

The Monthly Magazine of the Anglican Parish of Northern Albury – Diocese of

## **NORTHERN LIGHT**

Wangaratta.

St Mark's North Albury – St James' Lavington- St John's Thurgoona – St Paul's Jindera

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“TO KNOW CHRIST AND MAKE HIM KNOWN”

I am writing an essay for my children and perhaps grandchildren to answer the questions that they have put to me over the years. The fundamental question is, “Why are you still a Christian?”

But there are other questions too, each equally challenging. For example, “Why are you still a Christian minister in an institution that is corrupt, inhabited by fearful and angry old men who have an obsession with sex, and which is dying the death of a thousand cuts?” Tough stuff.

They ask a lot of other questions too, especially in the present environment where they see Christian representatives often arguing spurious and deceitful cases, unable to present a gracious and winsome presence and a case that is compelling in its truth, justice and hope.

I wrote the first sentences to the beginnings of an answer in the last edition of Northern Light (September 2017) and today I want to pursue another line of reasoning. I use the word reasoning because I know that Christianity is reasonable and can be presented as such, even in our modern hostile environment.

I do not belong to the Christian camp that thinks that believing has no basis in fact or reason. Paul tells his Thessalonian colleagues to “test everything” (1Thessalonians 5.21). The Anglican theologian Alister McGrath writes,

“Christianity may be open to criticism on many grounds, but it is certainly not vulnerable the charges that, in contrast to scientific or empirical thought, it rests on “mere faith.” We must be critical of our beliefs, subjecting them to interrogation.”

I think that one way to approach these matters is to tease out the most significant of the desires of the human heart. We can desire the trivial, but even under the immense weight of modern trivia, the desire of the human heart comes down a longing for significance and meaning.

William Hazlitt (1778-1830) once wrote, “Man is the only animal that laughs and weeps; for he is the only animal stuck with difference between what things are and what they ought to be.” We dream of better worlds; worlds of justice, and peace, and joy and meaning. It is as though we are hearing the echo of a voice long lost, that speaks to us of justice and things being put to rights, about peace and hope and prosperity for all. It sticks in our imagination and haunts us.

JRR Tolkien author of the *Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* always argued that human beings had a homing instinct, an inbuilt sense of our true origins and destiny. Further, the imagination was the key to opening up worlds that we were meant to see, and in whose light we could understand the enigmas and puzzles of life.

CS Lewis had an intense desire as a young man for something that he would later call “Joy”. As an atheist he thought it was imaginary desire. Then he began to realize that it was pointing somewhere else. He had to ask the question of himself, “What way of looking at this might be proposed that enables this puzzling observation to be explained?”

He would later answer the question this way, “If I find in myself a desire which no experience in the world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.” This is not a full blown rational defence of the existence of God. It is but a first step in illumination.

A great French Christian philosopher (1623-1662) listening to the echo penned,

“What else does this helplessness proclaim, but that was once in each person a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? We try to fill this in vain with everything around us, seeking in things that are not there the help we cannot find in those that are there. Yet nobody can change things, because this infinite abyss can only be filled with something that is infinite and unchanging-in other words by God himself. God is our true good.”

That is why we exist; to help others hear the Echo and find Joy.

With love,

Colin and Jeanette.

# Friends In Action Culcairn Experience

**“Yes it's a quiet station, but it suits me well enough;  
I want a bit of the smooth now, for I've had me share o' rough.  
This berth that the company gave me, they gave as the work of light;  
I was never fit for the signals after one awful night.  
I'd been in the box from a younker, and I'd never felt the strain.  
Of the lives at my right hand's mercy in every passing train.  
One day there was something happened, and it made my nerves go queer.  
And it's all through that as you find me the station-master here”**  
George R Sims  
The stationmaster's story

Now Spring has arrived the Friends like to venture to places outside of Albury. Annette was leader of this day out – to a museum she was keen to visit – but life got in the way and after organising, she had to give last minute arrangements over to Pam. Jeanette was also out of the picture, sending the raffle prize with Dorothy. A beautiful glass piece her son made and Sarah was the lucky recipient.

After a Bakery visit ( the range of house-made cakes was impressive) the once derelict Stationmaster's House was the focal point. It has been restored and contains some lovely antique pieces. The spacious two storey building has beautiful wrought iron work, original floors and ceilings. Culcairn was a major rail junction in the steam era and the house was lived in by families until 1979. 17 Stationmasters made it home and now it has been returned to its former grandeur, dominating the centre of town.



At the Stationmaster's House

The Historic Hotel too has features from days gone by – a large stained glass window in the dining room, along with old timber furniture. Creating the mood to romanticise the times of Cobb and Co..... It was great that Eileen could pop out of work to eat lunch with everyone – she was a very active member back in the day!!!

The rest of the day was spent pleasantly poking about in the little shops of the town. “ Edna Goes to Africa” is run by a church helping poor nations on that continent by selling recycled objet d'art and clothing. A fascinating shop, a number of members discovered items to buy at bargain prices.

Assisting the less fortunate and cutting consumption – almost guilt-free shopping!!

The Red Cross Craft Shop was popular but the Anglican Op Shop unfortunately was not such a treasure-trove.

As usual the car poolers did a great job and a food bank collection of over \$100 was taken by Dorothy to give to Laine. Despite the un-Springlike weather, everyone had a lot of fun. A very important aspect of outings!



Many folks want to serve God, but only as advisers.

It is easier to preach ten sermons than it is to live one.

The good Lord didn't create anything without a purpose, but mosquitoes come close.

When you get to your wit's end, you'll find God lives there.

People are funny, they want the front of the bus, the middle of the road, and the back of the church.

Opportunity may knock once, but temptation bangs on your front door forever.

Quit griping about your church; if it was perfect, you couldn't belong.

The phrase that is guaranteed to wake up an audience: "And in conclusion."

God Himself does not propose to judge a man until he is dead. So why should you?

To make a long story short, don't tell it.

Some minds are like concrete, thoroughly mixed up and permanently set.

Peace starts with a smile.

We were called to be witnesses, not lawyers or judges.

Coincidence is when God chooses to remain anonymous.

Forbidden fruits create many jams.

God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called.

God promises a safe landing, not a calm passage.

He who angers you, controls you!

Prayer: Don't give God instructions -- just report for duty!

The task ahead of us is never as great as the Power behind us.

The Will of God will never take you to where the Grace of God will not protect you.

We don't change the message, the message changes us.

You can tell how big a person is by what it takes to discourage him.

"Father, bless this person in whatever it is that You know he or she may be needing this day! Amen!"

Don't keep the faith... spread it around!!!