

# THE new vine



**UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA**  
Blackall Range Uniting Churches  
(Kenilworth, Maleny, Montville and Palmwoods)  
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**AUTUMN EDITION ("On The Way"), Issue No 28, MARCH 2023**

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

Welcome to this latest edition of our church journal with the theme - *On the way*. Where this came from is explained inside somewhere.

For whatever reason, congregational contributions were not numerous this time round, and I thank those who have given me something to share. It was looking pretty desperate at one stage but we "kicked with the wind in the final quarter". However, the result is that there is a fair bit of editorial material as I ran round and round in circles for the first three quarters looking for support players. I apologise for this up front. Hopefully, it is sufficiently varied for something to speak to each reader.

As things were reaching the final stages before compilation and printing [the final whistle], the first Sunday in Lent had arrived and Liena had chosen to preach on God as our shelter, saying, at various places in the service, that Lent is a time for self-reflection; a time for looking in the mirror and asking ourselves who we are as Christ's followers; a time which does not support business as usual; a time to seek personal change in our lives; a time to consider how our actions really reflect, or not, our words and thoughts.

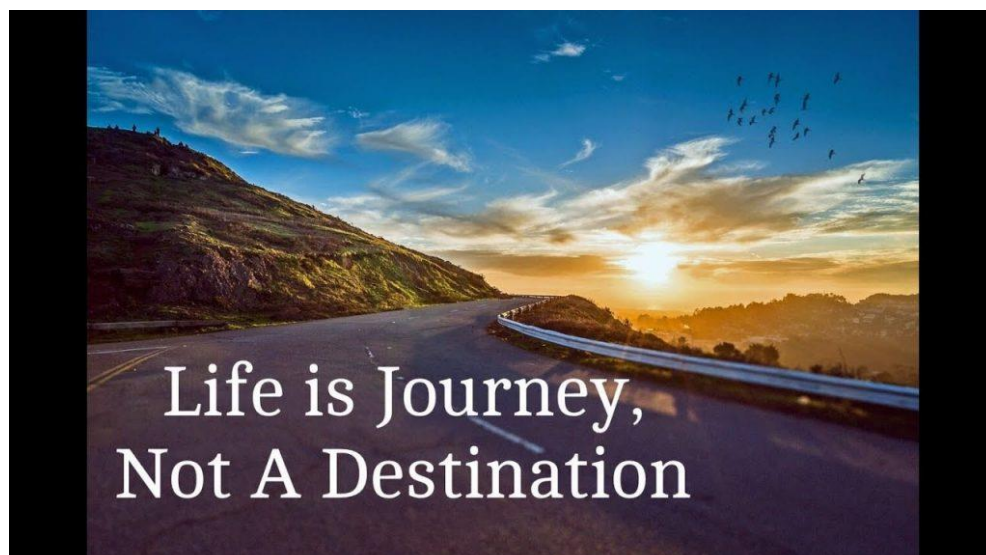
My hope is that this publication will help us all in this endeavour.

May it be read slowly and in quiet times; discussed among us; considered with other Lenten studies or activities we are involved in; support the Week of Prayer; and go with us as a companion on the road to Jerusalem with Jesus.

May Lent 2023 be a rich time for us all.

Peace and blessings,

Graham



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## WHO'S WHO IN THE BLACKALL RANGE CHURCHES

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## LIENA'S LINES

### A Pilgrimage of Identity

*“My father was a wandering Aramean,  
and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there  
and became a great nation, powerful and numerous.*

*<sup>6</sup> But the Egyptians mistreated us and made us suffer, subjecting us to harsh labour.*

*<sup>7</sup> Then we cried out to the LORD, the God of our ancestors,  
and the LORD heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression.*

*<sup>8</sup> So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm,  
with great terror and with signs and wonders.*

*<sup>9</sup> He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey;*

*<sup>10</sup> and now I bring the first fruits of the soil that you, LORD, have given me.” (Deut 26 vs 5-10)*

*“My father was a wandering Aramean,”* thought to be the oldest creed in the Bible undeniably defines us as pilgrims: as people of the Way (Acts 19:23), sojourners and aliens (1 Peter 1:1). Pilgrims is one of the most widely known descriptions of the identity of Christians, and seemingly also one of the most muted by the church. Mobility, being on the move is the core of our DNA, yet we seem to invariably lean towards planting, to occupying, to building, to establishment, to permanence (and consequently maintenance and entrenchment). Inversely we fear declining, change and moving.

The editor has asked us to reflect upon and share a personal story of pilgrimage. Here is a small perspective, clearly personal and subjective, of part of my own pilgrimage:

My father was a man of deep faith. And a farmer. Born and raised on Pennyfather, a 2,000-hectare property in the savannah grassland of mid-Zimbabwe. My father tilled the soil for more than 50 years, acquiring more property until the barefoot settler's son, who was raised as one of 10 children in a raw brick-homestead filled with much love and deep faith, and little possessions, and scarcity of food, developed a farming enterprise comprising of 3,000 cattle and 3,000 pigs. His intention was to leave each of his three children a viable farming operation, to establish us as secure landowners.

Then 2002, 108 years since my family occupied and worked the property, it was repossessed through political developments. And the unthinkable happened – my father had to leave Pennyfather and move to a foreign land, a land where he had no roots, no money and no allegiance...

And my father's response was that the land belongs to God and we are only stewards, temporary stewards, called to care for the property God has entrusted to us.

And so I stood before my mother's desecrated grave, and heard the new occupants' taunts: “why do you come to pay respect to thieves who stole this land from our mothers and grandmothers?”

For 40 years my identity was that of recipient and heir of an amazing beautiful farming enterprise and lifestyle. I too, like my father, was born and raised on Pennyfather, in a brick-home filled with love and deep faith and an abundance of possessions and food.

Now I learnt that there were others, who saw me and my father's identity differently. It is painful to hear that what one holds dear and treasured is considered by others to be bitter and stolen. History is complex, for settlers and migrants, and also for first occupants. It is challenging and emotive to discuss our histories, particularly those that cut deep into our identity.

Today, two countries, and one continent far from Pennyfather I try to hold on to the oldest creed of faith *“my father was a wandering Aramean”*. And I am learning to echo the words of my father *“we are only*

stewards". And I ask the Spirit to remind me that I need to bring my first fruits, with thanksgiving, and say "*my father was a wandering Aramean*".

Yes, we are pilgrims, people of the Way!

Shalom Liena



## ON THE WAY ... HOW DID WE GET HERE?

The stream of consciousness is a literary device I learnt about at Uni many years ago whereby an author's writings reflected the way her/his mind thought, going from one idea to another, without any apparent designated plot or story line. A bit of a ramble really. It was used by authors like Virginia Woolf, Henry James and James Joyce. I do not claim to be in that league, but I realised I seemed to be in that mode as I developed the theme for this edition. So, I thought I'd share the process with you to give you an idea of how we got to where we are. ED

### [A stream of consciousness reflection]

As the new year started, and I began thinking about the next edition of *The New Vine*, I realised it would come out in the middle of Lent. That suggested the theme should probably be something like – On the walk to Jerusalem with Jesus – as that would be upper most in our minds at the time.

However, at around the same time I received three New Year greetings, all the same, that caused pause and resulted in a broadening of that topic. This New Year message was obviously resonating with people so, I thought, it was probably worth sharing. It was a video in which Susan Boyle sang *Auld Lang Syne* as words rolled over the screen, and it was these words that attracted my attention. They described life as a train journey as you can see:

#### THE TRAIN OF LIFE

*Life is like a journey on a train ....  
With its stations ....  
With changes of routes ....  
And with accidents!*

*"At birth we boarded the train and met our parents, and we believe they will always travel at our side. However, at some station our parents will step down from the train, leaving us on the journey alone.*

*"As time goes by, other people will board the train; and they will be significant i.e. our siblings, friends, children, and even the love of our life. Many will step down and leave a permanent vacuum. Others will go so unnoticed that we don't realise that they vacated their seats! Which is very sad when you think about it.*

*"This train ride will be full of joy, sorrow, fantasy, expectations, hellos, goodbyes and farewells. Success consists of having a good relationship with all the passengers .... Requiring that we give the best of ourselves.*

*"The mystery to everyone is: We do not know at which station we ourselves will step down. So, we must live in the best way – love, forgive, and offer the best of who we are. It is important to do this*

*because when the time comes for us to step down and leave our seat empty – we should leave behind beautiful memories for those who will continue to travel on the train of life.*

*“I wish you a joyful journey this year on the train of life. Reap success and give lots of love. More importantly, give thanks for the journey!”*

*“Lastly, I thank you for being one of the passengers on my train!”*

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It was very easy to imagine taking such a train ride with Jesus as a fellow passenger.

Inevitably, questions arose:

- ❖ What is the destination of such a journey?
- ❖ Do we need to know the destination?
- ❖ Does Jesus notice all the people who get on and off the train?
- ❖ Does Jesus get off the train? What happens if he does?
- ❖ What do we all talk about while on the train?
- ❖ Are there different carriages for different people?
- ❖ What? Do I have to sit next to that person?
- ❖ How safe is this train?
- ❖ How come I lost contact with that particular passenger?
- ❖ And so on .....

Those questions reminded me of a book I read many years ago – *The Green Light* by Lloyd C Douglas, a USA Church of Christ minister, and author of *The Magnificent Obsession*, *The Robe* and *The Big Fisherman*. All were best sellers as I was growing up and impacted my spiritual journey to a great degree. They were on my train, so to speak.

I have always thought in *The Green Light* Douglas had one of his characters explain a life of faith in a fairly similar way, so I checked up and found he did, but not in the way I had thought. In this book, he described the life of faith as a great human procession where we all move forward, elbow to elbow, in the surge of life in an uncommitted way until there is a catastrophe of some sort and humanity’s finest traits of love, respect and compassion come to the fore. We are not pushed from behind to do this but pulled from the front, drawn into it.

I found this view a little challenging trying to measure my life and experience against it.

Again, questions arose:

- ❖ Do we meet our fuller and better self only through catastrophe?
- ❖ How are we drawn into this better way of living?
- ❖ Where/how does a conversion experience fit into this picture?

But this was not the image I had remembered for all those years. My memory must have come from another of his books. I remember very clearly his explaining life as a river – we do not know where it starts and we don’t know where it ends – it is just there, ever present, moving along and benevolently influencing, and providing life, to all around it. We, as humans, are like eddies that form at the edge of the river, spin from the bank for a period, are taken along by, and absorbed by, the current, and a little further on, we eddy back out to the river bank – some reach the other side, some don’t – but the river goes on, endlessly, eternally. We are simply part of it all – part of something much bigger and greater, for but a short while.

The similarities to the train ride appeared – being on a journey without really knowing the destination, just being part of the mass movement that carried us along. How does that fit with being On the walk



to Jerusalem with Jesus, I wondered. A number of possible answers presented themselves. This is the one I chose to follow.

If life is like a train journey or a river where we are just carried along, not knowing our destination, not really having any say in decisions that direct or affect us, what does that mean for us? Is that really like being On the walk to Jerusalem with Jesus – something we consciously choose, confident of where our destination will be? I came to the view that, while our lives are, to a degree, random, we are still to be part of, and play a role in, the world we live in. To be real, our faith journey must be chosen and lived consciously and deliberately.

So, I had to grapple with this – how to keep the two thoughts in balance and, being a wimp and a compromiser, I came up with *ON THE WAY*. This suggested to me that we can do both – live life and walk with Jesus. In fact, we must.



## ON THE WAY ... WITH VERBS

### Verbs for Prayer: Come, Look, Wait, Yearn, and Stay

From Saturday 1 April to Wednesday 5 April, as part of Holy Week, if we choose to accept the invitation, we will be taken on a journey of prayer developed at the Andrew Murray Centre for Spirituality in Wellington, a town in the Western Cape Winelands, a 45-minute drive from Cape Town, South Africa.

As I understand it, preparations are under way to supply everyone with a copied study booklet and a number of congregation members will be making short videos to give their thoughts and reflections on one of five themes for each of those 5 days. Along with the material in the booklet, the videos will help in giving background to the topic for that day.

The five themes for the study are taken from the five verbs listed at the top of this article. They are accompanied by scripture verses from John's Gospel and represent a moment in a larger movement of prayer and meditation. The centre which prepared them is attempting something new for personal and communal prayer – a contemplative approach to our spirituality.

I have seen a copy of the booklet and came to realise that the five verbs – or action words – can very easily be applied to being *on the way*. Do they not describe what we do on any trip we take - come, look, wait, yearn and stay? Surely then, they may be applied to our walk of faith.

There is much more to contemplate in the booklet which I commend to you.

Graham



*Andrew Murray*  
SENTRUM VIR SPIRITUALITEIT  
CENTRE FOR SPIRITUALITY

## ON THE WAY ... REFLECTING FAITH'S EXPERIENCE

As so often happens when I am thinking about a new edition of our journal, I see, hear, or feel the chosen theme reflected in so much of what I encounter every day. This time was no exception.

I was thinking about *being on the way with Jesus* and of what that might mean to each of us. How many different interpretations of this theme do we carry collectively, or even individually; how many different experiences have been had among us all as we have walked with Jesus; what will this particular walk bring in 2023? All sort of things running through my head.

And then I visited the Reflection Gallery at Montville to see the latest offering there. It was an exhibition of acrylic paintings by Wendy Jarrott-Smith entitled REFLECTING FAITH'S EXPERIENCE. My thinking sharpened suddenly – here, obviously, was something beyond my personal experience and it spoke to me as each painting put out a challenge to the viewer. Wendy's own words, as produced in the Gallery's Newsletter, probably say it best - Wendy writes,

*When you visit, you will notice that the focus for all my paintings in this display, is on words with the prefix 'RE'. From my primary school lessons, I remember that the prefix, 'RE' means 'Back or again'. Each of the paintings reflects the spirit of 'having another chance'...'turning back to your truth'..... 'starting fresh'.....'connecting again'. As you look at my paintings on display, please take time to read the accompanying thoughts, for they express the 'soul' of my work, and complement my mark-making on the canvas..... May both the 'words and paintings' be an encouragement to you on this part of your journey of life.....*

*Abstract painting gives me the freedom to conceptualise how our lived experiences shape our humanity, and to observe the 'rub' between the temporal and eternal worlds, through these experiences. The Celtic Christians would describe this space between the temporal, material world and the eternal world, as a 'thin place', and it is in the 'thin places' in our lives, that we often see the hand of God.*

*I have found this to be true in my life. And for that I am very thankful.*

I haven't reproduced the paintings here, that would not do them justice, but the list of words follows:

RENEW  
RESTORATION  
RECONNECTION  
REVERSE  
RECENTRE  
RECONNECT  
REVITALISE  
REGENERATE  
RECALIBRATE  
RESTORE  
REGROUP

My visit made me wonder if there may be value for us all during this Lent/Easter season in sitting quietly with these words and examining our lives – past, present, and future – to see if, and how, the words may impact upon us. What might the 'God of the Second Chance' be saying to us? Those who have viewed the exhibition will have a head start as Wendy posed some of these questions in her comments on each painting.

And hopefully, in this activity, we will encounter 'a thin place'.

## ON THE WAY ... TO OUR MOBILE PHONES

Apparently, I am told, this notice can now be found in many French churches

En entrant dans cette église, il est possible que vous entendiez l'appel de Dieu. Par contre, il n'est pas susceptible de vous contacter par téléphone.

Merci d'avoir éteint votre téléphone. Si vous souhaitez parler à Dieu, entrez, choisissez un endroit tranquille et parlez-lui.

Si vous souhaitez le voir, envoyez-lui un SMS en conduisant.

### Translation:

It is possible that on entering this church, you may hear the Call of God. On the other hand, it is not likely that he will contact you by phone.

Thank you for turning off your phone. If you would like to talk to God, come in, choose a quiet place and talk to him.

If you would like to see him, send him a text while driving.



Thinking of Lent and Easter often leads me to this prayer. It is, in a way, a precise summary of the Easter story for me.

This time round, it seemed also to be speaking about – Being on the Way.

**God help us to change.**

**To change ourselves and to change our world.**

**To know the need for it.**

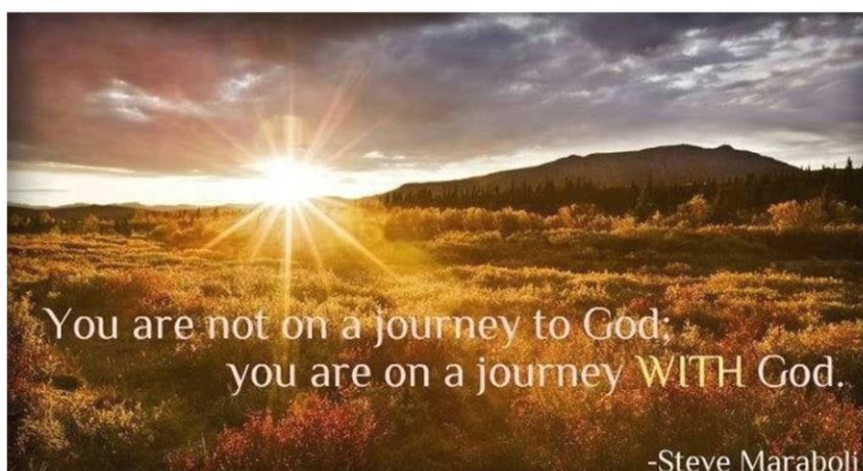
**To deal with the pain of it.**

**To feel the joy of it.**

**To undertake the journey without understanding the destination.**

**The art of gentle revolution.**

Taken from *A Common Prayer* by Michael Leunig





## POETRY ALONG THE WAY

Some years ago, the weekly prayer group that met at Moyra Jones' place, did a Lenten Study based on Mark's gospel. At the end of each session, our homework over the following week, was to write a poem based on our discussion. They were read at the start of the next study and then compiled into a booklet. The poems varied greatly but two that related specifically to *being on the way* are reproduced below in the hope they might encourage more such creative endeavour among us.

### JOURNEYING AND SEARCHING

Some of my search for truth indeed:  
 Is to try and impress people with my wisdom and learning,  
 Whereas Jesus would confront me with my great need  
 And in that confronting, satisfy painfully, my deepest yearning.  
 And still the journey goes on, and back;  
 One step forward – and two lost, alack!  
 Till one day perhaps, we will meet face to face,  
 And then at first hand,  
 Truth will take pre-eminence  
 And I will begin to understand,  
 That what I took for doubt and uncertainty,  
 Was perhaps the prompting of his divinity.

### THE PAUSE

My footsteps following Jesus  
 to his Jerusalem destination  
 pause, then halt.  
 He takes time out for a child,  
 and I, long time teacher of small children  
 am touched.  
 Touched.  
 Twice now Jesus has spoken  
 of betrayal,  
 and death  
 and rising  
 at his place of destination –  
 sombre and unwelcome words.  
 But now,  
 a small non-person  
 with no rights, no status  
 gives him pause,  
 and he holds this one in the circle of his arms.  
 I am wondering if the small, warm body  
 gave Jesus a moment of comfort  
 on his bleak journey  
 with honour-seeking disciples for companions....



## ON THE WAY ... TOGETHER

When I was preparing to take up the role of Moderator I was asked for a theme or slogan for the upcoming synod. I'm not all that keen on catch phrases and themes chosen by leaders, so I facetiously said why don't we simply have the theme "Synod". The word synod comes from two Greek words, "sun", which means 'together' and "odus" which means 'on the way'. That became an ongoing theme for the Uniting Church in Queensland for the next six years: *Together On the Way*. When Kaye Ronalds took over after my three years, she simply added the words "Enriching Community".

Thinking of my life as a pilgrimage, a purposeful journey "on the way to a promised end" has shaped the way I have understood my life and ministry. It still shapes what Heather and I have tried to do in our retirement.

At the end of March Heather and I are heading off on our own version of a pilgrimage. Ever since we retired, we have wanted to spend some time in the U.K. and the time has finally arrived.

For the past three years Heather and I have been leading prayer days at our place four times a year. We have had participants from a wide range of places, from Sydney, Bundaberg, the Sunshine Coast and Brisbane. We are trying to discern together what more God is asking of us. Therefore, we are going to spend Easter this year at the Iona Abbey, a retreat centre that has influenced us both for more than 40 years.

We will then spend a weekend at a retreat centre



Iona Abbey



The Corrymeela Community

in Northern Ireland called Corrymeela Community. We came across this Centre on FaceBook during the pandemic shutdowns. They posted a prayer each day which we used and encouraged others to

use. The theme of the retreat we are attending is "Building Spiritual Resilience", something that we hope to learn and share.

We will also be visiting The Holy Island of Lindisfarne, an ancient monastic site that still welcomes visitors who want to explore their own prayer life.

Celtic spirituality which has shaped each of these places of prayer, seeks to ground our prayers in our everyday life and work. The Celts sought to recognise God's presence in all that they did and all that they sensed around them.



The Holy Island of Lindisfarne

Apart from these specific places we will be touring many places that hold significance for us. Amid the usual tourist discoveries, we hope to listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit to discern what more God is asking of us. When we return, we hope we will have a deeper sense of what God is asking of us and the way we use all that God has blessed us with.

If you want to follow our journey, we will be posting our tourist experiences on our **Bruce Johnson** FB page and my theological reflections on our **Rest, Restore, Recreate** FB page.

Bruce Johnson

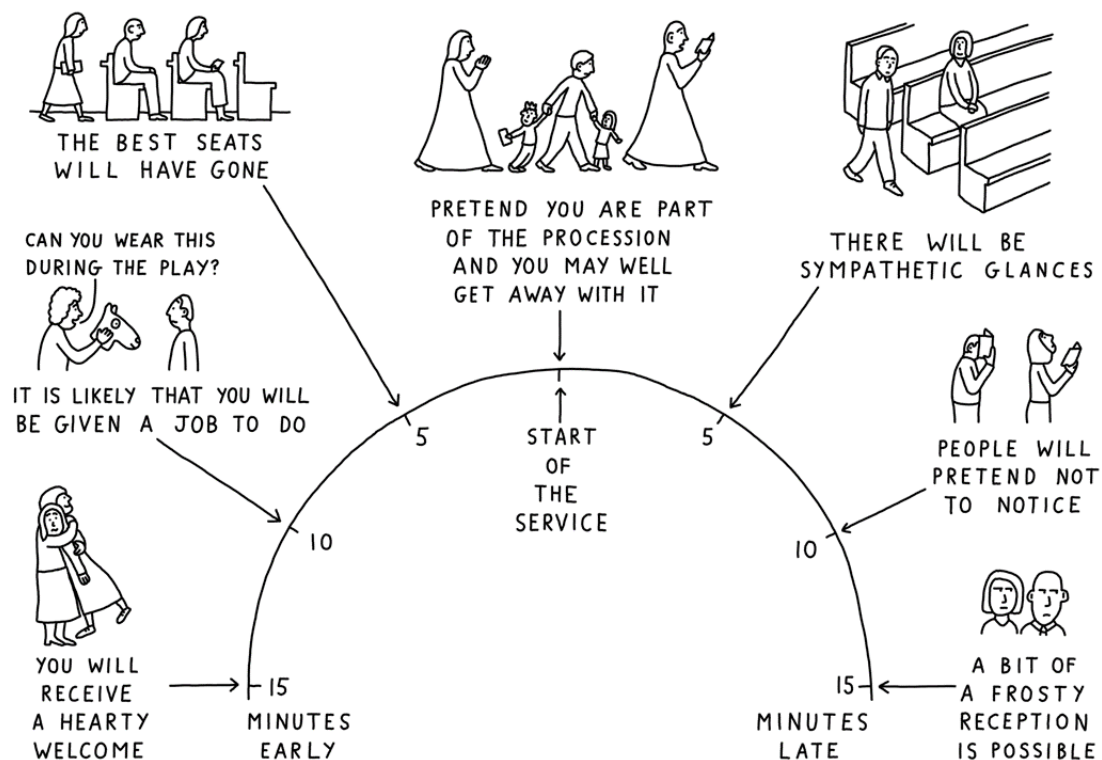
"Taking days out for prayer, a little soul searching, and a possible deepening spiritual journey is a well-established practice in a number of denominations. It is not so well known in Uniting Church circles, although ministers are encouraged to participate in such retreats. As we look to our church's future directions, and as we consider how we might dig a little deeper into what our faith journey actually means to us, I wonder if attending one of Bruce and Heather's prayer days might be something we put into our calendar each year for when they return? – ED"



## ON THE WAY ... TO CHURCH

Most Sundays, we put ourselves *on the way* to church. This little diagram was picked up from the church on the Scottish island Of Papa Westray [population 81]. It speaks of arriving at the destination more than being on the way, but I thought it a reasonable comment on the way things sometimes are. I guess, in a population that size, there might be a little more sting in the message.

### ARRIVING AT CHURCH



## ON THE WAY ... BUT FOLLOWING

The Church of Scotland's website carries worship material for each Sunday. Going through it one day, this final piece of a Reflective Prayer spoke – a reflective prayer allows for silent congregational prayer/thought/reflection after the prayer leader speak about an issue.

*Following Jesus  
does not require us to travel far physically,  
but to take huge steps  
in our understanding  
of our sisters and our brothers  
who make this pilgrimage with us.  
To bear their burdens  
and lighten the load  
with love and grace  
lived out in mercy and compassion,  
with steps more faltering than sure  
and a hunger born of justice.*

Hopefully it spoke to the congregation when used and again as you read it.



## ON THE WAY ... WITH FUTURE DIRECTIONS

At our combined service on 29 January, we were brought face to face with some of the work of The Future Directions Group. Papers had been distributed well before hand, and a good, open discussion was held after the service. We await the next steps on this journey with anticipation.

However, in addition, - I was brought up short by a couple of things in the service that preceded the meeting and which, I felt, led us to think that we were, in fact, *on the way*.

The first was in one of the opening hymns – “Brother, sister let me serve you” – by Richard Gillard. I am sure we all remember the verse in the Servant Song that says:

*We are pilgrims on a journey  
and companions on the road;  
we are here to help each other  
walk the mile and bear the load.*

I thought - how appropriate is that for where we are and what we are being called to do?

Certainly, *on the way*...

And later, in Fran's Prayers of the People, she included the hymn by Elizabeth J Smith - “God gives us a future”

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



*We must leave behind us sins of yesterday  
for God's new beginning is a better way.  
Fear and doubt and habit must not hold us back:  
God gives hope and insight and the strength we lack.*

*Holy Spirit teach us how to read the signs,  
how to meet the challenge of our troubled times.  
Love us into action, stir us into prayer,  
till we choose God's life and find our future there.*

Certainly, *on the way* ... with the promise and assurance that we will not be doing this alone.

Praise be to God!

Thanks to all responsible for the total experience of that time together.



## KARL'S KORNER

### ON THE WAY ?

One of the quirks of language is that we use words for several different ideas or things. To resolve this, we rely on the context in which the word is used. But do we always get it right?

Mostly we have thought of the "way" in a sort of geographical context. Thomas asks Jesus where he's going and Jesus replies by saying who (not what) he was (if John's memory and our efforts at translation are reasonably right – Jn 14:6) when he said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" and it seemed that he was using a geographical context because he spoke of coming "to the Father". Philip then asks Jesus to show him the Father, and Jesus says he and the Father "are one". So presumably Philip has seen "the Father" but not realised it, because he expected a second physical being. Confusing, isn't it?

So, what did Jesus mean when he said he was "the way"?

Was it a series of instructions? Perhaps on how to behave, or what rituals to perform to get to where Jesus was going? A sort of 'spiritual' 'road map', if you will. Religions of all persuasions have devised rituals and ceremonies, etc. which seek to fabricate such a 'road map' or 'formula' – abase yourself before your god; perform some pilgrimage; or follow some ascetic diet or lifestyle.

I recently read Neville Shute's book *Round the Bend* in which a fictitious narrator writes the story of how he, as an aircraft engineer, sets up an air charter business in the middle east and employs an old school mate who is also an aircraft engineer. This school mate has obviously come to some type of faith in a god, but he uses this faith to train his apprentices in the way they should approach their jobs. We would describe it as doing all you do as unto God, who sees everything you do anyway.

So, does Jesus mean that it is about the way we see the world and our place in it? After all, his beatitudes suggest he sees the world with a completely different value set.

What do you think?

KARL TIETZE



## ON THE LABYRINTHIAN WAY

One proposal arising from the Future Directions process was the establishment of a labyrinth at Montville. It was well explained at the meeting after church, and I heard it discussed in a few places afterwards. It is quite possible we will hear more about it at some stage. It reminded me of an article in *The New Vine* three years ago telling a lovely labyrinth story which I have reproduced below. I thought it could influence future thinking.

### **COMMUNITY LABYRINTH AT BARGARA CHURCH:**

*Last year we painted a temporary labyrinth onto the lawn at Bargara church for the retreat I held in November. It was quite popular, and people from within the community were using it before the paint dried up and blew away.*

*This started a bit of a community project to create a more permanent labyrinth in place of the painted one. The plan passed through church council, even though we were not quite sure how we would proceed. Next, a local developer offered washed rocks, free of charge and delivered to the church site. A post was put up asking if anyone would like to come along and assist us in placing the rocks. There are many people keen on labyrinths here, so we had quite a few people turn up and help move the rocks quite a distance from where the truck had dropped them, to the labyrinth. There was great excitement within the church and from within the community - there was previously no labyrinth in the Bundaberg region open to the community at any time.*

*Next we held a dedication ceremony and representatives from the Labyrinth society, local member Greg Barnes, Father John Daly from the Catholic Parish, and all the helpers who made the labyrinth a reality, attended and we officially opened and blessed The Bargara Peace Prayer Labyrinth.*

*Since then the community use the labyrinth regularly, and the Catholic Church will use it for retreats and planned walks with Fr John. It is very popular and has been received very enthusiastically by the community.*





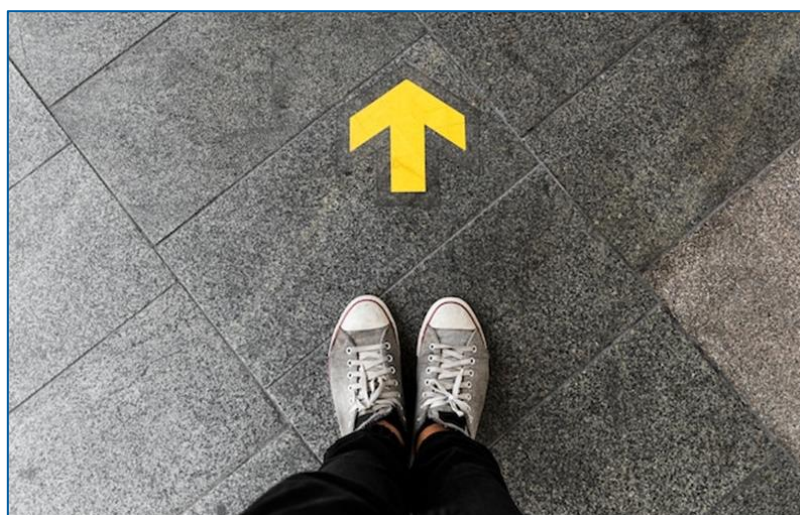
A labyrinth is an ancient tool for prayer and meditation consisting of a winding path [most often circular] that begins at the periphery and leads to a central space, and then out again by the same path. It is not to be confused with a maze which has dead ends or blind alleys. It is not a puzzle to be solved; you cannot get lost; you always end up at the centre. There, as at places along the way, you can pause to reflect and pray.

The best known labyrinth is probably that at Chartres cathedral in France where, in the thirteenth century, an eleven circuit labyrinth was inlaid into the floor of the sanctuary to signify the great pilgrimage to Jerusalem. More recently some have been more temporary, i.e. painted on canvas and moved around; nylon cord and tent pegs; cans of soup during an appeal for food and so on. None the less, however they are made, they always lead to the centre and out again.

In Christian practice, the labyrinth is not designed to produce a spiritual peak experience but to provide inner space for listening to God. It is a tool for prayer. They are usually walked slowly, but what if it has been used as a finger labyrinth? Why not try?



It is better to think of the journey of meditation as a spiral or a labyrinth rather than a straight line between two points. At times, it may seem as though we are going round and round in circles but in fact we are circling in – always getting closer to the centre.



## KIDS' PAGE

# Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

Read this story in Matthew 21:1-11

To work out the Key Words at the bottom of the puzzle

unscramble each of the clue words, taken from the reading.

Copy the letters in the numbered cells to other cells at the bottom, with the same number. ( clue 1 = P )

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The clue words are in this mixed up puzzle →



How many words can you find hidden here?

How many words can you find hidden here?



## ON THE WAY ... WITH DAILY DEVOTIONS

While thinking about this edition's theme - *On the way* - a number of things spoke to me unexpectedly e.g. Daily devotions and other reading.

### From author and poet **Edwina Gateley**:

But it is important for us to know that no matter how much life and circumstances may batter and bruise us on this journey of life, the God of our childhood is also the God of our adulthood and is also the God of our old age. God is faithful on this developing journey, ever seducing us along the way to remember who we are and from where we come. Who we are, the daughters and the sons of God, called to reflect the face of God in a suffering world.

### From American author, philosopher, theologian, mystic, educator, and civil rights leader, **Howard Thurman** in his essay - "*The Message of Micah*".

How do you walk humbly with God? How do you? How do you walk humbly with anybody?... [By] coming to grips with who I am, what I am as accurately and as fully as possible: a clear-eyed appraisal of myself. And in the light of the dignity of my own sense of being I walk with God step by step as [God] walks with me. This is I, with my weaknesses and my strength, with my abilities and my liabilities; this is I, a human being myself! And it is that, that God salutes. So that the more I walk with God and God walks with me, the more I come into the full-orbed significance of who I am and what I am. That is to walk humbly with God.

### From Richard Rohr in *Following Jesus' Way*

*Jesus summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it."* —Mark 8:34–35.

*Richard Rohr shares how Jesus' message and way is intended to change our lives with its counter-intuitive wisdom and call:*

A blatant contradiction between message and action is holding us back in every part of the world. Christians too often preach a self-absorbed gospel of piety and religiosity, rather than a "lifestyle gospel." The gospel is so radical that if we truly believed its message, it would call into question all the assumptions we currently hold about the way we live, how we use our time, whom we relate to, how we marry, and how much money we have. Everything we think and do would be called into question and viewed in a new way.

I believe that we rather totally missed Jesus' major point when we made a religion out of him instead of realizing he was giving us a message of simple humanity, vulnerability, and nonviolence that was necessary for the reform of all religions—and for the survival of humanity.

Jesus is a person and, at the same time, a process. Jesus is the Son of God, but at the same time he is "the Way." Jesus is the goal, but he's also the means, and the means is always the way of the cross.

The way of the cross looks like failure. In fact, we could say that Christianity is about how to win by losing, how to let go creatively, how *the only real ascent is descent*. We need to be more concerned with following Jesus, which he told us to do numerous times, and less with worshipping Jesus—which he never once told us to do.

### From Laurence Freeman, Director of the World Community for Christian Meditators in *The art of waiting*.

*Conversatio*, the word that St Benedict uses is the whole process of transformation, of change, like a conversation with God as the ground of our being, and a continual turning. *Conversio* means to turn, so a continual turning towards God. We have to take the attention off ourselves in order to place our attention on God. What does that mean? It means that we take the attention of the

self-conscious flow of thoughts, sensations, self-aware-ness, self-judgment, all the constant flow of thought and feeling that is going on in our consciousness, and that refers to 'me'. We turn away from that in meditation.



## ON THE WAY ... FROM A SERMON

Late last year, in Advent, there was a sermon at Maleny where the preacher suggested we develop an Advent film [called ARE YOU THE ONE?] based on the lectionary readings – mainly Matthew 11: 2 – 11 and Luke 1: 46 – 55 but also Isaiah 35: 1- 10.

The idea was that through group discussion we would find, based on Isaiah, the areas of life where God's presence was really needed today. Then we were to look at the gospel readings to find the characteristics of the three heroes [Mary, John the Baptist and Jesus] that we would like to portray in the film to show the world what it meant to be an authentic follower of the one, true God.

This was followed by consideration of what, if anything, the three may have had in common that could bring cohesion to our film. The view emerged that they were all on the brink of something new – they were agents of transformation.

And so, we looked at John's question to Jesus – Are you the one? We contemplated that the film might somehow reflect Jesus asking each of us that question. Are you the one who can, and will, be an agent of transformation in the word today?

As we went our way, we were challenged to each write our own version of the film – and one person, at least, did and sent it to the preacher for encouragement. It follows:

### ARE YOU THE ONE TODAY?

#### THE DESERT

Many units in a public residential block. Mary lives there, and each day she hears arguments and domestic violence.

#### MARY

A young woman, married to a builder. She is gentle, but sees the future where she in a resident with no one to care for her.

#### JOHN

A political prisoner, who hears of the world in the residential block, He asks friends if what he is hearing is true.

#### JESUS

An itinerant preacher with different ideas, and the son of Mary.

#### WHAT HAPPENS

John asks some of his friends to approach Jesus, to see if he could help in some way.

He has done many things before, why not now?

Jesus replies that it is what people say of Him, that makes them feel he could help.

He says I can help, but not by myself.

The help comes from Mary, because of her love. It comes from John because of his standing in the community.

They come because he asks just one question of each person.

### WILL YOU HELP ME?

### ARE YOU THE ONE TODAY?

## ON THE WAY TO ... HOW, WHEN WHERE???

### Musings on finding our way as Maleny Uniting Church

During the last few months, I've been reflecting on the broader issues that we as a church face. I have to say many questions repeatedly arose which I think need to be considered bravely and freshly and with imagination and hope. Also, several metaphorical elephants repeatedly entered the room, trumpeting loudly, demanding attention as only an elephant can!

I want to be clear that what I am sharing here is written from my own personal perspective and is not being written as a part of processes being undertaken by the Future Direction Group in which I have taken part. I am seeking to share what has come to me personally during several months of my own exploration and seeking and while having conversations with a broad range of people.

First and foremost, I have great hope and trust our Almighty God knows the way ahead for His church. I have great hope that we can move into the future, with a willingness to bravely release our grip on the past and being prepared to have a crack at moving forward creatively and with an open agenda. Then we can consider afresh new ways of being God's people and partnering with Him in making His Kingdom come in the midst of our community. So, here goes...

#### ***The really, really big "What if" question...***

We can become consumed with ensuring that the church as we know it continues into the future. But what if a completely different "church" is around the corner, about to be "born" at the inspiration of God's Spirit which is suited to the world as it is in this age? What if letting go is what our current era of church life is about as our inherited model of church life tapers off and, as has happened in many places, comes to an end? I know... shocking and scary but exciting too.

#### ***Some other questions...***

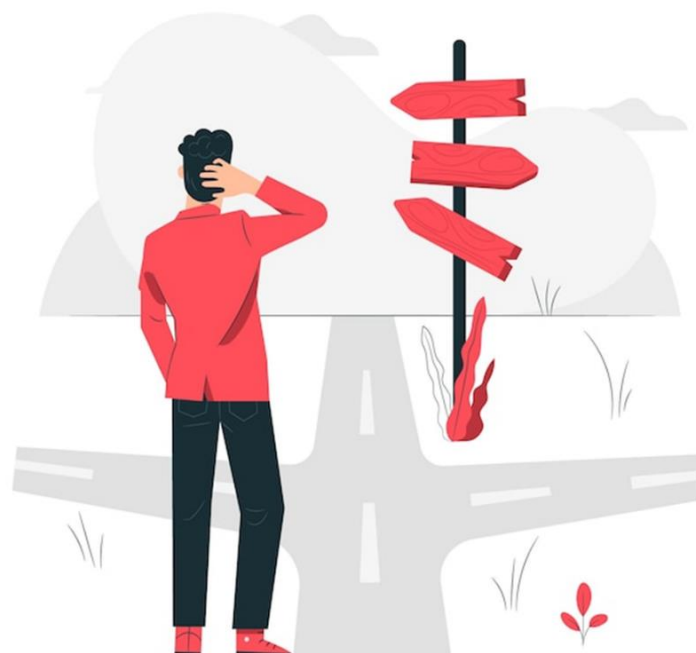
- Who are we? As I see it, we are (among other things) a caring and loving congregation of older people who join together in an inherited style of worship service on /Sunday mornings. Also, we have a substantially sized praying community. We have much blessing to bring.
- What are our giftings? I think God's intentions for His people are reflected in the gifts he has given to each of us.
- Where are we throughout the week? Do we each see ourselves as having a part to play in God's mission in our daily lives and are we able to articulate our faith story in these settings?
- Where are we located physically?
- Where are we placed in a broader sense? What are the needs of our community? What are other local churches doing/offering? What other organisations are working in the spaces we are considering? What other facilities are there in our town?
- What opportunities are there for partnering with others who are working in the community in areas for which we have a heart?
- How can we ensure we don't replicate what others are doing and in doing so "step on their toes"?
- How do we build on what links, ministries we have already – e.g. schools, Erowal, neighbourhood centre, other community groups.
- Do we understand the context of the church's standing in society and the extent to which the general population has lost faith in the institution of the church? Some current Christian thinkers look at many outside the church as "nones and dones" i.e. those who have no past experience or connection with church at all (nones) and those who have previously connected and have intentionally left (dones). Is how we "do church" helpful and inviting to these groups?

### ***The elephants***

- Our location...
  - As we are a bit out of town, does this present a barrier to the success of “drop in” or “hub” type ideas which may be more suitable if we were located more centrally in the town?
  - We have a built-in mission point right there in our campus – Ben Bryce and Erowal. Is this a beautiful forest of opportunity which we can’t see because we are looking for more rare and attractive trees to plant?
  - We have a vulnerable community in our immediate neighbours at Ben Bryce and Erowal for whom we have a duty of care. Maybe we need to consider that having people using our site unsupervised could pose a risk to these our neighbours? If our church was situated on a stand alone property, we would be free to choose to be more relaxed about the risks involved in inviting people onto the property unsupervised.
  - How do we manage the fact that we are sited on BlueCare land so don’t have ultimate say over potential uses of our site? Working with a large bureaucratic external organisation presents its challenges, for example in relation to timely decision making and non-aligned agendas.
- None of us is getting any younger! We will have a substantially increased need for pastoral care in the next few years. How can we use our resources to continue to honour our aging church members when their time of need for support and care arises?
- As an aging congregation how can we build into the lives of families/children/youth in our town? Sociologically, there is an ever-widening gap between generations resulting in a need for leaders who have a deep understanding of the context in which the younger generations are living. Youth don’t look to “elders” (or even their parents!) for direction/wisdom – they look to peers and social media. Families are busy and smaller churches struggle to have a sufficiently large cohort of regularly attending families to have a viable family church service, as we have found in the past. What does this mean for us?

That’s about it. Let’s bravely and with hope sit in listening prayer over these questions along the way.

Helen Uhlmann





## ON THE WAY ... TO A BETTER WORLD

Ray Ellemor's friend, Harry Donnelly, writes a poem every week and shares it among friends. Ray thought this one was timely and to the point we were considering. Thanks for sharing Ray.

### Wishful Thinking

*The winds of change had blown  
across a country far and wide,  
through sport, religion, politics,  
nowhere left to run or hide.*

*Something powerful had evolved  
and descended from afar,  
the Southern Cross had formed  
into one most amazing star.*

*From Broome to chilly Hobart,  
Perth to Townsville...merged as one,  
the outback joined the cities,  
amalgamation had begun.*

*The rich, the poor were equal,  
young and old saw eye to eye,  
one people of one nation  
hand in hand beheld one sky.*

*Animals felt their freedom  
no one hunted just for game,  
every person black and white  
had a home in their own name.*

*Banks weren't chasing profits,  
politicians told the truth,  
society started nurturing  
instead of badgering its youth.*

*Children played together  
with their innocence kept in check,  
parents found it useful  
to teach the benefits of respect.*

*Calmness ruled the highways  
common sense a way of life,  
carving Sunday's roast  
the main requirement, a knife.*

*Each hospital had resources  
for immediate love and care,  
the elderly felt respected  
within treatment kind and fair.*

*Drugs were used for healing  
not for mashing up the brain,  
employment was a way of life  
and pride in self remained.*

*Australia stayed Australia  
and threw that 'global' tag away,  
all Aussies became united  
to stand and fight another day.*

*Then — a clanging like I'd never heard,  
my heart went to my mouth,  
the alarm, 'twas Monday morning,  
and my dream — just headed south.*

Harry Donnelly 23-2-23



Joshua 1:9

## GOALS

*My goals I keep before me now  
Those goals I cherish without vow  
To cover the world with peace and love  
To help my God watching from above.  
This task I try every waking hour  
To bring God's wish alive, one day.*

*This one small task I hold so dear  
Held firm by those I find so near  
I pray that others may have found  
The joy of hope, and mind at peace  
We can together help our God  
To work together on this task so real.*

*Oh keep Your goals before me now  
Proceed to keep them ever more  
Trying, I will be forever true.  
God bring peace to your world below  
I will keep my goals with You.  
Your strength will guide me through.*

Col Harding



## ON THE WAY

*When travelling on the way each day  
I will try to take the right of way  
Some paths often lead us nowhere  
I must make sure I end up there.*

*There is where my Lord is waiting  
So I'll journey on, no deviating  
The path is long so I'll keep on track  
And be true to our God and not look back.*

*Genesis is the beginning of life  
Revelations the end of strife  
Why study the Bible I hear you say  
It teaches us how to live each day.*

*Strife through the ages, philosophies and more  
Songs of praise and parables galore  
Stories and miracles to fill us with awe  
The Bible is surely the word of our Lord.*

*So I'll keep on travelling on the way  
Making sure to read the Bible and pray  
So I'll be able one day to say  
I have come to Jesus my Lord to stay.*

Joyce Butterfield

## ON THE WAY ... WITH BLESSING

I came across this the other day and thought it may speak to others like it spoke to me.

### A Blessing When Suffering Costs Us

Our lives can be plagued by our humanity – by systems that are too large for us to shoulder alone; by cells that duplicate without our permission; by relationships that don't work out and church communities that disappoint us and mental health struggles that make getting out of bed just too hard some days.

How do we stay faithful when, no matter how hard we work or how much we pray, we are not exempt from suffering? Might there be room in our actual lives—the one freighted by our neediness for others and raw hopes for tomorrow—for a blessing when everything seems to cost so much?

If you are feeling the cost of all your loves and all your hopes, this is a blessing for you.

### For courage when you thought things would be different by now

God, I thought I would feel different by now,  
but new pressures just keep mounting.  
I have been struggling for too long  
to meet each new challenge,  
to scrape up resources,  
to find small comforts,  
to change strategies,  
to dig deep into my reserves,  
to stay positive,  
but I need relief  
and fresh hope  
and a minute to just say,  
*I really wish things were easier.*

*“We do not know what to do,  
but our eyes are on you.”*

—2 Chronicles 20:12, *New International Version*

Just when we thought we could almost be done with this,  
another shoe drops. There are no finish lines.  
We long for the simple joys of times past,  
those everyday pleasures we can barely remember, but still hunger for.  
A great night's sleep.  
Less financial stress.  
The ease of making future plans.  
The wish that our faith would give us an exemption  
from all that is too painful.

Blessed are we who look to you, God,  
in the midst of troubles that are too great for us,  
that have gone on far too long.  
Who dare to say,  
now would be a good time for help to come,  
for this to be over, once and for all.  
God, send us help.  
Bring solutions for the desperate,

protection for the vulnerable,  
comfort for the suffering,  
strength to the caregivers,  
wisdom to those in charge.

Infuse us with the courage to suffer with hope.  
That our suffering doesn't go unnoticed by you.

Sustain us and orient us to the reality in which we now live.  
Help us pace ourselves. Keep us awake  
to what might be done, right now.

*“I will strengthen you and help you;  
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”*  
—Isaiah 41:10, *New International Version*

Kate Bowler and Jessica Richie, *The Lives We Actually Have: 100 Blessings for Imperfect Days*  
(New York: Convergent Books, 2023), 146–147. Used with permission.



## ON THE WAY ... TO REALITY?

### Aging

Ageless God,  
I don't like getting old.  
I just don't relate to it at all.  
In my mind I'm still the youngest in the class.

It seems like only yesterday I had to show ID to prove I was old enough,  
now no-one even questions when I ask for Seniors' discount.  
And shop assistants call me “Dear!”

I know I should be thankful, and I am.  
I'm older (just) than my mother when she died.  
My hair is still mostly brown, and I don't have arthritis.  
But I'm getting long in the tooth – literally;  
my dentist warns that my front teeth might fall out  
if I don't change the way I brush.  
And not only do I wear glasses, but now I'm getting cataracts.  
Cataracts!  
They happen to old people, and I just don't feel old.

But it's not just the physical aging,  
it's the aching sense of loss for all that is past and can never be had again.  
Never!

Never again will my parents welcome me with open arms.  
Never again will my husband and I be young and carefree.  
Never again will we walk hand in hand along the beach  
feeling like Adam and Eve, ready to populate the world.  
Never again will I feel a child stir within my womb,  
feed a baby at my breast,  
hear my children's laughter as they play in the sun.  
Never.



At least I can still remember,  
some of us lose even memories.  
Do you know what that is like, Ageless God?  
  
When Jesus cried out in God-forsaken loneliness upon the cross,  
was it this loss he felt?  
Was he bearing, not our sins, but our terrible mortality?  
  
So, *do* You know what It feels like to grow old, Ageless God?  
You who exist from one eternity to the next, *do* You know?  
Are you the Participating Presence as one by one  
the things we treasure slip away?  
Are they somehow held safe in You?  
I hope so.

Another perspective of being on the way. Written by a valued friend and colleague in ministry in New South Wales, Rev Janet Dawson, and shared with me recently. We worked together – she as Presbytery minister and me as Presbytery Secretary, for many years – and we are still good friends!



## ON THE WAY ... THROUGH INTERCESSION

Murray led the prayers at Maleny on 26 February and I asked him if I could use his Intercession here as it spoke to me of being on a Lenten way and therefore worthy of wider use.

----

### First Sunday in Lent, 2023 - Prayer for Others

The season of Lent has been part of the Christian tradition for centuries.  
During Lent we are directed to **Pray**, to **Fast** and to **Give**.  
These are called the three Pillars of Lent.

They reflect the way Jesus lived his life:  
and have become a model for us to follow.

As we pray this morning, I invite you to reflect  
how our Prayer, Fasting and Giving  
might reach out to others in need.

#### Will you pray with me?

Holy God – We are called as your people to pray.  
Teach us to pray because we don't always get it right.  
It's easy for us to make lists and petitions and leave it at that.  
But we've just sung: *O for a closer walk with God*.  
Maybe that is what is needed  
instead of going in too quickly with our requests  
and then neglecting to use our prayers to worship you.  
So, in this season, draw us to you,  
and help us to re-align our times of prayer and contemplation.

Whether we fast, or not, fasting reminds us of the distractions that fill our lives,  
taking us away from the things that matter – prayer and giving.  
Lord, in these coming weeks, help us, as Jesus did,  
to find time to remove ourselves to a quiet place,  
to shut out the noises and demands of modern living,  
to be still and silent before you.

Fasting may also help us to confront  
the excesses of our modern, westernized lifestyles.  
Our demands for more, for better, here and now...  
In the coming weeks help us to see more clearly  
how our excessive consumption impacts in damaging ways –  
on our planet, on underpaid workers, on sweatshop workers,  
on food wastage, landfill, polluted skies and oceans

So, Lord, as we confront our excesses,  
may we identify with .....

Those with empty stomachs because there is not enough food  
Those who are ill due to – poor sanitation and dirty drinking water  
Those whose homes are wrecked by fire and flood and cyclone and earthquakes.  
Those whose homes are no more, because of the ravages of war.

May we identify with .....

Those who hunger within themselves,  
For Peace of mind, in place of confusion.  
For stable living in place of harmful relationships  
For reconciliation in place of disharmony  
For assurance that someone cares.

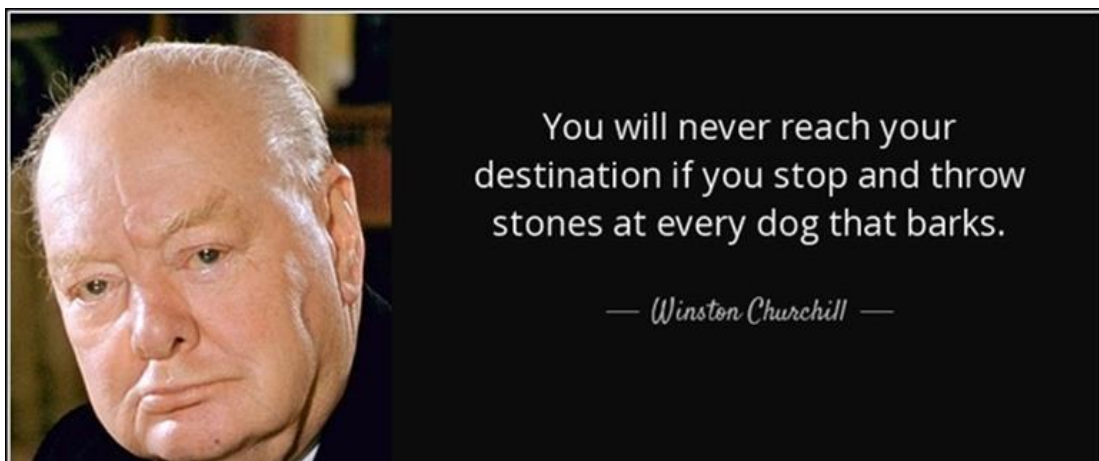
Finally, Lord, may our giving transform  
our prayer and fasting into action for others.  
For that was what Jesus did –  
coming down from the mountains and out of the desert –  
to heal, to feed, to preach the good news, to love.

I Invite you now in a time of silence  
to reflect, to focus, to pray....  
Asking God how you can direct your giving, your fasting and your praying.

### Pause for a moment

Lord God, as we give, as we fast and as we pray,  
may we do so without fanfare  
because that is the way of Jesus.                      Amen

Murray Robertson



## ON THE WAY ... AS PILGRIMS

When I was a young boy, I was given a picture book of John Bunyan's "The Pilgrim's Progress". This book is known as a classic account of the journey of one man (Christian) from his home city (called "Destruction") to a place called "The Celestial City".

We probably all know the story - his travels are not smooth, pleasurable mountain-top experiences. In fact, this man is confronted by difficulties, struggles, disappointments, threats, detours, negative influencers and fearsome, loathsome creatures all along the way.

In fact, if some of the politically correct censors had their way, some of the episodes in the *Pilgrim's Progress* might be sanitised on the grounds they could be emotionally harmful. I remember quite vividly the episode when Christian falls into the "Slough of Despond" and almost sinks into the bog because of the weight he carries; I can recall the pages full of pictures of the horrible Giant smiting pilgrims with a massive club and then my recollections go to the epic fight between Christian and the demonic entity "Apollyon". I was also intrigued by the strange names given to some of the characters, such as "Great-Heart", "Feeble Mind", "Ready to Halt", "Much-Afraid" and "Valiant for Truth".

At my young age, a few things stood out: that Christian left home and his family with a smallish backpack but it grew heavier and heavier, and he didn't know what to do about it; that when he arrived at The Cross, his heavy pack was suddenly loosed and bounced down the hill, never to be seen again. It struck me that even though the weighty pack had gone, Christian still encountered grave threats to his safety and even his life, but with his faith and the help and encouragement of others, he continued to fight the good fight and entered into his reward.

The full story ends happily in the second part of the book. Christian's family, who originally had rejected his faith and ridiculed his decision to leave, changed their minds and commenced their own journey, meeting him eventually in the "Celestial City".

*Pilgrim's Progress* has always been categorised as an allegory (a narrative or poem which contains images that represent a story with a deeper meaning). I notice that it is now available in modernised versions and as a children's book, fully illustrated in colour. Mine was in black and white, but that was quite a while ago.

It's an intriguing summary of the walk through life that Christian believers experience. I think that one quote sums it up and challenges us:

"What God says is best, is best, though all the men in the world are against it."

- John Bunyan, *The Pilgrims Progress*

Paul Tarbuck



## ON THE WAY ... TO KEPERRA

The farewell for the Clarksons on 26 February at Maleny Church was a musical feast, with Val at the organ and Ron on the clarinet. As usual, they displayed their skills and love of music: some rousing music prior to the service, a series of Val's favourite hymns from TIS and a moving, prayerful rendition of Mozart's Alleluia.

Rev Liena acknowledged the couple's significant contribution, not only to the musical component of worship, but also to their quietly unobtrusive contribution to fellowship and hospitality at their home, over their 16 years in Maleny. As well as the weekly organ rosters at Maleny and Montville, other highlights include their regular musical entertainment at Erowal, fundraising concerts for the Allen organ, and Val's membership of Church Council for several years. Liena highlighted the fact that, during Covid lockdowns, Val set out to play every hymn in TIS, a testament to her devotion to church music.

Paul Tarbuck spoke on behalf of the Music Team and then Mavis and Helen presented the couple with a music box in the shape of a miniature grand piano, skillfully crafted by John Bock.

Ron and Val will be greatly missed on the Blackall Range. We wish them every blessing as they move to their new home in Keperra.

Murray Robertson



### IN CONCLUSION

[To think about and record as many answers as we can remember]

I was on the way on my road of life and I was conscious of God being with me when

.....

.....