

Turning Around

- Michelle Naude

I wonder what the word “turnaround” means to you? So for example, there is the turnaround time for an aircraft between when it lands and when it is ready to take off again. When I googled it, most of the references were to a business turnaround. One definition says, “when a business recovers financially from a period of poor performance.” And many of the references were about the need for a good turnaround strategy. These definitions clearly seem to imply a complete change in the direction that something was taking.

There is a very important turnaround strategy in the New Testament. It is called repentance. The Greek word for repentance is *metanoia*. It literally means “to change your mind”. The preposition *meta* always refers to change—think of metamorphosis = a change of shape. The verb occurs 34 times in the New Testament and the noun 22 times—clearly an important concept.

I like to illustrate it (in person, if possible) as a person facing in one direction with their face towards sin and their back towards God. Then they turn around through 180 degrees and now their back is towards sin and their face is towards God—a complete, utter and total change of direction. Repentance is one of the prerequisites for entering the kingdom of God. Jesus even said: *Unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish.* (Luke 13:3,5). Paul said that God commands *all men everywhere to repent* (Acts 17:30). Why is this necessary? Because we cannot enter God’s kingdom with our sins and our sinfulness. God is too holy. We have to leave our sins behind. We have to turn away from them. Repentance conveys the idea of a total change of mind towards sin and towards God. So we read verses such as: *turn from these vain things to a living God* (Acts 14:15), *turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God* (Acts 26:18), *you turned to God from idols to serve the*

The Eight O’Clock

NEWS

February 2024 All Services, Christ Church, Kenilworth 021-797-6332

living and true God (1 Thessalonians 1:9) Each of these verses list what they turned from and to Whom they turned.

Both John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus began their ministry with exactly the same words: *Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near* (Matthew 3:2 and 4:17). So repentance is essential for entering the kingdom of God. But we don’t only repent when we come to Christ. We need to keep on repenting (perhaps even daily) as God continues to convict us of sins that we have committed. The service for Morning Prayer in the prayer book includes what we know as the general confession and asks God to “restore them that are penitent”. It is good to have a sensitive conscience towards God and towards sin.

Psalm 51 is a good picture of repentance and turning from sin in the life of a man of God. David is deeply convicted of the sin he had committed with Bathsheba and his repentance is very real. But by far the best story about repentance in the Bible is a very well-known one—the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15). He “comes to himself”. He realises that he has messed up. John MacArthur says “for the first time in his life he was determined to walk away from his sin.” He had left home and gone far away but now he changes direction completely and goes back home again, saying, *I have sinned.* He acknowledges that what he did was wrong. He is truly sorry. He casts himself on his father’s mercy and love which is the essence of saving faith. And how does his father respond? The old King James says *he fell on his neck and kissed him.* That is a very literal translation of what the Greek says. Newer translations say that the father embraced his repentant, returning son. And that is exactly what God the Father does when we turn around and repent and leave our sins behind. He welcomes us into His warm embrace—a very wonderful experience. Everything changes. We know that God loves us and that He has received us into His family as one of His children. That He holds nothing against us any more. That our sins are forgiven because we have repented of our sin and put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ *Who became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him* (2 Corinthians 5:21). Once we have experienced that first embrace of God when we repent and believe, we can continue from then on to bask in the fact that we have been welcomed into the loving arms of God. Praise God for He welcomes every repentant sinner into His warm embrace.

Dearly Beloved

– Gerry Adlard

Never before have I written a letter from a place like this. Unimaginable, inconceivable, unanticipated, but here I am, sitting in an exquisite, completely renovated cottage in a retirement village, located in a sun-filled valley with mountains on the long sides and the Atlantic at each end. Cottage G7, Peers Village, Fish Hoek on the Cape Peninsula, in greater Cape Town. And I didn't see it coming. Living with old folks has never really appealed to me, but it must surely be an improvement on living by my little old self! And now that I am here I feel hugely privileged and blessed. It was sparked in August, a couple of weeks before I was due to end my holiday in Ireland. Youngest son Ben wrote from America, out of the blue, and said, "We think that you should find something comfortable where you can spend the rest of your life—and let us know what you think in a couple of weeks."

Suddenly the rest of my life became more of a project than a prospect, and I began interrogating how and where I would like to live—for probably my next/remaining twenty years. One possibility was Peers Village where Gill and I had put our names on the waiting list back in 2007. I knew that I was now 120th in the queue, but as part of my new due diligence exercise I went along to see two cottages that were undergoing upgrading prior to resale. To my complete surprise I then discovered that none of the other prior applicants was currently interested, and that I had first choice. Time stood still, but for no more than three seconds. Some people say that 'it was meant to be'. My impression was that Jesus was standing there saying, "Look what we've arranged for you!" I accepted the offer, immediately, followed by the realisation that I was also being invited to 'emigrate' to Fish Hoek—to embark on a new life over the mountain, in Cape Town's Deep South. It would involve retiring from the team of Kirstenbosch Garden Guides, and withdrawing from Christ Church in Kenilworth.

...But, just to reflect for a moment on my clear impression of Jesus standing before me, showing me what he'd arranged for me... If I stop the clock right there, and spread my fingers apart to see more of the picture, I don't just 'see' Jesus—his presence is tangible, multi-dimensional, immensely capable, totally in control and supremely loving. When I respond with a look of amazement he replies with a look of everlasting, never-failing love. His is the same powerful presence that walked into my life the very moment my darling wife collapsed and proceeded to die, nearly seven years ago. I neither burst into tears nor was stunned into shock—I was awestruck by the presence, as our companion and protector, of ALMIGHTY GOD! In taking control he had to step forward, into my vision, and reveal himself to me—by the love of his presence. Jesus throbs with love like a helicopter. And invites us aboard. Even to share the controls—to experience living in, living out, the Love of God. Hallelujah!



Joy and Seung Young Jung ensuring they remain in contact with Gerry Adlard



'Did you see the look on the traffic cop's face?'
[Picture of the Day 23 January in Daily Maverick]



Inspired by the numerous cell phones which 'pinged' during the 8 am service on 28 January. Thank you to the many others who put their phones on silent.

Alpha—Louise Dobson

I have known about Alpha for a couple of years now. My parents had done the course about 20 years ago and my in-laws were very pro-Alpha as well. The church I used to attend in my hometown ran it a few years ago, so Alpha wasn't anything new, I just hadn't done the course before. For the past few years, church wasn't a regular occurrence for our family. We just didn't go very often. We started attending CCK about a year ago and we received such a warm welcome and we really felt like this church was one our family could feel part of. I got asked a few times to attend Alpha but I wanted to make that decision for myself in my own time, so I actually put it off for a couple of months; I really just wanted to get into the routine of going to church again. After attending church for the past year I decided that this is something that I wanted to do and no one is pressurising me into doing it—I made the decision to attend. Also, being an introvert the thought of going to Alpha on my own was daunting but as I walked through the church gates for the first Alpha session I just felt so welcomed. I wasn't nervous about not knowing anyone—I made connections straight away from that first evening. I'm so grateful for that comfort and reassurance that this was the right time for me to pursue this and find out a bit more and reignite the longing to be part of the church community, and my relationship with Jesus. I love the way that Alpha is set up—each week builds on the previous week and creates a firm foundation. In the small groups you never felt pressurised into saying anything and you didn't have to share if you didn't want to. Also I didn't feel judged at all. We had such incredible leaders. It really has ignited that passion and desire to get to know Jesus more and follow his word and be more intentional with going to church and exploring home groups, which for me was quite daunting and not something that used to interest me, but now I'm keen to give it a try and step out of my comfort zone a bit more. It was so well organised and run, the helpers were incredible, the content and the videos were really great. But mostly, I loved the small group discussions—hearing about other peoples' journeys, some similar and some completely different, but just knowing that we were all in this together, wanting to know more and build on that. It was a phenomenal experience and I would highly recommend it.



Charlie Brown & Christmas

- Attributed to Charlene M Speer

In 1965, Charles Schulz, a devout Christian and creator of the Peanuts comic strip, was asked to create a Christmas special for CBS featuring the Peanuts characters. He agreed with one requirement, that they allow him to include the story of the birth of Jesus. Although the stations executives were hesitant and tried to convince him otherwise, Schulz was insistent. As a result, for 50+ years, millions of people have watched "A Charlie Brown Christmas" and heard the story of Jesus and "what Christmas is all about."



It wasn't until a few years back that I realized a hidden message in the film: Linus is a child who seems to have some insecurities as he carries a security blanket with him at all times. In fact, Linus NEVER drops his blanket, except once—while sharing the message of "what Christmas is all about," Linus drops his blanket at the exact moment he says the words, "fear not!"

In this seemingly innocent moment, Linus delivers a powerful reminder of the true meaning of Christmas. We are to "fear not", for Jesus is born. We needn't rely on material things for security, we have God with us, "Immanuel", (Matthew 1:23) Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour—the true meaning of Christmas.

A while back, someone informed me, indignantly so, that Linus picks up his blanket at the end of the speech so my interpretation must be wrong. Well, he was right, Linus does pick up his blanket at the end of his speech. However, he "drops" it again later—amid big, bright, colourful, shiny artificial trees, Charlie Brown chose the least of these, a little, wooden tree with just a few branches. Shortly thereafter, Linus uses his blanket to wrap about the base of the tree and says, **Maybe it just needs a little love.** In that moment, the tree **awakens**, stands tall and firm—a reminder that no matter who we are, how many mistakes we've made, a little love can make all the difference.

Let's strive to **fear not** (Luke 2:10) and **love one another** (John 13:34), not just at Christmastime, but the whole year through.'

John 14:6

Jesus said to him (Thomas), 'I am the way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through me.'

[Do you believe Jesus?]

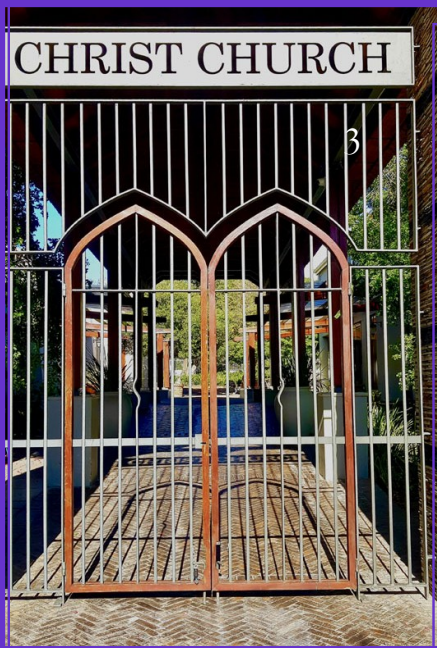
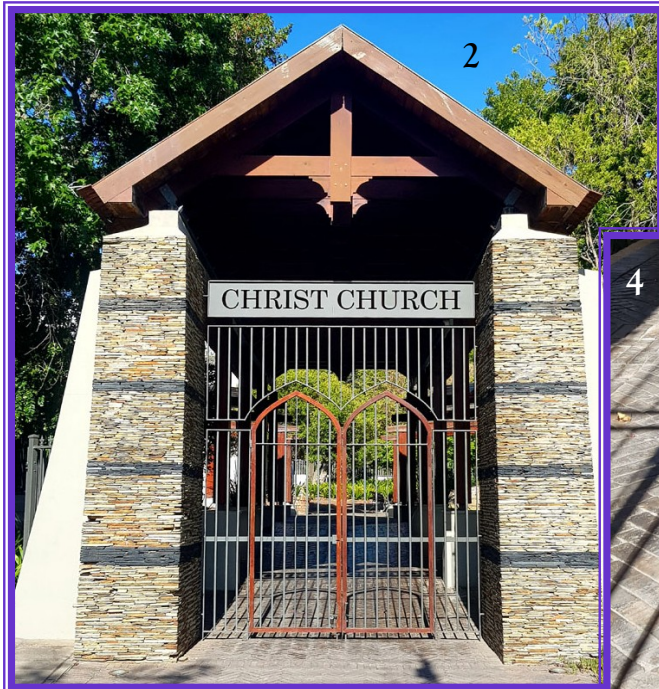
CCK Centenary Project 2008

- Quentin Miller

As part of the Church's Centenary celebrations, the community embarked on a major church complex re-think. I was asked to design a link between the existing church building and St Anne's Annex. The Annex was fully refurbished and had a major internal re-design and upgrade. The church had minor alterations, i.e. the introduction of a new ceremonial entrance designed to link the two buildings and provide a welcoming space before services and a space for mingling after services (1).

At 8 O'Clock in the morning in summer, an image of a dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit appears on the portico, cast by the shadow from the profile of the roof truss above. This was not intentional, but when

I first saw it, I felt it was a gift from God reminding us of his presence (2). I designed the gates with a cross central to each one and they cast a shadow of the cross on the paving (3). I imagined Jesus on the cross here and the squiggle at the base of the cross represents his feet (4). The inspiration for the main entrance gates (5) came from the apse of Christ Church (6). [View inside to the street (7).]



Sustainable Grandparenting 18

Are you a Matriot?

-Tony Westwood

Recently one of the 8am service prayer leaders, when praying about the environmental crisis the world faces, referred to Mother Earth. A note stating that we should avoid the term since it is not consistent with Christian theology was received. God the Father is the creator.

'Mother Earth' contains shades of animism or universalism. Or New Age-ism and Gaianism. 'The Earth is the Lord's and all that is in it' (Psalm 24:1).

I have recently read a very satisfying book: *The Ministry for the Future* by Kim Stanley Robinson. It paints a frightening yet heartening story of humanity's response to climate change in the coming decades. In it, for a number of authorially imaginative reasons, humanity largely comes together to deal with the carbon crisis. One strand of this is the idea of consciously being a citizen of Earth, or the earth, more so than of one's country. Patriotism takes on a new meaning. Or is it matriotism? In terms of getting to grips with the environmental crisis, should we be matriots, rather? Citizens of Mother Earth.

This got me thinking [again] on how Christians relate to the earth, this infinitesimal dot in God's [known] universe on which after many billions of years He has placed humankind whom He loves. It is not difficult to identify with the psalmist in delighting in the variety, glory and sheer splendour of the earth and skies whether using the naked eye or micro- or tele-scopes (e.g. Psalm 104). Likewise with its fecundity at harvest times (e.g. Psalm 65). Perhaps even with its brokenness in the theology of the Fall (Genesis 3:17-19). These can be seen as observational relationships with the Earth. One step removed from the Earth itself. And then there is our enjoyment of nature [small 'n'] in national parks, private reserves and green spaces. A recreational relationship.

How close an identification with the earth do these produce, and does it matter? Are we Christians, in a time of environmental crisis, experiencing restoration and joy in creation including thanking God, but then simply getting on with everyday life as something separate from nature? After all, isn't Christianity's main focus on humanity and its redemption, the redemption of the Earth being very much secondary (both in terms of theology as in Romans 8:22 and in terms of focus) in most of the church's activities? I feel that we are reaping the consequences of this imbalance: humankind as something separate from nature, rather than an integral part of a unitary creation.

Humankind's history including the 2000 years of the Christian era is littered with stories of communities outliving and destroying their natural resources. This now occurs at a global level. On our watch, as it were. Commodification of the Earth and nature have been the response here; the profit motive leading to exploitation (including colonialism and neo-colonialism) and destruction, largely led by the males



of our species. I wonder if this is not at least in part owing to an inadequate range of relationships with nature. Are we ill-equipped spiritually to deal with the challenges of stewarding the earth and dealing with the environmental catastrophe we have produced? What if more of us, while

abandoning our surprisingly pervasive contributions to the exploitative and damaging use of nature, were to complement our observational and recreational relationships with creation/earth/nature with a more *reverential* relationship? Not pagan nature worship, but a deeper sense of the sanctity of it all. Wouldn't the stewardship of the Earth given to humanity by God (e.g. Gen 2:15) be much the better for a greater degree of awe and profound engagement? Yes, it is all God's, but the path to worshipping God (capital 'G') in nature and thus treating it with reverence requires an intimacy that has its own characteristics, I think. Christian Creation spirituality one might call it. One of these, I believe, will be an appreciation of aspects of nature that might be considered notably maternal, such as nurture (so counter to exploitation). I am sure that you can think of other female/feminine characteristics in nature. This maternal aspect is just one facet of Christian Creation spirituality that can strengthen our Holy Spirit-inspired reverence for the Earth. 'Closer to God' takes on extra meaning when it comes to understanding and worshipping God through nature. For example, through rich soil, rotting leaves, seasons and cycles. As citizens of the Earth and of the Kingdom of God, we should explore this more as a church community.

For my part, as a citizen of Earth and the Kingdom of God, as I wake up every day, breathe in nature's oxygen (laced with extra carbon dioxide, it has to be said), look at a tree, tread on the gravel in the path, greet El Gecko on the wall, I will reverently, matriotically and patriotically (and perhaps not a little idiotically – à la St Paul in 1 Cor 11) sing out, in the immortal words of Allan Sherman, 'Hello Muddah, Hello Fadduh'.

Church House Bible Study Group (Lauren Bates)



We Sense, God Senses

- Jessica McCarter

It is 2024 and I must write today...write of the awareness of at least TWO of our senses in the "We hear, God hears" narrative of my earlier columns in the News; write of the need to 'keep putting one foot in front of the other... (Ps 17 MSG) as we embark on another year.

I wonder if you, like me, have ever felt that you are in a *crucible*: "a situation of severe trial, in which different elements interact, leading to the *creation of something new*." (Oxford Dictionary definition)

I'd like to suggest how two of our five senses can contribute to this *creation of something new* as we trust God in the crucible.

In a recent sermon of the 'Who is Jesus' series from the early chapters of John, we heard of the conversation between Jesus and Nathanael; and of how Jesus said that He knew Nathanael because He SAW him (John 2:48). In Genesis 16:13, pregnant Hagar, running away from

Abraham's wife Sarah, sees an angel from God and says this: "I have now SEEN the one who SEES me." The sense of SIGHT; we are known because God SEES us. Imagine my delight when later during the day of this preach, the reading set for the day was the story of Hagar!

The second sense is perhaps more difficult to describe: we FEEL, God FEELS.

I have written before of my practice of recording in a journal and memorising those verses of Scripture which jump out on the pages of our Daily readings. So it is that I have started to reread last year's highlighted verses, playing with them, mixing them and matching them from across the whole counsel of God. I noticed that I started to FEEL replete and FULL—some measure of the FULLNESS of God? Where are we all as 2024 begins? Have all sorts of different elements put you and me in a crucible? Let us trust God to 'caress us in His gentle ways' (Ps 18 MSG), so that 'inch by inch' (Genesis 8:3 MSG), we will emerge as 'new creations' beautiful for God.



Creation

- Jessica McCarter
- Sermon Wednesday 24/1/2024

I was very glad when Mike Keggie suggested that I focus on the beauty of Creation. So I used some Old Testament Scriptures to

highlight the beauty which surrounds us.

God's skycraft: here are some of the ways God speaks to us through the skies:

Isaiah 45:12: You handcraft the skies
And direct all the constellations in their turnings

Psalms 104:19: The moon keeps track of the seasons: the sun is in charge of each day

Psalms 136:7,9: You are the God who fills the skies with light; You set the Moon and stars as guardians of the night

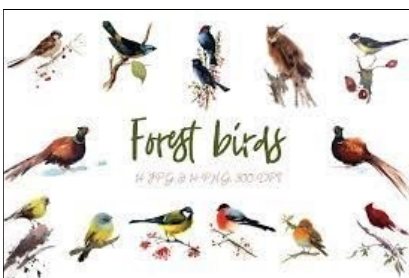
Isaiah 40:26: You march the army of stars out each night, You count them off and call each by name.

Psalms 8:3,4: We look up at Your macro-skies, dark and enormous.

Psalms 19: Your handmade jewellery on tour in the sky

Three pictures from Palm 50:

*And God **spoke/said** the earth into being from the rising of the sun to its setting in the West. (Note 'speaking' and hark back to last week's creation account in the first chapter of Genesis, where there was an emphasis on 'God said' at each step of creation.)



* How about this picture?
Every bird in the forest is mine
* And this one:
The scampering field mice are my friends
And so as we conclude,

how should we relate to God in His creation?
I'd like to end with two thoughts:

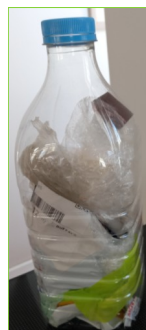
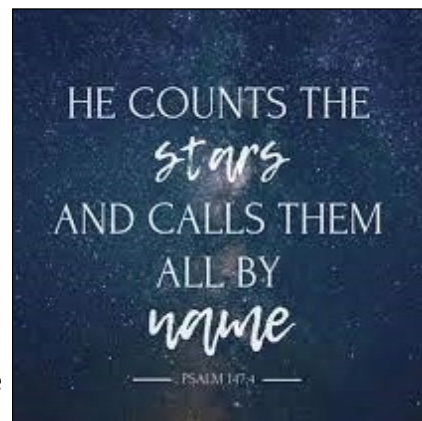


1) Years ago, when I could still walk easily, I used to take our two small dogs out for a walk in the Free State vlaktes near our home in Ladybrand, on the Lesotho border. Often, I'd see the dipping sun and I'd simply say, "Thank You God, You made that for me". This is something ALL of us can

do as we look at God's perfect creation in our everyday lives. I challenge us to try it. God loves it when we thank Him and tell Him how much we love Him.

2) My second thought is that ALL of us can make a difference by caring, even in tiny ways, for our earth—even by stuffing a bottle with small non-recyclable items waiting to become an Eco brick!

Dear people we need to be caretakers of God's creation.



My Walk Through 2023

– Kathy Scott

[Kathy, son Stewart and daughter-in-law Lezanne]

As I reflect on the year 2023, I am filled with gratitude to God and to so many people, especially my family. I started the year in pain and fear that my life was over. I had constant pain in my knee and the neuropathy in my feet had spiralled. This resulted in me being hardly able to walk without support. I could not drive anymore and generally felt life had thrown me a curveball. I felt God was not there and certainly had not heard my prayers.

I realise I received so much care and support from my CCK family that this was getting me through life. I functioned like this until my son and his wife came to visit from Edinburgh. My son took me to see my GP and insisted I should get another opinion on the knee issue (it had started in April 2022). So I was referred to another specialist who treated me holistically and investigated the whole leg. This showed that the knee was fine, but my hip was not.

So a journey of healing began on 1 June with a hip replacement operation and time spent in step down. Throughout this time there were so many people there for me. God was working in the most amazing ways. I returned home with no further pain in my knee but some discomfort in my hip.

Support and therapy from the physio and now the biokineticist have got me to a point where I could get on a plane and come to my daughter in Germany and be mobile. I am now in Edinburgh with my son and can explore the city on foot!

I know now that God had heard my prayers and answered in ways I did not expect.

Thank you to each and everyone of you that supported me in any way. I look forward to seeing what 2024 has in store for me as I walk with my hand in God's hand.



The Weight of Clouds

- Source unknown

In Job 37:16, God asks, "Do you know how the clouds float? These are the wonderful works of the One perfect in knowledge."

How much does a cloud weigh?

A **cloud mound** can hold around 550 tons of water. Or if you want to convert it into something that could be a little more meaningful, think about elephants. If we consider that an elephant weighs about 6 tons, the water in a **normal cloud** would weigh up to 100 elephants. All that water is suspended like tiny droplets floating in the warmer air rising from below. But unlike a nice puffy cloud, a big **thundercloud** can hold water up to 200,000 elephants!

And how about a **hurricane**? A weight equivalent to 40 million elephants!

This means that the water in a hurricane weighs more than all the elephants on the planet, perhaps even more than all the elephants that have ever lived.

How does God make all that water seem so light? The answer is in Job 26:8: "He wraps up the waters in his clouds, so that the clouds do not burst under their weight."

So what can this reassure us of?

Psalm 55:22: "Throw your burden on Jesus, and he will sustain you. Never will he allow the righteous one to fall" Jesus would have absolutely no problem relieving us of any heavy burdens and difficulties we may encounter. Though they may hang heavily like clouds, he would make sure we would never be crushed by them.

So remember that the next time you look at the clouds. What a marvellous God we worship!

[Editor: Part of God's Skycraft in Psalm 19. See p6]



HAPPY
SPECIAL [DECADE]
BIRTHDAYS
FEBRUARY 2024

6th Jackie Mellor (96)
6th Lyn Bayes

17th Penny Barnard

19th Thomas Pringle

23rd Rosalind Strang

24th John Hewitson

'Even in darkness light dawns for the upright,
for the gracious and
compassionate and righteous man.'

- Psalm 112:4

Humans Are Adorable

An Animal's Perspective

* **H**umans say **Ow** even if they're not actually hurt. It's just a thing they say when they think they may have been hurt. But aren't sure yet.

* Humans collect shiny things and decorate their bodies and nests with them. The shinier, the better, although each individual has a unique taste in style and colouring.

* When night falls and the sky goes dark, humans become drowsy and cocoon themselves in soft, fluffy bedding.

Metamorphosis

- Andrea Henderson/Natasha Anderson

Metamorphosis is a memoir, from when I was in my high chair to last year when I completed the book and had it published: a story of devastation and triumph, of emptiness and fulfillment, of loneliness and friendship and ultimately coming to faith and being healed; a story of my tortuous and subsequent triumphant journey which took place as a result of adversity. And then coming face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ where I found joy and healing. I continue to write children's stories and other texts when inspired and am busy with Mathematics books and some writing of English for a publisher this year. In *Metamorphosis* I put together texts from my Master's, poems and letters to family members and friends, songs which I found complementary and quotes from other sources; it has many genres. Having reached a place of healing, it was a pleasure to sit in my cottage, meditate and create this text, with help from the Holy Spirit. I live in the Breedekloof Valley and put the texts together whilst living in my cottage in Rawsonville. Last year when writing, my favourite times of the day were the cool evenings when I took the Golden and Black Labradors to the vineyards on a farm about two kilometres from where I live. The Labradors have emigrated now but I have friends down the road whose dogs I have adopted and who frolic with me in the cool summer evenings. My cottage, Lemon Tree, (as there is a lemon tree behind the building) is small and homely. It is perfect for one person (or two as I have a sleeper couch in the lounge). It was the former laundry of Sutherland House next door, and was converted into a cottage. French doors look out onto a courtyard where there are plants, a Weber, umbrella, a lovely table and chairs and a Wendy House to store things; a perfect place for writing.

I love having friends over for lunch or supper and I believe my curries are enjoyed very much (perhaps famous!). We always enjoy the delicious red wine from the valley as we chat and share stories.

When I wake sometimes at 4 in the morning, the birds are ready to greet me. In the summer, like now, I close up early and shut all the windows, doors and curtains to keep out the heat. The evenings are quiet and peaceful and I spend time reading, meditating and praying. I hear the odd dog bark and the world is otherwise silent and still. This is my joy and my inheritance—a cottage in Rawsonville in the Breedekloof, home to vineyards and wines, friends and writing. I hope you enjoy the book and come to visit me one day.

I am passionately interested in helping the lost and bringing about healing, wholeness and comfort to those who suffer; especially those who suffer from mental illnesses, depression, serious physical illnesses and emotional and spiritual problems. So many in our world today are struggling and many are down and outs, many have given up on life and are imprisoned in a net of despair. I am interested in loving them and giving them



hope through this book which answers every young and older person's questions about the meaning of life and how we need to come to a place where we 'hallow the name' of the One who created us and who wants to bring about changes and freedom and wholeness. It is when we are raging in our desperation and angst that we come to bow the knee to Jesus. This is what *Metamorphosis* is about.



Caught on Camera

Yvonne Kane & Seung Young Jung packing Christmas parcels for Jim se Bos—two happy recipients of gifts; Barrie & Joy Jack; Gill Young & Ev Els



Biblical Storms

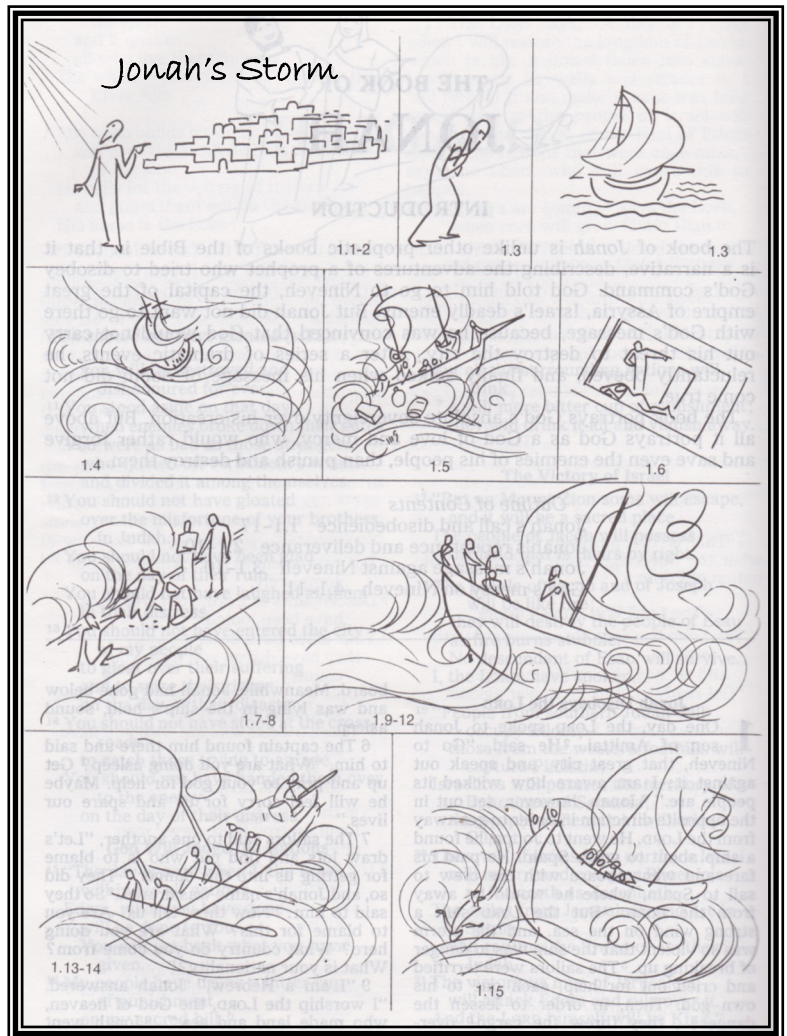
- John Rogers

Having spent much of my working life, as a UCT-based marine geologist, aboard research vessels of various sizes, I can empathise with Jonah's near-death experience during a storm, as he tried to flee westward, right across the Mediterranean, to Spain. (Jonah, Chapter 1). Annie Vallotton's vivid 10-image suite of illustrations, on Page 896 in the Old Testament of my Good News Bible, leaves nothing to the imagination. In 2013, I hiked with my wife, Phil, across Crete, in the Eastern Mediterranean, to its wave-exposed, cliff-girt southern coast, via the Gorge of Samaria (Saint Mary). St Paul, en route to Rome, was prevented by a storm from seeking shelter on this shoreline and ended up on the east coast of Malta, nearly 1000 km to the west. The victimless landing in St Paul's Bay, which I drove past in 1990 during an international geological excursion, was miraculous in itself and all 276 on the ship landed safely (Acts, Chapter 27, with an excellent illustration on Page 187 in the New Testament of my Good News Bible.) The Maltese lit a bonfire to help the bedraggled survivors to dry out, but a snake emerged and attached itself to the hand of St Paul who, luckily, felt no ill-effects. In the 1779 Chapel of St Peter and St Paul in the Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich, where my maternal grandparents were teachers, just before World War II, I saw Benjamin West's magnificent altarpiece, illustrating St Paul's narrow escape from the fangs of the snake.

<https://ornc.org/explore-whats-here/chapel/>. Most of my experiences of storms were aboard UCT's research vessel, the *Thomas B. Davie*, only 29 m long and with a displacement of 193 tonnes. I also went to sea on one of the largest research vessels in the world, the magnificent French vessel, the *Marion Dufresne*, designed for our stormy oceans, which has a length of 120 m and a displacement of 10 380 tonnes. Nevertheless it is the only ship on which I have sailed, where a mighty storm, SW of Cape Town, made us fear for our lives, just like Jonah and St Paul!

Opposite: John and Ted Mills on board the Thomas B. Davie—in rough seas

Below: The French Research Vessel, the Marion



Church House Bible Study Group
At their first meeting of 2024 (Lauren Bates)

The Joke's on Me !

- Jeanette Harris

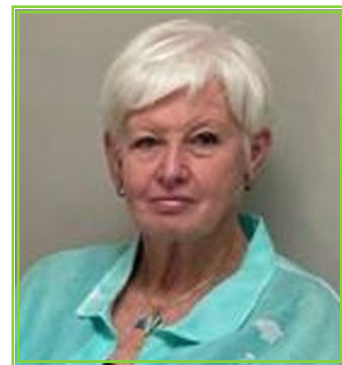
For some years Jim and I organised surprise parties for one another. Somehow we never guessed that it would happen again because it had happened the previous year, and every single time we were taken by surprise. Maybe we're very good liars?

There were two occasions that stand out in my mind. The first was when Jim was still a Baptist minister in Muizenberg and we lived in a double storey house near the main road. He had said he'd bring me breakfast in bed. My friend in America usually phoned on my birthday and I sipped my tea while we chatted. Then Jim came upstairs and suggested that seeing it was such a lovely day I should come downstairs and have my birthday breakfast in the sunshine on the verandah. Reluctantly I agreed.

I put on my dressing gown and went downstairs. As I got to the bottom of the stairs I heard the strains of 'Happy Birthday' and found myself facing a large group of people – just about the whole of our small church and a number of other friends. For once I was speechless! Jim had got someone to collect fresh doughnuts from the bakers *en route*, and coffee, tea and juice were ready. I was flooded with greetings from people who loved seeing me taken by surprise. Once I got chatting I completely forgot that I was still in my dressing gown and thoroughly enjoyed my celebration. When our photos were developed there I was in the middle of the crowd at 11 am in my green dressing gown. That was over thirty years ago and people who were there still remind me of how wonderful it was to see me rendered speechless.

Some years later I was celebrating my birthday in the lovely rectory at Emmanuel, Wynberg. For my birthday I wanted to have a sunset picnic on Llandudno Beach. It had been an exhausting week because the church had brought in fumigation experts to sort out the invasion of small cockroaches in just about every corner of our home, even in the lining of the fridge door. I was horrified, but felt better when the fumigator told me that these cockroaches can enter one's home in a pocket of potatoes and just keep multiplying. Every cupboard in the house had to be emptied and sprayed and special powder was shaken on the floors. I was told not to vacuum the carpets, only to pick up dead cockroaches lying around. Given the state of my house I was keen to get away and celebrate on the beach. Neither Jim nor the boys seemed in any hurry and I had to remind them that the sun was getting closer to setting—that it wouldn't wait for us to get to Llandudno. Then some friends who lived in Durbanville arrived. They said they were in the area and decided to pop in and greet me on my birthday. I was delighted and said they could also come to Llandudno. Still no sense of haste from my menfolk. Then another set of friends arrived with a cake box in their hands. Suddenly the penny dropped. This was a surprise party! I couldn't believe it. After that a steady stream of people arrived. I was mortified. I like my home to be tidy and clean when

visitors come. It was getting darker and I would need to put lights on, highlighting our chaotic home. Fortunately we had lots of candles and I put those all over the lounge and dining room. The soft glow was lovely. People also gathered on our lovely big verandah. Once I got over the shock I really enjoyed seeing everyone and we all had a lovely evening. I learned in this that people and celebrations are more important than a cockroach infestation and that it wasn't the end of the world if my home wasn't perfect. It didn't matter if I wasn't in control in every situation—and Jim and the boys were very smug about having totally pulled the wool over my eyes.



Thanks Jeanette, for kicking off our new column, 'Something funny happened to me and it needs to go into the Eight O' Clock News'. We have the following lined up: Kim Fowler, Ev Els, Denise Wood, Phil Rogers... Please consider sending in your contribution to us. Include a head & shoulders photograph. Addresses p12

Matthew and Erin Dunbar were married on
30 September 2023 in KZN.
Photograph sent in by Amanda Dunbar



Consolation

- Brian Morykom, Editorial 19/1/2024

'Mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me.' Lamentations 1:16.

'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem... How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!' Jesus in Matthew 23:37.

'Surrender don't come natural to me. I'd rather fight you for something I don't really want than take what you give that I need.' Rich Mullins

When hurting, sometimes we resist what we need most. We push away someone's kind offer to be with us, forgive us, or embrace us—especially if our painful situation is due to our own stupid mistakes.

Or we may resist consolation because it's not on our terms. We ask God for peace in the storm but we're really asking for the storm to stop; anything less feels like abandonment.

The Gospel of Luke tells how old, faithful Simeon was waiting for the consolation of Israel, an ancient Jewish name for the coming Messiah (Isaiah 40:1).

Many in Simeon's day were waiting for the consolation of Israel. Few had his heart. He understood true consolation may look differently than expected as he prophesied to Mary, 'This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too' (Luke 2:34).

Strange consolation.

But this is how Jesus works. He wants to get to the root of the matter and give a peace that endures, not a temporary fix. Sometimes that's not what we want.

In Matthew, Jesus likens himself to a mother hen who longs to gather her brood under her wings. Such a tender picture. Then comes the devastating line: **but you were not willing**. The old King James says simply, **ye would not**.

So, Lord, we want to be willing to be gathered under your wings. We do ache for short-term consolation, for the world and our little worlds to be set right. We know you want that, too. We also know the world has trouble. So console us in the midst of chaos we can't control. Your consolation at times may come as a severe mercy. Help us receive it. Your presence at times may feel undeserved. Help us not resist it. Give us grace, like Simeon, to receive you, Great Consolation of Israel—and then even if our hearts are pierced, they'll come to know lasting peace.

Humans Are Adorable An Animal's Perspective

* Some humans use pigments and dyes to make their bodies flashy and colourful. They even attach shiny, dangly bits to their cartilaginous membranes.

Christ Our Hope in Life and Death

- Keith & Kristyn Getty, Matt Papa

What is our hope in life and death?

Christ alone, Christ alone

What is our only confidence?

That our souls to Him belong

Who holds our days within His hand?

What comes, apart from His command?

And what will keep us to the end?

The love of Christ, in which we stand

Chorus: O sing hallelujah!

Our hope springs eternal

O sing hallelujah!

Now and ever we confess

Christ our hope in life and death

What truth can calm the troubled soul?

God is good, God is good

Where is His grace and goodness known?

In our great Redeemer's blood

Who holds our faith when fears arise?

Who stands above the stormy trial?

Who sends the waves that bring us nigh?

Unto the shore, the rock of Christ

Chorus: O sing hallelujah!

Unto the grave, what will we sing?

"Christ, He lives; Christ, He lives!"

And what reward will heaven bring?

Everlasting life with Him

There we will rise to meet the Lord

Then sin and death will be destroyed

And we will feast in endless joy

When Christ is ours forevermore (forevermore)

Chorus x 2: O sing hallelujah!

Our hope springs eternal

O sing hallelujah!

Now and ever we confess

Christ our hope in life and death

Jude 1:24-25

Now unto him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen

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