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Walk Humbly with God

MARY BETZ, NEIL DARRAGH, ROBIN KEARNS discuss humble walking

ZAHRA MUHAMMED and **SHANE COLEMAN** on the faith journey

PLUS — LIZ DODD on the title of the new encyclical **AND** much more

Hīkoi Mārire

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EDITORIAL

Walking As Kin in Earth

Walking is good for us. We've probably all done more walking this year, especially during Lockdown, so we'll resonate with the theme of the October issue — to walk humbly with God. We discovered over the weeks of restrictions that walking became a community activity and even as we kept to our bubbles we encouraged one another to keep within the constraints for the sake of us all. While out walking we noticed more about the plant and bird life in our neighbourhoods as well.

The walking Micah refers to is more than about dropping a kilo or two or boosting our fitness. He's reminding us that all of our living is done within the creating presence of the Divine. While walking we can experience being immersed completely in Earth — the ground under our feet and the atmosphere stretching above us till it runs out in space. We're enclosed in Earth. It's our home — shared with teeming life in diverse forms. Our walking is with an attitude of humility, acknowledging we belong as kin in this creation.

My sister and I walked across northern Spain from the Pyrenees to the Atlantic Ocean on the Camino de Santiago six years ago. I'd recovered from a major illness and as a celebration of life I decided to follow in the footsteps of medieval pilgrims. The walk was varied, taxing and exhilarating. The uphills were my nemesis. My sister ascended them effortlessly while I puffed up behind — very behind. She'd wait for me at the top. One particularly hot day of relentless climbing, I'd collapsed beside her thinking we were metres from a cold beer and she announced we had five kms more to go before we could stop for the night. Feeling murderous, I semi-crawled the last bit with every skerrick of pilgrim's progress leached from me. But on the trail I came across a little black snake basking — my first ever sighting of a live snake. And when I finally joined Margie we got the last two beds at the albergue.

Walking the Camino was a liminal experience yet also life in a nutshell: idealism encountering reality, gratitude vying with whinging, companionship alternating with solitude, awe overlaid with dread, strength giving way to vulnerability — the gamut of hopes, dreams, relationships and experiences. Funnily enough it felt like an anticlimax when we arrived at St James Cathedral because, I realised, it was the intensity of the journey itself rather than finishing it, that had tested and confirmed my return to health. And, newly tempered, I could walk into whatever came next — this year around the block with our neighbours, a humbler walk.

The contributors to this issue offer their perspectives on Micah's words. They give us riches of reflection, research, faith, inspiration, art and craft. We thank them.

And as is our custom, our last words are of blessing and encouragement.

BUILDING STRONGER DEMOCRACIES

The pandemic we are living through is historic but perhaps not for the reasons that immediately spring to mind.

As a virus, COVID-19 certainly is not unprecedented. We have experienced many plagues. Most people only need to reach back 100-odd years to find the deadliest of all, the Spanish Flu, which decimated Western Europe — and Samoa.

But in this day and age, and in this part of the world, it seems surreal for a virus to pose such a threat. It's a wake-up call for privileged countries like Australia and New Zealand — we've been fortunate for so long, and in so many ways, but also complacent.

What is unique then is not the disease itself but the treatment.

Twenty years ago it would have been impossible for most of the white-collar working population to do their jobs entirely from home.

It's only in the last few years that efficient home internet connections and mobile phones have become commonplace. The same goes for video calls, which we use to facilitate business, personal and family meetings, medical check-ups, large online family gatherings — with multiple video calls often being made simultaneously within the same household.

So, while the pandemic itself may not be "unprecedented", the response to it is. We are fortunate to live in a time and place that allows us to stay home and to stay safe. The collective response isn't always perfect, and we may have legitimate complaints, but the connected lives we are able to live in Lockdown are worth being grateful for.

When we focus on the negatives of the restrictions, we often miss the silver linings. Long shutdowns have restricted our daily lives, but our democracies have managed to stand tall.

Taiwan has succeeded in keeping COVID-19 infections down, blazing a path for the rest of the world. Having long boasted of its digital democracy, it adapted quickly to the pandemic. Citizens updated online maps to indicate how many masks were available at different pharmacies. This was of immediate use to shoppers, minimised unfounded fears about shortages and prevented panic buying from taking hold.

And a dedicated government agency in Taiwan identifies and combats misinformation in real time by creating humorous but factual online content. Taiwanese citizens then share it through their networks to counteract dangerous misinformation.

It is no surprise that Taiwan has a 91 per cent trust rating for its epidemic response centre. This trust has resulted in a world-leading response to the pandemic — Taiwan has just a third of the total cases of New Zealand, despite its proximity to China.

It has not been so for some countries, where the leaders have been more focused on their own power rather than on the health of their citizens. We see leaders taking the opportunity to aggrandise themselves, wind back agreements already negotiated, or step over democratic institutions. In many cases, they have found little resistance. But it has not gone unnoticed even during the pandemic.

When the Brazil government tried to accelerate the deforestation of the Amazon, video evidence and news reports went around the world, shining a spotlight on these dark moves.

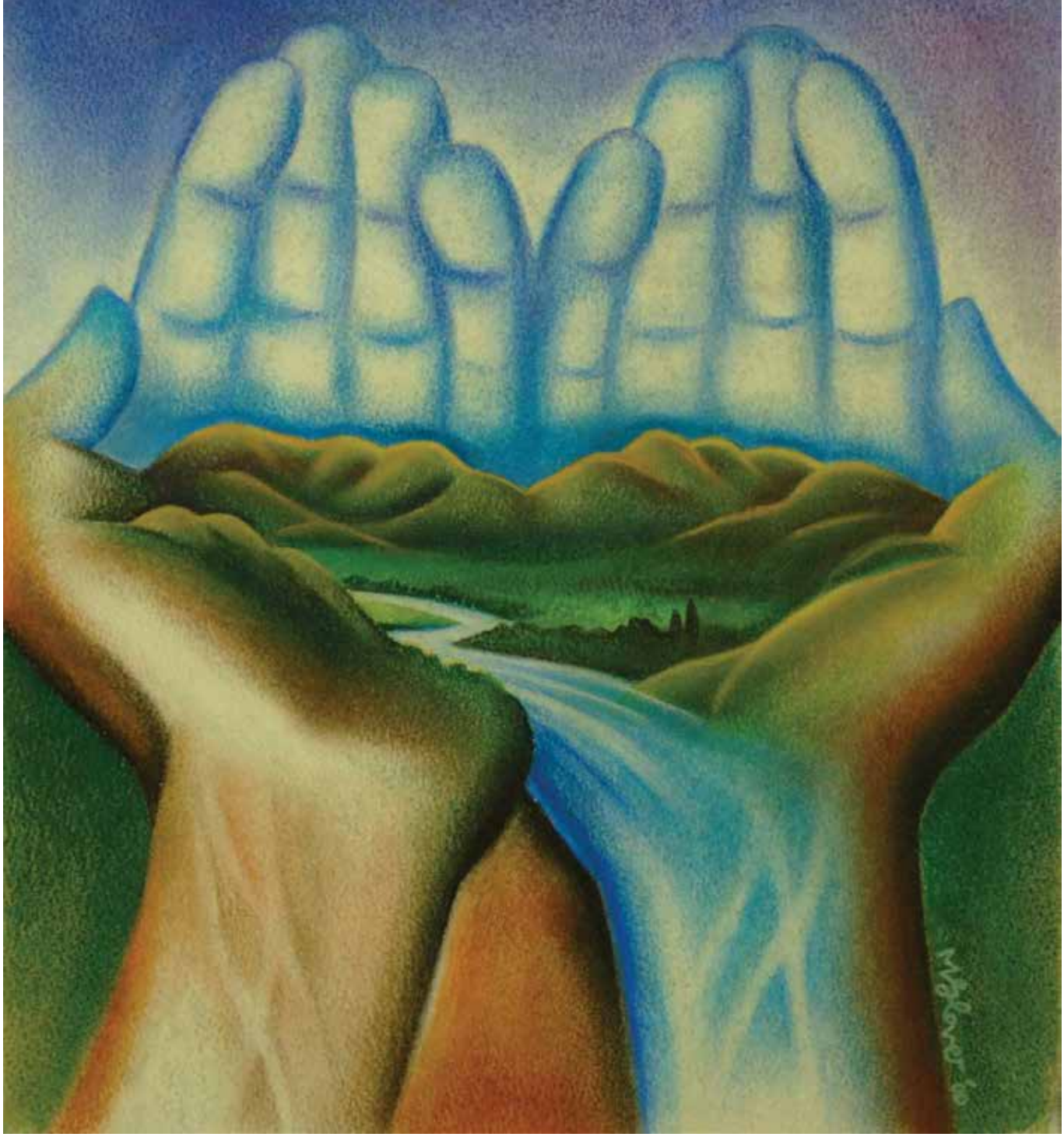
When Belarusians took to the streets to protest rigged elections, President Lukashenko managed to block the internet nationwide. But protestors have circumvented the blocks and are using encrypted messaging services to coordinate, keep one another safe and share supplies. And critically, they have been able to document what is going on and keep the world informed. Fifty years ago such a feat from within the Soviet Union would have been unimaginable, virus or no virus.

When the pandemic is over, many of the tools that have become crucial during the COVID restrictions, will remain just as useful for communications, organisation and co-ordination, for building trust and for analysis and scrutiny. We would do well to let the current moment be the impetus for ongoing improvement.

Rather than being the death of democracy, the pandemic has presented us with an opportunity to adapt and innovate. It has shown us there are better ways to run countries and democracies and to live our lives, especially in relationship to Earth's health. If we have the appetite and the incentive, this pandemic can be the push we need to impel our governments to take the crucial next steps.

Photo by Yiucheung/Shutterstock.com

Jack Derwin is a senior reporter at *Business Insider Australia*. His interests include all aspects of social justice particularly in the South Pacific region.



Walk with God

MARY BETZ writes of our opportunities for integrating humility in our lives.

My brother Greg showed brilliance from an early age, but suffered mental ill health and subsequently a life on the difficult and humble margins of family and society. In the last months before his death 10 years ago, he took to phoning me from overseas to ask often probing questions. One day he asked me: "What does it mean to be humble?"

I remember answering that being humble had something to do with knowing one's place in the world, how we fit in, what our part was. We were not inconsequential, but we were part of something bigger than ourselves. It was the feeling one has when looking up on a really dark night and seeing the heavens pulsating with stars, a glittering Milky Way strewn across the inky blackness of space. Who are we, rooted in our own small places on Earth yet somehow part of this ever expanding universe of swirling galaxies? Greg sounded pleased with my thoughts, but his question has stayed with me.

Humility in Micah's Context

Micah 6:8 links justice and kindness with walking humbly with God. In Micah's time, as in our own, these virtues seemed in short supply. There was great political unrest, the wealthy grew more so at the expense of the already poor and too little attention was paid to the common good. "To walk humbly with God" is the focal point of Micah's answer to his own critical

question: "What does God ask of us?"

The Hebrew word used for humble is *tsâna`*. It is an unusual word, used only twice in the Hebrew Scriptures. In its Micah context, it means humbly or lowly. The other usage is in Proverbs 11:2: "Wisdom is with the humble".

Connection with Wisdom

The link Proverbs makes between humility and wisdom often becomes truer with increasing life experience — when we learn to learn from others, when we have had to rise up again after adversity, and when we can look honestly at our own strengths and weaknesses.

Half a lifetime ago I was talking with a friend's mother, Bunty, who was celebrating a senior birthday year. Knowing something of the hardships and adventures of her early life, I commented that it must be wonderful to look back and remember all she had done. To my surprise, she sighed and said, unfortunately, her current recollections were more of the mistakes she had made.

Her candid self-disclosure recently came back to me when I reread Richard Rohr's *Falling Upwards*. He says that as we grow older we are better able to embrace the shadow side of ourselves, enabling us to see a fuller picture of who we are: "I am afraid that the closer you get to the Light the more of your shadow you see. Thus, truly holy people are always humble people."

Bunty's memories caused her sadness as she acknowledged the mistakes she felt she had made. But, in subsequent years, acceptance of all she was enabled her to become a source of wisdom and a role model for others, including me.

It is humbling to acknowledge the shadows in our lives, but it is a part of growing whole to embrace both our gifts and our weaknesses. Failures can be transformed when self-knowledge and wisdom gift us the ability to be more accepting and compassionate.

Walking with God

Micah offers us a beautifully anthropomorphic image of God in the invitation to walk with God. He uses the Hebrew word *yâlak*, which has connotations of journey, coming away, growing and prospering. God invites us to "come away" on a journey of growth into honest self-awareness and wisdom, of prospering into kindness and just action.

To walk with God is to learn to be present to people and situations along the way, not just to move through to a destination of our own choosing. It is to see the world through God's eyes of compassion and hope, and spend time walking with others on their journeys.

The disciples who walked with Jesus began, with painful slowness, to become aware that listening to and watching Jesus was not enough. Their own self-centred concerns about "who was the greatest" needed to give way to the needs of the people and situations they encountered as they walked.

> Walking humbly calls us to cross over to a more gentle, respectful and humble walk in Earth, sensitive to the needs of others on the road.

Walking with Jesus meant living into the realm of God, calling out the rich and powerful for ignoring the poor and vulnerable, yet sharing meals with all to teach and to care. It also meant taking time away in the wilderness for prayer, solitude and renewal of strength.

Walking humbly with God today

How we choose to live our lives is a question many of us come back to again and again, especially in the second half of life. What do we want to do with our remaining years? How can we better align our lives with what we continue to learn of Jesus's values, and those of perceptive prophets like Micah, in whose tradition Jesus walked? Who or what is this God we are called to walk humbly with, who imbues us with dreams of a world of kindness and justice? Why are we asked to walk this path, how do we do it, will it change us, and what will be the cost?

All these questions are asked within our own particular contexts of whānau, geography, culture and personal giftedness; immediate concerns like COVID-19; longer term challenges of socio-economic inequities; and the looming disaster of climate change.

It is overwhelming at times, and yet, we are part of the Earth family on whose behalf humans need to understand the issues and take responsible action. The future of our grandchildren rests on whether we abdicate or accept that responsibility.

There will be a cost whatever our choice, for example, with regard to carbon emissions. We can choose to do nothing and keep living our current lives, with the result that our mokopuna will lose life as we know it — struggling for human survival in a 4°C+ hotter world. Alternatively, heeding Jesus's warning — that we must lose our lives to save them — suggests our choice must be to change our lifestyles radically so that those who follow us may live.

Walking humbly with God comes from the wisdom and promise we perceive as we attend to God's presence in us and around us. It calls us to cross over to a more gentle, respectful and humble walk in Earth, sensitive to the needs of others on the road.

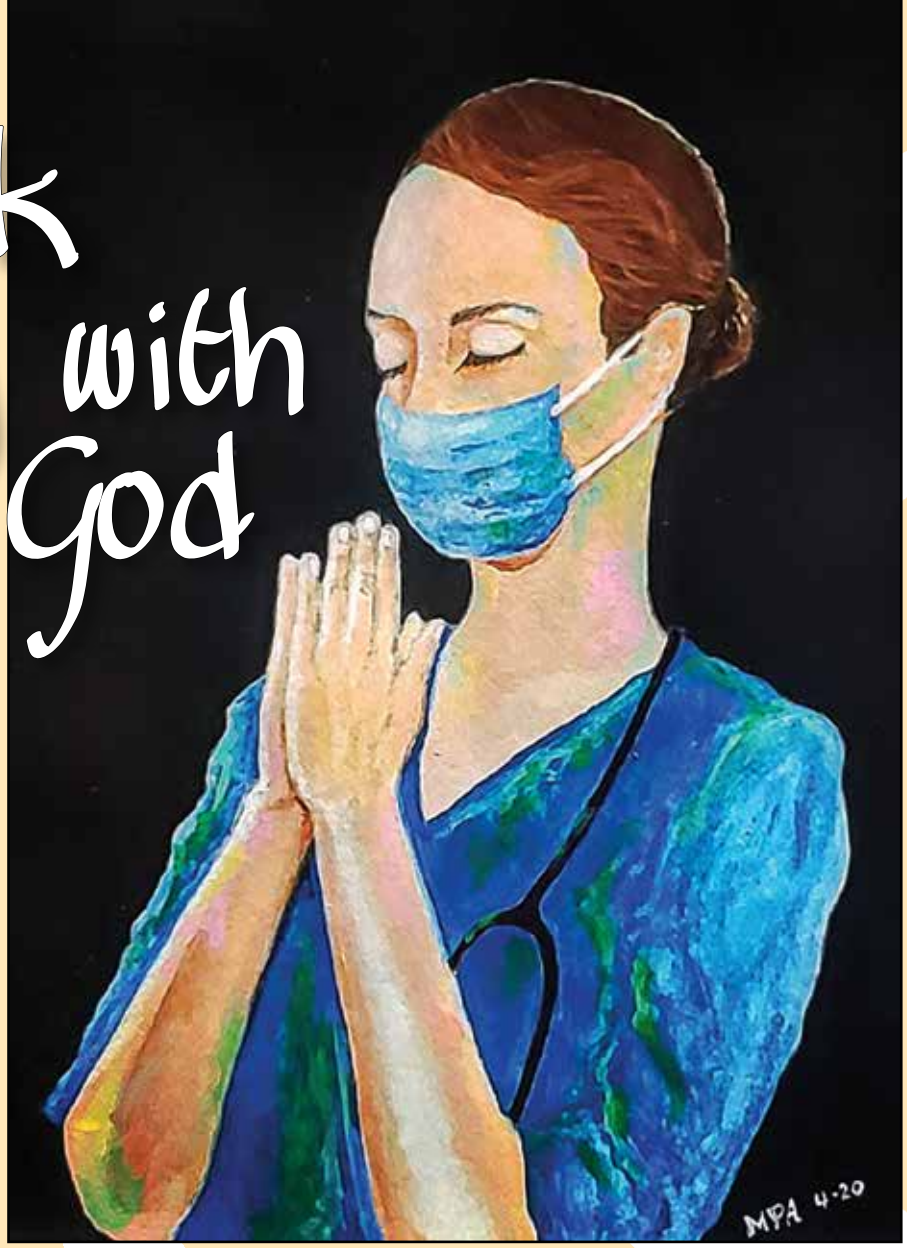
I think back on my brother's half-century of life. It began with such promise, and ended with his having learnt to walk a humble path. That path was not of his own choosing, but it led him ultimately to stand up for justice in a way that once cost him a job, and to show loving kindness to all around him.

We are all called continually to adjust our walk to God's often unexpected pace and direction. In the words of Joseph Campbell: "We must be willing to let go of the life we have planned, so as to have the life waiting for us."

Painting: ***Hold the Green*** by Mike Glover © Used with permission www.mikegloverart.nz www.facebook.com/mikegloverart www.imagevault.co.nz

Mary Betz is a writer and spiritual companion with a background in ecology, theology, justice and peace, and spirituality.

Walk Humbly with Your God



NEIL DARRAGH

reflects on what Micah's phrase means for us as a pilgrim people.

Prophets do not argue. Nor do they propose programmes for future growth. They throw words at us, critical or hopeful, but nonetheless insightful — future changing rather than future predicting. They call for a response, then leave us to deal with it in whatever way we can.

The words of the Hebrew prophet Micah's statement of what God requires from us: "To do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8 — NRSV version), have stimulated responses over the centuries from Christians — perhaps because they capture so succinctly the core of Christ's own teaching. They call for a response in our times too. My reflections in this article are confined to the last of these three requirements: *walk humbly with your God.*

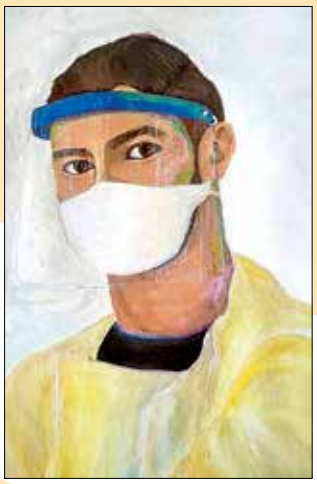
Walk

Walk is about life as a journey, a metaphor for process, perhaps even progress. It implies that life is motion from somewhere to somewhere. No standing still. No holding to a fixed position. Not just wandering aimlessly either. The journey has a direction though we can only just sense the end-goal. The early Christians called the teaching of Jesus the "way", a life journey that seeks to discover and immerse us in the deep reality of the realm of God. Jesus's disciples are a pilgrim people: a group of travellers, with some running ahead, some up front leading the chant, some acting as navigators, some stragglers, some wandering off for a time, some just catching up, some needing to be carried, some tired and irritable, and some guarding the boundaries. We seem to have lost this image of the "pilgrim people", so prominent in the Second Vatican Council's reforms, and replaced it with more static ones like parish, or diocese, or religious institute, or integrated school.

Humbly

The proposal to walk *humbly* opposes the temptation to stride proudly. It defies equally the military march of the victory parade with its threat of organised destruction and the liturgical procession of vested clergy with its promise of special divine favour.

Humility does not mean abasement. It means having a strong sense of the delicate but precious part we play in the intricate reality of God's dream for the world. Importantly, it scorns the many forms of human arrogance. We have become used to, perhaps even a little immune to (because many of us have to include ourselves in this), the arrogance of the people who have dedicated themselves to power, wealth, or recognition. Yet few of us have learned how to deal with the arrogance of the human race



itself — the attempt and the failure to dominate everything else in the Earth. Collectively, we still need to find a place and a role within that larger reality, a role that is neither foolishly arrogant nor unrealistically debasing.

With

The little word *with* carries a powerful social meaning. Accompaniment. Not "below", not "kneeling before", not "above all", not demanding attention. Not under a great ruler, not before a judge, not directed by a powerful administrator. This is companionship.

Most of our formal liturgical prayers have the sense of a courtier before a king, praising the king, professing our own unworthiness and petitioning for favours. Micah's words are not about this; they are about walking with God as our companion.

Your God

With *your God*. Micah probably never considered that any walking could be done *without* God. For many of us today, there are so many dysfunctional, oppressive images of God crowding around us. We have

to get rid of most of them. Pushing against these oppressive images are the opposites — those domesticated images of a god who serves mainly to comfort our distress and preserve our personal unrealities — not a real God then, not a companion, but just a friendly servant to our needs. Faced with so many competing versions of "God", many settle simply for a permanent agnosticism.

Those of us today who have been influenced by modern individualism probably take from Micah an image of God and *me* walking together. Me and my God! Imagine that! But Micah is addressing *us*, not as individuals but collectively. This is about "our", not just "my" God. This God relates to us as a people, as communities who recognise the God they have in common. A God who accompanies us, not just me. We have to make accommodations, personal sacrifices, negotiations in order to walk with others. This is not a God of individualism or personalist spiritualities (my successes, my achievements, my spiritual advancement, or my personal holiness). We walk together, as communities, as peoples, as networks, as movements, as nations, as families; not as individuals estranged by individual choices, personal preferences, our own agendas, our treasured rights or our individual freedoms.

Companion Creator

We walk with God as our companion. Yet within us arrogance may still be a stalking predator. Let us not allow ourselves to diminish this image of God. Recognising God as our Companion should not belittle this Companion. Compassion and immense power combine here. This Companion is not one who just walks beside us. This is a Companion who embraces us, a source of light surrounding us, a cradle of warmth among us, a wellspring of energy for doing justice and loving kindness.

This Companion is a voice that tantalises us with whispers of future wisdom and tall stories from the past, a Companion who laughs along with our own little stories and treats them as treasures held forever in the memory of God. This Companion is also our Creator.

This expanded sense of "companionship" includes all those others for whom God is a Companion. This is the sense of the first part of the quote from Micah—those to whom we "do justice" and "love kindness" become the body of our Companion God. Here Micah and Christ agree. "Love God" and "love your neighbour" was Jesus's way of saying it. And Jesus spent his life demonstrating that these two are both the same. To love God is to love all those within reach around us; and to love these is already to identify God as Companion. To walk humbly with God is already to do justice and love kindness, and those who are not humble cannot do justice or love kindness.

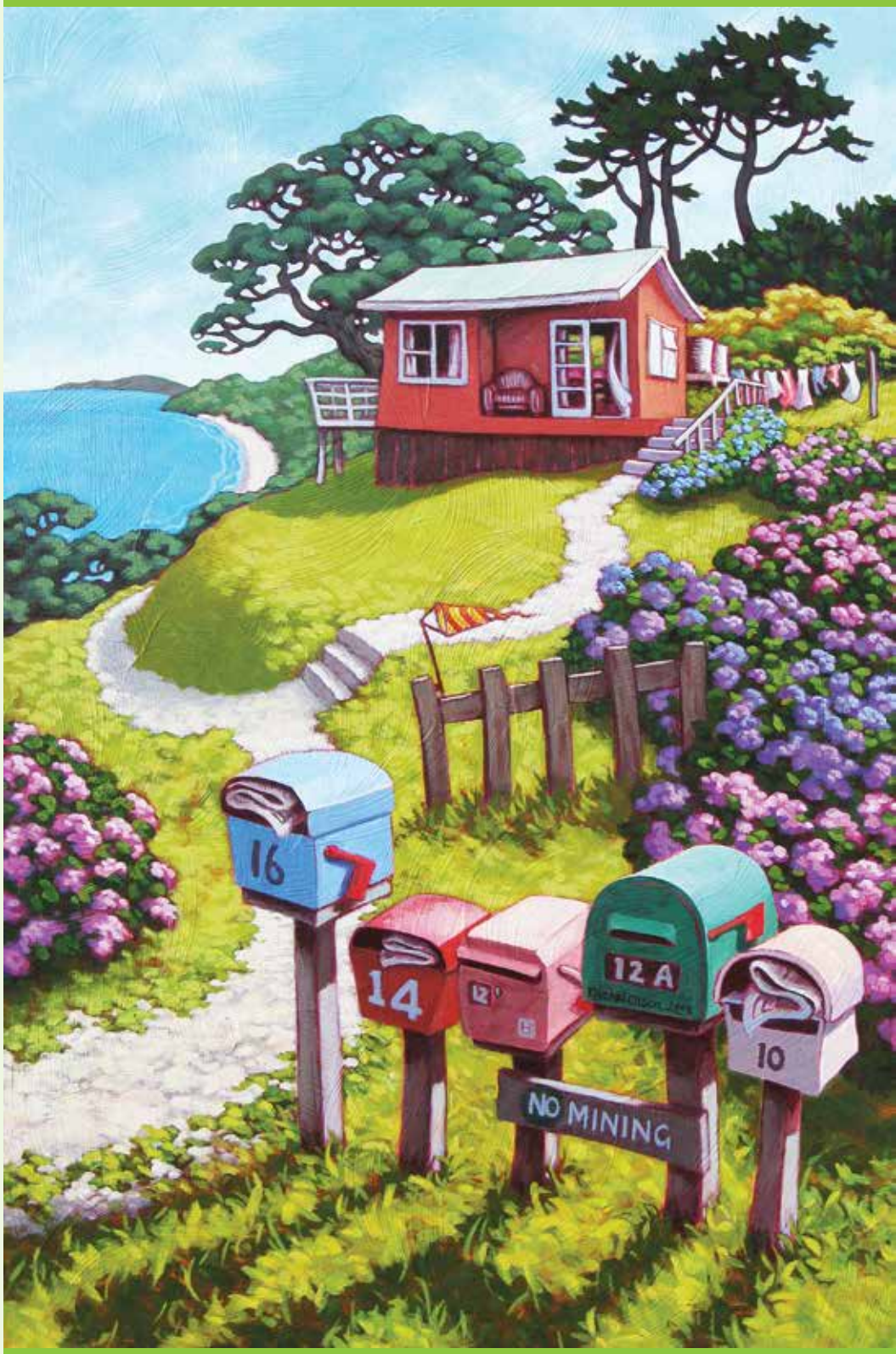
Fragile humans travel in trust if we are humble enough to walk with wonder and respect for our many companions within this Earth.

Be close, Companion Teacher
Be close that we may know
to live within wonder
to act with respect
to use without waste
the better to know You
the closer to seek You
the gentler to touch You
and by You be touched.*

[* Part of a prayer in Neil Darragh *At Home in the Earth: Seeking an Earth-centred Spirituality* Accent Publications, 2000: 74]

Paintings by Mary Aquino from her series of health workers many of whom have died of COVID-19. © Used with permission www.society6.com/mpacollectiondesign

Neil Darragh is a pastor, writer, and theologian with a long-term interest in the impact of the Christian Gospel in New Zealand society.



Walking More Humbly

ROBIN KEARNS shares insights into learning to appreciate the sacred all around us.

Back during the first Lockdown, I was on Waiheke Island. There, with all but essential vehicles off the roads, pedestrians turned back the clock. We walked the way people did before the hegemony of cars. When out walking or cycling, we offered greetings in a way usually reserved for those we already know. There was distancing but it was sociable distancing. But we noticed the odour of exhaust emissions more acutely than usual.

It was a time of noticing the non-human life with which we share the planet. We heard more birdsong. With roads quiet and the engines of industry silenced, the air and the sea seemed to have a new clarity. At the beach the horizon seemed sharper and we saw fish in the shallows. Dolphins came to visit.

Second Lockdown

More recently, I spent the year's second Lockdown in mainland Auckland without a car. It's been a great opportunity to re-appreciate the neighbourhood and find new walking routes I never knew existed. But places soon feel closer than they did before as routes and landmarks become familiar. It's also struck me that it takes a certain humility to walk and carry home your groceries in a backpack.

What does it mean to walk humbly in these viral times? It seems to me that in a car-dominated society, walking itself can be an act of humility; we step out in our embodied selves while, just beyond the footpath and grass verge, the powerful machines that rule our cities speed past.

Walking necessarily humbles us through its reminders of our limitations as well as capacities. Our bodies speak of ageing joints or offer painful echoes of past injuries. But to persist can be to walk humbly: in gratitude for the mobility we have and in active

defiance of the urge to drive or be passively driven.

Taking Note of Where We Are

But what does humbly mean? To walk humbly is surely to be attentive to the "whereness" of our walking. It is a time to both lose our thoughts and find our place. A time to ponder questions such as: What lies beneath our feet? Who walked this route before us: today, yesterday or generations ago? It is a time in which to give thanks for the ground beneath our feet.

Being Humble

If we break open the words, there is a connection between walking *humbly* and Earth itself. *Humus* is the organic matter that becomes soil. In turn it offers fertility and supports life itself. The Latin word *humilis* grew from humus with its meaning of something lowly and unpretentious. This word and its meaning became *humble* in Old English.

In a world that over-values confidence and self-importance, we can do well to reclaim these connections. Making these links allows us to see walking humbly as being open to each journey rather than focused totally on the destination. These links between humility and what lies beneath our feet can keep us close to the ground. Slowly we can re-find an intimacy with Earth. Eventually we can gently and more deeply rediscover the ground of our being.

Walking Tactically

The ideas of the French Jesuit and social theorist Michel de Certeau can be helpful. In his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, he writes of two types of walking: the strategic and the tactical. Footpaths and combined walk/cycleways offer *strategies*: they prompt people to keep left and keep moving. They have been designed by planners and are focused on destinations, being logically constructed to ensure people get efficiently and safely from point A to point B. Tactics are more subtle. For de Certeau, these are ways of walking that involve shortcuts, pauses, and personalised routes influenced by memories. Tactics are ways we can resist routes that can be tediously rational and instead bring creativity to our way-finding.

Based in Mt Albert during the second Lockdown, my regular walking has followed Te Auaunga/Oakley Creek. This route encourages being tactical: stepping off the path to observe the water's flow, a pool's reflection or some small plant. Through the tactic of lingering, we can humbly expose ourselves to the unexpected.

We can walk humbly to the letter box and back or set out on a week-long trek. Distance doesn't matter. Duration doesn't reduce our capacity to find the sacred in the act of walking.

It is a corridor of imperfect beauty. The path is broken but the land is being healed. Here, for almost two decades, volunteers have weeded, planted and cared for this place. Gradually its mana is being restored. I, too, have planted and plucked rubbish from the riverbank. Other times I walked, informed by the smells noticed by our beloved dog. These memories walk with me.

Walking humbly hones the discipline of attentiveness. When walking the same route daily we can see with new eyes: an opening flower, the pattern of bark on a tree, the quirky design of someone's letter box. Walking beside the Creek has become part of my practice as well as my place. I know each bend. I am not alone. My friend Kennedy Warne tells me he cannot stay away: the Creek has become his Walden Pond. In its presence, the stream speaks to those who listen.

Practice of Humility

Back on the city's footpaths, I have maintained a Lockdown practice of humility: greeting people when passing. Saying "Hello" is a simple gesture that adds a social dimension to distancing. How each hello is received is not the point: some are welcomed and reciprocated; some are met with surprise; others ignored. Such is city life. To "walk humbly with our God" is to walk not just in the presence of the Divine but to bring Presence to the path we tread. To be humble is to be vulnerable and open to being ignored.

In these COVID times, travel offshore is but dreams and memories. Perhaps Earth is asking something new of us: to walk *locally* and humbly. This is a time when we can be grounded – not in frustration but in celebration of the here and now. It can be a time to save the immense cost in terms of dollars and carbon emissions it would otherwise take to reach international destinations. The Camino can be closer than we think.

This can be a time to reacquaint ourselves with the paths that lead to a deeper understanding of this land. Do we have the humility to learn who walked our land in pre-colonial times? To learn of dispossession and despair as land and lives were lost? Can we embrace this humility? Can we walk our way into knowing more deeply the place on which we stand?

Walking Attentively

Whether we walk locally or take on Great Walks, it's the walking attentively that counts. We can walk humbly to the letter box and back or set out on a week-long trek. Distance doesn't matter. Duration doesn't reduce our capacity to find the sacred in the act of walking.

To walk humbly is to move in gratitude with and towards our God. To walk is to find thankfulness for bodily capacity, for time, for the weather, for living where it is safe to stroll, and for all that comes to our attention along the way. The Church may say we are in "ordinary time". But there is no ordinary time when walking. To walk humbly with our God is to welcome the extraordinary into our days.

Painting: ***Hydrangea Bach*** by Rachel Olsen © Used with permission www.rachelolsenartist.com

Robin Kearns lives on Waiheke Island, is Professor of Geography at Auckland University and affiliates with St Paul's Rongopai Eucharistic Community.

STORY OF FAITH

ZAHRA MUHAMMED describes her childhood experience of hearing she was not recognised as Jewish and her journey to Faith.

Zahra Muhammed, originally from Canada, now calls Dunedin home where she lives with her husband and three children. She is an avid ice hockey player and advocate for Steiner education.

One of my favourite childhood memories was dressing up for Purim. Purim is a Jewish festival where we wore costumes, went to the synagogue and ate triangular poppyseed biscuits. I would be lying if I said I knew what we were celebrating, but I loved it. I remember one year I didn't dress up; probably Dad decided we were going only at the last minute. When passing adults asked what I was, as I stood wearing what any normal 10-year-old would wear, I responded: "A communist". I didn't know what that meant at the time, but the response I got was encouraging. Adults laughed, I felt clever and I repeated it all evening and went home with a belly full of biscuits, feeling quite pleased with myself.

My dad parented me and my younger sister solo from about my ninth birthday onwards. Even before then, most of my memories revolved around my father's Jewish family. My mother's family, who had migrated to Canada from Scotland, were Catholic. I have a handful of memories of a crucifix above my Nanny's bed and my mother's oldest sister bringing me to church. She felt very compelled to save me.

My parents weren't religious people, and most of the religious holidays we celebrated growing up had more to do with family coming together than religion. But there were gifts, so I never questioned it.

A Double Loss

A few years after my "communist costume" Purim, my beloved Zaide (grandfather), passed away with Parkinson's. Snippets of that day are etched in my memory. I remember watching my dad take the call. He looked at me and without skipping a beat told me he did not believe in God. From that day onward he referred to himself as a Jewish Atheist and we never celebrated another Purim.

Zaide's funeral is also in my memory but not just for the obvious reasons. I remember being so deeply sad, but at one point during the service I broke out into a fit of giggles with my cousins. The whole situation was overwhelming and the fact the Rabbi kept pronouncing my grandfather's name strangely set us all off.

Earlier in the day we went to pay our final respects to Zaide who was in an open casket. I couldn't bring myself to follow my family into the room. As I sat

on the ground waiting for the others to say their farewells, my great uncle came out with his condolences. In the past he'd have asked me to sing a song in Yiddish and I would oblige as I had on many previous occasions. I generally received a five dollar note for my efforts. We were making polite small talk when I mentioned wanting to have a bat mitzvah, the coming of age ceremony for girls when they turn 12. I expected an enthusiastic response but was met with the words: "You're not Jewish."

My great uncle readily explained that only children born to Jewish mothers were chosen by God, and that even if I went through the process of converting, I wouldn't technically be Jewish. I will never forget the way it made me feel, that sudden feeling of disconnection. I don't think he meant any harm, nor did he realise how life changing that two-minute conversation would be.

If I wasn't Jewish, who was I? What was I? I knew one thing for certain. Even if my father did not believe in God, I did.

The Search

For the following few years, I really struggled to find my place in the world, my sense of belonging.

When I was about 15, I had the option of taking a world religions class in school. For our end of year assignment we had to present an essay on a religion we knew little or nothing about. I chose Islam. A week later I found myself at the back of the school library finishing off an English version of the Qur'an. I had so many questions, and yet felt I was given so many answers.

Halfway through the project the month of Ramadan began: a month of fasting from sunrise to sunset for Muslims. I woke up before the sun every day, walked down the road to a friend's house and joined the family for breakfast and prayers. After school each day I returned to help make the meal for breaking the fast. I don't remember what grade I got on my assignment, but I gained so much in the process of researching and writing it.

I felt I had found a religion that valued me as a person. A religion that valued me as a young woman and that accepted me as I was, regardless of my parents' faith or lack thereof.

Becoming Muslim changed the way I viewed the world. I realised I wanted to marry someone with similar beliefs and values, so I could pass on those values to my children. At 21, visiting New Zealand for the first time, I met and married my husband — a Muslim originally from Fiji. We eventually settled in Dunedin and have three beautiful children.

I always thought of myself as open-minded, but in reality when faced with something that felt foreign to me, I often dismissed it as untrue or assumed it lacked substance. It took me years of internal struggle to know that different didn't mean wrong, it just meant different. In my marriage, our faith made for a good common ground when juggling our differing cultures. And it has allowed us to build from that point.

Even as a Muslim, I still have a deep love for the Jewish community. Over time I have come to realise it's more than just a faith. Judaism is a culture, a way of life, the food we grew up eating and the Holocaust our ancestors survived. Even if I'm not "chosen" it's a part of me. It's in my blood.

Journeying in Faith

In my journey to Islam I learned a lot. I learned about different faiths and the beauty each of them holds. I learned that most of us want to live happily and peacefully and please God. I've also learned that truly knowing and understanding what others believe is spiritually liberating. I learned to understand and value others, but also to see yourself in them. Our similarities far outweigh our differences.

If someone had told 12-year-old me that I would find Islam; that it would open my heart and my mind; that through it I would confront my own privilege and underlying bias — I would have thought they were downright mad. However, 18 years later my faith is still growing and evolving and I no longer feel disconnected.

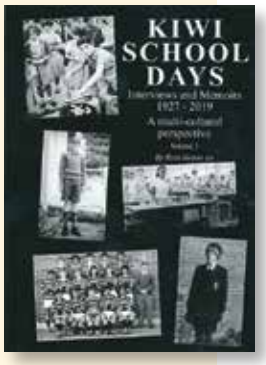
Photo by Nicole Y C on Unsplash

Kiwi School Days Volume 3: Interviews And Memoirs 1927-2019

by Ross Sutton
Self-Publication, 2020
Reviewed by Neil Laurenson

BOOK

This book, the third of a trilogy of personal experiences of schooling, is a collection of memoirs and photographs of 35 men and women who were educated in New Zealand schools between 1933 and 2009. The contributors represent a variety of ethnicities from different socio-economic backgrounds. They attended primary and secondary schools of all kinds — Māori immersion, state, church and private schools, including boarding schools — throughout the country.

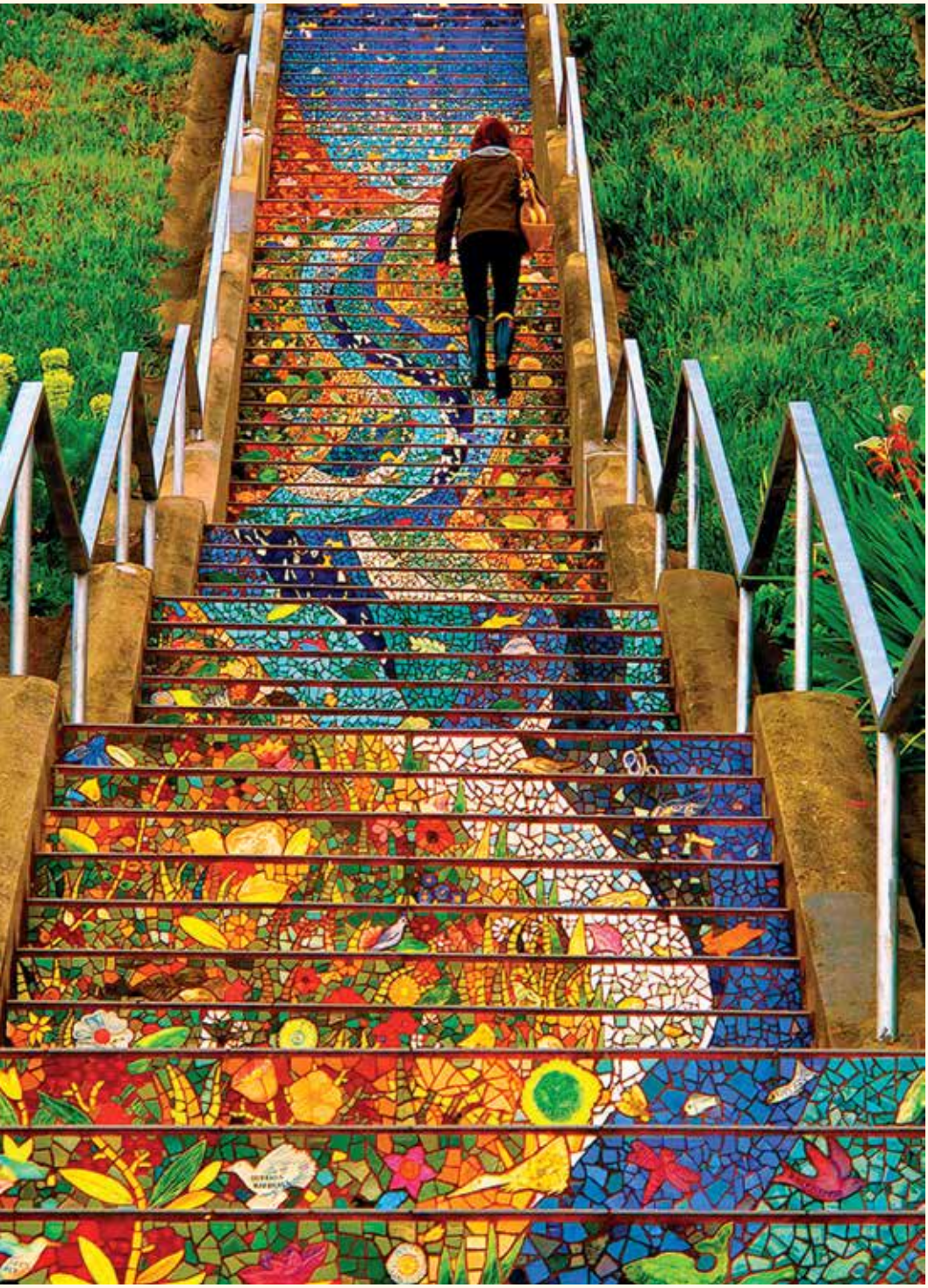


The majority of those interviewed are not well known which gives the reader a glimpse into the lives of everyday Kiwis during their school days as well as the contributions they are making to the workforce and society.

Most had happy school days and have fond memories of certain teachers. A few experienced racism and bullying. Some common themes which emerged in their stories were discipline, particularly the use of corporal punishment; the emphasis on sport; the fear of the dental clinic; and in most schools, the absence of anything relating to Māori or Pasifika culture.

These stories tell of a simpler time when children walked to and from school. Their after-school activities were chores at home and playing with neighbouring children.

This book will interest all of us who have been to school in New Zealand. Like me, you might discover the story of someone who went to the same school as you.



Step by Step in Humility

NELL BROWN explains the role of humility in the journey from alcoholic addiction to sobriety.

In 1987 I chanced upon the "12 Steps" of Alcoholics Anonymous and over the decades I've re-read the literature that explains the programme.

It occurred to me that each of the 12 steps of the AA programme is grounded in attaining a successively deeper degree of humility — a characteristic, the AA literature claims, necessary to obtain and maintain sobriety. Humility, says AA, feeds the desire to seek out and do God's will. And achieving and maintaining sobriety while doing the will of God, as each person understands that concept, are the dual goals of the AA fellowship.

The programme is unquestionably spiritual in nature, but it is not religious; it does not dictate the nature of "a power greater than the individual" but encourages people struggling with an addiction to seek an understanding of a power greater than themselves. People with a specific faith may identify with their tradition's interpretation of God. Others call it a Higher Power or a Deeper Wisdom, and still others choose to use the strength and experience of the AA group as a power greater than themselves.

Taking the First Step

Active alcoholics assert they can handle their drinking without help from anyone or anything, but the AA's 85-year history suggests otherwise. It is only through endless failures and countless humiliations brought on by their out-of-control drinking that alcoholics arrive at an AA meeting where they learn that in order to become sober, they must have the humility to admit they are powerless over alcohol and that their lives have become unmanageable. That's the first step in the programme and the first lesson in humility.

Second and Third Steps

The second step suggests that a newcomer needs to deny the ego sufficiently to believe that a power greater than themselves can restore them to sanity, because what is out-of-control drinking if not a form of insanity? And the third step suggests that the suffering alcoholic turns their will and life over to the care of God, as that person understands the concept.

These steps are predicated on the newcomer's willingness to progressively let go of egotistic control over their own lives and adopt a humbler attitude towards

their recovery. This is echoed in the succeeding steps.

Practising Humility

A common practice in AA meetings is that no one interjects when another is speaking. In this way, from their first meeting, newcomers receive an understanding of humility — listening to others without commenting, correcting or offering advice.

Uriah Heep – that obsequious, sycophantic character in Charles Dickens's 1850 novel *David Copperfield* — constantly wringing his hands and snivelling: "I'm ever so 'umble," shows us what humility is not. Interesting to note here that the fictitious character, the obverse of humble, made it his goal to destroy the reputation and character of his employer, Mr Wickfield, an alcoholic.

Humble people … accept their humanness, embracing their good qualities while acknowledging their flaws … make a habit of working towards transforming their defects of character.

Humility as a characteristic is often misunderstood. Some take it to mean timid, ineffectual, weak and self-deprecating. On the contrary, humble people are quietly self-assured because they know the truth about themselves, good and bad. They accept their humanness, embracing their good qualities while acknowledging their flaws. They make a habit of working towards transforming their defects of character into the corresponding attributes.

AA teaches that unless alcoholics have the humility to rid themselves of their toxic egocentric behaviour and thinking, they have little chance of becoming and remaining sober, let alone progressing towards living happy and useful lives. Further, AA literature asserts that a rampant ego is the only impediment between an active alcoholic and conscious contact with a Higher Power, or the God of one's understanding.

Humility — Foundation for Spirituality

The 12 Step Programme has an interesting origin. In 1940 the Jesuit Edward Dowling was one of the first to see certain parts of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola reflected in the 12 Steps, which had been published in the *Big Book* (Alcoholics Anonymous) a year earlier. In particular he noted AA's emphasis on the examination of conscience in the Fourth Step, confession in the Fifth Step and making restitution in the Ninth. He recognised the foundation principle of humility and the way it permeates so many of the steps.

However, when Dowling pointed out the similarities to the *Big Book* author Bill W, Bill said he had never heard of the Ignatian *Exercises*. He said he had augmented the teachings of another body, the Oxford Group, and later had input from fellow alcoholics.

Dowling asked him how long it had taken him to write the original 12 Steps and Bill replied that, after sitting at his desk and asking for guidance, it had taken 20 minutes of feverish writing. Dowling commented: "If it were 20 weeks, you could suspect improvisation. Twenty minutes sounds reasonable under the theory of divine help."

Spiritual Awakening

Having first shown alcoholics how they can be released from their physical addiction to and mental obsession with alcohol, the ultimate goal of the 12 Step Programme is to induce a spiritual awakening by being the means through which each recovering alcoholic can come into conscious contact with a power greater than themselves — the God of each one's understanding. They are encouraged to do this humbly and honestly and to practise the principles embedded in the 12 Steps in every aspect of their lives, while using the programme to help the still suffering alcoholic.

The 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

1. We admit we are powerless over alcohol — that our lives have become unmanageable.
2. We come to believe that a Power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity.
3. We make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand God.
4. We make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admit to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We are entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly ask God to remove our shortcomings.
8. We make a list of all the persons we have harmed and become willing to make amends to them all.
9. We make direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continue to take personal inventory and when we are wrong promptly admit it.
11. We seek through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we try to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practise these principles in all our affairs.

Photo: Barr Crutcher Staircase, San Francisco by Muhamed Sanad © www.flickr.com/people/116103386@N06/

Nell Brown lives in Oamaru. She writes magazine features, biographies and social histories.

JOURNEYING WITH COMPANIONS

SHANE COLEMAN **ponders his faith journey recognising the highways and byways in discerning the call of God.**

I'm sometimes jealous of biblical characters to whom God appears in a dream, or in burning foliage, or sends an angel saying: "I've got news for you." Their direction seems so clear-cut!

My "walking humbly with my God" is an ongoing adventure. It's meant a hikoi to other lands, to nurture relationships in community, to work for justice, to care for Earth, and to grow a deeper understanding of myself. My relationship with God, like all relationships, has had its times of joy and happiness, followed by times of strain and even hurt. Walking with God is a very human experience yet at the same time an encounter with Mystery.

Shane Coleman lives and works in Te Whanganui-a-Tara. He is passionate about rugby, baking, travel and whānau. He volunteers mentoring rangatahi and is an advisor to the Marists Brothers and other Christian organisations. He is currently undertaking study as a Racial Equity Practitioner.

Prayer and Discernment

"Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt and remain there until I tell you to return!" (Mat 2:13).

I find myself praying sometimes it would be so much cooler if God just gave me clear directions on what to do. I even remind God of that verse from Matthew's Gospel. "Look God — tell me what to do, and I will do it." Just say: "Hey, Shane get your butt out of here mate — bad news is coming" — and I'll go.

Prayer and discernment need practice and patience. They've required me to talk openly to people (in most cases my spiritual director), to stop and reflect, to sit in silence and be open to hear God. I have also learnt that prayers are answered but sometimes not in the way I want.

For a stage in my life I was a religious Brother. It was challenging, but I was pretty determined to stick it out. I kept telling myself: "You can do this. Harden up." I was stubborn. In hindsight I can see that I did not fit into their life. By trying to push for something that was not possible in their life, I was resisting the reality. I strained my relationships with my superiors which caused them pain. And it compromised my own well-being.

Despite this my prayer was simple — "Please make this work!" I thought I was on the right path and I was so focused on my own agenda I missed God's signs. So I found God entering my life not in a soft way but like a crashing

sledgehammer, shoving me onto another path. I had to walk away from the life I thought I wanted. I was humbled.

I learned so much about myself in this time, and now I can say I am grateful for the gift that it was. Through on-going discernment, I found peace. Joy Cowley sums it up in *The Paschal Way*: "You asked me to walk your path / You were talking of thorns, and a cross on the road to dying / You were talking of the tomb transformed, darkness into light". She ends the Psalm with: "You were talking of resurrections without end."

Discovery of God

"Were our hearts not burning within us while He was talking to us on the road?" (Luke 24:32) is a favourite verse. It reminds me that discovering God is not always a spectacular event. I'm aware of God more often in the normality of life.

Not so long ago my friends had twins. I arrived at their house one Saturday with a box of kai, presents for the boys and ready to help out. I expected to do chores but instead I was given one of the babies who snuggled into me and fell asleep. His mum and dad pottered around doing things that needed attention. I sat on the floor holding the baby, sharing kai, kōrero and laughter. We told stories about whānau, and of when we were younger. We also talked of the difficult delivery and the challenges of being new parents. It was simple and ordinary.

As I drove home, I realised that my heart was burning within me. In my friends' home I had experienced goodness, friendship, nurturing, manaakitanga — an everyday encounter with God among us. Vatican Council II reminded us that the presence of the Holy Spirit is everywhere — not just in a church. I experienced the truth that wherever there is goodness there is God.

Support of Community

"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them" (Mat 18: 20).

I'm an extroverted person and the connection and relationships with people brings me to realise the presence of God in my life. As in Mattthew, above, the gift of relationship brings me closer to God.

I've been shaped by the diverse communities I have belonged to and have been enriched by the mahi I have done across the world with young people and their families. This ministry, often with people on the margins of society, has made me read and pray the Scriptures in ways that shed light on my living. I have been challenged to work for justice.

I've prayed in community and alone — meditation, retreats, pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago, *lectio divina*. I've created liturgies and ritual and run youth groups and camps. I've prayed in all manner of places with a community — wharenui, homes, tiny chapels, grand cathedrals and outside in nature. All of these experiences immersed me deeper into the presence of God.

Now I'm struggling to find a parish where I feel I belong. The sins of abuse, patriarchy, racism and clericalism are testing my trust in the Church. Yet, I need to belong to a faith community. My partner recognises this in me and sometimes says: "Shane, you need to go to Mass" or "Go and spend time with the Brothers or your nun mates." This person I love senses that the faith community helps rebalance my relationships — with God, others, myself and the wider world. In the love I have for my partner and the love that is returned to me, is a great beckoning into the mystery of God, the fullness of love.

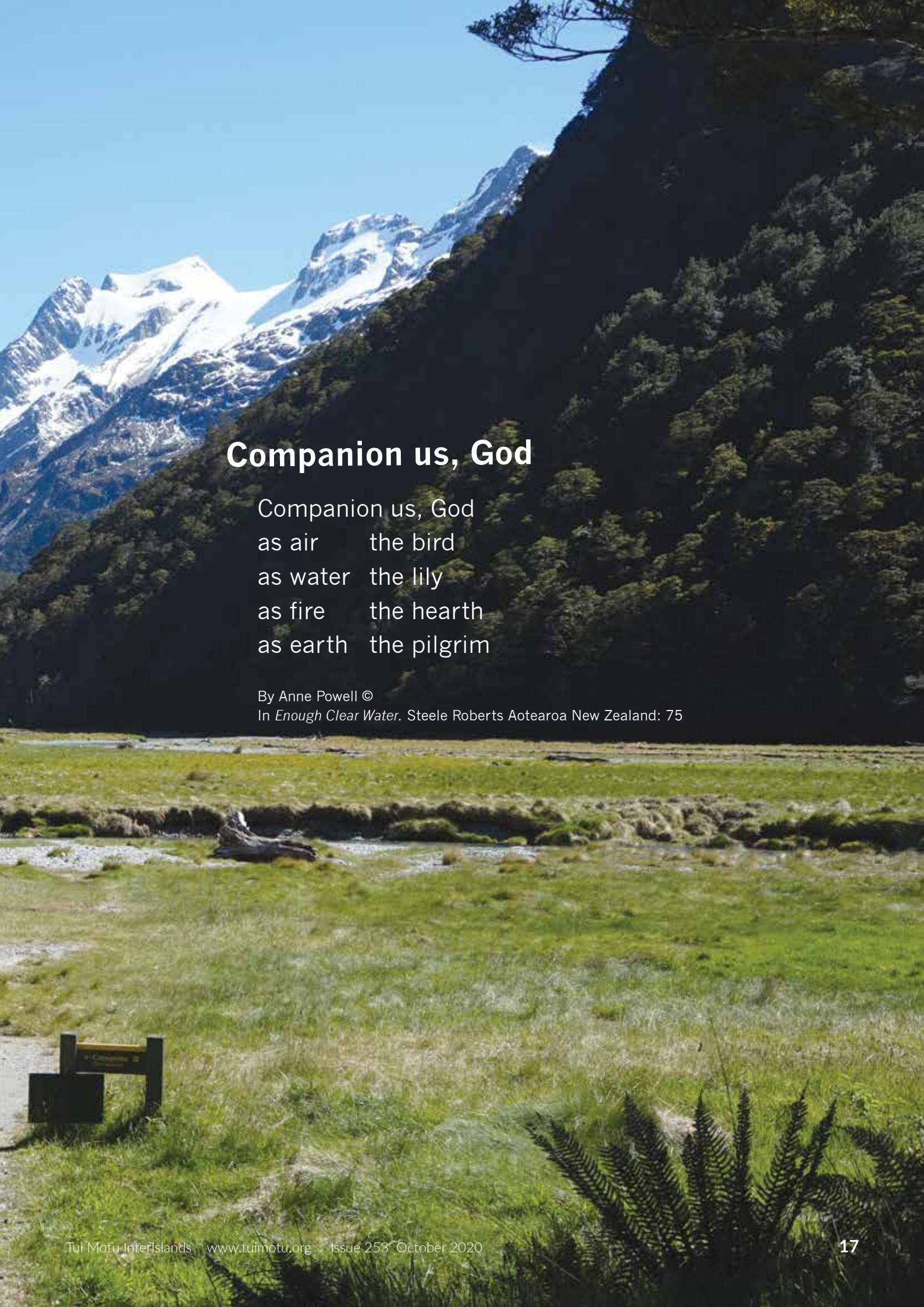
Learning Is Ongoing

"But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19).

Overall, I think I'm pretty cool with God. Walking with God is sometimes hard work and I am the one who needs to put in the time and commitment. I take heart from Mary in Luke's Gospel trying to make sense of her challenging circumstances — a young pregnant woman; then married and travelling from home; giving birth and encountering shepherds and angels. She "pondered" (Lk 2:19) these experiences in her heart.

I ponder my experiences of relationships — of prayer and discernment, in the highlights and low encounters in everyday life, in creation, in community, with whānau and with my partner. It's when I pause to reflect that I can feel my heart burning, and I realise, as if for the first time, that God is walking with us on the road.

Photo by Sezer66/Shutterstock.com



Companion us, God

Companion us, God
as air the bird
as water the lily
as fire the hearth
as earth the pilgrim

By Anne Powell ©
In *Enough Clear Water.* Steele Roberts Aotearoa New Zealand: 75

UNDERSTANDING HUMILITY

Micah 6:8 is probably my most cherished verse of Scripture. Indeed, this fleetingly brief passage has hugely influenced me, so much so that I named one of my children after the prophet. Micah 6:8 outlines three foundational touchstones, which provide an orientation — or way of being in the world — for those seeking to live in faithful relationship with God: do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. I want to focus on the third touchstone (to walk humbly), exploring in particular the idea of humility.

For lots of people nowadays, “humility” might seem a loaded or old-fashioned concept. The word "humility" connotes meekness, passivity, submission, modesty, deference and servility.

The Christian tradition has highly valued these qualities, particularly in relation to women. In some contexts they are entirely appropriate, but equating "humility" with "submission" is troubling when we use it to define relationships between men and women, priests and laity, old and young, human and other-than-human.

Humility, in this sense, may look more like humiliation. Relationships which require humility on these terms are often unjust and unloving, thus contradicting the first two of Micah’s touchstones.

So, how might we re-conceptualise “humility”, and how might this reconceptualised understanding inform our interpretation of this text?

I believe that an ecological analysis of humility can offer relevant insights for contemporary biblical readers.

From an ecological perspective, humility has to do with knowing our place in the world and how we relate to those around us.

It begins with the biblical affirmation that human existence is intrinsically and inescapably inseparable from the divine Other; life without this Other is impossible.

Acknowledgement of such dependence forces us to confront the limits of our own capabilities – both individually and collectively. It tempers our over-inflated sense of dominance and control in the world.

To recognise consciously our limitations is to comprehend our insignificance in the face of the immeasurably complex and fundamentally unknowable divine Other.

To perceive God is both to know God and not to know God. Comprehension, writes Mark Manolopoulo in *If Creation Is a Gift*, cannot be comprehensive. To encounter God is to encounter mystery. Like Job, who experiences a sense of deep humility when confronted by the divine mystery (Job 40:3-5), so we respond with humility when we encounter God’s presence.

But this humility is not passive, submissive or servile. Instead, it is characterised by awe, wonder, reverence and gentle receptivity. These are the qualities at the heart of this reconceived notion of humility.

But humility does not only relate to our encounter with the divine. It also has significant implications relating to how we encounter God’s creation — both human and other-than-human. In the same way that our existence is indebted to and inseparable from God so, too, are we utterly dependent upon Earth and Earth’s other-than-human communities.

When we are humble, we recognise the limitations of human power and authority, acknowledge and re-evaluate our misguided belief in the absolute human mastery over the world around us.

We come to realise that humanity is deeply embedded within the Earth community (human and other-than-human), a community whose myriad members are recognised and valued as subjects of intrinsic worth.

And,, again, this realisation engenders a response of humility (in the sense of awe, wonder, reverence, and gentleness).

It is an orientation which relinquishes the compulsion to master and control, resisting the temptation to insist on conforming to our own norms and ideals. Our attitude shifts to self-restraint, and recognition of the Other (human and other-than-human) in itself, for itself.

We stop perceiving the Other in relation to its utility, and instead allow space for the creative agency of life in all its forms without totalising or profiting from it.

At a material level, an ecological understanding of humility carries with it a strong ethical dimension requiring us to broaden our gaze, beyond our own individual/anthropocentric concerns, to include consideration of all living entities.

This brings us full circle to justice and kindness, the very essence of what it means to walk humbly with God.

Photo by Kwang Chun Gan/Shutterstock.com
Hoiho/Yellow-Eyed Peguin crossing the petrified forest to their nest in Curio Bay, Southland.

Emily Colgan is Senior Lecturer in Biblical Studies at Trinity Theological College in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Women Missed Out

I was staying with a community of Sisters when I first heard the title of Pope Francis's forthcoming encyclical, *Fratelli tutti*. Perhaps because I had spent time listening to their stories and sacrifices, their journeys and visions, it seemed all the more outrageous and heart-rending that the Pope, in a letter with the potential to gut modern constructs of human ecology, would fold these remarkable women — all the Church's remarkable women — into an amorphous, assumptive maleness. Again.

"Fratelli tutti" translates — no matter how delicately the Holy See dances around this — to "Brothers All", although some news outlets have done the PR gloss and inferred, in English at least, that "sisters" are silently included. As per tradition, the title is derived from the opening words of the encyclical, Francis of Assisi's admonishment: "Let us all, brothers, look to the Good Shepherd who suffered the passion of the Cross to save his sheep."

St Francis was addressing friars; *"fratelli tutti"* is unquestionably the accurate Italian; of course Pope Francis means, and is addressing, everyone as "brethren", or humankind. But this is not an argument about translation or tradition, style or semantics. This is about the Church listening — and reacting – to the lived experience of its women, and the Catholic women I know are furious and disappointed. I know it is difficult to convey "brothers and sisters" in a single, pithy catchphrase. I don't care.

Pope Francis could break with tradition, and name the encyclical after something other than its opening phrase. *Fratelli tutti* is — early indications suggest — a bold, prophetic vision for a new way of being a global community post-COVID. What does it say for Pope Francis's commitment to radical change if, alongside the blueprint for a better humanity and calls to melt the golden calves of capital, isolation and injustice, sits a paralysing refusal to change the way the Vatican names a document? It is not just the refusal to change that bothers me. It is the subtext. For this title to have made it through the editing process suggests to me either that no women were consulted, or that women who did raise concerns were overlooked. Neither would surprise me.

There is an easy solution: add *"sorelle"* to the title or, at the very least, make absolutely clear that "brothers and sisters" is the accurate English translation. Yes, this would look like deliberate capitulation to modern sensitivities. On the page it would look clumsy. It would sound prosaic to some ears, and it will be a pain to fit into news copy. Some would see it as an embarrassing u-turn. But it would be Christlike in the way it responded to women: it would recall a Jesus who begged a Samaritan woman for water; who changed his mind because of the insistence of the Syrophoenician mother. In a column for *La Croix*, Robert Mickens points out it was John Paul II who dropped the tradition of addressing groups of men and women as "dear brothers" in place of "brothers and sisters", thus acknowledging that women are present in a unique, different, valuable way to men.

When innovations like this happen, I still get goosebumps. For Pope Francis to do this would feel like a nod in the direction of women in the Church, its silent backbone across millennia of being gently, or violently, excluded; of being told that our need to feel included and at home comes second to language games. Changing the title would feel like Pope Francis saying: I see you — labouring in space stations and homesteads, forging breathlessly ahead for peace and science and our common future, welcoming strangers, building worlds and doing school runs, making shopping lists and schedules and works of art. It would echo Jesus's own long, loving look at the woman at the well, Mary Magdalene in her turmoil, Martha scrubbing dishes.

That simple acknowledgement is missing in this encyclical; I hope the substance is worth it. Meanwhile, sisters all, I see you. Like our sister who grabbed the hem of Jesus's cloak and wouldn't let go, or our sister who shut her ears to sarcastic comments as she anointed her teacher's feet, we can persist, and make enough noise that one day even Rome will hear us.

Liz Dodd is *The Tablet's* home news editor.

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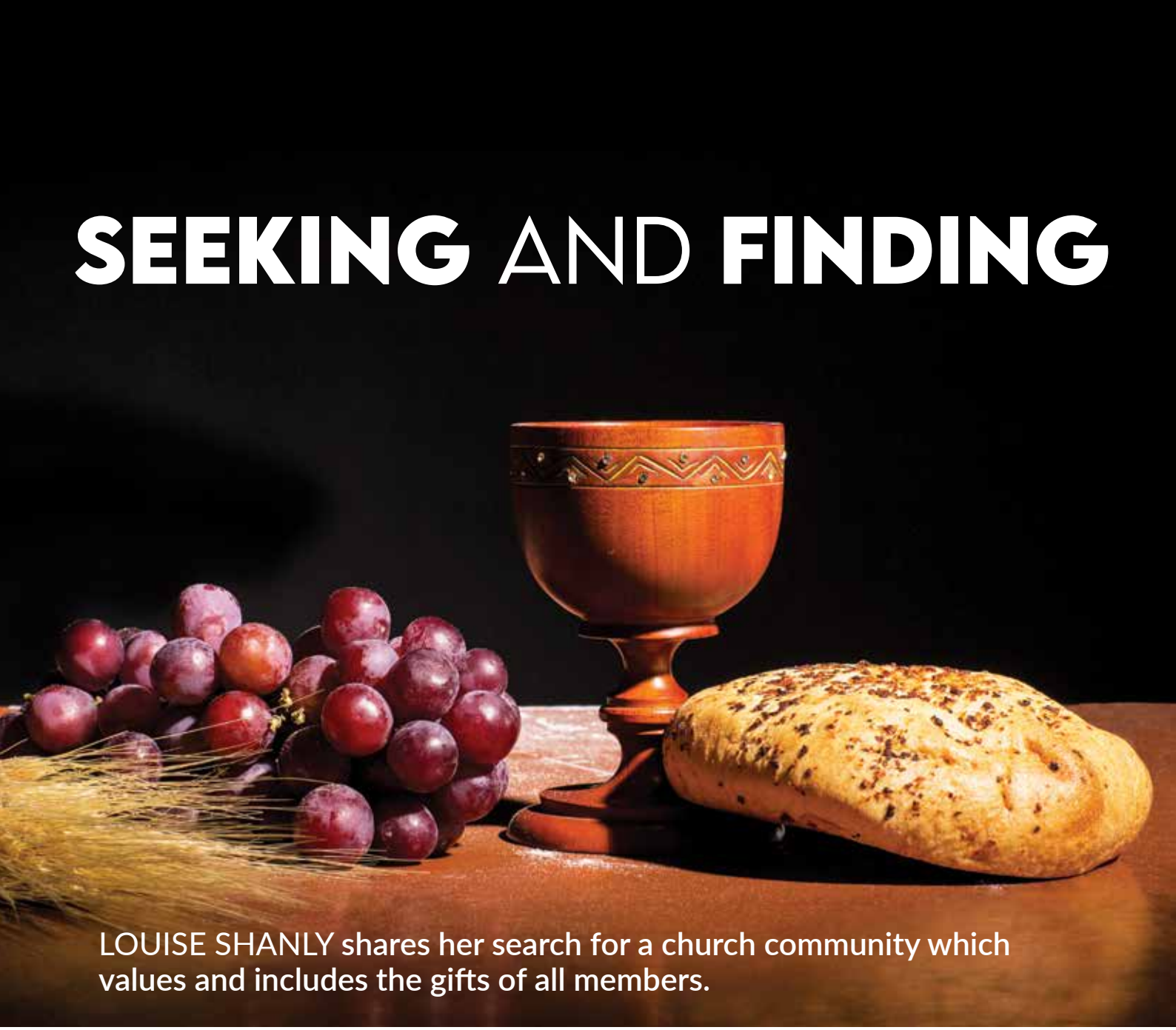
SEEKING AND FINDING



LOUISE SHANLY shares her search for a church community which values and includes the gifts of all members.

I've been a Catholic all my life. This meant I went to a Catholic primary school and as a teenager to CCD, (RE classes for young people not at a Catholic school). I married another Catholic whom I met at Newman Hall, the tertiary chaplaincy. Our three children have been to Catholic schools and our family has ministered in many ways in our local parish.

But over the last 15 years or so I've become dissatisfied and I've been searching. I began to see that the model of leadership in the Church practised by the male clergy was unjust, exclusive, unbalanced and dysfunctional. It was missing the many gifts and charisms of the other baptised women and men in the Church.

I spent a lot of time walking away and coming back, walking away and coming back — not physically; I've still attended liturgies and have taken an active part of our wonderful, loving parish community — but philosophically. I was really challenged and kept searching for what I was missing.

Louise Shanly is a member of the Coordinating group of Be The Change, Catholic Church, Aotearoa. She runs a Life Coaching business.

Discovering New Community

I was delighted to discover groups in North America and Europe who called themselves the Roman Catholic Womenpriests (RCWP). This seemed like something I was looking for, so I kept exploring.

Then, last year I met Paula Hoeffer, a Catholic woman priest from the Resurrection Community in Cincinatti, Ohio, when she was visiting Aotearoa. And later that year, on a trip to see my daughter in Seattle, I took the train to Lacey to visit Diane Whalen and Kathleen Bellefeuille-Rice who are RC Womenpriests at the Holy Wisdom Inclusive Catholic Community. It was wonderful to be able to speak with them but I was disappointed not to be able to participate in a community liturgy.

Joining During Lockdown

And then came COVID-19! With it a bright light shone in the darkness of the Church for me.

Over these months I've been able to Zoom into Eucharist, community liturgies and meetings with the Holy Wisdom Inclusive Catholic Community. The community has welcomed me and I feel a belonging and have taken on various ministries in the liturgies. Most importantly, I feel like I've walked a long journey and have now arrived home.

Participation

So what is this new home like?

While Diane and Kathleen are the ordained priests, Eucharist follows what we know as the Shared Leadership Model as practised in St Paul's Rongopai Eucharistic Community in Auckland. The community calls members with the gifts to lead the hospitality, Word and Eucharist parts of the liturgy.

In the Holy Wisdom community members lead the singing, read the readings and Gospel, give homilies, lead the various prayers. In their presiding role, Kathleen or Diane leads the offertory, Eucharistic prayer and blessings supported by a reader of the Eucharistic prayer. In fact, all of us sitting at home on Zoom with our bread and wine take part in these blessings, so it's an experience of shared ministry from that point of view as well.

The important thing for me is that in this Eucharistic celebration we are reminded that we are ALL part of the body and blood of Christ and we also share our own body and our own blood to support one another on our Christian journey. And not just our own community but ALL people — so it's an ongoing and strong call to another shared ministry — that of social justice.

I have found the community to be humble and simple and grounded in the humanity of everyone. When we share our personal prayers we hear truly human prayers — not formulaic — for people who are suffering. We all celebrate and rejoice when we hear prayers of gratitude for the joy someone has experienced. When we are asked to place our hands on our hearts and feel them pumping the blood of life — love-filled — through our bodies, we acknowledge we are human beings — all made in the image of God. When we sit and take deep breaths to relax and still our souls, we recognise that we are living stressful lives, often with grief and pain.

I enjoy the humanity and spontaneity of the community. In more normal times at liturgy in church, we stand and sit at appropriate places, however, on Zoom when we sit the whole time our bodies can stiffen up. During one liturgy, after the Prayer of the Faithful, a member raised her Zoom hand and asked Kathleen: "Can we have a quick break to stand up? My bum is numb!" We laughed. And Kathleen encouraged us to pray while moving, stretching and dancing if we wanted. So we did and then resumed more energised, alert and with a warmer sense of communion among us.

I am humbled to be part of the openness, sharing, loving, inclusivity of the Holy Wisdom Community. I'm journeying with this community, discerning how the Spirit is moving in the world.

Creating Local Community

I long to see this type of Catholic community with women priests growing around the world. In New Zealand we have yet to see a rise in RCWP communities as is happening overseas. Ideally, I would like Rome to include women in the ordained priesthood. Although the RC Womenpriests are ordained "legally", their ordination is not recognised by Rome — though we do not lose hope of a change.

For me, the RCWP movement has a freshness, inclusivity and attraction that I associate with Wisdom Sophia. Our Church communities can be stifled by clericalism. The RCWP model is an example of Church which reflects in word and deed God's love for everyone. My journey is continuing as I am working to make this a reality in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Photo by Jesus Cervantes/Shutterstock.com

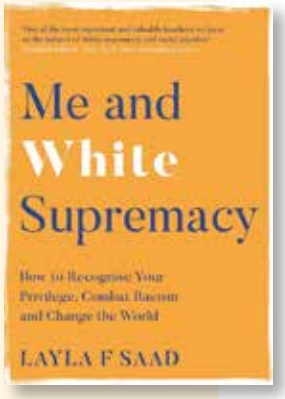
Me and White Supremacy: How to Recognise Your Privilege, Combat Racism and Change the World

by Layla F Saad
Published by Quercus, 2020
Reviewed by Pat Neuwelt

BOOK

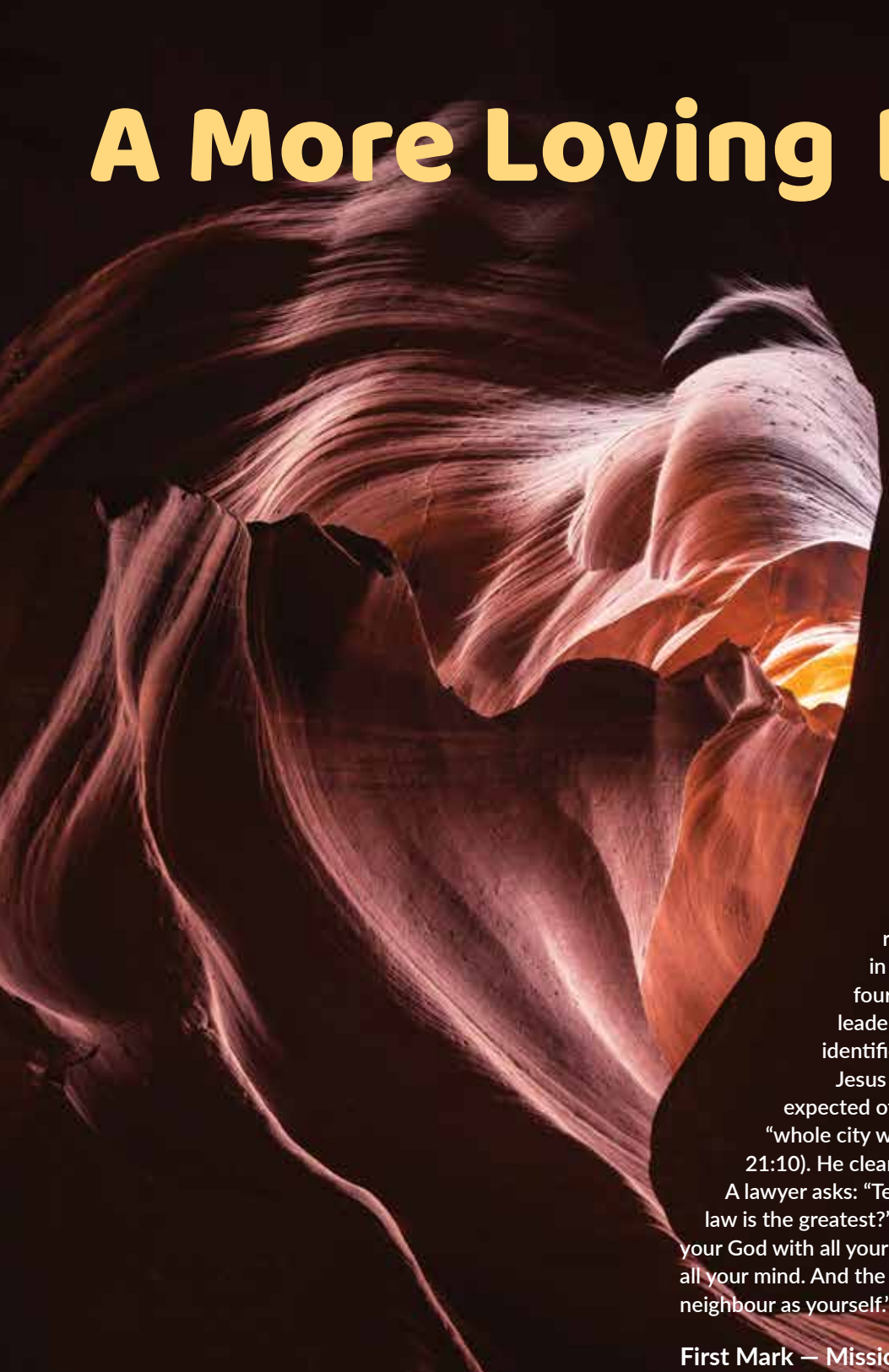
Author Layla F Saad identifies as a Black woman (East African and Middle Eastern), a Muslim woman and a British citizen currently living in Qatar. *Me and White Supremacy* is a working book — that is, a book to engage the reader in personal (and then hopefully systemic) work — not a casual read for pleasure. "The work", as Saad calls it, is both educational and transformational: "A journey to help you explore and unpack your relationship with white supremacy."

With such topics as white fragility, tone-policing and anti-Blackness, this book is necessarily confronting to a Pākeha like me. White supremacy remains largely invisible to those of us who benefit from it. Saad sets out the book as a 28-day challenge; each short chapter ends with a series of questions for self-reflection and journaling. She includes guidelines for a "circle process" to use this book in a group setting which, based on my experience I would highly recommend. My own small group set the following intention: "To wake up to our internalised White privilege so that we can be aware allies of Māori and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour)."



This book is a valuable tool for anyone interested in doing genuine anti-racism work in Aotearoa. The final chapter opens with: "The relevant question is not whether all Whites are racist but how we can move more White people from a position of active or passive racism to one of active antiracism."

A More Loving People



In her discussion of Matthew 23:34-36 KATHLEEN RUSHTON suggests COVID-19 is inviting us to live the commandments more fully.

Kathleen Rushton RSM is the author of recently published *The Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor: Hearing Justice in John's Gospel* (SCM Press 2020).

I was pondering this reflection when a woman handed me a leaflet and said: "The Bible tells us God will send pestilences." She continued with her the-Bible-says-it-is-true-views of coronavirus before getting off the bus.

That evening I began my annual retreat. I was offered Pope Francis's words about this time: "What we are living in now is a place of *metanoia* and we have the chance to begin. So let's not let it slip from us; let's move ahead."

Metanoia consists of *meta* (expand, go beyond) and *noia* (mind). We can stretch our minds by reflecting on the great commandments, in Matthew's Gospel, by drawing on the four marks of the church with Francis's leadership in the post-COVID-19 world as identified by Christopher Lamb.

Jesus enters Jerusalem in a way not expected of the Messiah – on a donkey. The "whole city was in turmoil: 'Who is this?'" (Mt 21:10). He cleanses the temple. Opposition mounts. A lawyer asks: "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" Jesus replies: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'"

First Mark — Missionary Simplicity

The first commandment is to love God with one's whole heart, soul and strength (Deut 6:4-9). COVID-19 is forcing the Church to concentrate on its core message. What can we learn from these biblical parallel understandings for the whole of human existence (Deut 10:12-13; 30:10) for the first "mark" of missionary simplicity?

The heart *(kardia)* is the centre of human emotions. The soul or life *(psychē)* is the centre of consciousness and vitality. Strength *(ischys)* suggests power and might. Love, then, is an inward feeling of attachment along with outward behaviour.

Matthew, too, emphasises the whole person. "Heart" is at the centre of willing, thinking, deciding and doing (eg, Mt 5:8; 6:21). "Soul" or "life" *(psychē)* is not disembodied, other-worldly or dualistic. We have a choice. Our life or

daily existence is given over to God or something else (eg, Mt 2:20; 6:25). Mind (*dianoia*), used only here in Matthew, means thought, understanding or disposition.

We can reflect on our love for God, then, as a direction, a joyful disposition amidst difficulties, a whole way of life and action lived according to God's revelation in the words (Mt 7:24-27; 12:46-50) and actions (9:36) of Jesus. Our whole self, living each day, desires and is orientated towards God and participation in God's mission.

Second Mark — Focused on the Poor

The second "mark" of the emerging Church will be that, though it might be smaller, it will be more focused on the poor. The global economic crisis flowing from Lockdown means the Church, too, will be pruned of resources. Its history shows this offers new growth. Love of God is entwined with the second commandment, love of neighbour (Lev 19:18). Jesus also stresses their unity and coherence (Mt 5:17-19). Financial hardship greatly affects the poorest and those on the peripheries. This will make the social outreach of the Church even more crucial.

Many Christians incorrectly believe that Jews are to love only their own people. But Christians, too, can have this tendency. Importantly, "neighbour" does not affirm an exclusivist ethic. A universalistic moral attitude is found, for example, in the insistence that all humanity is created in the image of God (Gen 1:27; 5:1-2; 9:6). Jesus quotes Leviticus 19:18: "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself." This does not mean just a few acts of love but a vision of a just society which is found repeatedly in Scripture.

The many requirements in Leviticus 19:1-17 are summed up in: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Lev 19:18). So, we cannot confine Jewish ethics to one verse and overlook all of Leviticus 19 where we also find: "The alien who resides among you shall be to you as a citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself" (19:34). And while Jesus is concerned with Israel (Mt 10:5-6; 15:24), all nations are included (2:1-12; 8:28-34; 15:21-28; 27:54; 28:19-20).

The "yourself" in Leviticus 19:18 is not about self-love. Those Mediterranean people were group-orientated. They saw themselves not in individiualistic terms but embedded in a family, clan or religious group. This instruction was given in the context of a *particular community* — for Jesus to his people or for Matthew to his community. That community is, also, "your neighbour".

The post-pandemic world invites us: to take responsibility for our faith; to a more active discipleship rather than being passive consumers; and to make spiritual sense of the COVID tragedy.

Maybe we can expand our vision by reflecting on a tendency to restrict "our neighbour" to people like us — those from our culture, race, creed, socio-economic group, gender or sexual orientation.

Third Mark — Natural World and Science

Arguably the intertwined love of God and neighbour is the focus of worship, spirituality and theology. The third "mark" of the Church in a post-COVID world will extend this horizon to a renewed relationship with the natural world and science.

In closing buildings and suspending liturgies, Church leaders were responding to scientific advice. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis gives attention to insights of modern science. He reminds us that: "Human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself" (para 66).

Fourth Mark — Liturgical and Pastoral Creativity

The fourth "mark" will be liturgical and pastoral creativity. With health restrictions, the Church is already finding new ways to proclaim the Gospel and bring the sacraments to the faithful. The post-pandemic world invites us: to take responsibility for our faith; to a more active discipleship rather than being passive consumers; and to make spiritual sense of the COVID tragedy.

Reflecting on the great commandments, I think of the words of the prophetic leader the late Cardinal Martini who offered this salient reminder: "Jesus asks: will the Son of Man, when he returns, find faith? He doesn't ask: will I find a great and well-organised Church?"

25 October
RL: 30th Sunday Ordinary Time
Matthew 22:34-40
RCL: 21 Sunday after Pentecost
Matthew 22:34-46

Photo by Omer Salom on Unsplash

Living in Grace and Peace

VERONICA LAWSON explains 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5 as a blessing and an encouragement to be gospel people in the Earth community.

1 Thessalonians 1:1-5

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,
To the Church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the Gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

The letter we know as 1 Thessalonians has the distinction of being the earliest extant Christian document. Its primacy in time accords it a special place in the Christian story. The first few verses of the opening chapter, the second reading for the 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, invites us to reflect on the earliest surviving written greeting to a community that had accepted Jesus of Nazareth as the anointed of God.

The triple authorship of this letter sometimes goes unnoticed: Paul, Timothy and Silvanus are addressing the *ecclesia* of the Thessalonians. While there is an occasional first person singular subject, indicating that Paul is the principal author, the *"we"* is sustained as subject for most of the letter. While the authors are all male and there is little indication in the letter that the addressees are other than male, this is not the word of one leading apostle: it is a communication from a leadership "team".

Why does this matter? An ecologically sensitive reading calls for attention to the constructors and the construction of the divine in the text, the constructors and construction of the social or human, of the environment, of all that inhabits the world of the text and of what may lie beneath the surface of the text.

Ecclesia at Thessalonica

Who comprised the *ecclesia* of the Thessalonians and what do we know of Thessalonica? Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia, a thriving metropolis situated on one of the main thoroughfares of the Roman Empire, the Via Ignatia. Its beautiful natural harbour attracted constant sea traffic from various parts of the Mediterranean world, as attested in the inscriptional evidence. The diverse cults in this populous city are well documented in the scholarly literature.

We can conjecture that among the "many devout Greeks" (Acts 17:4) who joined the Christian *ecclesia* were former followers of the cults of Osiris or Serapis or Dionysus or members of the Cabeiri, as well as members of the local Jewish synagogue. Luke has "some of the leading women" among the Jews who "were persuaded" by Paul and Silas to join the movement (Acts 17:4). If Luke's account is accurate, then the *ecclesia* of the Thessalonians was more gender inclusive than 1 Thessalonians might suggest.

The male images for the divine are consistent with the patriarchal bent of the letter as a whole: God is twice imaged as "Father" and Jesus is twice imaged as "Lord/*kyrios*". These male constructions can distract us from the reassuring language of the opening address which emphasises the community's inextricable relationship with the divine: the ecclesia of the Thessalonians is "in God/*en theō*" and "in Christ/*en…christō*".

> As gospel people, we are called to bring that grace and peace to our world, "not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction".

An ecologically sensitive approach to these expressions might lead us to ask what constitutes the whole *ecclesia*. Is the *ecclesia* restricted to the human members, or might it embrace the complex of human, of other-than-human life, of natural and constructed environment? What does it mean to assert that the *ecclesia* of the Thessalonians or of any other community is "in God"? There are no slick answers to these questions. They invite reflection and ongoing conversation.

Greeting Carrying God's Blessing

Four words in *koine* Greek, five words in English translation, comprise the earliest extant Christian greeting: "Grace/*charis* to you and peace/*eirenē*!" It is hard to imagine a more beautiful greeting. It is an expression of hope in the writer(s) that the addressee(s) might know the experience of total well-being. A cognate of *charis*, "*chairein*/greetings", appears as an ordinary epistolary greeting in that world.

Charis in the Christian Testament, on the other hand, carries all the power of God's favour, blessing, graciousness and steadfast love or loving kindness. Similarly, peace/*eirenē* has all the overtones of the Hebrew *shalom*: not just absence of war but a state of true reconciliation in the Earth community.

While the plural "you" in the greeting denotes first the Thessalonian Christ-followers and then their successors in faith, the ecologically sensitive reader knows all too well that there can be no grace and no peace without right relationship at every level. We might ponder the words of this greeting in our hearts and address them to all of God's wondrous creatures.

Earth Community Yearning for Peace

In these times of pandemic and climate emergency, the inhabitants of our planetary home, human and other-than-human, are crying out for grace, for God's favour and blessing expressed in restoration of life-giving habitat and home. They are crying out for peace, for reconciliation of the human community with the rest of creation and with God.

As gospel people today, we are called to bring that grace and peace to our world, "not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction". Just as Paul, Silvanus and Timothy tell the Thessalonian *ecclesia* that they are remembered before God for their "work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope", we might give thanks for those who show us, in our times, how to restore hope to our fractured world.

Veronica Lawson RSM is an eco-feminist biblical scholar and author of *The Blessing of Mercy: Bible Perspectives and Ecological Challenges*, 2016.

PAUSING TO NOTICE

A university chaplain gave me a book to read which looked familiar. The book was Frederick Buechner's *The Remarkable Ordinary*. I said thank you, took it home with me, then looked it up — finding, in my reading record, that I had read it in 2017. My notes said: "I should probably reread this in a few years, to really hammer the messages into my small skull." I had no memory of reading the book whatsoever — my small skull was clearly quite empty.

One of the central essays in the book is about paying attention. Buechner writes that Jesus encourages us to see life as a parable: "Consider the lilies of the field. Consider what it was to find that thing you had lost, that coin, that ring your mother gave you, that photograph that could not be replaced and suddenly it is there. Consider your heart itself…consider that. Consider the lost sheep. Consider the dead sparrow … Pay attention to these things."

Shanti Mathias is at Victoria University, Wellington, enjoying using long words and immersing herself in the intricacies of media, politics and literature.

It's the paying attention that has stayed with me. There is a glass bottle, perfectly whole and clear, embedded in the earth on the road I live on. I cycle past it several times a week, and have noticed it each time for the past two years: a reminder that I am almost home. I was thinking about this, and how I pay attention to the glass, but not to the marvellous living plants growing on the bank.

I am regularly humbled by paying attention: a friend explaining how difficult it is for them to walk to university. I hadn't noticed because my perfectly-functioning body makes it simple for me to do the same thing. The resilient tree trunk leaning gracefully in the wind and I'm too frantic and rushed to notice. Running with a friend who stops to pick up rubbish along the way. Seeing these things is a reminder to be grateful for the body God has given me, to be at peace and to make things better where I can.

It annoys me that the practice of paying attention is so locally rooted. I believe that change needs to happen on a large scale; that many problems are systemic, that calls for justice environmentally and socially are for widespread changes. This can make me feel powerless: mostly because I can't make things happen at that scale, I can just contribute to what is already happening locally.

When I pay attention, I realise again that I am one person, I don't change the world — that is God. I need this perspective. I need to see the glass bottle and the other plants, appreciate the tūi lapping kōwhai nectar outside my window and respond to the call for submissions on local council policy. In paying attention, I find that even as one person in a big world I can find ways that I can act.

Being raised overseas has been a gift in many ways, but it makes it harder for me to feel grounded where I am: to act locally, when there's a big world. Paying attention is a way of listening to the invitation to notice God's kindom, being built right here and in many places, in many ways.

My pangs of homesickness for India are at the heart of my longing to be part of the world beyond Aotearoa. So in attending I discover two things: the need to see injustice and remedy it and to be changed by the world — to pause long enough to "frame" the moments of our lives and grow to appreciate them as God's gift.

Photo by S Curtis/Shutterstock.com

From the Writings of Joan Chittister On Women

Edited by Mary Lou Kownacki
Published by Benetvision, 2020
Reviewed by Agnes Hermans

BOOK

"Don't be afraid to speak, be afraid what will happen to the whole truth if you don't." This quote from Joan Chittister opens this slim, 96-page collection of stand-alone excerpts from her writings on women from 1977-2019.

In clear and accessible language, Chittister invites us to consider the contributions of feminism and feminist spirituality to an inclusive, gospel-based Christianity. She grounds her observations in the many subtle ways women are excluded from a Church which she describes as "not a place, but a process", and highlights key women in the Church and society as role models for leadership and change.

The through-line of the book is that all of us, women and men, stand to benefit from a Church that recognises and honours women as full participants.

I would recommend this book to anyone genuinely open to asking questions about women and the Church. Personally I found the excerpts "Litany of Women for the Church" and "Why I Stay in the Church" particularly moving. As one of a growing number of women suffering marginalisation-anger or fatigue, we can draw on Chittister's wisdom and depth as a resource for guidance, reflection and renewed hope.

The Grief Walk: Losing, Grieving and Journeying on to Something New

By Alister G Hendery
Published by Philip Garside, 2020
Reviewed by John Meredith

BOOK

The Grief Walk has a freshness and honesty about grief, beginning with its imaginative title and sustained until the final affirmation of hope.

We all experience loss and grief in our lives. But, as Hendery writes, until we name and acknowledge a loss and recognise that we have a right to grieve, we are unable to come to terms with it.

He emphasises that grief doesn't follow a predetermined path and nor can we close it off like a tap. He describes a perceived end process of "closure" as psychobabble. While grief may not be permanently disabling, we learn to encompass it. This is not the same as closure.

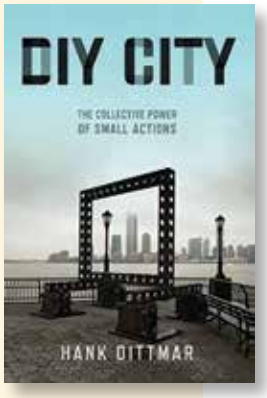
Grief may find expression in different physical and emotional symptoms and we can't expect religious faith to provide a magical answer. Finding someone who listens and understands, who in a sense personifies the presence of God, can help us with the grief journey.

The Grief Walk confronts the idea that grief is momentary or experienced in clearly-defined stages and points to a hope. This book is a gift for all who grieve or who walk with those who grieve.

DIY City: The Collective Power of Small Actions

by Hank Dittmar
Published by Island Press, 2020
Reviewed by Angela Foster

BOOK



DIY City tells a street-level story of people's relationships to their urban surroundings and the depoliticising of space. It is a pertinent read in light of New Zealand's recent relaxation of building compliance and the proposed sweeping changes to the Resource Management Act. Urban planner Hank Dittmar puts forward examples where necessity gives rise to a "grey" property sector, the instance when disused spaces change use before regulatory bodies have a chance to legitimise their occupation. Dittmar elaborates on the history of the boarding house in post-war England and the USA, and follows through to the rise of the artist studio and warehouse apartments of New York.

As acting airport director, Dittmar also details the Santa Monica airport project and the transformation of disused hangers into a startup hub and event centre, promoting a creative economy where urban renewal was a response to a need rather than a prescriptive masterplan. In fact Dittmar points out that when the professionals are brought in to masterplan often it results in the local community withdrawing. When it comes to interventions into the already gentrified areas Dittmar admits the unwieldy bureaucracy is not for the faint-hearted and the results all too often do not engender the emotive spaces of the locale. The informal use of the city often goes undocumented but it is important in generating the spirit of the urbs.

DIY City reveals and romanticises this illegitimate occupation of space and makes you think of your own neighbourhood, from the farmers' market, the food truck and the coffee cart, and other nooks and crannies of our city life.

Savage

Directed by Sam Kelly
Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

FILM

In many ways a *Once Were Warriors* for the 2020s, *Savage* traces the gruelling journey of one man from a life of unrelenting poverty, deprivation and violence to the tentative beginnings of redemption.

We first meet Danny — familiarly known as Damage — at a gang party in 1989. As "sergeant" or enforcer to the boss of the Savages, Moses, he is at the top of the tree in the brutal gang scene. Damage is about to execute a "hit" on a fellow gang member who has transgressed the group's strict code of ethics, an event that will change his whole world.

A flashback to 1965 illuminates the origins of their friendship. Removed from his poverty-stricken Pākehā home for stealing food from a neighbour's house, Danny is placed in a boys' remand home. Between bouts of savage beating and paedophiliac fondling from staff members, he forms an unbreakable bond with his Tongan room-mate, Moses.

The film then pulls us into the 1970s where the two young men are thrust into New Zealand's developing gang culture, where Danny has a violent confrontation with his brother Liam. Forcing himself to cauterise family bonds, Danny cements his mana by giving his loyalty to the Savages and their leader without reserve. But in his role of violent enforcer, not just against external enemies, but against threats arising from within, Danny/Damage inevitably faces challenges to his authority, and also to his residual sense of humanity.

The pull of his birth family never leaves him. Every year Danny doggedly travels country roads to his backblocks home, but never gets further than the gate, where he scores the wooden fence as a memento of yet another frustrated visit.

Despite its deep dysfunction, Damage's world has its own rationale. Moses glories in the fact that he and his associates are "animals", obeying the unforgiving logic of a world red in tooth and claw. The "normal" world, where people own flash cars and nice houses, merely gilds this Darwinian reality with a veneer of respectability.

Savage is not for the faint-hearted — every scene is like a punch in the guts. Yet we are offered some crumbs of hope. At the end of the film, Damage is in freefall. Only when he realises that a young prospect will become exactly like him does he get a glimpse of the boy he might once have been and begin the painful journey away from the only world he has known.

CROSS CURRENTS

by Susan Smith

Half the Picture Not Enough

Major media outlets are not so much guilty of fake news as of truncated news. For example, earlier this year, the OECD warned advanced economies that they should prepare to suffer. Even if they did everything right, the suffering could last years; if not they'd never recover.

However, when we watch the major TV channels, we can be forgiven for thinking that actual and potential economic collapses facing us here are the fault of the government. Right-wing politicians assure us that their policies would ensure economic well-being — certainly for big business, the more financially advantaged and superannuitants. Major American credit rating agency Standard & Poors has indicated that the COVID-19 driven recession will be uneven across the Asia Pacific region, but that New Zealand (along with a few others: China, Korea, Taiwan, Australia, Japan, Singapore) has well-targeted economic stimulus programmes and, by and large, good management of the pandemic.

What experts say is quite different from what reporters proclaim as gospel truth. Our media needs to cover the whole picture and highlight the encouraging signs for us.

Bannon Is Anti-Pope Francis

In August, Steve Bannon, Catholic layperson and strategist behind Trump's electoral win, was arrested for fraud. Bannon is a key player in the culture wars within the Church, particularly within the American Catholic Church. After his departure from the White House, he was involved with the Dignitatis Humanae Institute in Italy devoted to cultivating right-wing populist leaders who could promote the anti-Francis rhetoric that Bannon and certain cardinals favour. Bannon was key in drafting the curriculum of the Institute.

Good News

Pope Francis has spoken of the grave risk that while COVID-19 might eventually be tamed, the virus of selfish indulgence could take its place. In his homily on Divine Mercy Sunday he said the dangerous virus is "spread by the thought that life is better if it is better for me and that everything will be fine if it is fine for me. It begins there and ends up selecting one person over another, discarding the poor and sacrificing those left behind on the altar of progress."
Francis continued that during this pandemic we need to prepare for a "collective future" that sees "the whole human family as one, and holds all of Earth's gifts in common in order to be shared justly with those in need." This is the message we need to hear and act on now and in the future.

Book Review

I read Judith Collins's autobiography *Pull No Punches*, borrowed from the public library to save me $32.00. In the preface Collins says she wants to keep on writing! We are warned. The book is a self-serving narrative. Collins seldom engages seriously with important issues such as the National Party's selection processes which landed electorates with Aaron Gilmore, Todd Barclay, Hamish Walker, Andrew Falloon and Jami-Lee Ross. She never adequately explains her relationship with Cameron Slater — that relationship critically examined in Nicky Hager's *Dirty Politics*.

Was I surprised to read that Judith Collins is a great admirer of Margaret Thatcher, whom she regarded as inspirational? Not particularly, as Thatcher's commitment to deregulation, to collapsing the trade union movement and to neo-liberalism, resonates with Collins's political instincts. And let's not forget that Collins is promising Rio Tinto, the world's second largest mining company, that New Zealand taxpayers will continue to subsidise it for at least another five years.

TUI MOTU InterIslands
The Independent Catholic Magazine Limited

Tui Motu magazine provides Catholic as well as ecumenical and inter-faith perspectives and discussion on current issues in church and society. It focuses particularly on issues affecting Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific. Its intent is to promote the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, engaging faith and the world through informed, thoughtful comment and discussion for a general readership. The magazine publishes 11 issues per year in print and regular digital postings on social media.

The magazine invites contributions from writers of Catholic and other Christian traditions or faith backgrounds, who can offer our readers insights which resonate with the Gospel as it affects us today. We value diversity and seek contributions which are representative of our church and our society: Maori, Pakeha, Pasifika, other cultures, a range of ages and genders, lay and ordained. We offer feature articles, interviews, reviews, poetry, comment and opinion on theology, spirituality and history, as well as on social justice and ecology.

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National Manager Mission Integration St John of God Hauora Trust

St John of God Hauora Trust is a Catholic not-for-profit organisation. We are seeking a quality Mission Executive to develop leadership capability for senior leaders and managers in St John of God Hauora Trust services.

Based in Christchurch and reporting to the CEO, this is a permanent role working 20 hours per week. The successful candidate will be a practising Catholic with strong leadership skills, capable of working with a diverse range of stakeholders to integrate Mission within our organisational culture.

The National Manager Mission Integration is responsible for Pastoral Services, as well as, developing, presenting and facilitating formation programmes for all employees of St John of God Hauora Trust as well as the Board. The successful candidate will have a record of implementing formation programmes as well as an understanding and strong commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. All applicants to demonstrate the following:

- Relevant tertiary qualifications (preferably post-graduate) in Theology, Scripture, Ethics, Ministry or related studies.
- Ability to influence organisation culture and lead Mission integration.

- Demonstrated ability to develop the leadership abilities of senior leaders and managers to align with, and promote, organisational Mission, Vision and Values.
- Demonstrated understanding and application of key theological principles to all aspects of Mission aligned leadership.

For a Position Description and enquiries, please email sue.howie@sjog.org.nz.

To apply go to sjog.org.nz/work-with-us and complete the Application for Employment Form and email the completed form along with a cover letter and CV to sue.howie@sjog.org.nz quoting reference SJG-HAU-1017.

Applications close 5pm, 18 October 2020.

We welcome letters of comment, discussion, response, affirmation or argument of up to 200 words.

The editor reserves the right to abridge longer letters while keeping the meaning.

RETURNING TO COMMUNITY

I was interested in the articles by Kim Workman and Peter Hay-Mackenzie (*TM* August 2020) on justice and prisons. I was imprisoned at the beginning of the Hōkai Rangi Strategy Direction 2019-2014 and expect to be released a year before its end in 2023. I believe Tongariro Prison has come a long way to working alongside these strategic directions with a long way yet to go. My concern mainly is not just in the prison system but what life looks like going back to my community. I want to thank you for these articles and look forward to more articles on prisoners changing the direction of their lives with the help of the system and God. God bless.

Tony Hopton

WORKING TOWARDS UNITY

When I read David Day's letter (*TM* August 2020) my soul rejoiced. At the words of the priest at the consecration during Mass I always feel a sense of loss. Christ died for all men and women. At present so many are excluded. What can we do about their loss or exclusion? Maybe we can join in the heartfelt pleas of Pope Francis to pray for universal unity — "that they all become one".

Anita Moynahan-Stocks

A VIEW ON USA POLITICS

Just a note in reference to Susan Smith (*TM* "Crosscurrents" Sept 2020). Surely a gospel value is "Thou shalt not kill". Donald Trump is a pro-life anti-abortion campaigner. The Catholic Church states that no catholic can vote for promoters of abortion ie, Biden and Pelosi and their ilk. No wonder 50 per cent of white catholics support Trump. Please God he will win another four years as president of the USA.

Colleen Adams

Looking OUT and IN

A lavish quilt of snow is flung over the distant Southern Alps, the white icing dripping almost to the base of the hills. The setting sun, also generous, beams golden light onto Jalori and me as we walk up a Port Hills track in the late afternoon. We stop to watch the tails of two lambs, knotting and unknotting in spasms of excitement as they drink warm ewe milk. But it is an elusive meal as their mother quietly sidles down the hill, the lambs tripping and tumbling behind her.

Generosity extended over and over is what softens my heart and opens my cynical self to the possibility of transformation. At the age of 11 years, I was knocked flat by the sudden death of my father in an accident. I had lived nearly all my short life in South India, and more recently, in a village in Nepal and so it was with great tumult and uprooting that we returned to Aotearoa — my parents', and apparently my, home country. With my mother and three sisters, we flew over oceans and continents to the rolling green hills of Putāruru in the South Waikato. We were welcomed by my grandparents and my wonderful Baldwin cousins who lived high on Rapuke Farm where my Mum had grown up. Weekend after weekend I (and my sisters) was invited out to the farm to join in with riding horses and motorbikes, sleeping in haybarns, picking blackberries, docking and drafting lambs, falling and swimming in the Ngutuwera Stream. Other kind Gospel Chapel families invited us to their farms, too, for roast meals and games and walks across green paddocks. Slowly my tender sad heart that had lost my adventurous Dad and my place in the world, found that there were other places I could belong and I could find other friends and adventures.

Putāruru in the 1980s was a brassy green and generous world. Aunty Chris introduced me to Milo Pilo (a floating pile of Milo on top of a glass of milk). I learned to bake tan fingers, ginger crunch and marshmallow shortcake using the much thumbed *Every Girl's Rally Cookbook*. I started trumpet and piano lessons and every Christmas went out with the brass band to play carols, sitting on wooden chairs on the back of a truck. In the summer there was the big inter-denominational youth group raft race at Lake Arapuni. Tractor tyres and four-by-two planks were fashioned into clumsy vessels, fit to launch flour bomb attacks on other rafts. The Gospel Chapel was a rent-a-crowd instant community, and we went camping in the summers and shared soup and scones through the frosty Waikato winters. For me, a short, shy Pākehā kid in this time of deep loss, the generosity after generosity of welcome I received gave me space to slowly heal and find a new turangawaewae.

Of course, Putāruru in the 1980s had all the complicated troubles of human beings and hierarchies everywhere. There was the patriarchy woven through all of church life which eventually pushed our all-female household to Auckland where we could find more space for participation and leadership. There were divides between Protestants and Catholics and the kids from St Mary's weren't invited to the annual raft race. New Zealand's recent colonisation means the process of acquisition of all these beautiful green paddocks from the local iwi, Ngāti Mahana Raukawa and hapu, Ngāti Mahana seems likely to have occurred in ways that were not fair. There was racism which systematically limited opportunities for Māori in particular. Nowhere in the 1980s were safe spaces for people with alternate gender and sexual identities. Now, 40 years later, there has been some hopeful movement on many of these structural injustices. There is plenty of restructuring work needed ahead.

And so I am back in the golden setting sun with the lambs and my strong and funny 11-year-old. I am reminded again (and again) that God and God's creation are deeply generous. White icing on mountains, the flamboyance of magnolia trees in flower, the necessary work of the Waitangi Tribunal and restorative justice, friends who ring to ask how I am doing. These grace-filled gestures are offered over and over. And the God of Milo Pilo speaks abundance, welcome and new opportunities to me and to each of us in the absurd excesses of spring.

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Kaaren Mathias is living in Christchurch with her family. She sings, cycles, writes and sews wizard capes and promotes community mental health in New Zealand and India.

Companion us Spirit of God
with encouragement, energy and love
the better to appreciate your presence
the better to act for justice
the better to grow in kindness
the better to walk humbly with you
and all life in our home Earth.

From the *Tui Motu* team