

Special Services

9.30 Every Sunday
Live Streamed Parish
Eucharist

11 a.m.

"Zoom Morning Tea"
and catch-up.

Contact Fr. Shane

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IN THIS ISSUE

St Peter's in Lockdown ... pp 2-7

Operation Christmas Child ..p 7

Open Letter from Bethlehem

Christian Clergy.....p 7

Politicians, wake up! Sasha

Sondergaard Hearn on Climate

Emergency.....p 8

Abraham, Isaac and the God's of

War.....p 9

We Can't go Back.....p 10

A Resilient, Sustainable And Just

Future.....p 11

Christianity Has No Answers To

the Coronavirus.....p 12

The Parish Office and St Peter's
Church are at 1038 Whitehorse
Road, Box Hill 3128.

Office hours:

Tues 8.30am – 12.30pm

Thurs 10.00am – 2.00pm

Office phone: 9899 5122

GOOD NEWS

好消息

WELPIATH



Parish Magazine of the Anglican Parish of Box Hill
August 2020

The Vicar Writes

As I prepared this piece for this edition of the 'Good News' I reviewed what I wrote back for our May edition. It seems the only thing that has changed is that time has crept by and the numbers of people affected by COVID-19 increase day-by-day. These numbers are horrific – over 16 million people infected world-wide; about 650,000 deaths world-wide; more than 14,000 Australian cases and more than 150 dead in our country (Sunday 26 July 2020).

What I wrote in May continues to be relevant in August – *"Regardless of our luck, we pray for those families directly mourning the death of a loved one that God may comfort them in their grief. Prayer is, and will remain, the foundation of our response to life in all its beauty and horror. Regardless of our age or situation we can all pray! May we take the opportunity presented to us to become more adept at and accomplished in – prayer."*

I have been reflecting upon the loss of certainty and the loss of the ability to plan into the future. I have come to the realisation that I truly need to be mindful and thankful for the life I lead each and every day and take the promise of God's presence and support to heart. The epistle reading from Sunday 26 July – taken from Paul's letter to the Romans contains those verses which every Christian should know by heart:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8.38-39)

So along with being people of prayer I would add that in these challenging times we need to be mindful and thankful. Mindful of the love of God for us and thankful for the life we have at the moment.

I publicly want to thank all those who have helped with maintaining our worship and webpage; our food program; and those who have helped the parish stay in contact with its members. I thank all parishioners who have contributed

to the economic life of our parish. Without the generous support of so many people's time and talents our parish would not be in the okay shape we are, all things being equal!

From a personal point of view I am thankful for all the opportunities God continues to give

me. As many of you are aware I have taken up an exercise regime during this COVID period and have managed to lose almost 20kg. I have averaged about 11k a day walking for the last 100 days and have been careful about what I eat. What has helped in the walking has been the podcasts I have enjoyed listening to and I feel like I have done a semester of study just by listening to 1-2 hours of interesting shows each day. If you are bored and want to know what the Vicar has been listening to may I suggest you try out the following podcasts: 99% Invisible; Revisionist History; Freakonomics; Cautionary Tales; No Stupid Questions; Articles of Interest – just to name a few. May God continue to keep us safe in the days to come.



St Peter's in Lockdown

Church and hall are silent. Everyone at home. Nothing happening.
Don't be deceived. A lot's going on. Read on

Esther writes

*The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end;
They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22,23)*

The pandemic has caused a certain degree of fear, stress, and panic within the Chinese congregation, but God's grace is more than enough for us! Before the serious shutdown, we were planning to move all the meetings online. In such a time as this, people need more than ever to draw nearer to Jesus, as He is the Prince of peace. and we need to draw closer to one another more than ever, as we are the Body of Christ.

We are very thankful that we are able to gather more regularly at the Throne of Grace.

Early April, we started daily morning (6:30am-7:00am) and evening (10pm-10:15pm) prayer meetings. Through four months of these daily prayers, we already see changes, with people's growing awareness of the needs of others and the world and becoming more open to sharing personal needs and requests. It's very exciting not only see the answered prayers, but growing desire to seek for God's kingdom and His righteousness.

Even a couple who dropped off from meetings, recently came back. Our Friday regular prayer meetings (7:30pm -9pm) also attracts more attendees, more than 20 people meet each week on Zoom, it's like a lifeline for some people where they connect with God and with one another. This is one of the most precious meetings where people's needs are heard and prayed for.

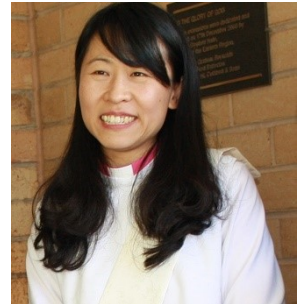
Our five cell groups are also gathered on Zoom each week, apart from bible study, we hope to encourage and support one another. Some cell groups are more active than another, overall. It is a vital platform to connect and support. Our Children's Sunday School is on Zoom every Sunday Morning 10am-10:40am before the service starts. There are 5, 6 children regularly attending. We also started a two month long Alpha course on Zoom, there are 6, 7 people attending each week. Though the discussion is not as good as in a physical meeting, we thank God for having the opportunity continue to share the Gospel online.

On the pastoral side, we only have a few elderly people in our congregation who are cared for by their families, and we also cover them in our prayers and regular calls. Most young mums are strong and courageous, and able to cope with the difficulties caused by Covid-19. Recently, a young couple returned to China for good, due to their visa expiring at the end of the year. Thank God, they arrived safely.

Our livestreaming Sunday service is going well, thankfully there are more people benefiting from our online service, each week we have more local people views, plus about 10 people overseas attending our online service. Recently we just finished an eight week series on the Lord's Prayer. It has been a challenging and rewarding journey to preach though and pray though it.

One of the surprises during the shutdown is our discipleship class which is held at 3pm-6pm each Sunday afternoon on Zoom. It is running very smoothly now. We have almost finished two books of discipleship training material. There are more heated discussions, challenging questions, and bold sharing. We are able to both encourage and challenge one another to grow in the likeness of Jesus. No matter how busy or challenging their life is, the participants are committed to daily spiritual disciplines and pursuing Jesus. Thank God! He is truly doing a new thing:

*Let us know, let us press on to know the Lord;
his appearing is as sure as the dawn;
he will come to us like the showers,
like the spring rains that water the earth." (Hosea 6:3)*



All Creation Groaning. Julian of Norwich

We know that all mothers bear us for pain and for death

O, what is that, but our mother Jesus

He alone bears us for death and for endless life, blessed may he be.

So he carries us within him in love and travail until the full time

When he wanted to suffer the sharpest horns and cruel pains....at last he died

And when he had finished and borne us for bliss, all this could not satisfy his wonderful love.

Janet writes

Enough – a meditation in pandemic times

As one parishioner mentioned at our parish virtual morning tea on Sunday, these current restrictions for the pandemic do not feel as hopeful and effective as the first time we entered restrictions. I've noticed in the last couple of weeks how it takes very little for me to become despondent. When I started to pray the other day, I felt quite helpless and hopeless and all I could manage was a time of meditation.

Many years ago, I came across a beautiful meditative prayer, which I have often practised when other kinds of prayer don't seem accessible to me. I thought I'd share it with you and how it helped me on this occasion reconnect with God. The beauty of this prayer is its simplicity and how easily it fits your need at any particular moment. The words of the prayer are said silently in rhythm with your slow, deep breathing. Then you choose the word that you need to fill in the prayer; in this example I will use 'love':

Breathe in: The **love** of God
Breathe out: flowing free;
Breathe in: the **love** of God
Breathe out: flow out through me.

This is repeated over and over for as long as you need to – I generally set a timer for 10 minutes as this helps me continually come back to refocus my prayer and breath if my mind wanders.

You can vary the way you breath, such as holding your breath between each phrase, for example:

Long breath in: The **love** of God flowing free;
Hold breath for a few seconds
Long breath out: the **love** God flow out through me.
Hold breath for a few seconds

You can also choose a different word to take the place of the underlined word above, depending on your need, e.g. light, hope, power, grace, mercy, protection, wisdom ... e.g. The **healing** of God flowing free; the **healing** of God flow out through me.

If you would like to make the prayer sound more personal, you could adapt it like this: Your **love**, O God, flowing free; your **love**, O God, flow out through me. When I started this meditation during the week, the word that came to my mind was 'enough'. Specifically, that *I am enough* – no effort on my part is needed for God to embrace me – and that *God is enough* for whatever situation I am in, or the world is in – when I feel lacking in some way, all I need is God and God is enough for whatever is needed. Although the word sounded a little clumsy in my meditation at first, it soon became a deep and true prayer that helped me focus on God who, through the prayer, restored my hope in these challenging times we face. By sustained and mindful repetition of this prayer, my spirit was encouraged and energised to carry on with hope, whether or not I feel despondent.

If you sometimes have trouble knowing what to pray or feel that prayer is ineffective, I invite you to try this meditative prayer and make it specific to your own situation in the way God directs you.

Alasdair writes

South Sudanese Saturday School Update

A great many thanks to all who have been contributing groceries for our Saturday School families. Who face many difficulties at this time. Many adults have lost their jobs during the COVID-19 restrictions,. Many families are single-parent, so struggle to make the time to shop while the children are home from school and need supervision. Many staple items have been disappearing from supermarket shelves. We have been supporting up to eight families which means around 100 people. We continue to also provide them with bread (with leftovers available to the parish) thanks to the generosity of Bakers' Delight Ashburton. The Volunteer Tutors continue to offer help online with many of the older children, but also provide the goods: I have even been able to rope in my next door neighbour! This ministry now reaches far beyond the boundaries of our parish.

The need is great, and our help is greatly appreciated. Please continue to give food staples such as rice, pasta, sauce bases, breakfast cereals, full cream milk (liquid or powder), personal toiletries and laundry/ house cleaning products. While the children are remote schooling from home, exercise books, writing and drawing/art materials are also needed. These items can be dropped off, and bread picked up, from 10am to 11am Saturdays and any time that the office is open (currently Tuesday and Thursday mornings) or by arrangement with Fr. Shane (0432 68 1177) Again thank you for your efforts: God bless you all. Alasdair

Margaret Dymond writes

From Brunswick to Dandenong

John Dymond made a routine sales call on a good customer, Les McColes in late 1978. Les informed John that his small blending plant in Brunswick was for sale due to his ill health. He asked John if he was interested in buying it.

Opportunity doesn't knock twice. So in March 1979, with the help of a small amount of vendor finance (promptly repaid) from Les, John and Margaret became the owners of the Penrite Oil Co.

In the early 80's Brunswick was a hive of small workshops and businesses. We made sewing machine oil for the shirt makers, high viscosity product for the Model T Ford restorers and provided grease for the veteran chassis fabricators. We produced oil for Harley Davidson motor bikes until a visit from some colourful gentlemen made it clear that to continue would be bad for our health.

The family continue to be actively involved in the company, but we are acutely aware of the challenges that lies ahead. Manufacturing in Australia has undergone some difficult times. Hopefully producing good quality goods will soon become a valued occupation once more so here's to the label "Made in Australia."

Hilary writes

Most of this includes quotes from others I have reread or discovered lately.
How are you feeling?
As long in the face as the Devil at a Christening?
It is an uneasy time for all of us.
One of my father's aunts wrote to my mother during WWII.: "Perhaps we will finally meet when this spot of bother is over."
Luckily this time we all have the same enemy however we have a large numbers of spots of bother.
We seem to spend more time than normally in our kitchens. Here is an old poem which I relate to.

*Lord of all pots, pans and things big and small,
Since I have had no time to be a Saint
by doing lovely things and all,
Or watching late with Thee,
Or dreaming in the dawning light,
or storming Heaven's gate,
Make me a Saint by getting meals
and washing up the plates.
Warm all my kitchen with thy love,
And light it with thy peace,
Forgive all my worrying, make all my grumbling cease,
Thou who didst love to give us food I
n room or by the sea,
Accept this service that I do, I do it unto thee...*

I have also learned the science behind why we check eggs freshness by placing them in a glass of water. Fresh eggs have a higher water content so will sink to the glass base. A stale egg contains more air so floats to the glass top.

Marisa Donnelly has written something we may wish for our younger folk: "I hope you surround yourself with people who make you feel alive. I hope you become the type of person who brings good energy wherever you go and the type of person people want to be around. I hope that you speak what's on your mind, that you raise your voice for injustice, that you tell others that you love them instead of waiting until it is too late. I hope that you live louder and shine brighter from this moment on.

Prayers.

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4. 6-7

*O God give me the strength
To look up and not down,
To look forward and not back,
To look out and not in and
To lend a hand. Amen*

Text for the transport system.

We have noticed in our neighbourhood the construction of a transport system which is still incomplete. A metal track built on wooden trestles has been erected in a neighbour's front yard.

There is a noticeable slope which may be quite unsafe once traffic commences. A passenger may

feel most uncomfortable while travelling and looking into the abyss.

We do have safety concerns for the denizens of the undergrowth through which the track passes.

We would prefer that there is no road kill at all. A sign has been erected, see the photo. We are unsure that the wording applies to all who live in the vicinity or may



visit the area. We do not think that this covers all eventualities. Part of the line also passes very close to a very high brick wall which appears sound but we are unsure whether foundations have been affected by the track construction. Furry creatures have not been forbidden from the area, some of their activity would pose quite a hazard.

Flowers.

Take time to see, really see the flowers and smell them.

Thank you

To those who work hard planning our online services, taking services to those without computers and those who give to the Sudanese ministry. It was terrific to have donated on Saturday 25 July disposable masks and a child's ukulele by a member of our Chinese congregation.

Hilary would like to ask if anyone is interested in contributing to a book on this time in our lives.

**How about if we have it ready to print before Christmas for presents.
Please contact Hilary on 9899 7553 or 0400 635 600.**

Barbara writes

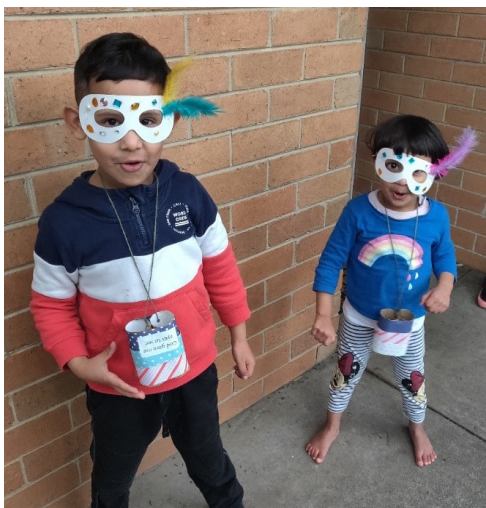
Playgroup at Home

At the beginning of term 3 we introduced a new activity called "Playgroup at Home". Playgroup has not been able to meet since mid-March, so it was decided to take Playgroup to the seven families who wished to participate.

Each fortnight we deliver two lesson packs to the families' front door steps. Included in each pack is the theme of the lesson, the Bible story and song suggestions that match the day's theme, plus craft items for the children to make one or two crafts related to the story / theme. Also included are ideas of other related activities that the parents can do with their children at home and a short note, called food for thought, for the parents to further ponder on the story or short parenting tips relating to a principle found in the Bible story.

The theme for this term is "All about me." So far, we have explored the themes of "I can see", "I can talk", "I can hear" and "I can touch", reflecting on the fact that it was God who gave us these abilities.

"I can see" crafts from the first lesson of Playgroup at Home.



Dream Stitches

Toilet paper and elastic!

What do they have in common? They both have been high demand commodities.

Forget about searching high and low for toilet paper, people everywhere are now searching for elastic to use in face masks. Dream Stitches is no exception.

In April, Dream Stitches was asked to make 500 masks for the Alfred Hospital. This task was completed by ANZAC Day.

In mid July, Dream Stitches were asked to make another 200 masks for a group who support disabled people. This was a paid job. More recently, Anglicare have approached Dream Stitches to make 300 masks in a week. All sewing is completed by the teachers in their own homes using donated fabric.



Photo: **Masks being handed over to the Alfred Hospital.**

Quilts

In late May, Anglicare asked Dream Stitches if they could make quilts for children who were impacted by the bush fires in East Gippsland. A small group of teachers met at the hall once or twice a week after the restrictions were lifted the first time, for quilting workshops. Other experienced quilters worked on quilts at home.

When we went into our second lockdown period, 7 quilts had been finished and around 18 were nearing completion. Experienced quilters undertook to complete the remainder at home during lockdown. It is unfortunate that the second lockdown has slowed progress and delayed delivery of the quilts. We hope that this can soon be resolved.

Margaret Dooley writes

Evangelism by Jam & Masks

When Phil and I moved to Bedford Heights 12 months ago, one of the main attractions was the range of community activities and the social interaction within the village. Bedford community centre is almost next door, so it was very easy to join with other residents for a drink and an evening meal, to use the library or the gym, go to a movie, or just to sit and have a chat. All of that is becoming a distant memory. During the first lockdown period we found it reasonably easy to stay hopeful – it seemed that movement restrictions had stopped the spread of the virus into the community, and there wasn't too much to be anxious about when there was only one active Coronavirus case in the City of Whitehorse. Maybe we had escaped the awful horrors of massive community infection that we saw in Italy, Spain, England and USA. We all started to relax a bit, and to think that we were past the worst.

Now we see how wrong we were and the second lockdown is so much harder than the first. We can now see how rapidly the virus infection spreads in workplaces and homes, in healthcare and most especially in Aged Care.

As I write the number of people infected in the City of Whitehorse has risen to 55 and we have at least one person infected in our village. So there won't be any return to 'life as normal' for quite some time. We do hope and pray for the development of successful treatments and for an effective vaccine, but those scientific breakthroughs are not usually the result of overnight inspiration but rather they come from weeks and months (or years) of unrelenting effort.

What can we do at this time? We cannot control much that is happening in the state, but we make our contributions to the community effort, if only by minimising our contact with others, keeping our hands clean and wearing a face mask. When the Government announced that masks would be mandatory, one of the residents in our village spurred the crafty people here to start making face masks. Our first sale of masks raised over \$300 for the Cancer Council, and a second sale this week will probably do the same. I may not have been able to play tennis or workout at the gym or exercise class, but my sewing machine is certainly getting a workout.

I was just planning to pack the machine away after finishing the Rona Scrubs sewing (17 sets of scrubs, all delivered to healthcare workers in the City of Whitehorse), when the mask project started and there are now half a dozen people sewing masks, with others helping by donating fabrics and elastic. The shortage of suitable elastic may be the factor that limits our production capacity, at least until I receive the 200 metres I have ordered online. Hilary and I have also kept on making jam, marmalade and chutney, with sales from the undercroft and to people in the village. People are limiting their shopping trips, but they can call me and pick up a jar of Cointreau orange marmalade, berry jam, or chutney or relish to enjoy themselves or to give to their relatives who are shopping for them. One of our resident customers told me that St Peter's was her church, although she had not been to services since her husband passed away, quite some years ago. I offered her a copy of the link and she is now joining our online congregation on Sundays. Evangelism by jam!



Who is the man in the mask?



Jan & Geoff write

We have missed our meetings, e.g. Mother's Union, Red Cross, Bus and Coach, Organ Society, Australian Independent Retirees, visits to 3 elderly people in Aged Care. I have felt very grateful and blessed to watch St. Peter's Eucharist each Sunday on my phone. This has been brilliant. Congratulations to all. Geoff's friend John sent me this cartoon and I have assured him I am dressed, fed, and ready at 9.30 each Sunday, as I listen watch sing and say each part. I crotch when I can. I can assure John when I carry my own hymnbook into church when "all is well", I won't have a spare hand for my crochet. Also I don't drink tea or coffee or wear fluffy slippers. We have enjoyed dropping into the office, Tuesday & Thursday to give

Fr. Shane an update on parishioners and collecting the LINK and sermon to deliver to 8 folk. We have a short natter after I ring the bell. It's nice to see all these folk are OK. Revd. Betty calls me the Parish Welfare Officer and I pass on to her the information I get. We have kept busy crossing off a list of "Things To Do," catching up on things on TV and watching some interesting DVDs.

Geoff loves reading his movie and bus books and is also a dab hand at housework. As I work 2 mornings a week for a GP, I can shop on the way home and have replaced my 4-5 days a week at the gym at Forest Hill with several rounds of the car park using a Woolies trolley. As it became busier I had lots of cars to dodge, but now back to only a few cars collecting take-away.



OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD.

As I said in the recent "link", I have boxes and starter bags ready to go. \$10. For bag. If you want either or both I can leave them in church office, if you are calling with food or envelopes. I am also happy to deliver. phone me 98906528, Also I am happy to "do" a box \$30. \$10/ of this is freight. **News from the new "drop off point" at Heathmont Baptist church.** 1 in 5. Children receiving a box "believes in Jesus", so that's 12 children from our record no of boxes last year.

Boxes went to The Philippines, Thailand, & Cambodia. As many of you may have noticed during the early days of Covid 19, the tents erected for accommodation of COVID patients in central park, New York, were clearly marked "Samaritans Purse." Reading in the July edition of TMA the question and answers article regarding Tammy Shepherd from St. Hilary's, volunteering in bushfire ravaged east Gippsland, you will see another facet of Samaritans purse.

SAMARITAN PURSE BOXES.

They sent a group of people, and chaplaincy team of four. Samaritans Purse set up a container full of necessary equipment for clearing burnt areas, along with Blaize Aid. I guess we only associate Samaritans purse with Christmas boxes, but they do have a wide range of humanitarian "good works" Donations other than for freight for our boxes goes to these activities. Jan Gunst coordinator.

Open Letter from Bethlehem Christian Clergy

"Act with justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed." (Jeremiah 22:3)

We are writing this letter in our capacity as spiritual leaders of various Christian communities in the Bethlehem Area. The Israeli Government is planning to annex more occupied Palestinian land. According to the information they have released, this process could begin on July 1st. For Palestine,

Bethlehem and particularly for its Christian population, this new process of annexation will be particularly catastrophic.

Soon after the occupation of 1967 Israel annexed over 20,000 dunums of land in the northern parts of Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour, for the construction of illegal colonial settlements. This severely hindered our capacity to grow as communities. They have already annexed one of the most important Christian religious

sites of Bethlehem, the Mar Elias Monastery, and separated Bethlehem from Jerusalem for the first time in the two-thousand years of Christian history in Holy Land.

One of the only areas left for our expansion, as well as for agriculture and simply for families to enjoy nature, are the valleys of Cremisan and Makhrou, both located to the west of our urban areas and are under the current threat of annexation by Israeli authorities.

This will affect the private property of hundreds of our parishioners. In the Cremisan Valley we also conduct spiritual activities. There is a school run by Salesian Nuns in addition to a historic monastery. The western Bethlehem countryside is also in danger, where some of our parishioners have been farming for generations, and this includes the Tent of Nations in Nahhalin. At the same time, and in accordance to the original maps of the US Plan, there are threats against the eastern part of Bethlehem, including the Ush Ughrab area of Beit Sahour, where there has been plans for years to build a children hospital to serve the local community.

Our biggest concern is that the annexation of those areas will push more people to emigrate. Bethlehem, surrounded by walls and settlements, already feels like an open prison. Annexation means the prison becomes even smaller, with no hopes for a better future.

This is land theft! We are talking about land that is largely privately owned and that our families have owned, inherited and farmed for hundreds of years.

Most of our parishioners have lost hope in earthly powers. They feel

hopeless and helpless, evident in the words a parishioner this month as he watched his land devoured by Israeli bulldozers preparing the way for more wall expansion: "It is devastating. You see bulldozers destroying your land and you can do nothing. No one is stopping them." Our parishioners no longer believe that anyone will stand courageously for justice and peace and stop this tremendous injustice that is taking place in front of your eyes. The human rights of Palestinians have been violated for decades. Hope is a pillar of our faith, yet is being challenged due to the actions of those who claim to care about the Christians in the Middle East. In practice, annexation could be the final straw when it comes to a viable Christian presence in Palestine, as well as the national aspirations to live in freedom, independence, dignity and equality in our homeland in accordance with international law. Nobody can claim that they did not know the consequences of annexation for Palestine in general and Bethlehem in particular. We feel the burden of history upon our shoulders to keep the Christian presence in the land where it all started. As we continue to put our hope and trust in God, we call upon

the leaders of this world to stop this severe injustice. We remain committed to peace with justice, and find strength in the support of many around the world, specially the support of many churches. We hope that the world takes decisive and concrete actions to stop this injustice and provide the conditions to restore hope for a future of justice and peace that this land deserves.

Fr. Yacoub Abu Sada – 'The Theotokos' Melkite Church Bethlehem

Fr. Issa Musleh – Forefathers Greek Orthodox Church Beit Sahour

Fr. Hanna Salem – Catholic Church of the Annunciation Beit Jala

Fr. Bolous Al Alam – St. Mary Greek Orthodox Church Beit Jala

Rev. Ashraf Tannous – The Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Reformation Beit Jala

Fr. Suheil Fakhouri – Our Lady of the Shepherds Melkite Church Beit Sahour

Rev. Munther Isaac – The Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church Bethlehem and The Evangelical Lutheran Church Beit Sahour

POLITICIANS, WAKE UP! DANISH YOUTH SHOUT OUT ON CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Sasha Sondergaard Hearn

Sasha Sondergaard Hearn is Bishop George's granddaughter. She is active in the School Strike 4 Climate movement in Denmark. This is a speech she made to an assembly of politicians at the Danish Parliament House in Copenhagen

*W*hat's the point? I ask this on behalf of an entire generation. A generation of young people who repeatedly walk the streets shouting for climate action, yet we are repeatedly met with empty words that never turn into action. We find it difficult to find meaning in what you - politicians say - because none of what we are told leads to the action on the climate crisis that we demand, on the contrary, it only makes our future even more uncertain. In December 2019, we got a climate

law for the first time. Presented as ambitious and binding - a climate law that will make Denmark a green pioneer - the most ambitious pioneer in the world.

When this happened, we felt young, in a small moment, hope and that we could breathe. After walking the streets and fighting with all our might for so long, we finally felt that our demands were being listened to and, for once, given priority.

But as time went on, we became increasingly disappointed as these many promises have not yet been put into action. The climate action plans have been postponed and the negotiations that have been made do not appear to be in a position to meet the objectives of the Climate Act or the Paris Agreement.

Again, we lack action from the politicians in Christiansborg, those who have the power and thus the

opportunities to act here and now. And again, we see how our demands for a future are deselected and how our globe is not prioritized - as always due to unilateral focus on economic growth and profit.

As a young climate activist, it was incredibly scary to acknowledge that we are all facing a huge crisis. But it has been even more shocking to see that they are responsible for the climate crisis; those who have the opportunity to do something - do not act on the climate crisis and would not actually take responsibility.

Of course, the only thing I and other young climate activists could do was take action because it was clear that nothing was being done about it. We began to strike and mobilize, and we found meaning in our common struggle: to stand with the same concerns and with the same hopes and dreams

of a future where our beautiful earth is always given high priority. We discovered that we could use our voice and directly demand the change needed. Through a historical mass mobilization of young people across continents, we put pressure on politicians and other rulers. And we are still standing here because we will not accept that the promises made by the politicians have not turned into the major structural changes of society that we demand.

It is perfectly clear that the climate and biodiversity crisis is an emergency and our action cannot wait. The crisis has enormous consequences for our land - even in its unfairness. The climate crisis affects the people who have done the least to create the most and benefits those who have created it. It highlights the inequalities present in the world at the same time that it creates further inequality. Therefore, the countries with the opportunity to act have a responsibility to remedy the looming crisis that we are facing.

Here, Denmark has the opportunity to be a truly green and ambitious leader.

The re-opening of Denmark after the corona should be seen as an opportunity to lead the fight away from the unambitious climate policy that we knew from before the society closed down. Right now, we have a unique opportunity to build our society in a way that leads to the necessary climate policy. During the corona crisis, we have clearly seen a fortunately strong power of politicians, a driving force that we used to long for. This necessary force must also apply to the climate crisis. We demand that politicians begin to treat all crises as a crisis, regardless of who is affected by them.

We want a green reboot of the community. A green reboot means that we set some requirements for how the reopening of Denmark should take place and requirements for how Denmark should follow the climate goals going forward.

We require that, as a premise for receiving support packages, you as

a body are committed to maintaining a sustainable profile going forward.

We require that a climate tax be imposed on goods depending on how climate friendly they are. This must be combined with a green check to ensure social equality. We need a transformation of the economy - a transition to circular economy, as a linear economy is not an option. It is necessary that we think planetary purposes into our economy.

In the end, we demand that green investments not black investments be made, as our future is green and not black.

We want and believe in a future where all our actions express love for the earth and each other.

We will continue the struggle to fight for our future, and no one has to decide what our future will look like. I know that we can act in solidarity and together create a better society.

THANK YOU

ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND THE GODS OF WAR.

Harry Kerr

A few Sundays ago we read the story of God's call to Abraham to offer a sacrifice of his son Isaac in Genesis 22. At the last minute God tells Abraham to stop and a ram caught in a thicket nearby was sacrificed instead. It struck me that this is a very strange story. What on earth is God up to? What is God trying to prove?

From reading the passage, it seems that God is testing Abraham. Will he obey God no matter what? To ask him to sacrifice the son who was God's special gift to him and Sarah just to prove a point seems drastic and cruel and to contradict all God is. Why would God need to test Abraham in this way? Had not Abraham demonstrated his faithfulness many times over? What would it achieve apart from a bitter and angry Abraham, a shattered Sarah and leave Isaac permanently afflicted with PTSD? How do we unpack this strange passage? We need to dig deeper.

It is clear from reading the Old Testament that the people of Israel were called to be different from the people round them, to have different standards and to behave differently because that was who God was. It is likely that Genesis was written when they were in exile in Babylon. The gods of Babylon were violent and warlike which suited a militaristic empire. It is also possible that their religion was very colourful and attractive to some Jews. Militarism is still attractive to many people. It would not be easy to stand for a different way. Genesis was written to remind them that they were different because their God was different. In particular it is possible that the Babylonians believed that they had to keep on the right side of their gods by offering the right sacrifices which may have included child sacrifice. It is probable that this passage is God's answer to child sacrifice. The story is told to drive home the lesson that God neither requires it or wants it. The people of Israel still had a rich

tradition of sacrificing animals to keep sweet with God. They had elaborate ceremonies with lively music all designed to keep the smile on God's face and the blessings flowing. In the prophets God pushes back. In Hosea chapter 6 we read: *I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings.* In Micah chapter 6, God specifically rejects child sacrifice: *Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with tens of thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?* We do not please God or bring God round when God is angry at us for doing the wrong things by sacrificing even what is most precious to us. What pleases God is who we are, what we do and how we answer God's call. Do we treat ourselves and

each other in ways that reflect God's love for all of us? These stories are very old. Have they anything to say to us to-day? They ask us a fundamental question: *Which God do we worship?* Do we worship the God of peace who demands loving kindness and not sacrifice or do we worship a god who is violent and capricious and demands child sacrifice? That might seem to be a strange question but is it? At the time of the Gallipoli centenary, I did a lot of reading about World War 1. What struck me was how hundreds of thousands of young men and boys were sent off into slaughter on an industrial scale. Many of those who returned alive were permanently damaged in body mind or both and their families paid the price. Was this not a form of human sacrifice to a violent God?

The Bishop of London in 1914 urged his clergy to join up not as chaplains but as soldiers to kill as many Germans as possible. No doubt German Bishops gave similar messages to their flocks. They believed they were going to defend the British Empire, or the German Empire, or the Russian Empire or the Turkish Empire. These empires represented to them the values they held most dear. But what kind of values or way of life do we "defend" when we sacrifice our young men and women? Who are we when we export weapons of war to the world's trouble spots? The early Christians refused to serve in the army because they believed in the God of peace who desired loving kindness and not sacrifice. Once the church did a deal with the Emperor Constantine and allowed

itself to be caught up in the imperial war machine, things changed. Armies were blessed. Some wars such as the Crusades were represented to be God's will. Christians fought wars against other Christians. Our Cathedrals often have military flags and banners hanging. Still we send our young men and women ought to fight. The proposed changes to the Australian War Memorial in Canberra would turn it into nothing less than a temple to the God of war rather than a place to remember and mourn those whose lives were sacrificed. In this very dangerous world, is it time for Christians to refuse to have anything to do with sacrificing our brightest and best to the gods of war and violence.

WE CAN'T GO BACK, BUT WE WILL UNLESS....

Jayne Ozanne

July 18 2020

Earlier this week I was privileged to hear Archbishop Desmond Tutu say these powerful words during a characteristically direct address ahead of a private screening of an epic new film about Africa, climate change and migration, the Great Green Wall. He was keen to draw on the words of Thomas Sankara, that set the tone of the film:

"We must dare to invent the future – everything humanity can imagine we can create".

For the last three months on Via Media we have had 24 vastly different and yet uniquely personal blogs from a range of contributors addressing the subject "We Can't Go Back..." They have touched on a truly diverse set of topics from power and equality to social care and justice, and from topics relating to our buildings to those relating to our well being and mental health. For all their differences, they have each dared to invent a new future, to imagine things as they could be. Indeed, the series itself found its genesis in words spoken by the Archbishop of Canterbury during his Easter Day sermon, televised to the nation from his kitchen at the start of

the lockdown, where he shared his own vision of a future filled with resurrection hope, saying:

"After so much suffering, so much heroism from key workers and the NHS, so much effort, once this epidemic is conquered here and round the world, we cannot be content to go back to what was before as if all is normal. There needs to be a resurrection of our common life, something that links to the old, but is different and more beautiful. We must dream it because it is the gift of God. Then we must build it in partnership with God."

But the million-dollar question of course is – will things actually *really* change? Or perhaps more importantly – what will it take to bring about the change so many long for, write for, march for and in some cases, even die for? I suggest that there are three things that we can each do to help bring about the change we seek. For power truly does *"rest with the people"* – we just need to understand how much power we have and how it can be harnessed, released and used to transform our Church, and our world.

The first is, we need to pledge to always "call things out". We need to name the elephants in the room. We need to stop admiring the "emperor's new clothes", and instead have the humanity and the decency to tell the emperors that they are in fact naked, that we will not go along with their charades any longer. It takes courage and wisdom, and it requires a tone that is full of love rather than accusation – a balance that is not easy to strike. In essence we need to stop colluding. We need to stop colluding with the lies that have kept us all bound and which have often left us feeling that we have no option but to conform.

What sort of lies?

Well those that say our Church is not rich. We *are* rich

It is just that the money is locked up in ways few can access, and it is this that needs challenging. It is the lies that say we, the Church, are united, when we all know that we are deeply divided and that it is those without power and influence who end up leaving by the back door, with few seeming to notice or care. It is the lies that say we, the Church, have a respected voice in our nation, when in fact few are listening and frankly many no longer care as we lost their

respect the moment we started preaching love to them and abjectly failing to show it to some of the most vulnerable in our midst. The second, which is closely related to the first, is that we need to stop being so deferential. This does not mean that we stop showing respect to people, that is quite a different matter – mutual respect is healthy and essential. However, there is an unhealthy level of deference in our Church that seems to put senior religious leaders on pedestals from which they can only fall. They are human beings just like the rest of us. They bleed, just like the rest of us. They make mistakes, just like the rest of us. If we are honest, deference can act both ways – it can be as much about people in power expecting it as well as those “in the pews” kowtowing to it. It may well have been an unspoken norm from our

past, but it is not the model that Jesus shows us as he interacts with people around him – in fact quite the opposite. The religious leaders of the day may have expected it, but He modelled something quite different – much to their frustration – and the people loved Him for it! Thirdly, we have to believe in ourselves. “*There can be miracles, when you believe.*” is not just a song sung by Mariah Carey. It is something we each have to embrace and hold on to. Right now there is so much that could happen, if only there were people willing to step forward and lead change. We are in the midst of a major “reset” – there is a “reboot” that is happening not just in our Church, but in our nation and in the world itself. Never has there been such an opportune time for people to stand up and say “enough, I want to do things differently!” What is stopping

them? Mostly, although I appreciate not always, it is their own levels of self-confidence and sense of self-worth. We are the key – we are also the barrier. Change lies with us! So, in the words of Archbishop Tutu, who closed his address to us with the following challenge: “*Let us not forget the transformative power of hope and imagination – we must dare to invent the future!*” We must “dare”, and we must “do” – for real power lies with us!

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TIME TO BUILD A RESILIENT, SUSTAINABLE AND JUST FUTURE Uniting Church in Australia.

Our Vision for a Just Australia
 The Uniting Church in Australia sees a nation where each person and all creation can flourish and enjoy abundant life. We believe the whole world is God’s good creation. Each person is made in God’s image and is deeply loved by God. In Jesus, God is completing the reconciliation and renewal of the whole creation. Our vision, grounded in the life and mission of Jesus, is for a nation which:

- is characterised by love for one another, of peace with justice, of healing and reconciliation, of welcome and inclusion.
- recognises the equality and dignity of each person.
- recognises sovereignty of First Peoples, has enshrined a First Peoples voice and is committed to truth telling about our history.
- takes seriously our responsibility to care for the whole of creation.
- is outward looking, a generous and compassionate contributor to a just world.

In a post-COVID-19 world
 There is much we have learned through this pandemic about who we

are as a nation, our vulnerabilities and our strengths. Drawing upon these learnings and the values articulated in our vision, we believe we have an opportunity to create a better future where all people and all creation can flourish. We have learned:

- Australia and the whole world are not immune from major threats, and that society is only as strong and as healthy as the most vulnerable in our communities.

We need to: **Build Resilient Individuals, Families and Communities**

- Existing inequalities are exacerbated in times of crisis, increasing the vulnerability of individuals and the whole community. When we make sacrifices for the well-being of the whole of society, we all benefit.

We need to: **Build a more equal society**

- We are all interconnected. In times of fear and anxiety, racism, isolation and remoteness can lead to less healthy and productive communities.

We need to: **Build a nation where everyone is respected and has a voice**

- We are capable of innovative solutions and new ways of being. A crisis is an opportunity to reimagine policy.

We need: **Creative, collaborative and constructive leadership to rebuild Australia**

- Reducing fossil fuel usage is possible and positively impacts the environment and all living thing

We need to: **Build for a sustainable future**

Key Actions for rebuilding:

Based on the principles outlined above, we believe the following actions are key in the process of rebuilding our nation.

- 1. Stimulation of the economy with a focus on job creation** by investing in projects that are good for all Australians and for our planet.
- 2. Fix gaps in the social security safety net** and ensure a permanent increase to JobSeeker Allowance, providing a liveable safety net for those out-of-work.
- 3. Ensure community services are properly resourced** to support vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals, families and communities, and to respond to areas of growing need, including domestic and family violence and mental health.

4. First Peoples and rural and remote communities must have adequate access to food and health services.

5. Develop initiatives that improve access to affordable housing for all people.

6. Ensuring our tax system is fair and transparent, with individuals and corporations contributing fairly to the costs of post-COVID-19 recovery.

7. Doing our share for the global recovery from COVID-19 and building a more equitable, safe and sustainable world for the future.

8. Reducing fossil fuel usage, and excessive consumption of resources to build for a sustainable future.

9. Adequate support for people living with disability and older Australians.

10. Prioritising work towards Voice, Truth and Treaty for First Peoples, meaningful action on incarceration rates for Indigenous Australians and calling out racism and building inclusion across all Australian society.

11. A focus on creating pathways to permanent migration.

12. Collaboration between governments and civil society with political leadership focused on the common good.

CHRISTIANITY OFFERS NO ANSWERS ABOUT THE CORONAVIRUS. IT'S NOT SUPPOSED TO

N.T.Wright

N. T. Wright is the former Bishop of Durham and Professor of New Testament at St Andrew's University

For many Christians, the coronavirus-induced limitations on life arrived at the same time as Lent, the traditional season of doing without. But the sharp new regulations—no theatre, schools shutting, virtual house arrest for us over-70s, not seeing friends or grandchildren, or going to the pub, the library or church.

There is a reason we normally try to meet in the flesh. There is a reason solitary confinement is such a severe punishment. We can't look forward. This is a stillness, not of rest, but of poised, anxious sorrow. No doubt the usual silly suspects will tell us why God is doing this to us. A punishment? A warning? A sign? These are knee-jerk would-be Christian reactions in a culture which, generations back, embraced rationalism: everything must have an explanation. But supposing it doesn't? Supposing real human wisdom doesn't mean being able to string together some dodgy speculations and say, "So that's all right then?" What if, after all, there are moments such as T. S. Eliot recognized in the early 1940s, when the only advice is to wait without hope, because we'd be hoping for the wrong thing?

Rationalists (including Christian rationalists) want explanations; Romantics (including Christian romantics) want to be given a sigh of relief. But perhaps what we need more than either is to recover the biblical tradition of *lament*. Lament is what happens when people ask,

"Why?" and don't get an answer.

It's where we get to when we move beyond our self-centred worry about our sins and failings and look more broadly at the suffering of the world. It's bad enough facing a pandemic in New York City or London. What about a crowded refugee camp on a Greek island? What about Gaza? Or South Sudan?

At this point the Psalms, the Bible's own hymnbook, come back into their own, just when some churches seem to have given them up. "*Be gracious to me, Lord,*" prays the sixth Psalm, "*for I am languishing; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are shaking with terror.*" "*Why do you stand far off, O Lord?*" asks the 10th Psalm plaintively.

"*Why do you hide yourself in time of trouble?*" And so it goes on: "*How long, O Lord? Will you forget me for ever?*" (Psalm 13). And, all the more terrifying because Jesus himself quoted it in his agony on the cross, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" (Psalm 22).

Yes, these poems often come out into the light by the end, with a fresh sense of God's presence and hope, not to explain the trouble but to provide reassurance within it. But sometimes they go the other way. Psalm 89 starts off by celebrating God's goodness and promises, and then suddenly switches and declares that it's all gone horribly wrong. And Psalm 88 starts in misery and ends in darkness: "*You have caused friend and neighbour to shun me; my companions are in darkness.*" A word for our self-isolated times. The point of lament, woven thus

into the fabric of the biblical tradition, is not just that it's an outlet for our frustration, sorrow, loneliness and sheer inability to understand what is happening or why. The mystery of the biblical story is that *God also laments*. Some Christians like to think of God as above all that, knowing everything, in charge of everything, calm and unaffected by the troubles in his world. That's not the picture we get in the Bible.

God was grieved to his heart, Genesis declares, over the violent wickedness of his human creatures. He was devastated when his own bride, the people of Israel, turned away from him. And when God came back to his people in person—the story of Jesus is meaningless unless that's what it's about—he wept at the tomb of his friend. St. Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit "groaning" within us, as we ourselves groan within the pain of the whole creation. The ancient doctrine of the Trinity teaches us to recognize the One God in the tears of Jesus and the anguish of the Spirit.

It is no part of the Christian vocation, then, to be able to explain what's happening and why. In fact, it *is* part of the Christian vocation *not to be able* to explain—and to lament instead. As the Spirit laments within us, so we become, even in our self-isolation, small shrines where the presence and healing love of God can dwell. And out of that there can emerge new possibilities, new acts of kindness, new scientific understanding, new hope. New wisdom for our leaders? Now there's a thought.