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# The Mustard Seed

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Armadale Uniting Church

*Edition 20 Easter 2016*

## From the editors...

In this issue, we reflect particularly on the “road to Emmaus” story, which appears in the Lectionary for the week after Easter. Gillian’s article offers us some thoughts about this story, and how it relates to the lives of each of us.

Bill has written a poem on the event that Luke portrays.

David and Lucy Fallick relate their experiences on Christmas Day in the Black Forest, and we reflect on the year of Luke in the lectionary.

Margaret Black’s meditation, delivered on the 2nd Sunday in Lent, is included for those who would like to recall it, and for those who missed it.

Also included is some information about changes on the Church council, activities at Armadale and the interesting talk we heard from Max and Ruth Champion.

— Bill Rush and Graeme Harris.

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## A Great and Wonderful Story for Easter

**Rev Gillian Crozier**

The road to Emmaus story (*Luke 24: 1-35*) is one of the great and wonderful stories that have come down to us. It is probably the most popular story next to the stories of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal son.

But for all of its greatness, it is interesting to note that the biblical scholars and the archaeologists have yet to discover just where this little town of Emmaus was. They haven’t quite found its location. And maybe just as well, because the way the gospel is written, the road to Emmaus story is less an account of geography than it is a story of every individual’s journey.

And it’s a universal journey, a kind of prototype story of human existence itself. Because the simple fact is that every human being - you and I and everyone who’s ever lived, is a traveller. We’re all travellers on that long-ago and ever-present road of life. All of us, therefore, as the gospel suggests, travel the same way.

Moreover, our Emmaus story, has the same three elements that are common to every journey story, religious or folklore, that is found in every culture, society, and time.

The first element that is common to all such stories including our gospel story, is that a supernatural guide is on the road with us – a supernatural presence on

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the road of life, like Jesus on the road to Emmaus, and this presence joins us en route.

The second element is always this: human blindness and the resulting disappointment. The human blindness is that we simply don't recognise the presence. And, because we don't recognise the presence, we are frequently disappointed. You can hear that disappointment in the complaints of the two disciples as they talk to the stranger: "We had thought that we would finally be rescued. "We had hoped that this Jesus would have been the one to set things right. "It's been three days now since they killed him and, along with him, our hopes."

And so, not knowing the mysterious presence that is with them, they fall, like most people, into despair or cynicism. They echo the age-old cry of us all, "Where is God?" And the cry is particularly poignant in times of distress, brokenness, tragedy or death. We had hoped that God would rescue us but God failed and didn't rescue us. Where is God? We have no hint that God is present or cares about what we're going through.

The third element, common to all journey stories is also present in our road to Emmaus story, and that is revelation. There is a certain point in the journey of human life when people recognise that they are not alone. Usually such a discovery is made in hindsight. Like our two disciples who had the revelation of the risen Christ in the breaking of the bread. Later on, in hindsight, on their way back to Jerusalem, they are compelled to remark, "Were not our hearts burning inside us on the road as he opened the Scriptures to us?" Put in other words, they are saying in effect, "Now that we think about it, when we were walking along that road, complaining, being bitterly disappointed and hurt and pouring it all out to that stranger whom we didn't recognise at the time - wasn't there something we couldn't put our finger on? Wasn't there a grace there?"

And often this is the way it is with each one of us. Think of times in your life that were messy and difficult and hard. And think of years later, looking back and saying, "I wouldn't want to go through it again, but now I can see that there was a grace



From *Christ at Emmaus* by [Rembrandt](#), 1648, [Louvre](#)

there. "I probably would not be in the church today, if it were not for this or that. "It was a terrible time in my life, but still - there was a caring, mysterious presence. "God had something in mind for me. "At the time, I didn't understand it, I didn't recognise it, but in hindsight, I am what I am by the grace of God. "God did touch me. "God was there. "I can see that now." Revelation, however belatedly, has taken place.

So every story goes through those three steps. First, there's a supernatural guide. Second, we don't always recognise it, which is why we are frequently disappointed and bewildered. Finally, however, in due time, we come face to face with the revelation. Also - and this is critical - in every story like our road to Emmaus story, there is a point of entry. What finally brings about the recognition, the revelation? How do we break through to a sense that we are not alone, that walking with us, is a God who is madly in love with us and who does care?

The Emmaus story gives us the telltale clue. In one word the clue is: hospitality.

In our gospel story, the point of entry was that Near East urgency that a stranger should not travel alone on a dangerous road. So the two disciples insisted on hospitality, "Come, it's getting late. "Share our food, share our hospitality." The reve-

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# From the Gospel of Cleophas

It was a conversation we didn't want to end.  
Feet and hands washed, we talked as  
lamps were lit.

Bread and salted fish never tasted better;  
the wine sweet as any from Herod's cellar.  
It was a meal we didn't want to end.

After a prayer he lifted up the loaf,  
tore it in two as if it were his own body  
broken in Jerusalem.

Our slow hearts quickened;  
our mouths mute in recognition.  
We did not want this meal to end.

Jesus, our host, then and always.

Bill Rush

*(Continued from page 2)*

lation came precisely at that moment when they forgot themselves and their disappointments and hurts, the moment when they focused on another. The good deed, the reaching out, was their point of entry that revealed the Christ who was there all along. On their journey, the presence, thus far hidden from their eyes, was revealed in the shared breaking of the bread.

Now we see why the Emmaus story is also our story. Why it is eternal and timeless. It's a story saved by the

church in order to remind us and encourage us that we do not walk alone. That it is okay to be disappointed and okay to complain and okay to talk about hopes that have been dashed and okay even to wonder if anybody cares. But the story also promises us a loving, caring presence and ultimately a revelation, which often comes in hindsight. More importantly, the Emmaus story urges us meanwhile - while we wait for things to get better - to deeds of compassion and caring and neighbourliness, for such things, it promises, will be our point of entry to finally recognising, some day, that Jesus broke bread with us.



Caravaggio's oil painting of 'The Supper at Emmaus', 1601 (National Gallery, London). It shows the disciples' astonishment at the moment when they recognise their companion, the Risen Christ.

The painting is full of symbolism : the grapes and bread refer to the Eucharist, the rotting fruit to the Fall, the pomegranate to the Resurrection.

# CHURCH COUNCIL — CHANGES

At this year's annual Congregational meeting, some changes to the composition to the Council occurred. Betty Terrell did not stand for re-election after many years of service, including 22 years as Treasurer. Her wealth of experience and knowledge of so many aspects of the Church's life will be missed. Dorothea Bogle also did not stand again, and we will be poorer for not having her insights and enthusiasm. During the year, Margaret Leach and Ryan Condron retired, each after making a significant contribution.

In addition to Cheryl Mason and Jason Knott who were re-elected, two relatively new members in Karel Reus and Susie Condron were elected for the first time at the AGM. Both Karel and Susie had been co-opted during the year, and we are looking forward to their continuing contributions.



Betty (above) and Dorothea (right)

## Easter services

**Maundy Thursday:** Armadale will be joining the other Uniting Churches in Stonnington for a traditional Maundy Thursday service at 7.15 for 7.30 pm, to take place at Serrell St, East Malvern. Cost is \$10/person, and RSVP requested for catering purposes to 9571 4575 or [contact@ewing.org.au](mailto:contact@ewing.org.au).

**Good Friday:** 9.30 am, Armadale

**Easter Day:** 9.30 am, Armadale.

# Christmas Day in the Black Forest at Todtnau

- Lucy and David Fallick



We'd embarked on the grand European odyssey in part to have a "White Christmas in the Black Forest". Specifically, in the village of Todtnau, 30 kilometres north of the Swiss border, where more than thirty years earlier we had stayed with an Australian friend. On that occasion around Easter there had been snow and the overall effect quite romantic and memorable.

However, from the time we got in a cab from Frankfurt airport and the driver told us it had been unseasonably warm, the locals kept warning us not to expect any snow in the Black Forest. Undeterred, we ploughed on, via Nuremberg, Heidelberg, Baden-Baden to Todtnau. Being the middle of winter, the days were short so, despite our best efforts, we arrived after dark. The next day as we strolled around the town, one couldn't fail to be impressed by the large dressed stone church that dominated the town square. But it wasn't just its size or position on the hillside well above the streets and square below, nor even the symmetry of its twin towers, with two gold faced clocks, one a minute ahead of its mate. Rather, it was the apparent 'modernity' of St John the Baptist's. Unlike the major cities of Germany, a few of which we'd visited en route, Todtnau with no strategic significance, lacking even a rail link to the outside world, had escaped Allied bombing in World War II, so there was no obvious reason for what appeared to be a relatively new church.

It was Christmas Eve and therefore the occasion for our hosts at Hotel Waldeck to turn on the special evening meal for all their guests, commencing at 5.30pm! Needless to say it was all over by about 9.00pm and we'd agreed that we would attend the 10.00am service on Christmas Day at St John's. A chance encounter with Sabrina, a local woman, had elicited not only the time of the service but that there would be a choir!

Having walked down the kilometre or so from the hotel, which perched above the stream, on the eastern edge of the town, we were seated in the vast nave uncharacteristically early. Consequently, we had plenty of time to survey the interior, as the contemporary and minimalist timber pews rapidly filled until the congregation probably numbered about 150. Our fellow worshippers were a truly diverse group; an elderly couple in the pew in front of us, a young girl, apparently alone, in the left front and behind her, a youngish couple with a teenager. Surprisingly, there was no one to greet worshippers as they arrived, no order of service, only the small, fat, pale blue hymn books, to which everybody helped themselves. Of course they were all in German! The church could probably have comfortably seated at least twice the number present at this Christmas Day service, however, when the organ thundered out from the choir stalls above the entry, the congregation were in a strong, good voice.

The service started with the procession of a dozen 'alter persons' (predominantly young girls) with one singular-

ly tall youth carrying a simple gold cross. They escorted a single priest in a Greg Crowe-style smock, very simple and unadorned. He appeared to be Sri Lankan but possibly from a former German colony in Africa. The contrast between the elaborate Catholic ritual and the relatively Spartan interior of the church was remarkable. To the casual visitor it could have been a Protestant worship space and only after the service commenced was the denomination apparent.

Despite our lack of German (though, somewhat ironically, both our daughters, SJ and Lucy, studied the language briefly at high school) parts of the 80-minute service, such as some of the hymns were familiar. We may have found it more impenetrable had the service still been in Latin! In the absence of an order of service, the hymn numbers were flashed, briefly, in red in small glass boxes on each side of the sanctuary, which was dominated by a huge fresco of Jesus below which, in gold, the symbols, Alpha and Omega. After the priest's lengthy sermon, communion was served at the front of the two aisles, in the centre by the priest and to the right by two older laywomen. Interestingly, the wafer was dipped in the chalice and then served to the communicants.

After the final hymn had roared out and the priest had delivered his blessing, the procession retraced its steps down the central aisle and out through the vestry and, since the priest did not re-emerge, there was no personal farewell at the front door. Surprisingly, despite the serious language barrier, I felt a deep spiritual sense of wellbeing as we emerged into the bright, but weak, sunshine. There was also time for reflection as we waited for Kaye and Lucy who had gone to the nativity scene, in the front right-hand side of the nave to light two candles: for Jack, Kaye's dad who passed away two years ago, and for Ken, a dear friend and Lucy's Godfather, who we lost on Christmas Day, 2010.

Certainly a very distinctive Christmas Day service and one to remember and treasure.

Photos by Lucy Fallick



After death something new begins over which all the powers of the world of death have no more might.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

# The Year of Luke

Bill Rush

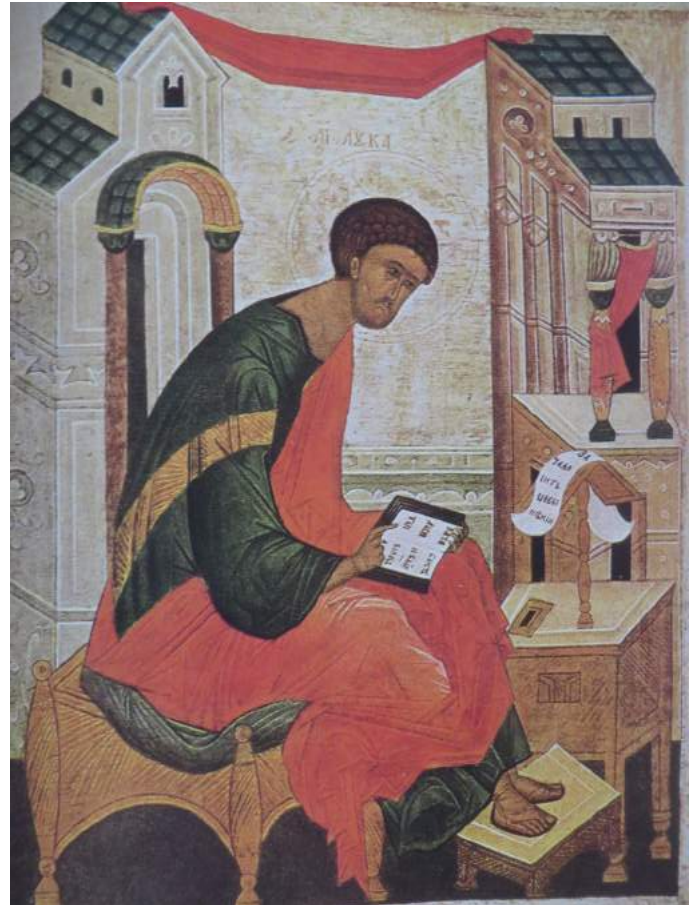
It is Luke's turn this year to be the main focus of the lectionary – with additional supplements from the Gospel of John. Most scholars believe Luke's gospel to have been written sometime after the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. Unlike Matthew and Mark, this evangelist writes in sophisticated Greek (from somewhere outside Israel, probably Syria), and for a Gentile audience. Luke has contributed two books to the New Testament: his own gospel which he presents to us primarily as being about God's plan for the future of the world through Jesus, in whom the prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled; the second volume, Acts, tells the story of the primitive Church as it began after the Resurrection.

Most critics concede that Luke was a careful and competent historian. He addresses his work to someone called Theophilus - perhaps an important Roman official. Another theory is that Theophilus is a general title for the name's actual meaning i.e. Lover of God – which could apply to any member of the Early Church. As well as using material from Matthew and Mark, Luke seeks other sources, many no doubt from oral accounts. He says that *after investigating everything carefully, he intends to write an orderly account* (1: 3-4) of the Jesus story.

Luke has often been identified with the 'doctor' who worked with Paul though there is no certainty about that. Paul's letter to the Colossians (4:14), has a reference to *Luke, our dear doctor*. Medieval legend had him as an artist, and in paintings of this period he is sometimes shown at an easel, painting the Virgin and Child.

Luke is anxious not to present Jesus and Christianity as a subversive force in the Empire. To this end, on three occasions he generously depicts Pilate as declaring Jesus to be innocent.

Luke wants the Christian disciple to identify with Jesus who was tender to the poor and lowly, to the outcast, afflicted, and sinner – but who was severe to the self-righteous and those who loved wealth more than the love of God. No gospel writer is more concerned with the role of the Spirit, the importance of prayer, and the insights of the parables that Jesus described. No other gospel is more open to 'the outsider', the hated tax collectors, the prostitutes, and of course the Samaritans who orthodox Jews regarded as absolute heretics.



(above) St Luke the Evangelist, late 15th century, School of Novgorod, Tretiakov Gallery, Moscow.

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Finally, the Gospel of Luke is notable for its scenes of meals, of Jesus eating and drinking with others – often not with the sort of folk the religious establishment would invite home for a meal. It is natural, Luke suggests, for us to enjoy being with and helping people like ourselves. Not so easy for us to be hospitable to others in need – particularly those who are different to us, who make us uncomfortable, or come from another level of society.

(right) Tradition credits St Luke with painting the first icon of the Mother of God Theotokos.

Antiochian by birth, a physician by trade, an artist by vocation, and a disciple and companion of St. Paul by conversion.

(Anonymous Russian icon painter)



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Yvonne Smith's son Gordon worked in Vietnam as an engineer for 2 years some years back, and recently returned there for a visit.

On a side trip to Cambodia, he and his wife Cynthia were able to bond with some of the locals ( at left)!



# A Meditation

*This meditation was delivered by Margaret Black on the 2nd Sunday in Lent. The gospel reading was Luke 13: 31—35.*

THE BASIS OF UNION OF THE UNITING CHURCH REMINDS US THAT

“We are a pilgrim people, always on the way, towards a promised goal;  
Here we do not have a continuing city but we seek one to come,  
On the way Christ feeds us with Word and Sacraments, and we have  
The gift of the Spirit in order that we may not lose the way.”

Jesus you have called us to be a people on the way with you.

You were always on the way to some place JESUS, YESU, when you walked our earth in the environs of Palestine under the Roman occupation of that time.

You aligned yourself with the people seeking repentance by the river Jordan and were baptised by John the Baptist where God anointed you as his Son and bestowed on you the gift of the Holy Spirit. You spent long days in the Wilderness afterwards and wrestled with Satan who tried to seduce you to follow him but you stood firm on the rock of God’s word and remained faithful to the ministry to which your Father was calling you.

You went then to Nazareth, your home-town, and you read from the Hebrew Scriptures of Isaiah, and you announced “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”, but because they knew you, and your parents, and your family they thought you were big-noting yourself, and tried to hurl you off a high cliff, but you escaped their evil intentions, and went on your way through the countryside, healing the sick, casting out demons, making people whole again, which was your Father’s Mission – telling good news to the poor, opening the eyes of the blind and proclaiming that the Day of their Salvation had arrived – because God loves you, and you are O.K. - to put it simply.

You prayed on the mountaintop, and spent time communing with your Father –you had a vision of how your life would end, but you still set your face to go to Jerusalem, even though you knew it would lead to your certain death, in confronting the religious authorities, who, you maintained, had led your people astray by rules and regulations that were almost impossible to fulfil.

You said the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. You taught us and your followers to love our neighbour as we love ourselves – neighbours who are rich and poor, black or white, and all colours in between, both nearby and far away. You told us these are the ones we should love, and we ask you YESU, to show us YESU, how to serve the neighbours we have from you. You called us to practice forgiveness – to forgive those who hurt us, to love our enemies and do good to them. We need help with this too.

You called us to practice the Golden rule of treating others how we would wish to be treated. But most of all you preached the dignity of all human life, and equality, and you treated women as equal with men, because women were your friends, as well as the men you had specifically chosen to carry on your message.

You call us to be compassionate – to work for justice, to seek to bring healing and wholeness to those we meet.

As you approached Jerusalem you wept over the City saying you would have gathered her people to you, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings – but they would not. You went on to confront the religious leaders in the Temple precincts, by throwing over the tables of commerce, thus enraging them further because you said it was meant to be a house of prayer for all nations.

YESU, you challenge us not to take the safe and easy road but to stand up where we see injustice and exploitation of those who have no voice. You call us to care for the Creation to take a stand on caring for the environment for future generations.

YESU, you call us to seek first the Kingdom of God and God’s Way, and all that we ask for in your name will be granted to us – all that we seek, and hope for. YESU, help us to believe that promise.

# CHRISTMAS AT ARMADALE



Christmas Wreath 2016 (above, left), Rev Gerrit Peterschlingman preached at the Christmas Eve service (above right), participating in the Christmas eve service (below)



If Jesus rose from the dead then you have to accept all that he said; if he didn't rise from the dead then why worry about any of what he said? The issue on which everything hangs is not whether or not you like his teaching but whether or not he rose from the dead.  
Timothy Keller

# Myanmar

We were privileged to have a presentation by Rev Dr Max and Ruth Champion about their experiences in Myanmar. Max has been there several times, lecturing at one of the theological colleges, and was there, with Ruth, when the recent elections were held. Their comments about the open-heartedness of the people and a society going through a period of change were fascinating, especially since they had been able to get off the "tourist trails" and to understand (and experience) the ethnic issues that exist in the country. Their comments on the election, too, were interesting; people were prepared to queue for hours so as to have their say.

Years of military government have left the country with hardly any civil administrative capacity, representing a massive challenge if there is to be genuine change.

Needless to say, many of the people are not well-off. However, they noticed that although much of the economy operates at a near-subsistence level, mobile phones are everywhere. Ah, priorities!



## Contemplative Worship at Armadale

This group meets in the church lobby on the 2nd and 4th Sundays at 7 p.m. It is based on Ignation meditative practice. For further information contact John Bottomley on 9531 3288 .

# St Andrew's, Gardiner

Sadly, the final service to celebrate the life of the present congregation of this church, which has faithfully served the community at Gardiner since 1911, an occasion to give thanks for and acknowledge the mission and ministry of this much loved church over the past 105 years, is to occur on Sunday 10 April 2016 at 2.30pm.

The service will be followed by refreshments in the Parish Hall

RSVP 1 April 2016

standrewsuca@bigpond.com; 9885 6793; 0407 515 713



The resurrection of Jesus was like a boulder crashing into the pool of history.

Karl Barth

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**Regular service times (except January):** 9.30 am each Sunday.

**Children's program:** 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month, during term time.

*During January, and occasionally at other times, we hold combined services with the other Stonnington region Churches, instead of meeting at Armadale.*