your dreams than you are to your comfort zone. *Billy Cox*
- Any change, even a change for the better, is always accompanied by drawbacks and discomforts. *Arnold Bennett*
- If we don't change, we don't grow. If we don't grow, we aren't really living..... *Gail Sheehy*
- A ship in a harbor is safe, but that's not why ships are built *John A. Shedd*
- Open your arms to change, but don't let go of your values..... *Dalai Lama*
- If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got. *Henry Ford*
- Only God who made us can touch us and change us and save us from ourselves *Billy Graham*
- The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking *Albert Einstein*
- God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference *Reinhold Niebuhr*
- A year from now you will wish you had started today *Karen Lamb*
- The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails *William Arthur Ward*



HOW HYMN WRITERS SAW CHANGE

Having thought about change myself, I have been struck by the fact that many of our favourite hymn writers have seriously spoken about change. So, I have made a brief, and I am sure, incomplete, search through *Together in Song* (TIS) and *The Methodist Hymn Book* (MHB), to look for the theme of change.

Once again, there are the two elements of change:

- one that is inevitable, associated with life, death and natural decay that the earlier hymn writers were unafraid to name;
- the other, the changes that we can choose to make, with God's help, for a life that is more loving and life-giving.

However, in both, there is strong belief that God is unchanging and can bring about change in us.

So, here are the specific verses that mention change, but I would suggest that it is worth reading the complete hymns to get the whole picture!

TIS 586, Abide with me: Henry Francis Lyte

Verse 2: *Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away.
Change and decay in all around I see:
O thou who changest not, abide with me.*

TIS 588, In heavenly love abiding: Anna Laetitia Waring

Verse 1: *In heavenly love abiding,
no change my heart shall fear;
and safe is such confiding,
for nothing changes here:
the storm may roar without me,
my heart may low be laid;
but God is round about me,
and can I be dismayed?*

Tis 217, Love divine, all loves excelling: Charles Wesley

Verse 3: *Finish then thy new creation,
pure and spotless let us be,
let us see thy great salvation,
perfectly restored in thee:
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love and praise.*

MHB 53, God is love: His mercy brightens: John Bowring

Verse 2: *Chance and change are busy ever;
Man decays, and ages move;
But His mercy waneth never:
God is wisdom, God is love.*

MHB 876, Omnipresent God, whose aid: Charles Wesley

Verse 4: *Or if thou my soul require
Ere I see the morning light,
Grant me, Lord, my heart's desire,
Perfect me in love tonight:
Finish thy great work of love,
Cut it short in righteousness,
Fit me for the realms above,
Change, and bid me die in peace.*

TIS 154, Great is your faithfulness: Thomas Obadiah Chisholm

Verse 1: *Great is your faithfulness, O God my Father
in you no shadow of turning we see;
you never fail and your love is unchanging:
as you have been you for ever will be.*

TIS 687, God gives us a future: Elizabeth J. Smith

Verse 1: *God gives us a future,
daring us to go
into dreams and dangers
on a path unknown.
We will face tomorrow
in the Spirit's power,
we will let God change us,
for new life starts now.*

TIS 685, Lord, I come to you: Geoffrey William Bullock

Verse 1: *Lord, I come to you: let my heart be changed, renewed,
flowing from the grace that I found in you.
and, Lord, I've come to know the weaknesses I see in me
will be stripped away by the power of your love.*

TIS 690, Beauty for brokenness: Graham Kendrick

Chorus: *God of the poor,
friend of the weak,
give us compassion we pray;
melt our cold hearts,
let tears fall like rain.
Come change our love
from a spark to a flame.*

Fran Guard



CHANGE

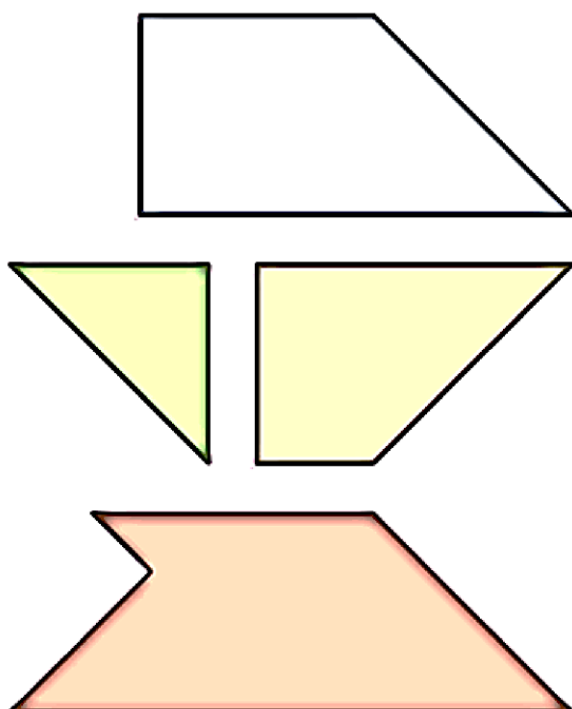


Change WOOD into SAND by changing one letter in each successive row. Each row must be a regular word.

W	O	O	D
S	A	N	D

Print/copy and cut out these shapes. Change them into a capital letter 'T', by rearranging them & putting them together.

Hint: keep the pieces this face up.



Find the names of these Bible Characters who were CHANGED when they met Jesus.

J E T S W R Q G H E Q W R M E
O N M U E E O Y Y Y E K W H K
H E T E M S M O R H N O M I S
N L Q A O B B V T A S K S W V
T A B H L A H T R A M U O U H
H D P C O S A V U U E V W C C
E G H C H M A L O A U H T B C
B A I A T Q S M M W D U A V H
A M L Z R W J I O P E V I G Z
P Y I Q A R T U A H E R F L R
T R P H B R K I H N T T D O Z
I A L M A T I J L J N K E N O
S M M B N I C O D E M U S R A
T Z H X F M C C K C O B L J M
Q S U K U Q H C I L S A C R W
X V G J A M E S U G Z I O B Q
A A M H F Y U T P A O J M H V
Z S M G Q W K L R T V Q O P Y
Z C Y Q D X D U Q L B X J H M
W Q E G X V S I I F T N J W N

Andrew

Bartholomew

Bartimaeus

James

John

John the Baptist

Lazarus

Martha

Mary

Mary Magdalene

Matthew

Nicodemus

Peter

Philip

Saul

Simon

Thomas

Zacchaeus

FOUND BY CHANCE

Following the Maleny service where Bruce Johnston's sermon broadly traversed some of the issues to do with change, followed by Fran Guard's prayer on page 6, I was perusing my weekly email from the Iona Community that tells of their latest publications, and old publications relevant to the church season we are in, and I came across this poem. I felt it was worth sharing. [The Editor]

Be the Blessing

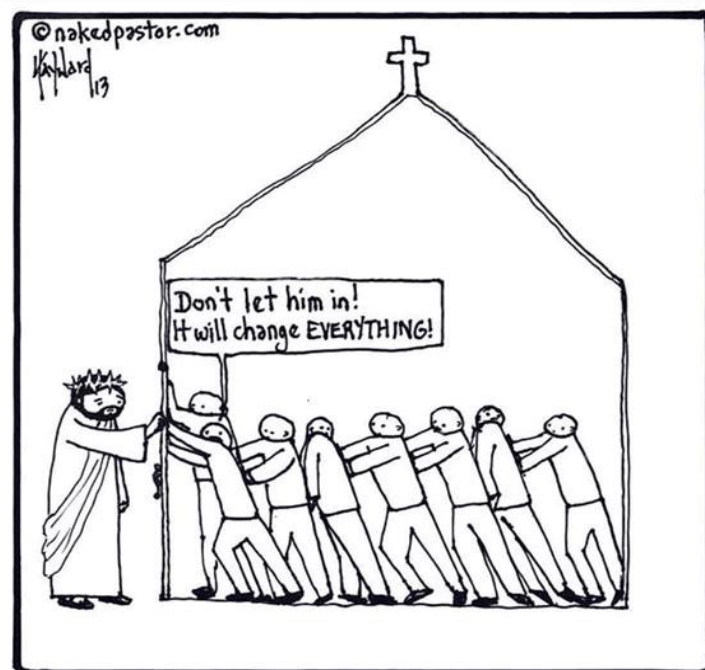
*May you be the blessing:
may you be the justice in the harvest,
the sharing in the community,
the hope in the neighbourhood.*

*May your gift of self
be a blessing to many.*

*May you be the change the world needs:
the light in the shadows,
the truth in the darkness,
the healing in the hurt.*

*May your gift of self
be a blessing to the world
For you need to be no other
than yourself.
It is enough.*

Roddy Hamilton



[Thank you to Nancy Baker for this piece](#)

KARL'S KORNER

Change

We live in an era of change. When I started work in the Public Service, I understood that I was working for the people of Australia; that my job would be secure until retirement; that advancement would be on seniority which meant that it was unlikely that I'd make it to the "top of the tree" (so to speak); and I would have to put up with managers and systems that were imperfect but at least relatively predictable. I focused on just doing my work, more or less as well as I could.

But then came change. Under pressure from certain quarters, I became an employee in something called a "Government Business Enterprise" which I saw as a government department trying to operate as if it were a private company. Suddenly I no longer had recognised qualifications since such were dispensed by the state authorities. Despite having worked with all manner of electrical equipment involving high voltages, I now wasn't authorised to change a three-pin plug. Even when I passed all the theory exams for an electrical license, it was deemed insufficient, and I was notionally restricted to working on "communications equipment".

I tried to work out what was going on and came to realise that it was all about ideology. The public service was seen by many as inefficient, full of bludgers and time-servers. (Of course, there are such in any workplace, but nobody asks why.) And so, we were told our culture had to change. We were now "service providers" in competition with others, fighting for our jobs. But when I did what I presumed happened in private enterprise and asked for a raise, I was told it couldn't be done. So, my workplace was "neither Arthur nor Martha"; "half-pregnant", a contradiction.

Top management was replaced by outsiders deemed to exhibit the appropriate culture. They were change agents, there for the short run to make a name for themselves and, in my view, line their pockets. A side effect of this was a crash in the morale of the people in my portion of the workplace. I did my best to improve the efficiency of the organisation but, ultimately, I gave up. The spirit was no longer there, one could say.

The church too is trying to cope with change. Governments (and the voting public) see churches simply as pressure groups or power bases. To fit into their new culture, churches are also simply service providers (which I equate with vending machines). They are also now "workplaces" and come under industrial relations laws. Churches are expected to do good thus saving the taxpayer money. (A friend of mine said that technical people like he and I were seen as enthusiasts and hence would work for less - and, I guess, church people are seen similarly.) Things were not helped by the various sex scandals exposed which removed any semblance of moral authority the church had.

So what is the church's role in this new environment? Indeed, has its role changed or had it already been side-tracked from its original role? Our church often speaks of justice and supporting the "marginalised", but these objectives are seen to have been addressed by humanism and legalism. The church is left to cover those who fall through the cracks. And who, precisely, will be the arbiter of "justice"?

No, the church's role as the "body of Christ-ianity" has always been to re-present Christ to the world. If it fails to do this, its other efforts will, regrettably, come to nothing - like putting Band-aids on a cancer. But how can we do this today?

Firstly, we need to be scrupulously honest. Faith is a substitute for knowledge, and we need to acknowledge that. Also, we are no less "human", with all the failings that description assumes, than anyone else. But we believe there is a higher authority than any collection of humans, to which we all will be found accountable. (In the absence of such an authority, which individual will be qualified to judge another?)

Secondly, we need to work out for ourselves a way to introduce people to Jesus. After all, it was he who claimed to be “the way, the truth, and the life” and thereby provided a framework – a way to look at the world and our place in it - for us to find meaning and purpose in life. It was Jesus who portrayed a loving “Father” as this authority, who gives us the gift of choice with respect to our inner lives. Others may impact our physical lives but can only affect our inner lives if we allow it.

Thirdly, it is not for us to judge anyone. That privilege belongs to God alone. People outside the church see us at times as judgemental but seem happy to judge us too. We need to find a way to express our concerns with the choices of others in a neutral or “matter of fact” manner. Perhaps we need to express our feelings without insisting they are “right”. The modern western world seems focused on not hurting anyone at all costs – a simply impossible concept – and, to that end, avoiding (inconvenient) truth as much as possible.

Finally, we need to accept that it is the Spirit's job to convict and convince people to see things through Jesus' eyes, as it were. We all would like to see church growth, but we cannot compel it. Nor will it help to co-opt the power of the state to enforce such a view as some seem to think. So, remember always that we have this treasure in earthen vessels. We need to look into ourselves and find a way to show it to others. May the Spirit help us in this endeavour.

Karl Tietze

MEDITATION, CONTEMPLATION

*What gift is there in clearing our mind
Thinking of nothing of any kind
To find our mind fully at peace
To bring at last our thoughts to cease.*

*It takes a while to clear our mind
To have our thoughts to unwind
But with our mind ready to receive
What thoughts can we now truly receive.*

*The world takes on a different face
We see the beauty of God's grace
How can we guard this precious view
To see the sparkle of the beautiful dew.*

*Parts of the world are peacefully silent
Let's move our minds to make that reliant
Our thinking now sees things of wonder
Without ripping our current world asunder.*

*This beautiful new view is love
Soft and calm as the wings of a dove
This love can spread throughout the world
Just get your new flag unfurled.*



CHANGE IS EVERYWHERE

As I thought about 'change', I realised it was everywhere and in a very short time I had come up with over twenty different conditions that could lead to change in life. I have listed them below. [I am sure everyone could add more.] I then spent some time thinking about each and have shared my ruminations on two of them. I found it to be a very worthwhile exercise.

# Different ways of thinking';	# Food;	# Govt. Policy;
# Death of a loved one;	# Age;	# Weather;
# Moving to another Country;	# Disease;	# Famine;
# Politics (America, Taiwan, China);	# Education;	# New Job;
# Friendship with a person;	# Travel;	# Marriage;
# Health Condition;	# New school;	# Sight;
# New Language;	# Country;	# New Hobby.

Education and Change

Reared on a dairy farm and working around dairy farmers as a herd recorder testing cows' milk, I often heard farmers saying of a particular cow, "She is no good because she has a tendency to hold up her milk." When I studied the process of milk secretion, there came a different understanding of why a cow 'holds up her milk'.

When a cow's teats are stimulated by a calf sucking or hand milking or the use of machines it releases a hormone, oxytocin, into the blood stream which causes milk secreting cells, called 'alveoli' to contract, releasing their milk into the udder. If the animal's emotional state changes during this process, another hormone, 'adrenalin' is released into the blood stream which counteracts the effect of the oxytocin and no more milk is forthcoming. Loud noises, fear, or mistreatment can cause the release of adrenalin and no more milk is given – but the cow did not 'hold up her milk' – she had no control over the release of adrenalin.

Some farmers used loud radios in their bales at milking time to mask extraneous noises and this led to the animals being more placid. Avoidance of rough handling by people or dogs also led to more contented animals and better milk production.

Change came by a more creative way of handling the animals and hence elimination of "cows holding up their milk." In this way, education led to change.

Travel and Change

Having been on a few overseas trips to underdeveloped nations has made me aware of the value of travel in leading to a change in thinking. People return with a new view of the conditions in the country visited, leading to their being thankful for the advantages they know at home. Food and housing conditions are seen in the light of the privileges we enjoy, and the burdens that others live under.

It soon becomes apparent that we have basic freedoms that others do not know and medical and educational facilities second to none.

People who try to reach our shores by boat are not queue jumpers, for there is no such thing as a queue of potential travellers in these underdeveloped countries. Just plenty of stressful living conditions which unscrupulous people smugglers exploit to their advantage.

I have never heard a well-travelled person use the words "queue jumpers" in relation to refugees.

Bob Philpot



A WELCOME CHANGE

It was at Montville on a dripping wet, COVID affected Sunday morning, and having a church service was very much in doubt because of the weather and the pandemic. Graham was rostered on to lead worship but neither he, nor George, had checked out if services were allowed to proceed. We turned up, in trust and hope – as did four other regulars, including Bernadette, as well as two visitors. Seven of us in all.

Graham arrived early in case something special was needed and, as he parked, another car pulled up and the driver asked if there was to be a service that day. The response was – I hope so – and the occupants of that car made up our two visitors.

We proceeded to have a fairly informal service. There was no music – the organist was kept home by the weather – so we read the hymns together, all old faithfuls, and the sermon became a two-way conversation – all fairly quiet and a bit unorthodox really.

But, as part of the discussion the young male visitor told us a story which is well worth sharing.

A couple of years earlier, the two young people had come to the Hinterland for a holiday together. The big question on their minds was – should they marry? He was quite unsure about taking this step. As part of their holiday, they visited the church gallery and as they moved through it, the young man said that, as he was 'standing before the altar' he was totally overcome with emotion; his knees gave way; and he ended up as a weeping mess on the floor. He could not explain what had happened.

However, they interpreted it as God speaking to them, and particularly to him, saying they should marry. And so, they did. The visit on that morning was the first anniversary of their wedding and they had come back to give thanks and to celebrate the place where God had spoken to them.

Over a cup of tea afterwards, the young man quizzed both retired ministers about how they were called to ministry – both having been well along life's pathway when this happened. He was very interested to hear those stories and we gained the distinct impression that the possibility of his seeking ordination may have been the question exercising their minds that Sunday morning.

Before he left, he asked if George and Graham would mind if he prayed for us – and he did – most unusual for a visitor and greatly appreciated.

His life was changed as he toured the Montville UCA gallery. How special is that?

It will be very interesting to see if they return next year to celebrate as it felt like his story, their story, may well show further change.

George Woodward and Graham Dempster

PS We found over morning tea that they went to a Pentecostal church, and ever since, what they thought of reading those old hymns rather than singing robustly some modern songs, has been a point of continuing speculation.



NOW AND FOREVER

It has been well established that the extent and rapidity of change is a major factor in the escalating mental health crisis facing Australians and indeed all people living in the Western World. To anchor us in this sea of uncertainty and to help us to cope, it is important to recognise that some things have not, and will not, change. We cannot appreciate this good news however, until we accept that the human condition, and our deepest needs also, have not changed. We are all sinners. We are all frail and broken and the world cannot consistently and fully provide the answers to our deepest needs. That's the bad news.

We all long to love and be loved. With all our shortcomings, we all need to be accepted and valued. We crave security, peace, and joy. We struggle to be released from guilt for our mistakes and sinfulness of thought, attitude, motives, words, and deeds. And we want answers to life's big questions like "Why am I here" and "What happens when I die".



The good news is that our lost human condition and our deepest needs are met by an unchanging God, His Son Jesus Christ, and His Holy Spirit. Our God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He knows us better than we know ourselves yet he accepts us as we are and loves us unconditionally. He invites us to love Him and walk with Him – and unlike humanity, He will never leave us or let us down. He has rescued us from our eternal lostness once and for all in the person of Jesus who paid the price for your sin and mine on the cross of Calvary and through whose sacrifice we can be forgiven – for anything and everything.

Our unchanging God has lost nothing of His almighty power which created this fantastic world and raised Jesus, the first of all, who having faith in Him, will one day abide with Him for eternity. God is still in the miracles business transforming people and breaking into our lives in the most amazing ways. Nothing has ever been impossible for God and this has not changed.

God has not withdrawn his offer to come and live in us by his spirit to help us walk our life's journey, in all its joys and sorrows, suffering and pain. "I stand at your door and knock" He says, "If anyone will open the door I will come in". God is still our Heavenly Father and we are still His children and He still hears our prayers made in response to the timeless prayer Jesus gave "Our Father who is in heaven". And God still answers our prayers albeit in His timing and in ways that He knows to be best.

Finally, despite the practice of some Christians to cherry pick, embracing portions that sit well with them and explaining away or ignoring those parts that are difficult or do not support their chosen lifestyle, the Bible reveals the ageless truth about God and constitutes the Maker's Handbook for living the Christian life. In God's word we find the answers to all the big questions of life. It contains truths we need to hang on to when our feelings would mislead us, warnings we should heed, commands we need to obey and hundreds of wonderful promises of encouragement for now and forever. In the words of the Gideons, "The Bible is the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God". We dismiss it or meddle with its teaching at our peril. To depart from it sets us adrift to our own views, that of others or those of an uncertain and constantly changing world.

Satan is having a field day encouraging us to believe everything is changing and up for grabs and that we (number one) or the world, knows best. Our faithful God and His Word have not and will not change. May we hang on to that truth, as hand in hand with Him, we live life in the now, looking forward to forever with Him.

Yours in Christian Service,

Bob Grice

CULTURAL CHANGE

One of the big changes in my life, especially my Spiritual journey, was our move to Samoa as missionaries in the 1960's – different lifestyle, different culture – and I was presented with seeing the scriptures through different eyes.

At first, I thought white, Western eyes gave the only interpretation of scripture. Over time, I listened, and understood, the Samoans' viewpoint from their culture. For the first time, I saw culture and faith intertwined making it hard to distinguish.

An example:

In the West, we give our money secretly or by direct giving each Sunday. We say, "it is between God and us". However, the Samoans give annually as they have been saving for the whole year from their small income, giving sacrificially.

The special day arrives where offerings are gathered – a festive day in the church.

The family name is announced, and the family all go forward and present their money where it is counted, together with other people who would like to add to the family's contribution. The amount given is announced and great cheers go up from the congregation. This goes on for a long time until every family has contributed.

At the end of the day, who gave the most money is broadcast to the village by the village "Town Crier". The family is congratulated because respect is so important in cultural life.

I was aghast and couldn't possibly see how that was biblical. I was politely told "Are you ashamed of what you give". Our interpretations can be so different according to our culture.

A lesson for me in humility, understanding and listening and a widening of my image and interpretation of scripture. A warning to me to discern between culture and living a life of love.

Ruth Potter

Editor's note: I can relate to Ruth's experience as I had a similar one when Adrianne and I visited Peru – a deeply Catholic country. There were a number of nativity scenes scattered in shop windows throughout the various towns we visited – but there were no sheep for the shepherds [who were all dressed in the traditional dress of their particular region]. The animals were all llamas – which is where they get their wool from. I realised then that faith is contextual and quite rightly should reflect the local culture. That had never occurred to me before.



JUST A THOUGHT ON CHANGE

The UCA Assembly produces a weekly e-mail newsletter [*National News*] that, among many other things, tells what is happening in the Uniting Church around the country. One recent topic of conversation over a few weeks, was – **Innovation**.

The 20 – 26 July edition spoke of the work being done by Rev Mat Harry who is the 'New and Renewing Communities Catalyst' in the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania. His job is to help others think outside the box about what it means to 'be' and 'do' church.

For Mat, if the Uniting Church is to be serious about making space for new and renewing forms of Christian community it needs to rethink some of the deeply ingrained ideas of what it means to gather and worship together. To take the risk to reimagine what might be.

Mat was a 'late comer' to faith, and hence to ministry, so he brings a non-church background to his work. He has led dis-spirited congregations to new life and the article tells this story.

Here are some of his remarks that we might like to think about:

- What we do well as the church is caring for people and loving people, and that's what we need to concentrate on.
- Many faith communities already have a strong presence within their local community, either through missional activities or individual relationships.
- Quite often people take for granted the good stuff they are doing. The relationships are already there, it's just a matter of knowing how to leverage those relationships and cast a vision for people to get onboard.
- Our theology of new and renewing ministries is informed by the story of Pentecost in which the Gospel of Christ is translated into the languages of those present (Acts 2:1-13).
- All who were present heard the stories of God's deeds of power in their own language. Today the church needs to respond to Christ's leading in being adaptable in living and proclaiming the Gospel – embodied by the Christian Community – in ways and languages that make sense to all people.
- A big challenge for the Uniting Church is to move beyond what he describes as "institutional depression" based on a narrative of declining numbers.
- There's a general sense of malaise around the place - a sense we're all failing. But that doesn't have to be our story because there are examples of innovation bearing fruit.
- Our task – as has always been the task in every age and for every disciple – is to live and share the story of Jesus within the place we are planted. Therefore, congregational life needs to be ever adapting, and therefore innovative, in order to respond to the changes within our broader context.
- It is a wonderfully rich invitation. New and renewed community life is possible. Go seize the day! He suggests the following questions as the place to start.

FOUR GREAT QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN THINKING ABOUT INNOVATION

- Are people from the wider community joining in? If not, why not?
- Does the worship style we offer engage and enliven people for discipleship? Does the worship style primarily suit us?
- Are our people confident and happy to invite people to explore Christian spirituality within our community?
- How would people connect with our church community? Are the entry points obvious and welcoming?

CHANGE and CHANGELESS

As we move up through the years of life, it seems that the news reports contain stories on a growing number of celebrities and other well-known people who have departed this world. Perhaps we can recall when our own youth coincided with theirs and we might have been influenced by them.

For example, in relatively recent times, there has been the passing of a cluster of cricketers and entertainers, so being a bit of a cricket follower as well as one who was influenced by the changing music scene while growing up, I felt a bit of an impact. Up until then, people who had risen to heights in public life always seemed a lot “older” and hence it was like a natural progression for them to pass on.

We are all changing in some way, some in many ways. Ageing brings a new set of challenges, and we confront those with a little less security or strength than we did in the vigour of youth or the self-confidence of the middle years. Those of us who have seen history passing for the last seven decades or more would be entitled to think that the changes we have witnessed have been incredible and unprecedented. In just about all fields of human endeavour, there have been rapid advancements while the World’s population increased, putting greater pressure on space and resources.

Think about your own schooling and what it was like then and how things have changed today. Think about technology, mass communication and transport. Think about medical and social improvements over that time. Think about sport and entertainment and art and family life ... the list is endless.

Then there are the changes in social and cultural attitudes that we observe, given the benefit of a relatively wide time span. While many of these have raised awareness and enabled greater willingness to help those less fortunate, there are some elements that may be troubling.

We often hear terms like “self-centredness”, “narcissism”, “disrespect”, “aggression”, “impatience”, “hedonism” and “wokeism” used to describe modern times. I have to remind myself that while life may have appeared more simple, innocent and predictable in earlier years, it wasn’t perfect and for many people it was downright oppressive and miserable, and many problems and issues were just not spoken about or were endured bravely. When I look back at previous eras in history, I see outlandish and atrocious examples of over-indulgence, debauchery and greed which created an ever-widening gap between the haves and have-nots. This goes back through the ages.

Then there are the current trends in spiritual beliefs and church affiliation, which we have been made acutely aware of. As one *Weekend Australian* journalist says in part: “We are on the way to becoming, for the first time, an avowedly anti-Christian nation - not just non-Christian, but anti-Christian. The census tells us, surveys tell us, the culture tells us, and the law tells us.” That article was entitled “Lost in the secular desert” which says a lot about the trends.

So, what do we do? Shrink away? Worry? While we need to be prepared to examine the way we move forward, let us always do it in the light of our steadfast trust in the faithfulness of God and in His holy word and be obedient to it. Yes, we are a diverse nation and culture, and it sometimes causes tensions, but that was how it was in the days of the early church, too. They endured persecution, segregation, ostracism and estrangement but the church (here I mean the community of believers, not the institutionalised church) survived and grew, spreading far and wide. Being tolerant and affirmative of all persuasions is not what Jesus was doing when he mixed with sinners, hypocrites, doubters and outcasts. Let’s not get swept away by the spirit of the age but let’s continue to be the salt and light in whatever way is possible.

Priscilla Owens wrote the hymn “We Have an Anchor” in 1882 and the chorus says:

*"We have an anchor that keeps the soul
steadfast and sure while the billows roll;
fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!"*

In times of change (constant and unavoidable) and particularly when that change becomes worrying, we long for something that gives us stability and certainty. The Christian faith offers this. Those who do not share that view, while they be many and growing in number, are often seeking the same thing but they don't think Christianity is the answer. Be prepared to share courteously and respectfully with others the hope that you have (1 Peter 3:15). We are all changing and as with the "celebrities" who are now no longer with us, remember that:

"The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever". Isaiah 40: 8.

Paul Tarbuck

CHANGE ON THE RANGE

*New ways and methods have been tried and failed.
What next do we do before we're derailed?
'Dear Father in heaven, what road should we take?
Please show us the way to avoid a mistake.'*

*Now the church needs to keep a firm grip on itself
Don't get caught up in the world of the self
Beware of Satan and his plying ways
Or we'll be like sheep that have gone astray.*

*There's nothing wrong with trying new ways
To get people together to sing songs of praise
So, lift up our hearts and our voices we'll raise
And may God bless us all, for the rest of our days.*

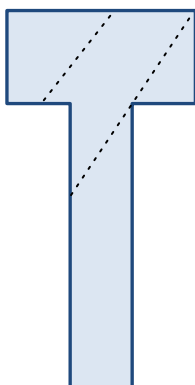
Joyce Butterfield

AN OLD AUTOGRAPHY BOOK ENTRY ON 'CHANGE WITH MARRIAGE'

AISLE
ALTAR
HYMN

ANSWERS TO TWO OF THE PUZZLES ON PAGE 13

Word puzzle (changing wood into sand) = wood --> word --> ward --> wand --> sand
Solution to 'T' tessellation puzzle.



THE TYPEWRITER

Early in my working life I was introduced to the importance of the typewriter. Described once by Mark Twain as a “new-fangled writing machine”, this device transformed workplaces. In the early eighties, my employer managed the critical task of producing typed documents for clients through an arrangement known as “the typing pool”. Typists sat in rows of desks with their typewriters constantly clickity-clacking throughout the day.

On one memorable occasion, the Remington typewriter salesman visited our office pushing a trolley onto which was strapped a large box. Typists and secretaries eagerly gathered around to see what was inside the box. The rest of us concluded that it must have been something fantastic, because from the other end of our hallway, we could hear the loud gasps of delighted jealousy. An electric typewriter had been brought to life. The fortunate recipient, the managing partner’s secretary, had insisted that a new technological advancement, the memory function, would improve her document output exponentially. The salesman, eager to demonstrate his product’s knowledge, entered the secretary’s name into the machine’s memory using a special new key on the typewriter. Curiously, when the secretary left the firm a year or so later, the only entry to be found in the typewriter’s memory was the secretary’s name.

The typing pool had their non-negotiable processes. Make no mistake, they were a gatekeeper of power. Cover sheets were mandatory for all typing requests. A three day document turnaround was the strictly enforced standard. Only partners had the authority to fast track a request, but they rarely were game to do so. But like many things, there are workarounds. When the typing pool supervisor, Miss Florence McVee, was on her lunch break this provided a slither of opportunity to jump the queue by bribing one of the junior typists with a chocolate bar. Miss McVee was a stickler for getting it right. I can still recall one of her impromptu lectures to me on the time and place for indented paragraphs.

After the conversion to electric typewriters, the next game changer was the use of those small bottles of white out paint. This sheer brilliant invention put an end to the frustration of having to wait a further three days for your document to be retyped should there be an error.

In time, with technological advancement, the Remington and IBM golf ball typewriters were sidelined in favour of the word processor. The typing pool morphed into the word processing pool. With an increasing demand for typed documents, the turnaround time increased to four days. Clients were inexplicably charged an extra fee for corrections. One typewriter was retained for typing addresses on envelopes. But with the advent of the sticky label, this lonely typewriter and the box of ribbons were soon destined for the trash.

Today, with the adoption of smart phones, tablets (the electronic ones), laptops, apps, social media and so forth, the printed document is losing its preeminent place. Typing pools and their new-fangled writing machines are a distant memory. Yes, processes change. Systems and things come and go.

What endures, is the message to be conveyed.

Peter Uhlmann



BOOK REVIEW:

'The Jesus I Never Knew'
by
Philip Yancey

Well! What a book! Philip puts the focus on Jesus as a real person in a real time in a real place and tries to ascertain his motives and reasons for acting and saying as reported. In the process he casts doubts about much of what he was taught in Sunday School and what we so often hear from the pulpits about Jesus.

The book consists of three parts – “Who he was”; “Why he came”; and “What he left behind” – in fourteen chapters as follows:-

1. The Jesus I thought I knew

In which he reviews images of Jesus as presented to him by Sunday School teachers (bearing cuddly lambs), painters (with long hair and European features), “Jesus freaks” (Che Guevara-like), movie producers (fearlessly self-possessed), and finally a film by Passolini taken directly from the gospel of Matthew. He admits to wrestling with the images that he had been offered, noting that these images had been often created or co-opted for political or other purposes. “Who was Jesus?” he asked. He notes that we often “see” Jesus from a “flash-forward” perspective – the now, not the then.

2. Birth: The Visited Planet

Here Yancey contrasts the way we have portrayed Jesus’ birth and its immediate aftermath in cuddly terms with Christmas cards depicting joyful scenes, etc. whereas the truth was probably much more traumatic – an unexpected illegitimate birth leading to pursuit by the authorities and fleeing down to Egypt. If God came today, Yancey speculates, what would his circumstances or characteristics be? Humble? Approachable? Underdog? Courageous? Yancey reminds us of another image – that portrayed in Revelations 12 where a dragon waits to devour a child.

3. Background: Jewish Roots and Soil

In the introduction, Voltaire is quoted saying “though he was a Jew, his followers were not Jews”. Yancey notes that our creeds were concocted by non-Jews and thus had no intimate knowledge of what a Jew’s eyes would see looking out at the world of a rural agricultural village called Nazareth. So, Yancey seeks to reframe his vision of Jesus to take in the view from that village and time. Along the way he also looks at the Muslim view briefly.

4. Temptation: Showdown in the Dessert

Here Yancey presents the temptation scene as one where Jesus is presented with the choice to come in power or in meekness. Each has consequences which we may not have considered. In the introduction he quotes Simone Weil “Love consents to all and commands only those who consent. Love is abdication. God is abdication.”

5. Profile: What would I have Noticed?

The introduction here is by Napoleon! Noting that the gospels quickly move from birth to middle age, there is no description of Jesus anywhere in the New Testament save for a reference to a passage from Isaiah which is a prediction, not a description. There was no ‘superhuman glow’ nor a halo of any kind. At times Jesus was unrecognisable. So “what would be noticed?” Yancey asks.

6. Beatitudes: Lucky are the Unlucky

Yancey notes that the Sermon on the Mount “haunted his adolescence”. *“Though I have tried at*

times to dismiss it as rhetorical excess, the more I study Jesus, the more I realise that the statements contained here lie at the heart of his message. If I fail to understand his teaching, I fail to understand him." Yancey writes. He brings the text into the modern world and compares Jesus' teaching with power politics and quotes J.B. Phillips' version for modern society – "*Happy are the 'pushers' for they get on in the world....*", etc. Delving deeper, Yancey notes "*Not only did Jesus offer us an ideal to strive toward, with appropriate rewards in view; not only did he turn the tables on our success-addicted society; he also set forth a plain formula of psychological truth, the deepest level of truth we can know on earth.*"

7. Message: A Sermon of Offense

Here Yancey explores the 'extremeness' of some of Jesus' sayings or expectations. Asking people to give not just a little but all, for example. He draws at times on the writings of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky for a different perspective on Jesus' sayings. Such demands come across as offensive to some – we might call it "Over the top".

8. Mission: A Revolution of Grace

Yancey asks in the opening lines why Jesus attracted so many 'down and outs' when we today seem only to attract the relatively well to do – a "community of respectability". He notes that Jesus turned a virtual caste system on its head and even had kind words for apparently immoral women. What has happened to our modern church, he asks.

9. Miracles: Snapshots of the Supernatural

Noting that when young he saw Jesus as the "great magician", Yancey here deals with the reported miracles Jesus performs and the seeming absence of God and His miracles in the face of so much need in various parts of the world today.

10. Death: The Final Week

Here Yancey discusses the events of Holy Week and their significance for him. He ends by writing "Power, no matter how well intentioned, tends to cause suffering. Love, being vulnerable, absorbs it. In a point of convergence on a hill called Calvary, God renounced the one for the other."

11. Resurrection: A Morning Beyond Belief

The events following the empty tomb through to the ascension are covered here. Yancey notes that the disciples staked everything on the truth of the resurrection. He also looks at some of the conspiracy theories to explain the empty tomb, and the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. He ends by noting two ways we might look at history, a change in which might explain the change in the disciples as they lock themselves in a room to discuss events.

12. Ascension: A Blank Blue Sky

Yancey talks about how Jesus might have planned his departure from the beginning. He notes that Jesus departed for the good of the disciples – why 'good'? He reflects on four of Jesus' parables and how they might be tied together and bear upon the post Ascension world – a world which still included the poor, oppressed, etc.

13. Kingdom: Wheat among the Weeds

Here Yancey discusses what might be meant by the "kingdom" so often referred to by Jesus. He highlights the fact that most thought of a Messiah as coming to restore an earthly kingdom, and many were disillusioned when this didn't happen. Christians are sent out into a dysfunctional world just as there is wheat among the weeds, I might say. We will find – and should expect - troubles but God has things in His hands.

14. The Difference He Makes

The chapter opens with the following introduction:-

The other gods were strong; but Thou wast weak;
They rode, but Thou didst stumble to a throne;
But to our wounds only God's wound can speak,
And not a god has wounds but Thou alone.

Edward Shillito

Here Yancey writes about the difference Christianity makes in peoples' lives and in history. The chapter ends with a simple story of him going to a grave in Louisiana to find only one word on the tombstone – "Waiting".

I found the book both challenging and inspiring, as it speaks to a real Jesus rather than a character in a book which so often seems to be the way we hear Jesus spoken about. I hope you read and enjoy it too.

Karl Tietze

KNOWING AND LOVING OUR BODIES

I find it interesting that, when I am casting around for content for the *New Vine*, I tend to look at all I come across to see if it fits the topic of the latest edition. What follows jumped out at me as being both topical to many of us, and it fitted the topic pretty well. I thought it also carried a worthwhile message. It comes from Richard Rohr's *Daily Meditations*, Tuesday, 9 August, 2022. [The Editor]

After being diagnosed with Stage IV cancer, theologian and author Kate Bowler worked intensively to know and love her body and its ways of both serving and failing her. As part of her spiritual practice, she wrote this letter:

Dear Body,

Sometimes, I hate you. You ache. You get tired sooner than I'd like to admit. You wake me in the night for no good reason. Your cells duplicate at unpredictable rates. New grey hairs, fine lines and silver stretch marks show up out of nowhere. You let me down just when I need you most...

Sometimes, I want a break from living with you. I'd prefer to trade you in for a newer model. A model that isn't in constant pain, that fits better in that pair of jeans, that has more energy. With you, I am limited—bound by skin and bone and thinning hair.

With you, I am fragile. . . .

But God knows what it's like to live in flesh. . . . If God too lived in a body, then God knows the ache of growing pains and the feeling of goosebumps on a brisk day and the comfort of a warm embrace. He felt the gurgle of a hungry stomach and the annoying prick of a splinter after a day of hard work. He wept over the death of a friend. Ours is a God who sneezed and rubbed His eyes when He was sleepy. Ours is a God who knew longing, heartbreak, excitement, frustration—the full range of what it means to be human . . . [and] live in a body.

So, when my own body drags me down, when my muscles ache, when my worries keep me up at night, when my fear for the future leaves me motionless, when I feel lonely and exhausted and burdened, I do not worship a God who is far off.

This is a God who knows my humanity inside and out. God has counted every hair on my head (Matthew 10:30) and bottled up every tear I have shed (Psalm 56:8). Not simply because the Word

formed us (Genesis 1:27), knit us together in our mothers' wombs (Psalm 139:13), was there from the very beginning . . . but because God wore our skin.

By embracing the wisdom of the incarnation, Bowler learned to listen to her body's messages and be kind to herself:

Dear, dear body, I get it. Or at least I am starting to. You do not have an unlimited supply. You run out, and I need to listen. Maybe I really should go to bed a little earlier or let you off the hook for craving those extra salty chips. I need to sense when you are struggling, and gently acknowledge that you are actually changing. That time and love and grief and life have worn themselves into my skin. Day by day. This is the beautiful, terrible evidence that we have lived.

Kate Bowler and Jessica Richie, *Good Enough: 40ish Devotionals for a Life of Imperfection* (Colorado Springs, CO: Convergent Books, 2022), 156, 157–158.

CHANGE

