

# Refresh

Journal of Contemplative Spirituality  
Volume 16 Number 2 Summer 2016.



Who is my neighbour?



---

Volume 16, Number 1. Summer 2015. ISSN: 1176-3477

Published by: **SPIRITUAL GROWTH MINISTRIES TRUST.**

**36 Buller Crescent, Manurewa, Auckland 2102, New Zealand.**

Spiritual Growth Ministries is an incorporated trust registered with the Charities Commission on 17 June 2008 (cc 26037).

Spiritual Growth Ministries [SGM] is a network of people from diverse Christian traditions and experience who find depth and meaning through the whole Christian heritage of contemplative spirituality. The Spiritual Growth Ministries Trust aims to enable people to develop spiritual resources for life and work by deepening their relationship with God in Jesus Christ through spiritual direction, training, retreats and other experiences of prayer.

**© 2001 Spiritual Growth Ministries Trust**

Disclaimer: The articles in this journal are the opinions of the authors, and are not necessarily those of either the Editor or Spiritual Growth Ministries Trust.

SGM Trust is happy for any part of this publication to be duplicated, distributed and used for training or information. Please acknowledge the authors and Spiritual Growth Ministries when using our material. We ask that no part of this publication be changed or altered in any way without permission from SGM or the authors.

**SGM Contacts [www.sgm.org.nz](http://www.sgm.org.nz)**

**Admin:**

Joanne Garton, 36 Buller Crescent, Manurewa, Auckland 2102; 09 2675957 [sgm@clear.net.nz](mailto:sgm@clear.net.nz)

**Convenor:**

Mike Wright, Spiritual Directors' Formation Programme Acting Coordinator: Andrew Pritchard, 25 Rongomau Lane, Raumati South 5032,(04) 9046764; [sgmtp@xtra.co.nz](mailto:sgmtp@xtra.co.nz)

**Desktop Publishing and Printing:**

Advocate Print, Rotorua

**Refresh Editor:**

Diane Gilliam-Weeks, 32 Kauri Street, Eastbourne, Hutt City; 0274978374; [dianegw@actrix.co.nz](mailto:dianegw@actrix.co.nz)

**Cover Image**

© Carol Jardine <http://www.chocolatandco.net/>

**Find Refresh on Facebook and 'like' us!**

---

# Contents

Really seeing our neighbours? <i>by Barbara Sampson</i>	3
Neighbours through the eyes of a child <i>by Adrienne Thompson</i>	6
Are you my neighbour? <i>by Jane Hansen</i>	9
Faith and neighbours in storehouses of sorrow <i>by Bob McKerrow</i>	11
Who else is my neighbour? <i>by Vicki Terrell</i>	15
Nameless <i>by Leslie Ayers</i>	17
Declaration of God's love and forgiveness	18
Contemplative Hospitality <i>by Robin Gates</i>	21
Neighbour? <i>by Naomi Greene</i>	23
My New Neighbours <i>by Jo Anastasiadis</i>	26
Who is my neighbour? <i>by Frances O'Leary</i>	29
Creation Story for children young and old <i>by Jenny Chisholm</i>	30
Luke 10:33-34 <i>by Anna Johnstone</i>	31
Neighbour to Creation <i>by John Franklin</i>	32
Being a Neighbour <i>by Trish McBride</i>	34
The one I really see <i>by Barbara Sampson</i>	36
Neighbours 'inside' and out	37
Neighbours <i>by Maggie Quinlan</i>	40
'Neighbouring' must include listening <i>by Lynne M. Baab</i>	40
Books	44
SGM News	46
The Last Word <i>by Diane Gilliam-Weeks</i>	47
Contributors	48



© Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation's (EGPAF)

# Really seeing our neighbours?

By Barbara Sampson

## My neighbour is the one I see – really see.

I had some of my most formative experiences of really seeing when my husband and I did a brief stint of missionary service in Zambia in the mid-1970s. Fresh from our commissioning as Salvation Army officers, we were appointed to one of the Army's biggest mission stations – Chikankata, comprising a secondary school, hospital and leprosy settlement. We worked alongside Zambian nationals and an expatriate community of around 60 people from many parts of the world. Three incidents of really seeing stand out in my memory.

## Entertaining angels unawares

The hospital, with its highly trained staff, drew people from far-flung parts of Zambia in need of specialised medical care. Often expat women would come to have their babies at Chikankata and, without much warning, the staff of the school or hospital would be asked to offer hospitality to the husband or other family members who came along. I took as my word from God at that time: 'Do not hesitate to show hospitality to strangers for some have entertained angels unawares' (Hebrews 13:2). I looked for the angelic in the people we offered a bed to, and discovered that angels come in strange disguises at times.

**'Do not hesitate to show hospitality to strangers for some have entertained angels unawares' (Hebrews 13:2).**

One couple had travelled for hours to come to the hospital. While the wife prepared to give birth at the hospital, the husband, exhausted from the trip, came to our house and slept. When he woke he went over to the hospital to be with his wife. My husband and children and I ate our usual cooked meal at midday and I served up a meal for our guest, leaving it on a saucepan covered with a lid. When he finally came back, quite some hours later, I was just bringing his meal, warm but somewhat dried out, when he called, 'Oh, by the way, I'm a vegetarian!' I did a swift U-turn to the kitchen and prised the sausages off the gravy into which they'd stuck. Our guest ate it gratefully, but I felt it was hardly food for an angel!

## Becoming one

The early morning sun was large in the sky as I walked home after delivering a message. The sun was coloured by smoke haze from burn-off of the maize stalks that marked the end of harvest. Low and red, the sun made my shadow look long and tall as I headed home.

A young Zambian woman was walking towards me. I could tell from the way a *chitengi* was folded across her front she was carrying a baby on her back. On her head she carried with perfect poise a large basin, probably containing monkey nuts cooked in sugar and

red food colouring, or little floury cakes cooked in oil. She was no doubt heading down to the school to sell her food to the students.

As we approached each other, I was suddenly struck by all the differences that separated us. Although we were probably about the same age, she was black, I was white. Our native language was different. She'd probably lived all her life in a local village. I'd come to her country from thousands of miles away. She was a stranger to me, and I was a stranger in her land. Living in a land-locked country, she may have never seen the sea, never felt the coolness of an ocean breeze. I had lived my whole life within easy distance of the sea.

I had had the privilege of a university education. She may not have had schooling beyond the primary level of standard six. She may have been too small, too short, or the family too poor, to go on to secondary school. She may have had few opportunities in life other than eking out a living, doing mundane housework, collecting water, grinding maize, cooking, having children, maybe getting married, maybe not. The differences between us seemed huge.

As we approached each other, our eyes met just for a moment. I spoke a greeting in her language – *Mwaponā*. She paused, lowered her eyes in a gesture of respect, then we both continued on our way. But as we passed, her shadow, which had been following her, now merged with mine. For a moment we cast one long, tall, slender shadow on the dewy ground. In spite of all the differences between us that had flashed through my mind, for one brief moment we blended as one.

In that moment I thought of all the things we held in common. Both women, both mothers. Both needed water and air, food and shelter. We both had concerns for our family – needed companionship, friendship, and other people. Cut us, and we would both bleed with the same coloured blood. Hit us, and we would both hurt. Befriend us, and we would both be enriched. Comfort us, and we would both feel stronger. Simply by being human, we held far more in common than in difference.

### **Brothers and sisters in Christ**

In the term holidays when the school closed down and truckloads of students were taken off to their homes in scattered parts of the country, we held Bible schools for Salvation Army leaders who had little formal training for their role. Sometimes these events would be held on site at the mission station – at other times, out in the bush somewhere at a makeshift camp. On one such week, when my husband and I and a teacher colleague were leading a week-long school, we took as our verse: When anyone is in Christ ..... (2 Corinthians 5:17). Every morning of that week we taught from this one verse - breaking it down into some of the new things that a person experiences in Christ – a new condition, a new conviction, new conduct, a new community, a new command.

On the fourth morning of the week I spoke about the new community believers in Christ become a part of. I explained while there may be many things about us that make us

different from each other, as Christians we hold far more things in common – our faith, our hope, our salvation.

As I looked at these adult students with their shiny dark skins, their poor clothing, their meagre tools of study, I saw the impact of that verse as it struck them. And as it struck them, it struck me with force as well. Here I was, thousands of miles away from my homeland, with a personal life story that would be different in every way from the life story of these rural Zambians. And yet, here we were, each one of us part of the new community into which God draws his people, from every race and colour and background. On that day I saw - really saw - people who were my brothers and sisters in Christ.

In serving up a meal to an angel in disguise, in meeting a young woman on a fresh morning at the end of harvest, in teaching Bible students in the Zambian bush, I met my neighbours. In looking beyond the many differences between us, I caught a glimpse of the precious, sacred things we held in common. In searching the faces of strangers, I found new friends.

**But as we passed, her  
shadow, which had been  
following her, now merged  
with mine.**

# Neighbours through the eyes of a child

by Adrienne Thompson

Kalpana was Nepali, and a Hindu. Chokchai was from Thailand, a Buddhist. Walsa, from South India, belonged to one of the world's most ancient churches – Thomist Christian. Tashi was a refugee, a Tibetan Buddhist. Roslyn's mother was an Australian Baptist, her father a Nepalese Christian convert. Rajni, from Gujerat, was Hindu.

Who were they all? I started school with them when I was five years old.

I was born in India. My parents worked at one of the many schools started by missionaries in the late 19th century. By the time these two young New Zealanders began teaching there, most of the students and more than half the teaching staff were Indian. As I grew up, my school friends included Muslims, Sikhs, Parsees, many flavours of Hindu, and varieties of Buddhist, along with (mostly evangelical) Christians.

Ironically perhaps, Roman Catholics seemed more strange and different to me than Hindus. This was impressed on me by my great aunt who we visited in Sydney. 'Can I go next door and play with that little girl?' I asked. Auntie looked very disturbed. 'I suppose you *could*, dear. But they're *Catholics* you know.' I didn't know! But clearly, whatever Catholics were, they were dangerous!

I grew up familiar with symbols of many faiths. In the town bazaar most shops had a gaudy picture of elephant headed Ganesha or blue Krishna playing his flute. The Catholic school up the road had an attractive little grotto with a statue of Mary. Tibetan prayer flags flapped comfortingly from many trees. In our forest wanderings we'd come across white stones marking a death. They were dabbled with red, scattered with marigolds, or held the stubs of candles we sometimes stole.

Our school was specifically Christian, and all pupils of whatever faith attended school chapel services. The Bible was part of the curriculum, but so were stories from other traditions. I remember being entranced by the tale of the young prince who became the Buddha. I learned the outline of the great epic of the Ramayana.

Likewise, my Buddhist and Hindu schoolmates listened to Bible stories, went to church and joined enthusiastically in singing. Many (as I've discovered when reconnecting via Facebook) still remember those hymns and stories with affection and gratitude.

What my parents believed *about* these different faiths is summed up perhaps in one of my favourite novels: "You must never forget Laurie that dissenters are often excellent Christian people. You must never be narrow minded."

I promised I never would.<sup>1</sup>

"Though of course," my aunt would add, "you must remember that *we* are *right*."

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Towers of Trebizond* by Rose Macaulay, 1956



I promised I always would.'

Other staff were less tolerant than my parents. I remember one fervent teacher delivering an argument 'disproving' Hinduism. I was used to believing my teachers but I had an uneasy feeling that her whole case was based on ignorance and misunderstanding of what Hinduism was really about. Nevertheless, 'we are *right*' remained my own position.

The first revision of the 'we are right' assertion came when I discovered that Roman Catholics were not dangerous. My father's best friends were the Jesuit priests who ran a neighbouring school. As a teenager, I had a bit of a crush on a Catholic boy who used to go to an early Mass at his school. My mum murmured that some of our Baptist ancestors might be turning in their graves, but she had no objection to my accompanying Tony. If I started by liking the boy, I soon discovered I loved the Mass. Maybe 'we' could be extended to Catholics?

I'd like to say I sensed mystery and beauty in these other faiths. It would be partly true. I have vivid memories of the bright colours and intricate designs of carvings, carpets and hangings in the Tibetan monasteries. I recall the kind, wrinkled faces of monks, turning a hand-held prayer wheel or counting their wooden beads. I still feel a shiver of awe at the prayer-banners on tall bamboo poles against the mountains.

But to be honest what I mainly acknowledge is how ordinary and taken for granted it all was. This was life, that's all. These were my neighbours.

As a young woman I went as a missionary to Bangladesh. 'It'll be like going home,' people encouraged me. It wasn't. The multi-faith experience of childhood was very different to the overwhelmingly Muslim context of Bangladesh. Then – 35 years ago – women were rarely seen in public. To go out was to be stared at, sneered at, ogled and objectified. It was hard not to generalise, negatively, about Islam and about Muslims.

But as I learned the language, I got to know my neighbours. Muslim women. I listened to their stories and played with their babies, cried with them, tried to help them, often swore, though not at them (well, not usually!) but at the cruelty of their situations. And sometimes I prayed with them.

They didn't mind at all that I prayed in the name of Hajrat Isa, the Prophet Jesus. In spite of barriers of belief, culture, wealth, education and language the neighbourliness of common womanhood and common need united us in seeking the Merciful and Compassionate One.

With language-learning too came the ability to read the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore. He wasn't a Christian but his songs of passionate devotion are sung in Christian churches. Deeper understanding of Bangladeshi Islam led me also towards the Sufi traditions. Many years later I discovered Rumi.

Spanning the different traditions – Hindu, Sufi and Christian – I could trace the shining thread of desire for union with the Beloved.

When we returned to live in New Zealand, I missed my neighbourhood! Wellington seemed empty compared to the energy and crowds of Asia. One memory stands out – the days following the 9/11 attacks in New York. We had a strong need to find a way of being with Muslims, connecting with them, affirming that they were our neighbours. Thankfully we could. There was an event at Civic Square where we could stand with Wellingtonians of different faiths, in shock and solidarity.

A year or two later we had a more personal opportunity to connect with Muslims. A young Bangladeshi couple made contact with us. The wife had little English, the husband little understanding of how lonely she was. I became the surrogate mother, accompanying her to antenatal appointments, with her at the birth of her baby.

Ten years on we are still friends, their two boys we count as our Muslim godsons.

Who is my neighbour? I've never really had to wonder too much about that. Jesus' story tells me that my neighbour is the person of a different faith, the stranger who comes to my rescue, the helper to whom I am indebted, and the person who is stronger, more competent and resourceful than I am.

Thank you God for my neighbours.

# Are you my neighbour?

by Jane Hansen

Refugees fleeing nightmares come to life,  
Leaving home and identity behind;  
Clinging to hopes and boats and debris,  
As they journey to be better life, or just life;  
Only to find the door is firmly shut and  
They are left outside.  
Where are their neighbours?

Corporate kings in their castles, politicians in Parliament,  
Who wear success on their sleeve but are  
Slaves to money, power and public opinion;  
Whilst inside a soul pleads for more than this, for  
Meaning, contentment, a peace that stays and  
A good night's sleep.  
But who would believe this of them?  
Who would want to be their neighbour?

Young men – and women,  
Fuelled by zeal, anger and passion;  
Breathing out well-rehearsed dogma from every mouth  
And hatred from every pore;  
Looking for a fight and  
Finding enemies everywhere.  
Who would care, who would dare  
To be their neighbour?

Elderly, forgetful, frail and confused,  
Considered financially unviable and  
Past their use-by date;  
Pushed to the edge of the societies  
They lived – and died for.  
Who notices, or cares enough to volunteer  
To be their neighbour?

Christ in disguise,  
Every day along my way,  
In every place and every face –  
You are my neighbour.



# Faith and neighbours in storehouses of sorrow

by Bob McKerrow

*Bob McKerrow is currently in Nepal with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the aftermath of the earthquake. This follows a brief time at home in Dunedin after assignment in Afghanistan. In this piece McKerrow shares with Refresh reflections from 2001 about the impact of faith on a life immersed in the worst and the best we can do to our neighbours. Headings mine Ed.*

## The Good Samaritan

Over the years I've been inside the storehouse of sorrow in wars, floods, earthquakes, famines, droughts, landslides, cyclones as well as sheer and simple poverty and exploitation.

Last Tuesday while on a Red Cross training course in France, I watched the tragic events unfolding in the US with the terrorist acts in New York, Washington and elsewhere. Three days earlier, Ahmed Shah Massoud and his friend Aseem were killed in Tajikistan by the same person suspected of the US attack. They were both good friends whom I met frequently.

Tea, like faith, is a connector,  
a healer and a leveller. I'm sure  
God made tea as a ritual and  
ceremony of peace.

I drank tea with Osama Bin Laden in 1996, when I met him in Laghman province in Afghanistan. He seemed a serious and likeable man. Tea, like faith, is a connector, a healer and a leveler. I'm sure God made tea as a ritual and ceremony of peace. I also drank many cups of tea with Massoud and Azeem.

So why do tea drinkers kill? Why were we born?

Man's inhumanity to man and inhumane killings have been part of my life. So has God's love and blessings. But how does one write about a personal thing called faith in the midst of all this? It's like describing the intimate feelings I have for Nailiya, something unspoken and intensely personal. But I will try.

Swiss writer and artist, Nicolas Bouvier, wrote, *'My belief is that one must have passed through fire oneself...to be able to sort out...the contents of those storehouses of sorrow, where fortunately we can also find, more often than we might have dared to expect...enough small miracles to motivate and encourage those in the field who are so often compelled, to quote a mediaeval Japanese poem, "to bear the unbearable and tolerate the intolerable".'*

When I was 19, I traveled by sea from New Zealand to Panama, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru and saw my first storehouse of poverty and exploitation, especially in Peru. I spent four months in the high *alta-plano* living with the Quetchua Indians, the remnants of a once proud and sophisticated civilization decimated by the Spanish.

Colonization, another of the world's evils which has been glorified in the name of God. There followed time in the Barriada (slums) of Lima with the beautiful Violetta, a social worker,

where I saw extreme poverty. There I saw 'Faith', something spiritual and simple from a non-material world giving them hope and the strength to survive. It helped shape my faith.

I saw my second storehouse of sorrow in Vietnam 1971. My first Red Cross assignment. Watching aerial bombing of villages and countless people killed or maimed for life by napalm, B 52's, M 16's, helicopter gunships, and land mines, forced me to see how the 'other half dies'.

It was all so far from my Sunday school and Bible class days in New Zealand where we were told of God's perfect world and moved wise men on camels across a make-believe desert in a sand pit, with paper palm trees.

The World looked so perfect.

I soon found an ever-increasingly imperfect world off my shores, where I have spent most of my adult life.

In 1971, sitting in the bar at the Continental Palace in Saigon, I recall meeting famous war correspondent, Martha Geldhorn, just back from assignment with US forces. Sharing on the futility of war and the deeper meaning of life, she spoke wistfully of 'that spiritual world up or out there' then dismissed the comment. She had her doubts about it. I knew she'd been married briefly to Ernest Hemingway, but refused to raise it for fear of being strangled. I thought it must have been more difficult living with Hemingway than covering any war.

I think about my spiritual life a lot, but more specifically in bars, on mountains, in wars, or when I see poverty and exploitation. Perhaps it is the biblical wine, wars, mountains and the Good Samaritan. These places/people evoke strong emotions for me. Having a solid spiritual leaning to my life has helped me through incredibly difficult times.

I like to think I am a Christian...far from being a good one, and I try to pray most days, and the more difficult the going, the more and the harder I pray.

Like in Kabul during 1995, in a ward at Kharte Seh Surgical Hospital. At least fifty children and teenagers with legs, hands, feet and legs blown off by landmines, had to, twice a day, dip and then soak their freshly severed stump into plastic bags of iodine, to ensure the flesh and bone was clean before operating. The plastic bag would be held by a relative or parent.

The first to dip their bloody stump would pierce the air with a tearful scream of death. As each child followed, sometime having lost two legs and an arm, the screaming built up to a crescendo for two to three minutes. I used to ask, 'Why God? Where were you when that child was out gathering wood and stepped on a land mine?'

### **The interfaith neighbour**

Today, when I pick up my 22 month old son, I marvel at the delicacy of, and the simple joy, a baby gives and it makes me think deeply about the ephemeral nature of life. Ablai is one of my six children.

Religions, spirituality, heaven, hell and the afterlife fascinate me. For me, I believe in the one God and a Christ-like figure. I haven't seen Christ but believe I have spoken to him.

I also feel close to all the prophets of the Bible and the Koran, the heroes of Avesta's, a canonical work of the Zarathustra, the Ramayana and the Mahabatra fascinate me. I've wandered deeply into Buddhist territory and thought, and I'm constantly aroused by the Sufi poets.

But above all, it is the spirit of the nomads of the Great Steppes and the Polynesians who constantly challenge my thoughts. For they were able to take on new religions, shrug them off like winter coats, or old canoes, and return to the spirits and roots of their ancestors at will.

*I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help? My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.*

### **The Mountaineer**

What moves me most are mountain landscapes and my dream of being a snow flake wafting from the sky. To fall on a mountain pass, or even a peak – later to merge with a snow field, a neve, a glacier, a crevasse and in my anger and power, an avalanche. And then when I melt, that long trip down the river to the sea.

**Man's inhumanity to man and inhumane killings have been part of my life. So has God's love and blessings.**

The processes of snow, ice, glaciers, and mountain geology fascinate me and have drawn me back in awe time and time and time again. While reveling in the beauty of the mountains, I'm reminded our life on earth is as ephemeral as a snowflake.

I once could ski like the wind down mountainsides in New Zealand, France, Austria, Italy and Switzerland. I often repeat the runs in my mind. But, what keeps me going these days is the anticipation of seeing something new – the sense of awe evoked by architecture, landscapes, people and their cultures. To close my eyes and imagine the history behind these special places, provides a sense of purpose in my life.

All too often amidst the kaleidoscope of contrasts, from awe to awfulness, between pomp, power and poverty, I feel sick and angry. I ask 'why?' But when I slow in contemplation, I know God is part of the world's latticework of life, and my anger dissipates.

Everyone blames God when things go wrong and forgets to praise him when they go right. I've tried most things in the material and spiritual world. All I can say is, 'thank God for this world, each dawn, sunset, flower, wave and child; there is a life hereafter.'

# Who else is my neighbour?

by Vicki Terrell

The lawyer asks, 'Who is my neighbour?', because he wants to justify himself.

Jesus replies with the parable known as the Good Samaritan and asks the lawyer 'who was neighbour' in the story? The lawyer correctly answers 'the one who showed him mercy'.

Like most of Jesus' stories, the parable challenges conventional wisdom about who our neighbour is. The punch line – the neighbour is the one who shows mercy to the victim. No other characteristics are necessary to define that person. Two thousand years later and living in a different time we nod our heads wisely and everyone can agree, isn't it obvious - in theory at any rate?

Another name for this parable could be the Stupid Samaritan. Why? Because what the Samaritan did was risky in the extreme. Those who passed the victim by were doing what the law required. The victim may well have been dead and a Jew could be defiled by touching a dead body.

Jews and Samaritans were sworn enemies and by showing mercy the Samaritan was risking his life! Not only was the Samaritan at risk of being attacked by bandits, but were the victim a Jew, he might well kill the Samaritan for touching him.

In childhood, the challenge of helping our neighbours may be to do something for someone else in our own family, school or neighbourhood. As we grow, the challenge becomes to ask, who else is our neighbour? When we live in a globalized village with thousands of refugees – indeed, who is our neighbour?

We often hear safety messages about not picking up or stopping to help strangers because we may put ourselves at risk. Our society, like many others, teaches us to fear the person who is different, the outsider. The different, the outsider theoretically poses a threat to our safety personally, to our family and/or our community. This underlying sentiment is not too dissimilar to the conventional wisdom of the first century.

The Good Samaritan directly challenges the safety rules in our society. We are to show mercy to whoever we meet, no matter who. Maybe we're called to be a Good Samaritan to a person living on the streets, or to a young person who has broken down on the side of the road or the person whose opinions we despise.

Yes, there's a risk we may be taken for a ride and get hurt. This is the cost of following Christ. We may learn something that will help us on our life's journey. On the other hand, we could well be blessed and our life enriched by the encounter.

The flip side of showing mercy to people in need is when we are in need.

How do we respond to people who help us? Our society tends to label some people as 'helpers' and other people as 'helpless'. Helpers include professionals and middle class



volunteers who help others to sort out their lives. Helpers are encouraged to help from a 'safe' distance and not to get too involved.

Often beneficiaries, young people, disabled people and migrants are seen as 'helpless'. These 'helpless' people are to be shown mercy, but if they show mercy to us, they're to be viewed with suspicion. People will question their motives for showing mercy. These labels cause division among people. These labels can stop us from recognising our shared humanity with all people we encounter.

Sometimes when we need help, it is the wrong time for the 'helpers' or maybe we don't meet the criteria and have to rely on people who just turn up to help us. Some of these may well be the 'helpless'. But they show us mercy in unexpected ways and we accept their help because there is little else we can do.

The Good Samaritan challenges us to see the humanity of the other: to offer mercy before applying the labels we use to justify walking by – or refusing help. Labels prevent receiving or showing mercy in times of need.

For all my liberal views, I still find myself constantly challenged to look for the humanity in people, with whom, for some reason, I initially find difficult to relate. They may be of a different generation, class, ethnic background, have a disability or different sexuality.

Yet, every person we encounter is our neighbour. We have the chance to show mercy to them and receive mercy from them. I often find life is enriched and enlarged by these encounters because they teach me so much about what it is to be human.

To show or receive mercy is a profoundly humanizing experience – for we all need each other. The labels that keep us apart fall away as we encounter human beings offering mercy to one another.

**Yes, there's a risk we may be  
taken for a ride and get hurt.**

**This is the cost of  
following Christ.**

# Nameless

by Leslie Ayers

I am here, in a strange city, for two months. My husband and I are house/dog/cat-sitting for a friend.

Later this year we'll move house, and live up here permanently. We'll make every effort to become involved in this new community, and trust it will gradually feel like home. But for now, for these two months, I've chosen to be an observer of sorts. It won't hurt me to find out what it's like being a stranger in town.

Back home, we lived in the same city for 44 years. We leave behind the multi-faceted connections that have built up over that time.

Already I miss the shared history of home. In the newspaper, I'd read familiar stories, with familiar people, photographed by the young man I remember in youth group with my son. Here, reading the local paper is like reading a newspaper from another country. I don't know the people, or the places or the issues.

Back home, it's unusual for me to walk to the local shops without seeing someone I know. I have conversations in supermarket aisles and nods of recognition at the movie theatre or at a concert. In Christian gatherings we know people across the denominations, across the decades. There are people I met through kindy, playgroups, and school. There are friends I trained with and friends I worked with. Most of all, there are the close friends whose friendship spans decades of sharing and caring.

But now, I'll find out just what it's like living in a place where I have so few connections. I will see what might make a difference to a newcomer.

By week three, my husband unexpectedly goes back home for a while. That leaves me with one enthusiastic, shaggy little dog, and one bored sandy-coloured cat.

Although I enjoy, and often long for, solitude, I become aware that solitude can easily slip into loneliness.

And I realize I need someone to be a neighbour to me, someone to make me feel at home, to help bind up the invisible wounds of disconnection. What will good Samaritans look like for me?

The thing that stands out is my namelessness, my anonymity. Yes, we have family living just out of town and one friend over the other side of town. It's great seeing them. But there are many hours to be spent where no one knows me.

I enjoy the twice daily walks with my cheerfully endearing little dog. People know him on the regular circuit. They call out 'hello Chalky!' and smile at me. But I remain nameless.

It strikes me how important it is to hear people say our name, how that changes things.

The weeks pass. I end up having conversations with some of the other regular dog

walkers. The 20 minute circuit can take longer as I hear the concerns of the woman whose husband is deteriorating with emphysema –‘We need to move somewhere more accessible...but it’s just too hard.’ I hear some life stories; I hear concerns about an ageing dog. There is warmth in the conversations. Yet still, I remain nameless.

If I collapsed on the street, who would know me?

Quite often, I go to a local café in a garden centre. For, as well as coffee, there’s a newspaper to read, and people to be around – human contact.

I’m always cheered by the smiling young woman at the counter. Eventually I ask where her accent is from and talk with her about her country of origin. One day her eyes crinkle as she stamps my coffee card and quickly adds an extra stamp. My next coffee will be free. But more than that, I’m starting to feel recognised. It’s such a little thing, an extra stamp and a smile, but I’m finding that even small gestures can make a difference.

I could have asked her name, but for now I have chosen not to. It’s all part of my finding out how long namelessness can last. Back home, in my favourite little café, year in, year out, I would chat with and smile at the barista. One day I decided I could no longer keep thinking of her as ‘the barista at the café’. I needed her name! She asked me for mine in return. From that time on it was like a light coming on as we called out ‘Hello Justine / Hello Lesley!’ There was vibrancy. It became person to person, not just patron to barista.

Instead of going to a large supermarket in this new city, I prefer to go to the small local shops. A month on, I think I’m becoming seen as a ‘regular’. The lady in the bakery even recognised I left my gloves behind one day, and returns them next time I am in. The attractive woman, probably in her 50s, in a clothing shop tells me how hard it is as a single person moving into a new area. I sense the singleness is recent and painful. The delightful young woman at the hairdressers greets me like a lost friend on my second visit. Hairdressers are amazing repositories of people’s stories.

But, apart from at the hairdressers, I still have no name. It’s good to talk on the phone to my husband, to visit family, to be known as a person.

I go to church. Again, there’s that strange experience of knowing no one in a sea of people. They give a warm welcome at the door and I have a sticker with my name on! I feel at home, the way I always feel at home with the family of God. Yet I leave the service alone, crumpling up my name sticker.

I decide to have a coffee nearby. Another car pulls in beside me. I recognise the couple from church and say hello as we stand in line. They invite me to join them at their table. It’s amazing and exciting, as we share our journeys, share the way we feel God calling us to this city for this phase of life. They had arrived around the time we did, and, like us, have few connections. We say our names...yes! And before I leave they have invited my husband and me to their house blessing and dinner afterwards. I am known, they are known – it feels like God’s grace.

On my walks, I often think of other newcomers to this city. What must it be like for them? Some will have come from other countries. They will have different cultural backgrounds, even those who come from English-speaking places. Many will have a different native language and some will have no English. In two months I have met people from Brazil, Westphalia, Ireland, UK and even Auckland!

What must it be like for refugees who have to cope not only with language and cultural differences, but whatever trauma sent them from their homeland to ours – at the uttermost ends of the earth?

If I hang on to my experience, if I remember what it's like to be in a strange city with lack of connection, then I think I might end up being a better neighbour. I'll know how much a smile, a kindness, an invitation and most of all – knowing someone's name matters.

## Declaration of God's love and forgiveness

Spoken in unison

Remember, the world doesn't revolve around any of us

But we are all revolving together

Friend, we have the choice of whether to resist this cosmic movement

Or to get on board with what God is doing on this planet

Moving us together,

melding us together,

making neighbours of us – together

And the Good News is this –

When we simply ride the orbit of God's movement in this world

When we simply align ourselves with the constellation of God's light

We find God's abundant gifts falling like stardust upon us –

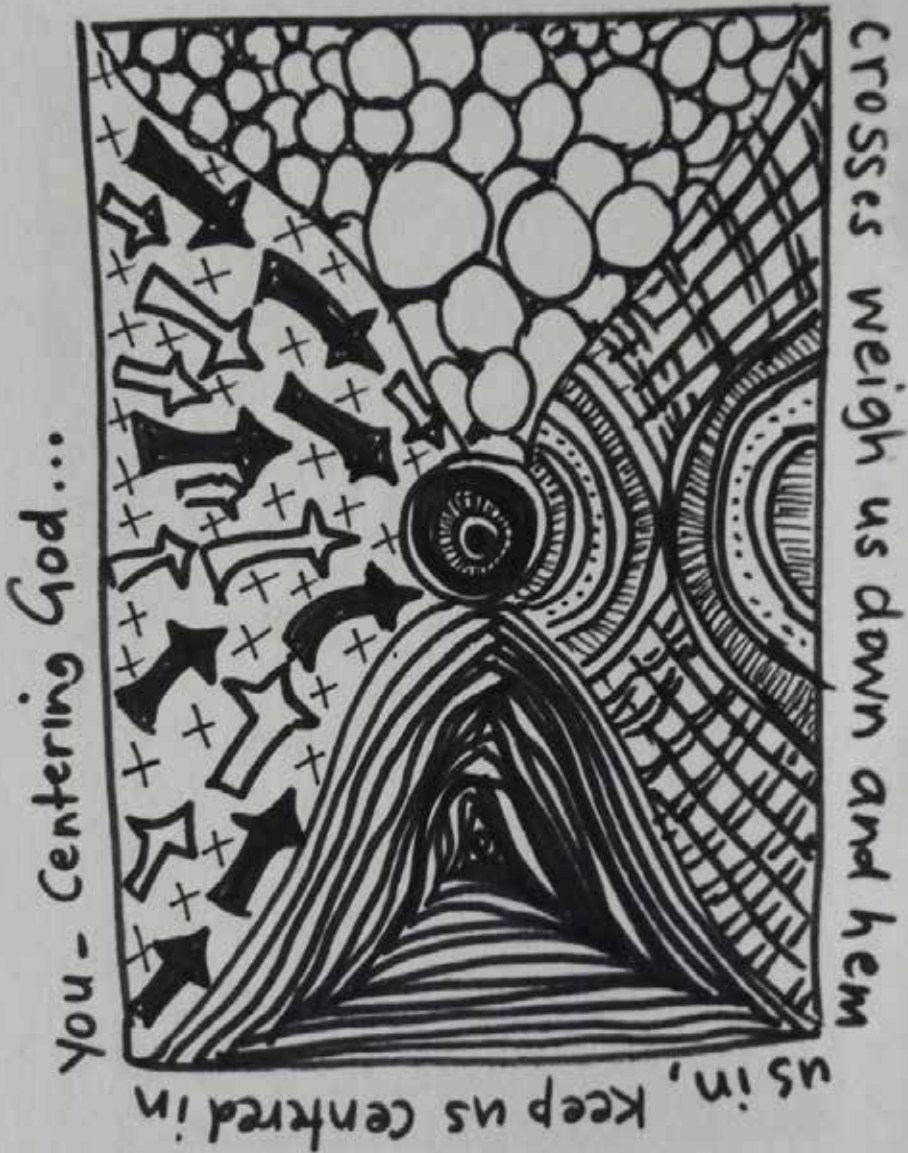
The gifts of love, forgiveness, freedom, and wonder

Family of Christ – let us revolve together

On this whirling, spinning ride of God's cosmic-scaled love. AMEN

*Adapted from the Rev Mindi Welton's REV-O-LUTION [rev-olution.org](http://rev-olution.org)*

When burdens and



© contemplative doodle by Suni Abraham

# Contemplative Hospitality

by Robin Gates

**Hospitality** In contemplative consciousness, one is equipoised, in balance, at the center of one's house, welcoming what arises in quiet hospitality, free of prejudice and attempts to change, possess or reject. In the silent interior, guests gather, are witnessed, and given respect, acknowledgement and clarity, as they birth into consciousness for healing and transformation.

Existing everywhere, rooted into the stationary earth and aligned with the spiritual Source, we are radically home providing a joyous homecoming for all who return, and a place into which spirit can descend. The soul is given boundaries, a center, and the safe container required for protection from external and internal chaos and distraction.

Without abandoning center, one makes friendly contact with guests at the door of the house, marking the beginning of (ego) sacrifice and death while the protector guards the house from thieves that might rob it or encroach on its boundaries by keeping guests in *limini* and limiting the contact.

A detached quality allows for necessary separation and letting go as guests can come to rest, incorporated into the whole. These two intentions of devotional service, centering and welcoming, must share the same interior space. The territory of one appears to end where the other begins.

Where there is unchanging, permanent center, there is also flow; in stillness and movement, they stand together to make an outsider an insider, and protect the inner work. When the tension of the opposites is held, the eternal living flame is tended and a harmonizing transmutation can take place, orienting the earthly to the divine, resulting in the gifts and blessings of peace, mercy, freedom, forgiveness, and new life for the soul.

**Presence** We dwell in the body of the indwelling sacred presence. This presence resists being a personified, conceptualized object of our imagination. It simply 'is', veiled in a 'cloud of unknowing', the ultimate mystery, hidden from view. And yet, one can sense an unattached quality, along with being nurturing, generous, and benevolent, loving everyone who comes to visit.

This presence provides kindness, compassion, shelter and protection to what went before: the wounded, orphaned little ones, the exiled parts of self and the world, along with a promise of becoming transformed in love. Its body gives soul and spirit place, and enables a sympathetic merging with the world.

**Poverty** Spiritual poverty is necessary for hospitality – we give up our selves, our ideas, concepts, opinions, convictions, desires, prejudices, worries, and concerns, to offer ourselves from emptiness. In the practice of kenosis, or self-emptying, we prepare ourselves for not knowing, by not clinging.

Western contemplative traditions have described this place as *le point vierge*, literally translated as 'the virgin point', an apex, or still point. According to Thomas Merton,

the 20th century Cistercian monk, 'at the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth...which is inaccessible to the fantasies of our own mind or the brutalities of our own will. This little point of nothingness and of absolute poverty is the pure glory of God in us'.<sup>1</sup>

At this still point, there is a sense of being in *Kairos* time, aware of the deep mystery. Thirteenth century theologian and mystic Meister Eckhart believed when you come to God, 'the soul must exist in unhampered nothingness.'

In the kenotic path, you can welcome everything fully but must not attach to anything. 'You preserve your chastity simply by not clinging. In the free flow of this coming and going you dwell in safety'.<sup>2</sup> In reverent practice, a foundation of natural peace and contentment in 'Beingness' is strengthened. We take on the beginner's mind and the role of the one who welcomes without judgment, rejection, or entanglement while being devoted to the non-dual human/divine union – the kingdom of God on Earth.

**Silence** We relate from a place of freedom and serve the world from the holy presence of silence. Phenomenological psychologist, Robert Sardello, believes silence is not empty but an alert unfocusing focus on subtle rhythms that join us to others.

'In perceiving through the depth of silence, we come to discover the invisible body of the world, the spiritual flesh within which everything is nurtured into existence at every moment'.<sup>3</sup>

By continuously clearing away obstacles to silence, we enter into deep relationship with ourselves and others through empathic resonance. In silence, we have greater intuitive receptivity and capacity to receive and welcome what crosses the border into consciousness as both autonomous, mysterious and as an intimate part of self.

**We take on the beginner's mind and the role of the one who welcomes without judgment**

It may be difficult to open to the divine invitation to silence, but with practice and in time, silence can become a presence in whom one can rest. Merton wrote: 'In solitude we remain face to face with the naked being of things. And yet we find that the nakedness of reality which we have feared, is neither a matter of terror nor for shame. It is clothed in the friendly communion of silence, and this silence is related to love'.<sup>4</sup>

Contemplative silence is filled with quiet, warm activity. It is dead unless in it, we are listening for and embedded in a deeper reality, the eternal voice. In Silence we experience the infinite while in the finite; we listen, poised in expectant waiting, for that still small voice, the sought-for Other, to pierce the veil.

<sup>1</sup> Merton, T (1968). *Conjectures of a guilty bystander*. Colorado Springs, CO: Image Classics p. 42

<sup>2</sup> Bourgeault, C. (2008). *The wisdom Jesus: Transforming heart and mind*. Boston, MASS: Shambhala. p.79

<sup>3</sup> Sardello, R. (2008). *Silence: The mystery of wholeness*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books. p. 67

<sup>4</sup> Merton, T. (1958). *Thoughts in solitude*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, pp. 85-86



© Wolfgang Staudt - Enjoy the silence



# Neighbour?<sup>1</sup>

by Naomi Greene

Maybe understanding is loving,  
Maybe as I'm learning to understand my self,  
I'm learning to understand something of you,  
Maybe understanding can lead to kindness,  
An opening, a softening, a gentleness,  
A readiness to flow with life's unexpectedness.  
Seeing my self means I might catch a glimpse of you,  
Conditioning, programming if you will, obstructs my sight you see,  
Desires, deeply rooted, invisible to the unaware eye,  
Power, control, approval, pleasure, security, survival,  
May be nurturing my emotions,  
Any one of these logs blocking the way,  
And we will both be denied.  
Awakening, coming to my senses,  
Welcoming feelings arising within,  
Centering, breathing, letting go, silence ...  
Responding rather than reacting.  
Maybe understanding is loving ...  
My self and my neighbour.

---

<sup>i</sup> A poem inspired by the following books ...  
*Rediscovering Life Awaken To Reality* (Anthony De Mello)  
*Open Mind, Open Heart* (Thomas Keating)  
*Invitation to Love The Way of Christian Contemplation* (Thomas Keating)  
*Silence: The Mystery of Wholeness* (Robert J Sardello)





# My New Neighbours

by Jo Anastasiadis

I've recently been tested not just by 'who's my neighbour?' but by an even more challenging question: 'how am I to be a good neighbour?'

The problem confronts me whenever I visit my 88 year old mother at her new rest home where she, along with everyone else, has severe dementia. So by virtue of their proximity to her, my mother's new neighbours have become my new neighbours.

'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

I confess to being very nervous the first time I visited. There were shouts and groans arising at random from different parts of the room, someone grabbing my hand, talking unintelligibly, and only persuaded to let go with a staff member's help.

With the broadest of smiles, a resident says 'hello friend' to one and all. One minute open to receive everyone, but in the next they're scowling and muttering angrily – totally unapproachable. Another cries over and over and over for someone to come – till somebody stops to talk. The minute they move on, the cries begin again. Still another walks round and round, tapping on the window between rooms – seemingly wanting someone's attention – yet staring blankly when anyone waves back.

**Another person cries  
over and over and over for  
someone to come...**

Many don't recognise their own name, let alone any visitor's. Some can no longer speak, let alone walk or feed themselves. All have lived and loved just like you and I. They've been productive, made and kept friendships, been involved in sports or crafts, thought and discussed ideas. Now, many of them just sit, staring into space, lost in their own mind's world.

How am I to be a good neighbour to them? Even more, remember as Brené Brown reminds me, 'worth carries no pre-requisites'.<sup>1</sup>

These people are worth loving just because they are. They don't have to be or do anything to deserve love, any more than I do. They too, are made in the image of God even with their physical and mental limitations. God loves them just as they are, and I'm called to do the same, whether I'm sworn at, dismissed, ignored, seen or understood. We're all loved as we are by God. These people no less!

I'm appreciative of Christ's words that we're to love our neighbour as ourselves, for they remind me to ask what I might appreciate were I in their shoes: a smile, a hello, a kind answer to my question no matter how many times I ask, help negotiating the hallways, reassurance when confused or frustrated or afraid.

These offerings seem very small, and often very inadequate; is this really being a good neighbour? And yet, perhaps it's not the size of the gift offered that's important, but the heart behind the gift.



© Diane Gilliam-Weeks

How can I be a good neighbour to these precious people who've lost so much?

My conclusion: one smile, one reassuring word, one gesture at a time. The common courtesy of a response even when I can't comprehend what's been said. A 'hello' or 'how are you?' Some acknowledgement their emotions are valid, even if I don't understand the reasons for them.

Will these make any difference to someone who stares off into space, face blank, totally unresponsive to my greeting? I do not know. But I choose to believe that somehow Christ uses these small offerings to let love live that little bit more in lives where so much has been lost.

And, perhaps the most surprising of all, is what's happening in me as I journey with my mother and her companions. I am changing in their presence. Compassion is growing. Grace is growing. Love is growing, genuine appreciation of these people whose comprehension is now very limited and whose ability to respond often distorted or absent.

As I choose to reach out to my neighbour, I notice God growing within me a compassion and genuine affection for these who are 'lost to our world'. I'm growing in love because I see these people through eyes of worth and value – as my true neighbours.

As I sit alongside, choosing not to leave them untouched, perhaps the greatest mark of a good neighbour is openness to these dear people's lives – allowing them to connect with mine – and letting that connection bring about change in me.

**I choose to believe that  
somehow Christ uses these  
small offerings to let love live  
that little bit more in lives  
where so much has been lost.**

---

<sup>i</sup> Brené Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection*

# Who is my neighbour?

by Frances O'Leary

I saw you last night on the television,  
Continents away, living in a refugee camp,  
And you have minimal water, little food, no hope,  
You are a witness to so much suffering and pain.  
You are my neighbour.

I saw you in a recent newspaper article,  
Wintertime in Christchurch, living in your car.  
And you were so disheartened, frustrated and angry.  
You feel that no one cares about you.  
You are my neighbour.

I saw you looking at me, with such sad eyes,  
A scared woman, battered, beaten and abused,  
And you wanted to end your own life.  
You are so precious to God - but no one tells you that.  
You are my neighbour.

I saw you sleeping in your wheelchair,  
Tired, lonely, afraid, living in a Rest home,  
And you miss your family, your friends, your independence.  
You just want to be held and loved.  
You are my neighbour.

I saw you gifting me with normality,  
In church, praying and singing; at the shops; walking; talking.  
Friendly, cheerful, sad, happy, sharing many pieces of life.  
You are a blessing to my everyday living.  
You are my neighbour.

I saw you dancing round my sitting room,  
Full of smiles, happiness, energy and innocence,  
And you bring life, hope and joy to everyone.  
You are two years old, my beautiful, treasured grandson.  
You are my neighbour.

I saw you sitting opposite me at the dining table,  
My friend, my lover, my life companion,  
And you always give me the freedom to be myself,  
You are my cherished husband.  
You are my neighbour.

I saw you, my God, in all these people,  
Suffering, frustrated, scared, lonely, and, oh, so beautiful,  
And you challenge me, you call me to be more,  
You want me to stretch my limitations,  
Because YOU are my neighbour.

# Creation Story for children young and old

by Jenny Chisholm

So Love, who later was called God, created all the matter there is in a stupendous explosion, sending it out at unbelievable speed into the nothingness to form a universe.

And God loved the universe and the dust of which it was made.

As the years and the centuries and the millennia passed, uncounted stars and galaxies formed from the dust of the explosion. Some were brilliant with light, and some were darker than can be imagined; some were infinitely more tenuous than the most delicate of gases, and some were heavier than all the worlds we can see on a starry night.

And God loved the stars and the galaxies as they grew and changed.

Some of the stardust coagulated into fierce little globes of molten rock or lumps of churning gases; and all moved at great speed, finding paths among and around the fiery stars.

And God watched the planets and loved them.

As more centuries and millennia passed, one rocky mass began to prepare itself like a nest ready to receive life. A kind of water and a kind of air began to gather, and the great heat and cold of its origin slowly moderated.

And God was in the little planet, and loved its possibilities.

When all the conditions had been fulfilled for the planet to spring to life, little creatures began to move on its surface and in its substance.

And God was among the tiny beings, enjoying what love had created.

The centuries and the millennia passed. Sometimes cold swept across the planet, and sometimes it was racked with explosions. Storms were created and passed across its surface, and often it was battered by other heavenly bodies that crossed its path. But it clothed itself with an infinite variety of green plants, refreshed itself with rain, and put on pleasing displays of clouds, dawns and sunsets, rainbows and auroras. Ever more complex creatures walked and flew and swam all over its surface.

And God took pleasure in the life that teemed all around.

The many living species grew and changed; some disappeared and others came to take their place. Some formed coalitions, while others preyed on their neighbours; and this seemed to be necessary for everything to exist in balance. And then came a time when God knew that some of the creatures were aware of Love, and were searching for their creator, and had found a voice to articulate the names of God.

It was then that God knew what it was to be loved.



Creation had achieved its purpose.

And at that moment, God knew pain.

For, just as a parent who has borne children and reared them with love sees them go their way and loosen their ties with their family, so these earth-dwellers who had grown out of stardust were now independent, some returning with passion and tenderness the love which had formed them, and some rejecting and denying it.

But still the love of God filled all that was created, from the smallest atom on the planet to the outermost ends of the still-expanding universe.

## Luke 10:33-34

by Anna Johnstone

But a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw him, he felt deep pity. Kneeling, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with medicine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his donkey and walked beside him till they came to an inn, where he nursed him through the night.

If it happened today  
we'd pull out a cell phone  
press 111 and wait for  
an ambulance so long as  
it didn't make us late

But the Samaritan walked  
along beside him

He'd need to stay close  
to give real support  
to make sure the poor guy  
didn't slip off the donkey

And he'd have gone slowly  
not urging the four-legged  
friend into a trot  
not doing anything to  
raise the blood pressure  
make the wounds bleed  
more or increase the pain

I know it was a story, Jesus  
but it's made me think of  
someone who's asked me  
to share something of the  
reflective side of my life  
regularly with her

I've thought of books  
she could read  
Quiet days she could go to  
a fantastic study course  
she could do

No doubt these may be good  
but I think you'd like me to  
just walk along beside her

Good one, Jesus  
We'll find a nice café  
order coffee and  
start to be friends

# Neighbour to Creation

by John Franklin

We humans all breathe the same air at home on this piece of star dust, this fragile island planet that has a 'best by' date. And we, just one of Earth's innumerable life forms, are in charge, or so we think. We have the power to radically affect the environment we live in, and every other life form that shares Earth with us, and the well-being of every other life form affects our well-being.

So what does it mean to be a neighbour to the creation that we're a part of?

Faced with issues like Europe's massive refugee crisis, the extinction of NZ birdlife, domestic violence and poverty in our communities, and rising sea levels, we wonder what we can do, if anything, to be neighbourly to our planet, its peoples and its life forms.

Ignorance, not caring, and hopelessness are one thing. Responding to the Gospel's radical perspective transformation is another.

By perspective transformation I mean: becoming – by grace – critically aware of how and why our assumptions about the world in which we live, have constrained the way we see ourselves and our relationships.<sup>1</sup>

There are two paths the Spirit uses for perspective transformation.

One, a sudden insight, like Paul on the road to Damascus. Or we might be moved by an image on Facebook and click to donate to the Red Cross.

The other path to perspective transformation, proceeds more slowly from a series of realisations. These often come through scripture. Leviticus 19, for example, says neighbourliness is about living generously toward the poor and the alien. Reading this may prompt you to *realise* your colleague is poor in self-esteem so you decide to be more consciously affirming. Or you might invite the people next door, who moved from Christchurch leaving family and community, over for a meal – lest they be feeling a bit 'alien'.

Realisations can also come through education, a process of intentionally finding out. You read up on what Red Cross is doing. You look at Aljazeera for the news to get a clearer picture of what is really happening in the world. You go to Google to see what effect the herbicide you are using is having. You read a book on children's critical first two years and talk to that little one in a more conscious, informed way.

In all cases we are becoming more aware, and that awareness enables us to see that we are interconnected with all life. So Jesus' words about loving your neighbour as yourself

---

<sup>1</sup> Ed David Boud, Rosemary Keogh, David Walker, *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning*, Kogan Page, London 1987, p23.

take on a new dimension of meaning; our quality of life is dependent on our neighbour's quality of life.

In both processes of perspective transformation – sudden insight and slow realisations – I see the Spirit generating a 'renewing of the mind' which is what Paul is talking about in Romans 12:2. And the renewed mind consciously seeks to be an agent of the goodness and compassion of God.

Jesus' neighbourly gestures were often seen to be outrageous. He talked to a Gentile woman, he healed a man on the Sabbath, and he made himself ritually unclean by touching a dead girl to raise her to life.

We may not be into outrageousness, but with perspective transformation we become aware that we have a part to play in the well-being of our world, and we can be practical and effective in the spirit of Jesus.

What cause can we donate to? How can we generate less rubbish? How can we conserve energy? What community project could we give time to?

Who is my neighbour then? Everything and everyone.

And how can I serve my neighbour? By opening my awareness to transformation so that I might see with the compassion of God, and offer whatever I can manage, remembering that Jesus said that even a cup of water given in his name would be a blessing.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Mark 9:41

# Being a Neighbour

by Trish McBride

About fifteen years ago I watched a series of videos from a US university on the Table Ministry of Jesus. This was a new concept for me, but it made so much sense! Who did Jesus choose to eat with? The B team, the shunned, socially unacceptable ones, tax-collectors and sinners. Whom did he ask for a drink of water? The B team Samaritan woman. Whose memory did he say would be honoured down the generations? The B team woman who was forgiven much because she loved much. Jesus was neighbour to them, joining them in their world, and they were neighbours to him. And his explicit teaching that the despised Samaritan who helped the wounded traveller was the one who was the neighbour. Not that the gospel story continues this far, but it's good to imagine that the injured traveller was overwhelmed with gratitude for the help he was given, and once he'd recovered was able to contribute somehow to his benefactor's well-being, and also to 'pass it forward' to another in need.

The concept of 'neighbour' has a great deal to do with willingness to offer hospitality. This may not necessarily involve inviting people to a physical meal, or bandaging physical wounds, but having the open eyes, ears and heart which invite others to be fully present with you for longer or shorter times. It's about paying attention, noticing, really seeing the other, the neighbour, and conveying 'I see you, and you matter'. About actively including, not excluding, the stranger, the waifs and strays, the other.

I think of four life-affirming movies, all with a deep spiritual message of 'being neighbour', sometimes played out as at odds with the non-life-giving organised religion in their environment.

There's **Babette's Feast** (1987), where a whole inheritance is spent on one meal for a community who, despite living together for years, are still strangers, suspicious of and antagonistic towards each other. During the meal, they opened their hearts to each other. And **Antonia's Line** (1995), where her table for celebrations gets longer and longer as all the misfits, 'sinners' and B team members are serially included with acceptance and respect. And **Chocolat** (2000), where again the heroine's unconditional acceptance and support work miracles in the lives of the town's strugglers. In all three, there was hospitality, neighbourliness that healed.

A more recent movie, **Pride** (2014), is the parable of the Good Samaritan writ large into our own times and culture. The despised 'others', the 'Samaritans', were a group of London gay and lesbian friends who decided to support the striking miners of the Welsh village, because they themselves knew what it was like to be ostracised and victimised. They gave unconditional love and support, despite rejections and struggles, the crucifixion of seeming failure, and for one a literal death sentence. Eventually, when it all seemed to be over, there was the turn-around that made legal history, as Trade Unions abandoned their discriminatory homophobic policies, and gave acceptance and exponential reciprocal support to those who had initiated the relationship. It made

powerful viewing. Getting to know each other as good-hearted human beings was the key. 'Who,' Jesus still asks, 'were the neighbours to the ones in need?'

The cosmos, our planet and all its creatures too, are our neighbours and have needs to be tended. To serve the well-being of a hurting Earth, we can choose to reduce our own ways of harming it, however benign they seem from day to day. We can eat, dress and play less lavishly, so we can reduce our impact on the environment, and give more to those with greater needs.

In the internal dimension, welcoming, loving and supporting the wounded, B team parts of oneself can be a real challenge. Christian programming has traditionally been urging to suppress, disown, ignore, malign as sinful these inconvenient, disreputable and elements of one's self. To know God's healing, we're actually invited to be a compassionate neighbour to these parts of ourselves as well. That way life can be a lot less of a battle. 'Know thyself' is a wise saying that pre-dated Christianity, but still applies. How much more compassionate it is to realise that our own unskilful behaviours (and those of others) come from woundedness, from life wounds that need bandaging and gentle tending so that they can heal. Without self-care and appropriate self-love (not to be confused with selfishness), our energy for being a neighbour will be severely undermined and limited.

So all that exists is my neighbour. Nothing and no-one can be excluded. The 'how' of it can be much more complex. There are times where it is better in the long term to stand back to leave people with the responsibility for steering their own lives, times where a power analysis of a situation means standing with those with less rather than those with more, times where the truly loving thing is to say 'No'. And it's often a greater challenge to figure how to be a neighbour - anyway - to the rich and powerful.

Being a neighbour is meant to be a life-consuming commitment for followers of Jesus. The world's needs often seem overwhelming. I had a beloved and wise mother-in-law. Her philosophy was simple: Do the work that's nearest!

Being a neighbour is the task of faith communities as well as of individual pilgrims. This is where the table-ministry of Jesus is – or isn't – at its most evident. How many parishes speak the words on Sundays 'Wherever you have come from, wherever you are going, whatever you believe, whatever you don't believe, you are welcome at this table?'

# The one I really see

by Barbara Sampson

If I opened my eyes and looked and saw  
really saw  
what would I see?  
Not just a flash of tree as I rush past  
but colours red and russet and gold  
leaves lined and scarred  
crushed and broken  
not one of them perfect  
yet every one perfect in its symmetry  
its imperfection and beauty

If I opened my eyes and looked at you  
really looked  
what would I see?  
Not just a rebel with tats  
a week's stubble  
teeth in need of a scrub  
but a son loved by a mother  
taken away  
a father of children to different partners  
taken away  
a man with hopes and dreams  
all taken away

I want you to know  
that when the light shines in a certain way  
and I look at you  
really look  
I see you my neighbour  
my brother  
I catch a glimpse of what your mother  
your partners  
your children  
loved and lost  
I see the fragile dream that still flickers  
like a candlelight within you  
your potential to become a man of influence  
an oak tree going deep  
growing tall and strong  
with colours red and russet and gold  
your life lined and scarred  
crushed and broken  
yet perfect in its symmetry  
its imperfection and its beauty

## Neighbours 'inside' and out

*Prison Chaplain, Margaret Young, sought reflections from inmates on our theme. Three responded. The authors have requested anonymity.*

### **First inmate:**

It is because I worry about the reaction of my neighbours that I write this short commentary in anonymity. My fear is of judgement; not from the ones who know me best, but from those which know me least and presume to know everything.

You see, I behaved in an immoral way which my neighbours quite rightly decided deserved incarceration. Over the past year or so, I've experienced the most challenging time of my life. 'Being caught' by society brings with it fears of punishment, shame and loss. But as time passes, I begin to understand it's the conviction from God which brings the greatest consequence. As God reveals a glimpse of who I've become, I'm left with an 'internal' pain which is hard to bear. Recognising that I'm selfish and used people for my own ends – while minimising, rationalising and justifying my actions over the years – leaves me with unbearable guilt.

For some, prison is a time to gain insight into their own frailties – however for many it unfortunately amplifies their undesirable traits. To survive, inmates protect themselves from the harsh psychological and physical environment by constructing an 'armour' of sin around themselves to hide their vulnerability.

**Not a good starting point  
from which to love thy  
neighbour as yourself.**

So I desperately search for good neighbours to help me through my journey but here they're hard to find. I also struggle to find my own neighbourliness – even knowing there are many here worse off than myself. After all, if I *had* been a good neighbour I wouldn't have betrayed society in the first place.

Scripture reminds us we should love our neighbours as we love ourselves. Unfortunately prison has a skewed population: those who feel they have no right to love themselves so cover up their low self-esteem with 'prison armour', and those who are simply narcissistic. Not a good starting point from which to love thy neighbour as yourself.

But as I think about this further, I begin to question what love really means. Intuitively it feels egotistical to love yourself. This leaves me grappling with the whole concept.

Until now, love for me has been that internal flame and warmth I hold for my family and closest friends. The level of love can be measured by the pain you experience when you actually or stand to lose one of these people. But if someone I don't know in a far off land is suffering, I may feel empathy for them, but I usually don't feel pain.

So I find myself looking for a new definition of love. The one derived from the Greek defined as God's love or 'benevolence' helps me most. Benevolent love requires an attitude of goodwill, kindness, fondness, regard and warmth towards yourself and

others. All the traits I'd 'love' to recognise in myself and find in others toward me.

'Do unto others as you would do unto yourself.'

Understanding 'benevolent love' gives me a chance to reflect on the remarkable people who've become my neighbours over the past twelve months. While many of my historic neighbours and friends have found it easier to distance themselves from me while inside, others have reached out to me with letters and visits – reminding me I'm much more than the worst thing I've done.

My new neighbours have come from the most unexpected places: the good Samaritans who've crossed the road to offer me their love, the guard who gave me his coffee when he noticed me shaking in the court cell, the inmate who put his hand on my shoulder when he saw me crying in the yard, and the officers who simply offer me their humility – to name but a few. Finally it is the chaplaincy service which needs special mention. They provide me sanctuary in a carpeted chapel, and continue to support my spiritual and psychological needs.

Q. Who does God want us to view as our neighbours therefore?

A. Everyone we're fortunate enough to come into 'actual' or virtual contact, even people in prison who've done the most wicked of deeds. Everyone deserves our love by offering our goodwill, kindness, fondness, regard and warmth even if their door is not open to receive it. My victims will always need a neighbour to help them through the pain I've caused. I hope, with forgiveness, they'll accept me as a neighbour who they can once again trust.

Everyone should be welcome at our table as Christ welcomes us to his. Through him they will find forgiveness, peace and the ultimate neighbour – God.

**Second inmate:** *Prisoner 2 poetically retells Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan then offers these comments. Ed.*

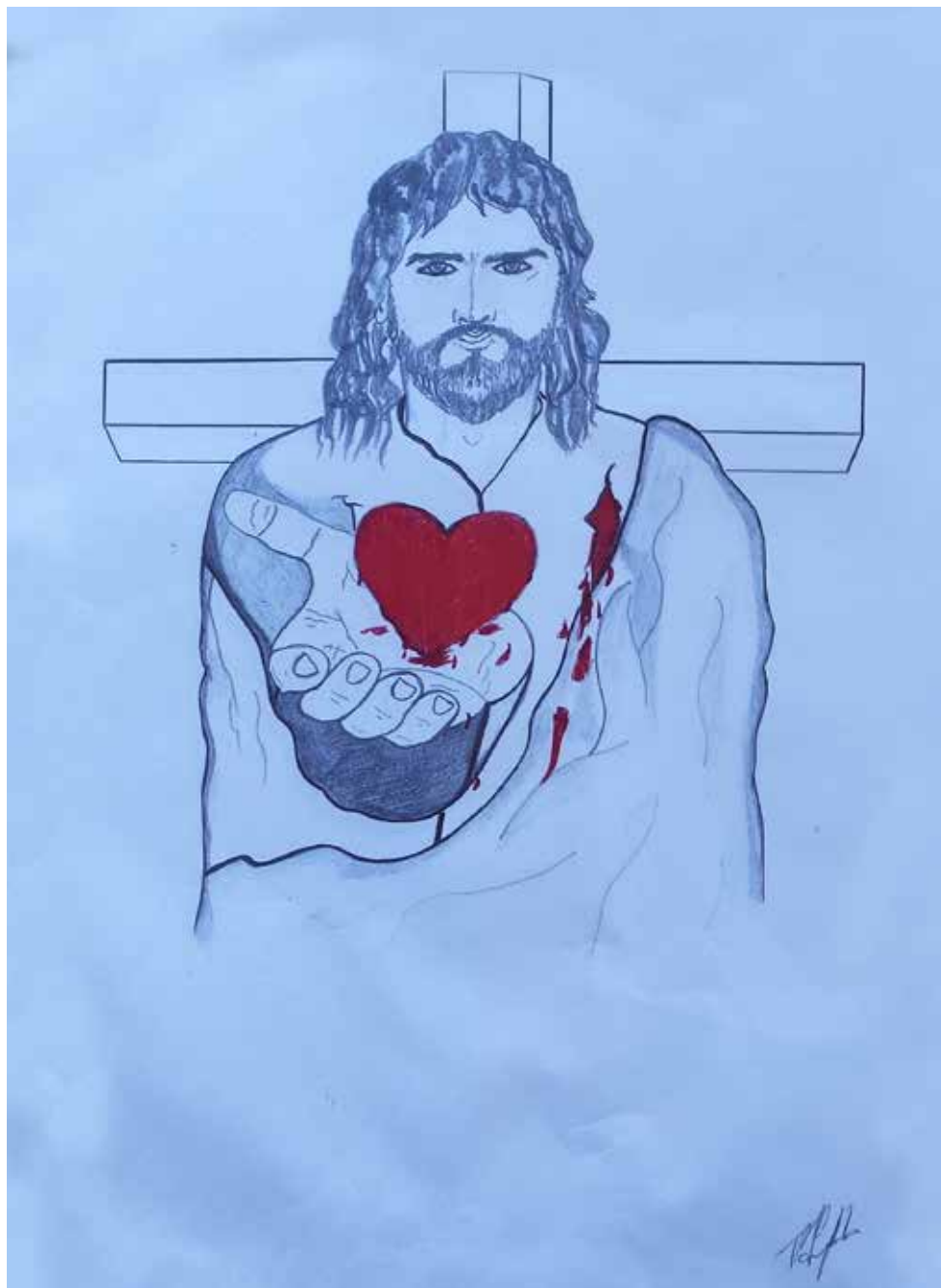
There are some, would have you think, this good Samaritan, is a picture type of Christ who gave himself for us, but I suggest all four characters in the parable evoke the image of our Church: divided, torn, afraid to help those who are hurt. All four claim one God – each feeling he was right. Remember too, the Lawyer – we have them in the Church. Showing each other how smart we are as we display our prejudice. The Parable asks that we put down our sinful pride and be a neighbour of sacrifice.

In Christ we are one body all, each have a work to do,  
In the power of His Holy Spirit, Jesus waiting there in you.  
To fulfil His Great Commission, together in His plan,  
A Church of brethren in love united, each one, a good Samaritan.

**Third Inmate:**

Jesus, shedding his blood was the ultimate answer to the question, 'who is my neighbour?'





© inmate 3 Christchurch Men's Prison

# Neighbours

by Maggie Quinlan

Life touches life;  
Race meets race;  
Gender moves with gender;  
Faiths intermingle.  
All connected  
By the love of God.  
Nothing just happens.  
The great lover of our souls  
Knows how much we need each other.  
Put together for a purpose.

These are my neighbours,  
Even if just for a brief moment.  
Does God's love flow through me?  
Do I offer them peace?  
Do I give of myself,  
To enrich their lives;  
To bring hope;  
To surprise them with joy and laughter?  
With the Holy Spirit's gifting,  
Help me to be a good neighbour  
To each you send my way.

## 'Neighbouring' must include listening

by Lynne M. Baab

Many years ago I heard a sermon on the prodigal son. 'Who is my neighbour?' the teacher of the law asks Jesus (Luke 10:29). In response, Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan. At the end of the story, Jesus asks, 'Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?'

On that Sunday long ago, the preacher noted it's helpful to think of 'neighbour' in Jesus' question as a verb rather than a noun. In other words, 'Which of the three men in the story 'neighbour'ed' the man who fell into the hands of robbers?' To 'neighbour' someone is to act in a certain way. This issue of *Refresh* addresses that question from many diverse and helpful points of view.

I want to argue that to 'neighbour' someone must include listening to them.

Why is listening a part of 'neighbouring'? Good listening conveys so many things. In the seminars I conduct on listening, I always open with the question, 'Why does listening matter?' Participants usually come up with about twenty answers: listening shows love and acceptance, listening helps people understand they're not alone, listening helps people solve their own problems as they talk things through, listening builds relationships...

In fact, listening reflects the dance of the Triune God where each of the three Persons of the Trinity lives in love and deep communication with each other.

Listening skills – which can be learned – include those small indicators that we are listening, 'hmmm' or 'yes' or 'I see.' Listening skills include body language and facial expressions that indicate we're paying attention. Other key skills include learning to

ask open-ended questions and growing in our ability to reflect back what we think the person said.

All listening skills depend on one behaviour. We must stop talking in order to listen. In this article I want to write about some of the inner forces that make it hard for us to stop talking.

### **1. People are different and their difference makes me feel tense.**

Imagine that you have a new co-worker. This new person wears a headscarf, so you wonder if she's a Muslim. Imagine you've never actually had a conversation with a Muslim before. What do you say? What do you ask? What do you feel?

Use your imagination a bit more. Imagine that last week you were talking with a family member who expressed his conviction that Muslims are trying to take over the world. At the time, you disagreed with him, but now, as you want to have a conversation with the new co-worker, your family member's words come back to you, and you begin to feel tense about what you will say.

All of us feel some degree of tension in conversations with people who are different than we are. Perhaps you enjoy conversations with Muslims, but get tense talking to people with different political beliefs. Or maybe your new colleague is a vegetarian, and you're intimidated by people who don't eat meat.

**All of us feel some degree of tension in conversations with people who are different than we are.**

When Jesus challenges us to 'neighbour' the people around us, he's asking us to make a difficult move. He's asking us to engage with people with whom we feel uneasy.

Perhaps it's their religious or political beliefs or their convictions about other things that really matter to us. Regardless, Jesus is asking us to engage with interest and respect. For many of us, our knee-jerk response when we feel uneasy is to fill the air with our own words – because we worry about what the other person might say that would make us uneasy. Setting aside our uneasiness so we can listen is a key listening challenge.

### **2. People say things I don't know how to respond to.**

Imagine your new co-worker not only wears a scarf, but she tells you about the recent death of her father. Imagine you're uncomfortable talking about death, so her story arouses your sense of insecurity about what to say when people are grieving. The next time you see her, you don't ask any questions about her father or the funeral or how her family members are coping. Instead, you talk about the project you're working on together. You're afraid she'll talk about her grief and then you won't know what to say.

All of us, even the best listeners, find ourselves wondering from time to time about what's the best thing to say. The challenge is to learn to set aside our anxiety about what to say so we can make space in the conversation for whatever the other person wants to talk about. If we can set aside that anxiety, we won't be afraid to let people talk about

what matters to them. We will be open to them and their concerns, as a good neighbour would be. Often no response at all is necessary, and with time we can learn to feel comfortable with silence in conversations. Learning to set aside our anxiety about what we're going to say next is a key listening skill.

### **3. I'm in a hurry.**

Another key listening skill is knowing how to cut off the flow of words gracefully. When we encounter someone in the supermarket and they start a long story, it's perfectly appropriate to say, 'I can't talk now. I'm so sorry, but I've got an appointment.' We must not ever make listening such an absolute value that our lives become out of control. Sometimes there simply isn't time to listen well.

However, it's worth examining our lives a bit. How long has it been since you've listened to a story from someone who is upset about something or worried or discouraged or angry? How long has it been since you have felt uncomfortable in a conversation? If it's been weeks or months, then it's probably time to spend some effort engaging with someone who's a bit different than you are or who is experiencing things that make you uneasy. Jesus calls us to 'neighbour' the people around us, and if we are always rushing off to the next appointment and never listening, then we are probably missing his call.

Just about all of us in this busy world have a long to-do list. That list can get in the way of listening. We need to ask God's help to know when to focus on the list and when to set it aside for ten or thirty or ninety minutes to listen to someone.

### **4. I'm in the habit of talking because it's less effort than listening.**

Let's be honest. Active, engaged listening is quite tiring. For many people, talking is less demanding than listening. Let's be honest again. We simply don't have the time and energy to listen carefully all day long. But in order to build bridges with people who are different than we are, in order to 'neighbour' people around us, we have to listen attentively sometimes. And, for those of us who are talkative, that means letting go of our love of talking for a period of time.

### **5. I have no idea how to show love while listening because it wasn't modeled to me.**

Several interviewees for my book *The Power of Listening*, talked about people in their congregations who'd never been listened to. They had no model for good listening. If you're one of those people, I have three suggestions:

First, read the Gospels. Jesus was a champion listener. Watch for the ways he paid close attention to the people he interacted with. He frequently spoke up and he frequently listened. He knew how to do both, and he is a great model. Secondly, watch the pattern of the conversations in your life. Pay attention to conversations when you're with people you like to be with. In what ways do they listen to you? Also, pay attention to the pattern of conversation with people who are hard to be with. What are their listening habits? I have learned so much from paying attention to the listening practices of people in my life, good and bad.

Thirdly, consider finding a spiritual director. Again, watch the pattern of listening on the part of your spiritual director and you will learn a lot.

## **6. I'll never show perfect empathy so I don't want to try.**

Communication scholars view empathy as the highest listening skill. Empathy is the cognitive process of identifying with or vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another. When we empathize, we are attempting to understand and/or experience what another person understands and/or experiences.<sup>1</sup>

Empathy is beautiful to experience. It's also very hard to sustain. In fact, no one can empathise perfectly. Sometimes we're tempted not to try because it's so challenging.

Perhaps you'll find it encouraging that the people in my life who are the very best listeners express how often they feel they fail as listeners. They're very aware their empathy is only partial and that sometimes they simply talk too much or fail to perceive what another person is trying to say.

But these people keep trying. They constantly work at listening better.

An example: I interviewed the minister of a culturally diverse congregation in Auckland. He said some European members expressed their uneasiness in conversations with Asians in the congregation. He asked them, 'What's the issue?'

One woman responded, 'Well, if I talk to an Asian I don't know what to say. If I talk to a European, I might be able to say, "Oh, you went to school in Wellington!" I can kind of imagine that because it would be like me going to school in Auckland. But if you said you went to school in Kuala Lumpur – blank.'

The minister said he found himself thinking, 'You're an intelligent person, so why don't you just ask the next question: "What was it like going to school in Kuala Lumpur?"'

To 'neighbour' the people God puts in our lives from very different backgrounds, or beliefs, requires a variety of listening skills. One of those skills is just to ask simple and appropriate questions and be willing to listen to the answer. But this requires something else first: we must stop talking.

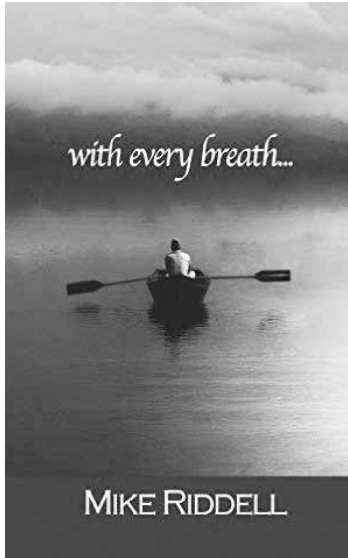
Many people talk rather than listen because it's easier for so many reasons. Exploring those reasons, and learning to set them aside from time to time, helps us show love to the people God is bringing to us as neighbours.

Watch for the ways you feel loved in conversations. Watch for the way people in your life 'neighbour' you as they listen to you. Then go and do likewise. You'll learn so much from people who are different than you are, and you'll enter into Jesus' love for you and for the people around you.

---

<sup>1</sup> Kathleen S. Verderber and Rudolph F. Verderber, *Inter-Act: Interpersonal Communication Concepts, Skills and Contexts*, 10th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 211.

## Books!



**with every breath... by Mike Riddell**

**Holy Bucket Productions Ltd, 2015**

I breathe into the depth of life.

I travel into the silence and emptiness.

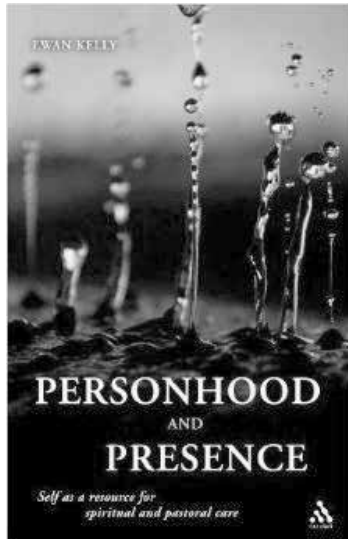
I surrender my anxiety.

I welcome the darkness.

I open myself to the deep.

I breathe.

How many of us wake up in the middle of life wondering how we got to where we are? Is there more to being human than routines, duties, and commitments? Mike Riddell suggests there is. In this small book he offers a few hints and insights for the voyage into the fullness of humanity. Through contemplative breathing, Mike suggest we find the source of breath [Ruach] and meaning. Here we find both the source and meaning of our lives. This is a book for anyone trying to find purpose or direction in the midst of busyness and confusion. It offers grace where it is lacking.



**Personhood and Presence**

**Self as a resource for spiritual and pastoral care**

By Ewan Kelly

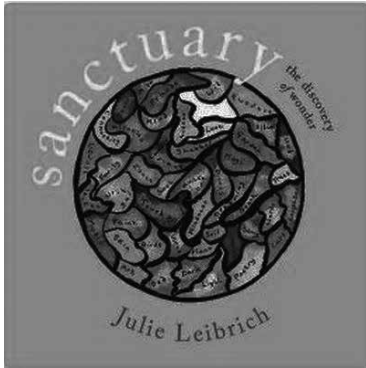
Bloomsbury, 2012

Reviewer Vincent Maire

Ewan Kelly believes for those entrusted with the care of souls, deepening self-awareness is a moral imperative and an ethical requirement. Not to do so is, at best, to offer second-rate care and, at worst, to inflict damage on those we hope to support. Personhood and Presence examines the Self from three different yet deeply connected perspectives: the Gifted Self, the Exploring Self and the Sustaining Self. Nine sub-sections drill down further into the nature of self as beloved, waiting, sexual, (Gifted); relational, vulnerable, limited, mortal, powerful (Exploring) and meaningful (Sustaining).

The underlying theology of the book could be described as the love of God. On the beloved self he writes, 'God

delights in us as caregivers, without measuring the quality or quantity of our work...Belovedness requires extending the gentleness we seek to offer others to ourselves.' The final chapter on Sustaining Self looks at creative self-caring. Trained as a doctor before answering a call to ministry, after ordination Kelly returned to hospital work. Today he is Programme Director for Healthcare Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care, NHS Education for Scotland. He is also part-time senior lecturer in Pastoral Theology at the University of Edinburgh.



## Sanctuary The discovery of wonder

Julie Leibrich

Otago University Press

Reviewer Pip Nicholls

Dear Julie, I was asked to review your book Sanctuary – the discovery of wonder and I'm going to 'fail happily!'

Fail because to review a book there needs to be a level of objectivity, of standing outside the experience of reading so that one can cognitively make sense of it. As soon as I read your first chapter I knew it was game over. By the end of the first page I was absorbed in your story telling - I was waft deep in holy ground, that 'space within the heart'.

All good mystical writing gently leads the reader to their own stillness and silence but not always as quickly as you can. I could so easily feel you delighting and struggling over a word, a turn of phrase, an experience and you get it right every time. My hunch is you've written this book from within your hard found sanctuary which makes it easier for the reader to read it from theirs... or if someone's reading your book as a means to finding their sanctuary – indeed they'll at least glimpse it from time to time. The Maori translation of contemplation is noho puku – stay in (your) belly. Julie, your book is to be read from the belly and to misquote you for others readers:

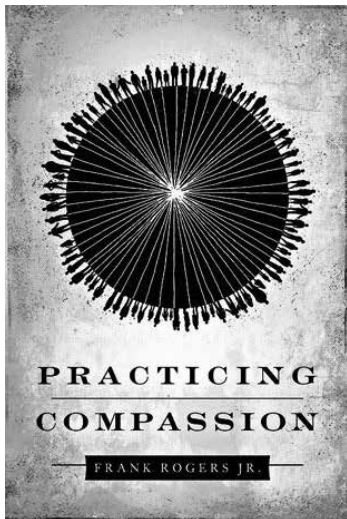
*Keep reading.*

*But do not dwell in the words.*

*Let the words dwell in you, let them*

*dissolve in you.*

*With warm regards, Pip*



## Practicing Compassion by Frank Rogers Jr

Upper Room Books \ Fresh Air Books, 2014

Comments by Brian D. McLaren and Dr. Sheryl A.

Kujawa-Holbrook

Everybody believes in compassion, but nobody tells you how to practise it. Until now. Frank Rogers turns compassion into a doable, daily practice as simple as catching your breath and taking your pulse. If you want to read a book that actually has the capacity to change your life (and the world), beginning today, this is the book to read. Suitable for individual and group study in homes, faith communities, and academic settings, Frank Rogers' deeply sensitive work has the capacity to restore relationships and organizations. This resource offers a way for people of all backgrounds to better cultivate compassion in their daily lives, and reminds those of us who find their way in Christian communities how compassion is an integral part of the tradition.

## SGM News

Isn't it ironic that Advent – one of the most (potentially) contemplative periods of the year – can be the most crazy-busy? But isn't that our challenge at any time of the year? To be contemplative; to pause and to notice the movements of the Spirit in the midst of everyday busyness; to ponder God's loving Presence within all our joys and successes, sadness and failure?

This is our challenge and calling on SGM Workgroup as well, to be contemplative together even in the face of a long agenda. At the beginning of each meeting (March and September), we take time to catch up, share our recent life-journey, and allow Workgroup colleagues to help us discern God's 'still small voice' in the midst of each experience.

In our other business, we rejoice at the number and calibre of participants in the Formation Programme. We continue to see God at work in the provision of generous financial grants and donations over the year.

We celebrate that, coordinated by Jeannie Martin Blaker, Spiritual Growth Ministries played an important role during *Connect* – the annual Presbyterian Youth Leaders Conference at Ngaruawahia. Twenty five spiritual directors from Putaruru to Whangarei 'popped in' for the day to offer one hundred young participants an individual experience of spiritual direction. The keynote address on Soul Care was given by Dr David Crawley, a discussion about spiritual direction was presented by Gareth Walters and Angelika Halstead, and two workshops were held – Prayer & Personality by Fran Francis, and Practising the Presence by Ricky Waters. Small contemplative groups were presented in the afternoon on *Lectio Divina*, *Visio Divina*, Body Prayer and the Examen. 'Spiritual direction is an amazing resource for nurturing', one noted. Others said they'd like to make it a regular part of their spiritual practice.

Yes, SGM has much to celebrate, but we've also mourned – for Barbara, as she's faced a deeply challenging health crisis that necessitated extended leave; and for Andrew as he stepped back from the cusp of retirement, to take up the challenge of Formation in Barbara's absence. You'll no doubt be aware we decided in 2016 not to have a Year 1 intake as part of this temporary arrangement. We discern God is at work here. There are some risks, but we're excited by the possibilities as well. Faith is all about risk, is it not?!

We covet your prayers in all these things.

As Christmas approaches, may you make time to pause and to ponder the promises and blessings of *Emmanuel* – God With Us – as Mary did so long ago waiting for the birth of her precious child.

Many blessings,

Mike Wright

SGM Convener

With contributions from Joanne Garton.





© Diane Gilliam-Weeks

## The Last Word

Much of my time leading up to this edition of Refresh was spent in the northern hemisphere autumn...sitting with my mother as she declined from early to later dementia and increasing frailty of the body. She slipped away quietly into the arms of love just as I put the finishing touches into the journal. Jo Anastasiadis has beautifully written for this edition what I could also have said about the experience. To this I add – sometimes in life we carry the cost of loving our neighbour when we are the stranger, the widow and the orphan ourselves. It seems to me Jesus understood that very well.

Shalom and enjoy summer while it lasts!

Diane [dianegw@actrix.co.nz]

## Winter 2016 Refresh theme 'Silence'

***Deadline March 28, 2016***

In the next edition of Refresh let us approach silence from a contemplative perspective but from many angles and sides. Prayer, healing, listening, presence and Presence, reflection, emptiness and consent. Maybe even hurtful silence and recovering from it. Maybe even when God is silent – how do we do our holy waiting?

### **Guidelines for writers!**

*keep contributions to fewer than 2000 words*

*use single quotation marks*

*be conversational in style*

*use conjunctions wherever possible*

*use endnotes instead of footnotes*

*use inclusive language wherever possible*

## Contributors

**Barbara Sampson** is a retired Salvation Army officer who lives in Christchurch where she offers spiritual direction, organises retreats and quiet days, proofreads manuscripts and writes the occasional poem.

**Adrienne Thompson** offers spiritual direction and supervision in Karori. A recent joyful strand to her activities is blessing things and people – a baby, a marriage, several houses and some offices so far. With her husband she loves exploring random, remote roads in their camper van, especially if they lead to bird sanctuaries. She is incredibly lucky to belong to Stillwaters, a wacky, wonderful faith community in inner-city Wellington.

**Jane Hansen**, married to Jim, is also mum and grandma. She has exchanged the Kaimai and country life for the Ruahine and town life in Feilding; enjoying spending more time with family, making new friends, keeping contact with existing ones; exploring the surrounding districts and discovering God in new places; continuing to write in response to God's grace and everyday blessing.

**Bob McKerrow** is a mountaineer scientist adventurer who served with the Red Cross since 1971 in Vietnam, Bangladesh, India, Geneva, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Tonga, Western Samoa, the Cook Island, and the Philippines. He now works for the International Planned Parenthood Federation as Resident Advisor in Nepal. He's married with 7 children and has written three books.

**Vicki Terrell** is an Anglican priest in the Diocese of Auckland. Born with Cerebral Palsy into the church, Vicki's life journey is a continuing dance between faith and disability. She has extensive experience in both communities and is currently facilitating links between them.

**Lesley Ayers**, with husband John, recently moved to Tauranga. Today is a time of transition, adjusting to a new place, new people and new possibilities in God. It's also time to enjoy being part of the lives of four young, energetic and delightful grandchildren (plus their parents).

**Robin Gates**, M.A. (Depth Psychology) is an educator, writer and workshop facilitator from Sonoma County, California. In her courses, she weaves together contemplative spirituality and depth psychology with experiential learning.

**Naomi Greene** lives in a beautiful spot in the Waikato near Mt. Pirongia on a small lifestyle block. At present she enjoys Quiet Days at Houchen House Retreat, reading, walking with her Mini Schnauzer, practising centering prayer, learning to draw and paint and being mum to three lovely young ladies.

**Jo Anastasiadis** is a born and bred Wellingtonian, wife, mother of grown children and spiritual director. She enjoys being outdoors, particularly walking on the beach, taking time out for retreats, and utilising creativity in her relationship with God.

**Suni Abraham**, mother, chaplain, teacher and member of Wadestown Presbyterian Church, often finds focus and rest during a busy day in symbols, shapes and patterns. Reflective doodling is almost a necessity for her on difficult and confusing days. Doodle a prayer and listen to the quiet still voice within offering comfort or truth as you make inky swirls and strokes.

**Anna Johnstone** loves being a life-long learner in God's amazing school of grace.

**Frances O'Leary** ..a wife, mother and grandmother. Life challenges me in many various ways to see and love the indwelling God in my neighbours.

**Jenny Chisholm** is a grandmother and retired teacher who still gets to teach a little group of bright 12-year-olds each year. She's come through Bible Class (and remembers annual conferences where the loudspeakers woke us each morning with Bach), Iona, Taizé (for almost 40 years NZ contact for the Letter from Taizé until it went online) and Progressive Christianity, and is an occasional lay preacher. Sometimes she sees how a Bible story might have been...

**John Franklin** loves to pray; to pray with soil on his hands, pray preparing food for friends and family, pray with coffee in his cup and music in his ears, pray in big landscapes and quiet corners, pray in company and alone. He is a spiritual director, retreat director, and ministry supervisor, and is a member of the NZ Association of Christian Spiritual Directors Exec.

**Lynne Baab** is a senior lecturer in pastoral theology at the University of Otago. She is a Presbyterian minister and the author of many books on Christian spiritual practices. Her most recent non-fiction book is *The Power of Listening: Building Skills for Mission and Ministry*, and she recently published a novel set in her adopted home town, *Death in Dunedin*. Visit her website and blog to read blog posts and articles about listening: [www.lynnebaab.com](http://www.lynnebaab.com).

**Joanne Garton** is a spiritual director living in South Auckland. She enjoys journeying together with other directors involved with the SD Support Group based in Auckland.

**Vincent Maire** is the Spiritual Care Coordinator at Hibiscus Hospice, Red Beach, Auckland. He is a spiritual director and currently National Coordinator of the NZ Community for Christian Meditation.