# THE CHURCH NEWSLETTER

## Emerald/Fernlees Uniting Church

**Cnr. Borilla & Yamala Sts., Emerald**

**www.emeraldunitingchurch.org.au**

**4TH-11TH TEMBER 2020**


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**Mission Statement**

**As Followers of Christ we seek to know Him: worship Him and share His love with all**

***Regular Meetings***

**1st Sunday**: Bring & share lunch after church

**3rd Tuesday**: Church Council/ Worship & Pastoral Care Meeting at the Church office

## Jim's Jottings I, Sunday 4th October 2020, Hints of the Divine in a COVID-19 World

*My sermon on Sunday 4th October will have Psalm 19:1 as a base text. David says there, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands." We will lightly touch the beauty of the day and night sky, and see how it hints at the existence of One far greater than itself.*

*Philip Yancey in his book* ***Rumours of Another World*** *(2003) does a similar thing, but with much literary panache. He challenges this present scientific and reason centred age (the philosophers call it the Age of Enlightenment), where much of humanity binds itself with the notion that only what is empirical and reasonable is worthy of acceptance or adherence. The thrust towards relief from COVID-19 through a vaccine is a case in point. So much trust and investment is being poured into the successful development of such an inoculation.*

*Of course, we do not decry or despise the endeavours for such a development. With over one million lives lost worldwide to this virus to date, any brake on its rampage is welcomed. But I, perhaps following Yancey, would suggest that total confidence in the scientific and the verifiable is to overlook the fainter yet more insistent whispers of God to a hurting world at this time. Is humanity being weaned, at least a little bit, from its addiction to materialism? Are we being reminded we are not omnipotent? Are we being schooled by deprivation about the importance of human connection and love? Are we being prompted about the value of local community and its self-sacrificing people like health care workers? As valuable as our lesson in the virtual world has been, are we finding a fresh appreciation of our full humanity (body, soul and sprit)? Are we re-discovering the preciousness of human life, and especially that life in a vulnerable or aged body? Are we being prompted (again) to turn from creation to Creator, to trust the divine and not solely humanity's own capacity to build and save?*

"In my own days of scepticism, I wanted a dramatic interruption from above. I wanted proof of an unseen reality, one that could somehow be verified. In my days of faith, such supernatural irruptions seem far less important, in part because I find the materialistic explanations of life inadequate to explain reality. I have learned to attend to fainter contacts between the seen and unseen worlds. I sense in romantic love something insufficiently explained by mere biochemical attraction. I sense in beauty and in nature the marks of a genius creator for which the appropriate response is worship. Like Jacob, I have at times awoken from a dream to realize, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.'

"I sense in desire, including sexual desire, marks of a holy yearning for connection. I sense in pain and suffering a terrible disruption that omnipotent love surely cannot abide forever. I sense in compassion, generosity, justice, and forgiveness a quality of grace that speaks to me of another world, especially when I visit places marred by their absence. I sense in Jesus a person who lived those qualities so consistently that the world could not tolerate him, and so silenced and disposed of him.

"I believe not so much because the invisible world impinges on this one, but because the visible world hints, in the ways that move me most, at a lack of completion.

"I once heard a woman give a remarkable account of achievement. An early feminist, she gained renown in the male-dominated field of endocrinology. She brushes shoulders with Nobel laureates and world leaders, and has lived as full and rich a life as any I have known. At the end of her story she said simply, 'As I look back, this is what matters. I have loved and been loved, and all the rest is just background music.'"

Philip Yancey, Rumours of Another World (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2003), p 171

Jim Pearson, Minister, Emerald Uniting Church.