



Easter Responses

Have you been noticing the wide range of human responses recorded in resurrection encounters?

- the nuance of voice.-“Mary” - ‘Rabboni’
- a meeting of self-imposed standards
“Unless I see...”
- walking with a ‘stranger’ to Emmaus..
- partaking of a shared breakfast in Galilee ... How often we are shown ourselves!

In similar fashion a hymn introduced to a congregation last Sunday sent members away with a sharpened appreciation of the perplexity of Thomas at the time of resurrection.

Perhaps you know the hymn?

These things did Thomas count as real:
the warmth of blood, the chill of steel,
the grain of wood, the heft of stone,
the last frail twitch of flesh and bone.

The vision of a sceptic mind
was keen enough to make him blind
to any unexpected act
too large for his small world of fact.

His reasoned certainties denied
that one could live when one had died,
until his fingers read like Braille
the markings of the spear and nail.

May we, O God, by grace believe,
and thus the risen Christ receive,
whose raw, imprinted palms reached out
and beckoned Thomas from his doubt.

-Thomas Henry Troeger 1945 -*Together in Song*,
649.

From Heather

On my recent visit to the deep South, I was delighted to meet with women from four APW groups. With some I shared my thoughts of how we may limit our expectations of God. Of course at the time I was unaware that a similar theme was being shared by Nan Burgess in the April Gleanings! I shared the story of a missionary doctor working in Africa.

With few aids it was a challenge to save the life of a newborn baby whose mother had died in childbirth, and who had also left behind a two-year old girl. The last hot-water bottle to keep the baby warm had perished and all seemed hopeless. Meeting daily and praying with the orphaned children at the mission station was always a special time. During daily prayers a ten-year old girl

demanding of God that a new hot – water bottle be sent that day otherwise the baby would die. The girl also demanded a little dolly for the little sister so she would know God really loved her! Despite the doctor’s unbelief that these prayers could possibly be answered, by late afternoon a large parcel was delivered, sent by her old Sunday School class back home. To the doctor’s astonishment it contained amongst many things a hot –water bottle and a little dolly. The tears flowed. Five months earlier the parcel had been put together and the leader obeyed God’s call to send a little dolly for an African child and a hot –water bottle –even to the Equator! *Isaiah 65.24 And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet*

speaking, I will hear.

In Joy Cowley’s book, *Come and See* (Pleroma, 2008) she asks us if our expectations of God limit our experience of God. She asks whether our minds create barriers to our hearts? Our expectations of God can be narrow and sometimes we try to put Him in a box and would make claims as to what He can and cannot do. There is much mystery amongst prayer but we know God is not confined nor limited by the natural laws. He can choose to work outside time and space.

Easter has passed for another year. The tomb is empty! Let us celebrate the Risen Lord.

- Heather Tate, National Convener



Financial news

Final figures for the Special Project 2008 – House of Passage & Chaplaincy in State Schools. Total funds amount to \$47, 258.00. This is great news.

The following letter of appreciation has been received from the Christian Education and Chaplaincy to State Schools:

Please accept my enormous thanks from CEC Chaplains, Volunteers, Committee members, Trust Board

members and myself for the donation recently received for \$1,302.31 A receipt is enclosed. This, added to the previous amounts sent from your organization and the Methodist women, mean we are not far off \$25,000. This amounts to a very generous donation and we are so grateful.

This money represents hours of tireless work from your members I know, and we want you to know that we are exceedingly grateful. Training and web-based resources for Chaplains are being developed in 2009 and this support

is eagerly anticipated by Chaplains throughout New Zealand.

Thanks again and God bless you.,

Yours in Christ -

Petrea Medland, National Manager,
Churches Education Commission

Round the regions

Wellington – Hutt Valley Presbyterians and the Wellington Methodist Women's Fellowship always share together for a Christmas Service at the beginning of December. Our gathering at the end of last year was at the newly renovated St Mark's Church in Lower Hutt.

The theme for the service was **PEACE** and the three groups prepared devotions using the letters **P E** and **A**. The letter **C** was represented by Christian World Service Christmas Appeal – where a very large offering was sent. Three members of the organizing committee took the final **E** and prepared a message on Environment, Enthusiasm and Christmas is for Everyone. With Christmas carols and prayers between each part, it was a very easy programme to organize. As each carload brought a plate for supper, a great time of fellowship was enjoyed.

- Lois Robertson.



Sunny Hawke's Bay –

On Sunday, March 29, 2009 the women of St Columba's Presbyterian Church, Taradale arranged and celebrated 100 years of service in their parish.

The Ladies Guild first met in 1909 with the first President, Mrs. Marion (Marie) Hill. She was the wife of The Rev Sydney Hill, and grandmother of Dr Graham Hill of Wanaka. Dr Hill sent us a photo which held pride of place in the Order of Service. The Hills stay in the parish was very short and it appears that both a minister (male) and an Elder (male also) were regularly in attendance at the beginning of Ladies Guild meetings and for some years! Not so in 2009 – the women had full control of all aspects of the Service. Progress or implicit faith?

The PWMU is briefly mentioned in Minutes of 1911, but became more active around 1934.

Women gave descriptions of how things had functioned through the years, the changes that had taken place, the formation of the APW and the unity and commitment that still prevails as Missionary Guild (afternoon) & Evening Fellowship work so well together. These groups are involved in Church matters and in the Community.

Triennial Conference is upon us. We look forward to the presentations and activities which have been carefully prepared; and to the renewal of friendships and the making of others. See you there!

To mark the special occasion one lady hand-stitched over seventy "a cross in your pocket". These were given to each group member and to those women who took part in the Service. To conclude the celebrations morning tea was served when a special cake was cut and enjoyed.

The writer of this special service was Nancye Munro, our Church archivist. Nancye is a daughter of the manse – her dad was the Rev Wood.

