Tui Motu

InterIslands

monthly independent Catholic magazine
July 2015 | $7

Homes for All
The Wisdom Years
Feeding the Multitudes

vision and heart for change

You'll find two themes, one urgent and the other slow-cooking, among other treasures in this month's issue. They're coming on the slipstream of Pope Francis's new encyclical, *Praised be — On the Care of our Common Home.* Pope Francis heralds the reality of God's mission blossoming in the communion of creation. He reminds us that however we live, breathe and have our being we are affecting God's creativity in the world. Francis is not backward in naming the areas of our sin against the care of creation. Nor is he short on practical advice. And he knows that the Church does not have the answers to the big ecological issues we face. He insists on an all-in-together endeavour — scientists, politicians, businesses, mums, dads, kids and grans, imams, rabbis and bishops, asylum seekers and landlords, faithful and atheists — humbly sharing vision, information, expertise, resources, decisions and actions for the sake of our common home. He takes a wholistic view and addresses equally everyone in our world. Our themes, while not coming directly from the encyclical, nevertheless present two important areas affecting communion in creation.

Our urgent theme is the issue of suitable family housing. Our writers endeavour to engage our imaginations in outlining the present reality with ideas of what could be. In a witty flourish cartoonist Tremain exposes the ridiculous and dreadful inequality among families trying to find an affordable home. Alan Johnson reminds us of the value of neighbourliness. The gospel stories of homelessness and asylum-seeking in Jesus' life in Bethlehem and Egypt he suggests, mirror the stories of contemporary families in our cities. Patrick Snedden, doing the sums according to our current economic model, shows how most families fail the home ownership test. In the first of his two-part series he hints at a radical value-based approach to home owning. Three other articles give first-hand stories of families struggling with desperation, exhaustion and poverty — and then their resilience when bolstered by a supportive hand. These portraits show that the current reality isn't enthroned in concrete — we have a vision and a heart for change.

Our slow-cooking theme offers tastings of spirituality from the pot of wisdom reduced over a life-time to succulence and bursting with beauty, fervour and flavour. Ann Zubrick writes of the inspiration of her friend's unofficial ministry in her care-home. Mary Englebrecht shares her experience of depths and delights, despite the limitations of her late eighties. Joy Cowley stacks aspects of wisdom like pikelets drizzled with the clarity of reflection. They intimate the ingredients of spirituality — experience mined by reflection, doubt warmed in revelation, irritablity honed to tolerance, self-absorption melted in hospitality, dogmatism transformed in faith, judgementalism softened into acceptance, busyness stilled in contemplation, competition faded into contentment — all marinated and baked in love.

We are grateful for the contributions of all our writers and artists in this issue. It is magical to see their work coming together as the July issue. And as is our custom, the final word is of blessing. ■

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Cover illustration: Fiona Whyte "Morning on Upper Queen Street". http://fionawhyte.co.nz/

Her current project Beetle Bottoms http://www.beetlebottoms.com/. Fiona's art is available through www prints.co.nz and www.imagevault.co.nz.

keeping churches accessible

Rosalie Sugrue

Everyone likes to think their church is a welcoming place. For many committed parishioners their church is a second home. They feel comfortable in the building they know and love and they welcome visitors as family guests. Church is one of the few places in our society where everyone is welcome from the cradle to the grave. Most church communities believe this as a fact. But is it? Cradle to the grave, yes, but what about pram to walking frame?

Most able-bodied people give little thought to the limitations imposed by impairment until they experience it for themselves or in someone they are close to. Although most church groups claim their community is more important than their building, in reality the building defines who can feel comfortable in their community. Impairment is not confined to physical and mental disability. Any adult with an infant in a pram or buggy is impeded by entrance steps and a lack of child-friendly spaces. Wheelchairs and walking frames also have space needs, but if the building lacks a flat entrance or is accessed by a too steep ramp or path, users of these tools won't be able to make it inside.

The NZ Human Rights Act of 1993 clearly identifies disability as a prohibited ground of discrimination. While most public buildings take this injunction seriously many churches do not. Inaccessible toilets are a major problem. In older buildings toilets tended to be cramped rooms tucked away around narrow corners or up steps. Not only are such toilets impossible for wheelchair users they are also impossible for elderly women and men who need a handrail. Most elderly people do not like drawing attention to their frailties, and younger people with physical problems can be even more embarrassed. Diminishing mobility, sight and hearing are obstacles to social participation and this includes worship. This also applies to a range of hidden disabilities. Affected people simply stop attending unless their parish shows sensitive understanding teamed with practical application.

The Disability, Spirituality and Faith Network (DSFN) based in Wellington has produced the fruits of their experience and research in a resource book, *Creating Welcome Churches* (see book review p. 28). All DSFN members live with a disability or experience disability through a family member so they know what they are talking about. It's timely for church communities to do a stocktake of their accessibility — even for the fact that many more members in our communities are aging. We know that everyone who approaches church wants to feel welcome and be able to participate. ■

Tui Motu InterIslands

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Tui Motu – InterIslands is an independent, Catholic, monthly magazine. It invites its readers to question, challenge and contribute to its discussion of spiritual and social 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.

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other faiths not for me

I bought a copy after Mass of the June journal but won't buy again.

A Catholic Magazine and it was filled with articles about the joy of other faiths — Hindu, Islam, Buddhism — so nicely written one would be tempted to waft off and explore same— unless one was comfortable in Catholicism. It is OK for these people to love their faith but we are blessed to have a scriptural base and John 3:18 would suggest their faith is not a redeeming one. Why promote them in a Catholic journal?

I believe there are many areas in our own faith that need to be explored.

If our own faith is strong, we should be loving these people of different faiths without question but personally I don't really want to know details of how people worship their many deities. We need to promote faith in Jesus Christ.

Val Southcombe

thanks for good reading

I have recently subscribed to your magazine and must say it is fantastic! Thank you for such informative, up to date and interesting articles. With a grateful heart.

Mary McDonnell, *Sydney*

bethlehem and east jerusalem are in palestine

I read the advertisement "See the Holy Land" in the June issue. It details a pilgrimage to sites in Jordan and Israel. Bethlehem and Jerusalem are listed as being in Israel. There is no mention of Palestine. As a member of the Palestine Human Rights Campaign I am very aware of such errors which are common but which are often unchallenged.

Bethlehem is located in the West Bank, and like East Jerusalem is illegally occupied by Israel. Israel occupied the territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967 and has controlled them since. In 1980 Israel officially absorbed East Jerusalem. The inclusion was condemned internationally and declared "null and void" by the United Nations Security Council. The international community regard East Jerusalem as part of the West Bank, and consequently a part of the Palestinian territories.

The term "Palestinian Territory, Occupied" used by the UN and other international organizations between 1998 and 2013 in order to refer to the Palestinian National Authority, was replaced by the UN in 2013 by the term "State of Palestine".

It is particularly disappointing that the misinformation is contained in the June issue when an article highlighting the noble work of George Abdo, a Palestinian Christian, correctly described him as a resident of Bethlehem, Palestine.

Janfrie Wakim. *Auckland* (abridged)

response: yes you are right

You are of course correct: the advertisement should have referred to Palestine and I will make this change in future advertising.

However, I would like to assure you that on our pilgrimages we make sure that our pilgrims are exposed to the reality of the situation of the Palestinian people, for example through visiting Bethlehem University and hearing from the Palestinian students, both Christian and Muslim. We also use Palestinian guides and drivers (Muslim and Christian).

We frequently find that pilgrims who begin their journey with a rosy-tinted view of the state of Israel have their eyes opened and their minds changed along the way.

Pat McCarthy, *Auckland*

a view of a point

In June's *Tui Motu*, Robert Consedine, writing about Pope Francis, quotes Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister: "We are currently living at a crossover moment in time. Whatever has been considered true, up to this time, will not be considered true after this time." Really? The Resurrection – not true? Jesus as God Incarnate – not true? Again, he quotes the World Council of Churches: "the world sets the agenda for the church."

Really? Jesus specifically tells us his Kingdom is not of this world, he has overcome the world, and that the devil is the prince of this world. God forbid that the world should ever set the agenda for the Roman Catholic Church.

Felix Daniher, *Omokoroa*

☞ letters to the editor

We welcome comment, discussion, argument, debate but please keep letters under 200 words. The editor reserves the right to abridge, while not changing the meaning.
We do not publish anonymous letters except in exceptional circumstances. Response articles (up to a page) are welcome — but please, by negotiation.

Notice

Books for Review

- *Tui Motu* often receives books for review so we need reviewers.
- We will send the book titles periodically to those on our email list.
- If you would like to review one, please email or ring the editor.
- You may keep the book after reviewing it.

the budget – too little

Gillian Bremner

Like other Churches, Presbyterian Support Otago has been concerned for the poor from our early beginnings. After the Ruth Richardson benefit cuts in 1991 (which created a gap between the benefit and the minimum wage) we established a food bank in Dunedin never expecting it to become a core activity as it is now. Currently we give out 9000 food items per month to families who come to us for help. Some need short term relief, but many need longer term support, budget advice, advocacy re entitlements and debt repayments. We notice how close they are to anxiety and despair and other centres around the country report similar experiences.

The *Voices of Poverty Report* (2011) gave examples of social exclusion due to poverty. It spoke of children's birthday party invites turned down because a family couldn't afford the present let alone a reciprocal party for their child. The potluck dinner at the end of a course not attended as the student had no food to contribute. Homes where tomato sauce is a luxury and where a mother nearly chastises her son for drinking the last milk in the house.

So what will this budget's extra $25 per week achieve? Maybe petrol in the car, the electricity bill covered — but there's no relief till next April. A Ministry of Social Development report showed that 19 per cent of children live in households that are in debt — just to cover the basics. Going forward, the extra $25 may mean fewer people get into debt but it doesn't deal with today's debt. Professor Jonathan Boston, Personal Chair in Public Policy at the School of Government, Victoria University, estimated that the increase needs to be between $100-200 per week to allow families to recover from debt.

True, the Finance Minister, Bill English, acknowledged that the gap between those on a benefit and those on the minimum wage is too great. We might be distracted by his compassionate sounding acknowledgement — but $25 doesn't solve the problem. The $25 per week increase from April 2016 in no way catches up on the 20 per cent benefit cuts of 1991. And in the meantime increases in the minimum wage of the last few years have widened the gap further.

The devil is always in the detail.

For example, the $25 will abate against other additional support, including accommodation supplements and special benefits and could be reduced to $17 per week. As well there is the additional requirement for a parent on a benefit to work when the youngest child turns three years old — down from five years. We know the barriers for parents to work. There's the availability of work and hours that will suit childcare. There's the cost and availability of transport, the cost of childcare and then time off when children are ill.

Will the family be better off? We're not optimistic. We have numerous stories of the stress for a sole parent that goes with managing a household, childcare and work.

We know that training and work are the best ways out of poverty. However there needs to be a reality about the challenges and barriers that have to be overcome for families to achieve them. Blanket policies need discretion for those for whom it is counter productive in their given circumstances.

For older New Zealanders, National Superannuation is pegged to 66 per cent of the average wage. Surely other benefits — and especially those for our youngest New Zealanders — need a similar approach to be aligned with the purchasing power of others.

This budget feels like a long car journey where the kids begin saying five minutes after the start: "Are we there yet?" Far from compassion this budget shows we have a long way to go before the poor can stop begging at food banks and we have in place a robust welfare system for the most vulnerable. ■

Gillian Bremner is the CEO of Presbyterian Support Otago.

making room for families

Being a good neighbour is a Christian imperative and Alan Johnson suggests that our neighbourliness today needs to take on the housing crisis in our country.

Alan Johnson

After telling the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus asked his questioner: "Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The man replied: "The one who had mercy." And to this Jesus instructed him: "Go and do likewise."

In this instruction Jesus has intertwined the ideas of neighbour with those of mercy and justice and so has given us a clear direction on the regard we should have for our neighbours and fellow citizens.

Mother Theresa said that "We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our own homes to remedy this kind of poverty."

She is of course fundamentally right in that poverty is a consequence of indifference and literally of the poor not being loved.

how can we bring change?

But as citizens, neighbours and Christians we often feel quite powerless to do anything meaningful about the social injustices we see in our own country and elsewhere in the world. We can become knowledgeable and aware of injustices and share some of the good fortune we enjoy through works of charity. But these responses seem to do little to change the political and economic structures which created and perpetuate these injustices.

Many of us yearn to be able to contribute to significant and substantial social change but feel that we lack the means to make this contribution. This lack of means might be a feeling that we don't have the necessary skills or sufficient resources and the relevant opportunities to make a difference. This might be true for us as individuals but is probably not so as a collective. As American cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

> The Christian narrative begins with a homeless child so it is perhaps not difficult to argue that homelessness, and especially the homelessness of children, is a central concern for Christians.

Such an idea requires us as Christians to act more faithfully. Not only to believe that when we gather in his name Jesus will be with us but also believe that through such communion we can achieve exceptional things.

And we need to achieve exceptional things in order to address the growing problems of homelessness and injustice around housing here in New Zealand. The housing problem is not one but several and the causes as well as the solutions are multiple.

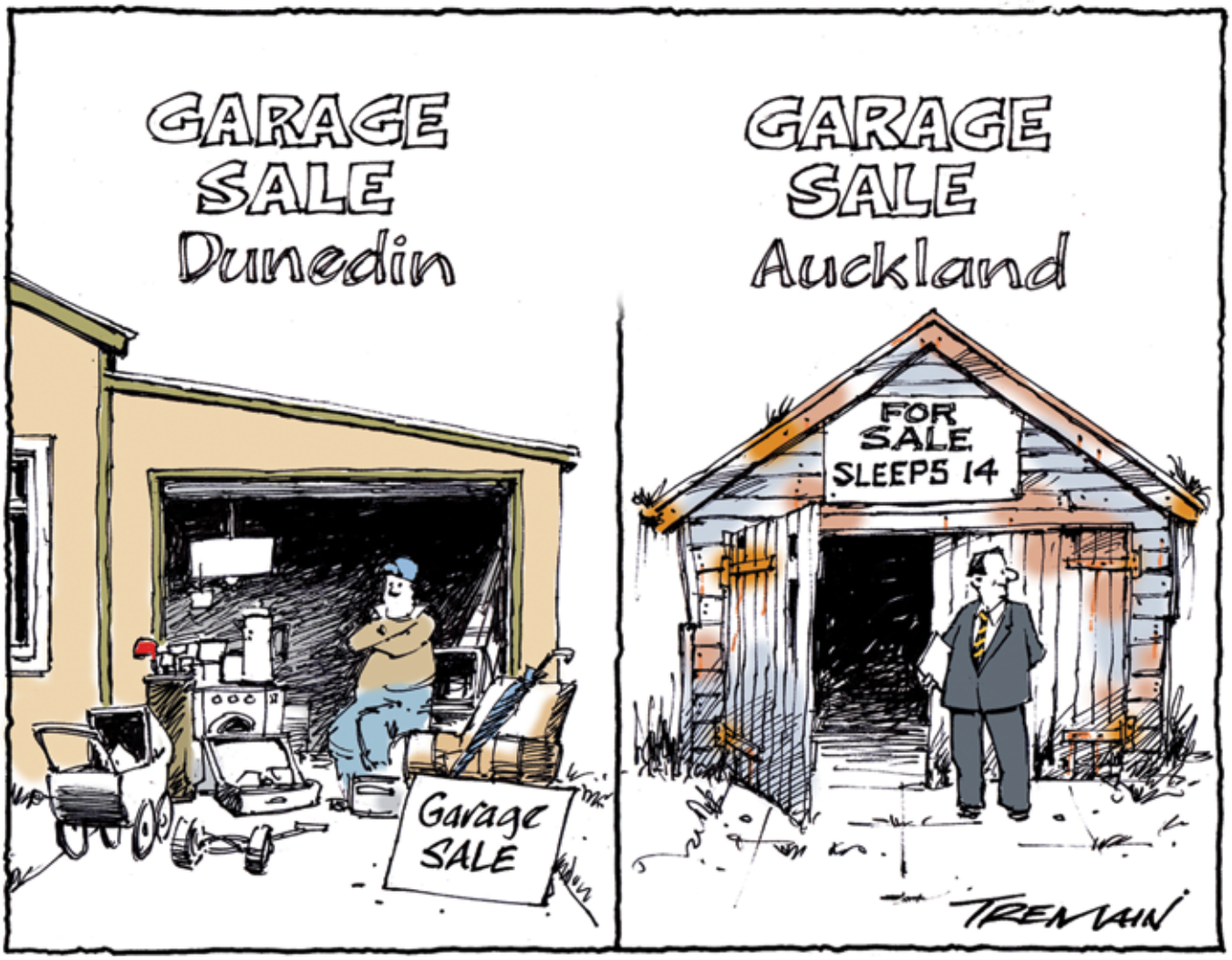
auckland and christchurch

For example we have a chronic and by all accounts worsening shortage of affordable housing in Auckland where population growth is outstripping house building. This in turn is forcing up house prices and rents. During 2014 Auckland's population grew by around 36,000 people yet there were only 8,000 houses built when perhaps as many as 12,000 should have been built. The shortfall in new house building required to keep pace with population growth in Auckland over the past five years probably exceeds 12,000 — far more than the 8,000 to 9,000 homes destroyed in the Christchurch earthquakes. As a consequence house prices have continued to rise. It now requires 12 years at the average wage to purchase the median priced house in Auckland whereas 10 years ago it was fewer than nine years.

The Christchurch rebuild is quickly replacing the number of houses lost in the earthquakes of 2010 and 2011. The problem is that because of rising house building costs, as well as the local economic boom which is driven by the rebuild, the cost of new and existing housing has risen sharply. The median house price in Canterbury has risen from $310,000 immediately prior to the earthquakes, to $430,000 at the end of 2014 and from 6 years of the average wage to 7.5 years. These rises have squeezed thousands of modest income families living in the east of Christchurch — the suburbs suffering the worst damage. Very little is said about their on-going plight and that of low-income tenants who have faced rent increases of around 25 per cent since the earthquakes.

better quality housing needed

Outside of Auckland and Christchurch the housing shortage is not as serious although there will always be families and individuals struggling to find adequate and affordable housing at any time. The broader housing problem nationally



Used with permission

is that of quality and in particular the fact that much of our housing is cold, damp and poorly maintained. This is especially so of rental housing which is more likely to be occupied by low-income households and by households with children.

A further injustice is that taxpayers are paying for much of this poor quality, unhealthy housing. Each year the Government spends $1.3 billion on housing subsidies through the Accommodation Supplement and a further $700 million to pay for state housing provided through Housing New Zealand. Much of this housing is cold, damp and unhealthy as we saw in a recent coroner's report which identified poor housing as a contributing cause in the death of a South Auckland baby Emma-Lita Bourne. Her family lived in a state house.

Emma-Lita's death is a consequence of the indifference which this and previous Governments have shown in ensuring that all New Zealanders have access to decent quality affordable housing. But we elect these Governments and most of us are comfortably housed so accept the lame efforts offered by Government of a few million dollars here or there in token efforts when billions of dollars are required.

being christian neighbours

The Christian narrative begins with a homeless child — Joseph, Mary and Jesus found no room in the living spaces in Bethlehem — so it is perhaps not difficult to argue that homelessness and especially the homelessness of children is a central concern for Christians. We can respond with neighbourliness — by being more aware, or by contributing dollars and time to children's charities. Alternatively we can become more involved perhaps by aligning the resources of our Church communities to those small but active groups across New Zealand which are offering emergency housing and affordable rental and ownership housing to low income families. We can lobby the government and support initiatives that promote action for affordable housing.

Such involvement means that we move closer to the poor and the poorly housed and get to understand more of their stories and of the injustices behind these stories. This pathway will, I am sure, give us new insights and lead us to further actions which may challenge and hopefully change the quite unjust structures which lie beneath our current housing crisis. ■

Alan Johnson is a social policy analyst of The Salvation Army's Social Policy & Parliamentary Unit. He wrote the chapter on housing in the Child Poverty Action Group's report: Our children, our choice: priorities for policy.

housing by the numbers

In this first of two parts Patrick Snedden outlines the reality of our current housing situation in Auckland and suggests that tweaking policies and budgets is not enough. We need a profound disruption creating a fresh approach.

Patrick Snedden

There's a stretch of green in central Auckland that's for sale. Under the new Unitary Plan it might be possible to build 10 houses on it. Each of these houses might manage a footprint of 150 square metres. They would be two storeys high with 120 square metres of internal living area including two–three bedrooms.

$7,000,000

The cost of the land and development would be about $7million. It would house a maximum of 40 adults and children — if the plan could get off the ground in the first instance. The slimmest of profit margins would be built into the project cost to allow for anything unforeseen.

need $140,000 deposit

To finance this opportunity a prospective group of 10 first-home-owners would need to have the deposit capability in cash (or with their parents) to fund 20 per cent deposit — about $140,000 per household. That would get your potential foot in the door only.

house and land - $700,000

Given that $7 million is the cost of the whole development, the average cost per house and land package would be $700,000. The funding cost of $700,000, less the 20 per cent deposit, is about $850 per week at 6 per cent over 25 years. Today $700,000 plus is an average house purchase price in Auckland.

The weekly funding costs for the 10 houses is $8,500. With a maximum of 40 people living in the houses this amounts, at least, to $212 per person per week — woman, man and child.

mortgage $1135 per week

At $850 per week after tax, assuming a tax rate of 25 per cent, this means that the household must earn $1135 per week to pay the mortgage from their after-tax income. But they also need income to feed themselves and their children, to travel back and forward to work, to pay rates and insurance, to fund education and medical expenses and have some recreational spending if they could afford it.

need income of $131,000

Assume for a moment that $1135 per week household income is 45 per cent of your income which is at the high end of viability for a household but you really want to take on this challenge. Then the other 55 per cent of your income would be $1387 per week. Together the household income would be $2522 per week, or $131,000 per year.

few earn over $50,000

According to *Statistics NZ* in Auckland only one in four people aged over 15 earns $50,000 or more per year. We would need nearly three of these "high paid" adults living in the same house to fund the house cost. Only one in 12 Aucklanders could fund the purchase of an average priced house on their own, spending just 45 per cent of their total income.

Quite simply the numbers are now clear. Today three out of four adults in Auckland cannot buy an average priced house, either on their own or even in the company of two other earners.

This situation gives a massive transfer of wealth to those in the top 8 per cent of earners who can buy and those who are already housed. This transfer of wealth directly benefits the rich and the elderly at the cost to young families who remain unable to buy in the housing market.

so what is to be done?

Clearly Governments of all stripes will tread carefully. They do not wish to disrupt dramatically those who benefit by some form of direct dispossession.

our own home

Jonathan Melville

Homeless. The word might conjure up images of dirty, smelly people sleeping in alleys or under rail bridges. In reality for our family the word homeless described a gnawing knowledge that the place we currently resided in was only temporary. We always had a house to live in, we simply had no home. We rented.

As tenants we couldn't dream about developing the garden, or the children's playground or look forward to building that dream kitchen and guest room. Even more painful was watching the lion's share of our modest income evaporate in rent. Over time the dream of home

Small steps are the order of the day. Tweaks to the interest rate, new tax rules for buying and selling within short time frames are introduced, stricter lending controls are foreshadowed in the anticipation of a massive market correction. Even special housing areas are taking so long to be translated from green fields development to home ownership, that the market moves beyond reach yet again.

All this activity appears sensible on the surface but its actual effect is inconsequential. The policy settings of successive governments have facilitated the wealth transfer we experience today in Auckland and this new ownership state is now in place.

profound disruption needed

We need a profound disruption to bring a degree of equity back into the housing market. Save for a market-driven collapse of land value, (that might help significantly), we have to play the cards that are being dealt.

We have to decide if we think it is a core value of New Zealanders that an average 21st century household is capable financially of the responsibilities and benefits of home ownership.

Is home ownership for the many as important and core to us now as women getting the vote was to our sense of gender equality, as core to our sense of social decency as the introduction of social welfare, as expansive to our sense of nationhood as the creation of the Waitangi Tribunal and as economically brave as we needed to be to remove subsidy from our primary industries?

The disruption I describe must derive directly from an appeal to a value we hold dear. It must speak to us of a sense of social inclusiveness where home ownership digs down roots, grows equity and increases societal coherence. ■

Patrick Snedden is a former chair of Housing New Zealand and works as a company director in Auckland.

Devonport Houses by Raymond Jennings www.raymondjennings.com [Used with permission]

ownership slowly died.

In 2012 my Pastor asked if I had heard of Habitat for Humanity. They were building in the local area and he suggested we take a closer look at it. Contact was made and we went through the application process.

The Habitat selection committee had the task of deciding which of the 20-something families who had applied would get the next home. My wife and I waited, not daring to hope. But our children were adamant about what they thought the outcome should be. This came out in their prayers the night before the committee was due to visit with their decision: "Dear Lord, if there is a family who needs this home more than us please give it to them."

I will never forget the day members of the selection committee visited to inform us our family had been chosen. The long suppressed dream was going to become real. We were going to own a home.

The structure is fairly simple: Habitat provides a home upfront, and we purchase it at market value over a long period. Rather than a cash deposit we provide labour (sweat equity) of 500 hours. After 10 years a commercial mortgage is obtained to cover whatever is still to purchase from Habitat.

Our home was recycled from the red-zone in Christchurch and relocated to the new site. Once moved, the house was re-clad, renovated, insulated and double glazing was installed.

The best part was working alongside the teams of volunteers who donate their time to support Habitat's vision of providing safe, warm, and affordable housing. The 500 hours of sweat equity went by very quickly and the house had become a home long before we were given the keys. The last few days before the official dedication were a blur of painting, packing, planning, media interviews and disbelief that the impossible dream had come true.

The most noticeable difference is how warm it is in winter, and the children don't get sick as much. And the confidence of knowing that this is an investment we can pass on to our children.

Our four-year-old son succinctly captured it on the day we moved in. With his big brown eyes wide in wonder he looked into mine and asked:"Can really we keep this house, will this be our home?"

"Yes, Son. We are home." ■

Jonathan Melville and family live in Kaiapoi.

struggling for a home

Monte Cecilia and De Paul House are Diocesan responses to the need for emergency housing in Auckland.

David Zussman and Jan Rutledge

Many families in Auckland find themselves without a roof over their heads or a meal on their table. De Paul House (North Auckland) and Monte Cecilia Housing Trust (South & West Auckland) are two of the largest emergency housing providers. Both services endeavour to keep families together and support them to function well again. These services are key works of the Auckland Diocese and they collaborate with client referrals, staff training and information sharing.

monte cecilia housing trust

Monte Cecilia, established in 1982 by the St Vincent de Paul Society, Liston Foundation, the Sisters of Mercy and the Marist Brothers, was registered in 1989 as a Charitable trust operating under the Catholic Diocese of Auckland. Since the beginning the Trust has worked alongside over 1000 families through its emergency housing programme and assisted thousands of others to find suitable housing. Monte Cecilia's small, dedicated team works with families in south and west Auckland. They draw inspiration from each family able to move into a sustainable home. As one social worker said: "They're our *whānau*. It's life changing, transformational."

The Trust's services range from housing advice and referral, advocacy for sustainable housing, together with a limited range of housing available in Trust properties. Additionally they run a supportive housing programme based in Mangere, accommodating 12 families in a communal environment. Participation in and commitment to the programme are required. Families join the programme over a number of weeks while working toward their own sustainable housing goal.

Jainesh's story

A year ago Jainesh, his wife and three children were faced with homelessness. Although Jainesh worked on a casual contract for 40-48 hours a week his income of $500–550 per week was not enough to keep up the $450 per week he paid for their private rental. The family had to move in with relatives, the five of them sharing one bedroom. The landlord was about to serve notice for overcrowding.

A friend from church told them about Monte Cecilia Housing Trust and they phoned one of the Trust's three social workers. The family moved into the Trust's emergency housing in Mangere. There the Trust offers a 12-15 week period of safe, secure and affordable housing for 12 families, along with a programme of education and support offered by onsite staff, including a dedicated social worker.

Jainesh and his family were fortunate that Monte Cecilia had just purchased a brand new four-bedroom house in a Community Housing-led development in Waimahia (Weymouth, South Auckland). They moved into the house in April and are now paying an income related rent of $121 per week. Jainesh said: "I never dreamed I would live in a house like this. Things are still tight but our heads are above water now and I'm looking for a full-time permanent job."

Jainesh and his family are one of an increasing number of families working on low-incomes who cannot sustain private rents. The combination of low incomes and high rentals is squeezing these families out of the private rental market in Auckland. They often end up living in already overcrowded houses, boarding houses or caravan parks.

Jainesh and family in their new home.

Monte Cecilia is also a registered community housing provider and owns or manages 30 individual houses rented to families with low-incomes. Families can live in them for a short term period — from 12-36 months — while working towards sustainable housing. David Zussman, the Trust Executive said: "Monte wants to be part of the solution — every house makes a difference even though the scale of the housing challenge is so big."

de paul house

De Paul House started by the St Vincent de Paul Society of the Auckland Diocese in 1986, operates as a charitable trust. The Diocese maintains the premises and external maintenance of the buildings. Local parishes provide support including most of the 98 registered volunteers who donate time to the playgroup, the learning centre, food and furniture, clothing banks and the work of cleaning and maintaining 12 emergency residential units. De Paul House relies on the volunteers' 61.5 hrs per week to provide its breadth of services.

And these services make a difference. Since 1986, De Paul House has supported 807 families into housing. In the last three-and-a-half years 94 per cent of their families achieved and are sustaining stable housing. These families are building a future for their children based on secure housing, education and employment. The House also provides a playgroup, learning centre and transport for families in the local community who require continuing support. Last year 164 families were supported with De Paul House's community outreach programme.

"I'm afraid that's the only home we have in your price range."

Cartoon by Estelle Carol and Bob Simpson www.cartoonwork.com [Used with permission]

Kamelia's story

Kamelia and her six children moved into De Paul House in January. For three years after her relationship with the children's father had broken down, she had struggled alone to provide for her children. The family pulled together. Kamelia worked as a caregiver at night arriving home at 7.30am. The older teenagers readied the children for school and made their school lunches. Kamelia had to rely on family or friends to look after her two pre-schoolers while she slept. The family had a hard time constantly moving around family and friends. Kamelia's oldest daughter had changed schools five times in three years and had lived with extended family for long periods. Before moving into De Paul House Kamelia was paying $350 a week to live in a garage on a property shared with another family. She was also burdened with debt incurred before the relationship breakup and since, while trying to feed and clothe her family.

Kamelia is going to make it. She's resourceful, proud and a wonderful mother. The family has embraced De Paul House services including the homework club, life skills courses and budgeting. Kamelia has organised events for the other De Paul House families and has become a leader and mentor among staff and residents. Now the family is awaiting a permanent housing offer following their application to Housing New Zealand.

emergency housing services

A report by the Auckland Council based on the 2006 census estimated that over 15,000 people are severely housing-deprived in Auckland. It found 14 agencies providing emergency accommodation across Auckland for 237 individuals and 35 families. De Paul House and Monte Cecilia were providing 22 of 35 places for families — 62 per cent of the provision. In March this year there were 2537 high priority applicants on the Ministry of Social Development's social housing register.

The shortage of affordable housing coupled with limited and low-paying employment options are key in families' ability to survive. Pacific and Maori families particularly struggle to access healthy, safe and affordable housing. Our society and government can redress both these issues. While De Paul House and Monte Cecilia are offering much needed services now, surely the goal of our Church and society is to provide for and support families so that none need these places.

David Zussman is the Trust Executive of Monte Cecilia Housing Trust.

Jan Rutledge is the Manager of De Paul House.

what you do to the least

Susan Brebner and Elizabeth Sullivan volunteered at different times to work with Burmese refugee and migrant families in Thailand and Malaysia. As so often happens the experience opened their eyes to the determination and the suffering of families who are risking all for their children's futures.

Susan Brebner and Elizabeth Sullivan

These days we are inundated with televised images of floating funeral parlours, people forced to leave their homes, taking risky boat journeys across the Mediterranean or the Bay of Bengal, many dying. In March this year the *New Zealand Herald* told about men from Myanmar being sold onto fishing boats. Then in April news broke of a Russian fishing trawler sinking off the east coast of Russia killing 57 of the 132 crew with another 12 lost, presumed drowned. Forty-two of the crew were from Myanmar/Burma.

susan at marist mission in thailand

A few years ago these stories might have slipped by me but not now. This year I volunteered in Thailand with the Marist Mission in Ranong (MMR) and spent time with Burmese migrants and refugees. Ranong, a fishing port in the south-west of Thailand, is a short boat journey from the Myanmar border. It's a gritty part of Thailand with temperatures constantly over 30 degrees. It's dry for four months, rains off-and-on for four months and then rains constantly for four months.

The Ranong population is mainly Burmese economic migrants, some legal and some not, and the Thai authorities place strict conditions on them. They arrive to work in the fishing industry or the charcoal factories. They have to pay for a work permit, which can cost up to a month's salary. They also need to pay for a health card. Both cards have to be renewed and the fee paid every year. There is huge potential for extortion and some Burmese find themselves in indentured slavery. Families live in one or two-roomed homes rented from their employer. A home may be a concrete room with a tin roof. Running water and toilet facilities are shared communally. Burmese children may receive little education and many are employed from the age of 12.

> We realised that these are our brothers and sisters and we have to act.

Some Burmese workers are brought into Thailand under false pretences. We met Thida (not his real name), who thought he was going to a factory but instead was sold onto a fishing boat for years. Conditions on the boats are grim and Thida was on the boat for months at a time. He worked for up to 20 hours a day and was injected with drugs to keep him awake. He developed TB and became HIV positive from the needles used on all the crew. He is now a broken and desolate person living in slum-like conditions, barely able to care for himself.

The MMR health team visits Thida regularly, ensures that he is taking his medication correctly and goes with him for his clinic visits. The MMR team has organised special coding on prescriptions for patients who are illiterate. They hold a monthly support group to educate patients and their families.

Thida was just one of a number of people we visited among the young to middle-aged — mothers, fathers and single people. His story of being trafficked, his ill health, the conditions of his home, and his struggle to get about, are nightmarish. We have little concept of what he has endured.

MMR also runs a school for 200 Burmese from three to 33 years. The young students attend pre-school, those aged between 12-18 attend high school and the older students are involved in on-line diploma courses offered by Australia Catholic University.

Thein (not his real name) graduated this year after spending much of his life working in a charcoal factory. He taught himself English and did huge amounts of work to reach the acceptable academic standard. He cried when he was accepted into the University programme. Thein now has two jobs in Ranong — in a shop and in a restaurant — and is able to support his family to achieve a better life.

It is life-changing to see children with bodies covered in charcoal dust, living in dark, hot quarters, and engaged in dirty, dangerous and difficult work with their parents for next to nothing. It is confronting to see children unable to attend school farewelling the more fortunate ones going to school on the bus. It is challenging to be among HIV patients, one a mother giving birth to her third child. It is humbling to see the steely determination of people making a better life for themselves and their families. We realised that these are our brothers and sisters and we have to act.

Children of the Chin Learning Centre with Elizabeth Sullivan.

elizabeth in chin learning centre malaysia

I spent time with a Burmese refugee community in Malaysia and have visited since. I met an inspiring priest in the Cameron Highlands, who took me to the Highlands Chin Learning Centre, set up with the support of the United Nations, a Burmese refugee centre and the local Catholic community. I went for a holiday to this popular Highland tourist destination and ended up staying to teach for a month.

The people are from the Chin State of Myanmar/Burma. They leave because they are persecuted as Christians under the current Junta military Government. They pay a people smuggler about US$2000 each for a risky one-way trip to Malaysia. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, at the end of April 2015 there were 49,600 Chin Christians out of a total of some 152, 830 refugees and asylum seekers in Malaysia. They register with the UN, eventually receive a UN card for protection and often wait years for the chance to resettle into a third country. Malaysia is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, which means refugees there are considered to be illegal migrants. They live problematic lives and are often exploited.

Since the children are illegal migrants, they can't attend school so learning centres are essential. Parents of the Chin children usually work 10-hour days for minimal pay, six days a week on remote farms. The Learning Centre provides weekly boarding and education for up to 20 pupils and the children visit their parents on the weekend.

Teaching as a volunteer means no pay, low stress, and is extremely rewarding. Each morning I would teach English and in the afternoons, we would teach anything. I bought a big map of the world and the children and I would talk about everything under the sun.

Keeping everyone safe is paramount. Fear of authorities is very prevalent and the police routinely demand bribes. Also the Government sometimes carries out local "raids". This affects the whole community including local farmers, as workers are sometimes imprisoned for periods of time, or farmers have to pay bribes to authorities to keep their workers.

Despite the isolation and lack of material comforts, the Chin people are a strong, close community. The children are loved; they find joy in ordinary things — kicking a ball around the yard or playing with their few toys. Their faith is strong — I've never seen children pray so earnestly. At night they would all face the wall with eyes closed tightly, praying quietly in Burmese, maybe for their parents or people back home.

God is close to the Chin people and I discovered that when we are with those in poverty or difficulty, an experience of God might be revealed to us also. ■

Susan Brebner is a teacher and former Board director of Tui Motu Magazine. She is travelling with her husband Mike this year.

Elizabeth Sullivan is a teacher, poet and photographer. Her documentary "Waiting in Malaysia" https://vimeo.com/65944069 is based on the Highlands Chin Learning Centre.

living with dis-ease

Artist and graphic designer Lilly Warrenson describes the highs and lows of a young person living with chronic pain.

Lilly Warrenson

We hear the names of diseases and we make associations to them. When I was in primary school there was a teacher who had crippled hands — like a six year old would associate with a witch. She walked with a cane and was overall a little scary, even though she was a well-liked teacher. That memory came to mind when I was diagnosed with Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) and — that it was an "old people's" disease.

diagnosis

I was about 26. I say about because it was a gradual progression and I can't be actually sure when it began. It started with a sore foot. I went to a podiatrist who said I was walking funnily and strapped my foot. This gave me a couple of days' relief but then the pain occurred in my other foot! It lasted for about a year or so my sister insists, then I noticed I couldn't stop clicking my hand knuckles. I didn't tell anyone about this but did finally go to the GP and told her about my feet and then reluctantly about my hands. I think at this point I already knew. She gave me anti-inflammatory tablets and said: "If they work you have a rheumatic problem." They worked.

young among many sufferers

Jump forward five years. I am one of the 40,000 New Zealanders living with RA. It's a chronic autoimmune disease, where my immune system attacks healthy cells causing inflammation, specifically the synovial fluid, in my joints. It affects five times more women than men and usually over the age of 50. There are medications to take — each with more side effects than the next. I live in a drug cocktail bubble.

I have discovered first hand the limitations of our public health system. From diagnosis to ongoing treatment it has been a test of my will. A feeling of being a file rather than a person continuously comes to mind. Each time I go in (about every three months, six if I am doing well) I have this optimism that the doctor will be approachable and positive. I hope they will be able to converse with me as an equal and give me respect and dignity. Sadly I may be one of the unlucky ones who seems to catch doctors on a "bad" day, or they are just so overworked that they can't take time to get to know individual patients. I am grateful in a weird sort of way, as their in-efficacy pushed me to search for that elusive treatment or cure. I've tried things I never would have tried, and met people I never would have thought to contact in a healthy lifetime.

remission

Not long after I was put onto my first heavy-duty drug — which put me into what is called chemical remission — I decided to push my body. I felt better than I had in years and wanted not to waste a single moment. I took up running, swimming, cycling, pilates and pretty much anything physical. I participated in five triathlons that year, as well as a quarter and a half marathon. I became vegan and lived an almost monastic lifestyle. I turned my life from average to (I believe) exciting. I joined the Arthritis Foundation as an advocate and met fellow sufferers through support groups.

The problem with all the heavy-duty drugs is that when you actually do get sick you get really sick. I picked up a water-borne bug on a

cycling adventure and this put me out for six weeks — over Christmas no less. After four doctor visits and a stay in hospital, luck was still not on my side, as the specific infection I caught gave me reactive arthritis. Healthy people get this and it wasn't an extension of what I already have. That was two-and-a-half years ago, and I have not yet got back to what I call no symptoms.

day by day

A challenge I have found has been that my disease has no external symptoms. You would never know I have health issues. I look well and I'm active. So explaining to people that no I can't come to a party or night-club because I am sore, or tired, or plain depressed, has been hard. RA makes you incredibly fatigued, and depression is the second (behind pain) most common experience of sufferers. I worry sometimes that people will think I am a boring person. I go to bed really early and exercise pretty much all of my spare time. You do what you need to do to get by. People say: "Listen to your body." However that is a half-truth. A lot of the time I'm sore, stiff and feeling exhausted but I suck it up and go for a swim or exercise class. I always feel better after exercising because I get my body temperature and heart-rate up. Best of all, the endorphins from pushing my body make me feel so much better and eliminate depression. I have found too that volunteering in the community keeps me looking outward and involved with other people — and with animals.

As RA usually affects only people over 50 it has been a bit of a lonely journey being significantly younger. I have met a couple of people my age, but most of the support groups and events held by the Arthritis Foundation are directed towards the majority. Most of the women I have met had onset RA in their middle age so past the most significant events in their lives — after career establishment and, more importantly, after having children. This is the next big scary step for me. If I want to have children I need to come off the major drug, Methotrexate, an immune suppressant that was initially used to treat cancer. I have to give my body six months to cleanse this out of my system, as it will cause deformities in a foetus. This means the disease will come back in full strength and I will then have to juggle various alternative drugs. The thought of putting myself through a huge amount of pain is very scary — and this will be even before I get pregnant, let alone give birth.

living with hope – and love

I'm on a bit of a crusade at the moment. I've become despondent with the same responses from the medical practitioners so I've become super interested in scientific research. I spend a lot of my spare time looking up research and listening to interviews and podcasts from scientists and medical researchers. There is some amazing work being done at present and the future is looking hopeful for me and others affected with autoimmune diseases. I try all of the fad diets, lotions and potions for nothing more than to have some control in my life.

Optimism for the future is what keeps me going. The thought of being normal, pain-free and able to do all of the things regular people do. Every time I have a good day I always make the most of it. I get out and enjoy life. Because even though I hurt, I do have good days and, oh, what a blessing they are. That is what I live for.

This all sounds a bit like a horror story but I think overall that RA has enriched my life so much. I have a fabulous husband who never judges when I complain of pain (which is pretty much every day). He always dresses me when the need arises, he rubs deep heat into my body whenever I ask and even dispenses my drugs. He, more than anyone, gives me faith in humankind. I have a wonderful family. Even if they are not really sure what I'm going through they are genuinely concerned for my well-being. You never feel real love, I think, until you are sick. ■

Lilly Warrenson lives with her husband Ben in Auckland.

What silence

Silence was a habit I wore for years.
Every day I lay down
in its field of cicadas,
fell asleep in its bony arms.

I imagined that if I waited long enough
angels would climb down their ladders,
and sit with me, blowing their trumpets
in silence.

Older now and
I still wonder wh

Before dawn tw
come gliding in
their lights casti
across the water

Painting by Christian Nicolson www.christiannicolson.co.nz

has to offer

tired of waiting,
hat silence has to offer.

o boats
on the silver sea,
ng beams
towards me.

I can see a string of lights
on the faraway shore
and lamps on the hill,
as in medieval times,
marking out a stairway
in the darkness.

I see these beautiful things,
the lick of morning,
the heavens drifting by.

Poem by Michael Fitzsimons

grow where you are planted

Ann Zubrick suggests that spirituality is about experiencing and expressing our connectedness within ourselves, to others, in our world and with God. She explores how participation, acceptance and wisdom can deepen our spirituality as we age.

Ann Zubrick

I first met Betty in Hobart in 2007 where she resides in an aged care hostel. She was then 88 and had lived in the hostel for six years. Earlier in life, Betty had been a high school teacher. She made the decision to move to supported accommodation realising that with arthritis, increasing lower back pain, significant osteoporosis, and restricted vision and mobility she would need more assistance. It was not easy leaving her family home of more than 50 years. But none of Betty's immediate family (five married children, many grandchildren and great grandchildren) lived close by and could offer regular, practical support.

She told me: "As a teacher I used to remind my students that life wasn't always ours to control as we wished but that we could always grow where we were planted."

taking initiative

On moving into the hostel, she quickly became bored. She observed that the part-time diversional activity officer "needs further development to do the job well. But she's young, so there's time." She regularly provided "ideas" to this woman "as nicely as I can". She refused to become frustrated when her ideas were not acted on. So, having consulted other residents about their interests, she simply phoned the local library to order a fortnightly drop/collection of books, videos and CDs.

She noted that some residents showed significant cognitive changes and "it's hard to find people with whom to have a conversation for very long". Her solution to this dilemma? "Well, I have the staff sit me at different tables for lunch and dinner each day so by the end of each week I've managed to talk with everyone in the place at least twice. It's hardest with a resident who's deaf and blind, but I make time in between to see her on her own and then I can introduce topics at the table that we can all share."

being inclusive

Betty recognises that "the care workers — most of whom come from different parts of Africa — don't receive enough support and they need this if they are going to continue to care as they do for us. So I've started to collect their stories." She finds times in the day when the

workers are less busy and while they are washing her hair, giving her a manicure, or at other less demanding times, to invite them to share their stories — past and present — and dispenses her perspectives. She apologises for the ways in which some residents and family members speak to them. She shares her frustration regarding current government policy with respect to refugees and asylum seekers. She likes to share a "thought for the day" as she moves around the residence — "something positive for people to think about as they go about their business".

When she learns of an unmet need — a care-worker who cannot afford football boots for a 15 year-old talented soccer player; a child who needs someone to hear them read; a resident who has no family visitors — she sends an email to someone in her faith and community networks to see if they might help. One of Betty's strengths is her capacity to ask for what she needs.

letting her life speak

Betty "lets her life speak" through the spiritual care and friendship she offers. Because she has been, and continues to be, spiritually nurtured, she draws on this strength as she reaches out to others. "The (aged-care) residence," she claims, "now provides me with my work in the world."

In spite of failing health and frailty, the essential Betty is unchanged. She remains a curious observer and is spiritually resilient. "I am embraced with love: the love of my family and friends, and most of all the love of God. Love so immense it surrounds me, strengthens me and grounds me."

Spirituality is the aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning and purpose and the way they experience their connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to nature and to the significant or sacred.

nourishing the spirit

In the New Testament the parables of Jesus capture spiritual capacity and growth in many different ways; among them watchfulness and preparedness (the wise and foolish virgins); setting firm foundations (wise and foolish builders); living simply (parable of the rich fool), and making the most of what you have been given (parable of the talents).

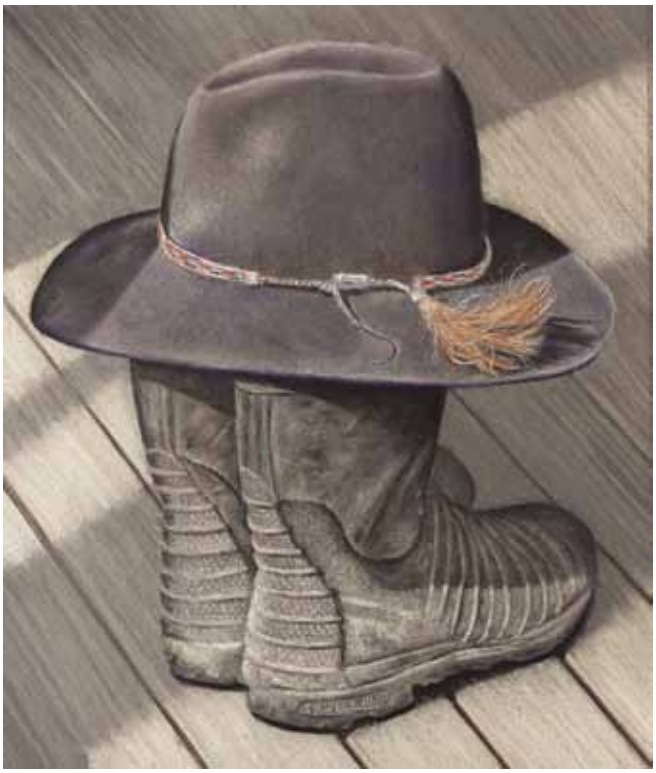
Betty and I are both Quakers. Quakers use these two practices to sustain spiritual life.

Advice # 18: Know one another in the things that are eternal, bear the burden of each other's failings and pray for one another.

When people form a community knowing and holding one another's faith stories, they are more apt to take appropriate spiritual care of one another, especially in time of duress, including ageing.

Advice #27: Every stage of our lives offers fresh opportunities. Try to discern the right time to undertake or relinquish responsibilities without due pride or guilt. **Attend to what love requires of you** which may not be great busyness. [emphasis added]

Attending to what love requires of us increases our



individual and collective sense of value — being a part of something greater than ourselves, no matter where we find ourselves, or what our age or stage in life. At any age we continue to have real worth regardless of activity or busyness.

listening and accepting

As we age, especially if we live alone, or feel isolated in residential care, "slow-stream" time for deep reflection in the company of prayerfully attentive listeners provides significant spiritual support. Betty asks one or two Quaker friends to share this sort of time with her each week. With such support, Betty says: "I can then reach out to others."

Listening is a powerful form of spiritual care; one in which all can contribute and from which all receive.

Victor Frankl, a WWII concentration camp survivor, observed that three things give meaning to life, especially in adversity. They are:

What we give to life in our creative work;
What we take from the world in our experience of values;
and
Our attitude in situations which we cannot change.

Or as the Serenity prayer suggests we pray:

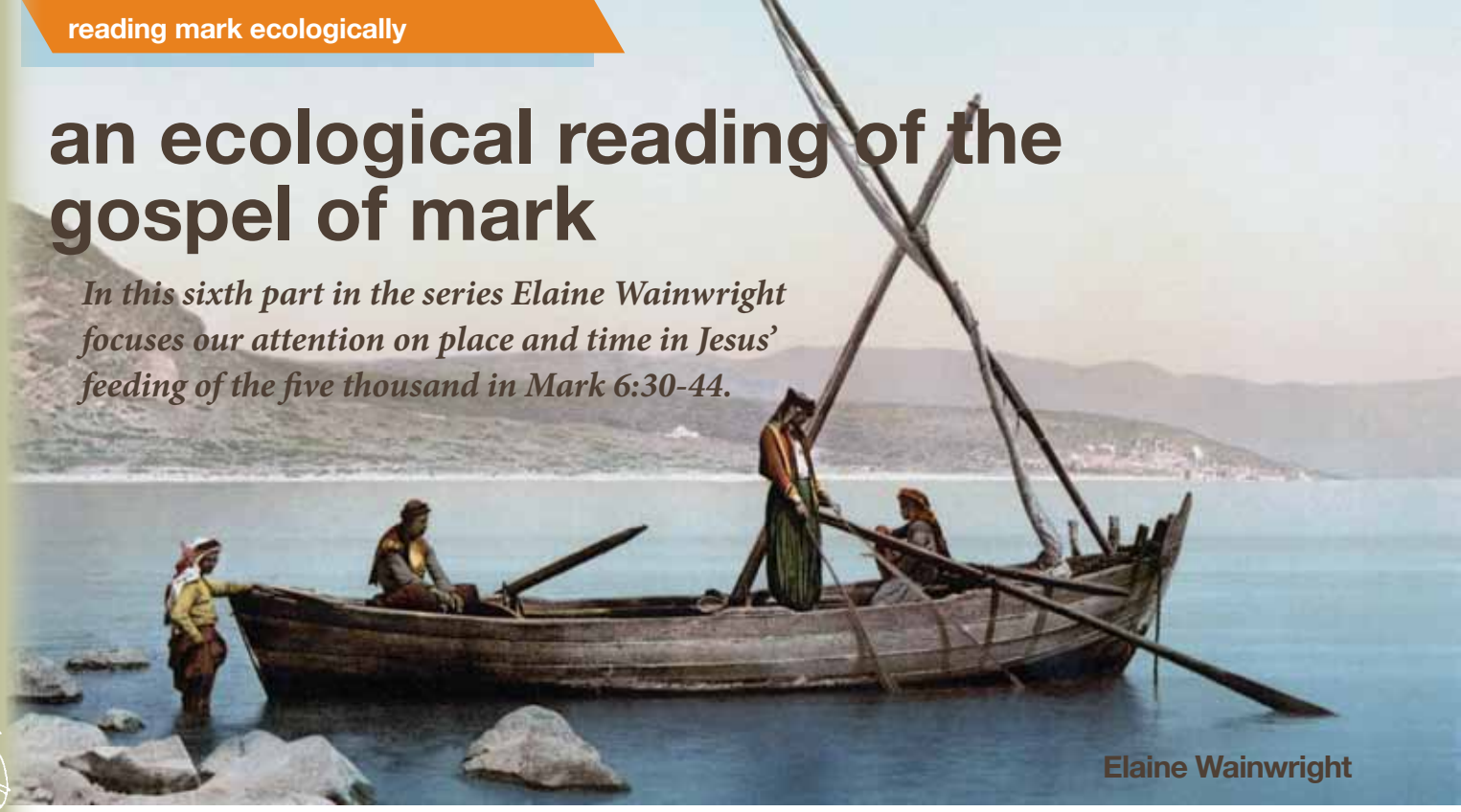
God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference. ■

Dr Ann Zubrick lives in Perth and teaches ageing and pastoral studies at Charles Sturt University. She is a founder of Revision: personal and social solutions to retirement.

Artwork at left: *They left Laughing* by Kim Novak www.kimnovakartist
Above: Painting by Karen Neal www.wild-impressions.co.nz
[Both used with permission]

an ecological reading of the gospel of mark

In this sixth part in the series Elaine Wainwright focuses our attention on place and time in Jesus' feeding of the five thousand in Mark 6:30-44.



Elaine Wainwright

The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. *31* He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. *32* And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. *33* Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. *34* As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. *35* When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; *36* send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat." *37* But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?" *38* And he said to them, "How many loaves have you? Go and see." When they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." *39* Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. *40* So they sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. *41* Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. *42* And all ate and were filled; *43* and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. *44* Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.

– NRSV. Used with permission

People "in place" may be an appropriate way for an ecological reader to characterise not only the opening verses of Mark 6:30-44, but the entire passage. Place will, therefore, be a significant focus in an ecological reading of this text familiarly called "the feeding of the five thousand". Interwoven into the fabric of this well-known narrative is a range of other material features that can be overlooked easily.

place and time

The place encoded in this Markan text is a lonely or deserted place (an *erémos*), sometimes translated as desert, into which Jesus invites his disciples. He does this so that he can hear them tell about their ministry, their anointing of bodies with oil and their healing them (Mk 6:13). Jesus also wants them to rest, to attend to their own bodies after the time of carrying out the mission to which he has sent them.

Knowledge of first century Galilee, especially the area around the lake, coupled with the reference in the text to "many coming and going", suggests that the place is somewhere apart from the crowds among whom the disciples have been ministering. Time, as well as place, characterises an ecological reading of this text, in particular the right time for ministry and the right time for going apart to a deserted place.

However the crowds do not recognise that Jesus and the disciples need to withdraw. Rather they run ahead to the place so that they are in the *erémos* when Jesus and the disciples arrive. Jesus' bodily senses are alert. He "sees" the crowd — but not just as a seeing with the eyes. The crowd draws forth a response from Jesus' body as the use of the verb *splagchnizein* — have compassion (Mk 6:34) indicates. He is moved in the depths of his being, his entrails, his gut. Sallie McFague, an American theologian, raises the question as to whether that compassion might also be extended to place (in this instance, the *erémos*), to the material world, which means seeing place and people with a "loving" rather than an "arrogant" eye — with the "eye of the ecological self".

different scenario

At the end of Jesus' day of teaching the response of the "disciples" to both place

and people seems to be informed by an arrogant rather than an ecological eye. They note that the place is deserted, the time is late and they want the crowd dispersed. They have an eye for commodity exchange (buying and selling) in an imperial economy as a way of feeding hungry communities. They propose to send the people into the villages to "buy food for themselves".

Jesus proposes a different scenario, that of hospitality or of gift-giving — "you give them something to eat" (Mk 6:37) — a sharing of material resources. Anne Primevesi, an Irish ecological theologian, describes such a "gift giving" as "a conscious acceptance of and commitment to the fact that our lives depend on indivisible benefits, on our being given what we need to sustain life whether or not we can or do pay for it."

Jesus initiates such a gift event when he garners from among the gathered crowd the five loaves and two fish, the staple food of people whose lives are dependent on their environment — the nearby lake and the rich agricultural regions around the lake. These five loaves and two fish are freely given over into the hands of Jesus by those who had brought them, implicating themselves and their food in what is to take place. Jesus also re-engages the disciples, who had "distanced" themselves from the crowd, asking them to seat the crowds in groups, or what we might call "circles of compassion", "circles of hospitality" in which food is to be shared.

Readers are drawn into the materiality of the scene. With 5000 men (the Matthean text extends the number — "not counting women and children") seated around in groups, Jesus takes into his hands, he touches, the five loaves and two fish. He turns his eyes to the sky or heavens, he blesses then breaks the loaves to give to the disciples for the crowds and he divides the fish among them all.

circles of compassion/ hospitality

There is no language of multiplication, only circles of compassion/hospitality among whom blessed bread and fish are distributed in abundance. Twelve baskets of *klasmata* or crumbs are gathered after all were satisfied — nothing is wasted.

It was in the giving of the loaves to be blessed, broken and then in their being given to disciples and crowds, that hunger is satisfied. Wendell Berry, an American writer and environmental activist, extends this interconnectivity further when he says that "eaters … must understand that eating takes place inescapably in the world, that it is inescapably an agricultural act, and how we eat determines, to a considerable extent, how the world is used … To eat responsibly is to understand and enact … this complex relationship." It is such reflections that might inform an ethical theology of food/eating as well as an ecological theologising of Eucharist which is so often associated with this narrative as well as its parallel account of the feeding of more than 4000 (Mk 8:1-9). ■

Elaine Wainwright RSM is Professor Emeritus University of Auckland and an independent biblical scholar.

Jesus feeding the crowd with fish and loaves, by Eric Feather www.ericfeather.com [Used with permission.]

look for ways to expand your heart

Archbishop John Dew was officially inducted into the College of Cardinals by Pope Francis on February 14, 2015. Michael Fitzsimons talks with him about his new role and his impressions of Pope Francis.

what is the significance of the appointment of an archbishop from new zealand as a cardinal?

I believe Francis is saying that he wants to hear from smaller churches, and churches on the peripheries. It's not all about what happens in churches but it's what you do for people on the edges. It's a clear message to a Church that had become quite focused on Europe. Last year also he chose men from smaller dioceses and parts of the world a long way from Rome.

what was the highlight of your visit?

The actual ceremony was simple, but very dignified, magnificent music, the Pope's homily was fantastic, and I continue to reflect on it. He's very focused at a liturgical celebration — you see him in the square chatting to people beforehand, waving to people, but walking into the Basilica his eyes are straight ahead and when you see him deep in prayer, it's a powerful thing.

The other important part was the two days before when all the Cardinals were called together for a meeting on the reform of the Roman Curia — thrown in the deep end, really. The Cardinals were very open about the idea that the Curia has to change, to be at the service of dioceses around the world. That was chaired by the Dean of the College of Cardinals, but the Pope was presiding.

The first day was on the reform of the Curia, and the second morning was on the economic structure of the Vatican which Cardinal Pell is working on. There were a number of great presentations, including an explanation of the principles of accountability and transparency, and a Frenchman spoke about the Vatican Bank and what they're doing to bring it up to modern accounting standards. It was very informative.

In the afternoon we had a presentation from Cardinal O'Malley, who's the chair of the Commission for the Safety of Minors in the Church. He was very clear about what every diocese has to do in order to protect young people.

> "He [Pope Francis] talked a lot about being people of charity, that we are called to meet people with great kindness and magnanimity."

were there any key messages from francis that you've brought back and will affect the way you do your job?

The homily Francis gave was based on St Paul's letter to the Corinthians that we hear so often at weddings — "love is patient, love is kind …" — and he talked about the fact that the word "cardinal" comes from the Latin word for hinge. We're a hinge between him and the Church of Rome, and the rest of the world. But the hinge can work only in love. He said that although we preside over particular churches, we are with him as hinges of the Church in Rome. He talked a lot about being people of charity, that we are called to meet people with great kindness and magnanimity. The final part of that homily, "unless you look for ways to expand your heart, to love with the love of Christ, you won't be doing what I want you to do," was a powerful message.

Francis's homilies are so practical. He made a great speech to the Curia just before Christmas and talked about the 15 diseases that he believes affect the Curia. When you stop to analyse it, you realise these are things that can apply to anyone. That was a very Ignatian way of expressing it, the 15 diseases.

what does francis's thing of living simply mean for you?

His commitment to living simply was there right from the start, when he was being driven around in a simple Ford Focus, rather than a chauffeur-driven Mercedes Benz. And even the vestments he wears, which have been becoming more and more elaborate over the years, from day one he put all that aside. Certainly for me it makes you think, do we really need this? Can we look at our diocesan structures and say, do we need this? Can we make money available for something else in the diocese, or for some new initiative to help the poor and people at risk?

For example, our own [bishop's] house here needs an enormous amount of money in order to strengthen it, but we haven't done anything about it yet. Maybe it's more important to make sure that parish churches are fixed up before we spend a huge amount of money on this.

In New Zealand — in some ways we're becoming a poorer church by default because we don't have what we used to have. But, even so, it's the right thing to do.

Top to bottom: Cardinal John Dew with two grand-nephews in St Peter's. Cardinal John with Cardinal Tom Williams. Cardinal John being congratulated by Pope Benedict.

what are some of the most urgent questions facing the church internationally?

A big issue at the moment is the ISIS crisis. Bishops from the Middle East spoke at the Synod last year of the families that were being driven from their homes in their thousands. For First World countries the issues affecting families are very different — issues such as communion for the divorced and remarried, cohabitation, homosexuality, those sorts of things — but in other parts of the world families are being torn apart in life-and-death situations.

There is also the enormous challenge of human trafficking, and the thousands of people who become victims of modern slavery. And it's not just overseas, we need to be aware of the plight of people who are being held in some kind of slavery and are being exploited. This happens in industries around New Zealand — for example in the fishing industry, horticulture, viticulture.

We need to be more aware that there are people who aren't being allowed to keep their passports or identity documents, who aren't being paid a proper wage, who don't get holidays that are due to them … I know that it's happening here in New Zealand.

Pope Francis's call is to look around and see the people who are struggling in one way or another — can't get money for food, can't educate their children, living in extreme poverty. We have to ensure our parishes aren't turned in on ourselves, but are looking to help others. Our faith is not just about the prayers or going to church, it's about how to live. The Church is to be at the service of the world around us.

what hopes do you have for the synod on the family to be held later this year?

I hope that some of the things that were talked about last year will be picked up again this year. I realise that it's a difficulty when you have very different concerns. For example one of the huge challenges for the African bishops is polygamy, and in the Middle East the issues are very fundamental with Christians being driven from their homes and struggling to maintain Christianity at all. In Asia, families are breaking up because a parent, normally

continued on page 24 . . .

the father, gets a job overseas, sometimes doesn't come back, or doesn't send money back and so families are broken up. There is a very broad spectrum of issues that affect the family.

When some Western concerns were spoken about there was a lot of fear that Catholic doctrine was going to be changed. I don't think that's what Francis had in mind at all. His concern was how to get alongside families with those concerns, and not judge and condemn them but walk alongside them and support them. You hear of instances where the priest won't baptise a child that's been born out of wedlock, and so Francis has gone and done it himself. He had 20 marriages in St Peters last year, where there were a whole range of living arrangements, but he wasn't judging anyone for that.

is pope francis signalling a much more proactive pastoral approach?

At the end of the Synod there was real debate getting quite heated, with some saying that you can't change a word of doctrine. Francis sat there for the whole two weeks, and at the end he said: "I want to say something." He spoke for about 10 minutes about the five temptations we're liable to — to be judges, to be too rigid, things like that. He has this way of putting things, like the 15 diseases, the five temptations. He's a great communicator.

what is a message of hope for people in new zealand who feel alienated from the catholic church?

We do really want to be with them and we don't want to be judging or condemning. We want to share a life-giving Gospel. We want them to know there's a place for them in the church and that they should never feel humiliated or judged, though I know that's happened in the past. We're trying to get everyone to say that this is the family of God and all people are welcome.

do you see yourself developing a particular relationship with cardinal paini mafi of tonga?

We have been good friends for the past few years, and I was delighted when I heard his name on the list. One commentator said we could be ineffective in Rome, because we came from smaller countries, didn't know the Roman system and might be a bit afraid to speak up. A priest friend in Australia sent me an email saying obviously the fellow who had made these comments doesn't know the physical stature of Paini Mafi of Tonga, or John Dew of Wellington, and doesn't know how New Zealanders or Tongans play rugby. I contacted Paini and said: "So when we go to Rome, we've just got to lock down like a couple of locks." It was a good image for us. We will have a good relationship. There's a natural affinity there because we've worked together already.

does the choice of cardinals reflect the priorities of the pope of the day?

Yes, Benedict appointed a number of Europeans because he had a focus on Europe. Francis has chosen people to represent the global church. I'm honoured and humbled to have been chosen.

What does pope francis's new encyclical *laudato si'* mean for you?

For me one of the key passages in the encyclical is Francis speaking about the need for people to feel connected to communities and being held "within a network of solidarity and belonging" (par 148). He says that if we feel connected and know that we belong we can turn our world "from being hell on earth into the setting for a dignified life." Where do we start? "Everything is connected." (par 91). But do we see and know that? Our parishes firstly have the privilege of helping everyone to know that we are all connected, that everything is connected, and because of this we face the challenge together of caring for "our common home."

how do you see the messages of the encyclical uniting parish and our wider society?

Pope Francis has some very practical advice as to what we can do to care for one another and the world we live in. I've a list of 40, among them:

- For genuine change, put the common good first. Special interests manipulate information, offer "superficial rhetoric, sporadic acts of philanthropy and perfunctory expressions of concern." (par 54)
- Be consistent. Pro-life, environmental and social justice movements are all connected. Protecting vulnerable species must include the unborn, endangered animals and the exploited. (par 91, 120)
- Believe in a happy future, a better tomorrow. Slow down, recover values and the meaning of life. Putting the brakes on "unrestrained delusions of grandeur" is not a call to go back to the Stone Age. (par 113-114, 225)
- "Business is a noble vocation." Create jobs that allow for personal growth, stability, living out one's values. (par 124-128)
- Listen to, protect lands of and involve indigenous peoples. The disappearance of cultures is even more serious than losing a species. (par 145)
- Moms and dads: teach kids to use things properly; to respect, take care of others; to ask permission politely; to say, "Thank you;" to control temper; to ask forgiveness; share. (par 213)
- Find happiness in simple things: get-togethers, helping others, honing a talent, enjoying art and music, praying. (par 223-224, 226)

These can easily be circulated, published, discussed, quoted and referred to widely, so that everyone has the opportunity to take up some of these very practical points — and make a difference to the world we are gifted with. ■

Michael Fitzsimons is a project manager, publisher and writer for FitzBeck Creative.

harnessing energies of love

Mary Engelbrecht

At eighty-eight years, I find the journey can be only inward and I smile with pleasure when I read the theologian, John F. Haught, talking about God as "depth", something we experience as "mystery". It can also be "future", which constantly presents us with new horizons to be crossed. The past has a limited depth because new science can show us it had a beginning, leading to our present. But the emerging horizon for me is eternity with the Christ, the doorway.

I can look back to a number of cultural changes. I have lived through Modernism and now Post-modernism, which is fast moving into chaos out of which we can begin to see something new emerging. Ilia Delio in *The Emergent Christ* points to "the return of God into secular space which can be seen in the personal spiritual quest and longing for I-Thou relationships, which is sought in different religions and in the many names of God." Delio speaks elsewhere of our need to seek wholes.

Recently I became aware of what she means while reading up on the evolutionary process, which demonstrates the wholeness, oneness, of the Universe, our mutual relationship to all creatures so the "sharing of life" takes on a new meaning. It is respect for every being, a willingness to include all in a new communion of being.

When the media exposes the huge shifts of peoples through forced migration and the reaction of nations to unwanted asylum seekers, I can see how, in a short time, we will be speaking of global demographics rather than national demographics and national boundaries. Cultural differences might very well blur and emerge as something whole.

I am writing this on Pentecost Sunday and can't help seeing such emergence as the Holy Spirit at work, bringing about that oneness Jesus prayed for before his death. I want to be a part of that.

In my experience as an octogenarian I find the challenge of these years sharpens. As the road seems to narrow, the new horizon emerges more clearly with its doorway of death in place, though still fogged with time. How much time?

The narrowing of the road occurs as diminishments increase and so much has to be let go, like discarding worn out clothes. But the loss of agility and speed can be cause for the practice of more determined optimism, a better sense of humour, a discovery of what acceptance means and a yearning for peace of heart.

Is this what I mean when I ponder a spirituality for the aged? As I mull this over I can see it is not such a different thing from a spirituality of the young or the middle-aged. But the environment has changed dramatically. It is slower, even in the midst of a chaotic, madly rushing world. The early stages of frustration and impatience with the many losses and limitations gradually give way to blissful times of stillness, meditation, contemplation of beauty, dwelling in nature and God, not just the Divine, but the personal intimate, understanding, experiencing Christ Jesus who can be known in the quiet.

Loneliness and the sense of isolation or exclusion merge into a sense of being at the heart of creation, in tune with the longing, the yearning for wholeness that is a response to the call of God to be what we are meant to be.

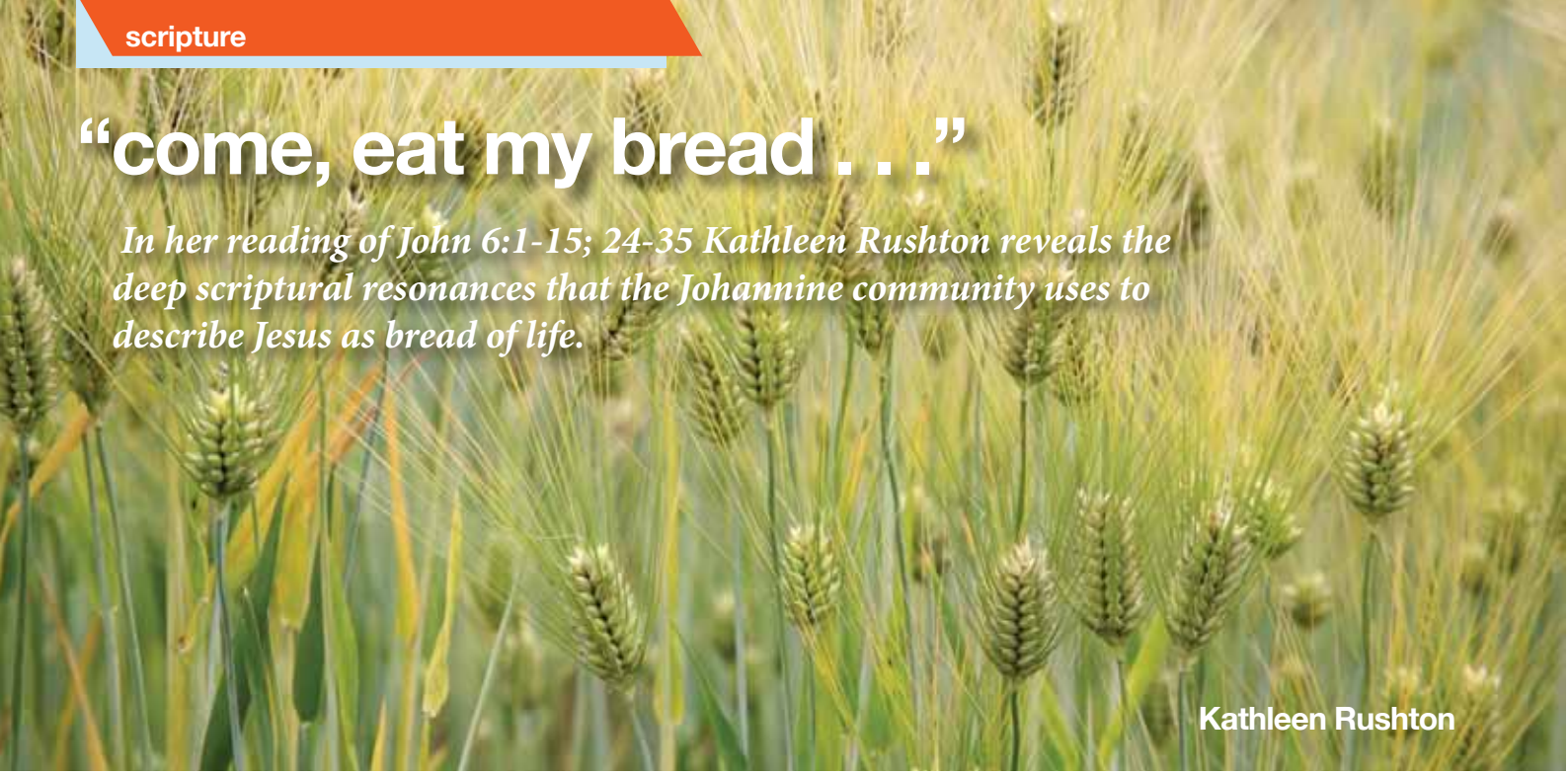
One other thing I am discovering in the precious emptiness, something Teilhard de Chardin wrote: "The day will come when, after we have harnessed space, the winds, the tides, and gravitation, we shall harness for God the energies of love. And on that day, for the second time in the history of the world, we shall have discovered fire."

I want to be part of that harvesting. ■

Mary Engelbrecht RSJ lives in Perth, WA.

Painting: *Wise Woman 12*, by Mary Horn. [Used with permission]

"come, eat my bread . . ."



In her reading of John 6:1-15; 24-35 Kathleen Rushton reveals the deep scriptural resonances that the Johannine community uses to describe Jesus as bread of life.

Kathleen Rushton

The Latin imperative "*Fiat panis* — Let there be bread" with the letters FAO encircling a head of wheat make up the emblem of the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations. This simple logo goes to the heart of the FAO goals: "the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition; the elimination of poverty and the driving forward of economic and social progress for all; and, the sustainable management and utilization of natural resources, including land, water, air, climate and genetic resources for the benefit of present and future generations." The FAO imperative links with the well-known scriptural invitation of Wisdom *Sophia*: "Come, eat my bread and drink my wine." In the layered narrative of John 6, Jesus is portrayed as Wisdom *Sophia*.

come eat of my bread

When the early Christians were trying to make sense of the death-resurrection of Jesus, they reinterpreted familiar figures, images and characters from their Sacred Scriptures. The earliest readers of John's gospel, would have recognised Jesus being presented as Wisdom *Sophia*, a female personification of God found in the Wisdom Books (of the First Testament). Like Wisdom *Sophia* they understood Jesus too as with God from the beginning co-creating, being sent from above, pitching a tent among us, being intimate with God and crying out publicly creating a division among hearers — of acceptance or rejection.

By chapter six of John's gospel Jesus is established in the narrative as Wisdom *Sophia* and evokes this female figure who gathers her disciples: "Come, eat my bread and drink my wine."(Pr 9:1-6). As John's gospel has no story of the institution of the Eucharist, John 6 is often seen as the counterpart of Matthew, Mark and Luke's Last Supper accounts. At the story level, John 6 begins with Jesus feeding a large crowd (Jn 6:1-15); then Jesus comes to his disciples walking on the sea (Jn 6:16-21); a discourse on the Bread of Life follows (Jn 6:22-59) and finally a conversation between Jesus and the disciples (Jn 6:60-71).

The feeding of the 5000 in John differs from the other three gospel accounts. Near the time of the Passover, it is Jesus, not the disciples, who looked up, saw the large crowd and not only asked how they were to be fed but later, after he had given thanks (*eucharistein*), distributed the bread himself. This difference comes from the Wisdom *Sophia* influence. And it recalls the synoptic gospels' Last Supper stories where Jesus himself distributes the bread and acts in this sequence — Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks (*eucharistein*) and distributed them.

providing daily bread

In the first century as today, the word "bread" meant both bread and food in general. Behind "bread" in all its senses is men's and women's hard work and the self-giving (sacrifice) to provide for their families. In ordinary life a meal and sacrifice are linked. Bread, in its particular and widest sense, comes from the soil and the water that irrigates it.

What of the bread — barley loaves — used in John, the only gospel to mention them? Grain, and the products made from it, was by far the most important of the three staple food commodities of grain, oil and wine. Wheat was considered to be superior to barley which tasted

less desirable and was cheaper. Barley ripened more quickly than wheat, required less water, was less sensitive to soil salinity and so it became the major crop in the arid areas of the Mediterranean world. Barley was the food of the poor and slaves and was also fed to animals. Apart from the hard work of growing barley, it needed to be milled. It could take about three hours to provide enough for a family of five or six — about three kilograms.

The mention of barley loaves evokes Elisha feeding them to a multitude in 2 Kings 4:42-44. The 12 baskets left over are also anchored in Scripture. God says to Elisha: "Give it to the people and let them eat … they shall eat and have some left." In the Exodus wilderness feeding they gathered up twelve baskets of left-over manna. This provision for all gathered and some left over is a recurring description of biblical meals. Jesus' words: "Make the people sit down," are expressed using a Greek verb meaning to stretch out for a meal — reclining was the customary position for eating. The description of "a great deal of grass" suggests the assurance of Ps 23:1: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures."

I am the bread of life

Jesus went up the mountain (Jn 6:3) and then after feeding the large crowd "he withdrew again to the mountain by himself" (Jn 6:15). As the disciples headed back by boat from that place near Tiberias to Capernaum during the night, Jesus comes to them over the water. The next day, some of the crowd come there by boat from Tiberias looking for Jesus. A long intricately-structured dialogue occurs in which Jesus responds to the crowd's five questions (Jn 6:25, 30, 34, 42, 52).

The prologue of John (1:1-18) gives a summary of the gospel story. The reader knows that "in him was life" (Jn 1:4). As characters, "the crowd" do not understand that Jesus himself is the bread that sustains life. The agents, through which God is revealed in the signs in John, are non-human elements: earthen pots filled with water; a mat carried by one who had not been able to walk; and in this story, bread and 12 stout, wicker baskets. God encounters persons in unexpected ways.

The crowd asks: "Rabbi, when did you come here?" (Jn 6:25). Characteristically, Jesus does not answer their question but moves the conversation to another level because he knows they just want another meal. Jesus talks of the contrast between physical bread and the bread of life which he offers. That is not to say that Jesus negates the need for bread. Jesus and his disciples had money and used some of it for the needs of the poor (Jn 12:5-8; 13:29). Jesus initiates an exchange with Philip about money to buy food for the crowd. (Jn 6:5-6). There is need for bread for physical hunger and for openness to the One who gives bread (manna) and is God (cf. Exodus 16:4). This is an ongoing need. God gives (Jn 6:32) not in a past event but in a present and ongoing one.

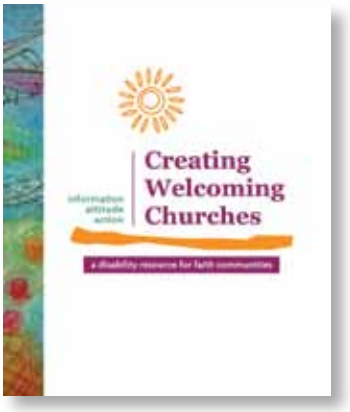
The eucharistic tones in this account of the feeding of the 5000 and the bread of life discourse emphasise the Eucharist as a meal. Later in the chapter the tone changes to the Eucharist as sacrifice and self-giving (Jn 6:41-69). This seems foreshadowed by the only mention in the New Testament of Tiberias (Jn 6:1, 23), a town built by Herod Antipas and named for the emperor Tiberius. In bold contrast to the tax-sucking Roman empire, Wisdom *Sophia* is imagined as building her house and filling it with provisions for all. ■

Kathleen Rushton RSM is a scripture scholar and adult educator.

Gospel readings for 17th and 18th Sundays of Ordinary Time (26 July and 2 August)

that all may come

Creating Welcoming Churches: A disability resource for faith communities



By the Disability, Spirituality and Faith Network Aotearoa/New Zealand Inc.

Available from www.dsfnetwork.org

Reviewed by Mike Noonan

In the early 1980s as part of l'*Arche*, I was at a parish social event with some friends who have an intellectual disability. The priest approached and explained to us that he had been told to ask us to leave. The reason was that "people do not want to look at you while they are enjoying themselves."

Five years later, *l'Arche* opened a new house which welcomed people with multiple and profound disabilities. We were anxious as we attended our new parish about whether we would again be made to feel unwelcome. We were greatly reassured when after mass a taxi driver came up with tears in his eyes and encouraged us to keep coming. He told us that mass had made so much more sense to him because of the presence of people with disabilities.

In the book, *Creating Welcoming Churches*, I found the assertion that: "The Church itself is disabled in its mission if it does not include people with a disability. People with a disability offer the church the opportunity to understand what it is to be the Body of Christ." I think both the experiences described above point to the truth of this.

This book will help Christian communities think about the way they welcome their congregations. It is a book which provides information, gentle challenges to embrace inclusive attitudes and a firm basis for practical actions which will assist in establishing your community as accessible and inclusive.

Insightful cartoons quirkily capture some of the key issues, and the book helpfully provides a broad overview of further resources which can be engaged with. Voices of experience are placed pertinently alongside the text and illustrate, often movingly, how a person has experienced inclusion or, conversely, barriers to inclusion and to their full participation in the Body of Christ.

Tools for assessing building accessibility are based on New Zealand Building Standards and there is a helpful community self-reflection tool based on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

I believe this book is essential for church architects and parish leadership teams — particularly as their communities age. It is good reading for anyone who wishes that their church could be more inclusive, welcoming and accessible. ■

beautifully s

Sanctuary: The discovery of wonder

By Julie Leibrich

Published by Otago University Press Dunedin, 2015.

Reviewed by Mary Thorne

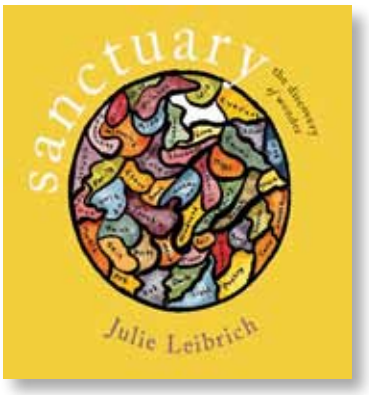
From first acquaintance *Sanctuary: The discovery of wonder* is an appealing book. Julie Leibrich's own watercolour on the cover, depicting a patchwork of earthy colours and heart-warming words, the use of photographs and the colour-coded inclusion of the author's poetry and journal entries all contribute to the beauty of this book, and beauty is a characteristic of sanctuary.

In a society in which depression and stress are so widespread, this book offers a deep and authentic exploration of the need for sanctuary, what comprises sanctuary, and how to safeguard it and treasure it. It is a wise and insightful contemplation in which the author shares her own life experience as a poet, writer, former research psychologist and one of New Zealand's first Mental Health Commissioners. Julie Leibrich also speaks frankly of her own journey through mental illness and her search for wholeness, wellness and meaning.

Theological voices from the world's great faith traditions and writings from literature and philosophy are woven together with the thoughts of family, friends and acquaintances to help us grasp the dimensions of this idea of sanctuary; different for each person but ultimately a sense of "a coming home", "a place to go and a place from which to emerge", a place within.

Leibrich's deep consciousness of seasons, hemispheres, tides, light and darkness, and the power they exert

atisfying



over our thinking and her appreciation of the part poetry, art, music, dance, and even mathematics can play in creating sanctuary, ensure that this is no lightweight, feel-good work. Some of the pondering and refining of Leibrich's writing was carried out at the Southern Star Monastery in Kopua where the monastic rhythms of community prayer contributed another layer to the enigma of sanctuary.

Sanctuary: the discovery of wonder was a long time in the writing and it has the richness of a wide variety of ingredients percolated for a lengthy period to produce something very satisfying. Such is the artistry of this book that the very aspects of sanctuary we consider; solitude, silence, simplicity, slowness and stillness, are words that sound like gentle waves on a beach or a baby being hushed.

This book is a wonderful companion for anyone who hungers, dreams, seeks, doubts or becomes exhausted. I thank Julie Leibrich for it. ■

an ordinary humanity

Still Life

Directed by Uberto Pasolini

Reviewed by Paul Sorrell

Still Life portrays the story of a lonely council worker whose job is to settle the affairs of people who have died alone, often with no family members even to attend the funeral. Unfolding at a human pace, the film creates an incremental portrait of a man whose unpromising job moves him towards fulfillment of a kind.

Like the film itself, John May (played by British character actor Eddie Marsan) works at a slow pace, but he is also thorough, meticulous and painstaking. After each case has been closed, he souvenirs a photograph of the deceased which he adds to an album that he keeps at home. Most importantly, he is anxious to give the lost souls with whom he has been charged the respect and consideration they were denied in life. In taking this approach to his job, May is out of tune with the rush and "efficiency" of the modern workplace, the bureaucratic pressures to tie up loose ends at the expense of human values and sensitivity.

After being given the sack — his post will be merged with the neighbouring borough — May decides to complete his final job on his own terms, and sets out to discover all he can about Billy Stoke, an elderly man who had died alone in a rundown apartment across the road from May's own sparsely appointed bachelor flat. Travelling as far afield as Yorkshire and Devon, he meets one of Billy's old flames, an old army buddy and a pair of winos who had befriended him towards the end of his life. He also tracks down Billy's estranged daughter, Kelly, who is deeply moved that May has made the effort to find her.

At this point, it looks as though romance is in the air for our unlikely hero. Then comes a shocking and unexpected event that threatens to derail the film. However, what follows is skillfully folded back into the fabric of the story and brings it full circle. The ending is astonishing, and beautiful without being sentimental.

In its measured and intimate portrait of one man's daily life, his struggles and small triumphs, ***Still Life*** shows us what contemporary cinema can achieve — without resort to "feel good" clichés or special effects. Pasolini's film succeeds in affirming our common humanity at the level of the everyday and the ordinary; for that reason alone it deserves to be seen. ■

Crosscurrents

Jim Elliston

the budget, part one

A *NZ Herald* article, "Helping others enriches life" about voluntary work explains how the lives of both the volunteer and those helped benefit. The volunteer interviewed said those she helped were "great people who just want the opportunity to be valued."

Many New Zealanders, conditioned by an individualistic economic system, don't appreciate that a person's "wealth" consists of more than purely material things; the ability to support, guide and nurture others, such as family, the sick and needy is also relevant. The ability of the marginalised (those suffering hardship and deprivation) to contribute to the wealth of the nation in that fuller sense is impaired. Neglecting the problem will compound it. "Repairing the damage" to the marginalised will be costly but that cost will diminish as progress is made.

There is a growing consensus that there are fundamental problems with the prevailing economic system, including a persistent imbalance between the rich and powerful and the poor. We need a human-centred economic system that aims to bring about a reasonably equal society which nurtures its members sufficiently to maintain that equilibrium.

There is no evidence that our government has a plan to tackle the root causes; only to apply sticking plaster to the wounds of the casualties.

In the April *New Statesman* Maurice Glasman wrote that history shows neither 1945 (state control) nor 1979 (unregulated market) generates prosperity, civic peace and participation. Moreover, 1997 (an attempt to combine a strong welfare state with robust financial markets) has not worked either. "We are left with debt, deficit and demoralization. There is an absence of a constructive alternative to put in their place that can explain the problems of the past and chart a course to a better future."

Those three main economic systems have failed here as well as in the UK. The budget, with its moves to privatise welfare, indicates further attempts to follow the third course mentioned. The recent Relationships Aotearoa shambles provides no comfort. Nonetheless, some signs of hope are emerging.

loaded dice

In the April *Commonweal* Peter Steinfels noted the inequality whereby 80 per cent of Americans received well under one per cent of their income from capital gains while the richest one per cent get over a third of their income. The top tenth of that one per cent get about half their income. And these capital gains are taxed at much lower rates than ordinary wages.

Steinfels referred to a letter from Larry Fink, Chairman of BlackRock, which has about $5 trillion of investments, to the CEOs of Fortune 500 companies. Fink's point? Too many corporate leaders were buying back stock and paying out dividends, sometimes with borrowed money, to please shareholders and aggressive investors with quick returns, instead of building up productive capacities. Fink argued a major incentive for this short-term outlook is the capital gains tax advantage.

oscar romero

Romero was appointed bishop of San Salvador, El Salvador, because he was a "good safe man" who would be acceptable to the Mass-going rich. The problem was that he was also a humble man willing to listen and learn from his poor congregation. He gradually came to realise the gross injustices of his society. When he criticised the government policies the rich supported, they accused him of meddling in politics. He didn't stop.

walter kasper on ecumenism

In 2017 the Christian churches will "commemorate" the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, but the meaning of that anniversary for Christian ecumenism is uncertain. A number of participants are posing questions about its function and significance.

In a recent address Cardinal Kasper, the retired Prefect of the Vatican department for Ecumenism, outlined three stages in the history of the churches and suggested we are entering a fourth.

The first came with the split between the Oriental (Middle Eastern) and the Mediterranean churches (Greek and Latin) after the Councils of Nicea and Chalcedon. The Orientals didn't accept the doctrines of those councils.

The second stage began in 1054 with the Great Schism between the Orthodox East and the Latin West.

The third was the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century which split Western Christianity into Protestant and Catholic branches.

Kasper said the rise of the Evangelical and Pentecostal churches constitutes a fourth stage.

Compared to the Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches, these younger, growing churches are less concerned about dogma and institutionalised expressions of the Gospel. They are more emotional in their worship styles and more voluntarist in their organisation. Their members tend to sample rather than restrict themselves to one church. In that respect they represent a contemporary social development in which religious identities are more transitory and church boundaries more porous.

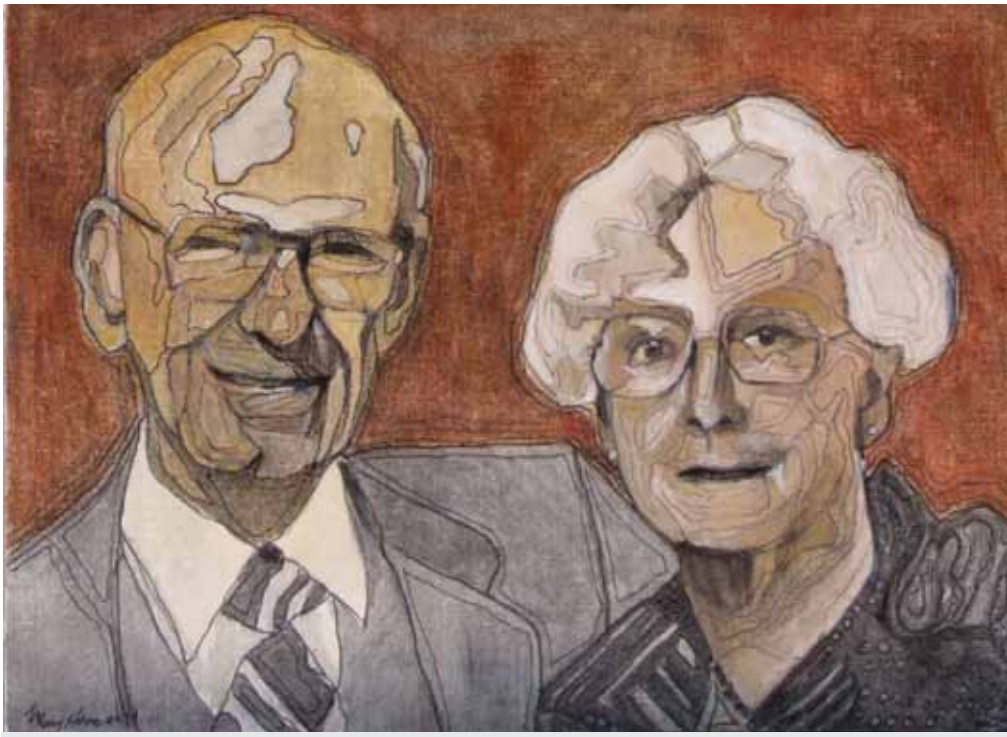
Kasper suggested that all churches must face porosity as a sign of the times. The older churches need to examine themselves and learn from the younger Evangelical and Pentecostal ones. He thinks that the growing importance of Evangelicals and Pentecostals will reshape and renew 21st century ecumenism. ■

counting our blessings ❊ ❊ ❊

Joy Cowley

Most of the advantages of getting old are emotional, intellectual and spiritual. Most of the disadvantages are physical. Because the physical tends to demand more attention, we don't always appreciate what we have gained through the aging process. Let's look at some of thee benefits.

- ❊ We've spent many years in Life School and our experience is a part of our faith. We have come to a deeper place where we see God in everything.
- ❊ We know that while the head has language, the heart has no words, only feeling. We have learned that words are not idols to be worshipped: they are signposts that lead us to the heart space where we find God.
- ❊ We are comfortable with the way God made us, and are not bothered by public opinion.
- ❊ We have learned that insecurity and doubt are not enemies but good friends of wisdom. Both allow us to grow. Security and certainty tend to prevent growth.
- ❊ We value the beauty of *lectio divina* (reading, meditating, praying and contemplating the scriptures), especially the gospels as we walk with God. In the company of Jesus, the words cease to be "law" and become "life," meeting our every need.
- ❊ We value our uniqueness, aware that God has formed us as individuals and continues to do so. We let go of the need to be like others, or to see them as like us.
- ❊ Judgement and division belong to the smallness of human understanding. We know that God's love is much bigger than human ideas, and that no one is ever lost to that love.
- ❊ We live in an understanding of paradox, knowing the strength in weakness, the richness of poverty, the fullness of emptiness, the gain that comes from loss, the resurrections that follow our little crucifixions. We have learned to trust that the lessons in life school have all been for our spiritual growth.
- ❊ When we were young we had a lot of questions about life. Maybe we didn't get the answers we wanted, but the questions themselves have now disappeared.
- ❊ Faith has become much simpler. It is all held in three words: God is love. ■



Ruth and Alex, by Mary Horn. [Used with permission]

Joy Cowley is a well-known New Zealand writer. She also engages in retreat work.

a Mother's Journal

by Kaaren Mathias

Photo by Karen Scott RSJ [Used with permission]

Five serene sentinels, white triangles against the dark green shrubs and trees are ***mandirs*** (temples), perched high on outcrops above, looking out over our valley. Visible from any spot, their triangles point up and remind us all of God who is above, around, behind, watching over. Walking at dawn down the unsealed road below a friend's place I wonder about the people who built each of these ***mandirs***. Structures made by human beings, perhaps these ***mandirs*** also remind God that we have needed to stack bricks and plaster to make a holy place, one of many marks of our yearning to know God and to feel the divine present here with us.

Green weeds — exuberant and irrepressible are still alive and cloaking these hills through these hot dry summer days. There is almost no patch of bare ground. Where the twiggy lantana has failed to thrive, the ***kali ghas*** (black grass) has cheekily taken root. Where dock has dried up to brown leaves and stalks, a tenacious thistle is still photosynthesising with glee. So too is the Holy Spirit — persistent, innovative under poor growing conditions, seeking out spaces and empty spots to take root. Exuding the green chlorophyll of life.

The sun catches a hundred green lilting wings — a fast chatter of parakeets flashes over my head and nearly before I can focus, they are way over across the valley. Swooping, vivacious and vibrant. Unpredictable, fast, blurry. Beautiful. Now here, now there, now gone, now behind me. So too the Holy Spirit. Fleet, surprising, agile, many-formed…

Back to my friend's house for breakfast, I write in my journal—

Veni Sancte Spiritus
this day
I welcome you
sentinel temple
chlorophyll weed
ecstasy of parakeets

Amen ■

Kaaren Mathias is a Public Health physician and the programme manager for Mental Health in the Emmanuel Hospital Association in North India where she lives with her family.

Blessing

May the warmth of home envelop us
A heart for others motivate us
Love of the cosmos be deep in us
and the mystery of God abide with us
in our common home.

from the Tui Motu Team