

# INTERACT

Quarterly

Winter 2018 Vol.20: No 2



Let us love winter, for it is the spring of genius.

*Pietro Aretino*

## 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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## Our Website

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



Many of you know that my wife and I are building a new home. Our old house was recently demolished and during the work, I took the time to visit and farewell the house that once was my home. As I wandered amongst the pile of debris, my attention focused on the remains of the old foundation which you can see below in this photo.



I remembered our structural engineer's report that found the house was built on very poorly constructed foundations and it was pointless to attempt to fix the house until the foundation issue was resolved. The unseen affected everything else in the house that was seen. This truth applies to all buildings, from the humblest of dwellings to the tallest skyscrapers. The right foundation makes the difference between something that lasts and something temporary.

In Matthew 7, Jesus taught the difference between a life built on obedience to Christ and a life built on other things. Jesus knew that though foundations are invisible, they are vitally important to the strength and stability of the house (*Matthew. 7:24-25*), especially when it is battered by the elements. He also knew the hearts of His

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## **From the Minister**

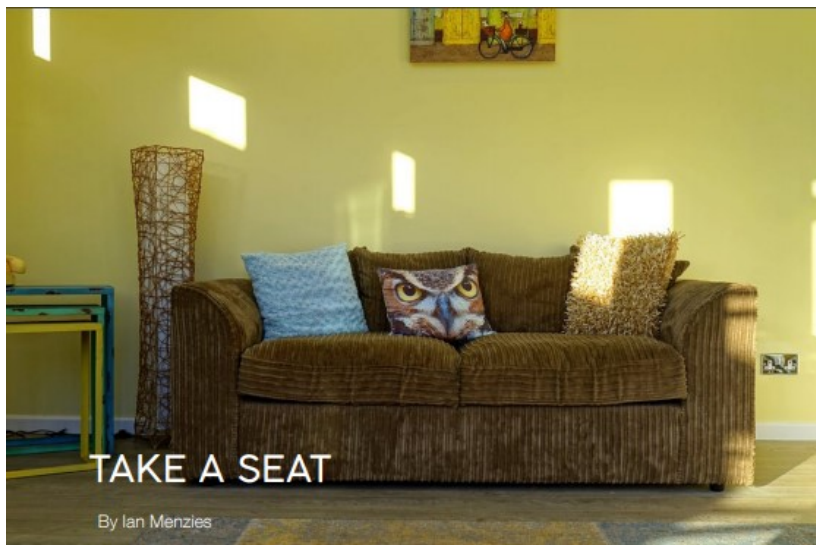
listeners. They would be tempted to take the easy way, find shortcuts, or do things by halves to gain their objectives. Other foundations may be quicker and easier.

Building our lives on the right foundation is hard work, but God's truth is the only bedrock worth building on. When the storms of life hit, houses built on and held together by Him stand firm.

Friends, what is the foundation of your life? Take the time to reaffirm that your life's foundation is on Christ. Place your hope on Christ and His promises in scripture. Continually pray too for our church, that Endeavour Hills Uniting Church will continually seek to keep Christ as our firm foundation.

*Rev. Robin Yang*





Our local council offers a hard rubbish collection upon request, so from time-to-time random piles of discards appear on nature strips awaiting removal.

Recently I noticed such a collection outside of the home of Bob, our late Church Council Chair, who died many years ago. His daughter and her family still live in the home.

Central to the pile was a battered old sofa of the mid-century, heavily-patterned-with-roses style. Clearly worn out, it nevertheless evoked instant memories of home groups, subcommittees and hospitality. When he retired, Bob took to baking and was a dab hand at it too.

How many hours had I sat on that sofa! What stories it could tell! Wistful with memories, I stopped to inspect. "Take a seat," I could almost hear Bob say, proffering his biscuits and tea, but I didn't consider purloining the old sofa as it was clearly well past its prime.

What wasn't past usefulness was the wisdom of my old friend and mentor; and I now fill the role he once did. Chancing upon that clear-out gave me a chance to remember, reflect and appreciate.

**Reflection:** It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding. Daniel 2:21



They're on the old manse desk in the study, the window overlooking the garden and the passing villagers in a seaside parish. Lectionary readings and commentaries are at hand, along with several Bible translations—even Greek and Hebrew texts for show!

I began contemplating the readings for next Sunday's sermon. Perhaps a text for the day and suitable hymns. Angie the dog is beside me, in meditative sleep. She becomes all alert as she senses a passing dog. It's only Sister Margaret from the nuns' house walking by with her guardian.

I'm still hoping for inspiration. An angel appears and a cup of tea is placed by my side. Angie opens one eye looking for a piece of biscuit. Satisfied, she goes back to sleep. All is at peace in the study, and it seems in the world outside too.

Back to work, but still little inspiration. Then into my mind came a text of a sermon I heard years ago in the old Gardiner Presbyterian Church.

I was there on the first Sunday of a New Year. L F Gunn, a dramatic character, was preaching on a wonderful passage from Habakkuk. As the clock in the Church tower chimed midday, to remind him it was time to finish, he concluded with that unforgettable text. "Though the vision tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come" (Habakkuk 2:3).

I decided to leave my desk and take Angie for a walk.

**Reflection:** We have many biblical resources and experiences at our fingertips. We need a portion of quiet, prayerful patience, as we wait for the spirit to point the way forward. Suggested Hymn 547. Be thou my vision.

*Bill Pugh*



# ALL GOD'S CREATION IS VERY GOOD

By Joan Addinsall



The 2018 World Day of Prayer service was prepared by the Suriname World Day of Prayer Committee. Suriname is a beautiful country located in Northern South America. The people who arranged the program described their country in this way: "Suriname is a country with incredible flora and fauna, where people from different ethnicities may live in peace with each other. We thank God for the freedom to worship and to worship together".

The Bible reading chosen for this service was Genesis 1:1-31 from which the title "All God's Creation is Very Good" was taken.

Many years ago, a minister taking religious education in a very small one-teacher school in the Victorian Mallee asked the children what they thought 'creation' meant. A little girl, about 10 years old, offered an answer. She stood up and extended her right arm, hand open, and while she curled her arm and closed her hand up to her chest, said, "Creation is making something out of nothing".

That one sentence embraced the whole of God's action in creating the world as we know it.

**Reflection:** God who made the earth,  
The air, the sky, the sea,  
Who gave the light its birth,  
God cares for me.

*Joan Addinsall*



We have a lovely old tea-tree which we planted in 1970. Each year it has a display of white flowers that provides shade and shelter underneath. For some time now it has started to lean over, gradually bending. Will it finally rest on the ground? Does it have a use-by date?

Every year, one remaining tall straight branch from the old tree still blossoms, providing an umbrella of shade for visiting birds. There is no USE BY DATE in its plans, and it will outlive the present gardeners!

As we age we sometimes feel creaks and groans. Some of us develop a lean, and we have to do recommended exercises and walking to straighten up. Aging reminds us we all have a kind of USE BY DATE. When will it be? The Bible tells us firmly that this is God's business. In fact Ecclesiastes 3 rings true. The Philosopher, as the author is sometimes called, proclaims, "Everything in this world happens at the time God chooses. He sets the time for birth and a time for death". All created things have their appointed time to begin and end.

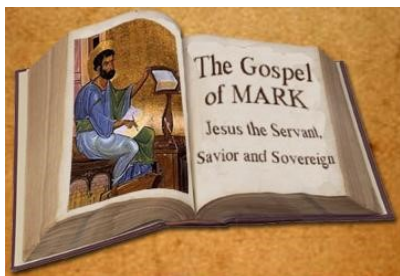
There is good advice for us here. Now, today, we still have time to make the most of what is left for us, to be useful. We may feel a bit feeble, but there is much we can still achieve.

**Reflection:** Psalm 90:12 has a word for each of us, whatever our age:

Teach us how short our life is,  
So that we may become wise.  
To do that we will need a constant presence.



# GETTING TO KNOW THE GOSPEL OF MARK



During each of the three lectionary years we focus on the stories from a different synoptic Gospel. Synoptic is a word that means “similar”. The first three Gospels – Matthew, Mark, and Luke – are called the synoptic Gospels because they have a lot in common. This is Year B (until next

Advent at the end of November) and so the Gospel is Mark.

Mark is an interesting book. It is the shortest of the Gospels – only 16 chapters – and most scholars think that it was the first Gospel to be written, probably sometime around the year 70. This means that, like all of the other Gospels, the book was written by someone who did not know Jesus personally. However, they undoubtedly heard stories that had been passed along by Jesus’ closest friends.

Nowadays, when we share stories we may not be too concerned about the details, because we know we can probably find written material to back us up. In those days, people told stories a little more accurately because they knew that most of the time they were the only source of a story.

Because it is such a short book, Mark does not contain many of the stories and sayings that appear in Matthew and Luke. However, there are also times when Mark tells a story with details that are unique to that book.

Bible detectives will sometimes wonder about things like: Why did this person take this out of a story? Why did this person add this to a story? What made this author change this story?

No one will ever know the answers to these questions but sometimes through good research we can come up with ideas. Most important of all, however, is simply knowing that each Gospel tells us wonderful things about Jesus. They are all unique and all very special.

# THE TRINITY

Like Muslims and Jews, Christians are monotheistic. We believe in one God, supreme over all creation, and yet there is the trinity – the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. The Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. The Source, Word, and Holy Spirit. The key thing that all three seem to have in common is that they are somehow ways of saying that one God has three forms, or personalities, or

nuances, or substances. In other words, more than anything, the trinity seems to be our way of putting words to a vast and divine mystery that is, when you think about it, well beyond our comprehension.

God is – that's the piece that seems easiest. It's only when we try to explain or understand what that means that we run into trouble.

Certainly the Hebrew Scriptures clarify that God is creator. But how? A big voice in Genesis 1, and someone playing in the mud in Genesis 2, and someone beyond approach in Psalm 8, and someone who has a child or a helper working close by from before the beginning. So is this one being, or different forms of the same? Jesus is clearly the son, present from the beginning, too. Yet John says that Jesus is the Word of God.

And what about the Spirit of God: creating (Genesis 1:1), blowing invisibly like the wind (John 3), or coming like flames of fire (Acts 2). Words for Holy Spirit are always feminine in Hebrew, always neuter in Greek, yet generally thought of as male in English. So, how do we best understand the work of the Spirit?

Perhaps the best thing to say is that God is God, beyond our understanding and our speaking, yet close as the next breath. Comforting as a parent and friend, vast as the farthest universe, and everything in between. Praise the Triune God, the eternal one in three; the eternal three in one.





## GOD IN THE DETAILS

The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. Psalm 145:9  
*Matthew 10:29–31*

When my “chocolate” Labrador retriever puppy was three months old, I took him to the veterinarian’s office for his shots and check-up. As our vet carefully looked him over, she noticed a small white marking in his fur on his left hind paw. She smiled and said to him, “That’s where God held you when He dipped you in chocolate.”

I couldn’t help but laugh. But she had unintentionally made a meaningful point about the deep and personal interest God takes in His creation.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 10:30 that “even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” God is so great that He is able to take infinite interest in the most intimate details of our lives. There is nothing so small that it escapes His notice, and there is no concern too trivial to bring before Him. He simply cares that much.

God not only created us; He sustains and keeps us through every moment. It’s sometimes said that “the devil is in the details”. But it’s better by far to understand that God is in them, watching over even the things that escape our notice. How comforting it is to know that our perfectly wise and caring heavenly Father holds us—along with all of creation—in His strong and loving hands.

Loving Lord, I praise You for the wonder of Your creation. Help me to reflect Your compassion by taking care of what You’ve made.

God attends to our every need.

*James Banks*

*(Reprinted from Our Daily Bread)*



I am fortunate enough to be able to occasionally travel to some exotic destinations. I have found that some of the most memorable highlights for me have been found in the hospitality shown by locals met by chance on the way.

Buying pastries from a tiny store in Tibet then being followed across the street by the elderly vendor with tea to accompany them; a public bus conductor in India proffering cardamom seeds to chew; the gracious welcome to curious foreigners into private homes in foreign lands.

Wordlessly crossing language barriers with smiles and gestures, such simple generosity ranks just as high as the iconic destinations in my memories.

So how do we welcome the stranger, both on an individual, personal basis and collectively as a society? Are our actions generous and unconditional? Do we expect the best or fear the worst?

The saying is 'travel broadens the mind'. Perhaps it can challenge our attitudes as well.

### **Reflection**

Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. *Hebrews 13:1*

## QUOTES AND COMMENTS

I have no special revelation of God's will. My firm belief is that He reveals Himself daily to every human being, but we shut our ears to the "still small voice". We shut our eyes to the "pillar of fire" in front of us.

*Mohandas K. Gandhi*

And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be liberated into God's freedom and peace.

*Acts 2:21, The Voice*

When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love.

*Rebecca, age 8*

Rushing into action, you fail. Trying to force things, you lose them. Forcing a project to completion, you ruin what was almost ripe.

*Laozu, Tao Te Ching*

The day the Lord created hope was probably the same day he created Spring.

*Bern Williams*

When someone sings his own praises, he always gets the tune too high.

*Mary H. Waldrip*

Anybody can win unless there happens to be a second entry.

*George Ade*

Earth teach me to forget myself as melted snow forgets its life.

Earth teach me resignation as the leaves which die in the fall.

Earth teach me courage as the tree which stands all alone.

Earth teach me regeneration as the seed which rises in the spring.

*William Alexander*

# SOME CHILDREN'S ANSWERS TO CHURCH SCHOOL QUESTIONS

(FROM THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND)

- Noah's wife was called Joan of Arc.
- Henry VIII thought so much of Wolsey that he made him a cardigan.
- The fifth commandment is "humour thy father and mother."
- Lot's wife was a pillar of salt by day and a ball of fire by night.
- Holy acrimony is another name for matrimony.
- The Pope lives in a vacuum.
- The patron saint of travellers is St. Francis of the sea sick.
- Abraham begat Isaac and Isaac begat Jacob and Jacob begat twelve partridges.
- The natives of Macedonia did not believe, so Paul got stoned.
- The first commandment was when Eve told Adam to eat the apple.
- It is sometimes difficult to hear what is being said in church because the agnostics are so terrible.



*Source unknown*



## 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](mailto: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
Spring	19th August 2018	2nd September 2018
Summer	18th November 2018	2nd December 2018