

INTERACT

Quarterly

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The winter is past; the rain is over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth, the time of
singing has come...

Song of Solomon:2:11-12

Endeavour Hills Uniting Church Mission Statement

The Endeavour Hills Uniting Church...

a worshipping, nurturing, learning community...

an open door, reaching out to show Christ's face to all.

'Together We Grow.'



ENDEAVOUR HILLS UNITING CHURCH

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The Endeavour Hills Uniting Church web site maintenance is overseen by Church Council. Please send all correspondence etc. to the Secretary, Judy Hopkins.

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Please note:

The views in the articles included in this publication are not necessarily those held by the Endeavour Hills Uniting Church.

FROM THE MINISTER

It has been a long winter accompanied by one of the worst flu seasons in a long time. Personally, I am so over the cold mornings, bare trees in the garden and brown leaves on the ground. It has been difficult seeing congregational members struggling with ill health and I long to see the return of spring that promises warm sunshine, good health, new leaves and beautiful flowers.



Yet, even as I anticipate my favourite season, I hear the words of Marjorie Pay Hinckley “Don’t wish your life away, waiting for better ones ahead”.

If you’re like me, you sometimes hear yourself saying, “When such and such happens, then I will..., if only so and so would do this, then I would do that..., I would be happy if..., I will be satisfied when...”

In longing for God’s good future, we forget that every day—regardless of the weather, health or our circumstances—is a gift from God, to be used for His glory.

Ecclesiastes 3:12 reminds us that in every season, there is a reason to rejoice and an opportunity to do good. The challenge for each of us every day is to find something to rejoice about and some good to do—and then to do both.

Robin Yang

A SPIDER'S WISDOM

Near the front wall of our home, sheltered a bit from the weather, is a tiny hole. Around it emerges a tiny all-encompassing structure, an intricately woven spider's web, with dried bits of leaves to reinforce and protect it. A tiny spider and her family live inside.



The web is a net and storehouse for a snared fly or insect, food for a growing family. Looking at the nest, we believe there must be an escape tunnel leading away from any threatening intruder. Such is the creative wisdom and family care in the Creator's provision for just one of nature's marvels.

The psalmist knew about that. Maybe he was a priest daily at worship and service in the temple:

"How lovely is your dwelling place O lord of hosts!" Nothing can match the majesty and holiness of this house of God. He is full of praise. His whole person sings with the joy he feels within the structure and atmosphere of the Temple of the Living God!

And then he raised his eyes and saw tiny evidences of God's wonderful love, care and provision for all creatures. There, in that holiest of places, amidst all the reverence and awe which surrounded it; "even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O lord of hosts, my King and my God".

Reflection: Read Psalm 84:1-4. When in church on Sunday, look for something small you have bypassed before as insignificant. Is there something you have missed or taken for granted? Praise God for all things small, which are equally important in the mind and eye of the Lord of hosts.

Bill Pugh

FINDING THE RIGHT WORDS



An adult Chinese friend of mine is studying to improve her English. This year she is tackling Australian history. 'What is The Dreaming?' she asked me one day. I floundered around, desperately trying to explain in simple English such a nuanced concept to someone from another culture. Words escaped me. I surprised myself with how hard I found it to explain succinctly something I thought I was reasonably *au fait* with. Later, I wondered how I would cope with the question 'What is Christianity?' or 'What is love?' or 'What is faith?' Putting things into words often isn't easy. It is a gift. Another friend has the ability to make an astute observation, proffer an eloquent phrase, a timely intervention or a quirky aside with seeming ease. There are those who quietly send cards or notes of support in times of need, and there are those who can be a support through a silence more powerful than anything that might be said. Take a moment to think about those you know who have the gift of saying or doing just the right thing at just the right time. Give thanks for them. And just maybe, you might find the right words yourself to tell them how much they have meant to you.

Reflection: Do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. -*Hebrews 13:16*

Ian Menzies

A PRAYER FOR THE MIDDLE-AGED & OVER



Lord, Thou knowest better than I that I am growing older and will soon be old. Keep me from thinking that I must say something on every subject and every occasion.

Release me, I pray, from the need to straighten out everybody's affairs. With my vast store of wisdom it seems a pity not to use it, but thou knowest that I would like a few friends at the end.

Keep my mind free from the recital of endless detail; give me wings to get to the point.

Seal my lips from my aches and pains. They are increasing and my love of rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by. Help me instead to endure the pains of others with patience.

I dare not pray for improved memory, but I do ask for growing humility when my memory disagrees with the memory of others. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be mistaken.

Keep me reasonably sweet. I don't aspire to be a saint – some of them are so hard to live with – but a sour soul, mature in years, is one of the crowning works of the devil.

Give me the ability to see good things in unexpected places, and talents in unexpected people; and, O Lord, give me the grace to tell them so.

Contributed by Judy Hopkins

OUR PLANET EARTH

How healthy is the world that our children and grandchildren live in?

While most world leaders try to agree to cut back on pollutants such as burning coal, what can you and I do in our small corner of our God-given world? Can we reduce our waste of discarded clothes and unwanted food and lower our consumption of commodities to what is needed rather than what we want?

Maybe we can be more discerning about the source of the products we acquire, having more regard for the workers who produced the articles, their conditions of employment, and how much exploitation exists in some countries.

Next time we consider an overseas holiday maybe we should be more concerned with how a particular country is standing in the eyes of the world about matters such as fairness to their less privileged, and how cooperative their government is in battling pollution and global warming.

Planting our own vegetables, shrubs and trees, and using a china mug instead of a plastic disposable container, are little ways we could lead by example to our grandchildren, who may just notice and learn from our actions.

Reflection:

God has given us a wonderful place to live our lives. Let us not lose the opportunity to pass on our corner of the world as a better place than how we found it. Be mindful of two quotes from Mother Teresa: “Live simply so others may simply live” and “Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies”.



Geoff Serpell

THE GIFT OF FRIENDSHIP



The renowned deaf-blind trailblazer Helen Keller once said “I would rather walk with a friend in the dark, than alone in the light”.

One of Keller’s lifelong friends was her mentor Anne

Sullivan. Sullivan helped Keller overcome the language difficulties imposed by her disability and paved the way for her to become the first deaf-blind person to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts degree. When Sullivan later became ill, her beloved student was by her bedside, comforting her as she passed away.

If we take a look at Jesus’ ministry, we learn that friendships can sometimes be hard. Jesus was mocked for dining with tax collectors, sinners and other marginalised people. When we become friends with people who are unpopular, we may be ostracised for showing solidarity with them.

Friends can also let us down. Jesus’ disciples fell asleep in Gethsemane on the night he was arrested. Judas betrayed Jesus to the Romans. Peter denied Jesus three times.

But on the cross, Jesus asked God to forgive those who crucified him. He gave his life for all of us, so that we can be saved from our sins. Truly, there is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for his friends (John 15:13).

Reflection:

We have a friend in Jesus who will always walk with us in the dark. How can we walk with our friends when they are going through tough times?

Pauline Murphy

QUOTES AND COMMENTS

Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit; wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.

Anonymous

Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So, throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.

Mark Twain

Do not be afraid to go out on a limb. That's where the fruit is.

Anonymous

We have no right to ask when a sorrow comes, "Why did this happen to me?" unless we ask the same question for every joy that comes our way.

Anonymous

HOLY JOE'S CAFE

A small chain of cafes has served over 75,000,000 cups of coffee without charging a penny. Bad business? No—great ministry!



Holy Joe's Café began not as a business but as an outreach of First Congregational Church in Wallingford, Connecticut. The church decided to collect and ship coffee to military chaplains serving in Iraq and Afghanistan so that they could provide a simple coffee house ministry to troops in those areas. In just over two years the project has grown to where it supports several coffee houses.

The idea is simple: people purchase fair trade coffee online through a supplier that then ships it to the church and they forward it to the chaplains. Through the coffee houses, the chaplains provide a safe place for the troops to get away, sit down, have a cup of coffee, talk with a chaplain, and just relax. It provides an alternative setting for soldiers to mingle and, as one put it, regain their sanity. You can learn more at www.ucc.org/justice/coffee-project/holy-joes-cafe.html.

KINDNESS OF STRANGERS



I recently returned from a trip to the US with my family where we went to Disneyland and visited friends and relatives. My husband and I flew with our two-year-old son, Isaac. As many parents will know, flying with a baby can be a nightmare and during the 15-hour flight from Melbourne to Los Angeles, Isaac kept waking up and feeling cranky. I met a lady on the plane who was in her 60s. We talked about Isaac and I learnt she was on her way to Cuba. She looked just as tired as me, but she was very patient and tried to entertain Isaac when he was crying. Once he was distracted, he would forget why he was crying in the first place. She was not the only person who offered assistance. A man sitting near us made silly faces to cheer Isaac. The air stewardesses were all very helpful. We don't always hear stories of kindness in this day and age. Sometimes, we are taught to be wary of other people's intentions. While it was a difficult flight, to get help from so many strangers made a big difference. I normally don't talk to strangers, but travelling with Isaac has opened me to new encounters and, in the process, allowed me to experience the warmth and generosity of other people.

Reflection: How can we share God's love with people we do not normally interact with?

Mirna Leonita

WITNESSING BY WALKING.

F.W. Boreham reminds us of a story from the life of Francis d'Assisi.

"Brother," Francis said one day to one of the young monks at the Portiuncula, "Let us go down to the town and preach!"



The novice, delighted at being singled out to be the companion of Francis, obeyed with alacrity. They passed through the principal streets, turned down many of the by-ways and alleys, made their way out to some of the suburbs, and at length returned, by a circuitous route, to the monastery gate.

As they approached it, the younger man reminded Francis of his original intention.

"You have forgotten, Father, that we went down to the town *to preach!*"

"My son," Francis replied, "*we have preached. We were preaching, while we were walking. We have been seen by many; our behaviour has been closely watched, it was thus that we preached our morning sermon. It is of no use, my son, to walk anywhere to preach unless we preach everywhere we walk.*" (Morgan, 2007).

As we reflect on this quote, it must be remembered that St Francis was a monk and as such wore the monk's attire which was specific to his monkhood, a drab brown ankle length tunic. THAT is a witness to what he stood for in itself. How about our own clergy today? Gone are the days of wearing Dog Collars at all times. Gone are the days when the Salvation Army (SA) would walk down streets playing their brass instruments. Gone are the days when they would venture into Hotels wearing their uniforms to collect money from the drinking

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Witnessing by Walking

clientele, using these opportunities to speak to the people. AND THEY WERE HIGHLY RESPECTED.

Where are those brave souls who would stand on their soap boxes, verbally preaching to the passing public? These brave souls were not so well received, or where are the tent missions of the past that were favourably received and well attended. (Tents are different, exciting and transportable.)

I would suggest that FEAR is a driving factor in the demise of these quaint and out of date forms of witness. Are we afraid of ridicule and/or assault? Yet we are in the midst of a world bombarded by so many messages selling us everything via electronic transmission. What people lack is the personal contact and message being delivered IN PERSON. A different message to a starving world; a personal message of HOPE and MEANING, *just as Jesus gave* in a world beset by isolation and fear. If Jesus was here today I do not imagine his message having much impact *via* SMS or Twitter.

Elke Beecher.

GOD'S CAR WASH



A church choir was holding a car wash to raise money for a special trip. They scheduled the event for a Saturday, and the day dawned bright and sunny. Business was brisk and booming. However, early in the afternoon the sky clouded over, and it soon

began to pour rain. Needless to say, business fell off abruptly.

Not to be dissuaded, one of the choir members printed a large sign that read, "We wash. God rinses."

Business picked up almost immediately.

I'M PRAYING FOR YOU



I'm praying for you
In this dark world of ours,
To find comfort and joy
In all that you do.

I'm praying for you
To find beauty in all that you see,
From the blazing, gold sunsets
To the turquoise, blue seas.

I'm praying for you
That your problems are few.
Your pathway is smooth
And peace shines in you.

I'm praying for you
That your losses are few.
Your friends hold you close
And healing hands make you new.

I'm praying for you,
In all that you start,
That the Lord is with you,
And you feel his love in your heart.

By Sue Ashley

GIVE WAY TO THE RIGHT



We had a salutary experience driving home late one night from Colac to Apollo Bay. It was dark and foggy as we drove slowly along this windy road. Suddenly the headlights picked up a tiny creature crossing the road. We stopped safely and watched the tiny creature until it disappeared

in the trees. It was an echidna, maybe on his way home. We gave way to the right, observing the rules, and the echidna was able to cross. It was more than a lesson in keeping the rules. The echidna was a tiny vulnerable creature and deserved our care and respect. How easy it is for us to ignore the small and vulnerable. Jesus taught us about the love of his Father for the seemingly insignificant sparrow, the absolute care and responsibility of the shepherd for just one lost sheep. How fortunate we are to have a Lost Dogs Home and the RSPCA, wonderful organisations of pastoral care. Our pets need fresh water to drink, a pat and a kind word. The life of every living thing is precious. We need to remind our leaders of the value of life and their duty to convince those who would threaten all life with weapons of mass destruction instead of peaceful negotiation, humanitarian concern, and responsible stewardship of God's good green earth.

Reflection: Reflect on the vision of the prophet Isaiah – they shall hammer their swords into ploughs and their spears into pruning knives.(2:4) There will be a highway there and it shall be called “The Road of Holiness.” (35:8)

Bill Pugh

CHRIST'S SUPREMACY IN CREATION & REDEMPTION

“He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation. For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together: And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the first born, from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross.”

Colossians 1: 15 - 20

“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.” *Colossians 2:9*

When we say we are “Christians” do we really understand who Christ is and who we are? The above Scriptures emphasise the Divine nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ reveals His humanity reflecting, God. He is not a statue, someone like God or like the moon reflecting the sun. Christ is the channel for God’s glory, completely holy and sinless. He lived in human form with all the attributes of humanity. To all those who saw and believed Him there was no clearer view of God than Christ Jesus. In Christ we see God, showing His love, His humility, teaching, correcting and counselling.

Saint Paul wrote Colossians (in Rome under house arrest) because of Colossian heresy and unbelief. He revealed to the Colossians that Christ was the Creator God, exalting Christ as the image of God, the fullness of Deity in bodily form. Today the mind of Christ is revealed by the Holy Spirit through His Word as completely adequate to all believers. “Sanctify them by the truth; your Word is truth.” *John 17:17*

Lakshman Pethiyagoda

Contributions to Interact

Any material you may have to be included in Interact may be sent in one of two ways:

1. e-mail (preferred method) to interact@ehuc.org.au putting “Interact” in the subject line
2. leave in the green Interact folder which is located on the stand to the right of the kitchen window.

Your contributions of up to **450 words** are very welcome, **BUT please include your name, phone number &/or email address in case it is necessary to contact you.** Material should be submitted by **12 noon** on the deadline dates indicated below:

Issue	Deadline	Publication Date
Summer	19th November 2017	3rd December 2017