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# The Mustard Seed

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Armadale Uniting Church

*Edition 23 – Lent 2017*

## From the editors...

This is the Lent issue of *The Mustard Seed*, and we've included a number of articles appropriate to the season.

Fiona's reflection is in the form of a letter, reflecting on the time she has been with us (it seems longer than seven months!).

We've also set out details of the Palm Sunday and Easter services.

— Bill Rush and Graeme Harris

## Fiona's reflection

Hello everyone.

I am glad to write this article for *The Mustard Seed* as minister of the Armadale congregation these past seven months. I am both delighted and excited to have been called to serve with you. It is an honour and a privilege. And while there is work to be done and challenges ahead, I want to say – in Jesus Christ, we have everything we need.

Over these initial months, I have been thinking about some of Armadale's attributes and characteristics. I wonder if any of you read E. F. Schumacher's 1973 book, *Small is Beautiful*? The full title of the book is *Small is Beautiful: a study of economics as if people mattered*.

It was an important book – some would say it is still an important book – written on the cusp of globalisation, forty four years ago. In it the distinguished economist counters the idea that 'bigger is better' and champions the notion of 'enoughness', in light of finite resources. How prophetic!

Given corporate and individual greed and current anxiety about the state of the world, given the militaristic posturings of power as nations seek to be 'great again' and given the change in the Church's standing in Western style democracies, these ideas might be worth re-visiting.

As I think about Armadale, I want to say, when it comes to the local congregation, there is beauty in

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littleness. There are particular graces – as well as challenges - in being vulnerable, fragile, precarious even.

This is where God is. This is where God comes. This is where God reveals God`s self.

Remembering our vulnerability ensures we don`t get ahead of ourselves, above ourselves or push destructively on beyond ourselves. Depending on God, supporting each other, we ask for the help of the Holy Spirit whose invitation is to listen well, discern carefully – and not be afraid to try!

So as we continue to gather to listen for God`s Word, sharing wonder and mystery in water, bread and wine – the simplest of simple hospitality – may we continue to be strengthened and renewed together, through

the ordinary and extraordinary gifts of Word and sacrament.

And then may we go into our lives and into the world to share gratefully with others what we have received...

It is a great adventure. I look forward to serving you and discovering with you, more of what it means to be one of Jesus` followers in these days.

Grace and peace.

Fiona

*‘Who dares despise the day of small things...?’  
Zechariah 4:10*

Lent 2017

Fiona preaching on Christmas Day.

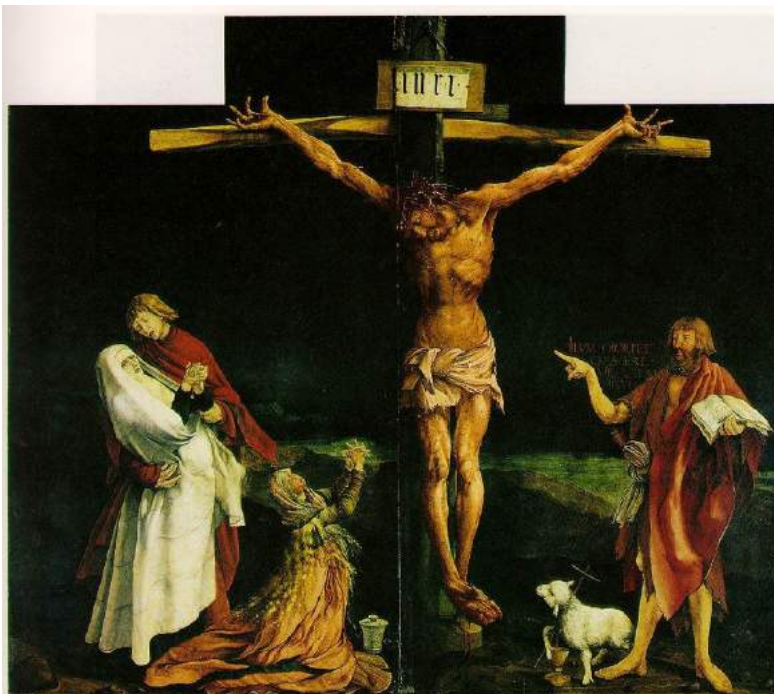


A local church is a congregation of embarrassingly ordinary people, in and through God chooses to be present in the world.

Anon

# An Easter Reflection

Karel Reus



In late 1976, back half a lifetime from my present, my wife, four children and I stood before Matthias Grünewald's Isenheim altarpiece in Colmar, eastern France, not far from the German and Swiss borders. We had driven across Europe for the express purpose of viewing Grünewald's master work, spurred by an essay by John Berger, a noted British art critic. It was a pilgrimage of sorts.

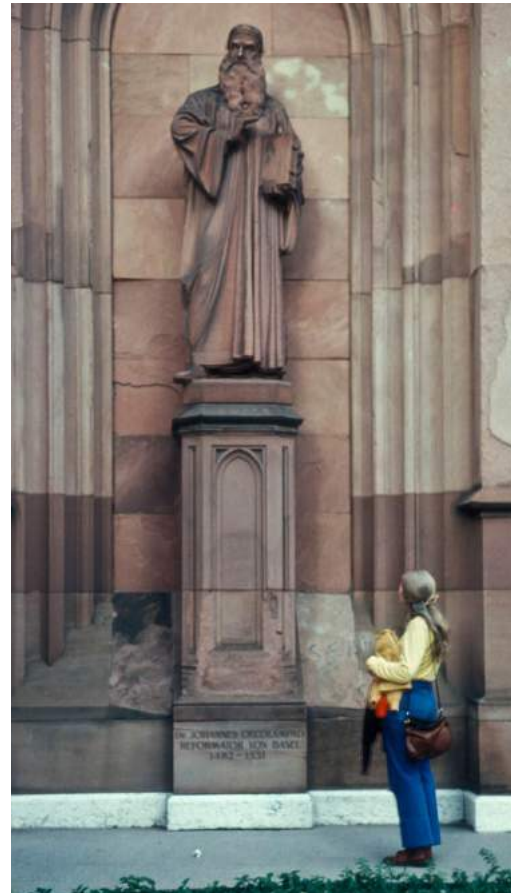
The altarpiece was painted around 1516 at roughly the time when Martin Luther, in Wittenberg, was putting the finishing touches to his ninety-five theses. Grünewald was later to become a follower of Luther. Grünewald's purpose for the altarpiece was more pastoral than revolutionary. He painted Jesus on the cross for use in the plague hospital in Isenheim, and it was an act of solidarity with people suffering from the plague. The painting demonstrated in no uncertain manner that Jesus understands pain and suffering. Patients, on admittance, are said to have been shown the crucifixion panel to calm them down. Like good medicine is always supposed to be, it was bitter. Can there ever have been a more graphic rendition of the Crucifixion, or a case where art is applied to such effect to the purpose of dealing with sickness. Jesus' body is covered from head to toe in lacerations, cuts, bruises, pustules and punctures, all presented in exquisite detail. The viewer is drawn into the agony of Jesus. We are both attracted and repelled. We feel the pain. We understand the agony which is not only physical, but mental. Rejection, betrayal, abandonment. We are tempted also to ask, as many of the Isenheim patients must, "My God, why have you forsaken me".

The crucifix is a powerful carrier of important messages. There was a time in my Catholic early youth, between the ages of eleven and thirteen, when I came much under their influence. They were everywhere it seemed; on walls, hanging around necks, in books and held high in processions. Priests, brothers and the occasional nun missed no opportunity to impress upon me the weighty burden of pain and anguish that Jesus bore, and "the fact" that much of it was my fault. As graphic as Grünewald's painting, but less artful, were the accounts of the intense pain of the crown of thorns, the searing penetration of the nails and the spear's cut. And I was instructed in the arts of self-mortification, for I was to have no understanding of Jesus' pain unless I was prepared to partake in it myself.

All of this came back as I stood before Grünewald's altarpiece. The black-clad tormentors of my early youth had done a great job. In the next few days we would visit the International Monument to the Reformation in Geneva as a counterpoint, but for the moment I was back in my youth, and was held once more in the thrall of death.

The reformers, whose memory we would honour a few days later, had no truck with crucifixes. No way! Their empty crosses were more than cheap substitutes for the real thing. The empty cross tells us of the happy ending. New life! Second chances! Re-birth! Resurrection! And Grünewald's dark fantasies are fine "as art"; as visual and visceral poetry in paint, but we will not hang them in our churches because they tell only half of the story. We will not dwell on death, because our reformed faith is built on hope and life.

But wait. Even without crucifixes and dark reminders of pain and suffering we are aware, even at Easter, that our sojourn can, indeed will, be cut short. We hope to be spared the pain and suffering. Make it quick, we ask, and we seek some words to comfort us and make us strong. In our reformed churches we pride ourselves on our intellect and our openness to The Word. But we are driven also by emotion, if only we were to admit it. We are allowed to feel, and like the sixteenth century patients in Isenheim, we are allowed to open ourselves to the comfort and the challenges of art and liturgy.



## Lenten Gatherings

During Lent, there's an opportunity for a personal spiritual pilgrimage through contemplation and conversation.

These gatherings will occur on each Wednesday during Lent, that is March 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th and April 5th.

They occur on Wednesday mornings from 10 am to 11 am at Armadale Uniting Church, and are repeated on Wednesday evenings from 7 pm to 8 pm at Stonnington Community Uniting Church (Ewing).



# A Liturgy for Lent

Lent can be more than a time of fasting. It can also be a joyous season of feasting.

Lent is a time to fast from certain things and to feast on others

It is a season to:

**Fast from criticising others; *feast on the Christ dwelling in them.***

**Fast from emphasis on differences; *feast on the unity of life.***

**Fast from thoughts of illness; *feast on the healing power of God.***

**Fast from discontent; *feast on gratitude.***

**Fast from anger; *feast on patience.***

**Fast from complaining; *feast on appreciation.***

**Fast from bitterness; *feast on forgiveness.***

**Fast from self-concern; *feast on compassion for others.***

**Fast from discouragement; *feast on hope.***

**Fast from lethargy; *feast on enthusiasm.***

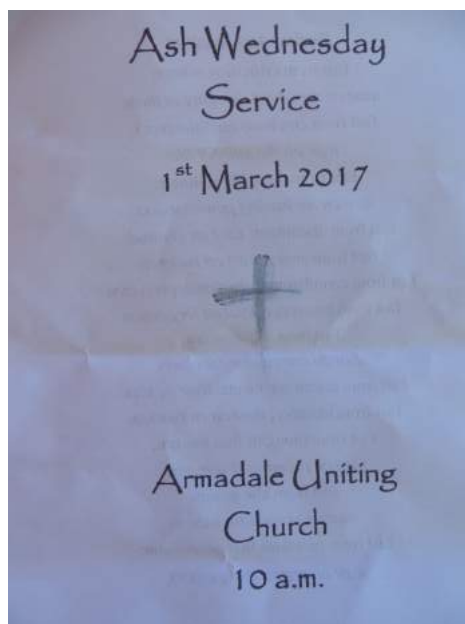
**Fast from thoughts that weaken; *feast on promises that inspire.***

**Fast from idle gossip; *feast on purposeful silence.***

**Fast from problems that overwhelm; *feast on prayer that sustains.***

Attributed to William Arthur Ward

(This liturgy was set out in the Order of Service for Ash Wednesday.)



# What's been happening at Armadale?

On the morning Wednesday March 1<sup>st</sup>, some of us gathered for the imposition of ashes and to reflect on Ash Wednesday, the beginning day of the Lenten season.

On Thursday March 2<sup>nd</sup>, we were delighted to welcome the Prahran Mission's faith community and some residents from the Scottsdale support residence (see photo on next page). The chaplain Ian led 23 of us in worship - which included the hearty singing of some favourite hymns such as *What a Friend we have in Jesus* and John Beavis's song, *The New Road*. John provided the accompaniment on his new guitar. Afterwards, we enjoyed a great pancake lunch with a variety of tasty toppings. Thanks to Robin and Keith especially for their culinary skill in the kitchen.

Earlier that morning a few of us joined an ecumenical service to recognise the World Day of Prayer at St Mary's Catholic Church in East Malvern. As well as praying for world peace, there was a special focus on the issues facing the people of the Philippines. A small orchestra from the Stonnington Community UC provided the music.

During worship on March 5<sup>th</sup>, we were pleased to receive and welcome Janet Atkinson and April Blackwell into membership of the Armadale congregation by transfer.

At the Annual General Meeting on Sunday February 26, Robin Ahin, David Fallick, Graeme Harris, Ian Thomas and Bill Rush were re-elected to the Church Council for 3 more years.



Mioko's baptism in December (above)

We joined with Armadale Baptist for worship during January (below)

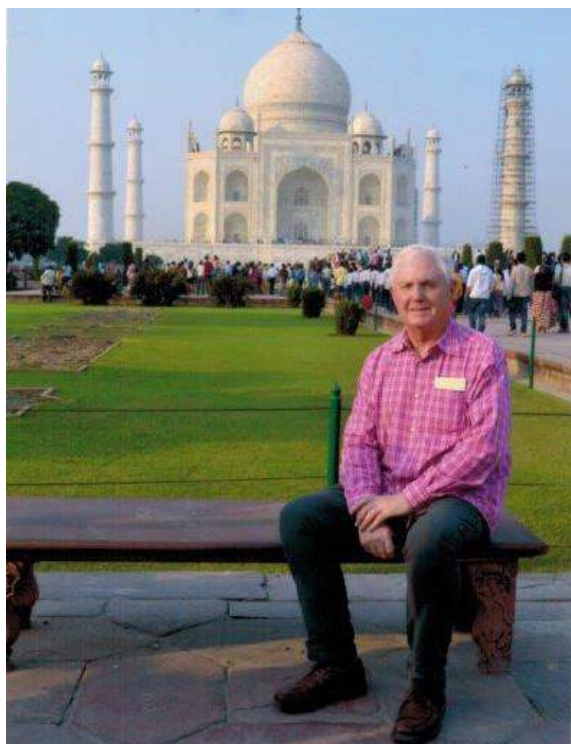


Often we prepare human strategies to organise the church, and as an afterthought, tack on the Spirit and mystery to justify these activities. We need to commence with the mystery of the Divine, and add patient listening and worship.

Judi Fisher (from *With Love to the World*)

# Prahran Mission Faith group

We've been pleased to welcome the Prahran Mission Thursday Faith group, led by Rev Ian Savage, on a couple of occasions recently. The photo below left was when they worshipped with us on 4 December, and the photo at the right was the service to mark the commencement of Lent (and was followed by pancakes).



As you can see, Bill recently spent some time in India! (left)

## Directory/Next of kin/contact details

The Directory has been updated and is now being distributed. Please note that it may only be used for matters relating to the Church. If your details need to be changed, please let Fiona know. Also, please consider giving Fiona contact details of your next of kin/contact, so that they're available if a situation arises where contact needs to be made with someone on your behalf (this information is not included in the Directory).



# Farewell Win and Betty

We were greatly saddened by the death of two long-standing and faithful members of the Church. Win Vears died in December 2016 and Betty Terrell in January 2017. Both contributed over many years and in many ways to the life of the Church. Fiona presided at both funerals, with Win's being at Armadale and Betty's at Stonnington Community Uniting Church.

*Betty (left) and Win (right)*



\* \* \* \* \*

## Easter services

**Palm/Passion Sunday, 9 April 2017:** 9.30 am

**Maundy Thursday, 13 April:** 7.30 pm - a simple service including foot washing and the Lord's Supper. We'll be joined by the Armadale Baptist congregation.

**Good Friday, 14 April:** 9.30 am - a reflective service - *'Seven Words from the Cross'*, followed by an ecumenical Stations of the Cross.

**Easter Saturday:** 15 April: 10 a.m. - 12 noon - *Cleaning and Contemplation* - preparing the worship space for Easter Day with readings and music from Taize. Come for as long as you can. Leave when you must.

**Easter Sunday, 16 April:** 9.30 am - Morning worship and Holy Communion.

On the 5th Sunday in April (30 April), we'll be joined for worship by Stonnington Community Uniting Church.



# Farewell Quinn Pawson



On February 28, Quinn Pawson, the retiring CEO of the Pahrhan Mission, was farewelled at the Chapel St headquarters. Graeme, David, Stephen and Bill represented Armadale. After 12 years at the helm, Quinn is taking up a leading management position with the new over-arching Uniting agency.

During his tenure, the Mission has grown significantly. Highlights have been the building of new headquarters and Goodwill shop, the establishment of the Voices program (which has now spread State-wide), the extension of many of its services to bayside suburbs - and of course the location of some programs at Armadale. The Mission's motto, adopted under his leadership, is *Everyone deserves a decent life*.

Our church has for many years seen its relationship with the Mission as part of its own mission. We do this by supporting the Chaplain and the faith community, with food and other collections, helping with the Winter Breakfast programs and Easter lunches, financially, and regularly with our prayers. Quinn has been, and will continue to be, a highly effective leader, who has the gift of responding to everyone he meets with grace and a sensitive listening ear. The Uniting Church is fortunate to have retained his talents.

We wish him well in his new position.

\* \* \* \* \*

## A Prayer for Easter

Dear God, as we rejoice and celebrate the Easter story, bless our families and friends with whom we are privileged to intimately share the goodness of life. Bless any strangers who come among us with a sense of your love through the hospitality and concern of our fellowship.

Brian Haig

# Galilee

(John 21:4-14)

Fresh morning fish, flat bread, and shining oil.

This barbecue is one we won't forget.

Before we hit the sand we could smell it,

hungry to be filled with good things.

His wounds say everything. We don't have

to ask. He is Host, Servant, Bread of Life.

WR

The main reason I'm convinced that small churches will be the next big thing is because they have always been a big thing. Since the days of Pentecost, innovative small churches have been the way the majority of Christians have done church. They've just stayed under the radar for 2000 years.

Karl Vaters

Graeme and Bill are always pleased to receive contributions from all members of the congregation for *The Mustard Seed*. These might be relevant photos, letters to the editors on an aspect of Christian or church life, your favourite hymns, concerns, travels, reflections, memories, book and movie suggestions and reviews, your life story, etc. In short, whatever you think might be of interest to others in the congregation. We would welcome anything from 50 to 500 words.

## SAMMY STAMP

One of the many ways in which Betty Terrell worked for the Church was by assisting the Sammy Stamp sorting team at Synod each Thursday. With her passing, we'll make sure that your used stamps, if left in the designated collection box in the office, will be delivered in due course.

# CELEBRATING EASTER

If Lent is a time to give things up, Easter ought to be a time to take things up. Champagne for breakfast! Christian holiness was never meant to be merely negative. Of course you have to weed the garden from time to time; sometimes the ground-ivy may need serious digging before you can get it out. That's Lent for you. But you don't want to get the garden back to being simply a neat bed of blank earth. Easter is the time to sow new seeds and plant a few cuttings. If Calvary means putting to death things in your life that need killing off if you are to flourish as a Christian and as a truly human being, then Easter should mean planting, watering, and training up things in your life (personal and corporate) that ought to be blossoming, filling the garden with colour and perfume, and in due course, bearing fruit.

The forty days of the Easter season until the ascension, ought to be a time to balance out Lent by taking something up, some new task or venture, something wholesome and fruitful and outgoing and self-giving. You may be only able to do it for six weeks ... but if you really make a start on it, it might give you a sniff of new possibilities, new hopes, new ventures you never dreamed of. It might bring something of Easter into your innermost life. It might help you wake up in a whole new way. And that's what Easter is all about.

Extract from *Surprised by Hope* by Tom Wright page 269 SPCK 2007.

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,  
The emblem of suffering and shame;  
And I love that old cross where the Dearest and Best  
For a world of lost sinners was slain.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,  
Till my trophies at last I lay down;  
I will cling to the old rugged cross,  
And exchange it someday for a crown.

George Bennard

What happened on Easter Day became, was and remains, the centre around which everything else moves ... Because the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead took place, there is no reason to despair, and even when we read the newspaper with all its confusing and frightening news, there is every reason to hope.

Karl Barth



Ciborium and cross, designed by Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola, at the Basilica of San Petronio, Bologna. This basilica is also noteworthy as having a meridian line inlaid in the paving of the left aisle in 1655, calculated and designed by the famous astronomer Giovanni Domenico Cassini,

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0403 662 786

Organist: Rowan Kidd

[www.armadale.unitingchurch.org.au](http://www.armadale.unitingchurch.org.au)

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

**Children's program:** 1st 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.*