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Dutch Christmas Nostalgia

Fr Jan Joustra

One of the things which I treasure most about my life is the multi-cultural experiences I have had. Firstly, being brought up in a bi-cultural home, that is a Dutch family living and adapting to life in Australia, then being married to a Chinese, and living in Hong Kong, then Monte Carlo and finally Aotearoa/New Zealand.

But it's the first cultural experience I would like to reflect on in this article and particularly the Dutch celebrations between St Nicholas Day on the 5th of December to New Year's Eve.



As Dutch children growing up in Australia, one of the most the things my siblings and I looked forward to the most was the Sinterklaas package sent by my aunts in Amsterdam, filled with the special food for St Nicholas Day and Christmas. There was always *taai taai*, a cake made in the form of a person, chewy with strong aniseed flavour, *speculaas*, crunchy spiced biscuits made in the form of a windmill, and Dutch salt liquorice, much loved by Dutch people. But that is not all these magical parcels contained, there were always *pepernoten*, a special small biscuit, translated as pepper nuts in English, that are thrown by Sinterklaas to all the children. No one worried about the hygiene of this in the 1960s. The prize of each parcel, apart from a piece of Delft pottery, or some other kitsch ornament, was the chocolate letter. This is a traditional gift in the Netherlands, it was always better to have an Z or and S than to have a name beginning with I, as you get much more chocolate that way. It did not go well for me, as my Preschool teachers had changed my name from Jan to Ian on my first day of school, so I not only missed out on having a complex letter like

my sister Baukje, who got twice as much chocolate than I did, but I even missed out on the extra inch of chocolate in the tail of the J.

Sinterklaas Dag was always very special for us and began the Christmas season. Even now, I do not start decorating for Christmas until after Sinterklaas has been.

In the Netherlands, Christmas, for many families, was a religious celebration, rather than a festive occasion, presents were given by Sinterklaas earlier in December. Christmas was for going to church and eating with the family. As an adult, I have only once been in the Netherlands for Christmas. What struck me most were all the lights, candles and decorations people put in the windows of their houses and apartments. It truly is beautiful travelling around the Netherlands at night at this time of year. Church-wise the experience was a very sombre celebration at the Church of England church in the centre of Amsterdam. The church was founded over 400 years ago to meet the spiritual needs of English merchants living in the city but also became a home to the many puritans fleeing England after the return of the monarchy following the end of the Commonwealth period. Needless to say, the church still shows its puritan origins, and Holy Communion was celebrated North-end on the Lord's Board, the first time I had encountered such a service. It was a particularly joyless Christmas service.

New Year's Eve, however, is party time in the Netherlands, with lots of small gatherings which all break out onto the streets just before midnight, waiting for the countdown. At the stroke of 12, the fireworks erupt, not big, impressive displays as in Australia, but small private gatherings like we used to have on May 24, (Empire Day, for those who still remember).

All in all, this time of year is very special both here in Australia, in the Netherlands and around the world, a time to celebrate the birth of Jesus.



The Lady Chapel at Ely Cathedral

Robert Gribben



Ely Cathedral's present Lady Chapel came late in the building's life¹. Its old Lady Chapel, in the traditional position behind the Altar, had several other, significant ladies already in it: the founder of the abbey which grew into the cathedral, the remarkable St Etheldreda (or in the old English tongue *Æthelthyth*).² Etheldreda was one of four daughters of a King of East Anglia, Anna (sic), born in 630 AD.

As royal fathers did, he married her off for political reasons to two successive husbands. With the first, Earl Tonberht, she made it clear beforehand that the

marriage would remain unconsummated; when he died, she was married to a boy of fifteen, Ecfrith, who accepted the same condition. This was not an unusual notion at the time, and it had much to do with Etheldreda's wish to live as closely as possible after the manner of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

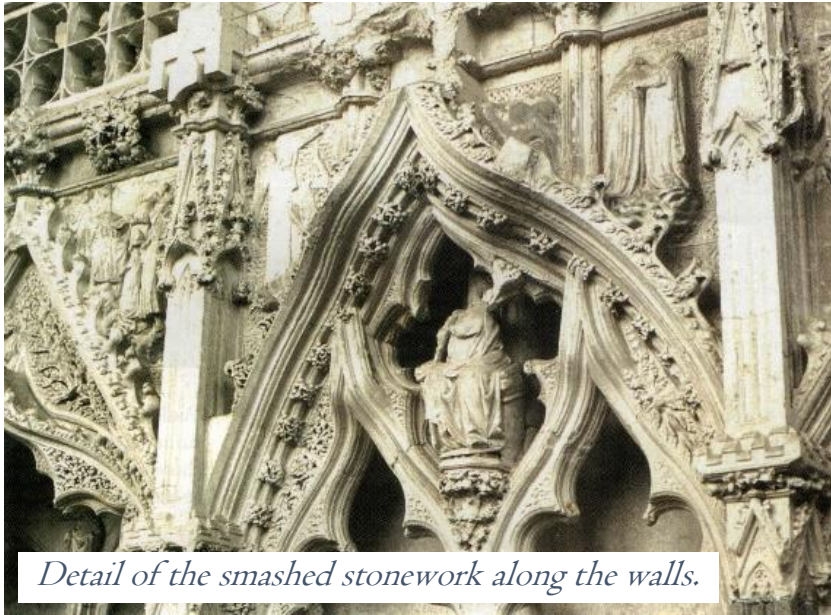
When Ecfrith became king of Northumbria, he tried unsuccessfully (with a bribe) to convince Bishop Wilfrid to release his wife from her vow of celibacy. The marriage was eventually dissolved, and Etheldreda retired to the swamp-encircled Isle of Ely, a gift from her husband.

The 9th C *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* says that Etheldreda founded a double monastery (women and men) there in 673, restoring an old church on the site of the present cathedral; she died of the plague in 679. The abbey flourished for 200 years until destroyed in a Danish invasion. The saint was later dug up and reburied in the

¹ The major study of the building and meaning of the cathedral is Dr Lynne Broughton's *Interpreting Ely Cathedral*, Ely Cathedral Publications, 2008. This is a superb production, not least in its photographs, and worth reading. Lynne read philosophy at Melbourne university (University College), later taught Ethics at Lincoln (after my time) and since then at Cambridge.

² The bodies of her sisters St Sexburga and St Withburga, and niece St Eormenhilda later joined Etheldreda in shrines in the retrochoir, all destroyed at the Reformation.

cathedral's retrochoir, where thousands of pilgrims came to pray. A new Benedictine foundation was begun in 970 and a bishop installed in 1109.



Detail of the smashed stonework along the walls.

A great Gothic building began to rise from the 11th century and has lasted well, with the notable exception of the Lady Chapel. It was added from 1361 and positioned close to the shrines, free-standing but connected at one door to the chancel. It is a magnificent example of Decorated Gothic architecture. It is

rectangular, with statues of the saints carved in every niche, brilliantly painted in colour, vestiges of which can be seen. At the Reformation, under the hand of the bishop, Thomas Goodrich, the face of every statue was defaced and much else with it. He was a chaplain and adviser to King Henry, High Chancellor of England, and keen to rid England of the relics of Romish superstition, and the Lady Chapel gave him considerable scope. Curiously, he was reconciled to Roman Catholic Queen Mary and permitted to retain his episcopal role to his death. He must have been a chameleon.

So, what does one say of a vandalized chapel? Its dimensions remain deeply impressive; it's when your eyes come to the detail that the tears flow. The chief subject of the stonework was the life of the Virgin Mary, and every head has been broken. One window has some fragments of the mediaeval stained glass. The ceiling vault was largely self-protected by its height.

There is a gift at the end of your pilgrimage, a new Portland Stone statue to replace the hundreds lost, likewise a new flash of colour. It is by the English artist David Wynne (1926-2014). She stands above the small altar under the great east window. Its glass has all gone, so the background



Ely's Lady Chapel looking east.

is the sky and the clouds. Her hands are raised above her head; a gesture which can mean both joy and praise to God (Magnificat!), or prayer. Her robe is of a powerful blue, her colour after all, but modern. Her hair is startlingly golden (an English maid?), but the rest of her is nursing mother, buxom, broad-hipped, with a golden belt which emphasises it (*Theotokos*, the God-bearer?). No shrinking Jewish teenager here, and if this is the Annunciation, the contrast with Fra Angelico and most other depictions of that moment pale into insignificance. This is what I see.³ She stands on a ledge, and a surfer could be mistaken in thinking she was about to dive. It has horrified some. 'Blasphemous' was one judgement. The *Guardian's* reporter thought it akin to soft porn. Mary's virginity can lead to misunderstanding too. Perhaps he needs to rethink what 'incarnation' means for whole of Christian faith.

I too was initially shocked, but it seemed on reflection to be a right response to the violent history of this sacred space. Mary's story leads within a few verses to her lament at the massacre of children, and then to exile. She is witness to her son's execution, the barbarity of which we do occasionally need to face – so it matches what we see on the evening news. She is present in the initial stage of growth of the infant church in that remote Roman province and its subjugated peoples. One role of art is to startle us out of our tendency to remake our faith as an escape from the realities of birth and death.



David Wynne's Madonna (2000)

³ There is a thoughtful meditation on the statue by Philip Harvey in the Carmelite Library bulletin, at <http://thecarmelitelibrary.blogspot.com/2013/03/the-blessed-virgin-mary-in-ely-cathedral.html>

Anglicans, and others, in Sri Lanka

David Keuneman

On Sunday November 15th, 2020 the Anglican cycle of prayer contained supplications for the Church of Ceylon.

When the country of Ceylon in 1972 officially changed its name to Sri Lanka (upon becoming a Republic within the Commonwealth), most institutions containing the word Ceylon in their titles changed their names accordingly. However, a few retained their old name. Ceylon Tea was one of these (for reasons of world-wide recognition). The Church of Ceylon, a member of the Anglican Communion, was another.

There has been a Bishop of Colombo (the capital in modern centuries) without interruption since 1845 when James Chapman was installed. Bishop Chapman was a product of Eton and Kings College (Cambridge) the first of eight British Bishops of Colombo from then until 1964. These were Oxford or Cambridge men without exception, and well-schooled too – from Westminster School; Winchester; Merchant Taylors'; and between 1948 and 1964 yet another Eton and Kings man Bishop Rollo Graham Campbell (unhyphenated Graham Campbell being his surname).

Bishop of Colombo was a stepping stone for some others who went on to occupy such positions as Archdeacon of London, Dean of St Paul's (Bishop Piers Claughton), or Primus of Scotland (Bishop Hugh Jermyn). For one stretch of nearly half a century Colombo was occupied successively by two brothers, Reginald Copleston, 1876 -1902 (translated thereafter to Bishop of Calcutta and Metropolitan of India), followed by his younger brother Ernest Copleston, 1903 -1924.



THE RIGHT REVEREND JAMES CHAPMAN, D.D.
Rector of Wotton Court, late Bishop of Colombo.

By the way, the Copleston brothers were uncles to one Frederick Copleston SJ (Marlborough and St John's, Oxford) who – to the distress of his immediate family – converted to Catholicism and became a Jesuit. He went on later in the 1950s to gain some public interest and popularity for, inter alia, his being heard on the BBC wireless debating the existence of God with the philosopher Bertrand Russell. It was a civil, friendly, even-tempered and respectful debate from both sides.

Ceylon had in 1948 gained political independence as a dominion within the British Commonwealth. The Anglicans of the island followed on in 1964 to acquire their first local Ceylonese as Bishop of Colombo, Harold de Soysa (educated at the prominent government school Royal College, and later at Oriel College, Oxford). The appointees have been local persons ever since then. The current Bishop Dushantha Lakshman Rodrigo was consecrated and installed 16th Bishop of Colombo as recently as the 28th October 2020.

The diocese of Colombo, starting in 1835, used to have as its Metropolitan the Bishop of Calcutta, but in 1970 it withdrew and has had a direct link to head-office, being an extra-provincial jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who serves as its Metropolitan. In fact, Archbishop Welby had to be called in this year to make the appointment (of Bishop Rodrigo) when the local diocese could not reach an agreement.

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2020/9-october/news/world/archbishop-welby-announces-the-next-bishop-of-colombo>

One can read in the above article Archbishop Welby say that "... although I regard it as a privilege to have been entrusted with this important function in the life of the Church of Ceylon, as its 'Metropolitan', it is not a role I have sought, or feel comfortable having to exercise. In my view, it carries too many reminders of a colonial past. I have therefore sought and obtained from Fr Dushantha his assurance that he will give urgent priority to enabling the Church of Ceylon to take its proper place as a fully independent Province in the life of the wider Anglican Communion."

So much then for the Anglicans, who now number perhaps around 150,000. Anglican faith and culture had come to the island with the British colonisation early in the nineteenth century. Both politically and religiously, the church has inserted itself into the rich and cultured history of an island which has a present population of somewhat over 20 million.

The country has a Buddhist history which began almost as long ago as Buddhism itself; about 70% profess that religion. Among the rest, roughly equal numbers are Hindus, Muslims and Christians. Of those 8% or so who are Christians, around four fifths are Catholics (thanks to the zeal of Portuguese missionaries in the sixteenth century) who currently even have the distinction of having a Cardinal in Rome. The remainder of the Christians divide equally between two groups, Anglicans and Other Protestants. Sri Lanka has in fact been judged the third most religious country in the world, with 99% of Sri Lankans saying that religion was an important part of their daily life. The Church of Ceylon contributes to this.

So why, you might ask, do I have a particular interest in all of this? Well, the mention of Ceylon in the prayer list took me back to some of my own very early memories of the world.

My father's family was from an ethnic minority group in Sri Lanka known as Dutch Burghers. Their forbears were, by and large, employees of the Dutch East India Company; families who remained there for some couple of hundred years or so. The Dutch had taken over from the Portuguese, and then ceded in their turn to the British. With the establishment of Ceylon as a British crown colony at the end of the 18th century, a significant community of Burghers remained in the country and largely adopted the English language. Unlike the Portuguese before them and the British after them, the Burghers felt themselves as more a part of the fabric of the country, and to some degree they intermarried with locals. During British rule this group came to occupy an important place in Sri Lankan society.

In 1939 my Dad, having finished school at Royal College, had gone to Cambridge to study. There he gained not only an education, but also a wife. I was actually born right at the end of the war in Lancashire, in Burnley, my English mother's town. *(Burnley is a town whose football team I still follow - with an enthusiasm which has more recently been rekindled by another St Mary's parishioner, himself a Newcastle United supporter, and about whom one could say that whatever he does not know about football is hardly worth knowing.)*

However, my parents' intention had always been to live in Ceylon, Dad's homeland. Nevertheless, we had to wait until the end of 1945 when post-war shipping could get through from England. So it was that I arrived in Colombo before my first birthday, and so it was that Colombo was my childhood home in infancy and through my primary school days, for more than the first decade of my life.

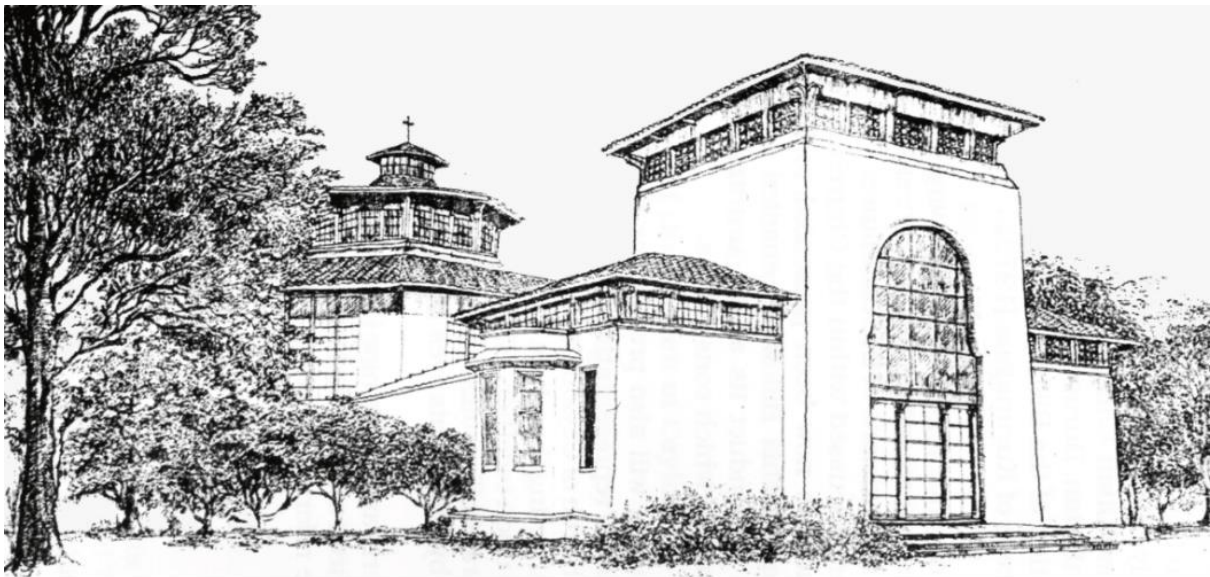
Ceylon was for me the most natural of places to be; as natural to me as were my friends and school-mates from all the ethnic and religious groups, as natural as the climate, the monsoons, the sports (this was before Sri Lanka was a cricket power, but the game was



nevertheless an obsession), as natural as the head-wobbling conversations, and as an elephant wandering down my street to carry things on a local building site, as natural as the dust, the beaches, the huge fragrant frangipani trees, the colonial architecture – and it was all the more natural to me because it was where my family was.

But then occasionally the youngster in me had to struggle a little in order to make sense of an event; to make sense of an occasional outbreak of ethnic or religious violence (the early sign of tensions which decades later became civil war); or to comprehend the assassination of a Prime Minister; or to understand the poverty which could sometimes unexpectedly confront. These would trouble me far more than did my family's deliberations about whether to attend my father's Dutch Reformed Church or to the Anglicans of my mother. (The Anglicans won out.)

Well, this is where I first started out on this musing – the Anglican Church of Ceylon, which is still alive and well. It has in Colombo a splendid Cathedral of Christ the Living Saviour, designed, and built by Sri Lankans; this marries the architectural traditions of east and west, and was consecrated in 1973. (<https://www.cathedral.lk/>) The Church of Ceylon has its traditions, and it has its congregation. In 2020 it has installed another new Bishop of Colombo. And it is prayed for by other Anglicans world-wide.



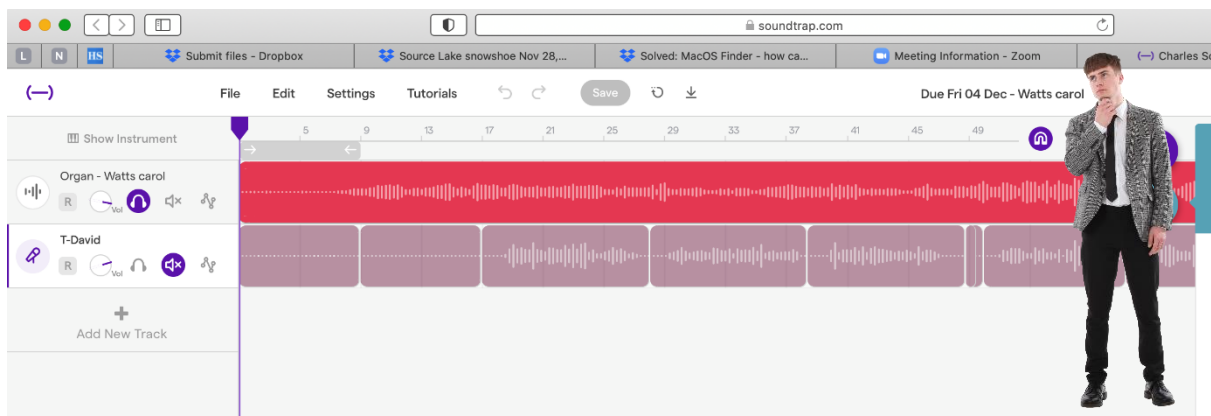
St Mary's Choir in Lockdown and—Who Knows?—in the Flesh

Chips Sowerwine

For seven months now, our communion together has been fragmented. This presented a profound challenge to our fellowship, which focused (and will continue to focus) on the eucharist, on our taking communion together, and which was so greatly strengthened by our common participation in worship and by our sociability together. We had worship by YouTube and by zoom and fellowship through zoom if at all.

The choir was in a fortunate position that, thanks to some great leadership, we were able to find a way to make music. At the beginning we each made video recordings singing our part while listening to the organ and the other parts on headphones, so that what we heard didn't get into the final tape and cause distortion. Then Tim Pilbrow discovered a programme called SoundTrap, which is designed for professional musicians to work together at a distance. Nancy Hooper and David Morton helped Tim edit the music from a distance. Bev became a technician herself and now edits with the best of them. Many of the choir members managed to learn to use SoundTrap, but we have all struggled a bit.

Just for fun, here's what the SoundTrap dialogue box looks like when we start. Bev has recorded the organ part and David has already contributed his. Each person then records a new track below David's. You can see why we were a bit daunted at first.



Despite our technophobia and even occasional techno terror, we were all glad that we could still play a part in our worship and that we could still maintain our own choir fellowship, if only by Tuesday night zoom meetings that took the place of Tuesday night rehearsals.

Now we're in a period of transition. Virtual worship is giving way to corporeal worship, but without some of the things we love and of course without singing. This is sad for us

as for the whole congregation, but we're pleased that worship is resuming. At the moment we're working on a virtual carol service, which will go out on YouTube, and then we may have a hiatus through our usual January choir holiday. We will be hoping not only to see all of you actually at church but also to sing and rejoice with you once again in 2021.

Climate for Change

Susan Gribben

I have always loved gardens.

As a small girl I created many fairy dells with moss and flowers in the hope that an elf or fairy would take up residence. And in the various places I have lived over the years it has always been my priority to create a garden, sometimes in very challenging situations. In Portland a cold salty wind blew all year round and few plants survived, let alone thrived, except for dahlias which loved the sandy soil. In Lincoln I only had a small walled area covered in 10 inches of asphalt which I dealt with by digging very deep trenches which I then filled with the asphalt to make paths, using the dirt from the trenches for flower beds. The first 20 years of my married life were spent in manses which meant that others had an interest in any garden and there was always a chance I would come home from a weekend away and discover that keen helpers had decided to tidy everything up, destroying in the process my carefully nurtured cottage garden effect. And I learnt not to revisit my former gardens to weep over their destruction or neglect.

So, you may understand why Bill Gamage's book *The Biggest Estate on Earth* moved me to tears.

In it he describes:

- That Australia in 1788 was not a wilderness, but a landscape that reflected a sophisticated, successful and sensitive farming regime integrated across the whole continental landmass.
- How fire was not an indiscriminate tool of fuel production or grass promotion but was carefully employed to ensure certain plants and animals flourished, to facilitate access and rotation, and to ensure resources were abundant, convenient and predictable, with every indigenous group having their own particular responsibilities.
- How many of the first European explorers and settlers to all parts of the country described it as like an English gentleman's park with trees planted as if for ornament, alternating wood and grass, a rich and fertile Eden.
- How within the space of 20 years wherever sheep or cattle were let loose, the whole carefully cultivated landscape was destroyed.
- How the last small group of Aborigines in Tasmania were found and rounded up because they had lit fires in accordance with their particular obligations even though they knew it would mean being caught.

And now, in this third decade of the century, which began with terrible bush fires and then engulfed us in a global pandemic, we can no longer ignore the fact that the survival of all life on earth is imminently threatened by climate change brought about by humankind's rapacious use and destruction of our planet's wilderness and resources.

For some years now, along with many others, I have been feeling increasingly depressed by the daily news of war, injustice, genocide, global warming, stupidity, greed, destruction, lack of political will and action, and unrealistic optimism that all will somehow miraculously be well. And also feeling overwhelmed by a sense of shame at my own involvement and of powerlessness to do anything about it.

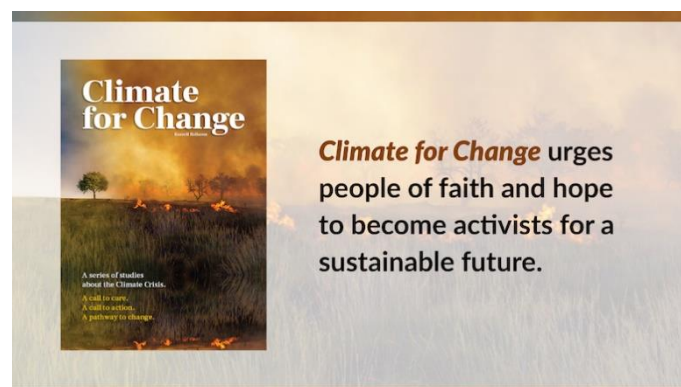
However, joining with a few others from St Mary's in recent weeks to work through the study booklet *Climate for Change* has shown me that there are things one can do as an individual and also the church can do, both at parish and national levels. I strongly encourage all parishioners to read it through several times, discuss it with others and think about your response.

- *Climate for Change* (Anglican Board of Mission – Australia)
- <https://www.abmission.org/resources.php?action=list-items&catId=33>

The key messages for me are:

- As St Francis affirmed, all things are created by God and inter-connected. Christ came for the whole created world, not just to save us humans as individuals.
- We who pray “Give us this day our daily bread” have a moral responsibility to see that the earth’s resources are shared equally.
- Our indigenous people have much to teach us about our spiritual responsibility for the land entrusted to our care and about ways of managing it sustainably and fairly.
- Emissions must urgently be cut and the strategies for doing so are clear – reducing fossil fuels, eating less meat and dairy, recycling water, using bioplastics, solar and other renewable energy, and electric transport.
- The next decade is vital – Covid 19 has taught us that we must “go early and go hard”.
- We need to recognise our own need to change, identify signs of hope and positive action and join with others to build a liveable sustainable world.

David Attenborough in his recent documentary *A Life on Planet Earth*, powerfully and movingly demonstrates how, in his own lifetime, spanning ninety-three years, humankind has destroyed rather than nurtured so much of our planet’s diversity of life. But rather than despairing he challenges us all to take action, for the sake of our children, our grandchildren and the generations to come. It is his personal testimony and I believe Christ is calling us to give heed to it.



Cost Accounting in the Covid Era

Christine Storey

Advent before Christmas, like Lent before Easter, is a penitential season, when we reflect on our lives and particularly focus on how God would want us to live them.

For some years now I have been concerned about the unfettered and at times amoral rise and rise of capitalism, which has increasingly focussed purely on short term financial gains, often with no regard to workers being paid barely subsistence wages, to maximise profits, often to shareholders who may ask few questions about the profit basis of companies in which they invest.

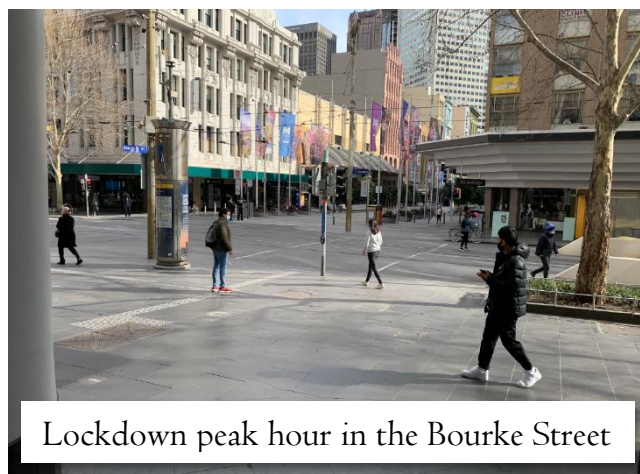
We need to look no further than our hometown of Melbourne where the surrogate marker for socio-economic status (SES) is postcode, and the gap between the “haves” and “have nots” is ever widening. Employment has become increasingly casualised, so that workers don’t get paid if they don’t work because they or their dependents are ill, or even if they have a well-earned holiday. I work at Sunshine Hospital, where before COVID hit, the population had grown the size of Canberra over the preceding 4 years. It also provides healthcare to some of the lowest SES postcodes in the State. Public health and education were bursting at the seams. In public health, elective surgery and outpatient waiting lists were many months to years long, for example. There was no capacity with preCOVID health resources to cope with any additional strains on the hospital system. Furthermore, working in public outpatients, I had been able to observe some families, who had poor health literacy, in low paid casual employment, needing to choose between bringing their child to outpatients and forgoing a days’ wages, or going to work for the sake of the rest of the family. Medicare had been persistently resisting remunerating telephone or Telehealth consultations, which would minimise time missed away from work for example.

At the beginning of this year, we were grateful that both Federal and State Governments took swift and decisive action to contain COVID-19 from a public health perspective, and we almost got there, except for Victoria, where the second wave of infections has had a devastating toll on our state on so many levels. Cheap, unskilled labour were used for the extraordinarily responsible job of overseeing hotel quarantine. People still went to work knowing they were unwell, as they were in poorly paid casual employment, with no sick leave benefits, our aged care sector was hopelessly under-resourced. COVID safe practices, as we all now know, take assiduous attention to detail with cleanliness and social distancing, which requires quality training, and appropriate time allocation and organisation in the workplace. Contact tracing was slowed down by long term lack of investment in Victoria of appropriately trained Public Health Physicians (the lowest

number compared with any other Australian state) and having inadequate resources in pathology testing. At an individual level, people have also been dishonest about their personal contacts, for fear of themselves or their contacts missing work and not being paid, although finally this was recognised, and workers were paid during enforced COVID isolation. Added together this meant Victoria had a slow and very suboptimal process in place initially, that was overwhelmed by the demands that contact tracing required. Disrupted “supply chains” has been another wake-up call. Australian manufacturing was largely sent overseas where production costs were so much lower, yet when we found ourselves in urgent need of personal protective equipment, we became aware that we were not manufacturing this locally and had to compete with overseas markets. Many of the lives of our healthcare workers and those of their patients were put at risk by this.

So what has all this to do with “cost accounting”? Some of you may know that my late father was a highly regarded chartered accountant and he was assiduous with cost accounting. His cost accounting was considered particularly detailed and included realistic contingencies, and optimum maintenance schedules. He mostly worked in the manufacturing sector in the 1960s and 70s, where his “bottom line” was clearly not just driven by profit. He would regularly be on the factory floor ensuring that the workers’ conditions were safe and reasonable. The factories where he worked were family affairs in those days, and I remember as a child, when our whole family would be invited to wonderful Italian weddings (the ethnic group which predominated on the factory floor), and it was clear that my father was well known and respected by all sectors within the factory.

What difference has COVID made? Many have commented that COVID lockdown has at least provided an opportunity for reflection, what drives us as individuals, families, society as a whole? When life starts to open up again, may our politicians and big corporates use this opportunity to rethink our economy, turning our backs on polluting fossil fuels, “enterprise bargaining” rife in an exploited casualised workforce, and turning a blind eye to profound disadvantage in our society. Triple bottom line accounting (financial, societal and environmental cost accounting) needs to be taken seriously, to ensure that both our young people and our fragile environment can look forward to a fairer, healthier and more productive future. May God’s gifts of wisdom, justice, kindness and generosity be shared by all this Christmas and for evermore!



All Hallows 2020: Remembering My Family Saints.

Pam Cox

During the time of stay-at-home restrictions, I enjoyed sharing and being with friends in the limited ways possible. One of my friends and I spent time reading through some of our favourite authors and spiritual writers over the phone. You can't begin to imagine how happy we were when we were allowed to meet in an open space out of our 5-kilometre zone. Our choice of meeting was the Melbourne Cemetery with its many garden spaces and rotundas.

On our most recent catch up, Jen said to me, "Pam, how appropriate we are together here with the dead on all Hallows Eve". You could feel the stillness stir. Suddenly we were awakened to the significance of the Day. You could feel the long past people almost listening to us read, chatter, sip coffee and eat our cheese and biscuits.

When we had finished, we walked through the graves, discovering another small group of young women picnicking together on a small, grassed area near some particularly old graves beneath the flowering gums. A true delight to behold as they sipped wine and ate sandwiches, laughing and delighted to be stepping out of their times of long restriction. Other likeminded young women, much like ourselves apart from age, were discovering the company and peace of the dead.

I am very familiar with spending precious time amongst the dearly departed, having visited relatives since I could remember, with my own parents leading the way. Memories, precious memories.

Sadly, during this time, the restrictions have prevented celebrating special occasions such as Birthdays, Easter, Mother's Day and Father's Day with our loved ones at their resting places, at their gravesides. But as the travel restrictions eased to 25 kilometres, my husband Terry and I were able to catch up with our loved ones on All Souls' Day - a true delight. And so, the story continues as I share this beautiful day.

Early preparations, thermos at the ready, cheese and biscuits, candles and flowers, early Christmas sprays of berries to place at the graves.



Our first visit was my mum and my grandparents at Kew Cemetery. This photo shows my poodle, Chloe and me sitting at mum's graveside. Mum would be delighted to know Chloe was visiting her. She simply adored her dogs, especially the poodles she had over the years. And so here we are sitting with my mum Doris, Victoria, my grandma, and pop, Albert. Known as Queenie and Bert,

it's not too hard to guess when they were born.

Their graves are a comforting space where we sit and reflect on each person with love, sharing a cheese biscuit and coffee and beautiful stories from childhood with each particular family member we are remembering. I have been visiting this grave at the Kew Cemetery since I was 19 when my grandfather passed away. There have been so many questions, stories and just deep silences as I have taken many of my joys and sorrows to share with Pop over forty years.

I can highly recommend a visit to the Kew Cemetery. The 'Friends of the Kew Cemetery' are lovingly maintaining the small flowering gardens, the new and old shrubs and trees to a very high standard. When we visited for All Souls', many of the roses planted in graves and memorial plots were flowering at an all-time high, totally unaware of the ferocious pandemic raging across our world.

Coffee, cheese and biscuits finished, another story told, and we set off to our next stop, Preston Cemetery, Plenty Road, where my husband's grandparents, uncles and an aunt await our visit. As he shares fond memories, Terry speaks of his grandparents, Emma and Pop, with such love that it brings me closer to two caring and loving people and I feel if I know them even though they had passed away before my time with Terry. Their grave is nestled on the side of the hill overlooking most of the cemetery and an amazing Mausoleum built at the bottom of the cemetery, holding many stories and memories in the care of many of our Greek, Italian community. We love this cemetery with the many beautiful monuments and highly decorated graves.

Somehow this year, I'm not too sure what it was, but I would like to feel it was one of the dearly departed moving in and around us seemingly touching deep into my soul, as we walked back to the car, a calm just came over me. I mentioned it to my husband, a moment in the sun touched by the past.

Our next visit is Fawkner Cemetery, where we visit Reginald and Ruby, Terrie's parents. We take a well-earned break at their grave site. We are fortunate enough to have a lovely garden seat situated under a flowering gum right at their resting place. More coffee and

biscuits candle and flowers. Another memory of two people I have never known in our waking life, and yet I could relate many, many stories about them.

Time is pushing us along by now, our final visit is with three of my dearest great uncles and my aunt. With much research some years ago, I found their grave. Two brothers who survived the First World War resting peacefully with their sister. I have the fondest memories of the three of them, having visited with grandma and mum every time they went to their home.



Uncle Edgar, served in France, was injured and sent back to England to hospital and then sent back to the front and survived. He lived well into his 80s. Uncle Ollie served as a Light Horseman in Egypt; he passed away in the 60s. Aunty Francis lived with both of her brothers high on the hill in Pascoe Vale. They grew flowers on the side of the hill and up in the Dandenong Ranges, which they sold in the Victoria Market. They never married. I feel the flowers and the peaceful life they all had after the War must have been a blessing of peace for them among their flowers. One precious memory of the

old house that their mother left to them for me is sitting on a small brick ledge next to the one fire stove, staying warm and listening to stories from the past, very precious memories.

What a day we have had sitting, remembering, praying over their souls, remembering these ordinary everyday saints to us in our lives. Time to head home. We will return to be with them around New Year, carrying the footprints left on our hearts.

I remember my dad also on this day. His grave may be far away in Adelaide, where his ashes are interned with his parents. I only get to visit dad occasionally. Always in my heart. And so, I come to the close of another celebration of remembering a few of our dearly departed. Wishing you all well and praying for our safe return to St Mary's together soon.

'A Thanksgiving prayer for our dearly departed

*Beloved Presence on my path of life,
Thank you for the footprints left on my heart:
The soft and gentle ones that brought comfort,
The deep and lasting ones of enduring friendship,
The lightly passing ones conveying kindness,
The heavy ones causing necessary change,
And the impressionable
Footprints swept away by time.
Even though lost, forgotten, or not recognized,
These visitors have led me to live more fully
The innate goodness residing
Deep within me.
How grateful I am'.
Abundant Peace*

Joyce Rupp

The Judds of North Melbourne

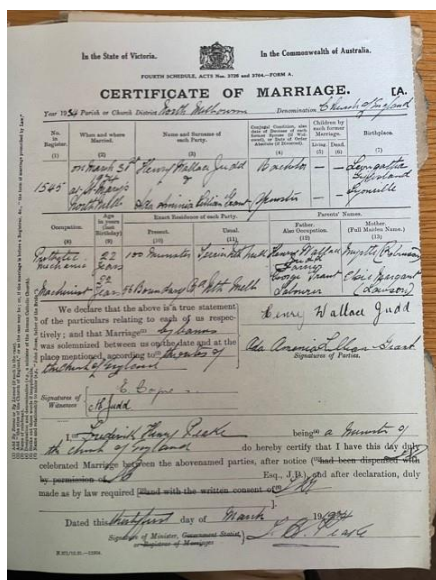
Rhondda Fahey

The McMahon Family, Dawn (nee Judd), Gerard and Kimberley are regular worshippers at the 8am Eucharist here at St Mary's North Melbourne. You might say it is their family church as Judds have lived and worked in North Melbourne, married, baptized their children and been buried from St Mary's since they arrived here from the U.K. in 1857, just after the demise of the original Dutch Oven church and just before the present church building, at the time when the school building still doubled as the church. In the Mary Chapel the McMahons sit beneath the benevolent spirit of Dawn's grandmother, Myrtle Robinson, whose memorial is on the south wall. Delving into the church archives, I was delighted to find on Dawn and Gerard's marriage certificate that her second Christian name, Myrtle, remembers her grandmother.



Dawn and Gerard were married at St Mary's by Fr Jim in 1985. It was something of a Judd family tradition. Dawn's older sister, June, was baptized at St Mary's in 1935, and married to John Rowe here in 1956. Her daughter, also June, was married here in 1977. But more

than that, Dawn's father and mother had met at a Saturday night 6d dance in St Mary's church hall and were married at St Mary's in 1934. Their wedding certificate is also in the archives.



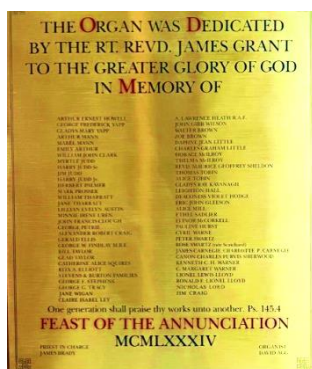
The groom, Henry Wallace Judd (Harry Jnr) had grown up in the parish. He played basketball in the St Mary's team and lived in Munster Street with his parents, Henry Wallace Judd (Harry Snr) and Myrtle Judd. Harry Jnr was a dental mechanic, who soon needed to move with his wife, Ada and eldest child, June, to Corryong at the tail end of the Depression to find work. As the family expanded, they moved to Bendigo, where they stayed for thirty years, during which time he also served with the A.I.F. in New Guinea. Three other children were born to Harry and Ada – Henry Wallace, known as Billy, Leonard Herbert, and Dawn Myrtle. When the family moved

back to Melbourne in 1962, they settled in Pascoe Vale and resumed worship at St

Mary's. Harry Jnr died in 1964 but Ada lived on in Pascoe Vale, visiting St Mary's as long as she was able.

Harry Jnr's parents, Henry Wallace (Harry Snr) and Myrtle, were active members of the church and the community. Growing up in North Melbourne, Harry had played football for North Melbourne when it was still known as the Hotham Hill club. Incidentally the story is that the club's blue and white colours were somehow related to St Mary's. Myrtle was well known for her good works and welfare work and was secretary of the Mothers' Union: Harry was on Vestry at St Mary's for over thirty years and for a similar time on the P & C at Errol Street State School. These years included the time when the parish school closed, and the pupils went to Errol Street

You can find these three generations of family names among those on the plaque commemorating the dedication of the organ by Bishop Grant on the Feast of the Annunciation 1984 'to the Greater Glory of God in Memory of.....'



Harry Snr, although the first of three owners of that name, was by no means the first of the North Melbourne Judds. For our purposes the Judd story begins with John Judd, who was born in Nether Wallop, Hampshire in 1788. He was married to Ann Denhem in St Mildred's Church in Whippingham on the Isle of Wight in 1812 and lived in that district for the rest of his life. There is still a St Mildred's in Whippingham, near Victoria and Albert's residence at Osborne, but the John Nash building where John and Ann were married was demolished in 1856 to be rebuilt in a style more suitable for the royal family.

John and Ann had six children. Their Christian names, Elizabeth, George, Henry, Daniel and Charles appear again and again in succeeding generations. Charles, the sixth child, was married to Mary Parker of Somerset at Bath Abbey in 1851. They first lived in Bristol but emigrated to Melbourne in 1857 on S.S. Dragoon with their second child, Clara Joyce, their first child, Charles Henry, not having survived his first year. A son born soon after their arrival was also named Charles Henry. By the time three further sons were born, William (1859), John Robert (1862), and George Edward (1865), Charles and Mary were living in Byron Street, North Melbourne but sometime after William's marriage to Emma Hall in Fitzroy in 1880, Charles and Mary moved to 34 Shiel Street, where he died in 1901

The first four of William and Emma's children were baptized at St Mary's and the home addresses in these records reveal that they moved house within North Melbourne with almost every child. It seems pretty clear that they were renting but the reasons for moving are lost. Did the leases simply expire every two years or did the dwellings perhaps become too small or was there some other reason?

7 Novem 2020	9 Septem 1850	Thomas Judd	Thomas Henry Judd	Rehably	Capell St. Brunswick	Robert Judd
5 Novem 2021	9 Jul 1840	Walter	Michael Judd	Lowell	Albott St. Victoria	Robert Judd
7 Novem 2022	2 August 1830	Frederick Judd	William Judd	Ludell	Curran St. Brunswick	Robert Judd
7 Novem	14 Jul 1880	Lillian Judd	William Judd Thomas Judd	Avery	8 Alchem St. Brunswick	Robert Judd

For Frederick John (1880) the address is given simply as Hotham, for Elizabeth Clara (1882) it is 2 Vale Street, for Edgar Josiah (1884) 2 Arden Street, while for William Charles (1886) it is Albert Park. Henry Wallace (1888) and Sydney (1891) were both born and probably baptized in Brunswick. Emma died in 1899, worn out perhaps by all those moves and children. William, a blacksmith, remarried twice but had no more children. At the time of his death in 1937 he was living in Flemington Road. Like so many of the Judds he is buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery.

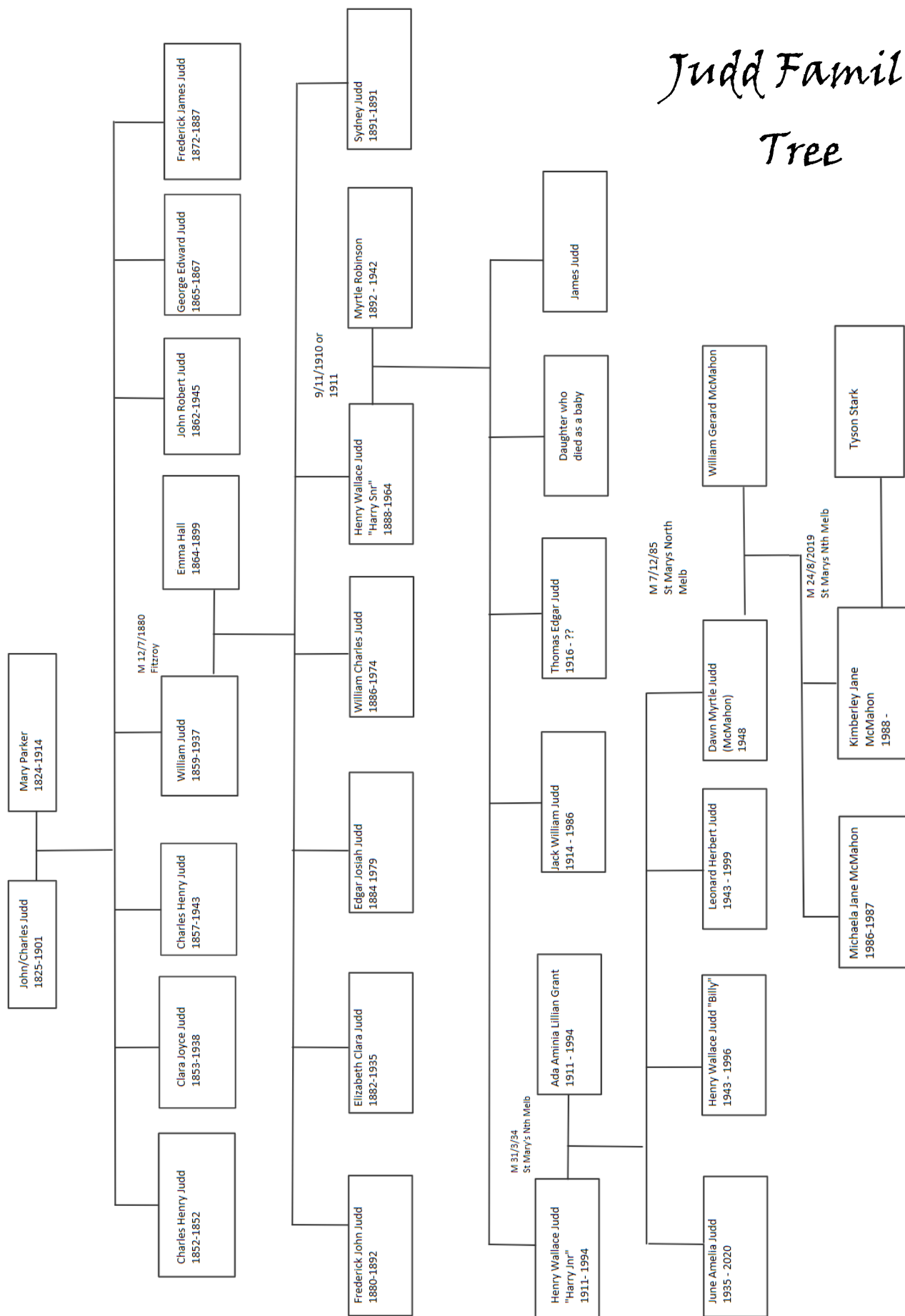
Following his father's trade, William's oldest son, Henry Wallace Judd (Harry Sr), whom we've met already as Myrtle's husband, Harry Jnr's father, and Dawn's grandfather, was a farrier who lived, and probably worked, at 100 Munster Terrace, North Melbourne, with stabling, as the family story has it, for thirty-two horses. At times various members of the wider family moved in for a while, moved out to a nearby residence, then moved back into Munster Terrace. In fact, the Judds were always moving. The Electoral rolls for Newmarket show Judds in Munster Terrace, Byron, Vale and Arden Streets, Dryburgh and Brougham, Queensberry, Curran and Curzon, and Flemington Road. They were drivers and store men, blacksmiths and dental mechanics (or as the Electoral Roll puts it 'prosthetic dentist'), and labourers. They were pillars of the community and the stuff North Melbourne was built of. They were real 'northies' and their parish church was St Mary's.

Dawn is the last living of Harry Jnr's children, but she has lots of family stories. Ask her about the child who was 'given away' in an earlier generation or about Uncle Tommy's wooden leg, the result of a motor bike accident at the intersection of Chetwynd and Queensberry. Her marriage to Gerard produced two daughters, Michaela June, who lived for less than a year and was buried from St Mary's, and Kimberly June, who was born in 1988.

And so it came to pass that when Kimberley was married to Tyson Stark by Fr Craig at St Mary's on August 24, 2019, the church was packed not only with their happy parents, relations and friends, but also with a great crowd of witnesses, the spirits of Judds who had been baptized, married and buried from St Mary's over five generations.



All references to the parish history are taken from John Rickard's brilliant 2008 book, *An Assemblage of Decent Men and Women: A History of the Anglican Parish of St Mary's North Melbourne*. Family details were supplied by Dawn McMahon and Ancestry.com. Sam Miller drew the family tree and took the photos from the parish records. Any mistakes in putting it together are mine.



Judd Family Tree

The Politics of Palestine Before 70 CE

Geoff Jenkins

The First Century CE in Judaea, where and when the Church came into existence, was rather tumultuous. Wars and rumours of wars all around. And not only in Judaea, for the Jewish Diaspora also faced tumult from within their own societies and without.

Some of this turmoil was "internal", meaning it was Jews fighting with each other. In fact, according to Josephus the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE was the result of a civil war between various Jewish factions. These factions represented some cities and towns of the Galilee, the more or less elite of Jerusalem, the Greek or Latin speaking Diaspora Jews and the Jews of lower-class priests and their families. All these factions just for starters.

This social stratification of Jerusalem is intriguing, and in some respects perhaps also unexpected. In particular, one misses Pharisee and Sadducee as a clear line of demarcation, just as one finds that Josephus himself barely distinguishes these two. Naturally, because of the focus on the distinction between Pharisee and Sadducee in the Gospels, we think of this as a natural distinction for first century Jerusalem. Likely as not we have got this wrong.

Luke-Acts illustrates this point. A priestly group (we might say 'the' priestly group) was



closely involved in the death of Jesus, but also according to Acts as members of the earliest church. In fact, the former priests were the high-priests and their associates, concerned above all else to maintain good relations with Rome. We might reasonably guess that the priests who joined the church were from lower classes. We find their presence in the church awkward.

And Josephus also is a case in point. He tells us that he descends from both high-priestly and royal lines, and he was extremely well connected. Deeply educated in Greek, though as a citizen of Jerusalem he both spoke and wrote Aramaic, he used a Greek Bible but seems not anywhere to acknowledge the existence of Greek-speaking synagogues which were, if we trust Acts, a

commonplace in Jerusalem. This goes to show that the use of Greek in and of itself did not distinguish any particular group, for the High Priests and the Hellenistic synagogues both did so, but they seem not to have been closely related or mutually sympathetic. Nor was the ongoing violence throughout the Empire between Jews and Greeks of any linguistic significance whatsoever. They doubtless shared a language of threat and derision, namely Greek.

Here is another idea to ponder. Acts tells us that persecution of the earliest Christians led to their leaving Jerusalem. Philip the evangelist, one of the original Seven (Deacons) of Acts 6, was one such. He turns up later living in the Hellenistic city of Caesarea Maritima, with his family, associating doubtless with Romans--Caesarea was the Roman capital of Judaea-- and Hellenistic Jews and perhaps even Greeks who had settled there in Alexander's time. During the first Century Jews and Greeks fought pitched battles in Caesarea, like they did in Alexandria and elsewhere in North Africa, as Josephus tells us with lots of interesting detail.

Meanwhile, according to Luke, the apostles did not (need to) leave Jerusalem. Clearly, there were multiple subgroups of Christians in Jerusalem, who would have aligned variously with the many distinct Jewish factions of the city. This is exactly in fact what Acts 6 tells us, namely that the apostolic group stood apart from both the Hebrews and Hellenists, between whom the dispute over community welfare had arisen.

Surprisingly perhaps, there is not much in the Gospels that seems clearly to reflect the life of the earliest Christians in Jerusalem. What there is reflects a debate about whether they should stay in Jerusalem or flee to the mountains. Mark is typically uncompromising. When the sign of the destruction appears, Jesus said you should flee! In fact, Mark gives us a whole sermon of Jesus on this subject, reflecting the fact that this was a live debate in the earliest church. Nor is it just Jerusalem that is in view, but the whole of Judaea.

In addition, we should admit the difficulty we have in thinking anyhow but theologically about the earliest Jerusalem church. We imagine that disputes between Jews and Jewish Christians were at least theological, if not Christological, to the exclusion of other considerations, but this is really unlikely to be the case. Two thousand years of fraught Jewish-Christian relations have left their mark indelibly on how we read the Gospels, but not much of a mark on the Gospels themselves, except perhaps for John.

So now we come to the point of this reflection, namely attitudes among the first Christians to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 CE. Later Christianity has taken the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE as a direct indication of God's wrath at the way his Messiah had been treated. It is, so it is commonly said, the definitive rejection of the Jews and the definitive validation of Christianity. Again, and again, we read this in the patristic literature, and we imagine that the earliest Christians would

scarcely have thought otherwise, nor shed a tear at the wholesale destruction wrought by the Romans, the killing of thousands and the enslavement of those not killed. As is commonly assumed by scholars, if the Gospel writers had known about the destruction, they would certainly have celebrated it as vindication in their ongoing dispute with Judaism.

This argument, boldly anachronistic as it might be, has led to a long-running debate about the dating of the Gospels. It is impossible to imagine, the argument runs, that an event so significant for Judaism as the destruction of the Temple would not have left its mark on the Gospels. But the argument is circular, and the assumption is defective. Let me explain what I mean. If the Gospel authors are writing around the time of the fall of Jerusalem--a little before up to a decade after, this event must leave its mark on the record. And we do find indications that the destruction of Jerusalem, and specifically the Temple, is in view. Jesus himself, so the Gospels tell us, spoke of the destruction of the Temple, and emphasised that this was imminent. None of these great stones will be left upon another, Jesus said. If Jerusalem was about to be besieged by the Romans when Mark wrote, it is difficult to imagine that he thought of what was about to happen was an "abomination of desolation", as he calls it.

Surprisingly then, the actual events of the war between Jews and Romans of 66-70, as it actually played out, match poorly with Mark at least. He relates it to Daniel and the events of the Maccabean period (168 BCE), and seems to anticipate a similar circumstance, from which one could flee at the last moment. This is really exactly what did not happen, but it is almost exactly what did happen in 39 CE when Caligula threatened to set up a statue in the Temple! I say "almost" because Josephus in his detailed account, which is especially sympathetic to Petronius, the Roman governor of Syria, tells us that the threat to place a statue of the emperor in the Temple was pending for more than a year, and caused great consternation in Judaea, but it was never carried out.

But what is Mark's real concern here? He might want to demonstrate that Jesus was able accurately to predict the future. Much more a modern concern than an ancient one I suspect! Or he wanted to direct Jesus teaching regarding the city to the immediate circumstances of some at least of the earliest Christians. Was this an exercise in self-vindication in an argument between Christians and Jews, well of this I find no hint?

What can we learn from this? I believe the more important lesson is that attitudes to Judaism which were pervasive from the second century onwards should not be read back without care into the first century. It is clear that, as time went by and the paths of Judaism and Christianity diverged, both gained a determined set against the other. At this time Josephus became a popular writer for Christians, for Jews not so much, and to this day Judaism described him as a traitor to their faith. His narrative of the destruction

of Jerusalem was hugely influential over the Christian reflections on the first century, and this seems to be the primary reason why his works survived at all. It is not just because he writes in Greek that Judaism does not transmit or read him. Note that Josephus tells us that he wrote the first draft of his Jewish War in Aramaic, but no trace of it survives.

Another lesson is that the earliest Christians were a real part of a real city under real threat. They needed to work out the futures of their families. There is plenty of evidence that some groups stayed, the apostolic group especially, while other left. This may be why, apart from Peter, the apostles seem to have disappeared from history, and the church's future was written in Antioch and Rome, rather than Jerusalem.



Three Short Chapters on Prayer for Advent

Andrew Murray

In Scetis, a brother went to Moses to ask for advice. He said to him, 'Go and sit in your cell, and your cell will teach you everything.'

Some of you may know that from September 2015 until June 2016, I lived as an intern alongside the brothers of the Society of St John the Evangelist in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Although I wasn't living as a monk, nor on the monastic track, I was living in the daily rhythms of a monastery. The component parts of life in a monastery can come as a shock to the system—a 5–9 job: rising at 5am to make coffee for guests; Morning Prayer at 6am; Mass at 7.30am; breakfast; ironing linens and so on, until the end of Compline and the Great Silence at 9pm. There were the five services every day in Chapel, not including the chapter office the interns would say in private, reflecting on the monastic Rule. Each week I would spend an hour or two ironing the fair linens for the altar. From humid summer to a frozen winter and back again, I was in the monastic kitchens for countless hours, following the directions of the Cook and the Cellarer. I learned to take my time and make bread.

These are parts of life in a monastery and the actions of a monk. Living in a monastery for nine months, saying six services a day while wearing a robe, spending countless hours ironing and baking, would make any person into the perfect and ideal form of a monk. But you would not be a very good monk.

At this point, it would be easy to follow the tangent of monastic rules and forms of life. Many writers and Church Fathers have written and said much less more wisely and have approached the difficulties of being a monk. But this is not the path to follow for this reflection.

Six months before I lived there, I first came to stay in the guesthouse of the monastery at Cambridge. I had applied to live at the monastery as an intern; but aside from a brief phone call with one of the brothers, I was only equipped with visions of severe fasts, glorious services and dour monks. All of these proved true, but none in the ways I had expected.

I had arranged to meet with Brothers Geoffrey and Mark, the Superior and Intern Director respectively. This meeting was more or less as a conventional job interview: what were my aspirations for my time alongside the monastery? What were my experiences that would equip me for the internship? These questions were all diligently

answered, and I took care not to slouch. But I was caught out by a question from Brother Geoffrey:

Do you like to pray?

Yes, I suppose I do.

I hope you like to pray. We do a lot of that here.

Most likely, similar to the unknown brother who went to Abba Moses to ask for advice in the desert, I did not understand these words at the time. I understood that there would be lots of set aside for liturgical services in the chapel. I didn't follow their meaning in the cell, or in the kitchens, or walking in the streets of Boston.

But words of Brother Geoffrey have stuck with me, even if I am unsure now if they were any help during my time in Massachusetts. Over the last eight months or so, as we as a parish and as a wider community have been at a distance from one another, these words have resonated more loudly through me.

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But, when you pray, enter into your private room and, having closed your door, pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father, who watches what is in secret, will reward you.

I was not raised in a religious family, and prayer has always been an ill-fitting garment. Like many things, I have found it easy to follow the pattern: kneeling in church with closed eyes; holding hands open *orans* reciting the Lord's Prayer; swinging a rosary and counting the beads. But to wear this worn garment, handed down through the Scriptures and Tradition? Attempting to pray, my mind is either blank, or cluttered with the junk of the day. Praying, I remember the washing; kneeling, I compose a work email. I find it easier to rely on Augustine, who writes in the confessions that *he who sings prays twice*. With a loud voice, I may have hoped this would double the effect yet again.

I have faced unexpected challenges over the lockdown period, such as the intensity of work coupled with increased expectations or the relative inability to leave the house for long periods. Making time for liturgy in solitude—church at home—has been hard, and harder still to pray in those times that I have set purposely aside to say morning or evening prayer. It isn't hard to say the words of the service, or to think about what they mean. But it has been hard to pray—leaving the definition of what 'praying' is relatively open.

A confession: I find it very difficult to interact with online services and virtual coffee hour. This has not been helpful during this period for my connection to the parish and

other communities of friends. We gather as Church for many reasons, and community together is one of them. There is an easy excuse: the demands of new ways of working. My days are built of virtual meetings and instant messages, emails and video announcements, and phone calls. But work alone does not entirely account for my absence from online settings, or the absences we each may find ourselves in.

Because of this, I have not interacted with the online service offerings, pre-recorded or live. But through the last eight months of church closures and working from home, I have found myself more and more thinking, meditating and praying on prayer.

We have been forced to close the door and, for some for some of us, to pray in secret. Secret from one another; but not secret from God, for *our Father, [...] watches what is in secret*, as is written in sixth chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew. As the author of the Letter to the Hebrews writes we have *so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us* that we might *run the contest set before us*. When we pray, we do not do so alone. There are more than two or three gathered, but the uncountable Saints and Angels who join with us unceasingly even if my own prayer is quiet and faltering. For this, I take heart and give thanks.

Praying at home—and more so, making the time to pray at home—has been difficult. But as my time alone throughout the lockdown stretched on, part of the strangeness of prayer and praying lifted. Brother Geoffrey's words have returned to me again and again, not empty but to water a small patch of prayer into fruitfulness. I have struggled with this, but I am sure I have not struggled alone. Even if two are three are not with me when I pray, as Jeremiah writes *Lord, you are in the midst of us, and we are called by your name*.

To steal a phrase from the Book of Common Prayer, these are comfortable words. They are comfortable words in uncomfortable times. It is not the comfort of settling into a chair with a glass of wine after a day of work, nor the comfort of a familiar walking path without paying attention. They are words that bring comfort: rest to the weary and a binding up of the broken hearted. Having closed the door and gone into my secret room to pray, the weariness of the last eight months is laid aside.

I do not think I have done a particularly good or effective job of praying alone over the last eight months. I have relied on service books, set prayers and occasionally hymns. I am sure that when the Last Day comes my faltering prayers will be called to account before the great judgement seat of Christ. Yet, I set out again each day to try again—with the solitude of my room in secret helping me. It could be that nine months in a monastery may be an unfair advantage.

The cell is the place of this secret encounter and reward . . . the primary place of prayer where we are to stand before God.

The words above are taken from the chapter ‘The Cell and Solitude’ in the Rule of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist. It has taken me a long time to gain understanding of what they might mean, along with their setting in Matthew 6, but lockdown and the changes brought about by the pandemic have provided me with an opportunity. For all its difficulties, this has been precious to me.

This is not to make light of the difficulties of the last eight months, nor to pass a value judgement on the necessity or otherwise of government-mandated lockdowns. But as James writes that *every good act of giving and every perfect gift is from above*. There has been a gift in these difficult times, and I have paused with this gift. This gift to me has been the chance and change of praying at home—the encounter with our hidden God in my secret room. Certainly, it was not something I would have immediately chosen to accept.

Our rooms, homes and lives are disordered and messy. Certainly, God is in the midst of these messy lives too, and we are near to him. As much as decluttering fads come and go, we will never be able to clean away all of the mess of our lives. But we are on the cusp of a season of preparation. As much as people like to think of the monastic—or even the Christian—life as a life of continual Lent, it is really a life of continual Advent. We should always be preparing ourselves for the coming of Christ into our lives.

Preparation in our messy and cluttered lives is not easy. I certainly haven’t found it so, though maybe some find it easier than others. Part of this preparation is, again as James writes in his letter, *remaining patient*. It may be easy to avoid reading the signs of the times and scoffing at preachers of apocalyptic doom, but part of this patience is with ourselves. All of our efforts at prayer and ordering our lives will not simply be charged overnight. As Moses told the unknown brother, we need to sit in our cells to learn.

For me, these months of lockdown and relative solitude have given me the rare chance to prepare myself in patience. It hasn’t been easy, and that has been in its own way a further good thing—even if none of us want to go through it all again. But it lent me an additional strength for my preparations for Advent—and my preparations for a life of Advent.

Part of my preparations this year will be to bring some order to a cluttered life, and some cleanness to a messy (metaphorical) cell. A great part of this will be prayer: liturgical prayers to order my life, little prayers in repetition for my walks, silent prayers for those moments where no amount of effort seems to be effective. After all, I have perhaps come to like praying.

The farmer awaits the precious fruit of the earth, remaining patient over it until it receives the early and the late rains. You be patient too, strengthen your hearts, for the Lord's arrival has drawn near.

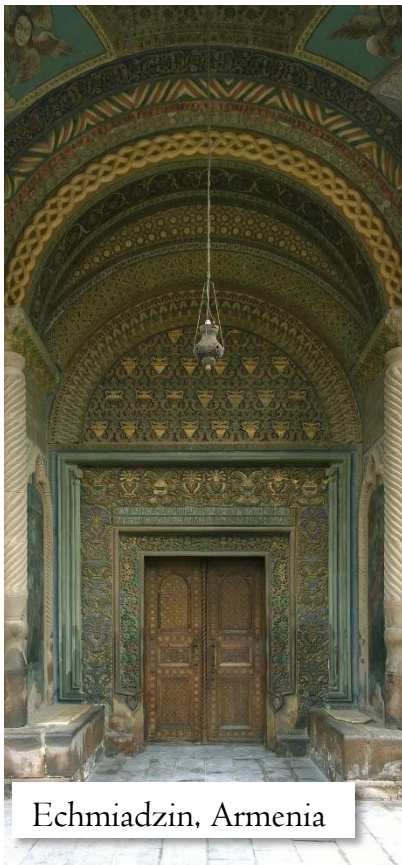
A Journey to the Caucasus

Greg Reinhardt

The recent repeat of Joanna Lumley's *Silk Road* series on the ABC brought back memories of my visit to the Caucasus in July 2006.

My visit to this very mountainous part of the world also included Armenia apart from Georgia and Azerbaijan. In fact, my journey commenced in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia. My first impression of this city was the very Soviet architecture, brutalist and functional but very drab, albeit with the snow-capped Mt Ararat in the background, where the Ark is said to have settled after the Great Flood, naturally much loved by American fundamentalists.

Armenia has a long and colourful history. I visited the archaeological site of Erebuni, the first capital of Armenia dating for the 8th century BCE. Armenia is one of the first parts of the world settled for Christianity having been founded by Gregory the Illuminator. In fact, it is the first Christian nation having been so established in 301 CE. In parts of Armenia the tradition of murtagh is maintained, that is, lamb or rooster slated for sacrifice to God, the ancient Jewish tradition of animal sacrifice as well as a pagan tradition. I saw the animals tethered for sacrifice at some village where I had lunch.



I visited the memorial to the 1915 Armenian genocide. The genocide resulted in one of the greatest movements in human history. The Armenian diaspora is enormous. Many Armenians, or those of Armenian descent, live in France or the United States but the diaspora is worldwide. I visited Echmiadzin the spiritual heart of the Armenian Apostolic Church (St Bartholomew is regarded as the saint through whom the apostolic succession in Armenia was established).

I journey on to Lake Sevan, the largest and highest lake in the Caucasus, passing south of Nagorno-Karabakh, the Armenian enclave in Azerbaijan scene of the recent conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan which has resulted in a temporary truce effectively favouring Azerbaijan and brokered by Russia, which supports Armenia and Turkey which supports Azerbaijan. I visited several churches and monasteries including the Geghard Cave Monastery with its two churches carved into rock where it is said that the holy lance that pierced the body

of Christ was kept. This was also a place of animal sacrifice where the faithful tie strips of cloth to the branches of wishing trees denoting a wish or prayer.

I should mention that Armenian cuisine is delightful with dishes that make full use of fruit and nuts, similar in many respects to the food one finds in Iran.

My next stop was Tbilisi in Georgia through the forested mountains of northern Armenia with a visit en route to the 10th century Hagartsin Monastery. Tbilisi itself is a lovely walled city overlooked by a superb fortress which those who saw the Lumley programme would appreciate. I enjoyed the town of Gudari set high in the mountains where I stayed in a wonderful guest house with views into the valley and superb home cooked food and Georgian wine. This was followed by a visit to Gori, the birthplace of Joseph Stalin (in 1879) where I saw the railway hut in which he was born and visited the somewhat sombre museum devoted to him presided over by a babushka who insisted on following so as to turn off the lights!

The scenery in Georgia is spectacular and the food and wine are wonderful.

I then crossed into Azerbaijan, a Turkic speaking and Islamic country, although the form of Islam is Sunni and quite liberal. The crossing is not simple as a thorough search was needed to ensure no one was carrying a map which showed Nagorno-Karabakh as part of Armenia! In Azerbaijan my first visit was to Sheki which, as Lumley pointed out, was on the Silk Road. She stayed in the caravanserai built in the 18th century where I also stayed and where camels would traditionally be taken into the courtyard with dining alfresco and added atmosphere created by the call to prayer from the minaret next door. It is always worthwhile finding out how close one's hotel is to the nearest mosque to avoid being woken at some ungodly hour (may not be an appropriate expression here!) by the call to prayer!

I had a visit to a small village called Lahji with cobble stoned street and local handicrafts such as beaten copper platters and covers. A wonderful meal was prepared by my guide. Travelling through dry desert landscapes I arrived at Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, on the Caspian Sea, which as the Lumley programme showed, is now a modern and ever-expanding city whose wealth is driven by oil drilled in the Caspian. There was an opportunity to eat real Beluga caviar taken from sturgeon fished from the Caspian.

What a pity that none of us has been able to travel this year. That said. I am grateful that I have had the opportunity to travel as much as I have and there may be a few more trips to take, God willing.



Sheki, Azerbaijan

St Mary's



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**FRIDAY 25 DECEMBER
CHRISTMAS DAY 9.00 AM**