

Something to Think About - Susan Adams (June 2009)

Recently I was at the signing of the Anglican Methodist Covenant that took place in both Lotofale' ia, the Methodist Tongan Church on one side of the road, and Te Karaiti Te Pou Herenga Waka, the Maori Anglican Church on the other side. It was a grand occasion graced by the leaders of both churches. After 200 years, these two expressions of being church once again turned to face each other with respect and agreed to honour each other's ministry and way of being church. Some of us who were there began our ministry in the hopeful days of the church union negotiations, and have, ever since, been affected by the vision of working together in the strength that comes from harnessing our differences. So I was affected by the covenant service, possibly because of this and the hopeful sign it set up again, and possibly because I have continued to read Richard Holloway's book *Between Monster and Saint*. In his book, Holloway reflects on the need for respect between people and groups if harmony and community are to be restored. It is the lack of respect he notes-being 'dis'sed', to use current slang - that dehumanises and diminishes people and groups of people, whether it be theft of property, rape, bullying, or torture. Where such behaviour has happened the victim needs to know that respect has been restored through naming and acknowledgment of the disrespecting act. The perpetrator of the disrespectful action needs to undertake restoration through acknowledgement of the action, apology and changed behaviour. Only then can relationships and community can be restored. It seem this was happening on both sides of the table last week. The use of the Tongan and Maori worship centres signalled that there was a new spirit moving in this place and the old 'stuck' ways of our Pakeha predecessors was giving way in the face of it. It is surely good-news to think about these things on Pentecost Sunday; to think about difference and diversity, and the strength that is present when we respect each other and open our hearts and minds to the gifts each contribute to being community; when we face each other and acknowledge our connection as a people.

And

I am full of admiration of the people here in Grey Lynn who focus sustainable living and the importance of recycling to this life style choice. I am aware how difficult it is to maintain it. Growing your own food takes time and planning, recycling is time consuming because you have to search out places and our local authority doesn't always make this easy, persuading friends and family it is your turn to use something for a while even if they are not using it is not an easy request to make-we are not used to this kind of sharing-and most of us want the convenience of owning our own car; we haven't explored joint ownership. In the press of our urban lifestyles and the pressures of the employment, we don't have a lot of time and energy left over. So we want it to be easy to gather the foodstuffs for our dinner, easy to move around the city, easy to have the appliances we want-right now! These thoughts have reminded me of how valuable time is. Time - something we rarely think about except when we consult our timepiece to check if we can do one more thing without being late for the next engagement! It seems to me that time is one of the most valuable gifts we

can give today. If we were to gift ourselves a block of time each day to do nothing but be still it would help us build the inner resilience most of us need for our busy lives. If we planned fewer engagements each day and gifted each more time, and was really present in that time, how much richer our relationships and satisfying our accomplishments. As I walked this morning I found my mind had crossed space to Iran, crossed time to next week, (then back 10years) taken a flight of fancy into my imagination...it seemed that I was reluctant to be present in the time I had ostensibly given to myself. Recognising the value of time, and gifting it with sacred intentionality is something perhaps many of us need to practice-especially if we are wanting to live more gently on the earth and respectfully with ourselves and others.

And:

I was sent a web link to an address given by environmental entrepreneur Paul Hawkins, titled "Healing or Stealing". The theme is not new, but as we celebrate the winter solstice and turn our mind to the dark and healing earth and the reemergence of Matariki as a sign of hope in the sky ,Hawkins' challenge is timely. He paints a picture of human maltreatment of the earth and the way humanity is stealing the health and resources provided by the earth from the health and wellbeing of our grandchildren. At the same time Hawkins reminds us that there are hundreds of thousands of people, who have recognized the interconnectedness of all life , including with the earth, and are working for the wellbeing and health of millions of people they will never meet. These people are part of the network of not-for-profit service providers: environmental groups, health and education volunteers, local groups seeking sustainability and resource responsibility such as the Grey Lynn 2030 group and the gardeners here at St C, and those who mind and nurture the spirituality of communities of people. Hawkins circles round this healing or stealing theme and challenges his hearers to locate themselves. 'Hope' is a powerful motivator for me personally, and as Derrida and other philosophers note, hope is only hope in the face of hopelessness. In other words it requires a vast imagination and desire to walk the path of hope in the face of all that seems hopeless. Yet as Christians this is what we are called to do: be hope in a world that is all but overcome with hopelessness; be signs that life can overcome death. And this needs to start with each of us choosing to be part of the healing not the stealing.