

*Lord,
You know how busy I must be today;
If I should forget you,
please do not forget me.*

*Sir Jacob Astley, before the battle
of Edgehill, 1642*

Contributions and other assistance from:

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DAILY THOUGHTS

FOR ALL THE MONTH

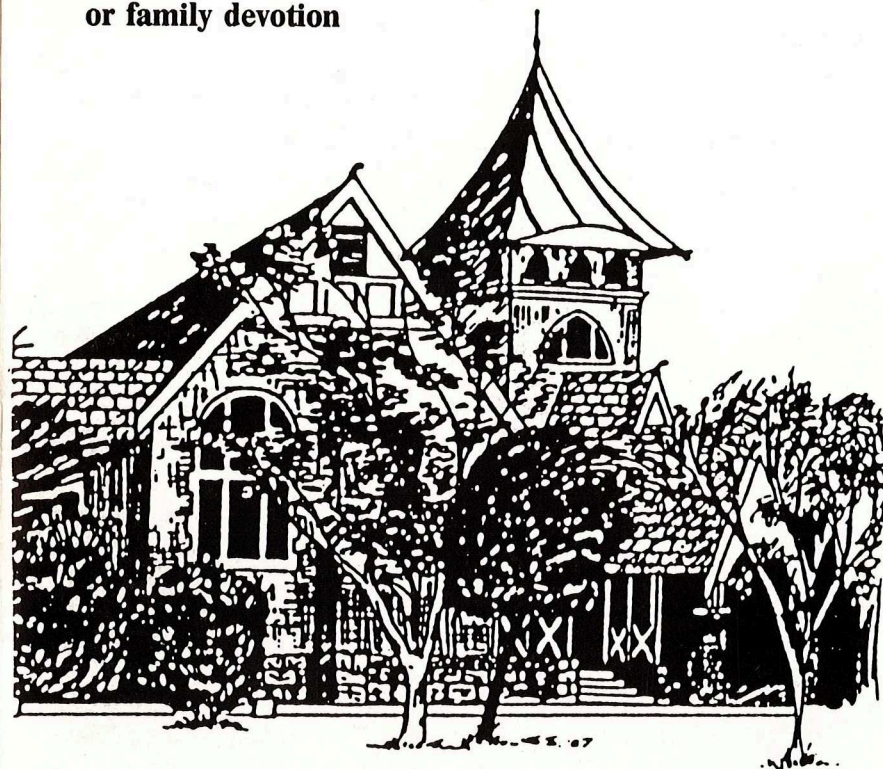
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A booklet for private meditation

or family devotion



Prepared by the Uniting Church, Tryon Road, Lindfield.

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Welcome!

Every now and then we read something that gives us the strength and confidence that we need to cope with the ever increasing demands that are made on our lives.

In many instances, the thing that enables us to cope can be a kind word from a friend, or something that was either written or spoken by someone who is totally unknown to us.

The written and the spoken word is therefore a very powerful influence on our lives, and this is perhaps nowhere better illustrated than in the realm of devotional writings and sayings.

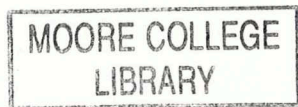
The collection of thirty one devotional writings contained in this book come directly out of people's experience. They are a true reflection of how the sense of the presence of the divine became real and vital to a great variety of personalities through a great variety of circumstances.

As you read it, I am certain that you will be inspired and helped in a very practical and personal way.

May it bring you as much blessing as it has brought to those who wrote it.

Peace.

DAVID BROWN



JESUS KNOWS US BY NAME

Uniqueness is a wonderful thing.

Each human being created by God for a unique purpose, with a unique design. How wonderful that our Creator God knows us and loves us as individuals as well as members of His Family - each one precious.

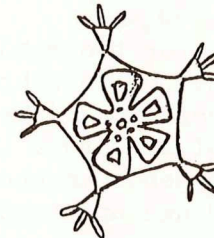
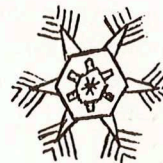
Each snowflake has its own unique design. Each note in a hymn has its particular place and purpose.

In John's Gospel, Chapter 10, our Lord speaks of Himself as the Good Shepherd: "I am the Good Shepherd and know My sheep, and am known of mine." Verse 14.

In verse 3, Jesus speaks of the Shepherd calling His own sheep by name, and leading them out. When he leads them out, He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him, because they know His Voice.

Heavenly Father, we pray for listening ears and responsive hearts to You. Enable us to hear the voice of Jesus Christ, who knows us each by name. Enable us to follow Him gladly and thankfully.

We praise you Lord.



STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

In most parts of the world today education, at all levels, is in high demand. At the close of this twentieth century that certainly is so in our Australian society. We call for increasing numbers of skilled people ... and in a community of rapid change. A direct result is that students are subject to competition and strains that were not nearly as acute in earlier decades. In some countries the change is more rapid still. Many nations have moved from a quite primitive agricultural society to an industrial and very much more developed society within a few generations. Cultural, political and racial tensions have inevitably developed. Old patterns of life have been challenged and younger people particularly find themselves torn between the old and the new. That, for many, becomes a very difficult situation.

"Everyone agrees that we have made far more advances in the scientific world than we have made in the world of morals and ethics. Scientific discovery has outstripped our moral character,
our spiritual quality,
our religious faith.

People have thought that in the more technology we have, the more religion can be discarded. But that is not so. Rather the fact is that the more science we have, the more we need character-building religion."

Peter Marshall.

Eternal God ...

We praise you for the mind you have given man and for the great adventure of thought and discovery which we inherit from past generations. We know, as we teach our children the meaning of life that the proper use of their inheritance depends so much on how we pass it on. So we pray for students and teachers .. and ourselves .. who have the task of adapting the wisdom of past years to the knowledge of today.

Our responsibility, to students who have to explore new ways of thinking, brings continuous concern. Show us, O Father God, how to pass on the true way of looking at life, with confidence.

We pray for all places of learning, schools, universities and colleges, that they may play a wise part in fitting their students with knowledge and that real wisdom which will lead men and women, not simply to serve their own interests, but to serve their fellows. We thank you for the work of the world-wide Church amongst students. Particularly we remember all religious Societies in Universities and Schools. May they make the most of their opportunities and in an atmosphere often indifferent, sent forth leaders to their communities and countries. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.



*O Lord,
Help us to be the masters of ourselves
that we may be the servants of others.*

Sir Alec Patterson, 1884-1947

NOT ALONE

A new day. A group of us, on holidays, had just scrambled and slid down a rather spectacular gorge in the Kalbarri area of Western Australia to the Murchison River below. Whilst walking and rock hopping along the river we noticed something unusual on a dead tree branch ahead. Closer investigation revealed a mother "Frogmouth" owl and her baby. Cameras out! In an endeavour to take a close up photograph of the owls I slithered and crawled toward the dead tree branch. Terrific! The owls now appear fully in the frame of the camera viewfinder. I take three "shots" for good measure. My friends standing further back photograph the scene - with their focus on the dead tree and the two owls.

A few weeks later, at home, we are all once more together, sharing memories and photographs of our time away. My photographic slide of the mother and baby owl is a beauty. It fills up the whole screen. My friend then shows his slide of the two owls and the "dead tree scene". Then, to all our amazement, we discover that his slide depicts not just a mother and baby owl but a third owl. Two branches higher up on the dead tree is "Father Owl" looking down and watching over the mother and baby owl. We had not been aware of "Father Owl's" presence whilst walking that day. We then looked at each other and marvelled at the wonder of nature and the magnificence of God's creation.

Our lives are like that you know.

My wife and I have travelled extensively throughout this land of ours, and even in the most isolated of locations, away from all other human contacts, we feel and know the presence of our Loving Heavenly Father as at all times and in all places He watches over us.

A chorus I learnt many years ago in Sunday School goes:

"Yet never alone is the Christian
Who lives by faith and prayer
For God is a friend unfailing
And God is everywhere."

How true.

SEEING AND UNDERSTANDING

As a visitor, I imagined that sensible thrift was the reason for the superseded Methodist hymn books being the only ones available in the church vestibule.

Over the balustrade alongside the lay preacher at the lectern was draped an open scroll of long white paper, inscribed with inverted numbers as large as those on car number plates.

The preacher told the children of a time when he cycled the unsealed road each week to teach a Sunday School of cousins who lived in an orchardist's hamlet of family homes nine kilometres outside the town. The past came alive for us as he talked of that Sunday school and its strengths. No mention was made of the white paper scroll at his side.

During the sermon he humbly witnessed to this service to others and to his lasting faith in Jesus as his saviour. His great regret in old age, he told us clearly through gummy mouth, was an eyesight so failed that he could no longer discern the programmes on his television set, let alone read any newspaper.

Then I learnt what I should have realised earlier.

It was at his request that the Australian hymnbooks had been temporarily put aside. The numbers on the scroll, at a size large enough for him to read, were those of hymns remembered from long ago from the hymn book he last had been able to read.

See Psalm 19.

Dear God, creator of all things, thank you for our human capacity to observe, with some comprehension, the wonders of the universe. Please give me the faith to search for the truth to the limit of my ability to understand, and the faith to exercise my free will in an informed, rational, and caring way. Help me to share with others

REFLECTIONS

Reflections on Reading Psalm 8 during Pentecost.

"What is man that you are mindful of him?"

The human is one of God's marvellous creations. The way in which the various parts co-ordinate with one another, each supplying a necessary function without interference or duplication, show the mind of a Quality Engineer.

The life-code embedded in each person's unique DNA structure commands this bit to be an eye; another to be an ear; yet another a heart, or liver, or even a big toe. For most of us, no part is overlooked, and none is regarded as more important than any other.

That peculiar neural computer, the brain, cannot yet be matched by any of man's creations. In computer jargon, it is a multi-programming, multi-tasking system, which controls several happenings at the same time. It also allows some tasks to be shifted rapidly from "background" to "foreground", as when a mother reacts to a child's cry in the night.

Some programs we are born with - breathing, blood circulation, digestion.

Some we learn - walking, reading, playing sport or some musical instrument. Some we choose - the search for love, for truth, for God.

Yet what is man, who is made a little lower than the heavenly beings? Surely of little import unless endowed with God's Spirit, that enables all these wonderful things to be used in His service, according to the "first and great commandment."

Good Lord of Creation, help us to make and keep ourselves a worthy temple wherein your Spirit may dwell. Good food in moderation, to help keep our bodies well nourished. Good exercise, for muscle tone and relaxation. Good books, music, and other "mind food" to develop our mental abilities. Good thoughts, through prayer, the Bible, and worship, to be ready to welcome You in our hearts, that You also can form an integral part of our lives.

Then we can agree with the psalmist, and joyfully affirm :

"O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"



DO YOU REMEMBER?

How wonderful is the gift of memory - from childhood to adulthood it cheers, inspires, humbles, rebukes, yes and saddens us with precious countless thoughts.

"To recall the lovely country walk with a dear Grandfather, and sitting on a log as he told me a story, carefully peeling an apple for me to eat".

To turn on the car radio for Daily Devotional broadcasts on 2FC and the voice of a well-loved minister came over, drawing us to God. These are the lovely things.

I am sure the words of this poem by Walter Grogan, set to music by Haydn Wood, will set our memory bells a-ringing.

"Praise for the roof that shelters me,
The trees that yield me shade,
The little brook that gives me drink,
The earth where seeds are laid.
Praise for the song of birds at dawn,
The wind that passes by;
The hundred blooms that scent the air,
The glorious sun on high.
Praise most to God who gave me life,
And lights my every way."

What a joy it is to share memories of experiences of life with friends old and new.

SECURITY

King George VI was a shy man, with a very strong faith. He was quite unprepared for the task of kingship. Soon after his accession to the throne, Britain was at war.

In his Christmas broadcast of 1939, with the future looking very grim, he quoted the following:

I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year

*"Give me a light
that I may tread safely into the unknown."*

And he replied -

*"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light,
and safer than a known way."*

- M L Haskins

The king followed that advice, and remained an example of quiet courage throughout the war.

Because of the inspiration which he drew from the words, they are now displayed on a brass plaque above his tomb, in St George's Chapel, Windsor.

GLIMPSES

During the 1930's the roads between towns in the west of the state were unsealed, few even macadamised, and most were of plain black soil graded so that when much rain fell parts of the road became boggy and almost impassable.

On reaching such a boggy section, it was advisable to stop and look and think how one would get through. If you saw a previous motorist had made a safe crossing, you would follow his tracks and reach the other side safely.

I have always thought Life is like that, for to me "Jesus as the Way, the Truth and the Life", has been through human life, and in all our problems if we trust Him He will be our guide and Saviour. John 14:16.

I thank you, Lord, for the loving kindness you have shown me throughout my life, and I confess that I have not always trusted you as I should. Forgive me and help me to be more faithful and to trust you more. Amen.

While touring in Victoria we were told by our Coach Captain that what is only a "hill" in New South Wales would be regarded as a "mountain" if it were in Victoria - the latest twist in interstate rivalry? Perhaps! But I'm not sure; but haven't we all known people who believe that if they or close relatives are ill then they are more seriously ill than anyone else with the same ailment had ever been. Maybe it's trying to gain more sympathy or even renown! Are these people as quick to acknowledge the richness of God's Grace in their lives or their share of God's blessings given to them?

Three stories come to mind -

- (1) The Pharisee thanking God that he was not like other men are and being boastful of the good life that he lived - secure in his own self-righteousness.

- (2) The "publican" aware of his own shortcomings, aware of needing God's help "to do the right thing", casting his burden before his Lord - God be merciful to me a sinner.
- (3) The reformed alcoholic grateful to God for His transforming Love, seeing the pitiful figure of a drunk man in the gutter - "There but for the Grace of God go I."

Where do you stand?

Scripture - Luke 18, verses 9-14.

Dear Father God, make us sensitive to our need for the grace you offer us each day - to recognise our sinfulness and our need for forgiveness.

Help us to claim that loving strength to live as you would have us live in our witness for your love for all people everywhere.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen

As a small boy staying with our grandparents on holidays at Stockton, I was fascinated by the lamplighter who went around the streets lighting the gas lights towards evening. He had his bicycle, and a small ladder and lighting equipment to attend to the lamps, and as interested watchers we followed the lamplighter on his round - seeing the lamps glow in the fading light. When the job was finished the lamplighter went home to dinner and to rest, knowing that wayfarers could walk safely guided by his glowing lamps.

Jesus, in John 8:12, claimed to be "the light of the World", and urged his followers to be the lights of the world too.

THE GLORIES OF GOD

I have a special place - made all the more special because at varying times it is shared by those whom I love. Those moments of importance that are shared by families have been experienced in this beautiful place. Times of disappointment, joy, new discoveries, and a closeness with my husband have made this "place" significant in my life.

I am speaking of Killcare.

Allan and I, when first visiting The Nelson's cottage there were excited with three growing children. No sophistication then - no luxurious mansions lining the streets. Huddled in bed, I can remember the first 'blow'. I remember praying, asking God to keep the house together. A 'blow' at Killcare is really something. The windows rattled, the wind howled, a really scary time for the uninitiated.

In later times, we have stood in awe watching the storms rage out at sea, more dramatic than any man-made fireworks. Sheets of rain have swept toward the big windows as rain poured down, hiding the view completely, only greyness and nothing visible. In the mornings, after these weather extremes, we have woken to sparkling waters, bluest of skies, and a horizon as clear as the outline of the beach.

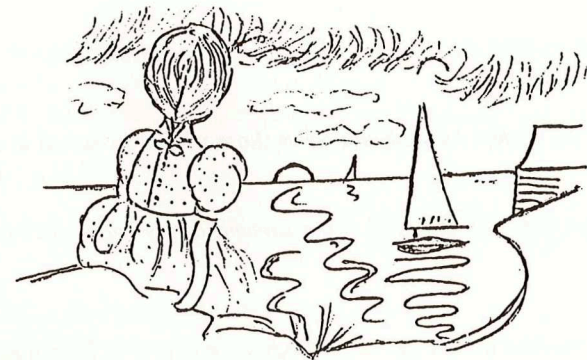
Life is reflected in these dramatic changes.

We would prefer the days always to be clear and predictable but like the snugness Killcare provides, God's care envelops us every moment of every day.

After the storms, first the stillness comes, then the sun shines through, bringing colour and life. Then we open the doors and windows and thankfully walk out into what was there all the time.

As the psalmist says in Psalm 46 : Verses 1, 2 and 10 ..

*"God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.
Though its waters roar and foam,
and the mountains quake with their surging.
Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth."*



SUPPORT

My dearest aunt, who is well into her eighties, was diagnosed recently as having a very serious illness. It has been a tremendous shock for her, and a very sad and worrying time for the rest of us.

She is a delightful lady, who had no husband or children, but a large extended family, all of whom love and respect her. It's a hard burden for her to bear, and at first left us all angry and bewildered.

I have prayed for help in accepting this unhappy turn our lives have taken, and perhaps a few thoughts and readings I've put together may help others in similar times of trouble. We all have them at some time !

Praise be to the Lord, to God our Saviour, who daily bears our burdens.

Psalm 68:19

The Lord is close to the broken hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Psalm 34:18

My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.

Psalm 73:26

We know that when this tent we live in - our body on earth - is born down, God will have a house in heaven for us to live in , a home he himself has made, which will last for ever.

2 Corinthians 5:1

Do not worry about anything, but in all your prayer ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart. And God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6 & 7

FACING LIFE'S CHALLENGES

Life's pathway is not an easy one. It never was. Even that legendary paradise, the Garden of Eden, held its dangers, as has every succeeding Utopian dream. For each of us there are personal problems to resolve and public and global concerns on which we must stand up and be counted.

As a student I attended a local high school which had for its motto "Faith with Fortitude". The Faith (in a loving Heavenly Father and the saving grace of Jesus, His Son) came naturally, having been nurtured from infancy among Christian influences by quiet and God-loving parents.

The Fortitude we can develop through prayer and trust in the promises found in God's Word. The Old Testament writers placed much stress on fortifying oneself, on courage and on might and power, but Jesus, and later the Apostles, taught that inner strength comes through the Spirit and by having Christ dwell in our hearts - a heart knowledge that goes beyond a head knowledge.

One interpretation of Paul's words in Ephesians 3 : 17-18 reads "With deep roots and firm foundations may you ... grasp ... what is the breadth, length, height and depth of the love of Christ". Armed with that perfect love which casts out fear, we can face life's challenges - with Fortitude.

WORRIED?

Are you a worry wart?

We had a plaque on the wall of our own home in Hobart, which said "Don't worry, it may never happen." How very true!

A lady who had learned some important truths about life remarked, "I've had a lot of trouble - most of which never happened!" She had come to see the futility of her anxieties.

An unknown poet has written : "I heard a voice at evening softly say, 'Bear not your yesterdays into tomorrow, nor load this week with last week's load of sorrow. Lift all your burdens as they come, nor try to weigh the present with the by-and-by.

One step and then another, take your way:
Live day by day."

Matthew says in Chapter 6, verse 34 : "Be not therefore, anxious about tomorrow."

Do you know it is a sin to worry?

"If you worry you do not trust. If you trust you do not worry."

If we stay in the centre of God's will and put first things first our loving God will supply all our need and lift all our burdens. Worry is unbelief.

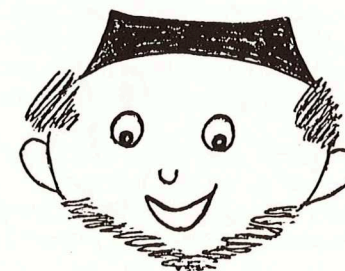
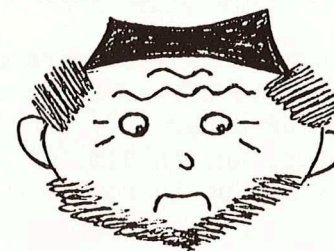
"Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." Luke 12:22-31.

Doctors point out that constant fear and worry are physically harmful. Brooding over troubles, real or imagined, may contribute to such as ulcers, high blood pressure and nerves.

"Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its troubles, but it does rob today of its strength."

"Worry is unbelief parading in disguise."

Substitute faith in God for fear about the future!



God grant us Serenity to accept the things we cannot change,

Courage to change the things we can,

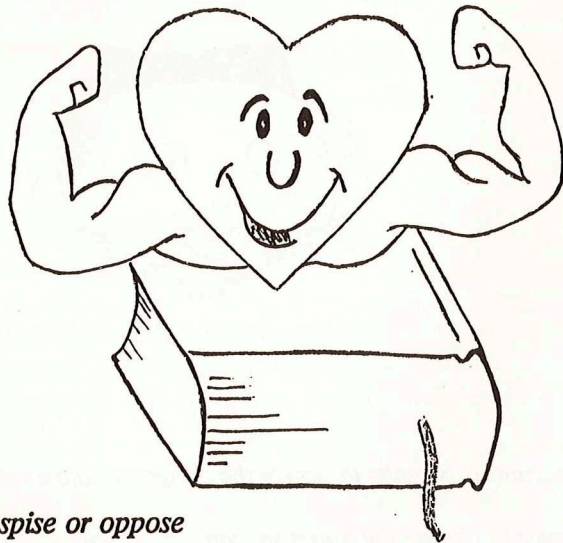
and Wisdom to know the difference.

JESUS IS FOR US

Jesus makes it clear in John 16 : 5-17 that it is so important to our spiritual welfare that we know, and believe and obey His Words to us. At one time in my life every time I opened my Bible, I knew I had to read John 14 - 17 inclusive, and this went on for several months.

At first I couldn't accept all that Jesus said, but as I read His Words over and over again, the Holy Spirit made them a reality and a great blessing to me, in new faith and trust in our loving, self giving Saviour.

We meet to remember His Word is the sword of the spirit, and we so need it to use as Jesus did, against the attacks of our adversary, the devil. Jesus overcame him for us, and in Him, we also are conquerors, as Paul assures us in Romans 8.37.



*O God,
help me not to despise or oppose
what I do not understand.*

William Penn, 1644-1718

SMILING

One of the first real signs that a new-born baby is alert to its surroundings comes when, at around five or six weeks, it suddenly smiles back at its parents.

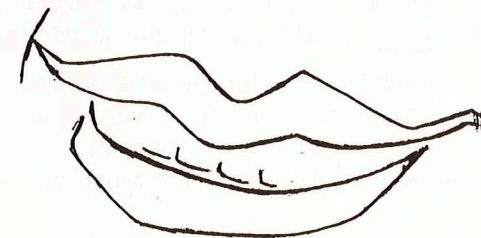
What a thrill to the parents that smile is! Can one think of a better way for such a helpless creature to respond to the loving care which it is experiencing? Could speech express any better what is said by the smile?

Perhaps we could take a few minutes to think about the many good things with which we are surrounded.

I think of my family, my friends, and the people I work with. I think of anyone who gives me a cheery greeting during the day. I think of the help which I have received from total strangers, sometimes quite unknown to me, when I have needed it. I think of the voluntary workers in all sorts of capacities in our local community and beyond, who make their contribution for no reward other than knowing that someone will benefit for it.

Nevertheless, it is rewarding, when one has provided some sort of assistance, to receive some sign of appreciation. It is also rewarding and heartwarming to be able to show that appreciation.

It often is difficult to express our appreciation to God for all that is good around us, and for all that we can look forward to. But we need not worry about the inadequacy of our expressions of thanks. When we are aware of the warmth of God's smile on us, we can smile back at Him.



LOOKING AHEAD FROM PAST BLESSINGS

Having attended Tryon Road Church for most of my life, it might be a good time to think back, to some of the experiences that have helped me along life's way.

I was brought up in a loving, disciplined, christian home without fear. Sunday School, Christian Endeavour and Church were the order of the day.

Sunday School picnics to "Fairyland" and anniversaries were big occasions.

In the training as Christian Endeavour members, we were taught to be thoughtful for others and to take responsibility in various ways - encouraging the timid to speak and the leaders to help etc.

Being children we followed our parents ideas and beliefs and life was free and happy.

Then "teen age" (not so called in those days) brought the usual problems and we began to question and finally had to make our own choice and accept the challenge of our spiritual lives - new temptations came and we were tested.

So in the various stages of our lives during the depression, through losses, and disappointments and in the many high spots we learned what true value was. We found that much of our success and peace of mind depended on the full use of our "whole self" and that we needed much beyond that. Here was where our faith came in - to trust and not worry - to be more tolerant and understanding of others and more humble.

Life is still challenging - one mellows with time but I'm sure if we can keep positive in our approach to life's problems and really believe "my strength is sufficient for you" life will continue to be a rich experience.

"For serious thought, for happy absurdities and kind laughter; for treasures of the past and discoveries of the present; for a desire to serve, a readiness to compliment and a willingness to forgive" we give thanks.

HAND IN HAND

Several of us sit around a campfire making toast and roasting marshmallows.

We are in Eungella National Park, not far from Mackay in Northern Queensland, camped alongside a lovely rainforest.

We hear movement in a branch of a tree nearby. A possum appears, climbs slowly down the tree trunk, walks toward our campfire and sits next to me. The possum and I share toast and marshmallows.

After we have eaten, the possum reaches out, and very firmly but gently takes hold of my right hand. My hand is then slowly moved by the possum and placed into the possum's pouch where, to my utter amazement, I discover a baby possum. Immediately I feel love and warmth toward the mother possum and her baby, and ever so privileged to experience the intimacy of this occasion. My friends, sitting around the fire, watch in silent wonder. After a few moments I withdraw my hand and the possum returns to her home in the tree nearby.

The following morning, while walking in the rainforest, we reflected on the previous night's experience with the mother possum. We spoke of our relationship with our Heavenly Father, and how wonderful and how close that relationship becomes when, with trust and with love, we put our hand in His hand, and walk in His ways.

*"Take my hands, Lord Jesus,
let them work for you.
Make them strong and gentle,
kind in all I do.
Let me watch you, Jesus,
till I'm gentle too,
till my hands are kind hands,
quick to work for you."*

From Hymn 178, AHB



THE MAN AT THE BARRIER

For many months I had seen him on my way to work, as he stood at the ticket barrier at Central Station. Neatly dressed in the uniform of the State Rail Authority, he collected tickets and checked passes of the hundreds of people who daily streamed past in the morning rush. He was never officious, and would often have a short chat to one of the "regulars", and give a child a friendly pat on the head as he spoke to its mother in a European accent, as the crowd surged past.

It was his cheery "Good morning, sir" which first had attracted my attention. He must have said it hundreds of times at that peak time. At first I had not paid much attention, often being preoccupied with thoughts of the day's problems awaiting me at my office. Then it occurred to me that he was really helping lots of people to have a happier start to the day, and I felt uncomfortable about not having always responded to his cheery greeting.

Then one morning he wasn't there. Holidays, of course, I thought. But the weeks passed, and he did not appear. One morning I asked another ticket collector what had happened to him, but my description meant nothing to him. "Whoever he was" said the man "shifts change, people get moved, you know". I thanked him and went my way.

I could not get the man out of my mind. Had he gone off on long service leave to see relatives in Eastern Europe, and been caught there, like some unfortunate folk I had heard of? Or had he gone back to his native land and opened a little tourist shop, like a chap I had met once in Delphi. I guess I shall never know.

But I could not help wondering, as I went on my way, if my unnamed friend had been a member of a church somewhere, or even if he had been a Christian. But I put this latter thought from me as I reckoned that, whatever I thought about the matter, there was One who would have answered "Yes" to the question.

WITNESS

Like most people, I have a dear old relative who keeps in touch once a year, mostly at Christmas.

So I was surprised to hear from him a week ago, and even more surprised on reading his letter, as he was enquiring about my spiritual state

To use his words,

" I conclude the reason I confided in you - I believed God had granted me His peace; you were a true believer and perhaps enjoyed His peace and still may not have realised it..... what I wish to hear from you is that you believe in God as our heavenly Father and believe in His Son, Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord".

There was a lot more. I was blessed and encouraged by his words. The wonder behind this episode is that he is ninety four years old.

Three aspects of his letter moved me deeply: his loving concern for someone he had rarely met, his conviction in the saving grace of his Lord for all people, and his assurance of the peace which passes all understanding. His witness to me - of God's love and gift of peace - filled me with delight and joy.

Philippians 4: vv 4 - 9

NAILS, NAILS, NAILS

Finding a nail eight inches long, set me thinking of the various sizes, thicknesses, shapes and use they could be put to.

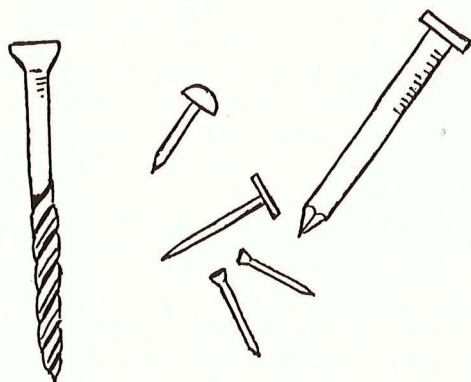
The veneer pin, with a conical head, is one of the smallest, followed by panel pins, some only three eighths of an inch long. They are used to secure thin timber that would be damaged by splitting if anything larger were used.

Most nails are round in the stem, but some are square; others used to be cut from various thicknesses of flat iron; others have a groove cut in them on a slow turn, and when driven turn like a screw. These hold in soft timber better than other nails.

There is a use for every nail and that is why they differ.

Our Lord has a purpose for every one of His children, who differ so much in God given talents, and under His guidance are used for the benefit of all mankind.

Prayer : "Use me Lord, even me."



TRAVELLERS

Australians are great travellers and I am no exception. One of the joys of travel is to meet with people of different cultural and environmental backgrounds, and to note with interest the different styles of living which have been adopted to cope with the particular circumstances pertaining to that area. Whilst travelling in the U.K. and Europe for the first time many years ago I was fascinated by the many different styles of architecture used in the public buildings and, in particular, the church buildings. As I visited those wonderful cathedrals, I was caught up by a great sense of being part of history which stretched back through many centuries. It was brought forcibly to my mind that I was but a tiny part of God's world, only one of the hundreds of thousands of people who had worshipped in those buildings. The very air seemed filled with the prayers offered and the peace received down through the ages.

What a vision some of these earlier Christians had! and what an inspiration their buildings still bring to twentieth century people.

Here in our own land, I have had this same uplifting experience when attending worship services in our more modern buildings - a feeling of being part of the family of God.

We are all travellers through life, making a journey together; helping one another along the way, sharing in the joys as well as the sorrows but always surrounded by God's love and care for us all.

In the New Testament, in the book of Hebrews, chapter 11 you can read for yourself of the faith journeys of the people of old. Then read on into chapter 12, verses 1 and 2.

May the peace of God be with you as you journey on in faith.

LIGHT

Sir Harry Lauder, famous Scottish entertainer and a dedicated Christian, declared that many Christians are like that lamplighter who though having left the scene by those lighted lamps - their Christian living - have influenced those whose lives they have touched to follow the path of Light.

I'm sure that most of us can recall someone who by his/her life has inspired us to follow Christ's way of life.

We too, can respond to Christ's challenge to be Lights of the World witnessing to God's Love and Grace.

Prayer : Lighten our darkness we beseech you,
O God. Help me to follow more closely
in your footsteps so that my life may
reflect more fully the glory of Your
Life and Your Love. Amen.

Many years ago, with the co-operation of the Church Stewards on duty, I had the lights of a Church turned off and I was able to show the children the effect that different types of lights had upon darkness. I used a match, lighted candles of varying sizes, different torches, a reading lamp, a floor light, the effect of having on only one Church light and all on together. Even the light from a match or the tiniest of candles was enough to disperse some of the darkness.

Much of my youth was spent in the country and rabbit trappers would sometimes go around their traps during the night, taking out rabbits from traps and re-setting them. We would follow their movements around the hillsides by the reflection from their hand lanterns, even though they were one or two kilometres away from our home. Such is the power of light! Matthew 5:12-16. With the power of the "Christ light" glowing in our lives, we can

help others to know that in Christ we have someone who can "light up" their life too, and bring happiness and purpose into their daily living.

Let us decide to be true followers of Christ Jesus.

John 1:5-7?
1 John:5-7; Ephesians 5:8.

Prayer : Dear Lord, Forgive us for our lack of faith and help us to serve you more fully so that we too may be lights to the World, witnessing to your power and love as we go about our daily tasks. Amen.

The Duke of Wellington, on the eve of battle, urged his soldiers to "Trust in God and keep your powder dry!"

This is a reminder that in all God's dealings with mankind there has always been a sharing of responsibilities. In our dealings with one another, the same thing has to happen if our relationship is to thrive - mutual trust and respect.

What a wonderful thought that the God of all Power should send His Son to live on earth to show us how much He loves us - poor unworthy humans as we are - that He should die on the Cross of Calvary to save us from our sinfulness and to give us the power through faith to become sons and daughters of God. For us to know that through Him we can inherit eternal life : That's God's promise. Isaiah 45:21, I Corinthians 10:13.

Prayer : Help us to believe that promise and to be Christ's faithful followers. Amen.



IN THE HANDS OF GOD

Some time ago, I suddenly found myself in a hospital a long way away from home. I was quite unprepared for this to happen, and even had to wear borrowed hospital pyjamas.

It took some hours to become accustomed to the change in my circumstances. I said to myself "What am I doing here? This sort of thing does not happen to me!". When I mentally wound down, and began to take stock, it crossed my mind that the nature of the care I was receiving and the frequency of the attention I was getting could only mean that there was a chance, however slight, that prompt action may be necessary at some time if things got worse.

I got very little sleep that first night because of the frequency with which the nursing staff were calling in to check up on me. I felt quite helpless. There was nothing I could do but lie there and wait for the hours to pass.

I realised that I was relying entirely on the care and judgment of the nursing staff, who were quietly going about their work. Judging from the buzzers I could hear from elsewhere on the floor, and the brisk pace of the walking in the corridor outside, they were having a busy night.

The only other person in my ward was asleep. I felt alone, in spite of the activity outside.

I was accustomed to joining in prayers for others who were ill. I suddenly had the thought that my friends would be praying for me. I didn't feel quite so alone, as I knew that they were with me in spirit.

In the early hours of the morning, unable to sleep, I turned on my reading light. I had no reading matter of my own. I looked in the bedside drawer, and found a Gideon's bible.

The often-quoted end of Romans 8 struck me as being appropriate to my situation.

*"..... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution,
or famine, or nakedness,
or peril, or sword?"*

*"..... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors
through him who loved us.*

*For I am persuaded
that neither death nor life,
nor angels nor principalities nor powers,
nor things present nor things to come,
nor height nor depth,
nor any other creature,
shall be able to separate us from the love of God,
which is in Christ Jesus our Lord".*

I turned out my light, and thought quietly for some hours.

I gradually relaxed in the awareness that, whatever the outcome, I was not just in the hands of the nursing staff, but also in the hands of God.

His presence became more tangible to me. And for the rest of my time in the hospital I saw everyone from a different viewpoint. The nursing staff, the cleaners, the volunteers who brought the library trolley around, they were all, in some way, an extension and expression of the love of God.

.....

"Father, wherever we are, and whatever our situation, may we be aware of your love and protection.

Help us to bring that awareness and that love to others".

DAILY HELP FROM THE SCRIPTURES AND THE HYMN BOOK

Some verses of Scripture or a verse of a hymn help you if you think of them as you go about your daily duties.

This one from Isaiah 26-3 has helped me many times.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee because he trusteth in Thee."

I'm going to replace a pronoun or two which doesn't alter the meaning, but makes it clearer and more personal.

"He will keep you in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Him, because you can trust in Him."

I can recall several occasions when I've been almost distraught over some duties I had to perform. This verse has popped into my mind when I've silently called "Help". It is really quite amazing how calm I've become almost immediately. I should not say that, for if I'd trusted enough or fully, I could not be amazed.

By repeating this verse or others, or lines of a hymn as you go about your normal life, you give yourself great support.

Many is the time I've "sung" in my mind whole verses of hymns. In fact, that kept me from a nervous breakdown many years ago.

This practice of recalling familiar hymns can be a constant source of strength and worship, and "keeps your mind stayed on Him."

One hymn that I turn to often is "Breathe on me Breath of God", Australian Hymn Book, No. 320. It makes a great prayer.

THE VALUE OF A GIFT

In these days when many people give and receive expensive presents at Christmas time or for birthdays, the true value of gifts and giving can easily be overlooked in the excitement of receiving something which is perhaps far more expensive than we would be prepared to outlay ourselves. Without detracting from such gifts, it must often be admitted that those who give valuable presents can usually (although not always) afford them. Sometimes even small presents can involve real sacrifice on the part of the giver.

One of the most memorable Christmas presents I ever received was, of all things, a banana. Yes, a single banana.

I found this gift on my bedspace one Christmas morning in a prisoner of war camp in Thailand during the last war. It had been left there by a friend. It needs to be realised that under POW conditions, when food is restricted and the ability to stay alive under adverse conditions depended very much on how strong you were, and when the pittance of pay for labour was the equivalent of about one Australian cent per day (if and when you could work), anyone who gave away food did so with a real sense of friendship and sacrifice.

The things we receive as gifts do cost something, perhaps time, energy or careful thought.

The best gift, the gift of love, whether it be God's love or the love of those around us, has a value far beyond the worth of a mountain of gold.

THE GIFTS OF GOD

1 Corinthians 13

..... but if I have no love, my speech is no more than a noisy gong or a clanging bell

Whilst standing on a railway platform at Basle in Switzerland, waiting for our train to go to Montreaux, we noticed a group of Swiss ladies also gathering there. They looked magnificent, tall and elegant in long skirts, white blouses and high black lace head-dresses. Old antique silver chains criss-crossed the bodice and were held in place by intricate silver brooches. We learned that they were on their way to a choral festival.

We found ourselves in the same carriage; the Swiss ladies sitting one one side, we on the other. Soon we were travelling through picturesque and majestic Swiss countryside, watching the beauty of that Swiss spring - snow clad alps in the distance, the green interwoven foothills, the tiny red roofed villages, the fields of flowers, daisies, poppies and lupins. The whole scene dotted with apple trees smothered in a frizz of pale pink blossom. A story book picture before us, through the huge windows the the Swiss train.

No one moved, we sat absorbed.

A sliver of the highest, purest note pierced the stillness of the carriage. The note hung suspended, then, ever so gently increased in volume as each lady joined in the song, so delicate, so hauntingly beautiful. The song filled the carriage with exquisite beauty.

A homeland song - A song of love?

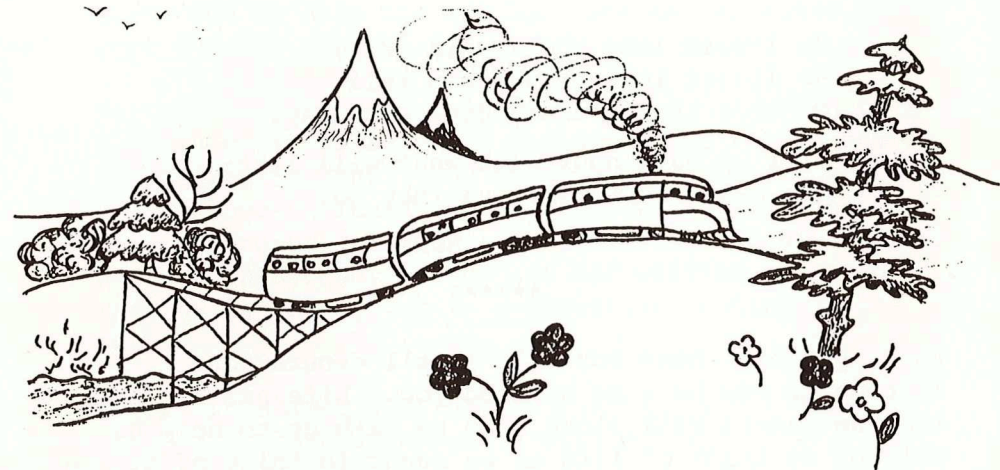
The warmth of emotion - and the tears flowed down my face as, suspended in time and lifted by beauty, we listened to that beautiful, beautiful song.

No song could have been so exquisite if heart-felt love had not initiated it.

The song ended - the fragrance lingered - like the brush of a kiss with love.

An unforgettable experience!
God was in His World.

Let us value the world God has given us and use our Given Gifts with love.



There are no strangers, only friends we have yet to meet.

We all smile in the same language!

Your future lives are like a field of freshly fallen snow: any step you take will be noticed.

USING TIME

TIME is the raw material of everything. With it, all is possible; without it, nothing.

The supply of time is a miracle, an affair astonishing when one examines it. You wake up in the morning and your purse is magically filled with twenty four hours of the unmanufactured tissue of the universe of your life! It is the most precious of your possessions ... you have to live on this twenty four hours of daily time.

Out of it you have to spin health, pleasure, money, content, respect, and the evolution of your immortal soul. Its right use, its most effective use, is a matter of the highest urgency and of the most thrilling actuality. All depends on that.

Arnold Bennett
(An extract from Inner Light)

He liveth long who liveth well;
He liveth longest who can tell
Of true things truly done each day.

Fill up each hour with what will last;
Use well the moments as they go.

H. Bonar

Lord, you have been our help in all generations.
We come to you because we need you. Life has taught us that we cannot walk alone. So be with us to help us. Help us to think of life as we ought to think of it and to use time and life as it ought to be used. Help us not to waste either. Help us to use time wisely and life generously. May we meet life with steady eyes and walk in wisdom and in strength because we face life with you, knowing that time does not go on in circles, but that you have for us a purpose and a place in an unfolding history of love.

RECOLLECTIONS

Playing football for my primary school, I asked God to keep me calm and he did.

God listens to a young person.

At 16, I attended our men's bible class. The speaker, a leading business man, inspired me to offer to teach a Sunday School class. Many years later, after receiving joy and satisfaction in being able to do something to express my thanks for what God had done for me, I realised thanks were due also to the man who was my inspiration.

A letter was sent, and with the reply came the information that his faith had been restored.

Under God we help one another, for He expresses His love through His children.

Meeting an aircraftman in Darwin, who was known to me, I invited him to attend a Christian meeting in one of the recreation huts, and he came and joined the group. Coming home on leave and meeting the Sunday School Superintendent for the lad, I was informed his prayers had been answered, as the lad had written and told him that he was now going to a Christian meeting in the hut.

We are sometimes serving God when we do not know it, and prayers are answered in strange ways.

JOY AND FUN

A Minister once asked "What did Jesus really love to do?"

The answer he was looking for was not healing, or helping people, or praying, even though Jesus loved to do them as well. He wanted us to say "partying".

Jesus loved to party.

The most obvious example is the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11). Picture Jesus laughing, and having a really good time with his friends - it's a different image from the staid and serious guy we are brought up to think of.

So many of us seem to think that the Bible is one big anti-fun book, full of DON'Ts that stop us from doing everything we'd really like to do. We picture God as a harsh schoolteacher, determined to cane us if we're caught having too much fun.

But God is fun!! He enjoyed creating this world, and He enjoyed creating humankind. I also believe God has quite a sense of humour (and many people have personal stories to verify this). Imagine people laughing along with Jesus as he asked them if they'd give their sons a stone if they asked for bread. Or a snake if they asked for a fish! (Mt 7:9-19).

God has created us all in His image (Gen 1:27) - therefore we all have the ability to create something too. Let's try creating events and situations that bring fun into the world - smiles and laughter, joy and love, friendship and fellowship.

Jesus came so that we could have life - life IN ALL ITS FULLNESS (John 10:10). How can we possibly convince people of this, unless we are HAVING A GREAT TIME? We should be having more fun, more joy, more freedom, more laughs in life than those who don't know Him.

Life on this earth is a precious gift from God. Let's use it to the full and have a praiseworthy, joyous time while we're here.

Prayer : Lord, today and all this week, let me be a light shining for you. Lord, may people see your joy and life flowing from me, and see that you Jesus are the giver of the fullest, most joyous life we can have on earth.

Amen.



DRAWN TOGETHER BY GOD

One Sunday when I was overseas on business, I went on a day tour to the neighbouring mountains. It was a crisp clear day, and the scenery was magnificent. When the bus had returned to the city, it was just before the starting time for the evening services at the city churches.

I went into a big one near the bus terminal. The denomination was different from what I was familiar with, and the language was one which I could barely cope with. But that did not seem to matter. The church was packed. All the seats were taken and people were standing in the aisles and across the back. The congregation appeared to comprise the regulars, plus the full range of visitors to be expected in this scenic city. There were tourists with loud shirts and cameras; young people in old clothes, boots and rucksacks; couples with small children in carriers; in fact a full cross section of the permanent and transient population of the area, of numerous nationalities. In spite of, or even because of, the crowd and the steady undercurrent of noise which was inevitable as a result, there was a strong atmosphere of reverence, rejoicing and thanksgiving. It seemed to be a coming-together of people drawn by a shared experience of the glory of God and thankfulness for life. Although I spoke to no one, I was aware of a great togetherness amongst us; all members of the family of God.

The service was simple, as far as I could follow. The sermon was preached by a young priest standing, not in the pulpit, but on the floor just in front of the congregation. He spoke carefully and clearly, and I was able to follow the essential thrust of it.

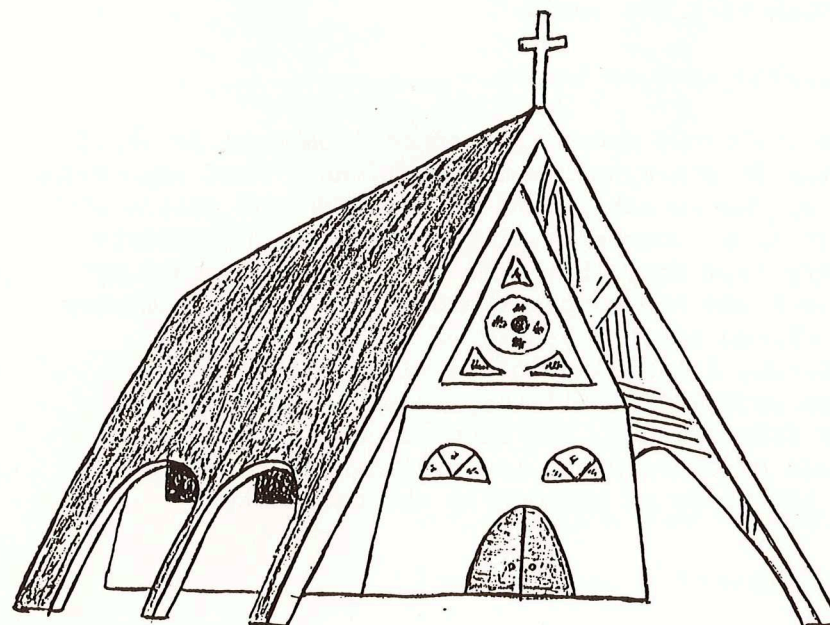
In essence, he said that as little children we regard our parents as the examples we should model ourselves on. As we get older, we start to see that even our parents are human, and we are influenced by other people; modelling ourselves on an amalgam of personality characteristics of teachers, relatives, friends and other acquaintances. But when we are adult, we realise that our model is Jesus.

It was a familiar theme, but was made memorable for me by the marvellous day I had just had in the open air amidst magnificent scenery.

.....

"Thank you Lord for the beauty of the world around us, and the capacity to enjoy it.

Help us to be more like Jesus, friends to all people, whether we have met them or not".



OUR CHURCH

For quite a few years my wife and I have been using the daily devotional readings from the Upper Room.

Thinking about this devotional booklet I was much encouraged by the devotions on July 15, 1990. May I share some of it with you.

Caroline Boender from Minnesota, U.S.A. writes :

"Some time ago, I attended a workshop for teachers. During a break, one of the women presenting the workshop talked about a town she had often visited as a child. She described a church in that town as "a funny-looking white building." She said she had always considered that particular church special because the people there did so much singing. Thirty years later, she still associated that church with its music."

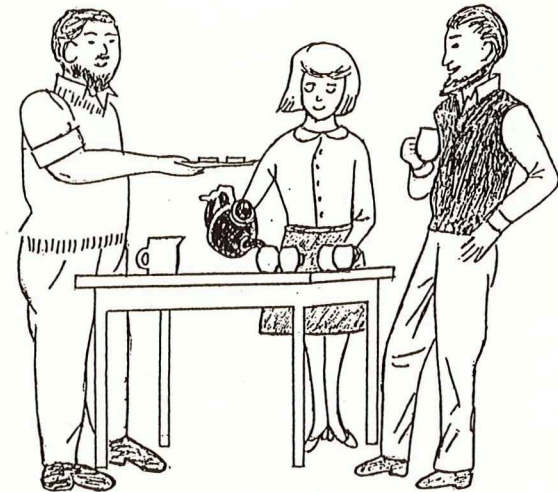
Caroline went on to say -

"As I thought about the woman's comments later, I began to ask myself some questions. What impression is my church making on the children and adults who live in my community or visit my church? Thirty years from now, what will they remember about my church and the people there? Will people remember my church for the beauty of its building and grounds, its stained glass windows and awesome pipe organ? Or will they remember my church for its friendliness, its acceptance of others, its focus on God's work, its willingness to minister to the needs of persons in the community?"

In recommending our church to the reader, I do so with a confidence confirmed by some thirty years of personal experience and association. Ours is a beautiful church with stained glass windows and pipe organ music. But, for me it will always be remembered as a family of friendly, caring people, open and accepting of others. Our focus is on God's word and there is a willingness to minister to the needs of other persons in the community.

I'm sure that those who worship at Tryon Road feel as I do and would echo all that I have said.

So, to any who may read this who are looking for a warm christian family base, please be assured you will be most welcome, and we look forward to your visiting or joining with us.



Don't walk in front of me, I may not follow.

Don't walk behind me, I may not lead.

Walk beside me, and be my friend.

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*Lord,
You know how busy I must be today;
If I should forget you,
please do not forget me.*

*Sir Jacob Astley, before the battle
of Edgehill, 1642*

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