TUI MOTU
InterIslands

Sheltering the Homeless

Independent Catholic Magazine
Issue 206 July 2016 $7

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Cover painting:
Hanging Key by Michael Naples
www.mnaples.com
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EDITORIAL

The Key to Home

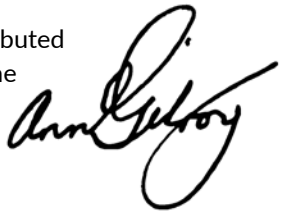
Michael Naples's, Hanging Key, reminds me of my grandparents' house where the key hung as a symbol of occupancy. They could lock the door if they wished but they saw no need. Like the roof over their heads, the key gave security. Now the key symbolises security in a different way. It is the password allowing entry to those who belong in the home, participation in family life and an address. Claiming an address is glued onto our identity and opens to participation in the wider society — stuff can be sent there, it gives access to council and government services and hospitality can be provided and received. Not having an address is isolating and sentences us to "wander the face of the earth".

This month's issue on sheltering the homeless focuses on responses towards those without a home. Where once we could dismiss homelessness as a problem in other world cities, now it is on our doorstep. We both advocate for resettling more refugee families in our country and at the same time watch reports of our families separated by homelessness and sheltering in cars and sheds. We protest, feeling appalled, confused and helpless. We hear loud agreement that this situation is not all right — either in our country or in the rest of the world — and that we have to do something quickly.

Our contributors this month, while acknowledging the reality, tell us of the practices of mercy that are giving shelter to the homeless. So many people are wearing the doorway of mercy down to bedrock in their efforts to ensure that all will have somewhere safe and warm to lay their heads.

Mary Betz and Jo Ayers remind us that hospitality, acceptance and support are at the heart of homemaking — whether that is in individual homes or in the world home. Bruce Munro describes the role of a night-shelter as emergency housing, a ministry of mercy offered in many places in New Zealand and around the world. Habtom Zeru tells his story of escaping Eritrea as a teenager and of being chosen in a Sudanese refugee camp to start a new life in New Zealand. Colin James and Michael Melville urge the government to commit to worthwhile, long-term solutions for homelessness. With Louise Carr-Neil they point to shelter as key in the well-being of our people. Daniel O'Leary takes our focus wider urging us to consider the implications of being at home in the universe. All contributors — writers, poets, commentators and artists — offer challenge and hope. While big solutions to world homelessness are essential, every act of hospitality on our part fosters co-operation, communion and at-homeness in our world.

We are grateful to all who have contributed to this July issue. And as is our custom, the last word is of blessing. ■



A HOUSE – THE CORE OF A GOOD LIFE

What's in a house? A lot more than "housing". The political noise around "housing" has got very loud. The government looks and sounds less assured as the noise level rises.

John Key has thrown three ministers at it.

Bill English, MP for 26 years, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, is Minister Responsible for the Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZ) which rents "social housing" to the needy.

He has long been scathing about HNZ, despite recent improvement. He has been trying to pass some of HNZ's houses on to not-for-profits because he believes not-for-profits are closer to the people and can be more innovative than a central government agency. But one by one the not-for-profits have cried off.

An alternative is private firms. If English sells HNZ houses to foreign firms, Labour and New Zealand First will play on xenophobia about taxes going to pay dividends to foreigners — as in pre-primary education, retirement villages, hospital meals and prisons.

Paula Bennett is the cabinet's rising-star No 5, associate minister to English in finance and Key in tourism, reframing the rhetoric as Minister for Climate Change Issues — and Minister for Social Housing, a residue of her 2008-14 role as minister-of-the-poor (Minister for Social Development).

Her job is the "homeless", those on the streets, in cars or garages or crammed in with relatives or friends. Not-for-profits say the numbers have been rising since 2008 to levels too high to be dismissed as "poor life choices".

Bennett has been sprinkling money and soundbites, including $5000 to leave Auckland and kind words for the Te Puea Memorial Marae at Mangere which has become a shelter. She upset the Salvation Army with some wrong advice to Key about its interviews with some homeless.

Meanwhile, the innovative not-for-profit Wise Group says it has put Hamilton on a path to zero homeless by end-2016.

The third "housing" minister is Nick Smith, a mate of English, like him 26 years an MP and with similar time in cabinet — even transitorily deputy leader to Don Brash.

Smith is Minister for Building and Housing. He is responsible for rental house standards — increasingly important as owner-occupier numbers slide. His bigger job is to get more houses built for people to own, including, in theory, some at prices within range of those on the average wage. The Auckland average price is nine times average income.

This ties in with his responsibility, as Minister for the Environment, for the Resource Management Act which he has repeatedly amended to relax rules, force councils to get more density within their boundaries and otherwise prod developers for more new houses.

And more are being built. But not fast enough to match record net immigration or demand from investors (of various sorts) cashing in on the ultra-low interest rates required by tight loyalty to 1980s monetary orthodoxy.

Average prices nationwide rose 12.4 per cent in the 12 months to May. Of Auckland house sales in May 46 per cent went to investors, not owner-occupiers. Nationally 40 per cent did.

Reserve Bank governor Graeme Wheeler last Thursday did his usual cartwheels of logic, reaffirming record low interest rates to get inflation back up to his mandated 2 per cent and worrying about the financial risk posed by the wild house market those rates have helped pump.

Put all this together. Despite myriad measures and modest successes, "housing" is a rising political risk for National.

Tales of spreading homelessness and of young people shut out of ownership disturb moderate conservatives. There is a voting risk that the excluded (and some worried conservative parents) will outnumber those wallowing in heaven-sent capital gain and ultra-low mortgages.

So the "housing" political field is opening in middle New Zealand for Labour and the Greens. They say only the state is big enough to finance effectively a big build of lower-cost houses for owner-occupiers and quality houses for the poor to rent.

Labour's Phil Twyford last month produced an innovative policy for more houses inside and outside Auckland city limits. He has support from big developers (still anathema to many Labour ideologues) and big construction firms, both normally in National's camp.

Twyford and the Greens understand something else: that the house is the core of a good life.

A good house and secure residence in that house is a base for a well-formed, well-functioning household. The house and household are critical to childhood development, health and education and the capacity to belong and contribute to society and the economy. Get them wrong and there are social support, education recovery, health and crime costs.

So the house — the real thing; "housing" is an abstract term — is core to all social policy and in turn core to material welfare ("economic") policy.

And that implies the house is not just a private matter but a collective issue. National's need for three ministers makes that point in spades.

What's in a house? Much of politics. ■

Image by Meek, (Melbourne) after Banksy (UK)

Colin James is a New Zealand political journalist of more than 40 years' experience who writes weekly columns in the *Otago Daily Times*.

Welcoming the Stranger

Mary Betz remembers her great-grandmother opening her home to travelling workers during the Great Depression and reflects on the encounter at the heart of hospitality.

Painting: *The Holy Trinity* [Artist unknown]

My great-grandmother, Laura, lived for 102 years in southern Illinois, across the Mississippi River from St Louis. I remember the candy jar, cups of lemon tea and extended family dinners at her home. Among many stories about her, one has stayed with me particularly. During the Great Depression there was a constant string of "hobos" knocking on Laura's door and she never sent them away with empty hands. She often invited them in for a hot meal and a wash.

I marvel at Laura's hospitality to homeless, jobless, often dirty and lice-ridden men whom she had never set eyes on before. It is one thing to offer hospitality to friends, family and acquaintances — offering it to strangers is quite another.

Traditions of Hospitality

And yet, the word "hospitality" has as its Latin root *hospes/hospita* — one who entertains or lodges a stranger, and interestingly — the one who is entertained or lodged — the guests, strangers or foreigners themselves. Long before the Romans, the tradition of hospitality was engrained in ancient Middle Eastern cultures. The Hebrew Scriptures are full of enjoinders to "share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house" (Is 58:7). On many occasions the host was rewarded, as when Abraham and Sarah were blessed with a child in return for hospitality to heavenly sojourners (Gen 18:1–15).

The Gospels recount the hospitality shown to Jesus, as at the homes of Martha and Mary (Lk 10:38ff) and Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1–10) — where Jesus invited himself. They also depict hospitality not shown, as by Simon the Pharisee (Lk 7:44ff). Jesus too was portrayed as welcoming and caring. He invited two of John the Baptist's followers to "come and see" him at home (Jn 1:39). He was concerned to feed those who followed him through the countryside (Mt 14:13ff), barbequed fish on the shores of the Sea of Galilee (Jn 21:9) and of course hosted the Last Supper.

The Emmaus story (Lk 24:13ff) is a striking illustration of hospitality and its sometimes surprising

consequences. After the death of Jesus, two disciples were returning home devastated, but hospitably allowed a "stranger" into their conversation on the road. The stranger was an attentive listener and a good teacher and tired as they were, the disciples found themselves entranced by him, urging him to stay on with them in Emmaus. The stranger agreed, then shifted the roles returning hospitality by breaking bread for them. Through this mutual hospitality the disciples were enabled to see in the stranger — the face of Christ.

Learning to Give and Receive

It is as if the reflexive meaning of the Latin word often carries on in the way hospitality is lived out. Everyone I know who has worked with refugees over extended periods of time has found that as they extend hospitality to others, it leads to engagement, listening and understanding, recognition of Christ in the other, and often in mutual learning and friendship.

But hospitality is not just a pleasant smile or even an offer of a meal. It is a deliberate offer to listen and attend to the needs of a stranger or friend — and a step into the unknown. Sometimes I have invited travellers or needy strangers into my home — with varying outcomes. Usually there have been short periods of accommodation and meals. Sometimes long-term friendships have been forged.

But more than once I discovered I lacked "street-smarts" and knowledge of available social and mental health services. And the stranger's needs began to turn my life upside down. Maybe that was the point because soon I began asking questions about why the poor and mentally ill had no place to go. Hospitality to strangers is often intertwined with questions that lead us to issues of justice and mercy.

Early Christian Hospitality

From Christianity's earliest years followers of Jesus were urged to welcome strangers and those in need on an individual and local community basis. St John Chrysostom saw failures in this regard and spared no sarcasm in his lament: "Christ has nowhere to lodge, but goes about as a stranger, and naked and hungry, and you set up houses out of town, and baths and terraces and chambers without number . . . and to Christ you give not even a share of a little hut." Ouch.

In later centuries following Constantine's legalisation of Christianity, multi-purpose "hospitals" were established to care for the poor, sick, homeless, travellers and pilgrims — and many of these continued to operate right through the Middle Ages. They were attached to monasteries or were diocesan entities.

"the future of humanity does not lie solely in the hands of great leaders, the great powers and the elites. It is fundamentally in the hands of peoples and in their ability to organise . . . Each of us, let us repeat from the heart: no family without lodging . . . no individual without dignity."

By the 18th century institutions offered "hospitality" to people with various needs in separate, increasingly secular institutions. Individuals like Vincent de Paul and later, Dorothy Day and Jean Vanier met needs for a home and hospitality in their own times and places. Their work carries on today in the Vinnies, the Catholic Worker movement and L'Arche communities.

Need for Hospitality Now

Today many New Zealanders struggle with poverty, inequality and a housing crisis which John Chrysostom would find tragically familiar.

Thousands of families and individuals are sleeping in cars, garages and shacks, or under bridges — the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services recently put the number at 42,000. Emergency housing providers like Auckland's De Paul House and Monte Cecilia have long waiting lists.

In the spirit of *manaakitanga*, Te Puea Marae opened its doors to homeless families in May this year and was quickly filled. In the 19th century, the *tangata whenua* welcomed migrant *Pākehā* and shared their land with them. Tragically, Māori are now some of those most in need of similar hospitality. And from overseas the call for justice through hospitality to homeless refugees continues to grow.

Becoming Hospitable People

In 2015 Pope Francis addressed the World Meeting of Popular Movements, reminding them that "the future of humanity does not lie solely in the hands of great leaders, the great powers and the elites. It is fundamentally in the hands of peoples and in their ability to organise . . . Each of us, let us repeat from the heart: no family without lodging . . . no individual without dignity."

Hospitality is a responsibility of our nation and its people. Individuals and communities often choose to offer hospitality because it is part of their faith tradition or value system, or because their hearts tug at them to do so. Unfortunately it is often only when a groundswell of citizens demands action, that governments respond with justice towards their own homeless and consider the plight of refugees. We need to practise the welcome, justice and mercy of hospitality. In engaging with the "stranger" we can be changed forever by the encounter.

I have lived with Great-grandma Laura's goodness in my heart but it always puzzled me why there would have been so many hobos around her home. This week I looked at an old map and discovered railway tracks and holding yards in all directions only blocks from her house. The men usually rode the rails in search of work so Laura was in the right place for them. While we may not have hobos knocking on our doors, if we open our eyes and hearts to recognise who is knocking now, we will be in the right place for them too. ■

Mary Betz engages in writing, ecology, theology, justice, spiritual companioning and retreat work from her home in the Titirangi bush.

WHEN I NEEDED A BED . . . YOU WERE THERE

Dave Brown and Angela McMorran describe to **Bruce Munro** how the Night Shelter offers a bed in an emergency to people in all kinds of situations.

"Homelessness is not simply a lack of shelter," Dave Brown, founder of the Dunedin Night Shelter 16 years ago, says. "Finding yourself without a place to call your own is, without doubt, an incredible physical deprivation. As a society we ought to have a safety net for people who find themselves in this predicament.

"Running out of shelter options to the point where someone is homeless has a significance that goes far beyond the physical. When someone is homeless, the world feels like a friendless place. It is an experience of being alone in a seemingly uncaring world."

When the Night Shelter began it was very difficult and expensive to find emergency accommodation. But last year the Trust undertook a major public fundraising campaign to buy the two houses it had been renting. The Dunedin Night Shelter Trust (DNST) now owns the two houses on one property in City Rise, a suburb on the fringe of the inner-city that has a comparatively high percentage of beneficiaries and boarding houses. The front house is the 8-bed Night Shelter providing up to three nights' emergency housing for men and women. The other house, Phoenix Lodge, provides three months' supported, transitional housing for up to six people trying to get back on their feet.

The Trust has the equivalent of three full-time staff who host the homeless in the Night Shelter. They provide their guests with dinner and breakfast, a place to shower and wash clothes and of course a safe bed for the night.

The Shelter relies on a large number of volunteer workers and supporters. It receives no government funding but is given wide support from the Dunedin community and Charitable Trusts.

Stumbling into Homelessness

Quite a number of the Shelter's guests are coping with mental health or personality disorders. "Their difficulties can make them difficult to live with or cause them to feel out of sorts with others in a flatting or boarding house situation. This can lead to instability in accommodation," Dave explained.

Others have addictions or lose perspective. They might spend money that should have gone on their rent on other less important things. This results in their losing their accommodation.

"Of course the addictions and various behaviours can be symptoms of other problems in life — depression or loss of hope — and they can be self-medicating unconsciously.

"Most guests are unemployed. When their car breaks down or other extra costs come along, rent money can be the easiest bill to forego. You just hope to be able to repay it before you get found out. But too often that is not possible," Dave said.

Support to Get on Their Feet

At present the men in Phoenix Lodge are all released prisoners. It is often difficult for these men to re-establish themselves in society. The Lodge's supported accommodation offers some security to men who desire a new start.

"Whereas once there seemed room for the community to 'carry' those who were not so able, now there are very few places for them. The resulting hopelessness is the seedbed in which all sorts of life-problems take root."

"Just getting a bank account, coping with daily tasks, budgeting and so on can be hard. Phoenix Lodge gives them three months to sort life out. It can mean that they do not have to associate with or fall back on to friends who got them in trouble in the first place."

Bruce Munro is a journalist and a board member of the Dunedin Night Shelter Trust.

Isolation of Homelessness

Dave suggests: "The growing demand for emergency accommodation is a product of a society geared to an ultra-individualistic perspective that prizes efficiency above almost everything else. In many more "primitive" societies there is no homelessness because one's identity is found in a group, be that family, tribe, sub-group, religious group. That group provides for, and incorporates, the one who lags behind. In our society you are much more 'on your own' and isolated."

A drive for ever-greater efficiency has seen technology used to transform our workplaces, getting rid of jobs and leaving no room for some people in various sectors.

"Whereas once there seemed room to 'carry' those who were not so able, now there are very few places for them. The resulting hopelessness is the seedbed in which all sorts of life-problems take root."

Citing the example of a young woman with a mental and emotional age of a child, Trustee Angela McMorran asked: "Where does she fit in society? She has no support structures. How does she find her place in a world like this?"

Life Upheavals

"Life shocks" are another significant driver of homelessness. "We had one woman who was texted by her landlord to tell her there had been a fire in her flat and she could not stay there. She ended up on the Shelter's doorstep."

Other unexpected events include being made redundant or encountering relationship problems.

"There is tension in the home and it seems good for one person to move out until it is sorted. We have had any number of men, and at least one woman, who have decided on this action.

"Or the police could move someone out of their home for a time. A man may have done something wrong. But if there isn't a safe place where he can stay, he is at risk of getting himself in an even worse situation," Angela said.

Community Offering Support

"The last time we checked the figures we found that most of those who stayed at the Night Shelter used it just once. Only around 20 per cent returned from time to time," Dave added.

The Dunedin Night Shelter Trust exists to make sure there is a consistent emergency housing facility operating for those who need it. It aims to provide support for people in the Night Shelter and Phoenix Lodge so that the guests are assisted in working toward a more stable future.

This can be through the provision of advocate support workers, or a community worker, or by referring people to other agencies for help.

The Trust hopes to be able to offer an "outreach" service in the near future providing support, guidance and help to people who are facing accommodation issues.

Dave said: "We seek to run the Trust in a way that truly listens to needs in the community and adapts what it offers to meet those needs. If, for example, it is true that homes for families is a growing issue, then we will look for ways we can assist in that area too."

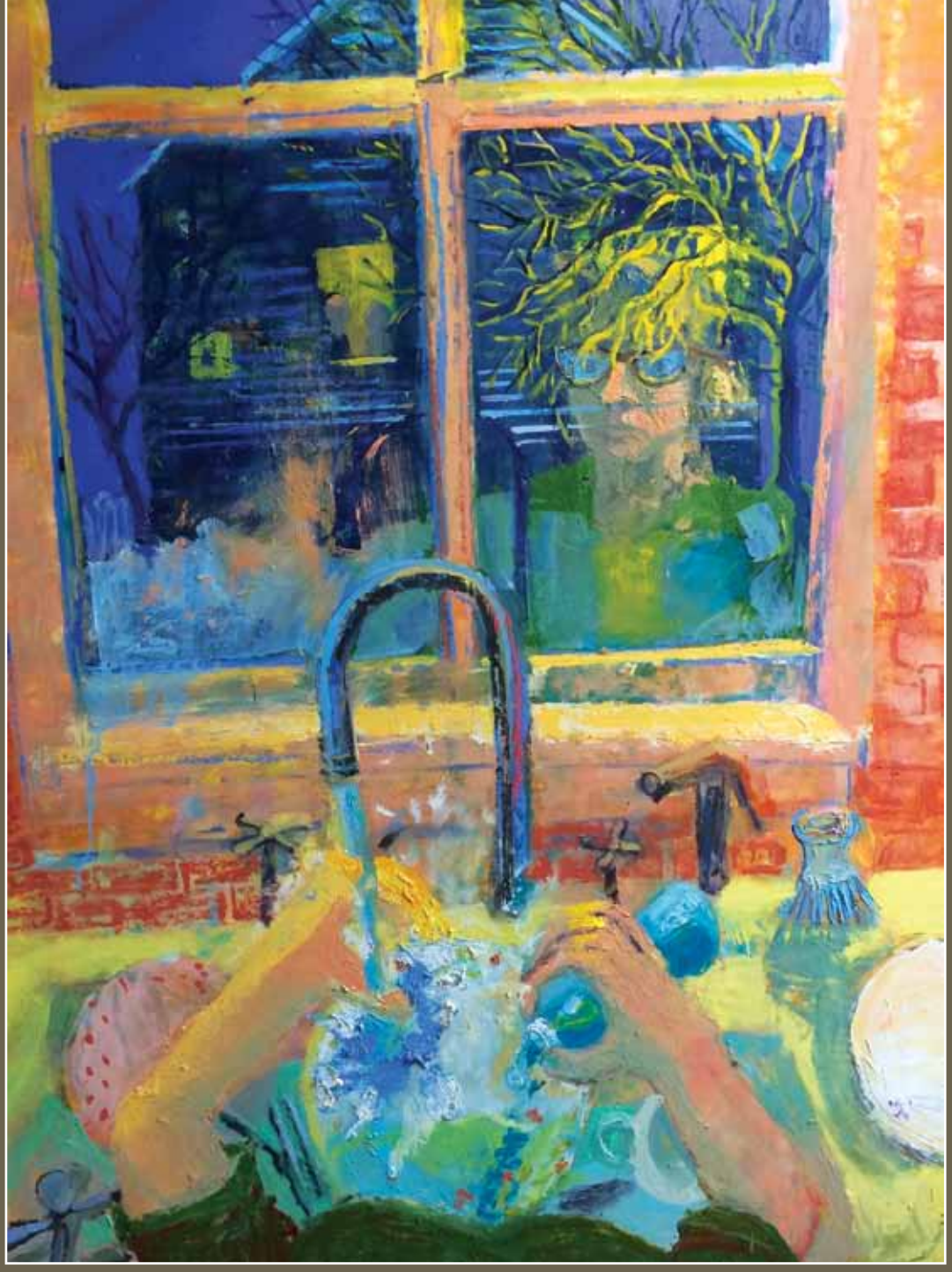
And so the Trust has begun working more closely with a Dunedin violence cessation organisation to help men involved in family violence. "We want to continue to be open to partnering with other agencies in Dunedin to meet needs in the housing area."

Dave said: "Homelessness can be devastating in so many ways. The Night Shelter is a powerful statement that not everyone is against them — that some people do care." ■

Photos on this page
by Angela McMorran

Being at Home

Jo Ayers recalls the example, influences and tradition in our families that help create a home.



When I think of what sums up home for me I recall a memory from my childhood. A Saturday afternoon. My sister and I had been out. We had been gone from the house for maybe three hours. As we came in the kitchen door there was my mother. All she did was give us a big smile and said: "Hello, how were the pictures?". I remember thinking very clearly: "She is really pleased to see us even though we haven't been gone very long!" I remember too how good that made me feel although I wouldn't then have been able to articulate it.

I have held that memory in the years since. It was not until I was an adult and a parent myself that I realised how precious a few hours to yourself on a Saturday afternoon could be. And too, how my mother's response to our ending that time captures all that she and my father gave us in the home they created for us. It remains one of my most precious memories of my mother and allows me to use it as a spring board now to talk about what it taught me about a home.

Home is Where We're Valued

Home is a place of hospitality where you feel valued, accepted and welcomed. It's a place where you feel good about who you are. Home is about identity. Where you learn, "this is the kind of person I want to become" from seeing it modelled around you. In her simple greeting my mother embodied all of that. She put aside what she was doing to focus on us and whatever we were bringing in with us. Of course this was not a one-off happening. Our parents always made us feel central to their lives even though their fortunes varied quite a lot.

I remember five of the houses we lived in during my childhood — there were others. A couple were too small for our three generations. One was in a little seaside town. One was very spacious and in the city. One was

on the edge of town with farmland and animals at the back fence. They were all home to me and I was always happy there.

Of course there were stressful times. There were difficult relationships, sometimes not enough money and having to "go without", illness and death. But wherever we lived, there was never a time when I didn't want to be there. There was never a time when I felt I was a liability or a difficulty to anyone. I was always secure in my belonging.

Home Markers

As I reflect now I can see concrete markers that reinforced my sense of belonging. They were my freedom to express myself (within limits) and to do my thing. That could be as simple as rearranging my belongings in our bedroom. Another was the sanctuary of my own bed — my place.

Eventually, of course, in the pattern of *Pākehā* culture, I moved away from my parents' house but my home stayed with me. I carried it around with me. It was the security and assurance about who I was and to whom I belonged and how I related to others. "Home" became the basic model, albeit with some very distinct variations, for the homes we attempted and often achieved in flats, in intentional communities and ultimately the home my husband Pat and I made with our children and others.

Now 40 years on we have the enormous pleasure of seeing our own children, again with very distinct variations from their own childhoods, making their homes and creating households of hospitality, acceptance and support. We count this as our greatest blessing.

Ingredients for Homemaking

When I reflect on what enabled my parents to create the experience of home and our formation in homemaking, I think there were three basic ingredients.

One was their personality and determination about how things would be. It was their faith in themselves and each other.

A second was a mixture of tradition and expectation. They were handing on to us something shaped by their own experience. They both replicated what they had had themselves and also tried to make sure that some of the aspects of their early life were not repeated. They expected that they would be successful home builders because that was the experience of previous generations of their family. My grandparents were there to demonstrate that and to support my parents' efforts. Also at that time in New Zealand generally most *Pākehā* were thriving.

The third ingredient was that they always had enough physical resources. They had work and they had housing. There were times when more of both would have been less stressful. But we had the security of enough resources to maintain the building and sustenance of our home.

Home is a place of hospitality where you feel valued, accepted and welcomed. It's a place where you feel good about who you are. Home is about identity.

Making My Family Home

So my personal experience of home has been very positive both as a child and as an adult. As a parent home-making has taken hard work and often stress and anxiety and once in a while you are really tested.

When our children were young we lost our house in a fire. Through the dislocation, rebuilding and relocation we learnt quite a lot. The fire destroyed all our personal belongings — clothes, books, toys, treasured possessions. Suddenly we had nowhere to sleep together as a family. Five children and three adults are quite a few people to house.

I was so anxious that I did not handle the concerns of the children at all well. A kind of panic froze my thinking. But we learnt about being the recipient of donations. The local Vincent de Paul Shop turned over the key to us and said: "Take what you need." I was relieved that the kids would have something to wear but the prospect nearly finished off our boys who were already scared and anxious. It seemed that wearing other people's cast-offs symbolised for them how awful the situation was.

Resources to Recover

Fortunately my husband was more resilient and of course we had the emotional and practical help of extended family, friends and Church community. It wasn't long before we found a house to live in and the insurance provided new beds and clothes and replaced some of the children's precious things.

We were a middle-class family who had all the skill needed to access what society had to offer. After a year we were back on our old property in a newly built house with better facilities than we'd had before. Even so the emotional and psychological trauma lasted a lot longer but we gradually rebuilt our sense of home and equilibrium. The upheaval of our "post-fire" days gradually eased into normal life.

In spite of that disruption we were able to provide what one of our sons described as: "a fairly boring childhood where nothing much out of the ordinary happened". I prefer to interpret that as being stable and secure. And I watch now as he dedicates himself to providing the same for his own child.

I think too of those parents who unlike us have none of those safety nets to catch them and for whom my "post-fire" days are their reality of everyday. ■

Painting: *Washing Dishes* by Ashley Norwood Cooper

Jo Ayers from Auckland has a life-long involvement with prayer and ritual. She and husband Pat Snedden have five children, three daughters-in-law and five grandchildren.

Fleeing a Homeland and Settling in a New Home

Habtom Zeru Habte tells **Adrienne Jansen** how he left Eritrea and about his life since coming to New Zealand aged 18 as a refugee.

"When I left Eritrea, it was the worst place on earth. The whole situation was very complex. We had fought a war to take the country back from Ethiopia, but the people who seized power became dictators. We had trusted them like our brothers and sisters, so we never expected that. They made the country a militarised state and everything started to collapse. They wanted to control everyone, especially psychologically.

"Growing up in that environment gave you no hope. But you couldn't leave Eritrea legally and if you were caught escaping you got shot. You had to decide whether to take the risk. My brother, two sisters and I left. Mum and Dad and one sister are still there.

More Dangers in Sudan

"I went across the border to Sudan. Sudan had its own problems but it was better than Eritrea. The biggest problem I faced in Sudan was not knowing who I was, where I belonged. If you're not Sudanese, anyone can blame you and take you out in a matter of seconds. The longer you stay in Sudan the more uncomfortable you are.

"My brother was in prison in Sudan for three years because they thought he was a spy from the Eritrean government. It's a normal part of life there to go to prison.

"At least the Sudanese tell you the reason. In Eritrea you don't even ask. In Sudan they can make one person disappear. In Eritrea they can make a whole family disappear. So there wasn't much complaining in Sudan because we came from much bigger problems.

Chosen for New Zealand

"At that time there were more than 25,000 refugees from Eritrea in Sudan and New Zealand government officials came and accepted 21 for New Zealand. Twenty-one! You can understand how lucky I felt. We had no idea where New Zealand was and we didn't ask anything about the country. The flight was extremely long and I thought: 'Am I going to get there or are they taking me to heaven?' But it was one of the happiest days of my life and for my family too, because they never thought we were safe in Sudan.

"When I came here I was 18. I had basic English but the problem was the accent. It was a big challenge, because if you don't understand someone you can't communicate. You feel excluded and negative thoughts come. But it takes time.

"I did an English language course, then a foundation course at Victoria University, then I enrolled at Massey University. I was also doing a cleaning job. Unfortunately I had to drop out in my second year.

Family Back Home

"The situation in Eritrea went from bad to worse to disastrous and I couldn't focus on my study. The problem is that Eritreans have extremely high expectations when someone goes to a first-world country. They think things are so easy here — you get the money out of a tree! And in that cultural lifestyle what you have belongs to your family.

"One phone call can destroy a whole week. Your dad is sick and they need $500 — where are you going to get that? The problem is like drops of water, it never stops. It's very hard to understand unless you're on that cultural path.

"I put it to them: 'Give me three years and I'll complete my study and I'll have a better life and you'll have a better life too.' I was one of the best students in high school in Eritrea and I know my potential. But how are they going to survive financially for those three years? Their survival depends on me, my brother and sisters and I feel guilty if I don't contribute. That's where I got stuck.

"I can't see a way of making them understand unless they come here. Then at least they would see how I've been living the past eight years to make their life easier.

"But one of the most depressing processes to get involved in is trying to bring your family here. It's not going to happen. You dedicate yourself to support the family and you literally forget what you have to pursue for yourself.

Taxi Driving

"I quit Massey and worked as a cleaner full-time. But I was very tired from that work so I started driving a taxi. The biggest reason a lot of immigrants drive a taxi is because of the demands of the family. In most jobs you get paid every two weeks. In the taxi you sometimes get paid cash and you can send that straight away. A lot of New Zealanders think we leave home for financial reasons. The reasons are not just financial. I would never recommend anyone to come here to be a millionaire. It's actually easier to be rich in Eritrea.

Challenges to Faith

"I'm a Catholic and this is not an easy place to follow a faith. The environment here doesn't encourage faith and

"At that time there were more than 25,000 refugees ... and New Zealand government officials accepted 21 for New Zealand. Twenty-one! You can understand how lucky I felt."

that's where we lose our humanity. We become extremely individual, extremely selfish. Look at the way we drive here — we don't give way to people. We go crazy if someone takes our parking spot. It's all about me. Why have we become so selfish here? I lost a lot in Eritrea, in freedom of speech, freedom of choice. But I lost a lot in moral things when I came to New Zealand.

Need to Feel at Home Here

"Refugees coming here need one thing — to feel at home. And to make them feel at home you need to accept them as they are. I didn't feel part of this country for a long time — four or five years. But I've never expected this society to be responsible for making me feel comfortable here. I'm responsible for that. So I think about the question the opposite way. What do I have to do to be accepted in this country? No one can answer that question for me. You don't tell me what I need to do to be accepted but you don't accept me. Why not accept me as who I am?

"In New Zealand the main problem is lack of knowledge. We're isolated from the rest of the world. And when people know so little it makes them judgmental. Racism is a very sensitive thing. We accept it as normal. But if we want to change it, the first thing is to face it. Do we treat a Somali person the same way as a white person here?

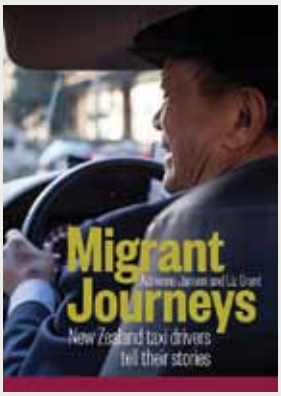
"New Zealand is a new country when it comes to immigration. It's very hard for New Zealanders to imagine a dangerous life — as an asylum seeker or a refugee. So it will take time. But it's not easy any more to be racist here. When there are only two or three races, it's easy. But imagine trying to be racist against all the races here! We are too many now.

I had an experience on a bus when one person said to a Somalian: "Go back to your country." It turned out there were around ten different races on that bus. They all stood up and said: "Do you mean me?" ■

Adrienne Jansen is a teacher and writer. Her most recent book is *Migrant Journeys: New Zealand Taxi Drivers Tell their Stories.*

Migrant Journeys: New Zealand Taxi Drivers tell their Stories

Edited by Adrienne Jansen and Liz Grant
Published by Bridget Williams Books
Reviewed by Elizabeth Mackie



When Pope Francis recently visited Lesbos to meet with Syrian refugees attempting to escape into Europe, he reminded the world that: "Migrants, rather than simply being a statistic, are first of all people, who have faces, names and individual stories." Adrienne Jansen and Liz Grant provide names, faces and stories which bring statistics into life through *Migrant Journeys*, a series of 14 interviews with overseas-born taxi drivers working in New Zealand cities. Not all are refugees. Some are people who have chosen to migrate here in the hope of a better life. All of them have settled here, contributing to the increasing diversity we experience in the population of Aotearoa New Zealand.

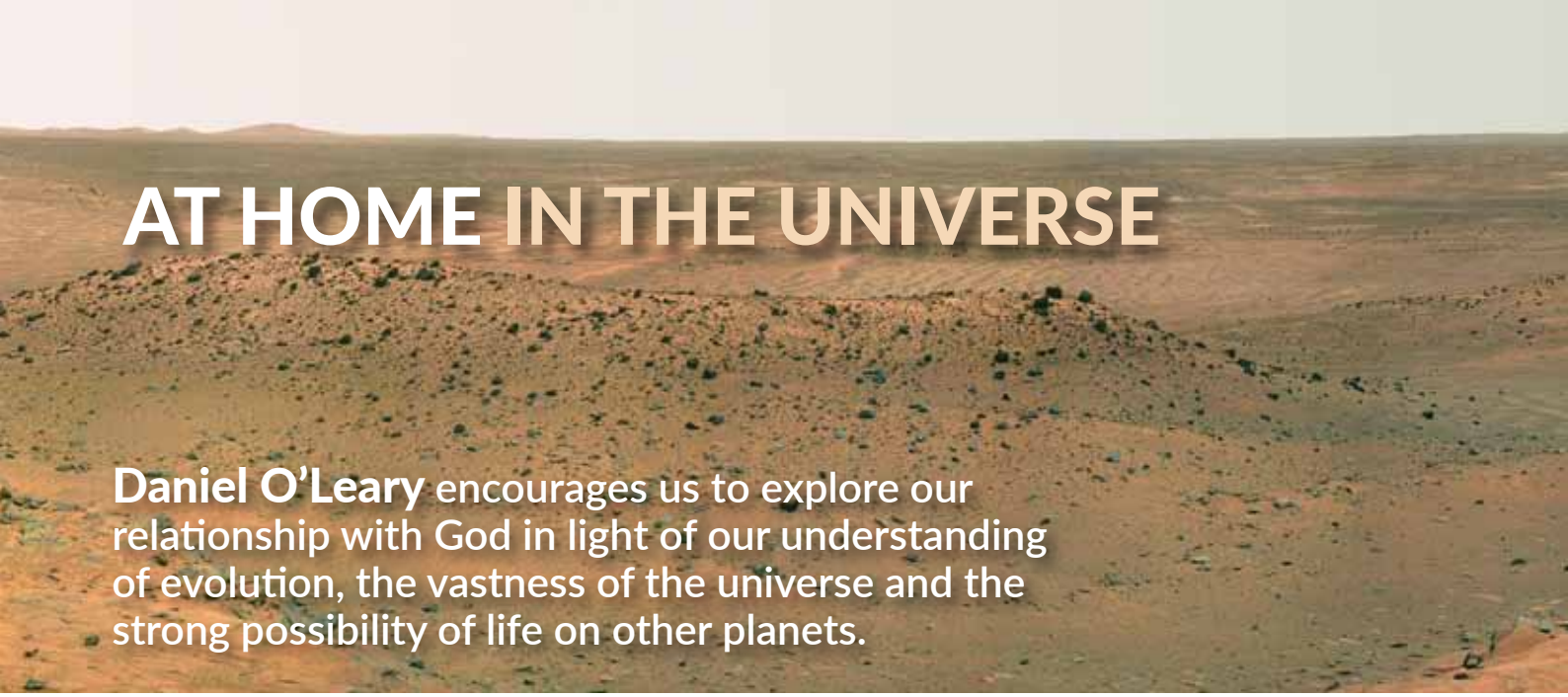
Through compelling human stories we meet people from 10 different countries, including Somalia, Serbia, Iraq, Samoa and others. The stories are very simply recorded, a fascinating and sometimes extremely sad record of people who have suffered immeasurably in their own countries and have bravely made the decision to flee, sometimes arriving in this country after long periods in refugee camps in an intermediate country.

There are some common themes which recur in almost every story. All are seeking a safer, better life for their families and greater educational opportunities for their children. Many are assisting extended family, either here or in their homeland. They are all willing to work — at anything. Many are highly qualified and feel frustrated that their qualifications are not recognised here. Taxi driving has provided a life-line in securing the income they need to live. Many spoke of the flexibility and freedom this industry allows them to care for their families and to contribute impressively to their own communities.

They value New Zealand citizenship and express gratitude for the goodness of New Zealanders. "I love Kiwis, I love you guys. New Zealand gives me everything, except for the weather."

The writing is direct and lucid, leaving the taxi drivers to tell their stories in their own words. There are some strong portrait photographs, although it would have been wonderful to have had more, a very good introduction and a helpful glossary of acronyms used.

The reader will be informed, moved and challenged. To quote one Somalian refugee: "What doesn't seem to happen is educating the whole community about the benefits that migrants bring. There is sometimes a perception that they are more like a cost burden, which can be the trigger for racism." ■



AT HOME IN THE UNIVERSE

Daniel O'Leary encourages us to explore our relationship with God in light of our understanding of evolution, the vastness of the universe and the strong possibility of life on other planets.

After the announcement in October last year that flowing water seems to exist on Mars and the earlier discovery that the Earth has a bigger and older near-twin, Kepler-452b, frissons of excitement rippled across the land. Maybe there is life out there after all! And if there is, what would the implications be for planet Earth? It is a time for imagination, for a courageous trust in Creation.

"We belong to a reality greater than our own", writes Diarmuid O'Murchu MSC, in his 2002 book *Evolutionary Faith*, "and it is now time to embrace the cosmic and planetary context within which our life story and the story of all life unfolds."

New Horizons

For sure, our current understanding of religion, particularly of Christianity, would be seriously challenged. Fr Thomas O'Meara OP, in his wonderful little book *Vast Universe*, wrote that "the possibility of extra-terrestrial life becoming part of our world, whether in theory or reality, makes us think differently about who we are and about what it means to be intelligent. It implies new horizons for the future. New theologies await. Even a revelation believed to come from God would be expanded."

Theologian Karl Rahner wrote: "Today the Christian is aware of living on a tiny planet that is part of a system of a particular sun, which itself belongs to a galaxy with 300 million stars, and is many thousands of light years broad. In this cosmos of unimaginable size . . . [we believe that] the eternal *Logos* of God who drives forward these billions of galaxies became a human being on this small planet which is a speck of dust in the universe."

> *"All that I can entertain is the possibility of a multi-aspect incarnation which would be realised on all the stars."*

Calling on Imagination

We wonder what creation stories those other inhabited "specks of dust" might have. Would they include a Fall? And if not would an incarnation still be central to their stories? God, of course, can be present on other planets in a million ways. Incarnation and redemption are not unique to Earth. Nor does the possibility of a different kind of incarnation to ours diminish the unique importance of our Christian story. We believe that the risen Christ, the cosmic Christ, has the supreme role of saving and completing the entire material universe. And we continue to wonder.

Jesuit paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin wrote: "All that I can entertain is the possibility of a multi-aspect incarnation which would be realised on all the stars."

In her poem *Christ in the Universe*, Alice Meynell imagines this "multi-aspect incarnation". She pictures an extra-terrestrial gathering of the civilisations of countless constellations, telling stories about their incarnations and eternities, listening to "a million alien Gospels, in what guise He trod the Pleiades, the Lyre, the Bear".

> *"O, be prepared my soul!*
> *To read the inconceivable, to scan*
> *The myriad forms of God those stars unroll*
> *When, in our turn, we show to them a Man."*

Revisioning Our Faith Stories

These reflections draw us into a deeper exploration of our own faith story, and especially, the meaning of an Original Sin. Might we be the only inhabited star to have disappointed our Creator? From the beginning there have been theologians who, careful not to confuse myth with history, find no place, since the first "Flaring Forth", for an actual historical Fall, a geographical Eden. Humanity, they say, is not defined by an original act of disobedience, condemned from the very start to a punitive exile.

Paradise was never lost, they hold. Incarnation is not about restoring it. Planned from the very beginning, it is about the healing, flourishing and perfecting of our human nature as it evolves, despite its ignorance, darkness, alienation and destructiveness, into its final

NASA photograph of the barren and freezing cold plains (average -50°C) of Mars.

New findings from NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter (MRO) provide the strongest evidence yet that liquid water flows intermittently on present-day Mars.

destiny in the heart of God. The Fall account is a story about our daily disruption of the harmony between the Creator, humanity and creation due to what Pope Francis calls, in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*: "our presuming to take the place of God and our refusal to acknowledge our creaturely limitations".

Original Sin is not the name of a primordial catastrophe: it expresses, as Fr Kevin Kelly puts it, "the dark underside of our graced humanity and our graced world". In *Christianity in Evolution* Jack Mahoney SJ critiques the theology of atonement that links the Fall with incarnation. He believes that "it would be more theologically appropriate now to drop (the doctrine of Original Sin) as unnecessary and cumbersome baggage." Why? Because God's first intention was never thrown off course.

Some leading theologians call for a radical revision of this flawed teaching, this blight on the blossoming of Catholicism. Apart from its implicit denial of the evolutionary process, the doctrine is generally understood to define our disobedient disposition, the flawed nature and origin of our human condition, the guilty way we stand before our Creator.

But we are born in God's image, not definitively shaped by sin from the beginning. Perhaps Baptism is not so much about exorcising a past Original Sin from the baby's soul as about preparing her innocent heart for encountering the waiting "sin of the world" (St Paul).

We are not a fallen race. We never were. And this, of course, is a lost traditional insight. St Augustine of Hippo wrote of the first creation as a *carmen Dei*, a divinely inspired symphony of incarnate beauty.

St Bonaventure saw our planet and its people distilling light as a "stained-glass window in the morning sun".

More recently Thomas Merton reminded us that we were created to be "manifestations of divine beauty" in a world that is "absolutely transparent, and the divine is shining through it all the time".

Fuller Consciousness of Cosmology Needed

Teilhard de Chardin was aware that the world stands at the threshold of a swiftly developing theology of creation together with a new cosmology. He believed that "our former planetary and anthropocentric focus must give way to a fuller consciousness of cosmic community".

And now, as astonishing discoveries and theories about our origin, evolution and destiny fill the media, a significant renewal in Catholic theology, spirituality and pastoral ministry must surely follow. Writing about "the fecundity and creative artistry of the Creator", Zachary Hayes OFM, at the end of his *A Window to the Divine*, asks a fundamental question: "How big a God do you believe in?" ■

This Article is republished courtesy of *The Tablet*, 3rd October 2015.

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HOUSING FAMILIES WELL PROMOTES THE COMMON GOOD

Michael Melville challenges the government to commit to providing public housing for the overall good of society.

The chatter on our airwaves is dominated by the state of housing in New Zealand. It is a static noise that has always been there but is making its presence known increasingly as our country groans under the pressure of a legacy of poor quality and insufficient housing stock.

All the indicators are pointing to a massive housing shortage, which left unchecked, will become unmanageable. Unusually it is a problem that is affecting a broad demographic cross-section, from those actually homeless to middle-income earners. It is no longer a local problem in Auckland but is starting to affect other centres as the slump from our largest city takes effect.

Minister of Social Housing Paula Bennett is promoting pop-up housing for reasonably well-off earners to ease the demand in Auckland. And in the same breath she says the government is talking to communities and housing providers about people in the other end of the spectrum.

Te Puea Marae in Mangere has opened its doors to the homeless in their community. But the definition of homeless in this situation is not the same as being destitute. Te Puea is housing students and families who can afford to rent but not at the prices charged in their areas. While Te Puea can be proud of what they are doing, they know it is an unsustainable short-term fix to a growing problem.

We've heard of abandoned buildings in post-quake Christchurch being occupied by destitute people. And of landlords spending money to keep them out of these buildings rather than putting them in. The talk about housing is endless and enlightening and sad. It is suggesting that we are a country which can tolerate its people inhabiting the streets rather than structures.

Profit Driven Constructions

Over recent years New Zealanders have woken up to the fact that good housing should be warm, safe, culturally appropriate, contextual and affordable. And that this is a basic human right. Now this awareness has permeated all aspects of our built environment, including construction processes and compliance. However there is a collision between the current norm of being supplied a "house" that responds to a spreadsheet of minimum standards and maximum profits and the expectations of a "home" which we now know to be our right.

New Zealand has been blindsided with developer-driven accommodation over the last 40 years and constructions that have fallen well short of our expectations. The strain put on a developer's profit or landlord's rent-roll has forced the price of housing to skyrocket and, simply put, become unaffordable.

Used with the permission of Garrick Tremain.

Earlier State Housing Provision

I first became aware of social housing in 1992 when we did a site visit of the Berhampore State Flats in Wellington as part of an architectural history paper at university. The flats were built by the Department of Housing and Construction set up by the first Labour Government in the 1930s to address a mass shortage of suitable, affordable housing at that time.

The Berhampore Flats with their high-density design and community focus were out-of-left-field plan at that time in New Zealand. The most radical component to the Flats was the fact they were built by a government who owned the process, the land and the product. They employed the architects and the contractors and let the people of New Zealand be the client.

Just how successful the original intent of the Flats was is an academic argument. But just this year they have been renovated completely to bring them up to the current building code. And the local primary school now

administers the public centre enabling the wider community to benefit from the complex. This has helped bring about one of the original aspirations of the architect, F Gordon Wilson, which had been lost over the years.

At the time the Flats were built the mantra of the Labour government was to provide housing "fit for a Cabinet Minister". All over New Zealand state houses were built with generous proportions, quality materials and with families in mind. That legacy is still with us and the quality of their construction often exceeds what we can buy in contemporary markets.

Scale model of proposed apartment building in Berhampore.
[*Photo used by permission of Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.*]

Bold Action Needed Again

The recent budget announced $258 million new spending over four years for housing but only $38.7 million is budgeted to be spent in the next financial year. This is less than 5 per cent of the $857 million budgeted for a new tax administration system.

Our government needs to act as boldly today as they did in the 1930s and 1940s. We need the state to take up the responsibility for housing and deliver again an out-of-left-field solution. It must be radical and challenge our thinking. It cannot involve developers or it will become fiscally unviable or the product will be compromised. There is no place for nimby attitudes or developers in this time of crisis.

In a great twist of irony a radical but legitimate solution also involves a spreadsheet. The government will balance its books more adequately if all people are housed securely. Just as the saying "an apple a day keeps the doctor away" evokes the benefits of good health from a balanced diet, so too does "take care of the home and your home will take care of you" ring true. We cannot underestimate the positive and cascading effects a home has on other services the government provides — education, health, family life. When familes are forced to move home and district frequently because of housing, the children are in danger of disruption to their family lives, education and connection to a local community.

Common Good Foremost

The cynical side of me associates current government moves with a lack of conviction. It is not only the 2016 budget for housing but take for example, the issues of cigarette packaging and the excessive sugar in processed food for children. They seem to be transfixed between the desperate need to address community health and the competing need for the tax to balance the books. With housing we do not have the luxury of waiting any longer. We need the government to be responsible and committed in the long-term to housing all people.

The stress that lack of housing puts on every aspect of our society is too great and we will break if a radical, long-term and socially-minded investment is not made soon. We need to make a great investment now. The risk is short-term and involves a financial bridge required to get from now to a point in time when our homes can take care of us. When all families have homes, our children have more chance to grow up healthy and safe and communities to develop and become cohesive and secure. The next generations will grow up in housing that was designed for their needs. We want to be able to look back on this time in 50 years and say: "these state houses — they are with us forever". And so they should be. ■

Michael Melville lives with his family in Wellington where he practises as an architect. He coaches netball and is a keen fisher.

CROSSING THE FRONTIER

There's a tea shop in Turkey
where old men dream
dreams of yesterday
and young men talk of tomorrow
and tomorrow they do the same.

There's a white house in Connemara
where young men dreamed
dreams and talked of tomorrow
in their own tongue let loose.

There's a refugee centre in Lesbos
where women cease to dream
in their own tongue
and the child, Anwar, speaks
"I have no way back
and no way forward."

There's an on-line petition in New Zealand
where people sign to double
the quota of refugees.
The children speak.
They cross the frontier
between speech and dream.
The children speak:
"Don't double the quota.
Triple it.
Quadruple it."

— © Anne Powell

Photo: Eritrea

At Home with the Birds

Peter Murnane notices the birds in his new neighbourhood and muses on them as companions and examples of Divine hospitality.

Until recently my home has been in the Solomon Islands. The people of that tropical place were most welcoming and friendly, but the littlest residents, the bacteria, were quite hostile. During four years, golden staph several times gave me cellulitis in my leg; a pseudomona took up residence in one lung and a whole team of bugs got together to burst my appendix.

But there is mercy in every event. In the struggle with sickness I gained precious insights, and after benefiting from the kind hospitality of doctors and nurses, found a new home during months of recovery in one of Canberra's leafy suburbs watching summer turn to autumn and autumn to winter.

Some of the astronauts, busy as they are, have declared that when they saw the blue globe of earth from their viewpoint in orbit or on their way back from the moon, they had a kind of mystical experience. I was far from busy, but a few hours walking or sitting in a local park gave me a similar privilege.

Those who built that Canberra suburb half a century ago on sheep-denuded plains were inspired to plant countless trees in its parks and along every street. Now the mature trees have become a home to abundant bird-life.

Magpies were prominent. Those splendid fliers spend much of their time walking around on the ground where they find most of their food. They were forever stopping to pick up some insect or grub quite invisible to me. Because people don't harass them they often didn't fly off as I passed. In fact if I sat still and tried to imitate their carolling, they would get curious and walk even closer.

Parrots, three or four at a time, flashed green, red and gold as they whizzed between the trees, characteristically dipping in their flight as they rested their wings for the briefest of moments. White cockatoos in groups of 20 or 30 would take over a section of ground for an hour or two, working it thoroughly for tasty grass-roots; or would occupy a favourite tree and almost ruin it, scattering a mess of leaves and twigs on the path below. Is it commonly known that they are almost all left handed . . . clawed?

The song of the magpies; the rosellas' and rainbow lorikeets' brilliant colours which astonish but never clash, force me to conclude that they were given by foolish generosity — generous folly is another part of love.

Birds of other kinds came and went: big, sinister currawongs, their dark looks saved only by those magnificent golden eyes; clownish galahs, pink and grey; wattle birds; black and white pee-wits; pugnacious Australian mynahs; courting pairs of crested doves. Where the bushes were dense and thorny enough to deter cats, the justly-named superb blue wrens flitted, the beautiful male in black and sky blue, the female in sober brown.

Walking daily among them, or watching birds splashing in our garden birdbath, I learned a new appreciation of these odd, beautiful flying creatures that have been shaped by the Australian landscape, each evolving to fill an available niche. Descended from dinosaurs, they were at home here before any humans walked the planet, and flew among trees on these hills to welcome the First Australians arriving 40 or 60 thousand years ago. They were my hosts; I their guest.

I hope I never underestimate the power of small creatures to help us recover our health, even our sanity. For we have acted insanely from the first. In our rush to make profit from sheep runs, farming and timber we have cut down most of the forest that was their home, entirely wiping out some of their species, but still they come back to adorn the landscapes we have built in its place

What did they teach me? They are entirely focused on their little goals of finding food or making out with a mate. What they do, they do with unworried concentration. That consummate poet Judith Wright put it simply: "Whatever the bird is, is perfect in the bird". How often we fall short of this, letting worries and passions divide us and weaken our efforts. Wright prayed that she "could fuse my passions into one clear stone and be simple to myself as the bird is to the bird."

It is a mercy to be among these creatures. So patently content to be what they are, the birds turned my thoughts to the simple but nearly unbelievable truth that they and I exist, standing out from the empty space that was there before our arrival. Once I begin to wrestle with it, the question "why are we here when we might not have been?" will engage me for the rest of my years. If the answer lies somewhere in the territory of pure mercy, what a joy to ponder the Love behind that mercy! Don't the best authorities say that God is Love? The song of the magpies; the rosellas' and rainbow lorikeets' brilliant colours which astonish but never clash, force me to conclude that they were given by foolish generosity — generous folly is another part of love.

Jesus was trying to show us the same generous folly in many of his parable stories: the big-hearted employer who paid a whole day's wage for a late hour's work; the foolish

Superb blue wrens

Rainbow lorikeets

Magpies

Currawongs

Sulphur-crested cockatoos

vineyard owner who kept sending waves of servants and then his own son, to try to collect the rent from murderous tenants; the impetuous shepherd who leaves the flock exposed to danger just to save one sheep that has already fallen into it; the happy woman who wants to throw a party when she recovers a little coin. Jesus himself chose to live without a home of his own, depending on the love of friends, until his foolish generosity made him a victim of the most inhospitable of all people: religious leaders who exploited the very house of God.

These stories show us how to look afresh at the wonders — which we take for granted — that The Holy One has thought up to show us God's heart:

Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them . . . (Mt 6:26)

God delights to give us pleasure too: "are you not worth much more than these?" We see God's heart in the guise of all those who show their love by feeding, clothing and housing the people who need it.

As if that were not enough, this Hospitable God invites us to ponder how loving and being hospitable lead us towards a mysterious homeland, beyond this present dimension and our present knowledge. Love promises us unlimited hospitality in "my Father's house". ■

Peter Murnane is an Australian Dominican Friar. He worked in New Zealand for 20 years before spending four years in the Solomon Islands.

Photo: Mary Ann Bishop

A PHONE CALL IN THE EVENING

Jenny Beck remembers the significance of an unexpected phone call from Bishop Len Boyle one Saturday evening.

I want to say something about kindness.

Emeritus Bishop Len Boyle died recently at the grand age of 85. He'd enjoyed 11 years of mainly active retirement after serving as the Roman Catholic Bishop of Dunedin from 1983 to 2005.

In the year 2000 I was heartsore after the death of my son Joshua and yearning for him. In fact my sorrow was bigger than that: fundamental life changes meant I was bereft of husband, baby and united family. At about 8pm one Saturday evening the phone rang. I answered it, weariness thick in my voice. Saturday afternoons had to be the worst. There is the host of small boys, and me feeling guilty about not being more. More able, more resilient and creative. Saturday evenings were spent in relief on the couch. Who could be phoning, probably wanting something of me, who had nothing to give?

To my utter surprise and overwhelmedment (the coined word necessary) the caller introduced himself as Bishop Len Boyle. He'd read an article I'd written about Joshua, what his life had meant, how the loss of him had devastated yet opened my heart. The Bishop was calling to? what? talk, one person under God to another.

I wanted to weep, because God had surely constrained him to pick up the phone when I was down low. I heard myself blurting out, "I can't bear even to think the words 'broken family'."

The world's big enough for all of us and within the world the household of God is tender-hearted and appreciative enough to hold us all.

And, "Zak followed on from Joshua and he's in my arms now. I'm so incredibly lucky to have him but on Saturday evenings it's Joshua I long for."

And, "Is that dreadful?"

No, he didn't think so. He thought it was very human. In response to a gentle enquiry I said, Yes, I could see blessing and God's hand in all of this. I told him about Anne Lamott and her book *Travelling Mercies* which had given my sorrow a framework. She talked there about the "flecks and nuggets of gold" that are washed ashore in grief. I couldn't quite remember the order of words, but I could remember this, having written the sentence on my heart: "Grief ends up giving you the two best things: softness and illumination."

"Yes?" I could hear him listening.

The softness I thought was generosity and tolerance. Also a quickness to forgive. "And the illumination?"

"Clarity of vision?" I heard my voice, raspy and hesitant. Well, let me take a stand. "Um, I'm surer than ever of the nearness of God and the goodness of life. Overall I mean. Part of this for me is showing willing because I can't actually feel it right, right now."

My listener was calm in the face of this, reassuring. More words poured out of me. Actually, we both talked. And cried, because life's hard and sometimes loss-riddled and inexplicable, and we exclaimed nevertheless at the beauty and daily warmth that remains, and looked forward in so many words to the resurrection morning when there'll be no more loss or heartache.

We laughed too; I can't resist the humorous and I recognised him over the phone as a fellow lover of light moments. I was reminded of Karl Barth saying, "Laughter is the closest thing to the grace of God." We chatted for . . . I don't know, perhaps 45 minutes. Then he bade me farewell and I was left holding the receiver and thinking, how good that I was home to receive this call. (Of course him being a man of

Jenny Beck, originally from South Africa, is mother to eight sons and has a general law practice in Dunedin.

the cloth and all, and me being a single mum — I suppose Saturday evening was a great time for us to connect.)

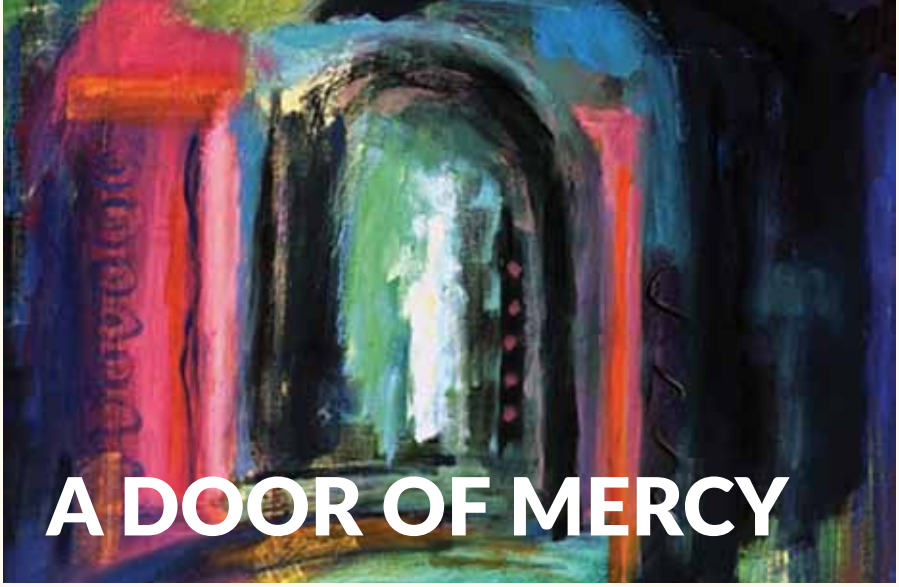
This was a seminal phone call for me and was our only (utterly edifying) conversation. Yet despite the slimness of our interaction, I can say now that he's crossed the River Jordan, that I knew the Bishop. Frederick Buechner once said, "If you want to be holy, be kind." I talked to a holy person that night. He didn't need to do it; it was sheer kindness that impelled him to pick up the phone and spend the better part of an hour encouraging someone who wasn't going to join the Roman Catholic Church and whose ragged tears would have sounded distinctly unattractive down the line. It was humanity we shared and the Gospel. (I had the sense though that it wouldn't have mattered to him had I not been a fellow believer; he would have done it for the humanity alone.)

At the end of our chat he said he would remember me and us Becks in his prayers. And I, a Baptist and non-conformist, unsure as to how to address him, said lamely, "Thank you, Bishop, so much." And then, "Thank you for caring so keenly about the Beck family even though you've never met us." The world's big enough for all of us and within the world the household of God is tender-hearted and appreciative enough to hold us all. On that unlikely Saturday night I felt such love that I could face the next day, and the next, knowing that, yes, I wasn't alone; someone's hand had held mine.

I'd also seen grace at work, of the type enjoined by Henri Frederic Amiel, "Life is short and we never have enough time for gladdening the hearts of those who travel the way with us. O, be swift to love! Make haste to be kind."

And now on this night some 16 years later, I say: "Thank you, Bishop, for picking up the phone, for hearing distress and consoling, for caring about a little person (even possibly a large-ish ewe) from another flock."

It's also a larger thank you. For the one who cares enough to stop. For people thrown across the path when they're needed. For human ties and the love of Christ made manifest in the Cross. And in particular today, thank you for Bishop Len Boyle, even now claiming his crown. ■



A DOOR OF MERCY

One Saturday in early May I sat waiting for the Joseph family (names are changed) at our Mercy house used for temporary accommodation. The house has been "home" for many families since the first Christchurch earthquake in September 2010. Some for short stays, others for up to a year.

The Josephs had experienced a lot of bad luck over the last few years and needed some practical support. I had met Ruth about four weeks earlier when she came to the Christchurch City Mission Foodbank for assistance. She was quite depressed and anxious, wondering how she was going to pay the bills and was generally struggling with daily life. Her husband, Tom, had full-time work as a labourer (on the minimum wage) and seven-year-old Robbie went to school in Woolston. Ruth had part-time work as a "before and after school carer" at a preschool but it was out at Rolleston – at least 27kms away. She had to be there by 7.30am and finished the afternoon session at 6pm.

Six months earlier the family had had to move from their rented house because the owner was having earthquake repairs done before selling the property. So they had moved into another rental in Hornby and were paying $500 per week. The rent was just beyond them. Their lease expired in May and their only solution was to move in with a family member who had four children. It would be cramped living conditions. I invited Ruth to come back for further food assistance over the following weeks.

In the meantime I discussed the situation with the Mercy community and we decided to offer the family the use of our house for at least six months. This would help them to get on their feet, save some money and decide where they could afford to live. It would give them some space and time to feel better about themselves.

We set up a day and time for the family to come to the house and consider the offer. I could tell that they thought this was a dream and that it could not possibly be happening to them. As the house was not free until late May I suggested they take time to weigh up all their options and concerns.

When Ruth came back to the City Mission for further food assistance we discussed the proposal of using the house. She sat in the office and cried and cried, sharing many other burdens that were weighing the family down. She likened me to an "angel" who had stepped into their lives to save them from despair.

It was two-way. I felt overwhelmed by the presence of God and the privilege of being able to offer this family accommodation. It was an epiphany experience — a realisation that this truly was a work of mercy — to offer shelter to a family in crisis. It was a practical experience of "opening the door of mercy". ■

Painting: Detail from *Seeing Through* by Penny Elder

Mary Wood RSM is a South Island West Coaster living and working in Christchurch East. Her ministry as the Foodbank Coordinator at the Christchurch City Mission challenges her to the core.

Reading Luke's Gospel with ecological eyes

In the sixth part of the series Elaine Wainwright interprets Luke 13:6-17 showing the importance of the principle of Sabbath for the health and well-being of all creation – human and other-than-human.

Luke 13: 6 Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. 7 So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' 8 He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. 9 If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"
10 Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. 11 And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. 12 When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." 13 When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. 14 But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day." 15 But Jesus answered him and said, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? 16 And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?" 17 When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.

We have just celebrated the first anniversary of Pope Francis's promulgation of the encyclical *Laudato Si'*. It has captured the imagination and the profound commitment of not only the Catholic world but all those of the human community who are committed to eco-justice. The encyclical opens with the claim that the Earth "cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted" on it (*LS* par 2). At the same time, the Pope reminds us that our bodies themselves are made up of Earth's very elements, particularly air and water. We cannot separate ourselves from all that is material in the world that we share as other-than-human and human beings.

Laudato Si' has, therefore, participated in the shift in consciousness that is called ecological. What I have been seeking to demonstrate in this series of readings of the Gospel of Luke is that we can and, indeed, we ought to bring that ecological perspective to our reading of this text. It will make us attentive to the human characters in the story and to the range of the other-than-human characters. These are the material elements that are woven through the text. Such a reading will in its turn, spiral back to further shape our ecological consciousness.

Fig Tree and Gardener

The opening parable in Luke 13:6-9 invites readers into a rich habitat where soil and water, a tree with deep roots and human community co-exist, although with some tension at times.

This particular parable does not begin with the formulaic "the *basileia*/ kingdom of God is like" that gospel readers have come to expect and which they will encounter in Lk 13:18. Rather, the reader is simply invited into the interrelationships within a complex habitat.

The human and other-than-human intersect as the parable opens with a man, a planted fig tree and its fruitlessness. The man's response to the tree's lack of fruit is to cut it down because it is *wasting* the soil — a somewhat violent response. The gardener, the one who tends the tree, digging around it and nurturing it with manure, knows that it is such a relationship between the human and other-than-human which enables the bringing forth of fruit. Readers are invited to hear what it is that the other-than-human speaks.

Disfigurements Seen and Touched

Time characterises the opening of the next segment of text (very explicitly in the English translation in which the connective *"de"* is translated "now"). It also continues to characterise the opening sentence of this new scene through reference to the "sabbath". The gospel is located in and must be read in its time context. In this same sentence, that time is linked with space — in one of the synagogues. It is in time and in space/place that the gospel unfolds.

In this space, a woman appears. The Greek phrase used to introduce the woman is *kai idou* which is a call to attention, to look, to see, to use one's senses, in particular that of sight. What the reader sees is a woman who has been crippled for 18 years, her body bent over, unable to stand upright.

We are not told the story of the woman's condition — just the now of her bent-over state. The ecological reader may be drawn to query the woman's condition and what might have been the multiple environmental factors leading to her present state. Also for such a reader the woman may represent symbolically multiple ecological disfigurements of landscape, of species and within the human community.

The text emphasises that Jesus sees the woman — a dance of senses playing in the space created. It is this seeing that leads to Jesus' words: "You are freed from your ailment."

It is, however, only with his touch, flesh on flesh, touching and being touched that the woman is able to stand up.

Healing happens in the materiality of flesh on flesh and gives rise to a voice of praise.

For the ecological reader, this text is one of hope. It points beyond the "bent-over" condition of many of Earth's elements. We know soil is being poisoned by chemicals used in fertilisation and fracking; air is being polluted by industrial emissions and species are being rendered extinct. It invites engagement in the very process of standing up straight.

The sabbath day frees the human community from work and a bondage to work. It frees the land as well as the animals from over-work. It allows the human and other-than-human communities to rest, to be restored.

Principle of Sabbath Interpreted

The shock for the reader of this text is that there is one who objects to the healing transformation that has just taken place in the body of a woman. The leader of the synagogue, like the gospel narrator, turns attention to time, to the naming of one day each week as holy, as Sabbath, as time of rest for the human and the other-than-human communities. For the ecological reader, Sabbath is a significant principle. It recognises that the Earth itself needs the rhythm of work and rest as do all living beings.

At issue in the encounter between Jesus and the synagogue leader is not Sabbath as a profound principle but whether there are situations when life and the flourishing of life, in the human community and in the other-than-human community, take precedence over the Sabbath principle.

Jesus' response to the synagogue leader is strong and manifests his depth of feeling in relation to Sabbath. It is grounded in the principle of "freedom from bondage", to cite the words of Jesus. The Sabbath day frees the human community from work and a bondage to work. It frees the land as well as the animals from over-work. It allows the human and other-than-human communities to rest, to be restored.

The synagogue leader in the Lucan narrative had lost sight of these profound Sabbath principles and had focused only on work or non-work.

In releasing the woman from the bondage that kept her body bent over for 18 years, Jesus demonstrates that Sabbath and the restoration that Sabbath enacts, need to be interpreted and re-interpreted continually in new situations.

The anniversary of *Laudato Si'* provides us with an invitation to explore the principle of Sabbath anew in the entire Earth community. ■

Elaine Wainwright RSM is the Executive Director of Mission and Ministry for the Mercy Sisters in Australia and Papua New Guinea. She is an international biblical scholar.

A Heart Moved to Mercy

Kathleen Rushton provides new insights into the parable of the wounded man in Luke 10:25-37.

15th Sunday of Ordinary Time 10 July

Painting: *The Good Samaritan*, by Vincent van Gogh (after Delacroix) 1890

In the larger journey section of Luke 9:51–19:22, Jesus answers a lawyer's question by asking a question. He then tells a parable which begins and ends with a wounded man (Lk 10:30,35) who is the focus for three people on a journey. They are from different classes — a priest (Lk 10:31), a Levite (Lk 10:32) and a Samaritan (Lk 10:33, 35). They arrive, see and respond.

Vincent van Gogh's painting, completed a few months before his tragic death, places the wounded one in the centre of his depiction of Luke 10:25–37. He portrays mercy as action-orientated, interactive and found in unexpected places. The face of the wounded man is that of his brother, Theo, who had carried Vincent through his psychological and financial difficulties. Vincent painted himself in the role of the Samaritan. In this reversal, both stand in need of mercy which is both given and received. Jesuit, James Keenan, describes mercy as "the willingness to enter into the chaos of others" and invites us to journey into the many layers of this parable of mercy.

A Heart Moved with Compassion

The three men journeying the lonely 27 kms descent from Jerusalem to Jericho saw the wounded one but only the Samaritan "had a heart moved with compassion" (*splagnizomai*) Lk 10:33. This verb and its other forms in the New Testament means being moved from the depths of one's being. It evokes the noun for womb-compassion (*rahamim*) which comes from the Hebrew word for womb (*rehem*).

There is a threefold pattern. There is a description of need, then a person is described as "having a heart moved with compassion", and something must be done to address the need the heart has felt. We find this pattern in two other parables — when the father sees his lost son return (Lk 15:20) and when a person is caught in a huge debt (Mt.18:24–25, 27). Jesus, whose life and actions are the incarnation of God's mercy, is described as "having a heart moved with compassion" when he met the funeral of the widow's son (Lk 7:13) and healed the men who were blind (Mt 20:34). This threefold pattern is repeated when Jesus sees that the crowd "were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Mt 9:36) and cured their sick (Mt 14:14).

Matthew says that after a great crowd had been with Jesus for three days he had compassion for them because they were hungry (Mt 15:32).

A Very Different World From Ours

The great crowds were mostly poor Jews living under various systems of the Roman occupation and making their livelihood from the land or sea. They had a collective history of being ruled by other nations. In the broadest sense most were rural peasants with little power over their economic or political situation and dominated by landlords and overlords. They were required to give in taxes any surplus they earned. If they fell into debt they lost their land. The land then fell into the hands of fewer and fewer. The poor became tenants, day labourers and some, like Jesus, were village artisans.

In this world the peasants may well have seen the bandits as heroes standing for justice, as social bandits who robbed the rich to help the poor. Possibly even those who first heard this story may have identified more with the bandits than with the wounded man.

Cultural Background

The Samaritan's response to the wounded man showed generosity and care above cultural expectations. The well-known hatred and separation that existed between Jews and Samaritans has led us to see the Samaritan as "good" for coming to the wounded man's aid. He was presumably a Jew from Jerusalem. However this obscures much about the Samaritan and the cultural situation of Jesus' first hearers.

The story gives indications that the Samaritan is a merchant or trader. He journeys (Lk 10:33), he has an animal to carry his goods and he has with him two items typical of trade at the time — oil and wine (Lk 10:34). Traders were unpopular with peasants who regarded them as part of the system that oppressed and exploited them. Traders were despised by the elites who regarded them as new wealth and upstarts.

It seems that as a trader the Samaritan knew a typical stopping place for commercial people and he took the wounded man to an inn (Lk 10:35). Public inns were notorious for being dirty, noisy and basic. Only persons without families or social connections would dare stay at such a place. Also innkeepers had low moral reputations. The Samaritan took the wounded man to the inn, put himself into debt and gave himself and the man he was helping into the hands of the innkeeper.

Showing Mercy

The Samaritan showed mercy to the wounded man and drew on all he had available to care for him. He used the medicinal qualities of oil and wine on his wounds and fabric for bandages. His animal carried the wounded man and he paid for the stay at the inn with coins.

The threefold pattern in this parable guides us into the works of mercy: we see a need, then "having a heart moved with compassion" we decide how to address the need the heart has felt. In a world of structural sin where political and economic systems function to benefit those with power and wealth, immense harm is done to the majority of people. Mercy takes us to the root causes of suffering and injustice, to the works of justice.

No interpretation of Jesus' parables can be made with absolute certainty because parables are not stories with neat, tidy answers. They are ambiguous and unpredictable, inviting the hearer to discover the reign of God. New Testament scholar, Douglas Oakman, suggests this parable is not about neighbourliness but what the kingdom is like, implying that the reign of God is found in unlikely and even immoral places. It is a parable of reversal. The lawyer to whom Jesus told the parable could not cope with where he found mercy. Instead of answering with the term Samaritan, he answers Jesus saying: "the one who showed mercy."

In Van Gogh's painting we see a portrayal of the giving and receiving of mercy. The two characters wear the same colour trousers, similar coloured head bands and one is losing his sandals to be bare-footed like the other. They show one act in "the great river of mercy which wells up and overflows unceasingly . . . from the heart of the Trinity, from the depths of the mystery of God" (Pope Francis, *Misericordia Vultus*, par 25). How might we give and receive justice and mercy in solidarity with those wounded by our political and economic systems? ■

Kathleen Rushton RSM tends her vegetable garden, walks in the hope her feet will allow her to tramp again and delights in learning about Scripture.

a GEN-Y perspective

Health, Housing and our New Zealand Community

While the Auckland housing crisis is certainly not a new issue in the New Zealand media, concern has hit an all-time high with the recent revelations of the numbers of people being forced to live in cars for lack of housing options in urban Auckland. We have seen on our screens mothers with new-born babies and families with children without homes.

Our government is denying that a crisis exists. The recent announcement by Social Housing Minister, Paula Bennett, that the homeless in Auckland will be offered $5000 to move to other areas of the country is a badly thought up band-aid solution. There are more questions that spring from this announcement than answers. What exactly are these people supposed to do once they get to their chosen destination? The rest of New Zealand is not exactly known for its wealth of employment opportunities — especially in small towns. The idea of displacing potentially vulnerable people for a meagre sum, ($5000 doesn't go far once you take into account moving costs, rental bond, new school uniforms and so forth), is really disappointing. It shows the lack of a long-term solution to the housing problem in Auckland. And moving our poor and vulnerable people out of Auckland is reinforcing the idea that Auckland is where only rich New Zealanders can live.

This option is not only short-sighted, it demonstrates the lack of understanding of the nuanced causes of homelessness. There are often barriers — such as limited language skills, undiagnosed mental health conditions and past criminal convictions — which prevent people from accessing housing. These barriers can make the application process for accommodation near impossible for some.

I work for an organisation that approaches problems using an holistic health model called *Te Whare Tapa Wha*. This model has been recognised by the Ministry of Health and is used around Aotearoa. Instead of seeing physical wellness as the core component of health, *Te Whare Tapa Wha* considers *Taha Tinana* (physical health), *Taha Hinengaro* (mentality), *Taha Wairua* (spirituality) and *Taha Whanau* (family health) to be of equal importance in the overall wellness of an individual and the community.

As I reflect on the housing problem, it seems to me that the wider government sees these health areas in silos. A pertinent example is the priority given to addressing rheumatic fever in New Zealand. It has gained increased funding and a comprehensive awareness campaign. This is undoubtedly a positive move and one that has had significant success. Rheumatic fever adversely affects Maori and Pacific people and can affect heart health if left untreated. So while there have been positive gains in reducing incidents of rheumatic fever there are still underlying problems. If our *rangitahi* are growing up in damp houses, garages or without permanent homes, their health will suffer and rheumatic fever will continue to loom. If we really want our precious population to be well, it is important that we consider all aspects of their health and well-being — which includes an appropriate home.

I find it powerful to think about holistic health as the foundation of society decision-making. Without our health, access to others of our basic rights becomes more complex. Our ability to make autonomous decisions, to take an active part in our communities and exercise our civil and political rights is compromised. And housing in which we can live family lives protected from the weather, from illness and overcrowding, is essential for the nation's physical, mental, spiritual and community health. We have to do better. ■

Used with the permission of Garrick Tremain.

Louise Carr-Neil, an Auckland native living in Hamilton, is passionate about gender equality and human rights. In her spare time she enjoys running and vegetarian cooking.

PUT DOWN YOUR ARMS

The Orlando mass shooting last month was the deadliest in USA history, killing 49 and wounding dozens more.

It is a tragedy in a long line of tragedies with the statistics painting a harrowing picture. According to the Gun Violence Archive in 2016 so far there have been over 6,000 gun-related deaths in the USA and a further 12,000 people injured.

Such is the extent of gun violence in the country that there is a dedicated, crowd-funded database called the *Mass Shooting Tracker* that documents every shooting event that unfolds.

I consulted the *Tracker* two days after what transpired in Orlando and had to scroll down past six more recent shootings just to find it. There were incidents recorded in Illinois, New York, California and other states in the 48 hours following Orlando.

It is an unfortunate reality that it is often only after a tragedy that we make the changes required to prevent further ones. In Australia the infamous 1996 Port Arthur massacre that killed 35 people and wounded 23 more was enough for the government to enact strict gun controls. Since those laws were implemented Australia has had just one mass shooting.

Likewise New Zealand's 1990 Aramoana massacre claiming 13 lives was the worst criminal shooting in NZ history. Consequent laws were passed after it and were tightened further following the Port Arthur bloodbath.

While each of these incidents was awful, they proved deadly enough to force us to implement the measures we needed. However it seems there is an even worse reality playing out in the USA where no matter the severity or number of shootings they experience almost routinely, change is never enacted.

Instead we witness fierce opposition to the suggestion of gun laws. This is spearheaded by the National Rifle Association (NRA) and the pro-gun lobby. Rather than seeing these deaths as a consequence of a gun-saturated society tolerating frequent mass shootings, they misuse the deaths to scaremonger among the American public and insist it is proof that people need even more guns to protect themselves.

The gun-control argument has become a partisan feud devoid of the sense of duty to do better by the American people. Instead we witness an almost fanatical opposition to any suggestion of gun control. We see those who are pro-gun frothing at the bit, proclaiming gun control would be an infringement of their liberties and their right to protect themselves.

Conservatives are quick to draw a dividing line between a gun-problem that they deny and a terrorism problem that they believe in. We heard that in the debate surrounding the Orlando shooting and indeed of many other shootings. The majority of gun deaths in the USA are unrelated to terrorism and the number of gun-deaths far outweighs those caused by terrorism.

Even so opponents to gun-control decry terrorism, instead of guns. According to the Global Terrorism Database 85 per cent of those killed by terrorists in the USA were killed by shooting. So guns and terrorism are inextricably linked and the number of shooting deaths over and above terrorism is enormous.

These partisan arguments seem to dominate discussions that would be better directed at deciding on suitable measures to prevent future tragedies. For example, conducting thorough background checks on all gun purchasers and denying the sale of guns to anyone with a criminal record or considered a potential threat could be a start. The AR-15 assault rifle used by Mateen in Orlando and by other mass-shooters could be banned again, as it was in 1994.

Rather than draw political party lines in the discussion that the Orlando tragedy has produced, it would better serve the American public to focus on practical, proven methods to protect citizens and communities from the gun-violence endemic in the nation.

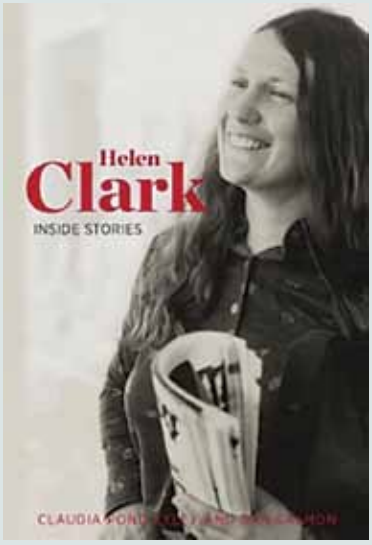
Hopefully the Orlando shooting will serve as the final straw and will result in the introduction of measures to protect the public from the anathema of shooting tragedies. We learned this in Australia and New Zealand. ■

Photo: Guns for sale at a Houston gun show. [Wikipedia]

Jack Derwin is a student, writer and journalist. He looks forward to the day he isn't broke because of that status.

Helen Clark: Inside Stories

by Claudia Pond Eyley and Dan Salmon
Published by Auckland University Press, 2015
Reviewed by Merata Snedden



Helen Clark: Inside Stories is a conversation with and about one of New Zealand's most influential, and at times, controversial political leaders. The book is a compilation of transcripts from interviews conducted by Claudia Pond Eyley and Dan Salmon for their 2013 documentary. At the time the documentary was completed, many of the interviews now included in the book, ended up on the cutting room floor.

For a long time Helen Clark has been a woman that I admire. I came into political consciousness while she was leader of the opposition and subsequently the prime minister. So the opportunity that this book promised, to get an inside look, was an exciting prospect.

Inside Stories does indeed give an inside look into Clark's life and experience. While Clark is undoubtedly the protagonist, her story also serves as a thread tying together themes and events in such a way that it becomes an intimate discussion of the political history of New Zealand. It provides insights from political players across the spectrum and an examination of the consequences of choosing a public life.

Each chapter focuses on a period in time or a theme and pulls together opinions and impressions from those who were in the thick of it or observing from across the parliamentary chamber.

It is a book you can read a section at a time and easily come back to. My only gripe is that at times the narrative jumps around. Just as you are getting into some deep analysis of one issue the chapter ends or changes tack, leaving the reader feeling slightly dissatisfied. In part this is due to the nature of transcripts. While you are certainly guided by the suggestions of the editors, *Inside Stories* is refreshing in that the reader is left to draw their own conclusions — no mean feat for a political biography.

Helen Clark: Inside Stories serves as a testament to the passion, dedication and at times sheer bloody-mindedness of one of New Zealand's most adept political operators. As she stands on the verge of being appointed to one of the most influential political positions ever held by a New Zealander, there is never a better time to get to know some of Helen Clark's inside stories. ■

People of the Light

CD by Jonathan Berkahn
Festivity Productions
Reviewed by Jill McLoughlin

People of the Light, composed and directed by Jonathan Berkahn of the Wellington Festival Singers, is worth listening to. The compositions follow the Church Year from Advent through to Christmas, through Passiontide and Easter and beyond. They feature both soloists and choir accompanied by a variety of instrumental musical styles. Some are reminiscent of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Jesus Christ, Superstar.*

As I listened to the songs, I found myself drawn to particular pieces, for example, the Advent Introit, *Blessed is He*. Its spirited rhythms were appealing and encouraged instant participation. In contrast, the gentle *God is With Us* calls for reflective listening with the reminder of God's constant presence. The *Finale* is very beautiful with the lyrics and music expertly woven into an instrumental Scandinavian dance melody. The CD offers an eclectic mix of musical styles and this would appeal to those who enjoy such variety.

The core of the CD is *The Third Day* — a resurrection cantata with twelve sections. Berkahn skilfully combines melodies and sacred text to tell the Easter story from the days of the Triduum through to Christ's appearance in the locked room. Each piece reflects the mood of the moment drawing the listener closely into the experience.

There are a number of solo pieces but I preferred listening to the choral music with its rich harmonies and warm tones. *Early in the Morning* and *Did you Hear the Angels?* are good examples of this. The selection of Celtic instrumental pieces following The *Third Day* was refreshing and uplifting.

While I would suggest that this CD is suitable for listening to, there are a number of songs which could be used for singing along to at liturgical celebrations. It should be noted that some of the God language is not inclusive. Having listened to *People of the Light* several times I appreciate Berkahn's hope that the tunes on this CD will "speak to any who will hear them". I believe they will. ■

Walking the Camino – Six Ways to Santiago

Directed by Lydia Smith
Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

This is a wonderful film. Although unpretentious in its documentary style, it gets to grips with some profound issues—perhaps the most important questions that people face on the personal, everyday level. Best of all, it presents us with a group of ordinary folk who ask the same questions, experience the same struggles and hold the same aspirations as ourselves.

In the film, we accompany several loose groups of pilgrims as they walk the 800km Camino across northern Spain to Santiago de Compostela. We become immersed in their lives, experiencing the hardships and joys of life on the trail, and listening to them as they tell of the ways in which this journey is changing their lives. Their motivations are mixed—albeit very different from their medieval predecessors, some of whom undertook the pilgrimage as an alternative to a prison sentence or as proxy for a wealthy patron.

Tatiana, a young Frenchwoman, is alone among our pilgrims in professing explicitly Christian motives. She walks with her brother, Alex, and toddler Cyprian, pushing him the length of the trail in a buggy! Young Tomás from Portugal falls in with a group of boisterous young men his own age and has a ball. Annie, an American woman in her late 40s, suffers from leg problems and struggles through the pain barrier, but is determined to finish. There are two elderly Canadians, Jack (a recent widower) and Wayne, who cement their lifelong friendship on the trail. Sam, a young Englishwoman with Brazilian connections, has come because her life is falling apart; for her the walk is therapy. Finally, Misa (Denmark) and William (Canada) begin the walk as strangers and end up as a couple.

We share life on the trail with these folk, experiencing the pain of constant blisters, the smell of unwashed bodies and the crowded dormitories full of snoring pilgrims. In the hostels or *refugios*, a dedicated band of *hospitaleros* invite their weary guests to share a common meal "as if you were one family." Here, a simple footwashing ceremony has practical as well as spiritual significance; like so much about this film, it is authentically sacramental.

Perhaps the chief life lesson the Camino has to teach is about letting go, shedding some of the baggage we carry. Wayne expresses wonder that the trail requires so little: "You pack up everything you have and carry it on your back". And Misa feels a sense of release and freedom after exchanging her bulky tramping pack for a day pack. This necessary process is made visible at the highest point on the trail where pilgrims are encouraged to leave a small token behind: the result is a small mountain of symbolic stones.

If the Camino is about shedding possessions, it is also about people, pain (and overcoming it) and the possibilities for change. As one pilgrim reflects, "it doesn't end, because you take the Camino with you". ■

CROSSCURRENTS

Jim Elliston

Headless Chooks

For seven years the New Zealand National Government has been cutting fat from our state institutions. Now the institutions are starving. Extra funding is needed to reinvigorate them and to cope with our growing population. National's imprudent tax cuts on taking office have exacerbated the problem.

One economic commentator described Bill English as a personal trainer who makes us sweat for our own good and John Key as a pastry cook who entices us with promises of goodies. There are no crises now and billions in tax cuts are just around the corner. Cabinet ministers are scrambling to shore up defences. An election looms. Tax cuts anyone?

Work and Unemployment

A hospital orderly recently told me his phone app showed he walked about 15 kms daily. He is employed in a low-paid job but he is among the lucky ones and doesn't sleep in a garage along with his family.

I remember discussing with colleagues in 1973 the "serious problem" of growing unemployment—the number at that time was 3,000!

Revolt against the Gap

The thought of "President" Donald Trump fills me with horror. But inadvertently he has assisted in triggering a revolt against the domination by Republican Party insiders responsible for disenfranchising the poor and lower-middle classes since the time of Reagan. The deregulation of financial institutions and the adoption of "the market knows best" idiocy greatly accelerated the gap between rich and poor. Bernie Sanders has had a similar effect on the Democratic Party's imbalance. His quixotic tilting at the hierarchic windmill was to moderate Hillary Clinton's policies. Her policies are not all that appealing either. The "great American dream" is an illusion.

This US revolt against the bias towards those better off seems to be occurring in some European countries too.

Leadership Valuing Workers

"At a time when career politicians are held in such contempt, Pope Francis is offering a master-class in leadership," wrote UK Labour Party member, Maurice Glasman, in April 2015.

He explained how Francis, as Archbishop of Buenos Aires, experienced the calamitous effects—social and institutional breakdown—of the US-led free-market economics in Argentina.

Francis makes frequent references to workers in his teaching on social justice. Glasman said: "For he still maintains a theory of labour value, that workers have value and generate value, and that one of the fundamental problems with the present system is that they are denied recognition as creators and partners in the economic system.

"Europe has been dominated by the free movement of money and labour, along with the intellectual and political domination of neo-liberalism . . . The Pope is unusual because he articulates a constructive alternative that is for private property but against financial centralization." He stresses vocation, virtue and value unlike monetarists, Keynesians and Marxists.

"It turned out that Catholic social thought . . . contained a more rational and apposite political economy than that of its secular rivals. In this, the Pope is as conservative as he is radical."

Happy "Error"

Pope John XXIII was advised to replace his personal secretary "as he was too frail". He didn't. Cardinal Loreto Capovilla died in May 2016 aged 100. ■

TUI MOTU InterIslands
The Independent Catholic Magazine Limited

Tui Motu – InterIslands is an independent, Catholic, monthly magazine. It invites its readers to question, challenge, and contribute to its discussion of spiritual, social and ecological issues in the light of gospel values, and in the interests of a more just and peaceful society. Inter-church and inter-faith dialogue is welcomed.

The name *Tui Motu* was given by Pa Henare Tate. It literally means "stitching the islands together...", bringing the different races and peoples and faiths together to create one Pacific people of God. Divergence of opinion is expected and will normally be published, although that does not necessarily imply editorial commitment to the viewpoint expressed.

ISSM 1174-8931
Issue number 206

Address:
Independent Catholic Magazine Ltd,
52 Union Street, Dunedin North, 9054
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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.

We do not publish anonymous letters except in exceptional circumstances.

COMMISSION ON WOMEN DEACONS TIMELY

Ann Gilroy's article on Pope Francis's Commission on Women Deacons made very good sense (*TM* June 2015).

It seems ridiculous in this age that women are not given more responsibility in our Church. Look at some recent newspaper reports that show where women are taking responsibility! Seventy-five years since the first women were accepted for training as police officers in NZ.

Two women featured in *Forbes* magazine as being among the 100 most powerful women in the world.

Helen Clark, former Prime Minister of NZ, is campaigning to be the United Nations Secretary-General.

Hillary Clinton is seeking, and is given a very good chance, to be elected President of the USA.

The Commission of Pope Francis is a very timely move for this Church of ours.

Barry Smyth, Whangarei

BURYING OUR DEAD

Thank you for the extensive coverage on burying the dead in the *TM* April issue. The feature on the funeral director could perhaps have been balanced by noting a growing interest among families who wish to arrange funerals themselves and by-pass the expensive funeral industry.

With so much discussion these days about poverty and families sorely in debt, some funeral directors engage in price gouging. The cost of a whole funeral is typically over $6,000. A number of funeral firms are foreign-owned companies here to make a buck. A grieving family is vulnerable and I have known several stories of families still paying off their grandmother's funeral debt years after the funeral.

But the main benefit of a DIY funeral is the active participation in "burying the dead". Our grieving is processed through the act of caring and burying of our loved one. Why should we assume that it is "normal" now to contract out this essential family process?

Of course not all funeral directors are sharks and not all families are up to the task of arranging funerals themselves. But perhaps we could one day see the DIY funeral as the norm rather than the unusual?

Forrest Chambers, Otaki (Abridged)

OBAMA THE REALIST?

Jim Elliston's article *Obama the Realist* (*TM* June 2016) implies that the USA and thus the "free world" under Obama was now in safe, reasoned, sophisticated, sane hands. The article provided no specific examples to verify this appraisal.

Other writers point to examples showing that Obama, for all his rhetoric about the primacy of international and constitutional law, has been far more dangerous to international peace than even his predecessors.

John Pilger said: "In 2009 Obama promised to help 'rid the world of nuclear weapons' and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize." Yet, "no American president has built more nuclear warheads than Obama ... One of the more violent presidents, Obama gave full reign to the Pentagon war-making apparatus of his discredited predecessor. He prosecuted more whistle-blowers, truth-tellers, than any president. Today Obama runs an unprecedented worldwide campaign of terrorism and murder by drone."

Glenn Greenwald in *The Assassination Complex*, said that "before becoming president, Obama opposed not providing suspected terrorists the due process of judicial review. But since he has expanded drone warfare, predominantly on Muslim countries. He has given himself 'the unilateral, unrestrained, unchecked power to decide, without a whiff of due process, who is a terrorist and who should die'."

Both writers fear that Obama has made the possibility of everlasting war a distinct and frightening likelihood. Realism? What does that mean?

Lois Griffiths, Christchurch (Abridged)

CONFUSION

I find Jim Elliston's piece on *Obama the Realist* confusing *(Crosscurrents TM* June 2016). The ideas expressed seem to me to be utterly sensible. Is Jim saying the President is opposed to these ideas? If so, that is the opposite of what we expect of Barak Obama.

Jacqueline Wood, Dunedin

Looking **OUT** *and* **IN**

"Later that evening the clouds parted and we scrambled out of the tent. Suddenly we could see all around us. There was golden sunlight on the snow, the big peak at our backs and it was all so huge and all so beautiful. We both just stood there for a long time. Then we turned around and looked up at the peak behind us, making our plans for climbing the next day." Gunnar took a slow sip of coffee and paused, savouring its strong yet slightly bitter flavour.

Gunnar and Eva were my parents' friends who had also lived and worked in Nepal and I had the opportunity to meet up with them this month. At the airport we recognised one another immediately even after 30 years. Drinking coffee in a back garden we were piecing together the story of my father's final mountain trip 35 years ago.

Gunnar continued: "On our way up to the mountain Brian had stopped and talked with the boys in the tea shop for a long time. He was always so interested in the stories of new people. That was one thing about Brian. Even when he was really busy with his school principal position or choir conducting, he somehow found time to talk to others.

"That Monday evening in the tent we talked for hours and hours. With thick mist outside there was nothing else to do. Of course we talked about the leadership in our mission organisation and about ways we could support the Church in Nepal. The politics and security situation was quite tense at that time. And then we got onto stories of our courtships with our wives. That was a really tender part of the conversation."

These were just morsels of information and I felt grateful for these jigsaw pieces falling into holes in my life story.

I told Gunnar and Eva how that Himalayan climbing adventure exploded into my 11-year-old boarding school world, warping time and throwing my life into chaos.

"I was in my dormitory at boarding school in South India early one evening after school. The dorm matron found me and asked me to follow her immediately to her room. As I walked down the dark corridor I searched my conscience, wondering what I had done to merit this urgent call. No other classmates had been called to her room like this. Miss Barton stood by the window heating Bournvita and milk in a pot over the gas stove and then abruptly said: "A telegram has come with bad news for you".

I blurted out: "Is it my Nana Wood? I know she's been quite unwell."

"No, it's not about your grandmother. Your father has been killed mountain climbing in Nepal. The search party couldn't find his body. His climbing friend Gunnar managed to get out alive."

The next hours, days and weeks were a tangle of tears, chaos, turmoil, sadness and confusion—packing up my boarding school bags, travelling to Nepal, crying and crying with my grieving mother and three younger sisters, packing up our home in Nepal.

Our father-less family returned to New Zealand and started anew in Putaruru with my grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins, all as kind and loving and welcoming and understanding as possibly could be. But without my Dad.

This last month there have been multiple reminders and opportunities to talk about Dad. My wonderful mother, Beulah Wood, stayed a couple of weeks with us in Mussoorie and we both welcomed the chance to talk about Brian Wood, my Dad, gone so long and yet still pivotal in our lives. We remembered quietly what would have been his 76th birthday.

Grieving my father's death will continue my whole life. So too will finding pieces of who he was and fitting it all into who I am and who I am becoming.

Gunnar continued re-telling the story of their Himalayan summit that October day: pumping a kerosene primus at breakfast, the route-finding challenges, photos on top, the critical decisions in the falling snow and mist, the final fall.

How I wish Dad could have known my husband, my children, my love of God, my joy in singing Bach and Handel and how mountains are folded into my story too. Maybe he does. This month he has felt closer than he has for a long time.

Gunnar stopped, poured more coffee into my cup, then continued: "And toward the end of that last night in the tent Brian started talking about his four daughters. He was so proud of each of you. I remember him saying how tenacious you were at trekking." ■

Kaaren Mathias lives in north India and works in community mental health in Uttarakhand state and for the NGO, Emmanuel Hospital Association.

Bless us with homes
Birds with nests
Rabbits with burrows
Whales with the deep
Cattle with hedges

Frogs with marshes
Ferns with tree cover
And people with a safe
place to lay our heads
Gracious God

From the Tui Motu *team*