

Something to think about: 17 April 2011

## **Radical Welcome**

Last week I pondering the mind shift I was experiencing in relation to 'expansive' language. This week that same idea has presented itself in the concept of 'radical welcome' - which is the title of a book I am reading. Radical welcome attempts to move beyond simple inclusion of newcomers and guests into a congregation. It lays out the requirement for a willingness to change if there is to be openness and 'holy boldness'. This is all so far away from the experience of the early church which was frequently subject to persecution and death for its members. It could be said the church developed as a 'secret society', with careful induction practices and passwords and rituals of inclusion. Its story in memory of Jesus shaped its vision and would shape its future as it survived and grew in what was, for 300 years, a hostile environment. Today it is not like that for us, so it is hard to understand the significance of baptism which was the indication rite into membership with a preparation process that weeded out spies! A new 'Christian name' was given which signified membership and allowed entry to meetings. We still baptise, and each Easter Day we renew our baptismal promise and remember that the justice and peace we seek is still a risky venture that requires 'holy boldness'. . I am thinking that Baptism today, rather than a rite of inclusion to a 'secret society', is a statement of commitment to expansive action. The vision that empowers baptism is directed toward the whole world – the earth and its resources, humans and other earth creatures – and seeks freedom and life. Today we encourage each other to pour our love and life-giving energy toward others in an expansive way, hoping they will catch both the struggle and joy we experience as a community. This Easter, think about your baptism and the promises that you made, or were made on your behalf. Be aware how life changing they have the potential to be. As we renew our promises be aware of the others we walk along side in expansive acceptance and love. They might be changed but so might we!

**Susan**