

The Parish Paper

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St Peter's Church, Eastern Hill, Melbourne

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Parish Church of the City since 1847



Water and Wine

Mthr Kathryn Bellhouse

Have you ever heard of Simone Weil? She was a philosopher, and a mystic of sorts, who lived, most of her life in France, between 1909-1943. A deeply thoughtful person who, even as a child, took to heart the command to love one's neighbour, she went on to wrestle with many of the ideals of her generation. Early on in her career, she gave up teaching to join the assembly line of a factory (*I cannot write about the worker until I have lived as one of them*); in her late twenties, she had two encounters with the Christian faith and one with Christ himself that deepened her spiritual commitment; toward the end of her life, while in England working for the French Resistance, she insisted on eating the same restricted diet as soldiers in the field. In a very long essay written at that time, she named within herself an "essential need, and I think I can say vocation, to move among men of every class and complexion, mixing with them and sharing their outlook on life." This was her calling. She was "ever ready to be mixed into the paste of common humanity."

I have been thinking of Weil in recent days, and in particular of those words, as, to my mind, they capture something of the mystery of Christmas: through Mary, God mixed himself *into the paste of common humanity*. He even assembled around his crib, in that ancient cave in Bethlehem, various people who were strangers to one another, as if to bring home to each of them that he was handing himself to all of them alike.

In our century, when people are searching for themselves, the emphasis is often placed on what distinguishes one person from others, looking to various points of difference to distinguish oneself, one's profession, one's nation or indeed one's corporation, as something unique and uniquely valuable to others. Even in the spiritual life, the question can easily become what makes one's personal faith or parish or denomination different, and even uniquely faithful, in contrast to the thousand others to be found in the world today. Underlying the impulse can, I believe, be a profound anxiety. An anxiety that, unless we set ourselves apart, we will be found unworthy, as though our survival, our value, even our validity before God, depended on being *exceptional*; that which will be *enough* to redeem us, must be something *more* than most have had to offer in the past, or have to offer now. To put it differently: if history is a history of blundering, and if we live in a world full of blunders, then in order to be redeemed, we must be set apart!

I wonder if Christmas invites us to lean into the opposite emphasis. As we contemplate the crib, we remember that our redemption depends, not on what sets us apart, but rather on what holds us together. We are of one species, of one nature, of one elemental existence, with *him*. Jesus. The Christ child. Therein lies my hope, and therein lies the hope of all people.

When a priest or deacon, preparing for the Eucharist, mixes a drop of water into the cup of wine, they pray quietly:

By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.

The water is a symbol of our humanity; the wine, of the divine nature of God. We are like plain water, yet, by the wine of Christ's divinity, we are cleansed and transfigured, that we may share the potency and sweetness of God. It is, of course, an imperfect analogy: in Christ, divine and human do not "blend in" to each other to form one hybrid species (nor do we ultimately hope to "blend in" to the Blessed Trinity); rather, each nature exists *in* the other, *as* another.

Nevertheless, the water and wine convey something powerful about the connection our Saviour has established with our whole species. It is elemental. While, when pondering the Christ child, the Almightyness of God may seem to disappear into the naked humanity of the crying baby: it does not. The divinity of the Word abides within, forming the creature he has become. So, too, through the Eucharist, he enters into us, not because we are particularly exotic or unusual specimens, but because we belong to a species as common and beautiful as water. As a species we are also, mind you, as susceptible as water to imperfection, but that is why we need the wine. It cleanses us.

This can be the beauty of life in the Church, engaging with one another, not as colleague or kin, but as human being. Amidst all the dazzling variety of personality and of piety in the Church, we try to share the simple way of life that has been lived by lovers of Christ for what are now millennia, and so learn to trust, ever afresh with each Eucharist, that our Saviour abides within the paste of *our* common humanity, and that, if he abides within, that will be, for God, *enough*.
Amen.

(Quotes taken from Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, trans. Emma Craufurd, New York: Harper, 1951, p.48, 49)

Epiphany Poem

The red king
Came to a great water. He said,
Here the journey ends.
No keel or skipper on this shore.
The yellow king
Halted under a hill. He said,
Turn the camels round.
Beyond, ice summits only.

The black king
Knocked on a city gate. He said,
All roads stop here.
These are gravestones, no inn.

The three kings
Met under a dry star.
There, at midnight,
The star began its singing.

The three kings
Suffered salt, snow, skulls.
They suffered the silence
Before the first word.

- *George Mackay Brown*

The new Director of Music at St. Peter's

Christopher Watson

I was very lucky to be born into a family with a long musical heritage, particularly on my father's side. His mother studied the piano at the Royal Academy of Music and her father was a keen amateur singer and member of the Huddersfield Choral Society. Dad's father sang in the Worcester Festival Chorus under Ivor Atkins and joined Worcester Cathedral Choir in 1950 under David Willcocks, and granddad's uncle Edward was a published composer who also worked closely on the creation of musical braille notation.

Granddad also played the organ in the local church, and when my dad went up to Oxford he sang in the choir of Magdalen College under Bernard Rose and played the organ at Manchester College. There he met my Godfather, the organist and composer Christopher Gower (narrowly missing Christopher's predecessor in the Magdalen organ loft, Dudley Moore...) and was a founder member of David Wulstan's Clerkes of Oxenford, the forerunners of the Tallis Scholars and the Sixteen.

Dad had a career as a schoolmaster, teaching history, running choirs, directing plays and shows (under the pseudonym Cecil B. de Watty) and was the director of music at a parish church in Cheltenham – which is where I got my first experience as a chorister.

In my teens Dad was the housemaster for the cathedral choristers at Canterbury Cathedral, so if everything else wasn't enough living 20 yards from that building, listening to the choir several times a week and talking to Allan Wicks as often as I could meant that I really had no choice but to become a musician!

I studied music at Exeter University and sang in the cathedral choir under Lucian Nethsingha, followed by three years at Durham with James Lancelot, four at Christ Church Oxford with Stephen Darlington and then seven years at Westminster Cathedral with James O'Donnell and Martin Baker. At some point in 1998 the Tallis Scholars rang me and by 2004 I was busy enough with them and other groups like Theatre of Voices and Collegium Vocale Gent to consider moving to a completely freelance existence, which I lived until moving to Australia and Trinity College Melbourne at the start of 2017. I am told (Peter Phillips is somewhat of a record-keeper) that I made 550 appearances with the Tallis Scholars, and you will find my warbling on over 100 CD recordings. I dread to think how many hours standing in freezing churches that represents!

Being a freelance musician means travelling a lot – I estimate that I averaged a hundred flights a year for over ten years – and so I suppose I have to list travelling as one of my hobbies. It was such a privilege to be paid to visit some of the most wonderful towns and cities in the world, and to get to know some of them (New York, Boston, Porto, Copenhagen, Florence, Amsterdam, Antwerp) almost as well as I know the places that I have called home, in particular Oxford and Melbourne. Regular trips to Japan were a particular highlight, as was my annual summer habit of heading (as soon as possible) slowly south through Burgundy and the Rhone to the Med, and then back home (as late as possible) via the Loire. I think I had to change the suspension on my car three times due to the extra work it had done transporting case after case of deliciousness. Of course since the idiocy that was Brexit that is no longer quite as easy as it was, but now I have the Yarra Valley, the Mornington Peninsula, and Coonawarra et al., which are proving to be just as delightful!

I am looking forward to getting to know everyone at St Peter's, and to get going with music-making in the church in January, and am very grateful for the opportunity to join this wonderful community.

La Chapelle de l'Ermitage in Neuchâtel

Fr Michael's account of his visit to the La Trobe Chapel in Switzerland

In October I was lucky enough to visit *La Chapelle de l'Ermitage* in Neuchâtel, on the French side of Switzerland, a little Swiss protestant church with a fascinating connection to our Founder, Charles Joseph La Trobe. As you may recall La Trobe (who was English of Huguenot descent, but a Moravian Christian by upbringing) married a Swiss woman, Sophie de Montmollin, from a Neuchâtel family. Sophie died at Neuchâtel after returning to Europe with their children in the early 1850s and La Trobe then married her widowed sister Rose who also had children. The sisters' family in Neuchâtel built this chapel as a memorial to La Trobe in the style of an English village church, making it a striking addition to the local buildings in the town of 33,000, picturesquely set (like so much of Switzerland!) on a hill above a lake.

Most of my holiday was spent in and around Milan, where two good friends, virtuoso jazz pianists Paolo Alderighi and Stephanie Trick live for part of the year (they will be staying with me for three weeks next July, so watch out for some wonderful piano concerts then). Paolo and Stephanie had arranged a

concert at the Grand Hotel Giessbach not far from Neuchâtel so that they could then drive me to this church, a work or supererogation for which I am extremely grateful. The extraordinary hotel, which is pure Swiss Picture Postcard, is set in a hillside with a spectacular waterfall on one side and an outlook across Lake Brienz at some snow-covered Alps on the other. It has been on the site in various iterations since the 1870s and was saved from demolition in 1979 by state intervention, so it has a special place in Swiss hearts and even its own archivist, the cultivated and congenial Thomas Krebs (also a piano-jazz fan), with whom we dined. He has papers dating back to 1869 which record connections to Australia: the grandson of the original owner, Weber, migrated to Australia and was involved with the very first use of X-rays here (there are apparently still descendants in our neck of the woods). The wonderful concert was in a gorgeous *Belle Epoque* ballroom off the hotel foyer and was enthusiastically received.

The next day, being Sunday 1st October, after a fine breakfast (at which another pianist entertained us), we drove south to Neuchâtel. We arrived an hour early for the planned visit which was to begin at 2pm with a short talk from me (with simultaneous translation by Daniel Schultless, a congregant with whom I'd been in touch for some months); then Stephanie and Paolo would play some spirituals in a New Orleans jazz style.

With some time to spare we wandered up the road opposite, past the eponymous *Ermitage*, and found a glorious botanical garden, which I gather had some input from Sophie La Trobe's family (La Trobe himself was an amateur botanist, among many other interests and founded our Botanical Gardens in Melbourne).

It happened that this day, 1 October, was the anniversary of the date in 1839 when La Trobe and his young family arrived in Melbourne to take up his commission from Queen Victoria as Superintendent of what was then the Port Phillip District of NSW, under the oversight of the Governor who was based 1000 kms away in Sydney.

With him on 1 October 1839 was his wife Sophie (memorialised on our south wall) and his two-year-old daughter Agnes Louise. Agnes travelled back to Europe with her mother when La Trobe's time in Melbourne ended; her father then joined the family, but as we know Sophie had died before he returned and he then married Sophie's widowed sister Rose. The La Trobes lived in England for many years, but the connection with the Swiss family de Montmollin remained strong; Agnes, the daughter who'd come to Melbourne with her father

and mother (and must have worshipped in St Peter's), later married into a local Swiss-Italian aristocratic family, with the surname de Salis-Soglio and she lived until 1916. One of the first things I saw on visiting the chapel was a memorial to Agnes on the outer wall of the church.

The talk seemed to go well enough (I count any talk in which no one heckles or throws things a success). I spoke and was translated paragraph by paragraph by Daniel Schultless; Stephanie and Paolo then played Just a closer walk with thee, His Eye Is On the Sparrow and Amazing Grace. I took questions, several of which were attempts to understand what Anglicans might be (especially our sort), but there was also much interest in our Lazarus Breakfast Programme and our context in this, to them, very large city. I answered with varying degrees of competence and then Stephanie and Paolo rounded off the hour with When The Saints Go Marching In. The best question, from the (Lebanese) Pastor, Constantin Bacha, was 'what is your relationship with David Bowie?' I have a story about answering that question in a different Swiss Grand Hotel which I'll share another time.

I suspect La Trobe was a fairly typical well-educated and inveterately curious man of his time. He enrolled at Cambridge, though we don't know whether he ever took a degree; always very restless, he had already, before marriage and coming to Melbourne, spent two years in Neuchâtel and become a keen Alpinist, as they call obsessive mountain climbers: Italy has a wonderful club called the Alpinists who go on rambles together (and, more often, meet in bars wearing strange Alpine hats). La Trobe was apparently so skilled at this that he could cross the mountains without guides or porters and his first book, *The Alpenstock*, was a surprise hit, leading to a first career as a travel writer. This in turn led to his friendship and exploratory travels with the American writer Washington Irving (the author of *Rip Van Winkle*) about which he published two bestsellers. Washington Irving wrote that La Trobe was

a man of a thousand occupations, a botanist, a geologist, a hunter of beetles and butterflies, a musical amateur, a sketcher of no mean pretensions, in short a complete virtuoso; added to which he was an indefatigable if not always a very successful sportsman.

After the talk and musical interludes we gathered outside the little church, where local red wine from the family vineyard (and grape juice from the last week's harvest for any teetotallers – not many that I noticed!) and of course Swiss chocolates appeared. Members of the congregation in Neuchâtel and its

Pastor are keen to make a link with St Peter's and to rekindle some past contacts with the La Trobe Society; we'll try to do that in the coming months. Loaded up with more chocolate and wine, we left the congregation to continue sociably drinking while we set off on a five hour drive back to Milan (Stephanie and Paolo are absolute heroes for making this visit possible).

The wine and chocolate were an unexpected bonus to a slightly eccentric but very pleasant ecclesiastical interlude. The chapel gathers a delightful little community, busily advocating for a welcome to refugees and having among them at least two La Trobe descendants. Pastor Constantin, a little carried away by the section of my talk about our Lazarus Breakfast Programme, suggested it would be good to bring some of his young people to Melbourne to meet our homeless friends(!), a phenomenon he said they don't really meet in their prosperous Swiss town of 33,000. He also spoke of a creating a twinning link, which might be a little more practical than flying young people 16,000 kilometres to observe a problem which others assured me can be found in Zurich!

Healthcare funding and Christian ethics

Stephen Duckett reflects on his new book

On All Saints Day about 40 parishioners and other interested people joined me in the Parish Hall to celebrate the launch of my latest book, *Healthcare funding and Christian ethics*, by the Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr Philip Freier. The book was published by Cambridge University Press earlier this year. An account of the book launch is available at the University of Divinity's Vox site (see Editorial). The book is based on a thesis I wrote for a PhD awarded by the Archbishop of Canterbury – yes, he has the power to award these degrees, sometimes called Lambeth doctorates.

The quest in the thesis and the book was to discern underlying ethical principles for how societies and governments should make decisions about healthcare funding. Ethical principles and values, in my view, don't just land from nowhere, like a Martian spaceship, but rather should be founded in some sort of framework. I argue that such a framework can be based on Jesus' teachings, specifically, in this case, using an exegesis of the 'Good' Samaritan parable as a starting point (Luke 10: 25-37).

The story is well known and was used by Jesus to explicate the meaning of the second Great Commandment, about loving neighbour.

Recall that after two others, who might have been expected to help, had passed by a 'certain man' who had been bashed by robbers and left wounded on the side of the road, the Samaritan, 'moved by compassion', stopped to assist him. Not only did the Samaritan help the man, but he took him on his donkey to a nearby inn and paid the innkeeper to look after the wounded until he was better, committing to pay the bill on his return. Jesus uses the story to teach that loving neighbour is played out in our actions, and that the Samaritan, the least likely hero of a Jewish story, is the one who showed mercy. The story is about being neighbourly, who we are, not about defining and limiting who is a neighbour.

I claim we can see three principles in this story which can provide an ethical basis for healthcare funding choices.

Firstly, health care funding decisions should be motivated by compassion. This should happen in many ways, including healthcare staff having time to be compassionate, that funding is not too tight to prevent their professionalism.

Secondly, we can see that the story points to inclusion and social justice. It is the Samaritan who cares and, importantly, because the wounded man was stripped of his clothes, the Samaritan had no idea whether he was a Jew, a Samaritan, or someone else. His care was for the person in need, regardless of who that person was.

Thirdly, we can see a principle of what I call 'responsible stewardship' at work. The Samaritan takes the wounded person to the inn and trusts the innkeeper to be reasonable in what it cost to look after him – even though the Samaritan said he would pay whatever it takes. Resources are not unlimited and so it is important that healthcare funding funds are used judiciously. Economic evaluation can help with prioritising resource allocation, but it needs to have an equity overlay.

The book is also a work of public theology, and so I have a few reflections on the place of this sort of argument in the public sphere. I have always talked about equity and efficiency in the healthcare system in my career, advocating the second and third principles of social justice and responsible stewardship. A big change for me from this work is that I now talk more about compassion in my public commentary.

The book launch was a joyous celebration of my labours in the academic vineyards or coalmines over the past few years. I would like to thank all those who attended the launch and worked to make it possible. Parishioners should remain on guard, though, because I still love to talk about these ideas so be

careful you are not cornered with no paths to escape if you raise the topic with me.

The book is available through the St. Peter's Bookroom, and I'm also available to sign copies for you if you wish.

Walking alongside, sharing stories

Peter-Barnabas Wild

Misery is no respecter of seasons.

Peace and goodwill? With our advent adrenalin depleted, friends and family absent (or uncomfortably present), Christmas can be a drab and dismal time.

After live streaming high mass last Christmas, I momentarily slumped in a deserted pew, dredging up resolve. Then, dejected but determined, I trotted over Victoria Street to the Emergency Department at St Vincent's Hospital.

Feeling ridiculous, I superfluously informed the triage nurse that my private psychiatrist was unavailable, and then presented for psychiatric assessment citing rapidly cycling bipolar mania, accompanied by violent fantasy. I had become increasingly dismayed by the irrationality and intensity of my thoughts. I recall being incensed for days when a friend casually described me as "fragile" when I regarded my mood as "feisty." More sobering, at refreshments after high mass, I once had to be physically restrained from cracking the skull of an exasperating communicant using an empty wine bottle. St Vincent's swiftly ushered me into a salubrious and comfortable observation space.

Our world is gripped by a pandemic of mental malaise, unwellness and unkindness (Why would any civilised society routinely remind the public not to abuse front line staff?). As a tempest rocked my boat from July 2022 to August 2023, the worship and people at St Peter's were among a number of steady, understated anchors in my storm.

This piece weaves together two strands. I'm writing here about one powerful way we at St Peter's already safeguard our psyches as members of a Eucharistic community, without need of psychological training – and might beneficially double down on it. That's **walking alongside, sharing stories**. Since telling stories is a key focus of this piece, I ground it in a thread of my recent personal story relating to a twelve-month bout of serious (but well-managed) mental

illness. Telling that story in a variety of contexts has been profoundly fortifying as my illness unfolded.

I was unambiguously diagnosed with bipolar type I thirty years ago, during a ricochet-off-the-wall mania. My florid manias, invariably mixed with subdued and affectionate spells, have three main characteristics: exuberant energy, recklessly immune to others' reactions; irritating "incandescent for Jesus" religious fervour; and belligerent hypersensitivity.

Daily vigilance living with a specific condition like bipolar, in jeopardy of losing control of one's mind and emotions, is a tiresome challenge. But there also is much accumulated wisdom regarding its management – miraculous medications, cognitive behavioural therapy, nurturing disciplines of the soul, wholesome lifestyle practices, and supportive networks. In general, in life we all sail on choppy seas at times – disappointments in relationships, adversity at work, financial stresses, ill-health, as well as the common vicissitudes of life. We also encounter fair weather – happy times with friends and family, success in our endeavours, and the sheer beauty of life. Fair weather or foul, these are all of great moment, as great as any mental illness.

This is where walking alongside and sharing stories come into play.

Walking alongside

It's easy to forget the centrality of walking in the pre-modern world. By walking, humans colonised the planet. The Son of God walked the world at four miles per hour - when he chose to ride, he borrowed a donkey. Walking remains a powerful metaphor of human journeying, and of discipleship.

A community focussed on the Eucharist is also naturally a community focussed on discipleship. Disciples tend to walk in pairs or in small companies, which is how we typically see people in the street. It's how Cleopas and his unnamed fellow disciple met Jesus the first Easter, as all three of them walked alongside, hearts burning, to Emmaus.

Today many of us walk alone more than we would like. In the current age of ambient anomie, our collective cognitive compass awry, our affect numb and lethargic, the dilute acid of everyday unmoored isolation slowly, implacably corrodes our sedated souls.

Our salvation story, our Heilsgeschichte – God's story for humans, and more significant and meaningful than event-based history – traces human alonsideness far back to Eden, where God said that everything was very good -

except that Adam lacked a suitable companion. Meticulously, the sacred story tells us that God fashions the woman out of man's rib, not his head nor his feet, signifying that, from the very beginning, male and female are intended to walk alongside in a relationship of equality, neither dominant nor submissive.

Walking alongside is about equal status and dignity along the Way (as New Testament believers, including St Paul, preferred to describe their discipleship). It also affirms the freedom to follow our calling within the Way. Walking alongside is not competitive, nor intrusive, and it is certainly not exclusive - my Indonesian boyfriend, a Muslim, and I have been walking alongside for 15 years, laughing, each exhorting the other to navigate prayerfully our parallel lanes of the Way of God.

The distinctive nature of walking alongside is succinctly articulated in a short poem frequently (but wholly implausibly) attributed to Albert Camus.

Don't walk in front of me... I may not follow
 Don't walk behind me... I may not lead
 Walk beside me... just be my friend.

Sharing stories

As disciples **walk** the Way together, we also often **talk** together. A lot of Wayfaring talk is, and should be, ephemeral banter. Still, introvert or extrovert, we often also have stories busting out of our brains, stories – sometimes silly stories – that are meant to be told, heard, appreciated.

I first encountered organised storytelling nearly twenty years ago when I was living in Dili, Timor Leste. In tepid twilight of sultry day, I met some of my Timorese friends chatting and laughing on the verandah of the local pub. I asked them what they were doing and they replied *tur halimar, konta istoria = just sitting around, telling stories*. Ordering a round of drinks, I sat down with them and listened to their rapid-fire dialogue as best I could. It turned that they weren't discussing salient issues of Timorese sovereignty nor how to construct a State budget within the constraints of oil revenue (my professional headache.) Rather, they told stories about happenings in their community, comic and tragic, current and long past, binding themselves to each other by re-enacted shared experience. I realised quickly that this cohering activity (a regular pastime in Dili) was something no longer common in my own culture.

I have recently encountered more structured story telling at Exploring Faith Matters = Education for Ministry = EFM. Over a few months, participants

privately prepare spiritual autobiographies and then share short selections with the group, who listen in respectful silence, without comment. For me, this curated, intentional storytelling deepened my understanding and engendered admiration for the courage and authentic living of my fellow participants, whom I suddenly perceived to be special.

Sharing stories as we walk alongside is primarily affirming rather than intentionally therapeutic, though the experience may have a healing effect. Sharing stories is about hearing and appreciating the other's narrative. It's not permission to offer commentary (not forbidden, but requires care) or about "fixing" anything (which is fraught). Walking alongside naturally allows for **silence** before and in response to talk; as the abstract artist Mark Rothko reminded us, "silence is so accurate". When they first saw Job in his derelict misery, his friends did well by sitting alongside him in silence for days; as soon as they spoke they erred, first telling Job his story (which was pretty cheeky) and then unwisely speculating on God's part of the story (which was even cheekier).

Proper storytelling and proper listening take time, foregoing other activities and focussed attention, curbing the urge to intervene. We are bankrupt in time, we have gnattish attention, so storytelling gets squeezed out.

When engaging with others' stories, simple questions – clarifying, pacing or inviting - work best, better than statements. An important alongside invitation to domestic storytelling is "How's your day been?" followed by attentive engagement with the preciously mundane. A powerful alongside invitation in therapy is "How's your week been?" followed by attentive engagement with the response of the therapee's soul to actuality. With its many long-term members, the community at St Peter's is well suited to sharing stories, as many of us already know each other and so already have the context for easy, nuanced storytelling.

To finish, let's circle back to the story of my bipolar mixed episode.

Sometimes walking alongside involves privileged declaration. By the gracious agency of the Holy Spirit, my Dad, dead and conjoined with the Godhead for nearly forty years, sometimes fleetingly walks alongside me, nudging. On the Feast of All Souls, profoundly thankful to be at last post-episodic since August, I reflected ruefully on renewed rage hijacking my psyche. Unheralded, Dad's voice dropped into my fretful prayer, pebble into troubled waters. "That's just the way things are going to be, Son." Velvet silence. **Only** Dad called/calls me "Son" and he **always** called/calls me "Son." Suddenly come, instantly gone. No

explanation, no resolution, no clear guidance, no fix, and certainly no expression of sympathy. Just an unadorned statement of reorienting fact, unwelcome but wholly credible, suffused with matter-of-fact paternal affection. God's love is bracingly matter-of-fact, and as raw as giving birth out of wedlock in a stable far from home.

So how does my story evolve from here?

I don't know the details, of course. I'll certainly test Dad's reframing of my situation. I'll certainly maintain all the protections that I have assembled over the years. This time I'll also get an expert to walk alongside me deploying some serious psychodynamics (as opposed to behaviouralism) to investigate what might be animating my novel, thuggish and random anger. I wouldn't be surprised if Dad knows something about it, indeed has something to do with it!

In terms of the mindset for everyday walking of the Way, I can't do better than the characteristically down-to-earth exhortations of Paul of Tarsus (as he was known in his lifetime). In an unusually positive (perhaps even slightly elevated) mood, Paul writes warmly to the church at Philippi, sharing the details his story as a prisoner, no longer walking the roads of Asia Minor and Archaia, alongside his fellow evangelists Barnabas and Silas. He is now chained alongside a Roman soldier, in jeopardy of execution, but still spruiking the gospel and the joyful, fearless, walk of God's Way.

Rejoice in the Lord always ... let your gentleness (epieikēs) be known to everyone ... Do not worry about anything And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

As we worship Christ in the Eucharist to serve Christ in the world, let's walk the Way alongside others, near and far, sharing stories, rejoicing.

St Peter's Social Enterprise

Terry Swann

2024 is shaping up to be an exciting year as we expand our mission to upskill the disadvantaged women and refugees in our community.

As part of our mission to support them with their employment dignity, we have developed and formalised a 12-week training programme in place to take our potential candidates through skills in hospitality. Our training programme will provide each candidate skills in barista services, customer service, financial awareness and staff management. Our candidates will be remunerated as part of their training course which will provide them with the confidence and empowerment towards their employment dignity.

On completion of the 12-week programme, each candidate will receive a Barista Certificate and reference along with help from us to enable them to find full-time employment.

We have partnered with Lighthouse Foundation, who will provide the candidates along with a dedicated case manager to support them and who will be onsite to assist the young women if needed. Mthr Kathryn will also be onsite to provide chaplain support to the young women, for which we are very grateful.

Lighthouse Foundation is an organisation that does wonderful work to manage many safe houses throughout Victoria and has many therapeutic programmes in place with skilled psychologists and carers. Many of these young women come from violent backgrounds and some from forced marriages and modern day slavery.

We are very excited about our new direction and look forward to helping make a difference to the lives of these young women. Each traineeship will cost in excess of \$8000 and any help would be much appreciated.

Donations can be made to heavenatthehill.org.au (all donations are tax deductible) or likewise through St. Peter's Charitable Foundation

Poets and the Faith

In the coming year we are hosting a series about significant poets who have inhabited - or skirted the fringes of - the Anglican and Catholic traditions of Christianity.

From Gerard Manley Hopkins to RS Thomas, from Emily Brontë to WH Auden, how did their poetry enrich, challenge, express their faith - even further them on their journey? How did their faith inform their poetic vision? What can they help us to see? Such are the questions our speakers will address as we gather on the second Tuesday evening of each month, a glass of something and some nibbles in hand.

These are addresses with no prior knowledge necessary. Only an interest to learn something of the lives, craft and spirituality of these poets, with opportunity to respond and discuss, and to hear some verses recited in that context in which, we believe, they are meant to be heard - in the lived gathering...

All are welcome! If you are interested in attending (or even helping to host), please email: poets@stpeters.org.au with an expression of interest.

- *Mthr Kathryn Bellhouse*

12 March	Gerard Manley Hopkins Presented by Professor Dorothy Lee
9 April	Denise Levertov Presented by Carol O'Connor
14 May	James McAuley & Gwen Harwood Presented by Ken Parker
11 June	Peter Steele Presented by Andrew Bullen SJ
9 July	RS Thomas Presented by Archbishop Rowan Williams, via zoom
13 August	Emily Brontë, Elizabeth Barrett Browning & Christina Rossetti Presented by Philip Harvey
10 September	Annie Dillard Presented by Wen-Juenn Lee Ewe
8 October	W.H. Auden & T.S. Eliot Presented by Nelson Rufatt
12 November	John Donne Presented by Kathryn Bellhouse

In the Days of Caesar

In the days of Caesar, when his subjects went to be reckoned
there was a poem made too dark for him

(naïve with power) to read.

It was a bunch of shepherds who discovered
in Bethlehem of Judah the great music beyond

reasoning and reckoning:

shepherds, the sort of folk who leave the ninety-nine behind
so as to bring the stray back home, they heard it clear,
the subtly assonances of the day, drawing

towards cock-crow,

the birthday of the Lamb of God, shepherd of mortals.

Well, little people, and my little nation, can you see
the secret buried in you, that no Caesar ever captures
in his lists?

Will not the shepherd come to fetch us in our desert,
gathering us in to give us birth again, weaving us into one
in a song heard in the sky over Bethlehem?

He seeks us out as wordhoard for his workmanship,
the laureate of heaven.

- *Waldo Williams*

Translated from the Welsh by Rowan Williams

Remembering Margaret Lugg

*A eulogy given by Bishop David Farrer
at her funeral on the 3rd of October, 2023*

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away, for I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me but raise it up on the last day. This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day." John 6:35-40

I chose this Gospel reading because it forms the inspiration for the Margaret we have heard about in the eulogies. It represents the faith and philosophy behind Margaret's life. Here we are, family and friends of Margaret Lugg, sharing the burden of grief at her death and yet we are rejoicing, rejoicing that Margaret is in the nearer presence of God and celebrating what she shared with us here. This is a celebration of her life, an expression of our grief and a recognition that she is at peace. That she is herself in the closer presence of God. Margaret's faith revealed the hospitality of God.

What can be said about Margaret? Much has been said in the eulogies, much will be left for our individual and corporate memories in the months and years to come. Neither time nor memory allow us to say all that could be said. She, who was clear that she wanted this service and approves of what we are doing, would be embarrassed by extensive eulogising.

Every funeral is about the love of God for people. Funerals are also times when we don't know how we feel. No matter whether or not we expected death, had been prepared for it, we still feel confused, numb. Loss of someone we love, no matter how rationally we see it as completion, is painful, parting is painful. For Christians we can hand this pain and grief to God. Every funeral is about the love of God for people. Every funeral is a message of God's love. Funerals are also times when we don't know how we feel. Expected or unexpected we cannot really ever be prepared. Loss of someone we care for is painful.

As Christians we do not hide the pain, but we know that we can hand our grief and sadness to Jesus, the one who has lived died and suffered for us. Robert Louis Stevenson wrote the following (I have altered the pronouns): *"The person is a success who has lived well, laughed often, and loved much; who has gained the respect of intelligent people and the love of children; who has filled her niche and accomplished*

her task; who leaves the world better than she found it... One who looked for the best in others and gave the best she had."

Margaret was for many years a phenomenal worker in this parish. She cooked and prepared food for endless parish activities. She was, too, the washer of endless table napkins. Both she and Alan were committed to the worship here in this church but neither of them left that commitment in this building, it was part of the essence of their lives. Margaret's faith was strong, her faith and Alan's informed their attitudes to people and to life. They lived the message about loving others. not just the comfortable or "nice" people. When people who were living rough came to the church when they were setting up for a function or the post-service gatherings, they fed them and gave them tea or coffee.

John Browne, and later Alan, chaired the Catering Committee Margaret the preparer of endless food inspired the catering team whose core for many years was Margaret and Alan, Margaret and John Browne, Les and Thea Rowe, the amazing James Walters, Joyce Schnell, and later Derek Loveday and Peta.

As I have said about the choice of the Gospel reading, both Margaret and Alan knew that the source of their work for the Church and the community was based in their Christian belief and understanding the words of Jesus: *"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."* Their commitment to service of Jesus the bread of life was the result of their understanding of God's love as seen in Jesus. They both said their prayers. They were, with James Walters, great welcomers, and encouragers. Their welcome when serving food after the service here or handing out books for people coming into church was so encouraging because each person felt welcome and wanted.

The Gospel we have heard today says: *"This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day."* Margaret's belief in the resurrection informed the way she lived. She believed in the hope of the new creation in Christ. She knew well the renewal of the waters of baptism, the feeding on Jesus in the Eucharist. She understood the promise of life to come.

To reinforce how that that played out in her life, I might well have taken another special Gospel reading: Jesus washing the feet of the disciples during the Last Supper. When Jesus rose from the Last Supper and began to wash the feet of the disciples, he was doing the work of the lowliest of servants. Walking in sandals on the roads of Palestine in the first century made it imperative that feet be

washed before a communal meal. People ate reclining at low tables, and feet were very much in evidence. The disciples were stunned at this act of humility and condescension—that Jesus, their Lord and Master, should wash the feet of His disciples. Washing feet was more properly *their* work, but as Jesus said elsewhere, he came “not to be served but to serve”. The humility expressed by Jesus’ act with towel and basin foreshadowed His ultimate act of humility and love on the cross. This was in direct contrast to that of the disciples, who had recently been arguing among themselves as to which of them was the greatest (When Jesus had washed the disciples’ feet, He told them (and us), “I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you”). Jesus’ message of service was clearly taken to heart by Margaret. I, and many others, saw it in stark reality here but clearly, as we have heard in the eulogies, it was very much at the heart of the care and upbringing of the family. It was, too, seen in the community. As Margaret got older she knew well the fact that the human body is heir to decline. She appreciated the care she received but, unsurprisingly, the frustration was there. She believed in the hope of the new creation in Christ. She knew well the renewal of the waters of baptism, the power of¹ Jesus in the Eucharist. She was confident in the resurrection.

It is something to be able to say that Margaret’s last years, which needed to be in care, were lived in the place for which she had done so much fundraising to build. Despite the frustration of her health restrictions, on visits I made to see her in partial lockdown and after the-all clear, Margaret was grateful to be in a fine facility with great care. A place of which she had had a significant hand in establishing. Today we commit Margaret to almighty God. We each have reason to give thanks for her life of devotion, service, care and welcome. A life grounded in Jesus’ message of his service which is to be reflected in our service of others. We give thanks, in what the dictionary calls British informal language, for Margaret’s sheer hard graft.

Words; words of condolence, words of comfort, important words, words that fill the void that our hearts can’t help but feel, words that stave off the emptiness of these days, are good. But times such as these are often awash with words. Let’s take a moment’s break between words. Take a moment to be silent together in this place and to remember Margaret—wife, mother, grandmother, sister, friend committed servant of others. Take a minute to reflect on the special gift given to us, our times shared with Margaret. Thank you, Margaret, rest in peace.

Editorial

Cover image: 'Nativity' by John Bayton. The iconography has its genesis in early Coptic Christian imagery. The account of Stephen Duckett's book launch is available at the University of Divinity's Vox site here:

<https://vox.divinity.edu.au/news/healthcare-funding-and-christian-ethics-by-stephen-duckett-book-publication/>

The Parish Paper is edited by Philip Harvey, arranged and produced by Warren Collins, and printed by Eugene Chin. Contributions are always welcome, both writing and original artwork.

Home for Christmas?

Carol O'Connor

They won't be home for Christmas.
The list is growing longer year by year –
Is it due to COVID or an accident, or natural disaster?
There's the one to alcohol, another cancer,
Quite a few actually, to cancer. A brain tumour,
Two suicides, and more from heart disease.
Not to mention the strokes.

We'll wait out another Advent in their absence;
Our hymns sharper for this season's piercing.
Our hearts in wilderness and desolation.
We too fading like a leaf, despondent
For our world which is all too much at war,
Fractious, self-justifying and impatient,
Even around our own dinner tables.

The frenzy of Christmas preparations can
Break our hearts. Our own selves wrapped
In tiredness. Dreaming the end but
Distracted by the tinsel; aiming for charity,
Clarity blurred by the overwhelming lists.
But through all this, all this, all this
Altogether too known humanness

Abides only one gift, a birth like the star
Itself full bright, radiant over its small crib.
Unseen presence of God, intimate Lover
Of all souls. Vulnerable, wild, creator of
Our universe. Bearing us, beyond us,
Extravagant and unending Spirit of life,
Who is always, yet always, with us.