

Refresh

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Surrender



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Yes

by Susan Jones¹

Often I have envied Mary
her calm serenity, her saintly certainty
as she said 'yes' to you.

But now, I read that maybe
this divine mother knew little of the other 'yeses'
that would be inside her first.

So Mary too, like me,
gave what she could at the beginning
little knowing where it might lead.

Like peeling layers from an onion, you strip me slowly, God.

My first assent gave permission to deal.
In my innocence I assumed
one peeling would achieve your purpose.

But you continue to claim me,
to seek my trusting 'yes' for one more layer
and then another and another.
So I face the other 'yeses' that were inside the first,
if I had but known it.

A confidence trick? A con job? Yes and no.

You asked me only for what I could yield at the time.
I can only handle this painful experience in stages.

My confidence in you builds as one skin is shed
I find I can cope and so can say confidently the next 'yes'.

That's the point,
not the understanding or the amount yielded
but the continuing, faithful readiness to say the next 'yes' too.
To have the courage to continue the job having started,
to remain open and trusting enough
to shed the next layer
and not to fear what I will be when all the skins have gone.

To be faithful to the desire to do your will
which prompted that first, most inadequate
and yet most important 'yes' of all

Yes, My God,
continue.

¹ © 2004 From *Like Me? reflections on scripture and life* by Susan Jones. Used with permission.
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Surrender

submitted anonymously

She saw him crucified
He whispered 'I'm thirsty.'
Distraught, she asked
'What can I do for you?'
He replied
'It's you I'm thirsty for.'
She said 'Here I am.'

Could you embrace that?

by Thomas Aquinas¹

I said to God, let me love you!

And God replied, which part?

All of you, all of you! I said.

God spoke,
Dear, you are as a mouse wanting to impregnate a tiger
who's not even in heat.
It's a feat way beyond your courage and strength.
You'd run from me if I removed my mask.

I said to God again,
Beloved, I need to love you – every aspect, every pore!

And this time God said, there's a hideous blemish on my body,
though it's such an infinitesimal part of my Being –
could you kiss that if it were revealed?

I will try, Lord, I will try.

And then God said,
that blemish is
all the hatred and cruelty in this world.

¹ translated by Daniel Ladinsky

Freedom – surrendering our ego to God

by Dylan Morrison¹

To ditch the Divine and go do our own thing
appears to be our first step into freedom.

Sadly, we are mistaken.

It is in reality,
a return to the subliminal chains of desire,
whereby anyone can tug us into their operational sphere of control.

Paradoxically,
true freedom only comes when we surrender ego control
to One commonly known as LORD.

¹ Writings ~ <https://goo.gl/7BJ8JR>

The Dance of Acquiescence

by Val Roberts

Meister Eckhart, the German Dominican mystic (c. 1260-c.1328), said that spirituality has much more to do with subtraction than it does with addition.

Carl Jung came up with the 'two halves of life' and the related tasks of human development.

As I've journeyed into the second half of life, I'm finding this to be a greater reality. Richard Rohr (Franciscan priest, author and founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico) explains that authentic spirituality is about letting go of our 'false self in order to find our True Self'. The false self is our ego and identity built up in the first half of life in order to survive and find our place in the world. The True Self is our identity of who we are and always have been in God. The 'dying to self' Jesus talks about in order to find life, is at the core of the spiritual journey.

In his writing about the two halves of life, Rohr says the transition to the second half of life requires some falling. My own experience is that this takes the form of cycles of dying and rebirthing.

Lent and Easter have become a profound time for the acquiescence of 'falling' into the Autumn and Winter seasons and the seasons of my life. The meaning of acquiescence is 'acceptance with some reluctance' and this word describes it well! Each cycle seems to be an invitation to shed another layer of identity and certainty, a call to discard more of the 'container' of the first half of life. Just as in Autumn, this requires allowing the dry leaves to fall to become life-giving humus and letting the seed drop into the cold, dark soil.

This inner process of surrendering to God is always accompanied by struggle and grief. Initially there's furious resistance and fear of the dark unknown I must enter.

Each Holy Week as I remember Jesus' agony in Gethsemane, I know I'm not alone in this struggle. This is kenosis. And it feels like it will strip me bare like a tree in winter, exposed to face the elements. How exposed Jesus must have felt on the cross on that Friday!

Contemplating this gives me the courage to begin to say yes to the journey ahead.

Often a creative way to do this surrendering with Jesus will present itself to me – to enable me.

One year I made a painting of a bare branch with colourful fabric leaves flying in the wind. In this I was letting go my long-held identity as a foster parent – to surrender to a new season.

By accepting what's offered to me, I find assurance the dying is not a finality. As in nature, it's part of the process of transformation, where nothing is lost. In the cycles of decay and renewal, what is dead becomes new life in a new form.

Another time I danced with my resistance and fear – fully embracing the dark I was facing. Through movement and music, I was able to surrender to the invitation to fall

into the earth, where the seed could germinate in due time. During the dance I spent time in my 'dark earth' huddled under a blanket on the floor. This time I was letting go of what was no longer spiritually sustaining. Surrendering my defined certainty and understanding of God to a larger, wilder landscape of faith – which includes more questions and unknowns. The release of deep grief made space for the possibility of moving even further beyond my comfort zones – into an ongoing redefining of self and Other.

Faced with letting go of some hurts and attachments to being needed in a particular role – I did some composting! I wrote all my feelings out on paper, then tore it up and added it to the compost. I discovered a wonderful form of surrendering the old to embrace the new. It certainly isn't pleasant – it's smelly and slimy in my compost bin, but it will yield the best nutrients for new growth.

Contemplative photography provides another way for me to do this journey. Capturing something that speaks to me in image form – allows me to spend time with it in prayer (*Visio Divina*). The Spirit sings, whispers or shouts in so many ways!

Surrendering so much of what has created a safe container for my faith and identity is very scary and I can only do this deep soul work by being open to the Holy Spirit's work in me.

Journalling, time with my Spiritual Director and reading about other pilgrims who made similar journeys to mine – are key elements in my transformation. This year Barbara Brown Taylor has been one of my favourite and most helpful authors.

For me, it's about relinquishing myself to the process and surrendering to the call to many metamorphoses – by joining in with the work of the Trinity in my life.

There's always a space in the circle for me.

When I'm able to let go of the ego-driven need to dance on my own, I can join in with the dance of the Three.



Naked Night

by Jo Anastasiadis

"Die deep!"

Surrendering self,
Light explodes along the edges.
Depth reveals truth:
darkness hardening in my soul.
Steel grips my heart.
Autonomy fears annihilation.
A war of will silently battling.
Autopsy revealing the throne's resident.

"Die deep!"

Self is hung on its cross:
will withdrawn, His alive
at my death.
Naked night killing me,
that His Life
may cleanse my spirit.

Awake Soft Dance in My Soul

by Jo Anastasiadis

Awake soft dance in my soul
Gentle rhythm born free.
Feel the beauty,
Flowing above, beneath, within;
The body celebrates.
Inner freedom inspires fragile joy.
A Sacred Grace embraces my spirit.
Slowly energy decays,
The movement stills
Surrendered to my God.



Creative prayer: Submitting AND entreating

by Lynne Baab

Some friends were talking about prayer recently, and a couple of them mentioned their desire to shift their prayers away from constantly asking God for things. They expressed their hope to become more focused on praying for what God wants and submitting to God's action in their lives.

As they were speaking, a vivid illustration came to mind.

Several years ago, my husband Dave walked the Kepler Track, a four-day tramp and one of New Zealand's Great Walks. The first day is a series of switchbacks that climb from an altitude of just over sea level to 1000 metres. The second day involves a slight increase in elevation, then a long walk along the top of a ridge.

The trail along the ridge is less than a metre wide. On both sides are dramatic drop offs. Dave walked along that ridge on a calm and quiet day, but he found it scary even then. He'd heard stories about people crawling along the ridge in high winds. (You can see the ridge in the top photo on the Kepler Track website.)

In prayer, we're called by God to walk along a kind of ridge between dangers on both sides.

I believe in prayer we're called to ask God for exactly what's on our minds. God invites us to pray honestly and fervently for our needs and desires, as well as the needs and desires of friends and family members, people in need around the world – Christian leaders, people in government, scientists whose research helps us take care of this beautiful earth, historians who help us learn about the past, journalists who help us understand what's going on in our world, and whoever else we believe shapes our life on earth. This kind of prayer is right and good, but it can morph into selfish preoccupation with our own desires.

I believe we're also called to ask God to lead us into prayers that reflect God's will.

God invites us to listen, through the Holy Spirit, to the voice of Jesus guiding us into prayer. God wants us to be willing to submit to whatever God is doing in the situations that matter to us. This kind of prayer is also right and good, but it can morph into passivity and inaction.

Walking the balance between these two aspects of prayer is like walking along that ridge at the top of the Kepler Track. We are called to walk a path that avoids the cliff on one side – our obsession with our own desires and a belief that only our wants and needs matter – while also avoiding the cliff on the other side – a hyper-spiritual approach that expresses only our desire to submit to God's will.

The Bible invites us to pray honestly about what's on our mind AND also express willingness to let God guide us. We are called to both entreaty AND submission. We must pray with sincerity AND assent to the purposes of God, candor AND surrender.

Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane illustrates this perfectly: 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want' (Matthew 26:39).

I've been studying the prayers of the Bible for most of my Christian life. I am awed by the honesty in so many of the Psalms. These prayers model a radical approach to God with everything that is within us – our hopes, desires, longings, and negative and positive emotions. The prayers in the Psalms also model a deep praise for God and God's purposes.

I'm also awed by the prayers in the Apostle Paul's letters. These express his longing for growth in faith on the part of the people to whom he writes AND a deep desire for God's will for them. (I've written blog posts about Paul's prayer in Colossians, the two prayers in Ephesians, and the prayer in Philippians.)

I'm challenged by the balance in the Lord's prayer: we are to ask for food, deliverance from temptation, and forgiveness of sins, while also praying that God's will would be done.

In our prayers, we are called to both entreaty AND submission, walking a path between excesses on both sides.

Thursday May 23, 2019 lynnebaab.com

My begging has been stilled

by Anna Johnstone

*I am quiet now before the Lord, just as a child who is weaned from the breast.
Yes, my begging has been stilled. Psalm 131:2*

Once littlies learn to walk
there's no holding them back
As soon as their feet
hit the ground they're off
in any direction
not usually where their
parents want to go

For much of my life
my feet wanted to find
the next adventure
and to find it now

Maybe I dashed ahead of you
maybe I was impatient
in my eagerness to be
of service, to do your will

Maybe your ears grew tired
of my constant asking, but
your heart understood mine
and my need to have
something planned
something to look forward to
something ahead

Now I have peace as
each day becomes the next
unexpected things crop up
and I deal with them
in your grace

My heart no longer
needs to beg
you know its readiness
its willingness

My steps are gentle as they
keep pace with yours

It's an amazing place
of settledness
this rest of peace
like a watercolour's soft
strokes flowing gently
into each other
without a break

There's joy in the peace
aliveness, newness
but no stress

It's a blessed place
and as I think of it
my heart is so thankful

I explore it in my mind
feeling the calm
as I reach out
to touch its edges

But there are no borders
just openness and beauty

Surrender to Survive ... and Come Home

by Bev van der Westhuyzen

*Awaken your spirit to adventure;
Hold nothing back, learn to find the ease in risk.
Soon you will be at home in a new rhythm,
For your soul senses the world that awaits you.
John O'Donohue*

In her challenging and absorbing book *My Year without Matches*, Claire Dunn writes – the sacred order of survival is shelter, water, fire and food.

The spiritual parallel is there; God our rock and refuge, Jesus the source of Living Water, Holy Spirit who baptises with fire and Jesus – who says 'I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me will never be hungry'. These are the foundations of our spiritual survival.

Dunn plunged into a year of living in the Australian bush, going back to basics; learning ancient ways of creating a shelter, sourcing water, making a fire without matches and finding food.

As time unfolded another vital factor came into play. It was the prime importance surrendering to survive.

Again, and again as she strove to fit into a natural world where she was the 'outsider', her normal urban skills of 'do more' and 'try harder' did not work. Whether she was making pots out of clay, searching for food, rubbing her sticks together desperate for fire; the message was the same. You're trying too hard, relax, let your body lead, listen to your inner voice, be open.

The lessons of surrender came hard over the year. There were emotional highs and lows, special encounters with creatures and the creation - a synchronicity of flow. Finally, when the year was done, Claire Dunn was a different person to the one who'd started out.

On completion of the book I was a different person too. It was written with painful honesty. Perhaps that's why it spoke so deeply to me. The message and call to surrender rang loud and clear in my heart intertwined with the sacred order of survival. No, I will never go to the bush for a year, but nature is close at hand.

I began to pay close attention to the world around me. As my heart and eyes were opened, God began to show me how He's woven surrender into the world. Henri Nouwen points out, 'in and through Jesus all creation has become a splendid veil, through which the face of God is revealed to us.'

Night surrenders to the dawn and rising sun. Trees surrender to the seasons, allowing sap to fall and then rise again. Leaves surrender to the autumn winds and drop to the ground to be recycled back into the earth.

Buds surrender to the warm, spring sunshine and blossom. Caterpillars, to the urge to make a cocoon and become the butterflies they really were meant to be. Seeds submit to the obscurity of the soil to bring forth new life. Creatures yield to the call of spring – to mate, nest and ensure their survival.

The day surrenders to the sunset and darkness allowing the moon rise. The ocean surrenders to the phases of the moon, tides ebb and flow.

Everywhere I looked SURRENDER and TRANSFORMATION were being whispered and sometimes shouted. Two sides of the same coin. Without surrender, there would be no transformation and without transformation, no survival.

As I reflected on these concepts, it became clear that Jesus so beautifully lived out surrender in His life. He surrendered Himself into the dark womb of Mary to become the Light of the world. He surrendered to being a vulnerable child, becoming a refugee – offering the solace of His understanding into world issues and pain.

Jesus surrendered to a personal trial in the desert. He loved His disciples, was betrayed, praying alone in the garden where He surrendered to His Father's will, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.' Modelling a path for us to follow – steady and with absolute confidence in the knowledge that in His surrender, He'd not only survive, but thrive and bear fruit.

Finally, He surrendered to death and hell saying, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit' – thus bringing resurrection life to all. This touches a deep spot in my soul and my spirit hears the whisper... 'surrender'. I ask myself can I surrender like that?

I know that to survive, I need to surrender. To thrive and be transformed, I need to surrender. The path to truly 'come home' is the way of surrender. Clenching my heart in fear and anxiety closes me down and shuts me off from the flow of God's grace, mercy and divine synchronicity.

This knowing brings big questions with no easy answers: Can I surrender to an unknown future, when I live in a world crazy for knowledge, when facts of all kinds are available at the touch of my phone anywhere, anytime? When trials come, can I surrender to His will, not mine? Can I thrive when times are tough? Can my ego surrender and let my true self become all it should?

A key discipline in my progress is Centering Prayer, a daily consenting to God's presence and action in my life.

In the silence I relinquish my grip and acquiesce to God's mercy, placing myself in His loving hands. I come home to His heart – where I'm safe and secure regardless of the unknowing and angst in my life. In this simple act of surrender, sitting still and quiet for twenty minutes – my life is slowly changing.

As in nature there is no hurry, no doing, just being, taking time. In her poem *The Avowal*, Denise Levertov says it all:

As swimmers dare
To lie face to the sky
And water bears them up,
As hawks rest upon air
And air sustains them,
So would I learn to attain
freefall, and float
Into Creator Spirit's deep embrace,
Knowing no effort earns
That all surrounding grace

And eventually when the time comes – to be able to say, 'Into Your hands I commit my spirit, redeem me, O Lord, the God of truth' (Psalm 31:5 a verse Jesus knew well).

The ultimate act of surrender; and the fruit – a new, resurrected life.

My final coming home. What an adventure that will be!!

*Water does not resist. Water flows.
When you plunge your hand into it, all you feel is a caress.
Water is not a solid wall, it will not stop you.
But water always goes where it wants to go, and nothing in the end can stand against it.
Water is patient.
Dripping water wears away a stone.
Remember that, my child.
Remember you are half water.
If you can't go through an obstacle, go around it. Water does.*
Margaret Atwood
The Penelopiad

Surrender

by Andrea Williamson

Cancer brings expectations.
Chemo is terrible.
The cancer - you're fighting it.
You must feel awful about it.
It must be a shock.

And I tell them
that God and I
have talked about that too
and God knows
the desires of my heart.

What if it were none of the above?
How do others cope then?
What do they say
when I tell them,
'All is peace,
God is here,
I'm loved and
all is well.'

But surrender to God
goes deeper
than trust in healing
and that is where I must rest.

Another round of expectations starts.
You must be healed.
We've prayed for it
so you must be.

You see, it's a little
like the flowering plants
I've watched these past months.
The orchid finished blooming
and, when pruned,
put out new flower stalks.
The African violet
has never stopped flowering
in all these months,
and, cancer or not,
neither have I.

Surrendering to love - again

by Vivienne Holt

First, I ran to you and cried in your arms.
Then I withdrew
And my anger grew.
I tried to do better, but nothing changed.
So, the cold war began and we became estranged.
I stopped looking for you.
Still your love sought me
Just a persistent drip that I refused to see.
The drips became a trickle,
And the trickle, a flow
That made its way through the trenches
Of my silence and now I know
In the winter of my soul,
That your love doesn't change.
And I surrender
Again.

Not Safe, Good

by Liz Maluschnig

*'Is he safe?' Lucy asks.
'Safe!' splutters Mr. Beaver,
Of course, Aslan isn't safe.
But he is good!'*

When we walk on life's edges
how do we not fall over the cliff in indignation and rage
at the cruel banquet it sometimes serves up
Or come up with airtight answers
I recognise in my desperation
I craft an understanding
a story
of why bad things happen to good ordinary people
I know it's just *me* trying to make sense
of a world
that doesn't make sense
trying to control
to walk on solid ground
When the greater truth is
.... there is no solid ground
Only the sure knowing
that this complex world
and our souls
are *not* held by human hands
that to live
is to walk between heart-bursting happiness and wonder
and the edge of an unstable precipice
to know that the life-giving breath
that created this indescribably gorgeous world.....
and all that call it home
Is indeed Good!

Across the Paddocks

by Clare Lind

Across the paddocks
by the willows
there's a track.
If you take the track
the track will take you
down along the river
to where the mud gives way to the sand
and the river gives way to the sea.

And this landscape of surrender
finds an echo deep within
in the Spirit's quiet insistence,
'Come, give way to me.'

It's a landscape of surrender.
If you take the track
the track will take you...
take you and remake you,
for your trust will be rewarded
and your loss will be your gain.



A journey towards surrendering

by Margaret Gwynn

I know I don't surrender easily.

Many years ago, I asked a spiritual director what the word 'surrender' meant.

'What does it mean to you?' she asked.

I muttered something about letting go – but knew I didn't really understand.

A few years later I created a mime/dance on a retreat. I imagined I was dancing joyfully with my Beloved, but suddenly the connection was lost – and I was alone, bereft.

I searched desperately, persistently, and at last came to a large rock blocking my path. I beat on it with my fists, but finally, when it wouldn't budge – I knelt before it and waited quietly.

I came to see, I needed to let go all the protective shield I'd created to live in the world. When only my true self remained – then I could step through the rock and dance again with my Beloved.

And while this dance has come back and back to me over the years, I know I haven't lived it into full reality.

Last year I had cataracts removed and discovered the blur I thought was a cataract was in fact the haze of incurable macular degeneration. This was a shock. I cried over the losses – no longer able to drive, not seeing friends' faces until they came close, not being able to identify the small birds in our garden.

I've come to accept the diagnosis as another step on my journey towards surrendering. To preserve my remaining vision requires eye injections for which I'm wholly dependent on the deft expertise of the nurse. As I lie there waiting, I'm learning a little more about trust – I surrender to her skill.

Now I face a new challenge – surrendering to a leap of faith – literally. I've been invited to skydive to raise money for the Blind Foundation.

So, in early December – as *Refresh* comes out – I shall take another step along the journey.

Give myself over

by Jenneth Graser

Your grand rush
of waters
is a fountain
through the belly
of me.

You simplify
all things
relinquished
and roomy,
as I let it all go.

No longer a dam,
now a river -
I give myself
over
to complete
lack of
control.

Your beloved
power
is a cradle
to channel
the force
of this life-giving
flow.

Jenneth Graser

[http://secretplacedevotion.
weebly.com/
the-present-moment-
of-happiness.html](http://secretplacedevotion.weebly.com/the-present-moment-of-happiness.html)



Surrendering self-sufficiency to interdependency paving the way for the Spirit of God - a sermon

by Alana Levandoski

May only truth be spoken, and only truth be heard. Amen.

This morning I want to focus on the Lord's prayer text. Also known as the Abba prayer. And by Abba, we mean Householder, the one who makes sure all in the household have enough.

And then I want to take it beyond the prayer itself into the next section, where Jesus talks in the parable about 'brash asking'.

The brilliant Jesus historian, John Dominic Crossan, has done immense research on this prayer and about who and what Jesus was about historically. I will be using him as an influence during this whole reflection.

Most of us come from a white settler background. So, we have what's called a pioneer spirit, or work ethic. Formed in part by necessity – and by the ethos of our ancestors who believed that 'God helps those who help themselves.' Even today, people still believe this saying is from scripture.

It is not.

We see this belief in self-sufficiency has produced terribly sad situations – particularly for the elderly. Due to the '08 recession in the United States, the rate of seniors who experience hunger on a daily basis has risen by 45%. That demographic is often the least likely to ask for help. We've all grown up in a culture that judges us for needing any help, and where we're always praised for our self-sufficiency.

I think our pride in this area is in part what caused our white settler ancestors not to ask for more wisdom from the people who were already here by at least 10,000 years. How different things would have been if our ancestors had sought wisdom and welcome, from indigenous people.

Before Jesus, by a couple hundred years, there was an interesting group of philosophers called the Cynics. Some historians speculate Jesus may have heard of them and what they were about, even in his peasant farming village of Nazareth.

The most famous of all stories about the Cynics is the one about Diogenes and Alexander the Great in Corinth. Alexander comes by on his large war horse and offers Diogenes, who's sitting on the side of the road basking in the sunlight, anything his heart desires. Diogenes asks Alexander to move over, because he's blocking the sun.

Cynics were known for their style. They carried a staff and something to tie their few belongings into. They wore a tunic wrapped off one shoulder and sandals.

You remember in Mark and Luke, when Jesus instructs his disciples to go from village to village offering healing and tells them to take nothing with them...no staff, no purse



or wallet, no extra tunic and no sandals? Well, some historians speculate this was Jesus' way of saying, the Cynics were pretty close in their philosophy, but they were more about self-sufficiency – whereas the Kingdom of God is about interdependency.

Yes, the Cynics were minimalists and making a statement about Empire. But as long as they had their daily bread and what they needed in their 'wallet' they'd have the gall to tell Alexander the Great to move along. The philosophy/theology we find in Jesus' instructions takes a different turn. Jesus asks for total vulnerability, not total self-sufficiency. The disciples' surrendered state as they travel, heal, and eat with these over-worked, occupied peasant people, is paving the way for the Spirit of God to flow through them and heal.

Jesus takes Cynic philosophy a step further telling them to keep going – don't stay in one place for too long. Most of us today read that simply as 'don't overstay your welcome' because, again, we're all about self-sufficiency. But for Jesus – you'll see him moving from place to place away from where the crowds begin to gather – because he doesn't want to turn these places of healing into places of brokerage where 'for a mere paltry payment, you'll be healed'.

Jesus was certainly interested in exchange, but not in the realm of dollars and cents. His currency was in the realm of mercy - with its roots in the word 'mercantile'. Jesus was about unblocking the flow of divine love that often gets forgotten in an occupied people – and certainly in their occupiers.

In the gospel reading today, Jesus is teaching the prayer we've all prayed a million times. When we measure The Lord's Prayer against that old familiar saying we mistake as scripture, 'God helps those who help themselves' – we find the Our Father in direct opposition it.

As Jesus begins the prayer, he calls out: Abba, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven. If we're ever at a loss for what the Kingdom and the will of God looks

like on earth, we look at the person of Jesus. For Jesus, it isn't just the rich who get adequate health care, housing or water and food. He didn't just heal the elite and he certainly doesn't perform the fish and bread miracles for the well-fed and the wealthy. In fact, John Dominic Crossan's research indicates Jesus performed these miracles of food sovereignty and abundance in direct, nonviolent rebellion to the Roman occupation of the Sea of Galilee, where at the time, urban, commercial fisheries had overrun the peasant fishers – some of whom were Jesus' best friends.

Then Jesus says, 'give US this day OUR daily bread', not 'give ME this day MY daily bread'. This is a prayer of balance and interdependency – trusting in the Source of all life where Rome would have them groveling in scarcity.

Next all the very earliest texts read, 'forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors'. This could be interpreted quite literally. Peasants in Jesus' world were overworked and overtaxed for their resources. Archeological studies of remains from that time and place indicate a male lived on average to the age of 29-35. Most of the bodies found were suffering from malnutrition when alive. Peasant farmers were forced into monoculture farming to serve the elite in urban centres. During this brutal occupation, the more the peasants could support each other by forgiving debt and sharing what they had, the more likely they were to survive.

Then comes 'lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil – or from the Adversary'. When we say this line, more often than not our default is to think of individual temptations. But let's look at Jesus' temptation in the desert.

First, the temptation to turn stones into bread – to break his fast. Then the invitation to throw himself from the top of the Temple, to be caught by angels. Next, Jesus is offered all the kingdoms of this world that were allegedly handed over to Satan or 'the Adversary'.

Crossan believes – at many different levels – the temptation of which Jesus speaks in this prayer, is the temptation to overcome his oppressors with violence. 'Notice... the tempter never speaks of "creation" or "the world" or "the earth", but of "all the kingdoms of the world" along with their "glory" and "power". That's the violent world of civilisation – not the nonviolent world of Creation. The tempter simply can't offer to anyone the world that God so loved.'

Then Crossan lays down this challenge: 'What, then, is the difference in precise content between worshiping God and worshiping Satan? To obtain and possess the kingdoms of the world, with their power and glory, by violent injustice is to worship Satan. To obtain and possess the kingdom, the power and the glory, by nonviolent justice is to worship God. The last and climactic temptation for Jesus is to use violence in establishing the kingdom of God on earth, and thereby to receive it as the kingdom of Satan. And so also for us.'

And I would add – there's also the temptation to believe in the lie of occupying Rome, that this system is the only kind of power there is. This has been the great sin of the Church since the 3rd century. More often than not, we've landed on the side of power, trade, oppression and colonization. Tragically, this may be the greatest irony in world

history. And I am glad I can see the irony, or I couldn't be a Christian anymore.

Jesus stresses this in the closing lines... for *thine* is the Kingdom, *thine* is the power, *thine* is the glory. Forever and ever.

This prayer is first, a prayer for an occupied people.

Imagine the prayers of indigenous people as Europeans plundered their Creator's sacred land. And took their children. I don't say this out of some contrived guilt trip...

I say it because praying the Lord's Prayer ought to instill in us a deep compassion for what it must have felt like, what it still feels like. We have to wrestle with it and we have to grieve it.

And second, this prayer is for all of us who are tempted to believe the lie that we can be self-sufficient along with 'the lie of scarcity'. Our current culture of power asks us to play along with the lack of balance and inequality that results.

After teaching the Lord's prayer, Jesus tells another story of interdependence – asking for bread in the middle of the night. This story wouldn't work if the person on the long journey was too proud to knock on their friend's door. And it wouldn't work if the host was too proud to ask the neighbour for help. So very unlike 'God helps those who help themselves'.

Though this teaching we learn that God is in and about interdependence, not independence. And to this Jesus adds – how much more will God give the Holy Spirit to those who ask. He compares the traveler's knocking in the night, to our 'brash asking' for the Holy Spirit – a coming to consciousness of the deep asking that has always been there. It is our true self, one with God, that does the asking deep down where we can sense the holy longing in our hearts.

So, what might this look like in community today? What might 'brash asking' look like in practice? Why bother asking for the Holy Spirit in the first place? What does that even mean?

If anyone's ever had one small glimpse of the oneness at the heart of all things, they have encountered the Holy Spirit. No one can experience the Holy Spirit and not see the interconnectedness of each other, and of all of life. No one can bear witness to the veil being lifted for just a moment – and not see there is enough. And that living in scarcity and fear is to be led into temptation. And what's more – living in scarcity and fear will never produce anything but division and hoarding, and more violence.

There's an overused saying of Einstein, that a problem can never be solved with the same thinking that created it. I think Jesus was practising something similar when he says, 'lead us not into temptation' because the use of violence can never beget the Kingdom of God. And what if praying 'thy Kingdom come, thy will be done' is all about trusting in enoughness?

Perhaps when that trust is our footing, the font of the Spirit will flow out from us – and into our world?



The picnic – surrendering to hospitality

by Adrienne Thomson

A traveller was journeying in a part of the country that was strange to her. She didn't know exactly where she was going, though she felt she was on a journey of discovery.

But one sunny Saturday morning she wasn't looking for the meaning of life – only for something to eat.

She was hungry.

She came to a small country town, one of those 'blink and you miss it' places if you're driving a car – but she was on a bicycle. Along the main street she spied a little cenotaph at the edge of a pleasant-looking park labelled 'Memorial Gardens'. Hopping off her bike, she locked it to the railing by the cenotaph and glanced around. Where could she find food?

At the crossroads stood a large, imposing building. In the town's glory days, it had probably been the bank. Now it appeared to have been converted to a restaurant.

The traveller approached and mounted the broad steps. The grand door was unlatched.

Walking in, at once she was met by a man in a black suit, wearing the badge of 'Duty Manager'. Behind him a gleaming bar backed by glittering glasses and bottles. Beyond this – white tablecloths and shiny silver place-settings.

The traveller was conscious of her biking shorts (from the Op shop!) and dusty boots – but the manager remained polite, if not effusive in his welcome.

'I'm looking for a meal,' said the traveller.

'And we can give you one!' said the Duty Manager (whose name was Malcolm). 'We have a set menu. It's a five-course dinner!'

'I'm not that hungry,' said the traveller. 'How about a filled roll or something?'

'You need a proper meal,' said the manager firmly. 'You may think you want a filled roll but We Know Better.'

'Oh, replied the traveller, 'Oh, well. I'll pay for the meal then, but I'll just eat what I feel like. I expect I'll eat all the dessert.'

Malcolm's smile grew steely. 'You will eat ALL of it. It's ALL part of a balanced diet. No picking and choosing! No dessert unless you've finished your vegetables!'

By this time, the traveller was feeling annoyed – the manager was reminding her of her mother.

'In that case, I'll look somewhere else,' she said boldly. And she walked right back out the front door. The manager heaved a big sigh. 'We just want the best for you,' she heard him say as, with a shiver of relief, she made her escape.

But she was still hungry.

The traveller spotted a café across the road, at least it looked like a café. Tables and chairs stood outside and the door was open.

She walked in to a large, airy room. All the windows were open and it felt a little chilly. Here was food on display! In one box, newly-dug potatoes, still earth encrusted. Another box of purple aubergines. A pile of grey pumpkins. A basketful of red and brown onions. A glass-fronted fridge displayed a whole fish, strings of sausages, and a heap of lamb chops.

This looked promising. The traveller rang the bell on the counter.

A friendly woman in neat professional dress appeared. 'Hullo, I'm Mary. Yes, we do serve food, but only on Sundays and Wednesday evenings I'm afraid.'

'Oh,' said the traveller, rather blankly. 'But I'm hungry now.'

The woman looked sympathetic. 'I'm sorry! Look, you can have a cabbage if you like. Or a couple of potatoes, or even some sausages. Help yourself!'

'Oh, thank you. That's great. But I'll need to cook them. Can I use your kitchen then?'

The woman pulled a face. 'Sorry! It's locked. We used to leave it open – but people always make such a mess. I'm sure you wouldn't,' she said hastily, as the traveller opened her mouth to argue, 'but we've decided we can't make exceptions. Good boundaries are so important, don't you agree?'

The traveller, who didn't agree, turned her back on the friendly woman and walked out of the café, muttering to herself. Outside, she noticed a lane leading off to the left. She followed it down to an attractive little cottage. Native trees overshadowed it, tuis sang from their branches. A grapevine grew above the out-door patio.

The traveller felt hopeful. She knocked on the door and two kindly middle-aged people came to let her in. The plump man wore grey trackpants and a baggy brown jersey. The woman, rather overweight also, looked comfortable in a turquoise blouse over a maxi-skirt she might have been wearing since the 70s.

'How lovely to see you,' the woman said. 'Do come in! I'm Pauline, and this is John. How can we help you?'

'Actually, I'm hungry,' said the traveller hopefully. The two people nodded thoughtfully.

'Can you say some more about that?' asked John.

'I'm very hungry!' said the traveller. 'I've come a long way and it's a hot day, and I'm on a bike, you see, so I've used a lot of energy.'

The couple nodded again. 'So, you feel you'd like some food?' Pauline responded gently.

'Yes I would!' snapped the traveller. 'In fact, I'm just about ready to cry! Where can I get food in this stupid town?'

Silently, John passed her a box of tissues. She took one and blew her nose.

'I wonder,' said Pauline, in a soft, gentle voice, 'if perhaps you carry the resources to feed yourself within you?'

The traveller looked at her in surprise.

'Why don't you look?' suggested John.

The traveller reached into the pocket of her bike shorts and pulled out a packet of sugar-free gum. 'You mean this?' she asked.

Both the others smiled warmly. 'Try it and see!' urged John.

The traveller unwrapped a stick of chewing gum and put it in her mouth. John and Pauline nodded empathetically as she chewed.

'How do you feel now?' asked Pauline.

'Um, ok,' said the traveller. It was something to do with her mouth, she supposed. She was still hungry, but they were so nice she didn't want to disappoint them. She retreated towards the door, chewing and smiling politely.

Pauline blinked back sympathetic tears. 'Would you like to make another appointment?' she called.

'Er – I'll let you know,' said the traveller as she closed the door.

Outside she drew a deep breath. 'I wonder what the hell that was all about!' she murmured to herself. And as she turned away the traveller noticed a sideboard swinging over John and Pauline's door. It read: 'Succour for the Soul'.

Disconsolately, the traveller plodded back to the Memorial Gardens. There was nothing for it. Further up the road she had spotted the golden arches of the fast-food outlet. She hated the white cotton-wool buns, the synthetic, identical hamburgers, the scrappy salad, the fiddly little fries. But what else was there? She bent to unlock her bike.

'Excuse me,' called a woman's voice. The traveller straightened up. A large campervan stood in the car park of the Gardens. 'Sorry to bother you,' said the woman, 'but do you happen to have a lighter by any chance? Ours isn't working and we seem to have lost our matches as well.'

Happy to help, the traveller handed over her cigarette lighter. 'Now that we can light the stove – would you like a cup of tea?' offered the woman. 'We're just about to have one. We're Jake and Leah, by the way.'

'Thanks, I'd love one,' said the traveller gratefully. Folding chairs came out of the van and into the sun while the kettle boiled.

An elderly Māori lady walked trundling a shopping bag on wheels slowly along the footpath. She paused to nod at the three of them.

'Kia ora, whaea,' called Jake.

'Kia ora, koutou. Having a picnic, are you?'

'Ae. He kapu ti mau?'

'Well, that's kind. Yes. I don't mind if I do. Kia ora.'

She sat down on a nearby park bench, opened her shopping bag and pulled out a packet of gingernuts which she offered around. The traveller dunked her gingernut blissfully in the mug of tea Leah handed her. Her hunger abated a little.

'Hey, we've got some onions and mushrooms and quite a few eggs', said Jake. 'Shall we do a bit of a fry up? There's one of those BBQ plate cookers over there. All it takes is a couple of dollars.'

'And I've got that,' said the traveller, handing over a coin. 'Now where's your chopping board?'

Presently the fragrance of frying onions wafted across the road and into the café – luring Mary to the park. She approached the campervan, a plastic bag dangling from her wrist. Speaking to the traveller, 'Look, I'm really sorry we weren't open earlier. Now you've got access to a kitchen, could you use some sausages?'

'Sure!' said Leah, seizing them before the traveller could reply. 'Why don't you join us?'

'Love to!' said Mary. 'I thought you might like tomato sauce too.' She sat down to chat to the kuia – who as it happened – was an old friend.

Over the next half hour, while onions browned and mushrooms softened and sausages sizzled, the picnickers were joined by a mum with a toddler and a baby in a buggy, two teenage boys with their skateboards, and old Ron, tall and stringy and dodderly. Ron

produced a 6-pack of raspberry buns. 'Jack's Bakery gave them to me,' he explained. 'On Friday nights he gives away what he hasn't sold – Good bloke, that Jack.'

Just as the food was ready John and Pauline came over with an enormous, colourful salad. 'It's vegan and gluten-free,' they reassured everyone.

'Haere mai ki te kai!' called Leah. 'Would you say a karakia for us, Whaea Rangi?'

Rangi stood up. 'I give thanks for the hands that grew this food, the hands that prepared it, the hands that carried it here. Let it be for the health of our bodies, the health of our souls, the health of our family. Haumi e, hui e'

'Taiki e,' chorused everyone.

Fortunately, Jake and Leah had plenty of plates and bowls. And everyone had nearly enough to eat.

The traveller lay back on the green grass in the afternoon sunshine. A shadow fell across her face. She opened her eyes.

There stood Malcolm from the big bank restaurant. He carried an enormous white cardboard box. On his face was the broadest of smiles. 'I brought dessert,' said Malcolm.

My Backpack by Marilyn Wilkinson

My backpack is full
it's just about busting.
It has all that I want
I'm a Christian
I'm loving.
I want comfort for my friend,
and health for my neighbour.
I want contentment for my husband,
and fulfilment for my son.
There are no things that I am wanting
but poked down the sides
I want not to be embarrassed
not to look a mess when spied.
So it's all legit my packing
but it's heavy
and besides
I can't put it in the cupboard
it is with me for the ride,
this ride of Christian living,
this journey of my life.

So off I go a-searching
I'm very careful not to trip.
Getting up with all this baggage
indeed would be a blip,
on a journey of such magnitude,
so no, I must not slip.

But listen that's the ocean!
Soon I see the blessed sight.
Soon I smell the kai moana,
just dip my toes I might!
Oh the fun of frothing water
oh the cooling,
oh the joy.
So just a little further,
it's so tempting like a toy.
But remember you're an adult
not a little girl or boy.
Jesus did say something about
becoming like a child
but this is not the time to do it
not with all this weight besides.
There is something in this Presence
though that brings me to a halt.
It is a gentle calling not a major jolt.
I drop my pack
and agree
to just Be
and let the whole place
fill my
Be....ing.
Then whoops
in comes the tide
and I'm swept off my feet!
I wasn't expecting
to get really wet.

I could struggle to stay
or go back for my pack
but the current is strong
and I know that the way
is to go with the flow
be in touch with the day.
So I float and I cruise
and I dip and I dive
and I wallow in weightlessness
loving the ride.
Maybe the journey was not mine to decide.

If there's a shore
there's a shore,
and if not
then there's not.
The Ocean of Love will decide.
To be here is bliss
and not to be missed.
I'm so glad that I stopped
just to Be.

Gosh there goes my pack
bobbing along!

With Love to transport us
we are never weighed down!



SGM News

Kia ora koutou!

The SGM sponsored *happy hour* at the recent Association of Christian Spiritual Directors (ACSD) Biennial Training Event which was noisy and fun. And I'm happy to report SGM is in good heart though we continue to feel deeply the loss of our dear friends who passed away.

Our *formation programme* is going well with good numbers and wide representation. Refresh continues to receive high quality contributions and we celebrate that contemplative initiatives promoted by the Calendar are being enjoyed around Aotearoa.

Workgroup – we are delighted to announce the appointment of new SGM administrator, Adrienne Bruce. Adrienne is a recently 'retired' Anglican Priest with considerable experience in admin and finance (***please note the change of address to PO Box 33, Dannevirke, 4942***). We're hugely grateful for Joanne Garton's dedicated administration for the past 7 years and glad she's agreed to remain on Workgroup. We've been blessed over recent months with a legacy, donations and several events which ran at a profit. We note Kiwibank and others are moving away from cheques. We thank you for your support and encourage you to shift to electronic banking: **you can now donate to our work online at <https://www.sgm.org.nz/donate.html>**.

And finally, SGM Workgroup is exploring (with tangata whenua) how we might better engage with Maori. We recognise the importance of this and that we have things to learn – especially given the absence (largely) of Maori in our formation programme. We want to be good listeners as we embark more intentionally on this journey.

**I warmly wish you Mere Kirihimete,
Jane Wilkinson (SGM Workgroup Convener)**

News from our Spiritual Directors Formation Programme

Surrender. That's a big word.

When I was a kid, I thought Mississippi was a big word; or antisestablishmentarianism

(I loved trotting that one out – no clue what it meant though); but those are small fry words compared to surrender and all it implies and invites. Surrendering to the urge to sit down and read this issue of *Refresh* is a great place to start!

How sad was it to hear of the death of Sophie Crestani or Mason Pendrous? I wonder if you realise that students and faculty alike are actively supported by their Uni chaplains in these situations, many of them trained by us in spiritual direction, alongside their chaplaincy training. The high level of mental and spiritual distress of students across all universities puts chaplains on the frontline in this essential area. And Police – did you know they have chaplains – also trained by us as spiritual directors? And the Military of course, and hospices and end-of-life care providers have Spiritual Care as a high priority, many of whom also are spiritual directors – I haven't mentioned the schools, churches and ordinary workplaces in which spiritual directors are quietly present, working with individuals and groups in their encounter with the Divine or with darkness.

As the Coordinator of the Spiritual Directors Formation Programme, it's my special privilege to work with outstanding individuals who bravely respond to a vocational call often in mid or later life. Just when you think you have it all together, God comes knocking with a new challenge!

And I'm noticing too, the high calibre of our young spiritual directors. Mature faith in the young often comes at a high personal cost; suffering...surrender.

This incredible programme, which I am lucky enough to be guiding for now, is a great gift to Aotearoa and the spiritual life of her people. Your support makes the SDFP possible. Make a donation or remember us in your will. You have no idea what a difference it makes – or perhaps, now, you do.

**Ma te Atua e manaaki koe (every good thing from God to you)
Fran Francis SGM Spiritual Directors Formation Programme Coordinator**

Books

Sensible Shoes Series

by Sharon Garlough Brown

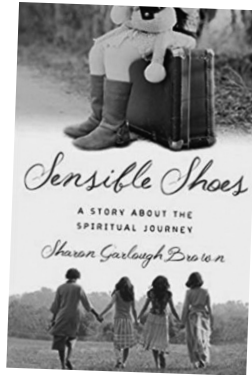
Sensible Shoes/Two Steps Forward / An Extra Mile / Barefoot / Kindle and Paperback

Publisher: IVP Books 2010 – 2019

Sharon Garlough Brown is a spiritual director and cofounder of Abiding Way Ministries – providing spiritual formation retreats. Sharon earned an MDiv from Princeton Theological Seminary. In this beautiful series of novels beginning with bestselling *Sensible Shoes*, Spiritual Direction, Contemplation and mystical connection with God are woven into magnificent and compelling journeys of spiritual seeking and transformation. Brown invites us to join Hannah, Meg, Mara and Charissa as they gain a new understanding of friendship, spiritual truths, and a deeper life with God. In *Sensible Shoes*, these four women reluctantly arrive at a retreat center and embark together on a journey of spiritual formation. They find themselves drawn out of their separate stories of isolation and struggle and into a collective journey of spiritual practice, mutual support and personal revelation.

- Hannah, a pastor who doesn't realise how exhausted she is
- Meg, a widow and recent empty-nester is haunted by her past
- Mara, experienced a lifetime of rejection and is now trying to navigate a tough marriage
- Charissa, a hard-working graduate student – just wants to get things right

In the second book, *Two Steps Forward*, we continue the journey as the women face roadblocks, and in the third book, *Barefoot*, they're challenged to embrace the joy of complete surrender. In the final book, *An Extra Mile*, the women are navigating both deep joy and devastating loss. Can they find equilibrium in the midst of all that has changed? Study guides are available for each novel for group work!



The Universal Christ

How a forgotten reality can change everything we see, hope for, and believe

Publisher: Convergent Books (March 5, 2019)

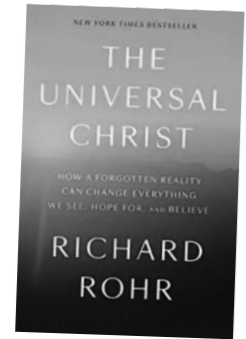
NEWYORK TIMES BESTSELLER • From one of the world's most influential spiritual thinkers, a long-awaited book exploring what it means that Jesus was called 'Christ,' and how this forgotten truth can restore hope and meaning to our lives.

In his decades as a globally recognised teacher, Richard Rohr has helped millions realize what's at stake in matters of faith and spirituality. Yet Rohr has never written on the most perennially talked about topic in Christianity: Jesus. Most know who Jesus was, but who was Christ? Is 'Christ' simply Jesus' surname?

'Too often, our understandings have been limited by culture, religious debate, and the human tendency to put ourselves at the center.'

Drawing on scripture, history, and spiritual practice, Rohr articulates a transformative view of Jesus Christ as a portrait of God's constant, unfolding work in the world. 'God loves things by becoming them,' he writes. Jesus' life was meant to declare that humanity has never been separate from God – except by our own negative choice. When we recover this fundamental truth, faith becomes less about proving Jesus was God, and more about learning to recognise the Creator's presence all around us, and in everyone we meet.

Thought-provoking, practical, and full of deep hope and vision, *The Universal Christ* is a landmark book from one of our most beloved spiritual writers, and an invitation to contemplate how God liberates and loves all that is.

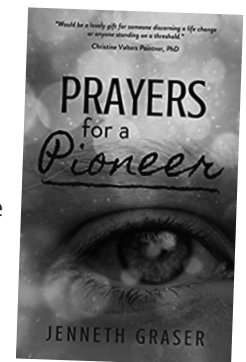


Prayers for a Pioneer

by Jenneth Graser

Published by Secret Place Devotion Publishing August 2019

Prayers for a Pioneer is an invitation to prayer as a journey, whether life throws up change suddenly or transition is beckoning as a gentle transformation. Six themes of prayer have been crafted especially for these journeys: Awake, Heal, Tune in, Abide, Inner Journey, Opening. This book is written for Pioneers praying the road with God, searching for the way forward, healing the past, while living fully in the present. Jenneth invites us to slow down and pay attention to the ways the sacred source is inviting us into new possibilities. Would be a lovely gift for someone discerning a life change or anyone standing on a threshold. One reader calls this book an oracle – a blessed field guide and companion for the soulful journey.



The Last Word

I'm grateful to Jo Anastasiadis who – at SGM workgroup – captured the essence of this 'Surrender' edition of Refresh as 'surrendering to' in contrast to 'letting go of'. There is One to whom we surrender. In our contemplative community it's the same as giving our consent to God in Centering Prayer. We give over the reins of our life to our divine beloved.

All through editing this and the Winter 'Joy' edition I've been surrendering my will and my life to God in relation to breast cancer, chemo, radiation therapy and whatever lies beyond. I trust God is doing whatever can be done – and that's a tremendous relief. As you read this, I'll be enjoying a White Christmas with my family in the US – as a little reward for good behaviour.

I'm extremely grateful to everyone who writes for us. My prayer is that you will let God nudge you into writing for our next edition!

May you surrender to God's shalom,

Diane

Winter 2020 Refresh

Theme 'Good News through a contemplative lens'

Deadline March 28, 2020

In an anxious world where people are bombarded daily with bad news – can we dare to proclaim Good News? How can contemplatives speak into the fear-driven messages that surround us? What does Good News sound and look like from a contemplative perspective? When the truth is difficult to discern, and our children know they face an uncertain future – what might our faith and our spiritual disciplines have to offer? When young people are taking their own lives in record numbers what messages do we carry to give a faltering life hope and meaning? How might contemplative practice impact on emotional and neurological health?

Guidelines for writers – please, please, 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.

Leaving retreat

by Hannah Rowan

When I am home
I will remember
sitting at the table
looking out the window
the ascending driveway
miniature horses frolicking
sunbathing alpacas
a sense of tranquility

When I am home
I will remember
stopping to smell the roses
their vibrant colours
and fragrant perfume
the depth of the tulips
my purple freesias
the yellow dandelions

When I am home
I will remember
the wind kissing my cheeks
the freshness of air
the sun warming my body

When I am home
I will remember
walking by the stream
singing a new song
finding autumn leaves in springtime
dry yet with intense colour

When I am home
I will take the girls to piano
prepare for dinner
clear the floor for the carpet man
lunch with a friend
Will I have time to remember?

When I am home
I will return to school
go to supervision
help at the college
celebrate with my family
I will find you there
when I remember to look

When I am home
will you help me
to count all my blessings –
at least the ones I can remember?

When I am home
I will hold close
the memories from this time
and cherish those
yet to come



Photo © Leeway Images

Contributors

Susan Jones is looking forward to a shift to Dunedin after retiring as minister at St Andrews on the Terrace in Wellington. She's a strong social justice advocate and published poet. A trained Spiritual Director, Susan taught Theological Reflection for Otago University's Master of Ministry programme – while serving in congregations in the south.

Dylan Morrison is an Irish author, poet and blogger impassioned by the mysticism of Yeshua bar Yosef, the Nazarene prophet. His autobiographical tale, *The Prodigal Prophet*, is available at Amazon and Kindle outlets, along with five other books on religion & spirituality.

Val Roberts lives on the Kapiti Coast with her husband and two cats. Her passions include creativity and encouraging people on their spiritual journeys. She loves being a first time Grandma and spending more time devoted to her spiritual journey and writing.

Jo Anastasiadis is a Spiritual Director in Wellington who loves God's creation, and seeing others grow in their relationship with God. She has recently rediscovered the delight of play with her young grandchildren, and the joy of simple moments.

Lynne Baab is a writer first and foremost. She and husband Dave lived in New Zealand for many years, during which she taught Pastoral Theology at the University of Otago. To learn about her books and articles access her weekly blog at lynnebaab.com. Lynne is a Presbyterian minister, preacher, and university teacher now living in Seattle.

Anna Johnstone is deeply grateful for the many joys in her life and loves writing about them. www.annajohnstone.com

Bev van der Westhuyzen lives in Tauranga. She enjoys and is grateful for the natural beauty that surrounds her. Two daughters and four grandsons keep her on her toes. Reading and E-biking are favourite pastimes. Bev has a special interest in ageing, death and dying.

Andrea Williamson is a Methodist presbyter, Police chaplain and Spiritual Director. She loves spending time with her family and friends, writing poetry and fishing with her husband and best mate, Pete. Andrea is grateful to God for every day and tries to live each one to the fullest.

Vivienne Holt is still learning to surrender to the deep love of God in life, in nature, in her family and friendships. She loves quilting and companioning others in their connection with God.

Liz Maluschnig is a Spiritual Director, counsellor and celebrant living on an eco-friendly lifestyle farm in Wanaka with her husband Steve and fur baby Beau.

Clare Lind is a Presbyterian minister at Tawa Union Church until Christmas, when is heading south to live in her old hometown of Dunedin, hoping to do some ministry and some writing.

Margaret Gwynn does yoga and Tai Chi and looks after a labyrinth. She loves to garden, read and dance, and is an active member of the Green Party.

Jenneth Graser is a writer and homeschool parent, married to Karl and living in Cape Town. She's part of a community of writers for the Godspace blog. She writes regularly at Secret Place Devotion on Facebook. Jenneth has authored three books, *Prayers for a Pioneer* reviewed in this Refresh, *The Present Moment of Happiness* and *Catching the Light*.

Alana Levandoski is married to Ian and mother to two young sons. She's a songwriter, a mystic, a liturgical leader, recording artist and a mentor. She and Ian built their house from the ground up and take delight in the bush that surrounds it. In 2015, her album *Behold, I Make all Things New* became a favourite of contemplatives.

Adrienne Thomson lives on the slopes of Whārangī, by the Waipahihi Stream within the rohe of Te Atiawa. Adrienne offers spiritual direction and supervision with the audible and visible support of tūī, kākā and riroriro that flourish in Karori, owing to the Zealandia Sanctuary. Learning te reo has been her path into living well in Aotearoa. Besides birdwatching, Adrienne loves playing with her grandsons, cooking curries for family and friends and, with her husband, exploring back roads in their campervan.

Marilyn Wilkinson walks a Christian path and has done so for her whole life. It is only recently that she has taken side trips for a different view. Yoga, Rumi poetry, *Dances for Universal Peace*, and a Buddhist silent retreat have all enriched her journey. All these – along with her Christianity – have silence and compassion at their heart. She very much wants to share this broader vision with her eight grandchildren.

Hannah Rowan is relishing the soul-enhancing experience of living at beautiful Waitare Beach. Hannah has a particular interest in children and spirituality and loves to encourage people of all ages to grow in faith.

