
The Mustard Seed



Armadales Uniting Church

Edition 29 – Lent/Easter 2019

Greetings from Fiona

Greetings.

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

Lao-tzu, *The Way of Lao-tzu - Chinese philosopher (604 BC - 531 BC)*

This seems a fitting and appropriate sentiment to ponder in the season of Lent as we make our way with Jesus from the temptations in the desert to the rigours of Holy Week, the pain of the cross, and beyond.

It speaks of making a beginning, a little beginning...one, single step - but it is a start. It may be the most important step of the whole journey because it is never easy to start something new.

Did Jesus know what He was starting when He began the journey to Jerusalem? Whether He did or not, He took that first step and set out...How glad we are that He did; that He was resolute, committed, obedient; given over to doing His Father's will...so costly...

What of us this Lent? What are we called to begin, to walk toward, to confront and face up to? As individuals, in our own, personal lives? As a congregation, in our life together? In the community around us? As the Christian Church?

Muslims massacred at Friday prayers.

Religious leaders in prison for heinous crimes against the youngest and most trusting in their care.

Rising tribalism, nationalism, fear and suspicion.

The continuing desecration of the Earth.

Fires, floods and drought...

We are called to walk a different road...to show a different way...

And it all begins with a single step.

And we must begin.

We must begin together with people of goodwill, of other faiths and of no particular faith.

Who knows what we might discover *en route*?

From the editors...

This is our Lent/Easter issue, and there's lots of food for thought. As usual, our message from Fiona raises issues we need to consider and Karel's piece *Let this be clear* gives rise to more matters for us to ponder.

Margo's article about a confrontation at St Kilda beach is particularly relevant in the aftermath of the tragic events in Christchurch.

Then there's an interview with Karen and a number of other interesting pieces as well as a poem by Bill. We also have a number of photos from some of our recent services and activities.

Details of the Holy Week/Easter services are set out on page 7. We hope to see as many as possible at each of these services..

— Bill Rush and Graeme Harris

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We don't need to know. Entrusting ourselves and the journey ahead to the Spirit of Christ, we set out with confidence, walking bravely, humbly, with Jesus.

Whatever may happen, all will be well.

Apparently, a better translation of the Lao-tzu quote is "The journey of a thousand miles begins beneath one's feet." Or "Even the longest journey must begin where you stand."

God grant us courage this Lent to begin the journey and walk Christ's way, to where He is calling us – whatever the cost.

*‘The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn
growing brighter and brighter till the full light of day.’*



At our Christmas Day service (left).
See page 8.

An Easter Reflection

Karel Reus

Let us remind ourselves about The Resurrection of Jesus as set out in Mark 16:1-8

16 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ²And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. ³They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' ⁴When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. ⁵As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. ⁶But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' ⁸So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Let this be clear...

Let this be clear,
this Easter time:
my faith is not made flesh
by signing on the creedal dotted line.
My faith's not for asserting,
...but for living
...and for bearing fruit in life.

Your resurrection, Lord,
is affirmed when I meet you
in *Eucharist*
and loving, caring, sharing
worshipful moments.

Your resurrection, Lord,
is affirmed when you speak to me
in blessed discourse
of collective prayer
and whispered sacred give-and-take.

Your resurrection, Lord,
is affirmed when I hear your word
spoken anew from Holy Book and pulpit
and in the pregnant silence
of my soul's dark night.

Your resurrection, Lord,
is affirmed in my self-giving;
when acts proclaim, much more than words,
when needs of all have equal claim
upon my precious time.

Your resurrection, Lord,
is affirmed by the rending of the Temple veil;
enlivening with redeeming love
the space between the sacred and profane
and you and me..

Your resurrection, Lord,
is little more than myth
if I can't meet you on salvation's path,
and take your hand,
and share your cross and hold you close.

Let this be clear
this Easter time
that I am simply yours, my Lord,
to do with as you will;
because by grace
you live in me
and I in you.

For reflection:

The poet bases his faith in the risen Christ on the day-to-day experiences that he has of Jesus' presence in his life. He accepts the witness of scripture, but what counts is his encounters with Jesus. The resurrection, therefore, is not for the poet a matter of creed or doctrine; it is part of life itself. Have we had experiences of the living Christ in our life? What difference do they make?

The poet asserts that in Jesus' resurrection the difference between the sacred and the profane has changed. It's interesting to think about what he means by this.

SPEAKING GREEK IN CHURCH

The early church in Jerusalem would have worshipped in Jesus' own language, Aramaic. As the gospel spread quickly beyond Palestine, the church grew mainly within a Greek-speaking culture. However by the 4th century, most churches in the West used Latin. We hear remnants of the earliest days in our own services. Holy Communion, or The Lord's Supper, is often referred to these days as the *Eucharist* - a Greek word for 'thanksgiving'. Luke in his gospel, writes 'when he (Jesus) had given thanks (*eucharistien*)'. Today, when we confess as a congregation, we sometimes say or sing '*Kyrie Eleison*', the Greek for 'Lord, have mercy'. These few words connect us to the earliest Pauline Christians, who worshipped in houses.

Picnic at St Kilda beach, January 2019

Margo Anderson

Late last year there was a terrible incident on St Kilda beach foreshore where a number of Ultra Right White Supremacists called The United Patriots Front under the influence of their founder, Blair Cottrell, goaded and taunted a group of South Sudanese youths who were at the beach doing what we all do at the beach, or once did, into a stoush. The youths fought back as youths have a want to do, and result was reported and labelled by the media as a “race riot”.

Earlier this year a call went out from Blair Cottrell to have a picnic on St Kilda beach to “reclaim the beach for white Australians”. I suspected many would respond to his call and descend on this wide public space to spread their hate-filled divisive views. I was right.

As a counter to this a call went out via social media to also be at the beach to stand up and claim the beach and all open spaces for all Australians, to be a presence and a voice to say *“we the people can and will stand with each other in harmony”*; so I did.

The police presence was huge and multi divisional; horses, dogs, riot police, detectives, regular ranks and public response units as well as the police boat. It felt safe and I was so impressed with their demeanour and actions. One asked me what side I was on, a question that threw me at first until I saw his wry smile, I said “I come in peace” to which he wished me to *“be well”*.

Actually I was there in part to recognise the Anderson range of diversity, in our family we has Atheists, Muslims, Pakistanis, Indigenous, Christians, same gendered couples, Scandinavians, Kiwis, English, Buddhists, farmers, business people, carnivores and vegetarians, social workers and a myriad of other categories. We are Australians and as a family we welcome and are enriched by all peoples as we were welcomed, by most, when our forebears arrived in this country around 175 years ago.

So I stood with “my” side of the divide and joined in the chanting, the fist waving and the surging towards “their line”. I must admit I could not join in all the chanting given the range of language being used, but I did my bit the best I could. I also want to say I was scared at times and I also stood back from the fray.

I was struck by the power of the hatred coming from The United Patriots Front; it was palpable, unrestrained, mindless and unconsidered. It was forceful and violently dangerous and you could see the influences it was having on the teenagers amongst their ranks. Domestic violence, robbery, fraud, road rage, white collar and blue collar crimes etc all start with this level of “hate speech” and dominance.

The organisers of the counter protest were from the younger generation and their courage and passion was wonderful to watch, if not a bit uncontained at time.

The media were also there in spades, at the ready from early in the day. They quoted numbers, behaviours and language as a means to determine winners and losers, this tells us nothing and sells us short. I was photographed and printed in The Guardian newspaper, which served mostly to thrill a number of interstate nieces and nephews, as well as probably showed that the older members of the community will stand up to what they believe.

So what did we learn from all this; as the Buddha said, *“find the middle path and tread gently as you walk with others”*; as Jesus said, *“love one another as I have loved you”*, as Mohammad said, *“be at peace with each other”*.

St Kilda beach on a quieter day! (right)



A chat with

KAREN BROWN

We caught up with Karen for a chat

How long have you been coming to church in Armadale? What was your faith background before this?

I was christened and confirmed in the Doncaster Lutheran church, which was built by descendants of Lutheran settlers who established orchards in the area in the 1850's. The orchards are now all just suburbia.

I have been worshipping at Armadale Uniting Church for approximately three years. Before this I was a member of Holy Advent down the road.

Tell us a little about Holy Advent

Armadale Uniting and Holy Advent used to have joint services once or twice a year. I was there when Fr Val Rogers was the priest and Gary Warne was the organist. A number of people at Armadale got to know Fr Val and his wife Josie quite well, and enjoyed listening to his Irish accent.

When Holy Advent closed, I followed the organist and other members to St Stephens Anglican church in Richmond. Eventually I decided to find a local church again, and was very happy to join AUC.

Do you follow a sport or other interests?

Softball used to be my favourite hobby. I travelled around Australia to play, but had to give it up because of injury.

Now I enjoy ballroom dancing in Camberwell.

What do you like to read?

I like to read science fiction and in December enjoyed the sci-fi movie, 'Mortal Engines'. I thought it was excellent.

Any favourite hymns?

Some of my favourites are:

Tell out my soul
Behold a Rose is growing
Beautiful Saviour, King of creation.

Are there any stories in the Gospels that especially strike a chord with you?

One of my favourite gospel stories is that of Jesus stilling the storm. It demonstrates clearly that he is the Lord of all creation



Everything brims over with light, heaven and earth, the world below the earth. All creation celebrates Christ's rising with joy.

John of Damascus (Orthodox theologian)

DISMAS - THE GOOD THIEF?

Bill Rush

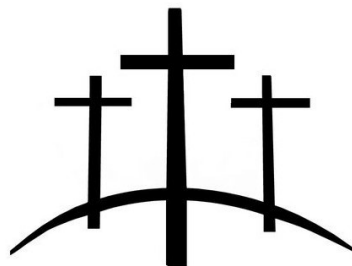
According to medieval legend, Dismas is the name of one of the men who was crucified beside Jesus. He is also known as The Penitent Thief (perhaps a more accurate title). Acknowledging the sins of his former life, Dismas was assured of forgiveness by Jesus as they hung together: 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise' (Luke 23:43).

Groups and churches in Australia with specific ministries towards those behind bars include The Friends of Dismas, and The Prison Fellowship. The latter is part of an international organisation with 1000 volunteers throughout Australia. As well as visiting and providing spiritual and practical help for those inside, and also to those emerging from prison, they run camps for the children of prisoners – the collateral damage of crime. No doubt some of their volunteers find inspiration in Matthew 25: *When I was sick and in prison, did you visit me?*

It's said: 'Do the crime, do the time'. Though for those of us who may have received the benefits of good parenting, good examples and education, Dietrich Bonhoeffer offers this:

Judging others makes us blind, whereas love is illuminating. By judging others we blind ourselves to our own evil and to the grace which others are just as entitled to as we are.

Australia has 92 prisons, public and private, holding over 40,000 inmates. The cost to the public purse is over \$300 per prisoner per day. Unfortunately our federal and state criminal justice systems don't have a strong focus on rehabilitation. Dismas did not find a new start before his sentence, but he did find forgiveness hope from the man who suffered with him.



Lent/Easter services

Each Sunday during Lent, 9.30 am at Kooyong Road (except Sunday 31 March), with Holy Communion on 7 April.

Sunday, 31 March : This is a "5th Sunday", so we will be joining the other Stonnington Churches for a combined service at St Andrew's, Gardiner, starting at 10.00 am. No service at Kooyong Road on this day.

Palm Sunday 14 April 2019: 9.30 am at Kooyong Rd

Maundy Thursday, 18 April 2019: 7.00 pm, Foot washing and Holy Communion.

Good Friday 19 April 2019: 9.30 am, Holy Communion at Kooyong Road.

Holy Saturday, 20 April: 10 am -12 noon, Cleaning and Contemplation.

Easter Day, Sunday 21 April 2019: 9.30 am at Kooyong Rd.

AlterNativity at Armadale

Our AlterNativity activities started early in Advent with the preparation of our messy display, and culminated with our Christmas Eve activity with the children and our Christmas Day play.



Our Advent activity day (above), with thanks to Ann Ahin for the images, and our Christmas Eve play (right)



Around Armadale



(above) We enjoyed pancakes and cakes for Shrove Tuesday. Here are Rob's sister, Pat, Rob Ahin and Keith Ferguson in control in the kitchen

(right) Men's Breakfast, January 2019 (photo Rob Ahin)



Karel R and Margaret led us in worship on 20 January.

Lapse

I stride into this room but don't
know why I've come. I should.

Some neurones are on holiday
or walked out on me for good.

I'll go back now to where
I was beside the kitchen sink

stand quite still, be very calm,
compose myself, and think,

hoping an answer will emerge
from deep down in my brain,

then with purpose reaffirmed,
retrace my steps again.

Bill Rush

Two excerpts from the Confession of Saint Patrick

(Fifth Century A.D.)

My name is Patrick. I am a sinner, a simple country person and least of all believers. I am looked down on by many. My father was Calpornius. He was a deacon, his father was Potitis, a priest who lived Bannovem Taburniae. His house was near there and that is where I was taken prisoner. I was about 16 at the time. At that time I did not know the true God. I was taken into captivity in Ireland along with thousands of others.

So first of all I am a simple country person, a refugee and unlearned. I do not know how to provide for the future. But this I know for certain, that before I was brought low, I was like a stone lying in deep mud. Then He who is powerful came and in his mercy pulled me out and lifted me up and placed me on the very top of the wall. That is why I must shout aloud in return to the Lord for such great deeds of his, here and now and forever, which the human mind cannot measure.

**Beware of despairing about yourself. You are commanded to put your trust in God,
not yourself.**

St Augustine

BLESSED AMONG WOMEN

Protestant worship and liturgy has often relegated mention of Mary to the Christmas and Easter seasons and is otherwise not often acknowledged in our services. This is not how the early Reformation began. Its leaders had no problem in openly recognising her role in the history of salvation and according her deep veneration. However, as time went by, fear of Mariology grew, and with it concern that the piety centred on her in the medieval church threatened to raise her to a quasi-divine (almost Trinitarian) status and invite actual worship. Titles such as 'Queen of Heaven' and 'Co-Redemptrix' made this anxiety more acute. This was seen as diminishing the unique role of Christ in salvation.

Nevertheless other mainstream churches continue to give her explicit honour. Particularly they emphasise Mary's essential role in the Incarnation and her place in history as the first Christian. Recently however, there have been signs of new interest in her among contemporary Protestant theologians. Many reformed Christians might be surprised to learn of the unabashed and positive attitude of their founders to Christ's mother.

For example:

'The veneration of Mary is inscribed in the very depths of the human heart' and 'She (Mary) is rightly called not only the mother of man, but also the Mother of God'

Martin Luther

'It cannot be denied that God, in choosing and destining Mary to be the Mother of his Son, granted her the highest honour.'

John Calvin

The more the honour and love of Christ increases, so much the esteem and honour given to Mary must grow.

Ulrich Zwingli (Swiss Reformer)

Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury explains:

'It is quite hard to imagine the depth and cost of what is asked of her (Mary) in Luke's story of the Annunciation. To look at her and meditate on her "Yes" - and seek her friendship in prayer - is not at all an eccentric or foolish thing to do if we want to grow in trust.'

Bill and Graeme 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 (or even more).

God always gives you what you would have asked for if you knew everything He knows.

Tim Keller

THE WISDOM OF THE CHEROKEE

Thanks to April Blackwell

A Cherokee elder said to a young child,

There is a fight going on inside me, a terrible fight between two wolves. One is evil, full of anger, sorrow, envy, greed, regret, self-pity, guilt, resentment and ego.

The other is good, full of joy, peace, hope serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.

The same fight goes on in every person.

The child thought for a moment then asked: Which one will win?

The old Cherokee simply said: The one you feed.

Who can describe the bond of God's love? Who is able to describe the majesty of its beauty?

First Epistle of St Clement to the Corinthians (1st century)

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Regular service times: 9.30 am each Sunday, Holy Communion on the 1st Sunday each month.

Quiet Contemplation—10 am each Wednesday (except during January and Lent)

Children's program: 1st Sunday of the month, during term time.

Usually on the 5th Sunday (where a month has 5 Sundays) we hold combined services with other Stonnington region Churches, sometimes instead of meeting at Armadale. During January, the format of our services may vary.