

# Refresh

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# Like A Child



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© Alana Levandoski (see a review of her new album on page 41!)

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## Like a Child

by John Franklin

My granddaughter Amelia is now 20 months, but when she was barely 3 months, she taught me about the gaze. Fresh from God, she just gazed at me, and I gazed back. In the love of God, we were just there, and we knew each other. I had no need to think, analyse, and process. The invitation was to just be there; be there like nothing else existed, like a child.

A child can gaze. And remembering the little one's gaze was a significant awareness for me on a recent retreat. I realised that in prayer, I've had an energy to reach out for God, to 'find' God, connect with God. This meant I had a task in prayer, a goal, an achievement to accomplish – to make this praying worthwhile.

This ego-centred reduction of prayer was sabotaged by grace.

I remembered Amelia. She wasn't trying, or even able, to do anything. She just gazed. She was love. Like God is. God gazes in love. And what are we to do with that? Think about it, analyse, process? I think not! Our task is to receive.

**In the attachment-generating gaze, the child learns that this world is a safe place, that she will be held.**

There's a parallel in the Song of Solomon. We can wonder, what is the bride's task? To follow the lover's example, and like him, go leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills (2:8)? Or to go out into the city to find him (3:2)?

No, her actions would be in vain. The lover is the seeking one. The task of the bride is to feel her desire for him, and let herself be loved; to receive his loving gaze, and receive his loving words. 'How beautiful you are my love, how very beautiful!' (4:1) These are the words of one who gazes with the simplicity of a child.

Gaze. The gaze of the parent, especially the mother, is critical in the first months.

Attachment is formed, a process that's critical for later social, emotional, and cognitive development. In the attachment-generating gaze, the child learns this world is a safe place, that she will be held. And we know we're safe when we 'don't let our hearts be troubled', and like a child, trust in God's loving gaze (John 14:1).

Here is the gospel. And how our world needs gospel! Around the planet there are plagues of anxiety, stress, depression, social phobia, eating disorders, self-harm, and loneliness striking people down. Human beings are ultra-social animals, whose brains are wired to respond to other people, but we're being peeled apart.

Our educational, economic, technological and ideological systems tell us we prosper through competitive self-interest and extreme individualism. And consumerism fills the

void, encouraging us to gaze at ourselves and see the need for this body enhancer, that mind stimulation, this or that food, fashion, or furniture life-comforter.

Research shows that social pain and physical pain are processed by the same neural circuits. Not surprisingly, we use physical language to describe social and emotional breakdowns or harm. For example, 'his words cut right through me', 'she's a pain in the neck', 'he broke my heart'.

And in humans and other social animals, social contact reduces physical pain.

So we hug our children when they're hurt, and they feel better. Recent research reported in the *Journal of Physiology and Behaviour* observes that children who experience emotional neglect suffer worse mental health consequences than children who suffer physical abuse.

The hug, let alone the loving gaze, is not there for so many people. Statistics show that dementia, high blood pressure, heart disease, strokes, lowered resistance to viruses, and even accidents are more common among chronically lonely people.

Loneliness apparently raises the risk of early death by 26%. That's the equivalent of smoking 15 cigarettes a day because it too, raises cortisol which suppresses the immune system. As prison systems and terrorists know, solitary confinement is one of the most effective forms of torture.

But – I've read reports of people surviving solitary confinement because they were conscious of Jesus with them. For God so loved the world, he gave his only Son (John 3:16). He showed up in human form. The Holy Gaze came among us, and full of grace and truth, he called us to be like a child. He invites us, like a child, to be open to the gaze that is love itself. And he sends us out, bearers of his gaze, to be healing presence for the lonely, hurting un-gazed-upon people in our communities.

So I think evangelism is a 'pass it on' strategy. As a child-like recipient of the Holy Gaze, we can pass it on. As we have received, so we give – when we engage the eye of the family member, the friend, the checkout operator, the teller, the client, the business consultant, all the people we randomly run into. I just gave the gas delivery man a kindly little eyeball to eyeball gaze and he smiled, as did the butcher. Jesus did say, 'Whoever receives you, receives me' (Matt 10:40).

Psychologist Carl Rogers promoted 'unconditional positive regard'. And like a child, bearing the presence of the love of God, we can do just that and so reverence humanity, and all of creation for that matter, with a gaze of unconditional positive regard.

With childlike wonder, delight, and presence, we can gaze with love upon all that is, in response to, and with, the love of God. And that is prayer. I thank Amelia for reminding me.

## Like children?

by Graham Millar

Yes, I do actually. Especially our four sons and nine grandchildren.

Jesus of Nazareth knew that children were socially, economically and politically powerless. I'm not sure that today's children are all like that.

If I take this passage seriously then I have to ask, 'What is it that we do to children that means they become adults who can't be part of God's community?'

Perhaps our great efforts to socialise children into being good Christians achieves the opposite effect. Personally, I'm very aware of the seduction and corruption of power. As a distorted, ageing adult, I relate to a divinity in the cosmos that is indifferent to my affluence and comfort. To keep struggling to be an ideal follower of Jesus is too difficult.

At times, I still need a parent God. When I feel weak and helpless, my God becomes nursing mother or dandling father. For encouragement and advice, I'm glad to know a middle-aged parent. When I am most arrogantly certain, God has become a parent needing rest-home care.

Childlike adults in New Zealand have little power. I have enjoyed the simple, open affection of people in supported accommodation who have the gift of Down's Syndrome. Henri Nouwen was so changed by living in a L'Arche community in Toronto, that his book, *In the name of Jesus*, invites Christian leaders to stop trying to be relevant or popular or powerful.

I still have all these temptations. Maybe it's not the cuddly child, but the unpretentious adult.

And sometimes I experience divine love when the pretensions drop away.

For an answer Jesus called over a child,  
whom he stood in the middle of the room, and said,  
'I'm telling you, once and for all, that unless you return to square one  
and start over like children,  
you're not even going to get a look at the kingdom, let alone get in.  
Whoever becomes simple and elemental again,  
like this child,  
will rank high in God's kingdom.  
What's more, when you receive the childlike on my account,  
it's the same as receiving me.

*Matthew 18:2-5, Message Translation*



© Anna Johnstone

## Do we dare?

When did we first learn  
to wear a mask?

Was it as littlies  
when our tears  
were shushed  
and we were told  
it was 'all right'  
so the hurts and fears  
were popped into the  
jar of our minds  
and the top screwed tight?

Was it later as we saw  
others understanding  
what to us was a puzzle  
so we drew the curtains  
across the questions  
and looked  
knowledgeable?

Later still as others  
succeeded and we  
struggled was it easier to  
assume indifference?

So many masks  
so polished  
our performance  
of wearing them

But you say you want us  
maskless  
open  
vulnerable

How can we risk this  
moving into the unknown  
minus the protection  
we've always worn?

What's the point  
if up to now  
we've managed  
more or less?

Jesus, you walked  
this earth transparent  
in motive  
in word  
in deed

Risking reputation  
you refused all masks  
allowing God's love  
to flow unhindered

You offer us the same  
freedom

Freedom from fear  
freedom from pretence  
freedom from the false  
self who parades  
in our clothing

Walk with us/through roads of truth  
Courage us till  
every mask lies  
stripped  
discarded  
powerless  
as we move on  
your peace filling  
our eyes  
our hearts  
our lives with  
new beginnings

Anna Johnstone  
*The Freedom Walk*



© David Whyte

## Hiding by David Whyte

Hiding is a way of staying alive. Hiding is a way of holding ourselves until we are ready to come into the light. Even hiding the truth from ourselves can be a way to come to what we need in our own necessary time. Hiding is one of the brilliant and virtuoso practices of almost every part of the natural world: the protective quiet of an icy northern landscape, the held bud of a future summer rose, the snow bound internal pulse of the hibernating bear.

Hiding is underestimated. We are hidden by life in our mother's womb until we grow and ready ourselves for our first appearance in the lighted world; to appear too early in that world is to find ourselves with the immediate necessity for outside intensive care.

Hiding done properly is the internal faithful promise for a proper future emergence, as embryos, as children or even as emerging adults in retreat from the names that have caught us and imprisoned us, often in ways where we have been too easily seen and too easily named.

We live in a time of the dissected soul, the immediate disclosure; our thoughts, imaginings and longings exposed to the light too much, too early and too often, our best qualities squeezed too soon into a world already awash with too easily articulated ideas that oppress our sense of self and our sense of others. What is real is almost always to begin with, hidden, and does not want to be understood by the part of our mind that mistakenly thinks it knows what is happening. What is precious inside us does not care to be known by the mind in ways that diminish its presence.

Hiding is an act of freedom from the misunderstanding of others, especially in the enclosing world of oppressive secret government and private entities, attempting to name us, to anticipate us, to leave us with no place to hide and grow in ways unmanaged by a creeping necessity for absolute naming, absolute tracking and absolute control. Hiding is a bid for independence, from others, from mistaken ideas we have about our selves, from an oppressive and mistaken wish to keep us completely safe, completely ministered to, and therefore completely managed.

Hiding is creative, necessary and beautifully subversive of outside interference and control. Hiding leaves life to itself, to become more of itself. Hiding is the radical independence necessary for our emergence into the light of a proper human future.

*Excerpted from CONSOLATIONS: The Solace, Nourishment and Underlying Meaning of Everyday Words. 2015 © David Whyte*

## Longing for the wonder

by Elinor Galbraith

We stand there watching the yellow digger move piles of rubble, we are silent and spellbound. Who would have guessed the new Mitre 10 being built in our little town of Motueka would give such joy and wonder?

My two-year-old and I walk home with occasional outbursts of 'Boom!' and 'Really Big!

You'd think being with children all day, every day would give me numerous opportunities for celebrating and being childlike. But more often than not, I'm too tired and feeling out of balance – to truly join in the great life I give my children.

My mothering style is formed around the natural rhythms of the seasons, simplicity and preserving my children's childhood.

But a dilemma arises. For me to get through the day in my business – get it perfect and special for the children – I find myself not fully present to my life, this day.

I forget to use grace as I do the hard bits, the loud bits and the messy bits. I lose my awareness and then my peace. I long to finish it all, get it done and it over with.

There is little time for solitude and definitely no silence. But I do crave this and desire it and know and remember the feeling.

At the core of myself, I visualise an easy balance between my hectic days and unmet needs – and the gifts that are in front of me, that is my life.

There's a saying 'go sit in your cell and your cell will teach you everything'.<sup>1</sup>

In my cell with my husband and three children, I sit and listen to the truths God calls to me – to use the tools of my job and the living of my daily life as a means to make art.

I need to remember to see everything and everyone as sacred. To give it all the attention it deserves. So today I pause to honour the childlike qualities of awe in the making of play doh, and be dazzled by the daffodils we collected for the season table.

Children effortlessly see and feel the presence of wonder – it's all around them.

I feel this calling from God, to join in the mystery of life and embrace the gifts of wonder and have a holy curiosity, to be open like a child to all life and all my days.

**In my cell with my husband and  
three children, I sit and listen to  
the truths God calls to me**

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Merton in *Sayings of the desert fathers*



The simple acts of reverence, awe, wonder, kindness, and beauty that dot my days – give me glimpses of the sacred right here in my home, amongst the sandpit in the garden and the banging of pots and pans in the kitchen – and there I am also.

And although this gift is surrounding me and my mothering, I still stumble, fall and sit crying with the children. Some days seem unholy, not beautiful and an unsolvable mystery.

But in the evening when the house is quiet and the children are asleep, there's a welcome relief and comforting peace – because no one needs me – so I take a deep breath and release the day and know tomorrow is another day to recommit and begin again.

It's part of my rhyme of stirring – stumbling – remembering – rejoicing and noticing the rousing of my soul again.



## Coming Back Home

by Val Roberts

Throughout my adult years God has been showing me in greater depth what it means to be His child. The ongoing invitation is to keep becoming like a child.

This healing and transformational journey, I've come to realise, is my journey back home to the heart and womb of God.

Part of a prayer by George Appleton rings true for me, 'Take me down to the spring of my life, and tell me my nature and my name. Give me the freedom to grow, so I may become self, the seed of which you planted in me at my making.'

This is my prayer too, that I may become the child that Jesus talks about in Matthew 18:2-5.

I used to think this teaching was just about having childlike faith, and welcoming children. But the first exercise my Spiritual Director gave me years ago, when I was stuck in depression, was to meditate on Psalm 139, putting my name into it. This was the beginning of understanding and believing – deep in my heart – how precious I am to God as His beloved child.

...this is what my heart was yearning for, to return to the simplicity and innocence of a child.

One of the next exercises was to ask Jesus how He sees me. It was one of my most profound and healing experiences. I saw a picture of myself as a young child – barefoot, carefree, running in the grass, laughing and playing with Jesus. I began to realise that this is what my heart was yearning for, to return to the simplicity and innocence of a child.

Along the way, raising my own children and welcoming foster children into our home were also instrumental in rediscovering my child within.

As E.E. Cummings wrote, 'We do not believe in ourselves until someone reveals that deep inside us is something valuable, worth listening to, worthy of our trust, sacred to our touch. Once we believe in ourselves we can risk curiosity, wonder, spontaneous delight or any experience that reveals the human spirit.'

Slowly, as I helped the children, I began to risk discovering and enjoying my inner child as well. It wasn't easy. My inhibitions were not easily let go of! I still struggle with my own or others' expectations and constrictions.

Much work with Spiritual Directors and counsellors, plus reviving my love of poetry, art and dance have enabled me to become more of who I believe God designed me to be.

Another stage of my journey was discovering the Mother/Father heart and feminine side of God. This helped me to shed some of the rigid Christian understanding I had



about God. Psalm 131 about being still, like a weaned child resting in a mother's arms became a vivid image of God that I often returned to. And over time as encouragement, God brought people and opportunity into my life which took me way out of my comfort zone. This, I believe, is part of what following Jesus and being childlike is all about.

When I discovered the mystics during Spiritual Direction training, I was especially excited about Hildegard of Bingen's idea of God as our playmate. I gained more insight through the writing of Michael Yaconelli in *Dangerous Wonder -the Adventure of Childlike Faith* and Laura Boggess' *Playdates with God*.

The last six years of my life have been hugely enriched through working with adults with intellectual disabilities. They are indeed the 'little ones', 'the poor', and 'the childlike' whom Jesus welcomes and calls us to be like. This work has enlarged my understanding of the ministry of welcoming the childlike in His name.

Many times when I am troubled or overwhelmed with the less pleasant things of this world, God brings me back to letting go, being still, and trusting He is God.

Knowing I don't have to understand everything is very liberating.

Often when I become over-serious, anxious, resentful, or angry – God reminds me to go back to being playful and adventurous. To delight again in Him and in life.

Today I have many ways to practise being like a child. Many I'm drawn to naturally. And if I trust my intuition, it's usually my inner child telling me what I need to do: like spending time with my intellectually disabled friends or young children, dancing to music, drawing in the sand on the beach, doodling in my journals, collaging and having fun with paint and colour, enjoying nature and taking photos of anything that catches my eye, being spontaneous, daring, and doing something others might consider crazy/ breaking the 'rules'.

Connecting to the senses is really important for me, as is allowing myself to fully experience emotions (especially uncomfortable ones). The more I do these things the more natural they become.

But one last thing: I'm careful about where, how and with whom I become 'like a child', when I'm not just by myself. Finding like-minded people who understand is important. We can easily be discouraged or judged for being or doing something unconventional. It takes courage and vulnerability to be childlike in an adult world.

That being said, my experience is when I'm comfortable with choosing to be true to my childlike self, it encourages and allows others to be more vulnerable as well.

After all, Jesus was unpredictable, passionate, courageous, unconventional and His love and grace spill outside the lines.

## Play by Marilyn Wilkinson

Play  
dancing breeze  
with the birds  
and the leaves  
mighty sun  
with the day just begun.

Play  
gentle rain  
as you trickle  
and giggle  
and tickle the earth  
into life  
with a smile on its face  
and a leap in its heart.

Play  
all you creatures  
become  
one  
with the trees  
and the breeze  
with the rain  
and the sun.  
Roll into a ball  
full of light, love and laughter  
bouncing and tumbling  
and reaching out wide  
to bring others along  
for the riotous ride.

Then all can soar high  
and reach for the sky  
taking leave of the earth  
dissolving in mirth  
ripe for the adventure  
of Ultimate Birth.





## Playing with God

by Helen Bathurst

I had two burning questions on my mind, when I arrived on a seven-day silent retreat in February 2016. 1. 'How do I discern God's affirmation and appreciation of me without looking for it?' and 2. 'How do I see the world through his eyes?'

But somehow that first day, as I tried to reflect on them and prayerfully meditate – things just didn't seem to gel. I became frustrated and despondent.

It appeared God had other ideas. On the second day God said, 'Come and play with me this afternoon.' And that's what we did for the rest of the week.

We played down in the creek repairing and adding to the dams that form its pools. I lay in the pools letting the water flow over me. I splashed my feet and watched the waves I made. I sat under the waterfall for a massage – throwing stones at the dams, examining the cockabullies nibbling at my toes and at the algae on the rocks.

Safe and secure in his arms I was relaxed and happy, knowing I wouldn't be dropped.

I even made a fish viewer out of a yoghurt container, so that I could see them more clearly and take photos of them. I enjoyed the sensation of water – washing over me and supporting me.

It reminded me of Holly Arrowsmith's song *The River*: 'Put my feet in the river and wade on in...I close my eyes and sink right in.'

Playing and relaxing in the water with God was refreshing and cleansing.

'We' worked on the jigsaw puzzles; patiently fitting pieces together, sometimes making wrong assumptions and having to try again. And maybe that's what happened at the beginning of my retreat; I made a wrong assumption about what God had in store for me and now God was showing me how to redo the puzzle a different way. Sometimes the piece that fitted the hole wasn't the piece I expected.

Maybe there's a lesson in this – expect the unexpected, recognise there's a different way to look at things.

We designed and stitched a pukeko and a kiwi into the tapestry I was working of St Francis of Assisi. As I stitched, I thought about God designing and creating the pukeko, the kiwi and all the hosts of other creatures so long ago.

'What a good idea to create pukeko,' I said. 'God, you must have had fun creating everything.' He replied, 'I did; it was great fun.'

I found a picture of Jesus holding a baby and coloured it in. I saw myself in the picture as the baby being held safely and securely in the arms of God – the baby whisperer.

Safe and secure in his arms, I was relaxed and happy, knowing I wouldn't be dropped.

Jesus and I were paying attention to each other as if there was no one else in the world. I felt his hands as strong and capable workman's hands and as gentle and nurturing motherly hands.

We went out walking, up the bush track to the now ruined Cross Creek railway settlement, across the farmland, to Boggy Pond and even up the creek bed. A bit of an explore and an adventure this last one as I wrestled my way through low growing willows – some of which had fallen across the creek. Journeying with God is an adventure, never quite knowing where I'll be going and what he'll be asking me to do.

I was trying to circumnavigate the big locked gate between the farm track and the Cross Creek settlement. My feet, shoes and socks all got soaking wet – as I don't know how to walk on water. (Well, not yet anyhow!)

On our walks there was much to see and enjoy of God's creation. The small mouse which darted across the track ahead. When I stood still, it came to nose around my shoes – until another walker came and scared it back into the undergrowth.

A dragonfly sat on the track with wings of delicate black and clear tracery fully extended. We saw cicadas – God and I – sitting on trees and heard their loud summer noises. We felt their bodies as they dive bombed.

And the plants! There were ferns; hound's tongue, hen and chickens, spleenwort, and tree ferns. There were flowers; wild sweet peas, thistles, montbretia and more. There were blackberries, many juicy and ripe just waiting to be picked and eaten; a delicious taste sensation.

I thought again how beautiful creation is and how much care God put into each animal, each plant, and each species – even those we view as insignificant, as weeds or as pests. Again I thought, 'God, what fun you must have had creating so many individual species with their own particular form and quirks.' Again he replied, 'I did.'

We 'walked' a finger labyrinth together, tracing the path to the centre and out again with my forefinger. Then I shut my eyes and 'walked' it using my sense of touch. I discovered in this a totally different experience, needing much more concentration, using the sense of touch rather than sight and a sense of trust my finger was on the right path and I hadn't jumped tracks.

And then there was golf. I came across a lone golf ball on a farm track so I upended my walking stick and took a few swings at it. Not very successfully I might add.

I've never mastered the art of playing golf with a walking stick nor even with golf clubs. Another playful moment enjoyed with God.

I eventually realised what was happening. I wasn't praying and reflecting on how God sees me or how I might see through God's eyes.

Instead, we were doing it, playing together, enjoying each other's company – and I was learning more of my heavenly Father.

God answered my questions a different way than I expected, but in ways that spoke powerfully to me. Even more powerfully, I suspect, because he chose to answer in ways that were particularly meaningful to me. I am detail attentive. I notice all the little things around. I am a tactile hands-on learner and I am playful.

As I played I was learning – something of how to be with God. I came to see that by playing intentionally with God, I was learning how to be intentionally with him in all of life. The challenge then became – how to continue this awareness of being together with God as I left my retreat and re-entered everyday life.

Lead me on, I'm coming too

Show me your ways as I follow you.

Lord, all that hinders strip from me

And guide me to eternity.

## How I found my way home

Excerpted from **Spiritual Direction:  
Wisdom for the long walk of faith** by Henri Nouwen

'The L'Arche community gradually became my home. Never in my life did I dream that men and women with a mental handicap would be the ones who would put their hands on me in a gesture of blessing and offer me a home. For a long time, I had sought safety and security among the wise and clever, hardly aware that the things of the Kingdom are revealed to "little children," that God has chosen "those who by human standards are fools to shame the wise."

But when I experienced the warm, unpretentious reception of those who have nothing to boast about and experienced a loving embrace from people who didn't ask any questions, I began to discover that a true spiritual homecoming means a return to the poor in spirit to whom the Kingdom of Heaven belongs. The embrace of the Father became very real to me in the embraces of the physically and mentally poor.'

## He is a father to the fatherless

by Anna Johnstone

*He is a father to the fatherless;  
he gives justice to the widows, for he is holy. Psalm 68:5*

I remember reading this verse at 17  
after my Dad died suddenly at 43  
and telling you  
in not polite or holy terms  
that I was now fatherless  
my Mum a widow  
and I expected you to keep your word  
and be what this said you'd be

I'd only been a believer a few months  
and knew little about Christian stuff

It was a bit like a teenage office girl  
meeting the CEO  
of the world's largest company  
on her first week at work  
and demanding  
he reorganise the whole business  
to suit her needs

Looking back  
I think what a cheek I had  
taking you entirely for granted  
but you never failed us  
proving yourself  
in ways my young mind  
could understand  
allowing yourself to be known and  
drawing me deeper and deeper  
into loving you

I'm sure that's why I have such  
a deep, passionate faith in you  
a no-nonsense, complete trust  
that's only grown over the years

In our sailing days  
my man was so good  
at knowing how and where  
to anchor so that  
no matter how hard it blew  
we didn't drift off

You've been my strong anchor  
Loving Heart  
the constant, the always there  
holding me steady  
holding me close

I look to the road ahead and wonder  
how many more years  
I'll walk it

Impossible to say  
My times are in your hands

But this I know  
fatherhood is for life  
So long as I live  
you are my father

With the same childlike trust  
I face tomorrow  
and all my tomorrows,  
knowing my heart  
is safe in yours

## Child-like Seeing

by Martin Stewart

I've been experimenting with the blend of image and poem prayers for thirty years now,  
but only recently have the images and poems been ones I've created.

While at times I wish I was more sophisticated at both photography and writing, I have  
neither the time nor the patience to accelerate my skills to get them to that higher place  
quickly. Consequently, I am somewhat raw and somewhat simple and at times it feels  
like I have entered a second childhood!

I set out with the camera and find myself lost in the simple wonder of what is around  
me – a daisy flower in the wild, a tree on a cliff edge, the way the sun casts a shadow, the  
simplicity of a plant...

This being lost in wonder has become a rich contemplative space for me and echoes of  
similar experiences from my childhood have made their way into my consciousness.

I have also begun to write stories and poems, and they too have become contemplative  
experiences. Most of these stories and poems have their beginning in my mind as  
images. Sometimes an image I caught on the camera pops into my mind when I'm  
writing. Other times an image prompts a story. This is the case with the story, image  
and poem below.

I know I want to become more proficient with camera and pen, but it seems the pathway  
to that place requires a recovery of my childlike way of seeing.

### Wide Awake

On a recent trip to the West Coast I planned a stop at Castle Hill to photograph  
the magnificent limestone formations. But what caught my eye that day was the  
proliferation of wild daisies.

It was only because I allowed myself to stop and step aside from my carefully  
made plans that the simple wonder of the small things about me had a chance of  
catching my attention.

It reminded me of how the small things were noticed and celebrated when I was  
a child. When I was eight I spent most of a day watching lines of ants pass each  
other on a concrete path in Takapuna.

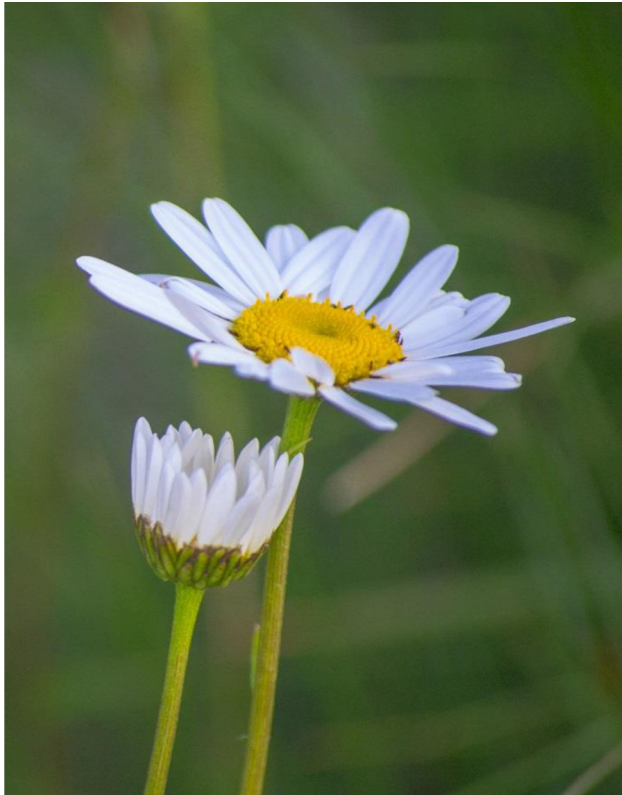
It was a glorious waste of time, just like the hour I spent with the daisies at Castle  
Hill.

when I was a child I could sit for hours  
staring at the trail of ants going this way and that

time did not go slower then, rather,  
I was contracted to wonder and moving fancifully

as one ant passed another it paused  
– it seemed as if it bowed out of respect for a king

I am no longer a child - I have not sat for hours with any one thing  
and my life is speeding away.



© Martin Stewart

## I was only 9

by Liz Maluschnig

I was only 9 when it happened  
That quiet Knowing, the beginning of a  
relationship with the Other,  
Name unknown yet present somehow

The Other became defined in my 20's and I joined the exclusive club of church and  
learnt that some are IN and others are OUT, some people are GOOD and others are  
BAD

Denying the silent, still voice in my heart I believed and assented to this – it felt so good  
to be in the IN and Good Group – I was accepted, I wasn't disabled, gay, outspoken  
I was Good and obedient  
I was IN!

More years past and the voice in my heart tugged at me, sometimes feeling  
uncomfortable with the IN and Out exclusivity teachings of my church - like clothes that  
no longer fitted.

Slowly it felt like these clothes once worn with such pride began to feel too small for  
me- I was beginning to outgrow them.

Then it was as if my tastes changed completely and I couldn't stand these outdated  
generic outfits at all – I threw them off, feeling vulnerable and alone in my nakedness.

It was a time of confusion for my beliefs – my heart held fast to my 9-year-old Knowing  
as I struggled with all those old tired exclusive beliefs  
then I simply threw them out!

Eventually I found my people,  
voices that echoed the Knowing in my heart,  
People who put words  
to what was silent and wordless within me

And what emerged was Love,  
The simplicity of Love  
for all people and all things

Total inclusivity – all were IN and all were GOOD  
Despite their professed religion, race, sexuality, beliefs

I found the Contemplative Way  
The Quiet Way of the heart  
Just like my 9-year-old Self always knew was there.



## God's Little Ones

by Leslie Ayers

Over the years I've known several people I think of as 'God's little ones'. This had nothing to do with their actual age. Some are intellectually or physically limited, some socially awkward or painfully shy. What they bring to our community can't be evaluated on society's measures of success.

I find myself thinking of a quote from Black American, Booker T. Washington, who was born into slavery, survived into emancipation and became an educator, author and advisor to presidents. 'I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position one has reached in life, as by the obstacles which one has overcome while trying to succeed.'

Some of these 'little ones' have obstacles I simply can't imagine dealing with. And over time, God has given me new ways to value them.

### Peter

Peter is in his 40s, but has the social and emotional age of a youngster. However, he has a phenomenal memory for dates, a huge awareness of times, an internal almanac that can tell you immediately what day Easter will fall twelve years from now, or when it occurred in decades past.

What Peter says is gratingly inappropriate at times, yet at others he has wisdom. He grapples honestly with issues of faith.

I often see him walking around the neighbourhood, always keen to stop and have a conversation. And yes, there were times I took a different route home when I spotted him in the distance. Sometimes I simply didn't have the time or energy for an encounter.

So, how has the Lord changed my attitude to Peter – from being kind but patronising – to seeing him as a person, not a disability?

Interestingly, I think it's because Peter turned out to be someone who, through chance meetings and words, brought me God's comfort or guidance in a totally unexpected way.

For instance, one day I went for a walk when I was grieving my aunt's death so far away in England, and mourning the passing of all my parents' generation. I bumped into Peter and he started talking about my father, who always had time for him, and my mother who was kind. We shared our memories. He knew exactly the years and dates when they died decades earlier. Who else in my city could have had such a connection with those whose loss I was feeling that day? Who else could have brought me God's solace?

I'm slow to learn, but the third time Peter's mention of a bible verse or song proved spot on – I got the message!

God is a God of the unexpected, who doesn't take conventional paths.

I recognised the Lord can, and does work in and through Peter. Yes, there are many problems, many weaknesses. Life will never be easy for him or his family. But Peter is a child of God.

### Ariana

Ariana is paraplegic and has been from birth. She requires help with many aspects of her life and has limited use of her hands. Yet she zooms around in her motorised wheelchair (watch out for her on the footpath!). Her smile lights up the room when she enters.

She endures physical pain and daily discomfort, and she's honest about how hard it can be. She tells me she's looking forward to being free from her body's limitations in heaven. Yet Ariana encourages others and radiates the love of God. She has genuine gratitude for the gift of life. She is fun. I find myself smiling as I think of her. She's one amazing young woman! I've learned so much from her. She's helped me get a better perspective on life.

### Tom

Tom finds it difficult to make eye contact. He's very shy and could easily be overlooked. Sometimes I get irritated by his shyness, perhaps because it's something I have to deal with in myself. Yet, Tom is always there helping out in the background. Am I that willing?



© karlynemile.wordpress.com

Conversing with Tom is a challenge and few would realise he's a talented artist. Art lessons late in life uncovered his gift. His work celebrates the wonders of God's creation. His greeting cards are both professional and beautiful. I've moved from being patronising, and irritated, to respecting him and his gift.

### Meg

Then there was Meg. Now she was truly an 'overcomer'! She failed academically at school, and people tended to write her off as somewhat 'simple'. Yet she, like Peter, had an amazing memory for dates, for numbers of any kind. She'd never, ever, forget a birthday. There was a consistency, reliability about her.

Because depression was her frequent companion, Meg always seemed to struggle with life and relationships. In spite of this she maintained an unassailable faith.

Our friendship spanned four decades. At first, I was aware of 'being kind' – my 'Lady Bountiful' persona? I was the 'alright' person, who is gracious to the struggler. I listened to her stories over and over, and yes, I got impatient with her too at times.

While first I had to face up to my own superior attitudes – change did come. Eventually in her fifties, Meg succeeded in completing a university degree. In fact, on a post-graduate paper, she gained an outstanding top mark!

Well, that upset the balance didn't it? We were now peers in the academic world – in fact she'd done better than I.

Though I was delighted by her success, I had to honestly face up to the niggles of jealousy. Any residual label of 'failure' – which gave me a sense of superiority – had to be discarded.

Meg was always faithful in prayer and year after year upheld my family and many others daily. When she died I felt so unsettled – the security my friend had given was gone. I hadn't realised how much it meant to me.

Meg faced her last battle, with cancer, with great courage, and no hint of self-pity. Her funeral in a packed church was filled with the music she loved. It was joyous, triumphant, honouring a life well lived to the end. She would have loved it!!

All these 'little ones' – whose names I've changed to protect their privacy – have overcome obstacles many never face. And they've opened my eyes to how God's values are often upside down to those of the world we live in. Their faith is simple and uncomplicated. It spills over into how they live.

I had much to learn. I'm grateful, so grateful, to have had these people in my life.

'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth' Matthew 5:5.

## To become 'like a child' again<sup>1</sup>

by Pam Gordon

'To become like a child', is the answer Jesus gave to the disciples when they asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?'

One wonders why they asked such a question.

Did they think Jesus would say they would be the greatest? Was His answer meant to take them down a peg or two; to humble them? Did they think heaven was an actual place, 'up there'?

I doubt they understood the concept that the kingdom of heaven is within, or they wouldn't have asked such a question. And why did Jesus choose a child?

I think He used a child to exemplify traits such as trust, simplicity and innocence. But there are also many other characteristics that spring to mind: spontaneity, curiosity, honesty, taking delight, giving joy, living in the present.

It's an interesting exercise to reflect on the childlike qualities we'd like to develop in our own adult lives – then explore what it's like to become more 'like a child'.

From my children's Playcentre days, I realised that 'play' is a child's learning time; play is their 'work'. Play connotes a sense of enjoyment. How good it would be if we, as adults, could bring the same sense of play into what we do!

We play a musical instrument and we play sport. I'd put singing and dancing in the category of play. Could gardening, craft, painting, writing – any creative endeavor – be included? Could we bring that same sense of play to all our work – take delight in everything we do?

What a blessing that would be.

Another childlike quality is the wholehearted expression of their emotions. Whether pure delight or utter devastation – we know exactly how they feel. They run to hug you, they give their love so freely and in so doing, give us such joy in receiving.

They're totally honest and spontaneous, embarrassingly at times. We can all remember occasions like this. It's only when children are taught to control their spontaneity and be polite, that their feelings are concealed and their honesty is compromised.

Whether pure delight or utter devastation – we know exactly how they feel.

<sup>1</sup> *References:*  
Campbell, Joseph. *The Power of Myth*: Anchor Doubleday NY 2011  
Ram Dass, *Be Here Now*: Lama foundation. San Cristobal. New Mexico 1971  
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Tolle, Eckhart, *The Power of Now*: New World Library USA 2004



Do we want to be truly open and honest with our family members, colleagues, friends and strangers? Children live in the present. They don't hold grudges from the past. I've yet to meet a child who has become bitter. Furthermore, children don't worry about the future.

Adults have also been encouraged to 'be here now': an aphorism made popular in the early '70s by Ram Dass. This was expanded by Eckhart Tolle in 2004, in *The Power of Now*, and later by Pat Schneider: 'Everything is transient, everything is precious, Be here now'. I love this quote. Oh, that we could hold on to this awareness during our everyday life.

What would it be like to see the world through the eyes of a child again, free of our preconceived attitudes, prejudices and expectations; to be more child-like in our perceptions and to accept everyone as they are? What stops us?

Remember 'We don't (actually) see things as they are, but as WE are'? This ancient maxim of Talmudic origin has been quoted by many over time. How true it is.

It's hard not to bring our own biases and preconceptions to what we see and hear. How easy it is to spoil a moment with hasty criticism. What a gift to accept people and situations as they are, or if we can't, at least be aware of how our prejudices filter our perception.

Children approach life with a thirst for knowledge. They have an insatiable curiosity, from the incessant 'Why.....?' to fascination with the tiniest of creatures. Everything seems to grab their attention and induce a sense of wonder. Have we retained this lust for learning and this sense of wonder and awe, or have we become a little tired and cynical as the years have gone by?

Children have a sense of freedom. We know this because if they're not set limits, they just go where ever they want. They need parents and fences, literally and figuratively, to keep them safe. What if adults had this same sense of freedom?

Joseph Campbell, in *The Power of Myth* advocates this: 'Follow your bliss and don't be afraid, and doors will open where you did not know they were going to be'.

So, returning to the disciples' original question, would it be too much of a leap to believe that when we have a simple childlike trust, we are closer to a heavenly state – a state of Grace?

For me, living in the present and having a childlike attitude of awe and wonder, taking joy in all that we do and being honest, open and accepting, is what Jesus meant by 'become like a child'.



© <http://nakedpastor.com>

## The Dependent Child

by Maggie Quinlan

Birth, completely dependent.  
Life begins; much care is needed.

Nourishment and warmth.

Protection and security.

Above all love.

A place in a heart which no-one else can satisfy.

Created uniquely and loved intrinsically.

Heavenly Father.

So encompassed by this compassion,

The child is caught up in the wonder all around.

Treasured and enjoyed.

Faithful caring Presence.

No anxiety; complete trust.

Years add up.

Increasing tendency to independence.

Help not needed.

God does not figure in our decisions.

Joy is lost.

Anxieties accumulate as a snowball gathering snow.

God seems to be absent.

Self is the motive.

Power and status.

Then STOP!

Someone special dies.

The career goes off track.

The vision is lost.

Opposition is powerful.

Hurt and abuse.

Isolation.

Gifts seem redundant.

Storms thunder around.

Rejection.

Loveless and desperate.

Be still.

God's love is unchanging.

He is still there.

He cares for the heart-broken and lonely!

Remove the barriers

Become vulnerable.

Naked as the newborn

In your honesty and openness

Spend time with the healer.

Allow Him to dress your wounds.

He has plans for you.

Good and not evil.

Listen and wait patiently.

Let go of the past.

Its losses, pains and failures.

Become free as the child.

Surrendered to Jesus,

As once again you begin again.



© Maggie Quinlan

## Becoming the child

by Trish McBride

I was a late starter as far as tramping is concerned. The bush always had a strong attraction, but I never thought my fitness was up to tramping club standards. So a decade or two ago, I jumped at the chance for a two-day trip in the Tararua's, north of Wellington with three other fifty-somethings.

According to the literature, our first three hours' walk would be alongside a stream and 'easy'.

And so it was. Except the bit I took one look at and decided was impossible. Imagine a path about twenty centimetres wide, with a slight lean towards the edge, and over the edge a ten-metre drop to the river. To make matters worse the surface of the path had some loose shingle; and even worse again, the inner curve of the path was a high clay bank with nothing to hold on to.

I've never liked edges. I knew I couldn't get round there even without a pack on – let alone with!

Several options were apparent: I could go back alone; I could pretend it was no problem, swallow the fear and have a go, while knowing for sure I'd end up on the rocks below. I could simply refuse to try – or I could risk being real.

One of my companions was a very old friend – we'd known each other nearly forty years. I could actually be honest with her about my fear. She'd already bounded like a mountain goat across to other side. Why couldn't I do that? And the voices of doom inside shrieked louder and louder 'You'll fall! You'll fall!'

'I'm too scared,' I said. Her response was utterly accepting and without judgement. 'Would it help if I came back and held your hand?' 'Yes, please.' And she did. I took the outstretched hand and despite the cold sweat of terror actually made it to the other side, with a sense of being aged about four.

Once there, along with the relief, I felt something inside me was being re-made.

I had actually – with support – accomplished a task that five minutes earlier had looked totally impossible. The little four-year old girl inside suddenly had a new sense of competence. This new taste of the abundant life Jesus promises was exciting stuff!

It dawned on me that I'd just lived Matthew 18: 3. I had quite literally become as a little child, and the reward was indeed great. I had been enabled to enter the Promised Land in both literal and metaphorical terms.

In choosing to drop the mask, the illusion of independent adulthood, the pride – and admit the reality of my fear, and in accepting the calm offer of help, I had discovered some more of my own potential.

Children in general do not hide their feelings – that's something we learn to do as we get older. Jesus talked about eternal life being now. So those moments when we can become as little children, reveal our fears, find them respected, get appropriate support and discover we can transcend our hitherto limits, are truly heavenly moments.

We walked on through the bush. Fern fronds unfurled in celebration, trees clapped their hands, the river cheered and tui belled alleluias.

And I prayed a thanksgiving – for safety, for the grace to take the risks, and for my friend who had truly been the Christ-bearer, holding out her hand to me in my paralysis of fear.

The next day we retraced our steps, as weather conditions made our proposed route unwise. That three metres of narrow path was still scary – but no longer impossible. If I'd managed it once, I could do it again.

Help was again offered, and again accepted with relief and gratitude. Becoming the child was easier this time. We made it! Another God-moment to savour. Another taste of heaven.

I took the outstretched hand and despite the cold sweat of terror actually made it to the other side, with a sense of being aged about four.

## Terrified Toddler

by Sue Pickering

A terrified toddler  
ran bawling from a shop.  
Red-faced and short of breath  
from the effort of his crying,  
he searched and scanned  
the faces of those  
who'd stopped to stare.

Lifetime-long seconds later  
he saw her - with relief  
was enveloped in her arms,  
lifted from his panic,  
enfolded in her loving mother comfort.

How many times as adults  
bruised by loss or conflict  
have we walked away sedately,  
faces closed and silent,  
inwardly rushing headlong  
emotions set to burst,  
desperate for comfort  
for arms to hold and heal?

How many times,  
blinded by our pain,  
have we run right past  
Your outstretched arms,  
dear loving Mother God?



© Madeleine Benn Helbron



© Sue Pickering

# 'Granny I like your old hands!'

by Carolyn Runciman

## A meditation

We were sitting round the table with our son's family, having a roast dinner together. Emanuel, my five-year-old grandson, watched me thoughtfully as I cut up his meat and potatoes. When I'd finished he looked at me and said, 'Granny, I like your old hands!' His remark touched me deeply and over the next few days I often thought about it.

A few weeks earlier I hurt my right hand. The doctor called it RSI – too much knitting or maybe holding too tightly to the steering wheel on a long drive that week. We didn't know, but over the following few days while my hand was out of action, I had plenty of time to consider how very precious our hands are.

Emanuel had watched my hands. What about you, John and James?

How did you feel when Jesus held your dirty, calloused feet in his hands and washed them? And Peter – I know you were embarrassed at first, but how was it for you as you watched your master wash away your resistance?

Later, at the Last Supper together, they watched his hands as he took the bread – broke it and shared it with them.

What was the impact on Mary as she saw his dear hands had been nailed to the rough timber of the cross? These were the hands she'd held as he learned to walk. The same hands that shaped and smoothed wood in Joseph's work-shop.

What about the two friends he joined on the way to Emmaus? His hands broke the bread and then they knew they'd met with the resurrected Christ.

Thomas, who couldn't believe until he saw his hands, could only say, 'My Lord and my God'.

The scriptures say we're hidden in the hollow of his hand and that he'll never forget us because our names are engraved on his palms.

Thank you Emanuel darling – truly God is with us.



## Books for the Contemplative Journey



***The Walking Stick Tree***  
**Author Trish Harris**  
 Escalator Press  
 ISBN: 9780994118646

*How does a child deal with acute pain?*

In her memoir, *The Walking Stick Tree*, Trish Harris never waters down the experience of acute childhood arthritis, nor how it plays out for her as an adult. But instead of letting pain defeat her, Trish forms a relationship with it and treads a fine line with loss.

Throughout, is the core story of a Catholic upbringing, and the need to find a spirituality that helps Trish connect with her body in a life-giving way.

The memoir's four essays ('Exploring loss, sadness and grief', 'The dance of identity', 'Body and soul' and 'The nature of pain') reveal a view from the inside rarely captured.

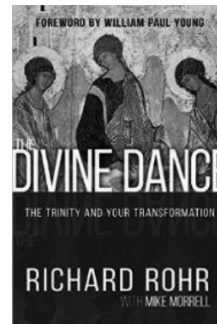
Renowned children's author, Joy Cowley, comments, 'It's often said the body is the house in which the true self dwells.' And while Trish Harris's 'house' has arthritis written all over it, her true self has expanded beyond its walls to embrace the universe.



Illustration by Sarah Laing

This warm, perceptive, insightful book is for anyone who wants to live life fully, regardless of the circumstances, as well as those with disabilities and their caregivers. *The Walking Stick Tree* will bring hope and encouragement to everyone.

*Trish Harris is an active member of the New Zealand Disability, Spirituality and Faith Network and the NZ Association of Christian Spiritual Directors.*



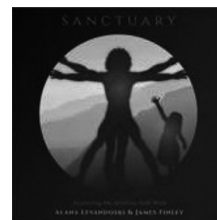
***The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation***  
 Authors Richard Rohr and Mike Morrell  
 Whitaker House, Print and eBook available  
*What if changing our perception of God has the potential to change everything?*

God is not what you think. Visions of an angry, distant, moral scorekeeper or a supernatural Santa Claus handing out cosmic lottery tickets to those who attend the right church or say the right prayer dominate our culture. For many others, God has become irrelevant or simply unbelievable.

In *The Divine Dance*, Fr. Richard Rohr (with Mike Morrell) points readers to an unlikely opening beyond this divinity impasse: the at-times forgotten, ancient mystery of the Trinity—God as utterly one, yet three.

Drawing from Scripture, theology, and the deepest insights of mystics, philosophers, and sages throughout history, Fr. Rohr presents a compelling alternative to aloof and fairy-tale versions of God: One God, belovedly in communion, as All-Vulnerable, All-Embracing, and All-Given to you and me.

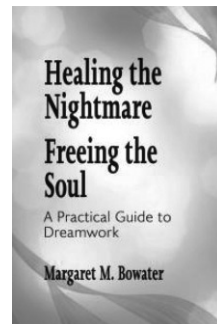
The *Divine Dance* makes accessible and practicable the Christian tradition's most surprising gift...God as Community...as Friendship...as Dance. Are you ready to join in?



***Sanctuary CD and MP3,***  
 Alana Levandoski and James Finley

Canadian chant and songwriter, Alana Levandoski has released a collaborative album on the healing path, with clinical psychologist and contemplative teacher James Finley. *Sanctuary* explores our relationship to our inner child. The last song chants James Finley's words 'In your most childlike hour, your heart did not deceive you'

Described by therapist and author, Bonnie Bodenach, as a 'blessed companion' for the healing journey, *Sanctuary* is sure to offer consolation and growth to whoever's ready. Available at <https://alanalevandoski.com/>



***Healing the Nightmare Freeing the Soul,***  
 Author, Margaret M. Bowater  
 Calico Publishing, 2016

'Written with great compassion, this book is a highly readable and useful account of the significance of nightmares. It encompasses the science of dreams, as well as the art of interpretation and the importance of visionary experiences – all interwoven with relevant theory and suggestions for self-help. I highly recommend this book.' Dr Keith Tudor, Professor of Psychotherapy, AIT.

## Mission possible: becoming intercultural by becoming children

by Steve Taylor<sup>1</sup>

I spoke this week at Mission Possible, an event organised by Asian Ministry of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand at Henderson Korean. It was a privilege to be part of an event with more non-Western speakers than Western. In response to the theme of Mission Possible, I offered two stories, one picture, one proverb and one practical application for Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership where I am principal.

First, I began with a story of mission impossible.

In 1987, I went to Hong Kong. For one month I served with YWAM (Youth with a Mission) then for another month I worked with drug addicts. I lived on the outskirts of Hong Kong with ten Cantonese men recovering drug addicts and an American. We worshipped, worked and studied together.

One day the American took a day off – leaving me the only English speaker – in a group of ten Cantonese speaking men. About midday, I heard yelling. Stepping outside, I realised the yelling – all in Cantonese – was directed at me. I spoke very little Cantonese and the person yelling at me spoke no English. I had no idea what he was saying. I just stood there. Seeking any clues as to what was going on. Wondering when it would stop.

In that moment, I became aware of the importance of bridge builders: those who speak two languages and can stand between two cultures, who can help with communication and understanding, who provide different ways to look at what's going on. Tonight I honour our organiser, Kyoung, who is such a bridge builder among us. What a gift you are. Mission is impossible without bridge builders.

Second, a story of mission possible. I brought a picnic basket with me (well I did in the airplane in my suitcase, but forgot it in coming here! so please use your imagination).

I used this (imaginary picnic basket) at KCML graduation last year, at which David Kim (my interpreter tonight) graduated. Another bridge builder. The Bible text was Matthew 15, Jesus feeding the 4000. To help me enter the Bible story, I imagined a picnic. I even brought my own picnic basket – not!

We are a diverse church, so I also asked Nathan Pedro, Moderator of the Pacific Island Synod, to bring a picnic basket too. He brought a large mat, a huge fish and some taro.

I asked Kyoung to bring a picnic basket. He brought a beautifully wrapped small box. So different than my picnic basket or that of the Pacific Island Synod. This is my second story: mission possible begins when we celebrate our differences and embrace our diversity.

Third, I offer a picture, an art image. It is by Faith Ringgold, an Afro-American artist, of a church picnic. Each family has brought their own food.

The picture asks a question. Once you sit on the mat, with your distinct and diverse picnic basket, how do you move? How do you get up off your mat and engage the mat of another?

In Ringgold's picture – the answer is children.

In the Gospel, Jesus calls us to  
be children. This is how disciples  
enter God's Kingdom.



18. © Faith Ringgold

Title: Church Picnic Dim: 72 x 72 Medium: acrylic on canvas

Print in credit line: © 1988 Faith Ringgold Collection: High Museum of Art, Atlanta

<sup>1</sup> Read more at <http://www.emergentkiwi.org.nz/#ixzz4AxE1rgdE>

It's children who run to the Korean mat and taste the kimchi. Then run to the Pacific mat and enjoy the raw fish in coconut cream.

So when we think about mission possible we need to ask: 'who are our children?'

Who will run between the mats of the different cultures in our church and community. When we identify them – we need to value them. We need to encourage them. Let them go. Let them explore. Let them bring back richness.

Fourth, I share a Maori proverb – *Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou ka ora te manuhiri* – with your food basket and my food basket, the guest will have enough.

Today, we live in super diversity. In this city, mission is only possible when the church has bridge builders; celebrates diversity and has children.

Fifth, a challenge for those of us whose teams are monocultural – all pakeha – all male. It's not enough for us to sit on our mat. It is not enough to rely on bridge builders.

We need to become children. We need to step out and move to the mats of other cultures and approaches to life.

So to challenge and grow ourselves, we at KCML have developed an intercultural code of practice expressing the behaviours we need, in order to become like children. There are 15 behaviours – here are a few:

We will find theologians in the heart language of our students.

We will be open to different modes of assessment that suit a student's culture.

We will take study leave in non-Western cultures.

We will give this KCML Intercultural Code of Practice to our students and place it on our website. We do this to hold us to account.

In the Gospel, Jesus calls us to be children. This is how disciples enter God's Kingdom. Our Code of Practice expresses what Mission Possible means for us. It calls us off our picnic mats to engage the rich diversity of other cultures.

## SGM News

### Introducing Fran Francis:

SGM Spiritual Directors' Formation Programme Coordinator

Discerning is a bit of a contemplative buzz word and as a person from a tradition where personally hearing from God can often mean a form of individualism and eisegesis, resulting in not very good decisions, discerning is a bit of a personal hobby-horse. Lately I've been on quite a ride. My hobby-horse – more of a Kaimanawa wild thing than a painted stick with a head and wooden wheels!

Making a good decision doesn't happen overnight, it involves noticing feelings, their source, their invitation and wisdom. It entails brave conversations, acknowledgement of desires and fears. It leads to saying two things out loud; yes. And, no. Hello and goodbye. I have said 'yes' to invitation to be National Co-ordinator of the Spiritual Directors' Formation Programme and 'no' to ongoing parish ministry alongside my husband with whom I've worked since we were married in the olden days.

I am saying 'hello' to the contemplative community of Aotearoa New Zealand and specifically those called to the ministry and art of spiritual direction – to be the face of their formation programme for this season. I'm saying 'God be with ye' to my Shore Vineyard community as they release me to serve our country and the Church more than serving them.

The wild ride of discerning is done, the horse is back in the stable and now I'm standing on the turangawaewae God has led me to. Feels like home.

It's from this place that I invite and welcome enquiries about the SGM Spiritual Directors' Formation Programme. If you, or someone you know, seems to be searching for this home too, then go to <http://www.sgm.org.nz/spiritual-directors-formation-programme.html>. for more information.

We have a 2017 Year One cohort commencing in February and applications for 2018 will be open in the new year.





## The Last Word

Many times in life, I've had to become like a child to find healing. Had to dig back into my early childhood to find the age at which I 'knew' what it meant to trust. I'm aware many people didn't have such a time.

I've had to delved back into those painful early experiences – where trust was lost or the pain of betrayal experienced for the first time. Children are so vulnerable. We are so vulnerable. Which is why as we grow into adulthood, we must become our own parent and protect ourselves from childlike mistakes.

And I've been inspired to preach on Jesus', 'unless you become like a child – to remember my daughter as a one year old, playing in the sea for the first time – clearly knowing she was safe and loved and the apple of my eye – and paying no attention to me whatsoever in that moment.

I remembered that my love for her wasn't conditional on her attentiveness to me, nor her feelings about me! I've come to believe that's how God loves us – even when we're completely absorbed in the sea shells and the gentle moving of the water and the soft sand between our toes.

Blessings

Diane [dianegw@actrix.co.nz]

## Winter 2017 Refresh theme 'Resistance'

Deadline March 28, 2017

If we believe God invites us, woos us, seeks us out, and desires our company – why then do we sometimes resist this Love, skirt it, run away from it, and even deny the experience of it? 'Why would we resist the very One for whom our hearts long?'<sup>1</sup> What are we afraid of? How does our resistance to God manifest itself? What can we learn from it? How do we overcome it? What images of resistance help us understand?

### Guidelines for writers - please!

*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*

*ensure any images you send are larger than 2MB.*

<sup>1</sup> Buckley, Suzanne M. Ed. *Sacred is the Call: formation and transformation in spiritual direction.* Crossroads Publishing, New York. 2005, pp 60 ff.

## The Child

by Frances O'Leary

When she was just a child  
God spoke clearly in her heart,  
inviting her, calling her, asking her  
to become his follower, and serve Him, as a Priest.

With child-like devotion  
the little girl cherished, like a jewel beyond price,  
this wondrous call, happily nurturing it with such love,  
prayer and veneration – because she loved God above all else.

God gifted her with his love,  
with understanding, compassion and  
a growing awareness of his indwelling presence —  
in every way supporting and nourishing this future vocation.

But this special call from God  
was over-ruled by her church – not permitted –  
because the child had grown, in God's image, into a woman.

Church law took precedence over God's inclusive call, saying;

**NO WOMAN CAN BE A PRIEST.**

Now a woman of many years, she thanks her God  
for a happy life filled with blessings and gifts. But still, in her  
little girl's heart, there is grieving and questioning and quiet sadness  
because she was not allowed to honour that wonderful, special call from God.



## Contributors

**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.

**Graham Millar** is a granddad, gardener and guide, spiritual director and retreat leader.

**Anna Johnstone** is loving working on her next book of reflections and photographs, enigmatically entitled, *The Last Walk*. See her other five books in *The Walk* series on her website <http://annajohnstone.com>

**David Whyte's** life as a poet has created readers and listeners in three normally mutually exclusive areas: the literate world of readings that most poets inhabit, the psychological and theological worlds of philosophical enquiry and the world of vocation, work and organizational leadership.

**Elinor Galbraith** is mother of three children 2,10,15 and wife to Glen and lives in sunny Motueka. She loves walking, biking, ice creams and her pastoral care role at her child's school. Elinor also loves creating women's soul events for her friends – to share and eat cake.

**Val Roberts** is a Spiritual Director living on the Kapiti Coast with her husband Tim. She loves being involved with L'Arche Kapiti, a community of adults with and without intellectual disabilities who live life together. She's passionate about nature, writing, art, creativity, dance, and journeying with people God brings into her life.

**Marilyn Wilkinson** is a Kapiti Coast grandma who, with her husband, Peter Dallas, is learning to cope with the challenges and gifts which come with older age. Walking in the bush, swimming in and walking by the sea, delving into the garden, creating with wool and words and reading authors that stretch her boundaries, are all blessings she savours.

**Helen Bathurst** is a Mum and Nana. School holidays are always busy out and about with various visiting grandchildren. This, coupled with experiences as a Playcentre mum and an early childhood teacher, means Helen's had plenty of opportunities to be playful and childlike. This is reflected in her journey as a child of God.

**Martin Stewart** is a minister in Christchurch who enjoys photography, writing, gardening, bass playing, tramping, and DIY (and has the scars to prove it!) <https://marttherev.wordpress.com/>).

**Lesley Ayers** is married to John and lives in Tauranga. She's grateful to be living near both sea and bush. Writing is central, yet is interwoven with hospitality, grand-parenting, walking, swimming, reading and times with friends.

**Pam Gordon** has always appreciated New Zealand's beautiful natural surroundings and feels blessed with friends and family. Since retiring, and when she had time between grandchildren, Pam created a labyrinth. She is now working on a path of contemplation through native bush on their organic farm.

**Maggie Quinlan** is a part-time GP and lay minister/pastoral care co-ordinator in Clevedon Anglican Parish in Auckland Diocese. She has two children and two grandchildren with another one on the way! She enjoys the outdoors, looking after her menagerie of animals, dancing, singing, mosaicking, writing poetry and photography.

**Trish McBride** is a Wellington spiritual director, writer, quilter and grandmother of 19. She belongs to St Andrew's on The Terrace. She has contributed to five Catholic-based theology books and had articles published recently in *NZ Quilter* and *Presence*, the *Spiritual Directors International Journal*. She delights in family, friends and hearing stories.

**Sue Pickering** is an Anglican priest, writer and spiritual director, who loves Taranaki's mountain, sky and sea and Taupo's inspirational spaces. Family, faith, friends and pets help Sue see God in all things.

**Carolyn Runciman** is Wife, Mum and Granny of course. She did the S.G.M. spiritual directors' formation course not long ago and loved it. Having moved recently to Paeroa, Carolyn enjoys discovering what the Lord wants them to do there.

**Steve Taylor**, as Principal of Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership, speaks and writes widely on mission, theology and leadership in cultures of change. He is author of *Built for Change* (2016) and *The Out of Bounds Church?* (2005) and blogs at [www.emergentkiwi.org.nz](http://www.emergentkiwi.org.nz). He's married to Lynne and they enjoy Shannon and Kayli, exploring, gardening and coffee.

**Frances O'Leary** is a wife, mother and grandmother, who spends many hours a week on voluntary church work. Writing poetry is a therapy – a way to deal with frustrations and keeping sane!

**Liz Maluschnig** is a Comprehensive Nurse, a Counselor and Spiritual director. She currently works in private practice as a Counselor and Parent coach working with adults, children and families at risk. She facilitates Grief groups for children, Parenting seminars, Mindfulness meditation seminars and co-facilitates cancer healing and wellness retreats. She is the author of 4 books and enjoys living on her eco-friendly lifestyle property with her husband and teenage children.

