

The Creator at work in the seen and unseen

I love going into the garden and seeing how things grow. A few years ago we took out a hedge at the church which was dying and replaced it with some grevilleas. Not all of them survived but those that did have flourished and have flowers on them attracting both birds and insects. In the garden John and Matthew planted some agaves. They are hardy plants and some have not grown much but others have a number of 'pups' which need to be replanted. There is a Geranium that Karen planted and it has gone very well and continues to cope with the changes in weather. There are some other plants growing in the gardens which have been planted by different people at different times. Margaret comes and weeds from time to time. The lawns are cut and the hedges trimmed. Two of the gum trees were removed as they kept dropping branches and much has changed.

Yet there is a persistent gum sapling which keeps growing. No matter what we do like a weed that hangs in there, this sapling continues to grow. It is a reminder that there is something about nature we can understand and even control, but there is much that we can't.

We are in the season of Easter. During this time we recall the stories of the disciples in that early time after Jesus had died. They were afraid, shut away and did not really understand what was happening. We know from our own experiences of being shut away from Covid 19 that this is not the best way to live.

So, just like the peace lily at church which received too much sun and heat, (and not as much water as usual), we may feel 'dry' and wilted. The good news is that with a little attention, care and life-giving water we can recover well.

In the readings today we are reminded that the disciples struggled to find the good news. They were in places of fear and isolation. And perhaps their questions didn't seem to have any answers.

As someone who loves science it is very easy to focus on how things work and how they relate to each other. It is easy to look down a microscope and see a virus and be fascinated about that virus, how it looks and how it acts. It is another thing to take the broader look at the results of that virus and its impact upon people.

I think that it is really important for us to think about God and what some of the messages from God to the world have been and continue to be.

In the very beginning of Creation there are two interwoven stories of Creation and how things came to be. Perhaps the focus needs to be less upon 'what' happened and more on the beginning of an ever-evolving journey of bringing order out of chaos. In an article by Prof. Dr. Dr. Günter Thomas he speaks about how we need to readdress our Theology (way of understanding God) in light of the Covid 19 pandemic. He refers to *'the traditions of understanding Creation as the permanent overcoming of chaos'*. Yet when we are faced with Covid 19, other factors such as the Climate Crisis, and the ongoing challenges we face because of who we are as human beings, we need to rethink more of the things which have been solid understandings of the church. Reading Thomas' article "Theology in the shadow of the Corona Virus" there is a challenge – can Creation always be understood as good or do we need to rethink our understanding of Creation?



I am not going into this too much here but what I want to challenge us to think about is how we understand God. If we believe that God is so powerful that Creation came into being through God's spoken word (as in gospel of John and elsewhere) is it not then reasonable to believe that this same God is powerful enough to overcome death?

Even harder to understand is if God is powerful to overcome death, then why do we suffer? Is suffering for some a form of punishment, and for others seen as a test?

Perhaps the disciples in that upper room were in a place of wondering what was happening. Was God present or had their hopes in Jesus being the Messiah been dashed. Or was God testing them?

Sometimes our imaginations take us on journeys where we simply shouldn't go. When a lump is found- we suddenly imagine it is cancer and we will lose a limb- or even our lives. When someone speaks harshly to us or questions us our imagination can take us to a place of darkness where we berate ourselves.

Sometimes we simply need to be a little more matter-of-fact. Thomas was just like that. Let me see with my own eyes. Let me touch with my own hands then I will believe.

So Thomas and the other disciples had different experiences of the risen Christ. And although we can't be in the same time and place as that upper room all those years ago, we can also experience the risen Christ. For some of us it is a constant presence and for others, it is an occasional or even absent presence- but still a solid belief that God is with us.

We may never be able to touch Jesus' side like Thomas did, but we are blessed and able to believe because others believe. I haven't seen my own heart beating, yet I feel it within, and I know it is doing what it is supposed to. I haven't seen the electricity flowing through the house but I know that when I turn on a switch the electricity works.

The first letter of Peter speaks about trials and suffering-and I think we can all relate better to that now, and he speaks of belief and from that belief comes being filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.

May you know this joy, and may your belief be deepened by God who continually comes alongside us as we, just like a garden, are continually being grown and shaped by the One who loved us.

