

the
FINGERPRINT
of God





Dedication

For my family –
Neville,
Jeanette, David, Josh and Abbey,
Paul, Betsy, Reece and Nora.

And to the Reader –
May you know the
ongoing, gracious, unique
“Finger of God”
in each of your lives.



THE FINGERPRINT OF GOD

The fingerprint of God, in His creation, is everywhere –
From azure depths of sky to freshness of unpolluted air.
Flaming sun and billions of stars shine out His majesty.
Moon in reflected fullness whispers His kindness quietly.
Layered mountains – green, brown and tinged with mauve,
 then white after snow
Echo with the voice of One who formed them millennia ago.
Rough rocks, water-hewn stones tell of His work from antiquity.
In canyons and caves, in the heights and the depths, His hand we see.
Tiny grains of sand, clay, clumps of loam – birthplace of growing things;
Vast oceans, broad rivers, tranquil lakes, gaily skipping streams, springs;
Cumulus clouds, north-westerly gales, the soft rain and the hail
Remind us of His power and plan to provide without fail.

The fingerprint of God, in His creation, is everywhere.
In detailed design we find His involvement, and loving care.
The pure white arum lily in its stately simplicity
Points precisely to Holy God's streamlined creativity.
Spreading daisy bushes blooming so long and prolific'ly
Demonstrate clearly His open-handed generosity.
Peach blossom, pale pink; apple trees splattered with red and green globes,
Gladly proclaim His thoughtful provision – and His sweetness probes.
In scent of honeysuckle, roses, lavender, buddleia,
Rosemary, jasmine, nasturtiums, mock orange, gardenia
There's the fragrance of a love that continually reaches out,
Surrounding us with encouragement to believe and not doubt.

The fingerprint of God, in His creation, is everywhere.
Gravity, galaxies, night and day – all His greatness declare.
Spring, summer, winter and autumn harvest speak of His order.
Certain winter will return, grey squirrel's an annual hoarder.
In the frozen lands, bears slow down their breathing and hibernate.
Through warmer seas, fish spawn, abandoning offspring to their fate.
The limitless God of eternity, unhindered by time,
Has given us a framework to measure our days, that's sublime.
Who wound the clock of the March lily so it would not be late?
Who instructed the stork when to migrate; how to navigate?
Who told the olive thrush to start building its nest in the spring?
How blessed are we to have a time and season for everything.

The fingerprint of God, in His creation, is everywhere.
In horn of kudu, design of cheetah – the fleet and the fair;
In gracefully winging, beautifully coloured butterflies;
Cunningly camouflaged chameleon – on the twig it lies;
In the song of the robin and the cooing of laughing doves
God communicates His message of how much He truly loves.
Sea anemones, starfish and scuttling crabs in rocky pools;
Playful seals, waddling penguins, flying fish say, "A good God rules."
The fixed expectant eyes of our lively, faithful canine friend;
The shimmering black, blind, golden mole tunnelling without end;
Show the marvellous, varied world He's made for us to live in –
Wonderful – but flawed – no longer perfect because of our sin.

The fingerprint of God, in His creation, is everywhere.
Man moulded from dust; made in His image; none else could compare.
Cells of all kinds with information systems of DNA
Evidence His boundless intelligence and wisdom at play.
God's engineering produced the best pump in the world – the heart.
Varied colours of hair, eyes and skin – a tribute to His art.
Each individual unique; blessed with thought, deduction and wit –
A person composed of living matter, a soul and spirit.
Male and female formed according to His amazing design.
We were meant to be His friends. His plans for us were all benign.
Yet our bodies decay, our souls are soiled, our spirits estranged.
His fingerprint so perfect we have smudged, spoiled and rearranged.

The fingerprint of God, in His creation, is everywhere.
Once, the Creator entered His creation, our life to share.
Into the imperfection we created through sinful pride,
He came in humility and for our rebel selves, He died.
Over the chaos of mankind's fall – the death and decay –
Our Creator triumphed when He rose on Resurrection day.
That was the start of an eternally perfect creation.
Where there is no fear, sadness, regret, pain or condemnation;
But joy, enjoyment, love and relationships restored once more;
While beauty, harmony of purpose and design lie in store.
If God's fingerprint here is good, how much better it will be
In the new heaven and earth with His recreated family.

November 2012

SUMMER IN SHEMLAN

(written one summer – about 1972)

Red rose hips,
The climbing pink Roses
And the cream ones with the earwigs in,
The thick, old Bay tree and the Judas tree
With the leaves dropping in the Autumn,
The heavy green gates that creak
And the arch over them
Where the children climb up
In danger of falling and breaking their limbs,
The Fig tree heavy with fruit
That is red and sweet – yet tart –
Where you stand and pick
While the rotting figs on the ground
Stick to your shoes,
The Vines leaning over and half falling down,
The grapes too small but sweet,
The stone walls, the terraces, the wild grasses,
The Cyclamen and red Anemones in the spring,
The yellow Crocuses in the Autumn
Creeping out of the hard and barren earth,
The excitement of finding two slightly eaten Violets
Amongst the green leaves that die off in the heat,
The green, thick grass in winter,
The dry stubble at the end of summer,
The clusters of climbing, yellow Roses
And later the red Virginia creeper
Heralding the end of summer,
The red-tiled roof, the Crab-apple tree,
The Pomegranate trees and the Quince
With one piece of solitary fruit,
The wooden verandas and the iron railings,
And the cement, block floors,
The stone walls, the buttresses, the arches
And those lovely, arched windows with the light shining through
As we sat around the embers of the dying camp fire,
The domed and arched dining room – and study,
And the telephone booth lavatory,
The little stone outhouses and cottages,
The outside Arabic toilet with the black sewer flies



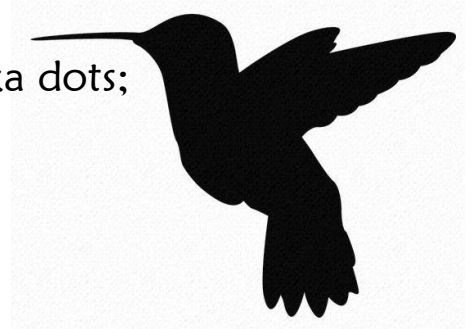
On the white-washed walls
With the plaster falling down in cakes,
And the weeds,
The red Geraniums covered with spider webs,
The old bell-pull – and that bell,
The Azzabaal calling for the rubbish,
The little donkeys struggling down the steps
Next to the house –
Their owners calling out their offerings
And the sound of our neighbour, Violette's voice raised high,
The view over the mountains
Down to the sea,
The feeling of openness and freedom on the edge of the village,
The church bell early and late,
The crackers for Eid-assoliib,
The thick walls, the old lecture room
Turned into the table tennis room,
The derelict state of the building
And yet the security, steadfastness,
The friendliness of its spooky passages,
The dungeon-like one passing by the only bathroom,
The rail-less stairs to the attic,
The different floor levels,
The quaint drawer-stairs,
The dark room and raftered ceilings,
And the cracked plaster ones
In imminent danger of falling down
But somehow staying up,
The fun and fellowship,
The sound of the children
Laughing, shouting, quarrelling,
Games – Cluedo, Railroader,
Services in the garden, hymns, tapes, Sidlow Baxter.
How can I express what I have found here?
The desire to express what I feel is heavy on my stomach
But the ability escapes me.
I only know I love the old house
And the tree-shaded, neglected garden
And the village
And the people
And the little church up the steps
I'm glad God brought me here.

BIRDS OF THE AIR

Psalms 16:6 The lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places .

A cream butterfly flies, and lands
On an impatiens; closes her wings;
Drinks nectar;
Flits to another flowerpot, and lands
On a pink impatiens.

A small sunbird pecks at a bun;
Mouldy, iced Chelsea bun dotted with fruity polka dots;
On a cracked, gold-rimmed, bone-china plate;
On the green bird table
That once was a door.



Red-winged starling black as black,
Except for the red, does not disdain the fungus tainted feast.
Five noisy, nervous sparrows
Gluttonously gorging themselves on the food;
Sitting on the copper water bowl;
Gone! Scared by a shadow.

A bulbul fledgling drinks and bathes
In the recently filled bird bath; filled with liquid from far underground.
A bulbul breaks the fast
Two bulbuls bathing; fanning themselves dry.
Two others on the loop of a creeper;
The loop of the cup of gold.



The leaves of the lemon scented gum wave.
A branch of the Cape ash twists. The leaves of the bottle brush
Join the chorus.

Sun shines on the neighbour's roof;
On the bird-spattered red tiles of the neighbour's roof.

Sun shines on half the lawn,
And half the garden. Rocks border the lawn.
Shrubs and trees – oleanders, yellowwood.
Frangipani, fir and pomegranate –
Hide the wall, line the lawn.

Sunshine from the east
Warms the wall;
Wilts the poinsettias and arum lilies;
Beats on the climbing bougainvillea;
Climbing green and mauve
Into the dead ash tree.

A witogie hops from twig to twig,
Searching for protein satisfaction. The breeze moves the bird feeder house.
Chimes move with no audible sound.
An orange butterfly momentarily appears.
Their caterpillars thrive on cyanide
From the recovering wild peach tree.



Landing – bulbuls with tufty hairstyle.
Eating – bulbuls, each with yellow spot. Fleeing – cowardly bulbuls –
From a single sparrow!
Female olive thrush, dull orange belly,
Stands sentinel, cautious, watching.
Suddenly yellow beak grabs dough-like piece. Lift off.

(Four footed trapeze artist, bushy tail,
Creeps along the beams; grips the living rope;
Disappears.)

Once more, the female sunbird,
Sparrows, bulbuls contesting, sharing.
Doves unaccounted for, unaccountably.



All around – cool green;
Carpet of green; curtains of green – balm to the eyes;
Thankfully green overhead on a hot, muggy summer's day.
Dabs of colour – bright, gem-like, muted.
Varieties of colour
Painted by the Artist Par Excellence.

Oh the blessing of older age –
Time – to sit, observe, enjoy, appreciate.
And share these moments with you.

January 2020

MY TIMES ARE IN YOUR HANDS

A constant challenge to faith, is the SPAN of your life;
Unanswered questions causing conflict of mind, and strife –
How to understand suffering, the wounds and the scars.

Remember – GOD reigns. HE rules your life, the earth and stars.

Your TIMES are in HIS almighty hands, HIS Word declares.
When distress, hurt, perplexity come your way, HE cares.
And uses all to fulfil HIS sovereign, gracious plan.

Remember – CHRIST died for you; loves as only HE can.

Through yesterday's YEARS you have seen HIS true faithfulness –
When there was chaos and situations seemed a mess;
When life was easy, for there was happiness and peace.

Remember – HIS unchanging concern will not decrease.

Through many MONTHS when others heap on you all the blame,
Keep in mind you were clearly called to serve in HIS Name;
Regardless of others, you be faithful to HIM still.

Remember – you are HIS servant, there to do HIS will.

Through weary WEEKS that never seem to come to an end
Lean hard on your worthy and authoritative FRIEND.
HE will powerfully work to strengthen you within.

Remember – HE'LL never forsake you – HIS blood-bought kin.

Through difficult DAYS when others want to put you down;
And they look at you with disapproval or a frown,
HE'LL give grace to answer with words reasonable, mild.

Remember – who you really are – GOD'S beloved child.

Through hopeless HOURS when you feel you can't take any more;
You wonder to what purpose you worked so hard before?
You may have sowed and watered; the right conditions met.

Remember – GOD gives increase; expect a harvest yet.

Through mundane MINUTES that drag out their drab, dreary way;
When life is without colour – so uniform and grey;
When there's nothing to look forward to but stress and pain.

Remember – loss for HIS sake equals eternal gain.

Through scurrying SECONDS these lim'ted lives tick away.
As well as great joy, hardship and heartache come your way.
Can you trace in all things your CREATOR'S moulding hand?

Remember – no second causes; THEN you'll understand.

Through endless AGES you'll gratefully worship and praise
The TRIUNE GOD WHO orchestrated all your life's ways.
From birth to being born again and led you since then.

Remember – your life in HIS hands – remember again!

DISTANCE

DISTANCE – arcs of geographical space

Keeping us in a particular place;

DISTANCE – we have been scattered once again

To different parts of the globe, giving pain.

DISTANCE – transported through the skies to lands

Where each the other's life barely understands.

Distance – that which divides from the other –

Us from our children, sister from brother.

Distance – that's measured in thousands of miles,

Preventing a glimpse of faces, tears, smiles.

Distance – reminds at each season of year

That our most beloved ones are not here.

DISTANCE – what there was between me and God,

Until I was brought near, by Jesus' blood.

DISTANCE – He left His glory and His throne

To bridge the divide and make me His own.

DISTANCE – that which a loving God ordained.

Knowing Him, why then should I have complained?

Distance – part of our Father's grand plan

To share His love with each far child and man.

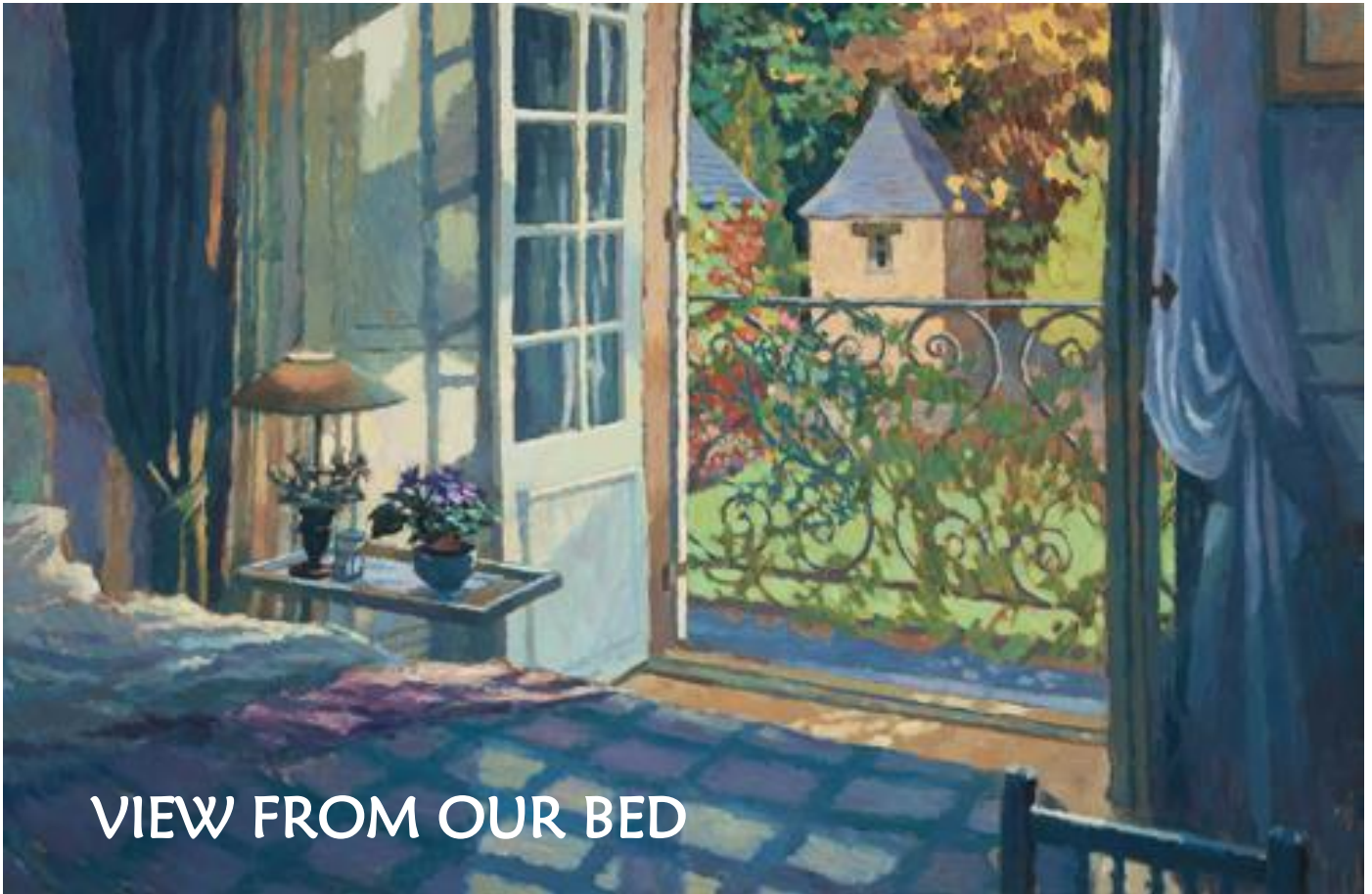
Distance – a cross that we gladly embrace,

Though suffering, that sinners may know grace.

Distance – we shall stay that way, joyfully;

If others may come near eternally.

Easter 2009, mostly



VIEW FROM OUR BED

I'm looking through the less-than-clean window,
Under the vine, across the patio,
Through the leafy gap that leads to the lawn,
Beyond the three-trunked Ash – ageing and worn –
To where the crags of the mountain appear –
Far, indistinct, yet at times sunlit clear.

The mountain's the backdrop to our living.
This sentinel, secure, unforgiving.
Here, behind the mountain, drew my first breath,
Here I expect to close my eyes in death.
I can view it but only partially –
Hidden behind leaves, pergola and tree.

This incomplete vision of what is there,
Speaks of life beyond that one day I'll share;
The future prepared which God Himself planned.
Through the Scriptures I partly understand.
Now it's distant; I dimly comprehend.
Then, full reality I'll apprehend.

January 2015



THE SECRET GARDEN

January 2017

The news is seldom good on TV, Facebook or printed page.
Our budding democracy is decaying, though of young age.
“Naught for your comfort” – violence, disturbance, corruption and crime –
We retreat to our islands, stand aloof so much of the time.

But we need a quiet oasis that can be separated
From a world of crazy noise – doof, doof – where order’s frustrated;
Unweeded pavements, with paper, plastic and dog poo are fouled,
By pedestrians with raised voices and unleashed dogs that growled.

We have a secret garden behind our high walls and locked gate,
Where we are at home and at peace in a world of threat and hate;
A place of relative security and serenity;
Green and shady beneath creepers and spreading tree canopy.

There is no litter in our flower beds, on the paths or lawn.
Underground streams ensure plants are neither wilting nor forlorn.
Touched by sun, shadows protect, and mild or strong south-easters cool.
Rippling refreshment mirrors reflections in a rock-bound pool.

Bright fuchsias, roses, orange crocosmia in the back yard
Dispense enjoyment in a country that is hot, dry and hard.
The potato plant stretches, grows tall with dainty cups of blue,
While small, deep pink carnations their blooms continually renew.

Round the house heat bakes, wind blows, seeks to dry the loose, sandy soil
Mould'ring leaves, fortuitously dropped, the conspiracy foil.
Rambling bougainvillea both blist'ring sun and cold survives.
Indigenous growth, protected or exposed, annually thrives.

Thrushes, ibis, robins, doves, raise their voices in cry or song,
Adding movement, music to our sanctuary all the day long.
Green headed, breast red draped, lesser collared sunbird – exotic.
Mating dove couples add a subtle touch of the erotic.

Under the vine, in the still liquid of the patio pond
Our solit'ry goldfish hides under a water iris frond.
By the white pillar, a stone table bears cracked, gold rimmed, white plate
On which alight winged creatures, whose appetites do not abate.

We offer services to the avian population –
A bird bath that quenches the thirst of the feathered creation.
Alone or in pairs they perch on the edge and daintily drink.
Then hop in for ablutions before returning to the brink.

Drying off on perches of fir, Hibiscus or Jo'burg Gold;
Stretching their wings, ruffling their feathers, the drying pose they hold.
Then renewed they fly away – who knows where – far out of our sight,
Or they stay on the nearby ash tree, the home birds alight.

Other visitors – those attractive rodents with bushy tails
Who sneak their sleek bodies under the wooden pergola rails;
Squirrels swing through trees with unbelievable, sure-footed speed,
Disappearing till next time they're driven back by thirsting need.

Near lavender, impatiens, on red bricks, two repaired chairs
Where we can relax, enjoy morning tea, relinquish our cares.
The world is still out there, often unsavoury; can't escape
The realities of people's lives – theft, death, disaster, rape.

We cannot be ostriches, hiding our heads, closing our eyes.
Beyond our garden wall a desperate and broken world lies.
God has work for us, with them His extravagant love to share –
Some small task or big to bring beauty to others, if we dare.

But in our secret garden we can read, quietly contemplate
That God's preparing a place which this spoilt earth cannot negate –
A new heaven, earth filled with only the beautiful and good,
Where there will never be mess or sin in any neighbourhood.

END OF A HOT SUMMER

The garden is dry and dusty;
Dying ferns and oak leaves – rusty;
Drought of summer and lack of rain
Leading to this place, worn and plain.

The roses have ceased their bearing;
None to pick, give, show our caring.
The tomatoes fading away;
Once prolific, they will not stay.

There seems to be something missing –
Scant blooms the butterflies kissing;
No sense of luxurious growth;
Fewer Cape doves plighting their troth.

Yet there is, brilliant and bold,
A Crane flower of blue and gold;
While Impatiens daily dress
In gem-like shades – though there are less.

Bright blue, pink Plectranthus showing
That not just for leaves, they're growing.
Blossoming now for good reason,
Count'ring drabness of this season.

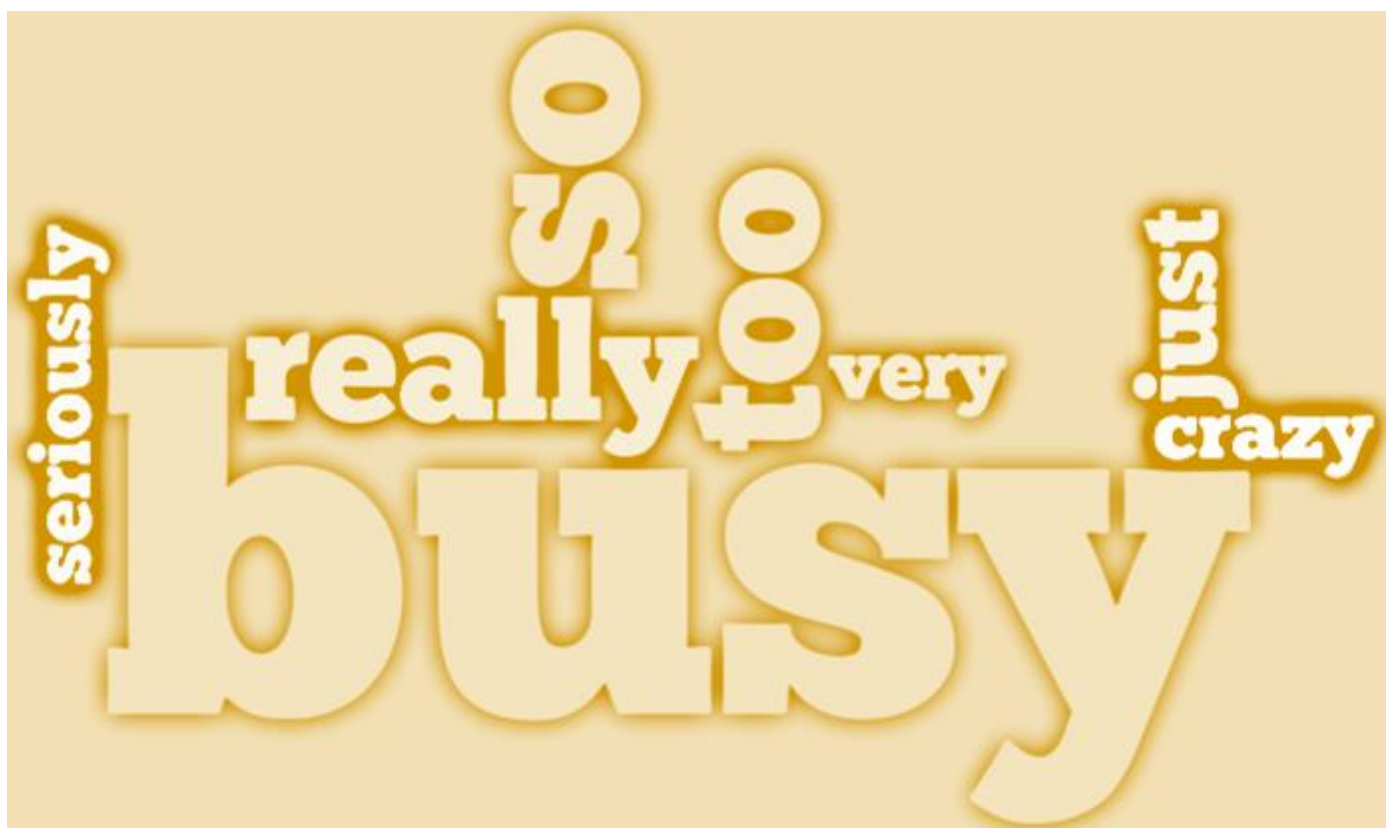
Cream and red Fuschia still delights;
Those of diff'rent hues claim their rights.
Odd Nasturtium catches the eye.
Geraniums refuse to die.

Ornamental vine met sad fate,
Harshly pruned near the wooden gate;
One on the patio remains –
Red, overtaking green, now reigns.

Autumn garden's a bit like me –
Looking old, less activity.
Trust there can be bright life to bless
Amidst this ageing wilderness.

27 April 2017





TOO BUSY Written in Lebanon when the children were small.

Lord, forgive me,
I've been so busy.
I just said, "Thank you"
"Thank You for a few minutes
To fit You in".
How could I?
As though time with You
Should not be top priority.
As though You should not be first.

Lord, forgive me,
"Thou shalt have no other gods beside Me."
I put the cleaning of the house,
The tidying, the breakfast,
My husband, the children –
Everything before You
And now – I'm fitting You in.
Forgive me, Lord, for this great sin –
Other things before You,
And just fitting You in.

CAMEOS THROUGH OUR WINDOWS

AUTUMN

Three pots, three roses, differing shades of red;
One white butterfly flutters; wings overhead;
A single bee hovering, ready to dive;
Collecting nectar for transport to the hive.



Large Plectranthus bush with tall spikes of deep blue;
Nearby another of the same species too;
Carries many flowers of delicate pink –
Fall blooms, between summer and winter the link.



Shadows on Kirstenbosch green wall, moving, dark;
Stillness, nothing to disturb except dog's bark;
Mid-morning, yet the light is like an eclipse;
Heedless the laughing dove, from free water sips.

Orange hibiscus, its flower borne aloft.
Orange throated robin alights – soundless, soft;
Flies up into shedding oak tree, standing tall.
Berry tree's leaves orangey-brown, soon will fall.

Two open roses of striped pink and scarlet;
Two long-lasting orange roses by cream knit;
Close to each other you would expect a clash;
They live in harmony – the sweet and the brash.



Squirrel in creeper, rapidly moves along.
If I guessed at destination, I'd be wrong.
He's thirsty and arrives at the full bird bath;
A long drink then retraces his tree-borne path.

Wispy clouds and two butterflies – all in white;
Red and green leaves of the vine in noon sunlight;
Rose and blue miniature flowers in foreground;
Azure sky above; sandstone rocks on the ground.



Still the roses keep on blooming and dying;
Joy-giving, with each other's glory vying.
Seven beauties opening today are red;
Standard bears thirteen pink, higher than my head.

Red-flowered bush, stamens pointing to the sky;
Maybe small sunbird visitors, by and by;
Tall, green neighbour with its multi-floral sprays –
Purple-blue, relieving those dull autumn days.

Sun on wall, shining and vaunting its power;
Indigenous shrub beginning to flower;
Shape of the Cape fig tree in a silhouette;
Shrub illuminates the shade, by bright shades met.

Young robin perched on the low hanging vine loop;
Bulbul devouring red berries in a group;
Witogie nearby flitting, pecking for food;
Black-masked robin moves to a new neighbourhood.

Night-time; scattered stars – points of light unfailing;
Between them ephemeral white blobs, trailing.
The first fixed, incredibly distant in space;
The near clouds will soon disappear without trace.



Through the lounge windows, spikes of bright red and leaves of greenest green
To right Plectranthus skeletons with few blue petals still seen;
High presentation of mature, curling leaves, coloured port wine,
Pink, tints of yellow – the turning, shedding ornamental vine.



Yes, it's that special season of the year – autumn here once more;
Cooler, mellow, cloudy, sunny; winter waiting at the door.
Now all's pleasing, but precursor to that which before us lies;
Coming – the weeping, grey clouds and thundering, punishing skies.

Life's like that – calm and pleasant and peaceful without hint of storm;
But Winter will come with rain and hail in one or other form.
Are we ready? Not with extra clothes or firewood to bring cheer;
But with a strong foundation that stands when the tempest is here.



In our mild Autumn circumstances, we have time to prepare
And hold fast to the unmoving Rock who all our gales will share.
Cemented on the Rock of Ages, we'll endure and survive.
Beyond Winter is Spring and though battered, intact we'll arrive.

April 2015

There are some situations in this life, I must confess,
When on the surface all appears to be a muddy mess.
And it would seem that God has lost the thread of His own plot
Or worse – He is cruel or indifferent, or simply forgot.

Think of Job whose life was happy, prosperous, full of good.
He enjoyed marriage, a sound reputation, fatherhood.
Shares in sheep, camels, donkeys and oxen, he had plenty.
With a large household, seen as leader of local gentry.

He was an exemplary man who kept his conscience cleared
Of wrong before the God, he gratefully worshipped and feared.
He concerned himself with his family's spiritual state;
To ensure this, he paid the price and did not hesitate.

From every point of view that is reasonable and fair,
He deserved a life's voyage of fair winds, sails set, sans much care.
But suddenly everything started to go badly wrong
With a sequence of disasters unbelievably long.

The unprovoked attack on oxen and donkeys came first
With the slaughter of faithful servants that was the worst.
Then the sheep and shepherds killed by lightning was the next news;
Followed camels, more workers butchered. What more could he lose?

He was still to receive the hardest, deepest, most cruel blow.
A further messenger arrived to let stricken Job know
Of the whirlwind, and his beloved children's dreadful fate.
In spite of all, Job would not his God blame, reproach or slate.

But his terrible trials even then had not yet ended.
For painful boils on his own body's skin now descended.
And his devastated, mourning wife added to his woe;
With bitterness urging him, his life and God to forego.

Now in this extremity Job had three unhelpful friends.
They knew it all, as they tried to get him to make amends.
It was obviously his own fault that tragedy struck,
"If you were innocent, Job, you would have had better luck."

They had all the answers and knew exactly how God worked;
To shield God's reputation, Job must have his duty shirked.
While they multiplied their thoughtless words, Job struggled within;
Wished he'd never been born, but denied deliberate sin.

Thus he cried in agony of spirit, bitterness of soul.
Sleepless nights and hopeless days, from his life all comfort stole.
Job wrestled to understand God's unfathomable ways;
Who will not respond however much he cries, seeks and prays.

Through all the darkness, though he couldn't clearly comprehend,
In spite of the platitudes of each aggravating friend,
There were flashes of faith at times, although they were but brief:
God could be trusted, despite Job's hurt, puzzlement and grief.

Well, God would not allow him to be tested endlessly,
So He intervened, out of the whirlwind, challengingly.
Questioned the man, "Where were you when I created the world?"
And to get Job thinking, question after question, God hurled.

There was no direct answer to Job's previous demanding.
He grasped that God had no peer in wisdom or understanding.
The almighty Creator alone knew what the score was.
Job realized, unlike man, God was in another class.

If only Job had perceived the behind-the-scenes action,
It might have given him some reasons and more satisfaction.
Not at first knowing Satan's part in his suffering and stress,
He still had to trust that God's paths are never purposeless.

"No purpose of Yours can be thwarted", the man concluded.
Despite his ignorance, God's plans could not be occluded.
"Once I heard of you but now with crystal clear clarity
Inwardly I can see You, God; sovereign and almighty."

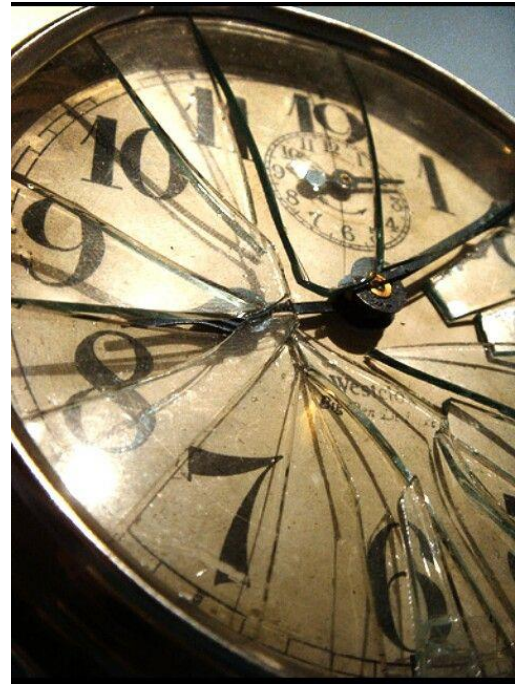
The only answer to our anguish and perplexity –
Not the "why" but the "Who" – our incredible Deity.
Experience tells us – through our confusion and distress,
We learn to see God more clearly, than in our happiness.

Though many centuries have passed since the lifetime of Job,
His words and story have travelled right around this great globe.
The man could never have imagined, in his wildest dreams,
How God would use his pain to light our darkness with faith's gleams.

Many a man and woman in tears and near to despair
Have learnt from the patience of Job and all he had to bear.
And it's often God's way, through suffering, to bring gain not loss.
If you have doubts about my logic, just look at the Cross.

THE OLD CLOCK

September 2014



My Great-Aunt Mary's husband's clock, hangs on our bedroom wall
It once graced his office – beyond that know nothing at all.
But since she gave it to me, it's travelled thousands of miles;
Peered out at our ups and downs, drama, disagreements and smiles.

In nineteen eighty-four, it hung in our kitchen that day,
When the shell exploded in such a devastating way.
The old timepiece lost the glass that protected its white face,
While shrapnel removed enamel and left a dent in place.

And in the thirty years since nineteen eighty four, it's stayed
Without the glass; proudly displaying that wound the war made.
Surrounded by cornered, polished wood and elegant brass,
It once was a clockwork clock of superior class.

Sadly, age caught up. The clockmaker found it hard to fix.
Then he changed this proud ancient into a quartz and antique mix.
We no longer need to carefully wind the vintage clock.
The hands keep on moving but it's quieter – lost some tick-tock.

So now we have a mixed-up time-teller on our green wall.
Though life is not the same, I've not heard it protest at all.
It's worth to us, I can neither calculate nor measure.
Though downgraded, we regard it as a special treasure.

This hybrid, reduced in value, without its own brass key,
Is appreciated by reason of our history.
It speaks loudly of the Father's loving, protective care.
While it was hurt by the shell, God arranged that we weren't there.



CRIMSON RED

January 2017

Red, red, red, crimson red
All over the garden
In damp, gritty soil bed.

Some yellow, mainly red,
Each Poinsettia's branch
Ends in a showy head.

Bougainvillea red,
Climbing up to the roof,
Follows where light led.

Still clinging, vine leaves red.
Not the worst storm in years
Can persuade them to shed.

Bunches of rounded red
On the peppercorn tree –
Green with bright clusters wed.

This warming winter red,
Clearing the dull outdoors
Where other plants seem dead.

Various tints of red –
Contrast to the greyness,
When summer's shades have fled.

Red, red, red, crimson red –
Reminder of the blood
That flowed red, in my stead.

What's your understanding of this world's history?
It makes sense or it's a meand'ring mystery?
Is there some purpose behind those centuries past?
Or is it haphazard like a dice being cast?

There are learned theses and grand philosophies,
Behind the host of famed historians' theories –
Ways to look at archaic and more recent times;
To unravel their customs, culture, kings and crimes.

Instead interrogate God's comprehensive Book,
And you'll find that history has a different look.
Perceiving it from God's deep, wide-viewed perspective
Throws light on so much – it is hugely reflective.

We discover heaven and earth created good.
In an unsullied world, our first forefathers stood.
Man was special. God breathed into him his life's breath.
There was no sin, violence, unhappiness or death.

Man lived in Paradise with beauty and fruit trees.
A wise God gave them freedom and set boundaries.
God granted liberty His command to obey;
Desired a relationship of trust every day.

Adam and Eve were innocent and unashamed
Until they rebelled and each, one another blamed.
Tempted by Satan they sinned, turned their backs on Him.
With dire, fatal consequences, they chose to sin.

And we are the later offspring of that first man;
Living without God because we think that we can.
And that is man's history from Eden till now;
Refusing before God's authority to bow.

Consider the passing millennia and see
If this does not explain the course of history?
The cruelty, the pride, the selfishness and the spite,
The greed, the lies and the blurring of wrong and right.

Deep imperfection in each single human life;
Jealousy, covetousness, unfaithfulness, strife.
Death entered the world through sin, bringing tragedy,
Sadness, separation, heartache and misery.

Made in God's image, His marvellous creation,
Man turned aside wanting his own deviation.
Though spoiled, that image is not obliterated.
To restore, recreate, God planned, acted, waited.

On the day of man's Fall God promised, and He said,
"Seed of the woman would come and crush Satan's head."
The rest of the story from that start until now
Highlights mankind's revolt and refusal to bow.

Men's insistence on their godless independence
Led to endless wars, with dark hell in attendance.
Through it all God pursued His own purposes sure
To redeem such sad losers and remake them pure.

God chose someone from a heathen city, called Ur.
Abram became Abraham, Sarai named Sarah.
Unfolded His plan to use them to send His best;
The Seed through whom all the world's nations would be blessed.

Four hundred years plus; followed each generation;
From Isaac to Moses the fam'ly turned nation.
Out of Egypt, Jehovah called them to the land
He had promised, and they entered in as He planned.

Sometimes they followed His law and sometimes did not.
Often, they went their own way, past lessons forgot.
When at times they were defeated and, on their knees,
Gracious God would once more rescue from enemies.

Came the time of David, king after God's own heart;
The Lord promised that his family line was the start
Of a kingdom without end; an eternal throne
To be filled by One of his descendants alone.

Followed centuries of the nation's ups and downs;
Rulers assorted – statesmen, idolaters, clowns.
Until the Lord, though so patient, had had enough;
Handed them over to Babylon – cruel and rough.

Chastened by seventy years of bitter exile,
Descendants returned to rebuild after a while.
Through four hundred more years of trouble and felt need,
They waited for Abraham's, David's promised Seed.

They expected an all-conquering Messiah –
One who would drive out the Romans, was their desire.
God sent the blessed Seed, a baby helpless, small –
Yet God incarnate, Himself, come to save us all.

He lived a righteous life of grace, healing and love.
Some trusted Jesus was the One sent from above;
Others rejected and plotted that He should die;
Encouraged the mad mob to shout out, "Crucify!".

Through the apparent defeat of His dreadful death
Satan's head was crushed, as with His last cry, last breath
Jesus, Lord, claimed the full and finished victory –
Over death and sin and hell and the enemy.

And the triumph of the finished work of that hour
Was proved when He rose on the third day in power.
He gave orders to the Eleven, us as well,
"Go to folk of all nations and the good news tell."

The Holy Spirit was poured out to change, restore;
To bring about people recreated once more;
Reconciled to the Father through His blessed Son;
The Fall reversed; it's done, being done, will be done.

And when the years decreed by God have sped their way
This spoilt earth will dramatically pass away.
A new heaven and earth are planned – lovely and good;
Perfection once more – nothing evil, sad or crude.

It will be paradise restored, as Milton said.
There will be joy as God's people praise Christ their Head;
Worship Father and Spirit, their Three-in-One God –
Forever rejoicing in the Lamb and the blood.

God's take on hist'ry is that the story's all His.
He planned, gave and carried out all His promises.
His purpose cannot be thwarted through all ages.
His past, present, future plans – in The Book's pages.

I WANT MERCY, NOT SACRIFICE

May 2012

Hosea 6:6; Matthew 9:13

“I want mercy, not sacrifice.”

How profound is the depth of this word
From the kind lips of a holy Lord –
Not thinking that religious duty
Precedes giving love in its beauty;
Not God’s law, rigid in the letter
But kept in the spirit – much better;
Not emphasizing Sabbath keeping
At the cost of compassion weeping.

“I want mercy, not sacrifice.”

Terrifying – I must die to “me”,
Living for the struggling ones I see;
To have mercy on those who are weak;
Not despising but helping them seek.
Enabling to find God’s solution,
Those whose lives are dark with pollution;
Having a heart for the one who’s poor
When adversity knocks them once more.

“I want mercy, not sacrifice.”

This emphasizes priorities –
Respecting oppressed minorities;
Visiting the child who is ailing
And the old man whose mind is failing;
Empathy and comfort for the sad;
Rememb’ring prisoners, said to be bad.
Considering my own sinfulness,
I cannot judge those who’ve made a mess.

“I want mercy, not sacrifice.”

I of all people should understand –
I’ve received mercy at God’s hand.
Now He wants me mercy to extend
And acceptance, patience with no end.
Easier to offer sacrifice
Than to pay mercy’s demanding price.
But He who showed us this different way
Provides the love to pass on each day.



AUTUMN AND GOD

May 2013

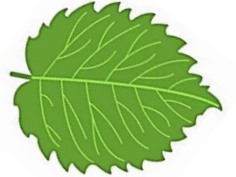
Autumn vine leaves outside on the patio;
Changing shades of red, pink and muted yellow;
Though once bright green, each one will fade, die and fall.
The damp, dark and gritty soil welcomes them all.

The serrated oak leaves are also dying;
Detaching, dropping, upon the ground lying.
The berry tree is cheerful with its red fruit.
But brown, once-live leaves are resting at its root.

Seems such a prodigious waste of living things.
Their relentless death disintegration brings.
What purpose this messy, mouldering decay?
This wasteful destruction nothing can delay?

Yet God is the wise, great Recycler Supreme;
Bacteria, bugs and worms, part of His team;
Transforming the discarded, done-with and despised,
The forgotten, the deserted and the demised.

Rubbish abandoned, broken down bit by bit;
Turned to an extraordinary benefit –
Humus, compost created for life to grow.
When Spring comes there will be green, red, pink, yellow.



AUTUMN AND GOD – some weeks later

Looking through the burglar bars on our window
At the fading leaves – less red, pink and yellow.
But still so beautiful in antique colours –
Some dying more graciously than others.

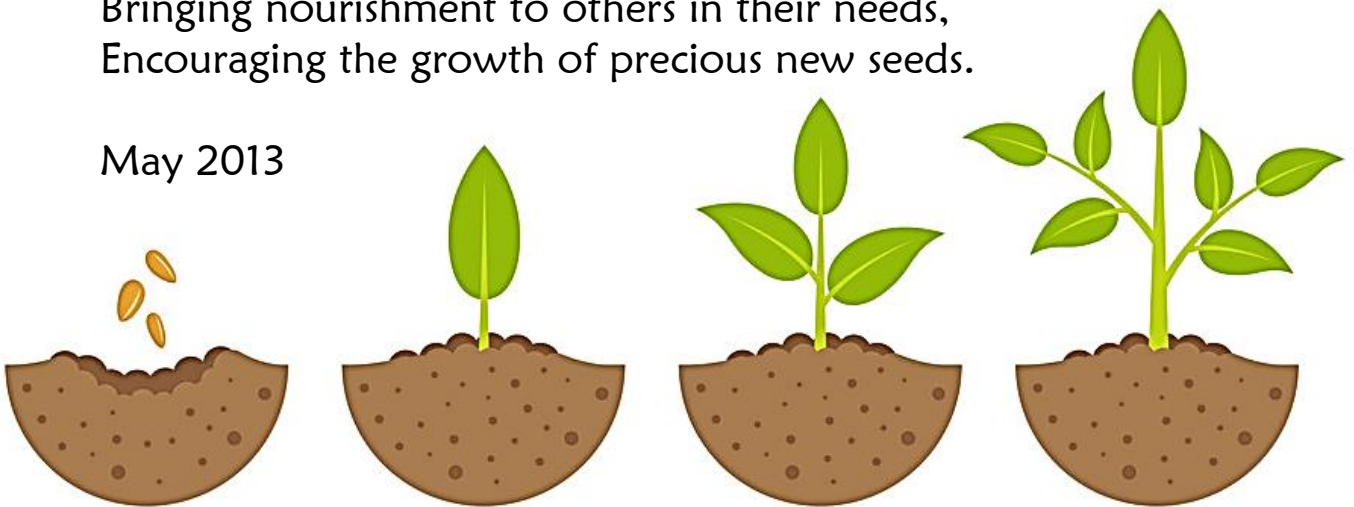
What an amazing craftsman – our Creator!
This world is not perfect, as it was before.
Yet in imperfection, He's chosen to bless
We're surrounded by underserved loveliness.

If God can do so much with nature's decay;
Form joy for the eyes in plants that do not stay;
How much more can He transform a blighted life;
Change “ashes to beauty” and give peace for strife.

Before we knew grace, we never realised
The way God can take the fallen and despised;
Turning lost lives into a life-giving boon,
To help protect the weak from the heat of noon.

Out of the disintegration of our lives,
God makes an enriching warmth in which growth thrives –
Bringing nourishment to others in their needs,
Encouraging the growth of precious new seeds.

May 2013



A LESSON IN DETERMINATION

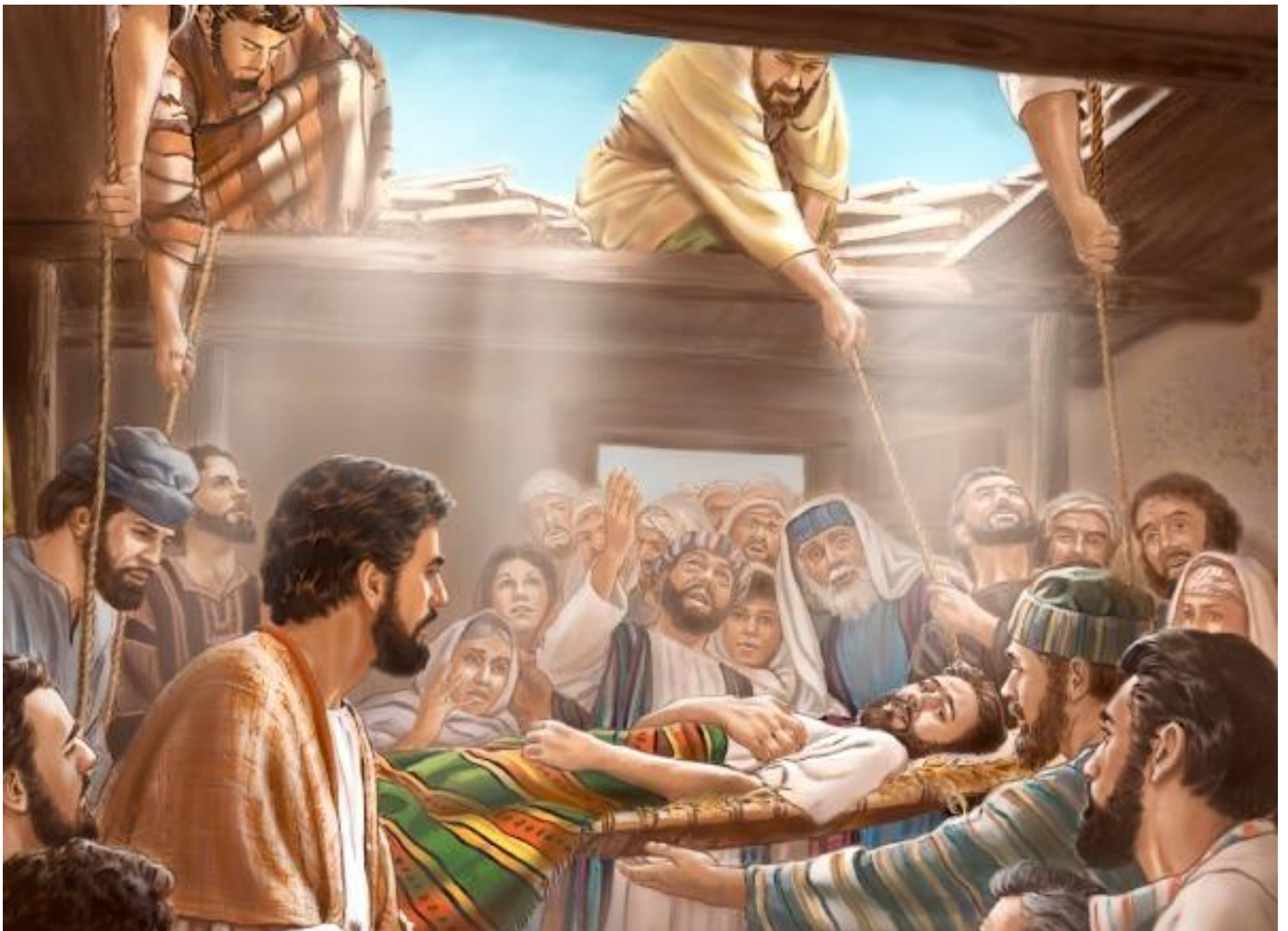
June 2014

The man lay on his rolled-out mattress and thought...and thought
About the law of Moses which he had been thoroughly taught.
Disregarding it, to these consequences he had been brought.
No use blaming others, in his own tangled net he was caught.

The guilt of his sin eroded the man's deeply troubled mind.
Where on earth could he forgiveness, restoration and peace find?
If he lived in holy Jerusalem...but he was resigned.
No way to get there and offer a lamb the way God designed.

The man's fearful future stretched before him – bleak and grey and grim.
Paralysis and uselessness and helplessness – hope was dim.
Bodily functions out of control; suffering full to the brim;
For all normal needs, dependent on another person's whim.

But the man who found his life to have such a bitter flavour.
Had one hopeful, positive factor that he could still savour –
Four, non-judgemental men whose concern and caring behaviour
Meant, that with all he had lost, something was still in his favour.



They weren't ready to leave the man in his dire situation.
They would get him to Jesus – this their firm determination.
The Carpenter from Galilee, a prophet in their nation,
Healed lepers, delivered the possessed without hesitation.

Carrying the immobile man, they arrived at the right house;
But the crowds were so dense, no one could pass – not even a mouse.
They took the stairs to the roof, removed tiles. Did some people grouse,
“Why are they bringing him here? Has not God judged him – the louse?”

The four men brought the man thinking of his physicality.
Perhaps neighbours condemned him on basis of morality
Onlookers may have had an unbelieving mentality.
Jesus considered first his state of spirituality.

Carpenter of Nazareth. Prophet like Moses. Son of God.
He knew the man's heart, his hist'ry, his need and the path he trod;
The despair, humiliation, hopelessness – under the rod;
Deeply marked furrow of guilty remorse he'd constantly plod.

“Your sins are forgiven”, Jesus promised with authority.
The man's burden lifted, the past dealt with authentically.
Some religious leaders were totally shocked – “And Who is He?
Only God can forgive sins,” declared the truth unknowingly.

For the sake of the man, and the many doubters all around,
Jesus then commanded him to pick up his bed off the ground.
Paralysed man, despite wasted muscles, was up with a bound,
With pow'r and compassion, Jesus could unbelievers confound.

From the true story we can deduce and gather umpteen things.
Jesus Who forgives, is God the Son with Whose praise heaven rings.
Jesus is the One Who, ultimately, health and healing brings.
Jesus knows our hearts, our thoughts because He is the King of Kings.

That's not exactly where the teaching of this incident ends,
Because Jesus took special note of the faith of the man's friends.
They made sure he got to Jesus despite the tale's twists and bends.
Sometimes the fate of others, on your faith and my faith depends.

To forgive the man's sin, Jesus alone had absolute right.
For it was He Who would pay the price on a dark day turned to night;
On a Cross, on a hill, the Lamb of God sacrificed – the sight!
THE MAN changed the man's destiny (and ours) from bitter to bright.

CAMEOS (Looking out through our Windows)



For now, the north westerly winds and drenching rain are done –
Beyond the trees, mild blue skies and a temporary sun.
Outlined, dark shape on the boundary wall, a plump olive thrush
Calmly surveying its hunting grounds – not in any rush.
Diving to alight on the rough, thick, looped trunk of the Vine –
Unashamed and bare, of green life there's not a single sign.
Orange abdomen, olive backed, yellow beaked bird gently
Descends to the ground; disappears amongst leafy debris –
Ever tracking delicious morsels of soft slugs and snails.
In wet weather they multiply leaving their slimy trails.

There's one imperious, impressive looking Hadedda,
Joined on the grass by its mate – as imposing, on a par.
Busy using their long-curved beaks, they kindly condescend
To assist us, aerating our lawn as their necks they bend.
Regal and ancient Ibis, your family tree is well-known.
Pity you spoil things by your raucous cry – like an old crone.
Your stately ancestors revered as sacred, long ago.
We're honoured you are not too proud to help our garden grow.
Whether slithering, pink earthworms feel the same, is in doubt.
Their lives are endangered as you probe and wander about.

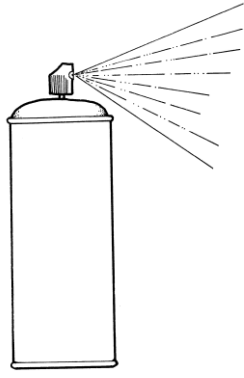
Three open Iceberg roses with closed, roseate offspring
Need to be pruned. Hard to be ruthless while they keep blooming.
In the same antique bath clumps of Snowdrops happily seen –
Small, white heads humbly hanging down, decorated with green.
It may be winter, it may be cold and windy today
But still yellow and red Poinsettias are on display.
Arum lilies are blooming. This is their territory.
Pale pink Almond blossoms burst into life on the old tree.
High above, a Hadedda calls uninhibitedly.
They let their presence be known – African style – noisily.

The deciduous Oak tree is leafless, lifeless, forlorn.
In its heart sleeps the sap but there is left not one acorn.
Then what are those two squirrels doing on the patio,
When their natural food is rotting in the damp soil below?
They run along the wooden beams, the garden walls, the trees,
Driving Balash crazy, barking up and down to so-fa keys.
They must be decidedly short of food and so hungry.
Saw both handling Hibiscus leaves, eating them daintily.
They make free of our private place and our bird bath water.
We'll tolerate them as long as there's no fledgling slaughter.

Thick clouds pouring over mountain, from north west direction.
Another cold front coming to challenge our protection,
Threatening our roofs, windows, doors and frail tree branches.
We're battened down, ready for the worst, taking no chances.
Will driving, pouring, oh-so-wet, persistent winter rain
Flood the poor, low-lying shacks on the sandy Flats again?
Farmers, dams desperately need this liquid provision;
But in its wake, men, women, children from homes are driven.
The wind is picking up; the skies more foreboding and grey.
Through the mistiness weak sun shines, before fading away.

August 2015

SELF- DEFENCE



I caused an awful catastrophe today.
Don't feel particularly good about it.
"But what else could I have done?" is all I can say
Would you have acted differently? I doubt it.

I realised our home, our goods were under threat,
And acted in legitimate self-defence.
It's not like I owe those intruders a debt.
What if you'd seen crowds of creatures black and dense?

But when I consider they too had a life;
Were only trying to provide for their own.
They'd worked extra hard though challenges were rife –
A close-knit community – not one a drone.

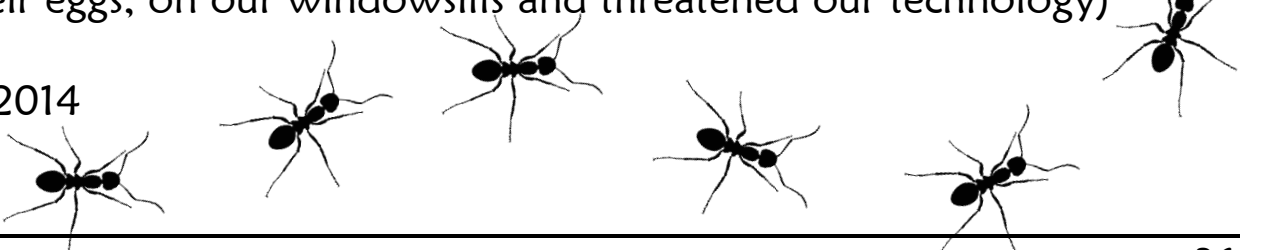
If they had kept their distance, they'd have been fine.
There would not now be so many of them dead.
Embryonic young, for which the living pine,
Would be safe; not scattered on the ground instead.

And I was responsible for the chaos.
I acted, and killed, not just a few of them.
Because of me, they met disruption and loss.
If they return, I'll get rid of them again.

Though the necessary action I regret,
One thing is sure, we simply cannot afford
To have our computer confused and upset
By the invasion of an enemy horde.

(Written when the ants once again found refuge,
with their eggs, on our windowsills and threatened our technology)

August 2014



THE BLACK BUTTERFLY

Winging its way across the backyard, a black butterfly.
I do not think I have ever seen one like it before.
It was unusual, sombre, like a travelling sigh;
A reminder of darkness and gloom; despair at its core.

Winging its way across the backyard, a black butterfly.
In our garden it is scarce, in fact exceedingly rare.
It is beautiful, sophisticated and soaring high;
Simplicity dancing a ballet in the sunlit air.

Winging its way across the backyard, a black butterfly.
With my own two eyes I can see it in different ways:
I can concentrate on its darkness, feel sad, want to cry
Or recognise it as God's creation, giving Him praise.

In the natural world, and in life, not everything is light.
Plants, creatures can be dull, grey or black, like times in our lives.
I appreciate joyful colours, exciting and bright.
Can I accept it's sometimes in bleak days, my spirit thrives?

April 2015





The Triune God

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Our God is an amazing mystery.
He is One, yet has been revealed as Three.
On this rock, the Christian faith is founded.
On this truth, many a one has floundered.

In the Old Testament there are clear clues.
Through the books, this deep fact you may peruse.
Creation to Moses, through history,
Psalms, the Prophets unveil the Trinity.

God the Father, through His Word, created.
The Spirit also participated.
“Let us make man in Our image”, God said;
“According to Our likeness” – the Godhead.

Abraham, Hagar, Moses, Gide’n saw
The Angel of the Lord and stood in awe.
Jacob’s weakened by a Man, as a sign.
Joshua worshipped God’s Commander Divine.

Moses met Someone, with the bush burning,
Who gave a Name, to set the brain churning.
His, God’s revealed name “I am that I am”.
Jesus claimed it as His own, though a man.

David probably did not comprehend
The significance of the words he penned:
“The Lord said to my Lord” in Psalm 110.
But Jesus explained it to doubting men.

Isaiah had incredible insight
When he named the Infant of divine right.
The Babe born, was also the given Son,
With a threefold name ascribed to this One.

King Ahaz refused to ask of the Lord.
The prophet gave from God a special word;
A virgin-born Child with a holy name –
“God with us” – and the Incarnate Son came.

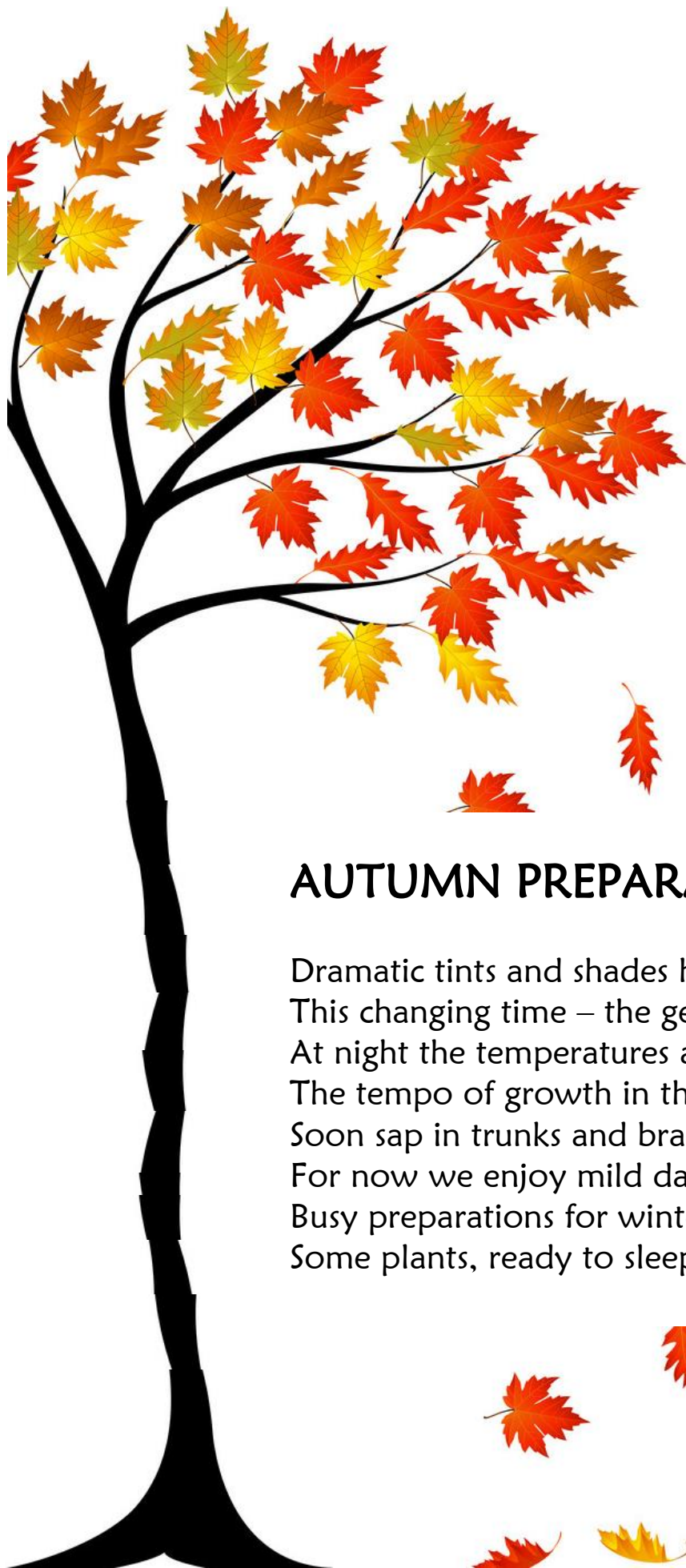
Micah speaks of Him born in Bethlehem
Who clearly grows to be like other men.
Yet “His goings forth are from ancient days”;
From everlasting, His Deity stays.

Of a Branch, Jeremiah prophesied –
David’s line; Bringer of Salvation wide.
He is to be “The LORD our righteousness”;
This One – God’s answer to our sinfulness.

We read often of the Holy Spirit
Who came on God’s servants without limit.
Isaiah records too how He was grieved
As men rebelled when they should have believed.

“Listen people, The Lord your God is One” –
Composite One – The Father, Spirit, Son.
God revealed, as age succeeded ages,
The Trinity – through the sacred pages.

July 2014



AUTUMN PREPARATIONS

Dramatic tints and shades heralding the Fall;
This changing time – the gentlest season of all.
At night the temperatures are slightly lower.
The tempo of growth in the garden slower.
Soon sap in trunks and branches will cease to rise.
For now we enjoy mild days and sunny skies.
Busy preparations for winter abound;
Some plants, ready to sleep dormant in the ground.



A strong wind is shaking the shivering leaves.
There is space for ruffled doves under the eaves
Vines' foliage is transforming to deep red;
Plectranthus proud – florid with florets, each head.
Part of the garden looking worn and shabby.
While squabbling thrushes appear to be crabby.
Other species will noisily congregate,
Joining their kind who plan, due north, to migrate.

Autumn colours in our own personal space
Mainly have a crimson, rose or roy'l blue face.
Add pale, dusty-brown – drying leaves of oak tree;
(Although patches of green cling on longingly.)
Plus, the roses – pink, scarlet, orange and white –
End-of-summer blooms, still a joy and delight.
Soon the Canary creeper will shoot yellow.
Gradually garden's ambience more mellow.

In our arboretum a few trees will shed,
Dumping on the brick paths their unwanted dead.
Long legg'd orb-web spiders – black and white females –
Are spinning with silk their spreading, golden veils.
For birds on the wing, there is red berry fruit,
And acorns for squirrels, if they are astute.
Free supplies include nectar in small, red cups
Where the Lesser Double-collared Sunbird sups.

Windless days, there's a quiet, stillness in the air.
A time of waiting with a need to prepare.
Autumn's a warning to get ready for storms,
Even while the bright sun deceptively warms.
Autumn too is an endorsement of God's truth;
His promise kept, to the mature and the youth.
Seasons like the Fall come year by year, and go,
As He said – that we His faithfulness might know.

March 2015

GENESIS

He is the One through Whom the Father created the earth,
And the vast universe with its ordered planets and stars.
Without the Word nothing was made or brought to living birth -
Whether fruit trees, bumble bees, hippopotami or Mars.

He is the Second Adam – obedient and good within.
As the Righteous One, bringing grace, He's deservedly hailed.
Replaced the first man who gave in to Satan and sin -
Adam who opened the door to darkest death when he failed.

He is the Seed of the woman, predicted long ago;
Who at great cost to Himself would crush Satan's deadly head -
Destroying the Destroyer – each man's implacable foe.
Though the Seed's heel might be bruised, Serpent's purpose would be dead.

He's like the animal that died to render up it's skin,
That there might be a covering for our deeply felt shame.
What a costly exaction for such deliberate sin!
The Innocent Creature was killed. God to our rescue came.

He is the great High Priest, but not of Aaron's earthly line.
Instead, like Melchizedek, without beginning or end
Ministers for our sakes continually – the Priest Divine;
King of Righteousness, King of Peace, through Whom our prayers ascend.

Genesis 1
John 1
Colossians 1

Genesis 3
1 Corinthians 15
Romans 5

Genesis 3
Luke 1
1 John 3

Genesis 3
1 Corinthians 5
1 John 2

Genesis 14
Hebrews 5
Hebrews 7

IN ALL THE SCRIPTURES

And He is Abraham the Patriarch’s long promised Seed
 Who all the widely scattered nations of the world would bless.
 Not just Isaac’s, Jacob’s descendants – though great is their need –
 But to Ishmael’s, Moab’s, others, He gives righteousness.

Genesis 22
 Galatians 3
 Acts 11

He is like the providential Ram, thicket-entangled.
 Slain in the place of Abraham’s precious son.
 The friend of God trusted, as he the knife down-angled;
 Knew the God-Who-will-provide – a Substitute for each one.

Genesis 22
 1 Peter 3
 1 John 4

He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, prophesied.
 To Him victory, submission, fulfilment and praise.
 His all-sovereign, ruling sceptre will never be denied
 While each subject, obedient tribute at His feet lays.

Genesis 49
 Isaiah 11
 Matthew 1
 Revelation 5

REST OF THE PENTATEUCH

He is the One Who called Moses – I AM, His revealed name.
 In a burning bush in Horeb Mountain, near Jethro’s sheep,
 Divine Angel of the Lord came – in non-consuming flame.
 There He encouraged God’s chosen leader, His charge to keep.

Exodus 3
 John 8
 Colossians 1

He is the perfect, spotless and slaughtered Passover Lamb;
 By His blood saving from certain death and the judgement threat.
 Escape was sure. The Angel of Death could no longer damn
 Those behind the blood-painted door, where love and justice met.

Exodus 12
 1 Corinthians 5

He is the Manna that was generously sent from above
To satisfy unfulfilled longings of the hungry soul.
God's abundant and miraculous provision of love:
The Bread of Life on Whom we feast, eternally made whole.

Exodus 16
John 6
1 Corinthians 11

He's like the Snake lifted in the wilderness, made of brass.
When all was condemnation and inexorable death,
The afflicted – all in the hopeless, helpless, lost-cause class -
Gazed, trusted in the One Who could save and restore life's breath.

Numbers 21
John 3
1 Peter 2

He is the promised Prophet, like Moses had been before.
He would speak the words commanded, to His listening nation.
But greater than Moses, who as a servant kept the door,
This One, in His own house, worthy of adoration.

Deuteronomy 18
John 1
Acts 3
Acts 7

He's every morning and evening Sacrifice for man's guilt;
Each bawling, frightened beast destroyed by the penitent's knife;
Dead on the bronze altar that's washed in blood up to the hilt.
Lamb of God died for our sins, to give us undying life.

Leviticus
John 1
1 Peter 1

October 2014

WHY?

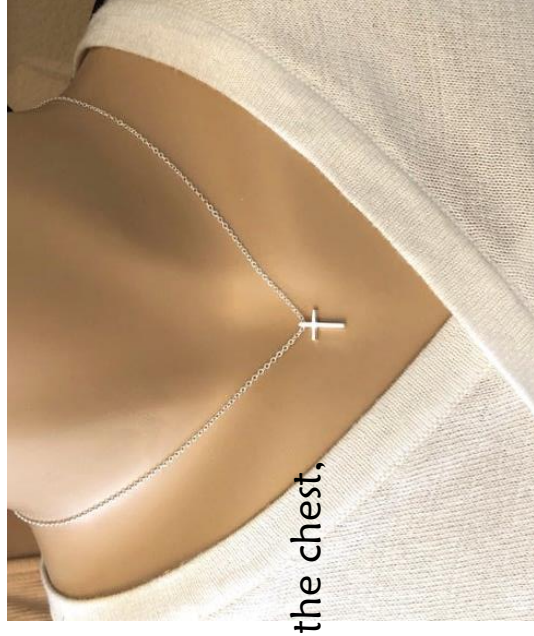
Why always the Cross? Why this crass symbol of criminality and death? What is it with these Christians, breathing negativity with every breath? Why do they display crosses, hoisting them on spires, worn dangling on the chest, Obsessed with that reminder of Rome's imperial torture at its best?

This pointer to death, my friend, is the ultimate symbol of lasting life. The concentration on weakness, a glorious sign of the end of strife. And the decried symbolism points to an eternal reality – Our God came down, became one of us in incredible humility.

Jesus Christ died to Himself, served and taught, loved and healed, restored and forgave; Then took our place on the Cross, bearing our sin, these eternal selves to save. He's taken down from the Cross. Friends place Him in a borrowed tomb. He is dead, Laid on a slab, wrapped in a linen shroud, another cloth around His head.

The Cross was fatal. The Cross was empty. Spear pierced, dead man cannot survive. Third day, rigor mortis reversed, corpse rose, grave empty, forever alive. So now we celebrate the empty Cross with the love and grace poured out there – The symbol of our Salvation that calls us out to live and love and care.

September 2019



AUTUMN DAY

On a chair, on a lawn, in a green bower;
Relaxing, soaking up the solar power;
Around me creepers, trees, shrubs – some in flower.
Enjoying warmth on a Fall day, this hour.



Red Bougainvillea on Greek pillar grows;
Pink Oleander, a showpiece in deep rose.
Blue Plectranthus all around the garden grows.
Orange Strelitzia strikes a crane-like pose.

Young male Robin enters and lands on a brick;
Feels my presence; moves into undergrowth – quick.
Yellow and black Butterfly, gone in a tic.
Frustrated Clicking Stream Frog venting – click, click.



Red orange Butterfly flitting happily;
Into its airspace comes a large Bumble-bee;
Mid-air collision avoided, narrowly.
Around ferns, fly flies – aimlessly, crazily.

Breeze waving the Fir's branches, and Jo'burg Gold;
Varied birds above the garden soared and rolled –
Perhaps preparing to escape coming cold,
While hardier birds stay, and their stations hold.



Appears white Butterfly of the common type;
To the left, bunches of berries, red and ripe –
Fav'rite food of the Bulbul with yellow stripe.
Thanks Lord, for Autumn with its colour and hype!

March 2015





SHADES OF RED AND OTHER COLOURS

I'm eating my muesli while through the kitchen window gazing
At one of our ornamental vines – totally amazing.
So many variations of red – those tints and hues and shades,
As the rambler with its thickened trunk climbs, intrudes and cascades;
The lower leaves showing scarlet mixed with original green;
On one creeper many nuances in varied colours seen.

They all grow from a single, deep-seated root and sturdy stem;
Cell structure similar, yet each different – without mayhem.
Every one of the leaves, with all their colour variation,
By shape and texture part of the whole, that can't be mistaken.
Each indisputably belongs to the ornamental vine –
Whether it's green or mixed, pink or yellow or deepest port wine.

Why is it that we people, descended from one couple's fruit;
All branches of the same family tree, grounded by one Root,
So often do not recognise our real similarity;
Think that because of hues, shades, tints, we lack solidarity?
Why would God create us all the same – in just one boring shade?
How interesting the different individuals He's made.

God is intelligent, brilliant, way beyond our small minds.
His handiwork so marvellous in its breadth and depth and kinds.
The way He formed us with chromosomes and DNA and genes –
There can be no doubt we are definitively human beings.
At the same time exciting and infinite variation
That stamp each one of us as God's personal, precious creation.

May 2015



HIS POSSESSIONS

Psalm 104:24 O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches.

I search the Book of Psalms and by this statement I am awed;
That the whole earth is full of the possessions of the Lord –
From the cloud-wreathed mountain peaks to the smallest grain of sand;
Every plant and all the creatures dispersed throughout our land;
Varieties of trees – the Keurboom, Cape Chestnut, Ash and Fig;
His idea to provide food, shelter for birds – small and big.

Proteas – Blushing Bride and Sugar Bush – He painted each one;
All the Fynbos that thrives in the heat of the summer sun;
What a palette of colour the Divine Artist uses!
On Vygies, Ixia subtle-tinted shades diffuses;
Plectranthus bushes – pink, white, blue – growing in dappled shade;
Bees, butterflies, sunbirds – these blooms, their local pub have made.

Even the raiding Baboons are amongst His possessions.
To accommodate each other, there must be concessions.
His, the plump Dassies breeding in their rocky hide-away,
Eschewing most activity in the heat of the day;
His, the Table Mountain Ghost frog and Western Leopard toad
That, going courting, stops the traffic on a busy road.

The warm sunshine and the photo-synthesizing daylight;
The nimbus and cumulus clouds – a promise-of-rain sight;
The unseen oxygen levels in the surrounding air,
Made and provided by Him for our survival and care;
Gravity to keep us grounded firmly and securely;
His, every useful law of Physics and Biology.

He owns all the blueprints for every complicated cell
That in this world lives and functions so incredibly well.
Every human and other mammals, each fruit and each seed,
The worms and insects, reptiles, the algae, kelp and seaweed;
My kidney in all its complexity, also my brain;
His wise design, His possession – every system and grain.



The restless sea round our coast, splashing up its foaming spray,
Often sunlit blue and green; some days a forbidding grey;
In cool depths swim Snoek and Kabeljou, also Yellow Tail –
Food for hungry people who fish from the pier, or set sail;
Crabs, Crayfish and Mussels, Sea Urchins and Anemones,
Cavorting whales, flippered seals – He invented all of these.

In our small part of the world, there is so much we can see
That is stamped as belonging to Him – His own property.
Though He cares for them all, fruit of His creativity,
His whole heart goes out to us – sad, fallen humanity.
For of all His possessions, we're the ones who have no end –
Who with (or without) our Owner, eternity will spend.

January 2015

REPLACEMENT

One witogie, two witogies in the almond tree;
Still some pinkish-white blossoms clinging tenaciously.
The annual blooming time has nearly come to its end.
As flowers fall, branches and twigs fresh, green leaves extend.
Beauty has faded but hopefully left in its place
Green sheathed nuts, developing at their seasonal pace.

2018

Witogie translates as “Small White Eye”





AUTUMN 2010

(thinking back from 1968 to 1972)

Autumn – the season of many memories;
Thoughts of Shemlan – wind in the tall cypress trees;
Gold crocuses pushing through the brown, baked earth;
The crimson creeper clasping stone walls. With mirth,
Leaves dancing a dumb dabke in the brisk breeze.
Then dying, drying, dropping with equal ease.

We lie on our bed in the arched room – we two –
Musing on the many things that we must do
Before the starting of the new school year soon;
Thinking how fast the months have flown since last June.
Gazing at the deep set, old, pointed window,
Its age and beauty give a warm, inner glow.

The summer has gone – time of relaxation,
Stress-free laughter, fellowship, restoration,
Casual clothes, outdoor living, untidy “digs”,
Season of grapes, pomegranates and ripe figs.
Visiting, visited – neighbours, family, friends
When timeless day, star-filled night, energy blends.

Weary spirits rested, renewed, with time to pray,
Consider God’s Word in an unhurried way
Joyful summer is past, and Autumn is here
We must be up and doing once more, my dear.
Our bodies, hearts, minds were then all satisfied.
Autumn in Shemlan – gone. Memory never died.



THE SOUTH PENINSULA MOUNTAIN FIRE

It is a dragon, spitting searing fire and flame.
It is a huge monster without pity or shame.
It is a hellish pit, drawing in destruction.
It is a fireworks' display of red eruption.
It is a distance runner of exhaustless speed.
It's a devouring glutton of remorseless greed.
It is a beauty queen on the catwalk of night.
It is a work of art with colours dark and bright.

It is a deceiver, pretending to be dead.
It is a murd'rer, from whom creatures flee in dread.
It is a destroyer of all life in its way.
It's a rampaging beast that won't be kept at bay.
It is an enemy, an implacable foe.
It is a boiling pot, endlessly on the go.
It is a psychopath, not knowing right or wrong.
It is a bird of prey with a loud, cackling song.

It's a ferocious lion roaring for its prey.
It's an untiring worker, busy night and day.
It's a show-off who to others' disgust is blind.
It is a vulture leaving no pickings behind.
It's an eccentric, doing the unexpected.
It's an unwelcome intruder, but respected.
It's a demon in beautiful, crafty disguise.
It's a curtain of orange reaching to the skies.

It's a challenger, taunting the brave who respond.
It's an actor, taking the stage – here and beyond.
It is a cleaner, sweeping everything before.
It is a rebel – out of sync, beyond the law.
It's a runaway train, ending as a wreck.
It's a stampeding elephant nothing can check.
It's a high jumper trying the top mark to find.
It's an invader, to wholesale slaughter inclined.

Then to do battle and beat back the fiery foe,
Forward the fire fighters and skilled volunteers go.
Against the blaze in all its fearsome, awful pride,
A group of staunch people laboured to turn the tide.
Unbelievably fatigued, sweaty, eyes bloodshot,
They endured wind with nights and days scorchingly hot.
They made Capetonians thankful and very proud.
Many wanted to help but untrained weren't allowed.

They slept in their trucks and laid their lives on the line.
Their families did not see them, but that was fine –
They gladly shared their courageous women and men
Who selflessly stood in the gap for us – again!
To show how they felt and express their gratitude,
People brought food, showing a gen'rous attitude.
Some provided liquids for knights thirsty and brave –
To stave off dehydration; men from heatstroke save.

The dragon was slain but it took courage and time.
The murderer in chains, but guilty of much crime.
The brilliant fireworks fizzled out to a damp squib,
The show-off's embarrassed and has ceased to ad-lib.
The lion is dying, now harmless and toothless.
The destroyer has lost its power to be ruthless.
For now, the curtain has fallen on frenzied skies.
Unspectacularly dead, the enemy lies.

Nothing remains but charcoal and ash – shades of grey.
Many tortoises, hedgehogs, insects passed away.
Families lost homes and items they long treasured –
Distress and disruption of lives can't be measured.
Although the scavenging vulture picked bare the bones,
There was an end to the carnage, the heat, the groans.
No longer is the demon's raw power unbounded.
The fires are doused, contained, put out or surrounded.

And the proteas will revive, live where death has lain.
Green will reappear on mountains watered with rain.
Birds and little creatures outside the fiery path
Will move to the new growth in the fire's aftermath.
For our burnt, black mountain there's a future of hope.
Though with the conflagration it was hard to cope.
The full consequences we don't yet comprehend.
But expect restoration and life in the end.

The parable for ourselves is so plain to see.
When life's an inferno blazing ferociously,
We have to hang in there, trust help is on the way;
Despite the strong gale and searing heat of the day.
Eventually God with His crew, and volunteers,
Will bring the fire under control – till the smoke clears.
Smould'ring ashes, desolation, deadness we see.
But from it, God brings new growth for eternity.



AND THE RAIN CAME

For days we've been suffering from the windless heat;
Like unwatered blooms, turgidity in retreat;
Dried out, dehydrated, desiccated and beat;
Energy, motivation, desire, all deplete;
Sweaty, smelly, dishevelled clothing, stinking feet;
Exhaustion, discouragement, weariness complete.

And then this morning relief – light, refreshing rain.
The flowers that hung their heads low, renewed again;
And I have hope that the smog will lift from my brain;
That I'll endure, survive my scorching drought of pain.
As showers revive, rehydrate, life in their train;
So, heaven's coolness will calm my heat, stress and strain.

Lord, I feel some days I'm at peace, unharmed by care;
Some I'm wilting, life's dryness I don't want to share.
The sun is too hot for the huge baggage I bear,
But I'm grateful when I wake and become aware
Of Your cooling showers that stir my mind's stale air,
Through Your life-giving Word, in answer to my prayer.

13 January 2012



The Bible is wrapped round by timeless eternity;
Includes the broad sweep of this world's chequered history;
From beginning of time and God's creativity
To the end of the ages – a future yet to be.

The Bible tells us God created a perfect pair
In a wonderful environment of special care;
A man and woman who decided God was unfair.
The deathly result of revolt, they had to bear.

So, from that day and through all the succeeding ages,
Man's sin continually blotted the Bible's pages.
But God had a plan that He unfolded by stages
To restore us: He, Himself, would take our sin's wages.

We discover the facts of Abraham's family,
With all its romance, intrigue, drama and tragedy.
Clan became a nation delivered from slavery.
Despite hardships, at last claimed their own territory.

Followed an up and down history of judges and kings;
Of prophets, poets and a shepherd turned king, who sings.
While in a far land, an exiled group to their God clings,
Until He the people back to Jerusalem brings.

Brave young men endured a lion encounter and fire.
Their godly principles were fixed and were not for hire.
Through all these years devout men waited with deep desire
For God's promise of a Saviour King, the Messiah.

Through the Old Testament there runs an unbroken thread
Of God's plan to give life to the spiritually dead.
In detail the Divine Author was pointing ahead
To the coming Messiah who would die in man's stead.

After 400 years' wait, the New Testament starts
With the arrival of God's Son, sent to win our hearts;
Come to live a perfect life, not one of fits and starts;
But pure, kind, just, loving and gen'rous in all its parts.

Finally, Easter story starts with a joyful crowd
Claiming Jesus as King with palms, and voices raised loud.
But days later see His beaten back – like a field ploughed –
And He on a Cross, hands, feet pierced, head thorn-crowned and bowed.

For His followers, here all hope of a kingdom ends;
But three days later, He's alive, talking to His friends.
The next forty days, Jesus His risen presence lends;
And then His own people on a world-wide mission sends.

Jesus returned home to His Father as He had said.
The Holy Spirit was sent down to us in His stead.
Peter and other apostles, the growing church led.
Paul, the Persecutor's life was changed. The Gospel spread.

Though oppressed, killed, beaten, insulted, impaled;
Believers stayed faithful. Jesus Christ as their Lord hailed.
Letters from James, Peter, John, Jude and Paul who was gaoled,
Helped Christians persevere 'though earthly comforts had failed.

The Bible is a library of 66 books,
With evidence of God's actions wherever one looks.
Yet it is a unit that is connected throughout –
God's plan, God's love, God's Son; that's what God's Word is about.

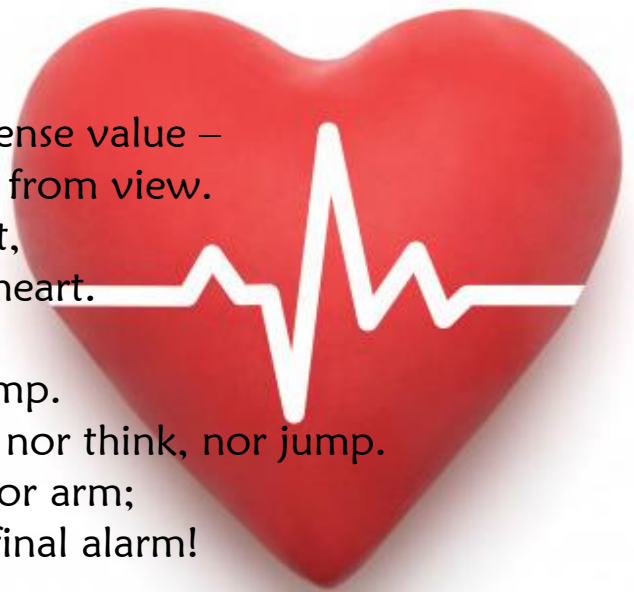
The Bible was inspired by God the Holy Spirit;
Yet written by the men whose humanity's in it.
Statesman, scholar, priest, king, doctor – with Christ the pivot.
Fisherman, tent maker – encourage us to live it.

The Bible is God's own personal revelation
Of Himself; to be shared with every man and nation.
So, all may know, regardless of their age or station
That God is love and wants a reconciliation.

April 2015

THE HEART

Walking miracle, treasure chest of immense value –
This is the human body, mostly hidden from view.
Indispensable to each co-ordinated part,
At the centre of action is the pulsating heart.



On the surface it's merely a reliable pump.
Yet without it, we can neither breathe, nor think, nor jump.
I can live without one kidney, or a leg or arm;
But no heartbeat – and there's a fatal, final alarm!

The mean, muscular machine that is your rhythmic heart,
Has an electrical system that sets it apart.
Combined with vessels, valves, ventricles and atria,
It's a more complex unit than would at first appear.

This central, essential part of ourselves, physic'ly,
Beating from birth to death, night and day, continuously –
A marvel no human mind could conceive or design,
Leads to this conclusion – the Engineer is Divine.

The heart, part of English language, figuratively –
Used to express our deep feelings emotionally.
Love and the heart are joined together like Siamese twins.
The heart is filled with grief at loss, yet glad when one wins.

Throughout literature – both in poetry and through prose –
This symbolic organ illumines our highs and lows.
It is such a big part of idiomatic speech,
Clarifying ideas, otherwise beyond our reach.

In the Bible the heart is perceived spiritually,
Expressing that inmost part that we can't touch or see.
Every individual's heart is seen negatively –
As rebellious, self-willed, failing terminally.

But God offers a possible spiritual transplant –
A new heart – unselfish, pure – that He alone can grant.
The Great Heart Surgeon prepared for this operation
From way back in eternity, before Creation.

God's heart's filled with overwhelming compassion and love.
He sent a Heart Donor – His only Son from above –
Who fulfilled the plan, dying in our place on the Cross.
Jesus' heart was pierced in a sad time of pain and loss.

On the third day, living, out of the tomb He arose –
Conqueror of evil and death, our relentless foes.
Since then He knocks on our hearts' doors, wanting to come in,
And transform our hearts, heal our past and forgive our sin.

August 2015



IN THE BEGINNING

Our great God of incredible intelligence and worth,
Out of nothing, created the vast heavens and the earth.
Through His commanding, eternal Word, matter came to be;
Initial Word – light from darkness – His activity.

God – the brilliant Inventor, Physicist, Chemist, He –
Formed, mixed hydrogen, oxygen molecules perfectly.
Dividing the waters above from the waters below,
He set in place the firmament – the atmosphere we know.

He rolled back all-encompassing flood, and oceans were made,
While stretched out tracts of uncovered, barren earth were displayed;
Set boundaries for land and sea – each in its place alone.
(And we have a bit of His sand and stone we call our own.)

He spoke – from the ground there sprang varied herbs, (each bearing seeds)
Fruit trees; soon to provide for herbivorous creatures' needs.
Grass grew up, as Great Designer decreed, from that very date.
Each plant was set up basically to self-propagate.

God made two enormous great lights to illumine the earth –
Sun and moon to influence our globe in its length and girth.
By powerful solar and mild reflected lunar rays
There would be a division of seasons, and nights and days.

He said and sea creatures appeared in the watery deep;
Also, birds flying above the earth, soaring high and steep.
He commanded the living things in the ocean and sky
To reproduce – each after its own kind – and multiply.

His next intention, land animals – domestic and wild;
Insects, creeping, crawling things; everyone friendly and mild.
Each species created was commanded, by God, to seek
To produce progeny, carrying on their line unique.

The Three-in-One God was determined creation to crown
With Man – made in Their image, like God, only lower down.
Man's body amazingly, genetically programmed,
With incredible, functioning organs and systems crammed.

God Himself breathed into the inert man the breath of life,
Made a unique help-meet; presented to Adam his wife.
They were told to take stewardship of the newly born earth,
To walk with God in the garden, to descendants give birth.

God saw all that He had created in the past six days.
He pronounced it very good in its many, different ways.
Through His beloved Son, the Father carried out the plan.
By the same Word all would be sustained, as only He can.

September 2015

I FEAR

What do **you fear** or are you one hundred percent brave,
Sure you can deal with life and ready the world to save?
Well, in that case, I bear little resemblance to you.
No heroine – admit to fears, if I’m to be true.

I fear, fear. I am afraid that I will be afraid;
On this day, I will be disturbed, distressed and dismayed.
Yes, there is fear that I will no longer be at rest;
And that my mind’s inward calm will be put to the test.

I fear too the inability to right a wrong;
That I shall be unable or too weak, to be strong.
I fear guilt – not the best motivation to do right;
But I’m aware of my conscience’s tremendous might.

I fear helplessness – I’ll be unable to restore;
Or make restitution for things that happened before.
I fear enclosed spaces; being caught and not getting out;
The inability to breathe, swallow, talk or shout.

I fear my dearest being absent for my last breath.
Yet I am not afraid of the certainty of death.
I know the Lord Jesus will be waiting there for me.
It will be the end of struggles, fears, uncertainty.

I fear disaster will overtake the ones I love;
Although I believe there is a sovereign Lord above.
I suppose the basis of fear is a lack of trust;
Unable to accept God is love, mighty and just.

Yet I do turn to Him when I am feeling afraid;
Think of His word and pray. The fears are often waylaid.
If I keep my mind fixed on Him, then many doubts cease.
As He promised, anxiety goes. I am at peace.

May 2015

Through the kitchen window, winter wears a colourful gown –
 Repeated, and again, the shades of red and green and brown.
 Tall and short Poinsettia shrubs bear their non-floral blooms;
 Brightening the dull, grey landscape as the next cold front looms;
 Reminding of our Creator Who makes beautiful things;
 Choosing red – to paint plants, and under red-winged starlings' wings;
 Reaching for the trees is a rambling, ornamental vine.
 It's crimson leaves and mature branches clasp and intertwine;
 Climbing up the wall, leaning against the dead, brown lilac.
 The red vine leaves, gradually will fall, slowly dying back.
 Though non-productive of grapes, its still a treasured creeper;
 Resistant to drought, as for water the roots probe deeper.

With dark arches and loops, provided for weaker plants shade,
 While nestled in its thick branches, the Cape dove its nest made.
 Green-leaved in the spring and summer, in autumn all is changed.
 As if by magic, the abundant leaves are re-arranged –
 Wonderful swopping of colour till all covered with red,
 Scrambling vine, poinsettias in a scarlet blend are wed.

The Indian lilac remains as a brown, withered stump.
 It should have been cut down long ago and sent to the dump.
 Though lifeless and barren, the old roots still anchor it fast.
 It supports the growing vine though its own growth time has passed.
 No sweet-scented flowers, no verdant growth of any kind;
 Yet still it's useful, when the old and the new are combined.

To complete the picture – background, foreground and in between –
 Found variations of light and dark, shiny and matte green.
 The backdrop, Brazilian pepper tree, foliage tall
 Spreading, towering over all from behind pebble wall.
 Right in front mock orange bush without any cream flowers;
 Quietly growing, one day to bloom, helped by rain showers.

I look through the kitchen window at the scene frequently,
 Hoping olive thrush or lesser collared sunbird to see –
 Flitting, hopping on the stump. Poinsettias, vine or tree;
 With or without birds, the outlook points to Divinity.
 How great is God, incredible His planning, loving mind,
 That through every window of the house His art work I find.



A small oak chair that my Grandfather had made for me –
I was a little girl. It suited me perfectly.

This was part of my Grandparents Keenan's legacy –
The small oak chair that my Grandfather had made for me.

When I left home, just returning irregularly,
My mother looked after my small oak chair carefully,
My husband and I travelled to live over the sea,
Leaving the small oak chair my Grandfather had made for me.

Then sixteen years later we came back permanently
To reside in Cape Town, on our Plumstead property.
Neville, Jeanette, Paul and myself – our family –
Welcomed home the oak chair my Grandpa had made for me.

Our children married, lived far away – predictably.
But they came home to visit, each with their progeny.
Grandchildren played and the chair fitted them perfectly –
The small oak chair that my Grandfather had made for me.

The children's Grandfather Holmes used the chair constantly,
As he stood on it, the wood bore his weight sturdily.
As a low ladder, it served him beneficially –
The small oak chair that my Grandfather had made for me.

So now it is handed on to you, my dear Abby.
Let your children, and others too, use it playfully.
Pass it to the next generation, eventually –
The small oak chair that my Grandfather had made for me.

My Grandfather James Keenan worked as the Time keeper in the furniture
factory of GH Starck in Elsies River, Cape Town.

WINTER GARDEN



Life and death, order with disorderly confusion;
Ugliness and loveliness – an unlikely fusion;
Barrenness and fruitfulness – seems like a delusion.
Can winter ever end in a hopeful conclusion?

There is exposure and nakedness – branches laid bare –
Alternating with green shades, hiding close secrets there.
Through foliage, at blue skies, grey skies, white clouds, we stare.
Reluctantly a vapid sun deigns her rays to share.

In the herb bath, celery growing to make hot soup;
On the edge of the garden path, the side of the “stoep”,
Piles of chopped up logs are lying ready in a group –
To warm cold, dreary house; lift our spirits when they droop.

The wind blows, gales batter the ash and fir trees outside.
Under that tossing canopy, robins, thrushes hide.
Streams of rain descend, land, gushing down a leafy slide,
While by the cheerful fire we are warm and dry inside.

This wet, windy season’s hard but essential we know –
Life-giving water coming from rain and mountain snow.
Plants rest until sap rises, and all will stronger grow.
Only chilly winter can these great blessings bestow.

Winter 2016

OUR GOD

How Great is God – omnipotent over the universe;
Set in motion, now sustains all the galaxies diverse;
Designer of each intricate, complex, created thing;
Self-existent, mightier than wildest imagining.

How Kind is God who daily surrounds us with loving care –
The sun and the seasons, the food crops, the rain and fresh air;
Providing for our eyes and ears, much beauty all around –
Lovely shapes and colours and many a marvellous sound.

How Good is God who encourages, protects His own flock.
He is their guiding Shepherd, and their noon Shelter – the Rock.
Every perfect gift is received from His generous hand.
He is the One Who, when we have fallen, helps us to stand.

How Wise is God – limitless, real Wisdom personified;
His knowledge, understanding providentially applied.
He's omniscient and controls all in His creation.
He's the Dispenser of wisdom to His blood-bought nation.

How Strange is God – never fully, finally understood.
Beyond our shallow minds, He Is – unique in His Godhood.
We can't grasp the Triune God nor plumb the depths of His plan.
Yet He's revealed something of Himself to frail, mortal man.

How Strong is God, sovereignly ruling over history;
Controlling the world's affairs, its ultimate destiny.
Of His mysterious ways, there's much we don't understand.
By faith we can accept that everything is in His hand.

How True is God to Himself for He is always the same;
Nature and character expressed in His multi-fold Name.
Faithful to all the promises in His once-given Word,
From His decreed purposes our God will not be deterred.

How Far is God – beyond us in His lofty transcendence;
Worshipped and honoured with awe, angel hosts in attendance;
Heaven's Eternal King and, of all that exists, the Lord.
Worthy of obedience, He deserves to be adored.

How Near is God – imminent and intimately close by;
Omnipresent, condescends to live with us – God most High;
Asking humility, repentance and faith on my part,
He waits to stoop and enter my weak, underserving heart.

How Pure is God, in spotless, flawless, perfect holiness.
Nothing contaminates or stains or spoils His righteousness.
All mankind touched by rebellion, omission, sins' taints;
Through the slain Lamb of God, the unholy become God's saints.

How Just is God. He is fair, cannot be bribed – Judge of all.
His standards we could not reach – since the original Fall.
In justice He had to expose our sin and then condemn.
To meet that Justice, God's willing Son died for guilty men.

How Slow is God – to anger; patient and long suffering.
To forgive us, freely pardon, He's prepared – and willing.
That we might not remain under His wrath, He made the Way.
On Jesus' shoulders, the weight of our condemnation lay.

How Free is God, pouring out gen'rously mercy and grace.
He is love – once humbled Himself; left His heavenly place.
To my risen Saviour, God the Son, with Father, Spirit,
I owe eternal gratitude, and praise without limit.

October 2015



LORD OF ALL

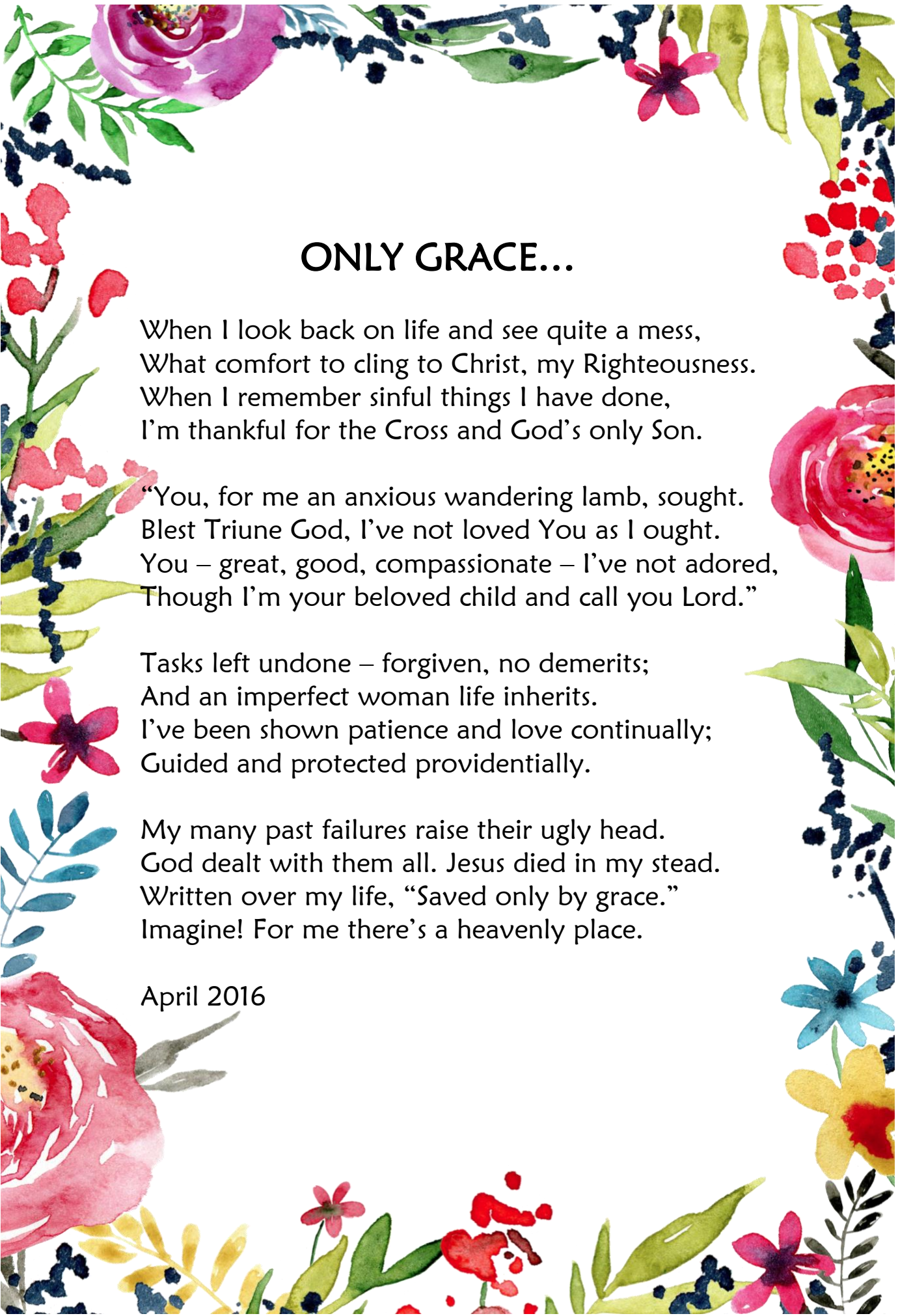
Jesus is Lord, yet life can be tough.
Jesus is Lord, and that is enough.
Jesus is Lord. I don't understand.
Jesus is Lord. I'm held in God's hand.

Jesus is Lord. How will I endure?
Jesus is Lord, His enabling sure.
Jesus is Lord. My wounds He will tend.
Jesus is Lord – right through to the end.

Jesus is Lord when the outlook's bright.
Jesus is Lord on days calm and light.
Jesus is Lord. My spirits are high.
Jesus is Lord. On rose beds I lie.

Jesus is Lord. This truth I believe.
Jesus is Lord – more than I conceive.
Jesus is Lord. I am in His care.
Jesus is Lord – sun or storm, He's there.

October 2015



ONLY GRACE...

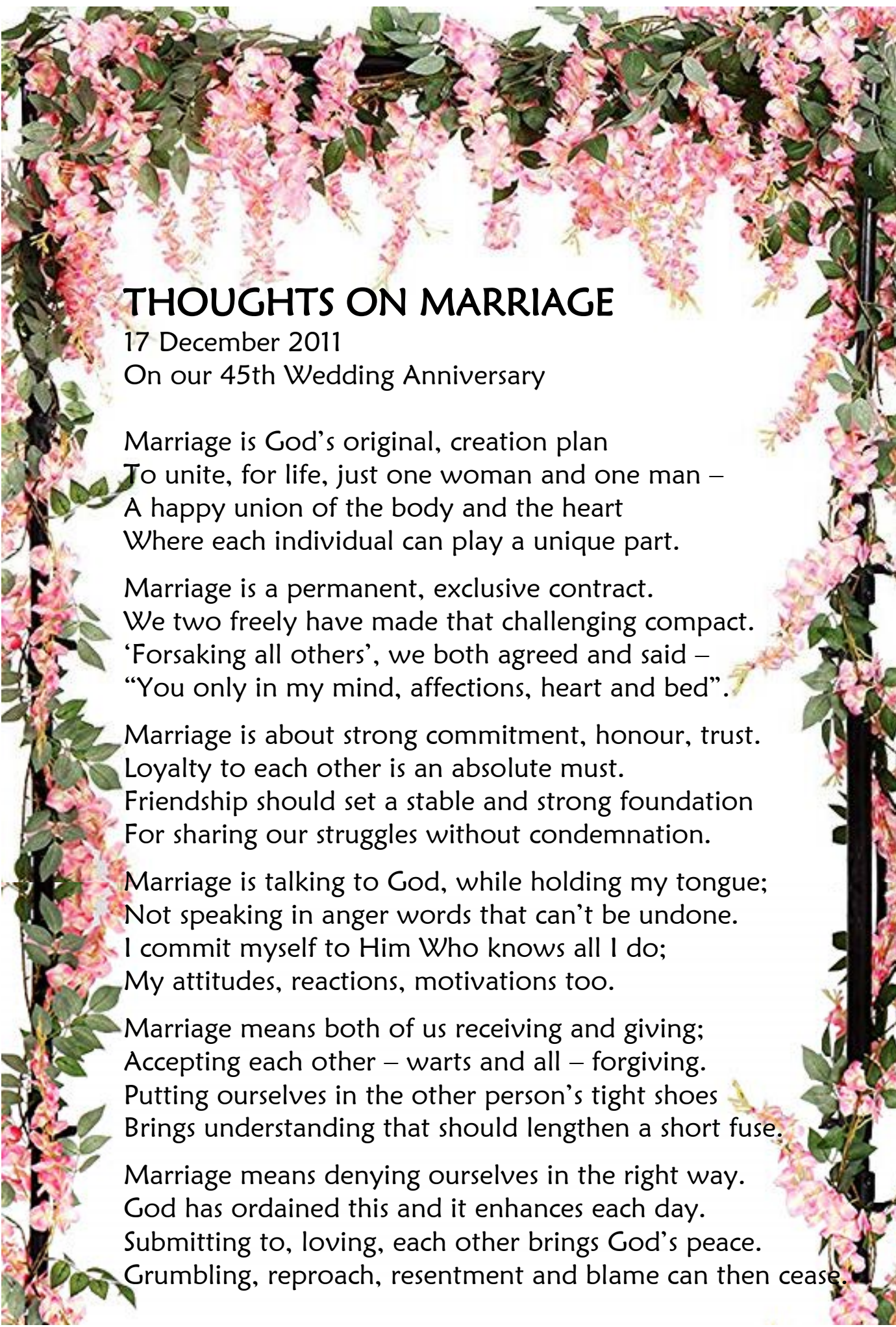
When I look back on life and see quite a mess,
What comfort to cling to Christ, my Righteousness.
When I remember sinful things I have done,
I'm thankful for the Cross and God's only Son.

"You, for me an anxious wandering lamb, sought.
Blest Triune God, I've not loved You as I ought.
You – great, good, compassionate – I've not adored,
Though I'm your beloved child and call you Lord."

Tasks left undone – forgiven, no demerits;
And an imperfect woman life inherits.
I've been shown patience and love continually;
Guided and protected providentially.

My many past failures raise their ugly head.
God dealt with them all. Jesus died in my stead.
Written over my life, "Saved only by grace."
Imagine! For me there's a heavenly place.

April 2016



THOUGHTS ON MARRIAGE

17 December 2011

On our 45th Wedding Anniversary

Marriage is God's original, creation plan
To unite, for life, just one woman and one man –
A happy union of the body and the heart
Where each individual can play a unique part.

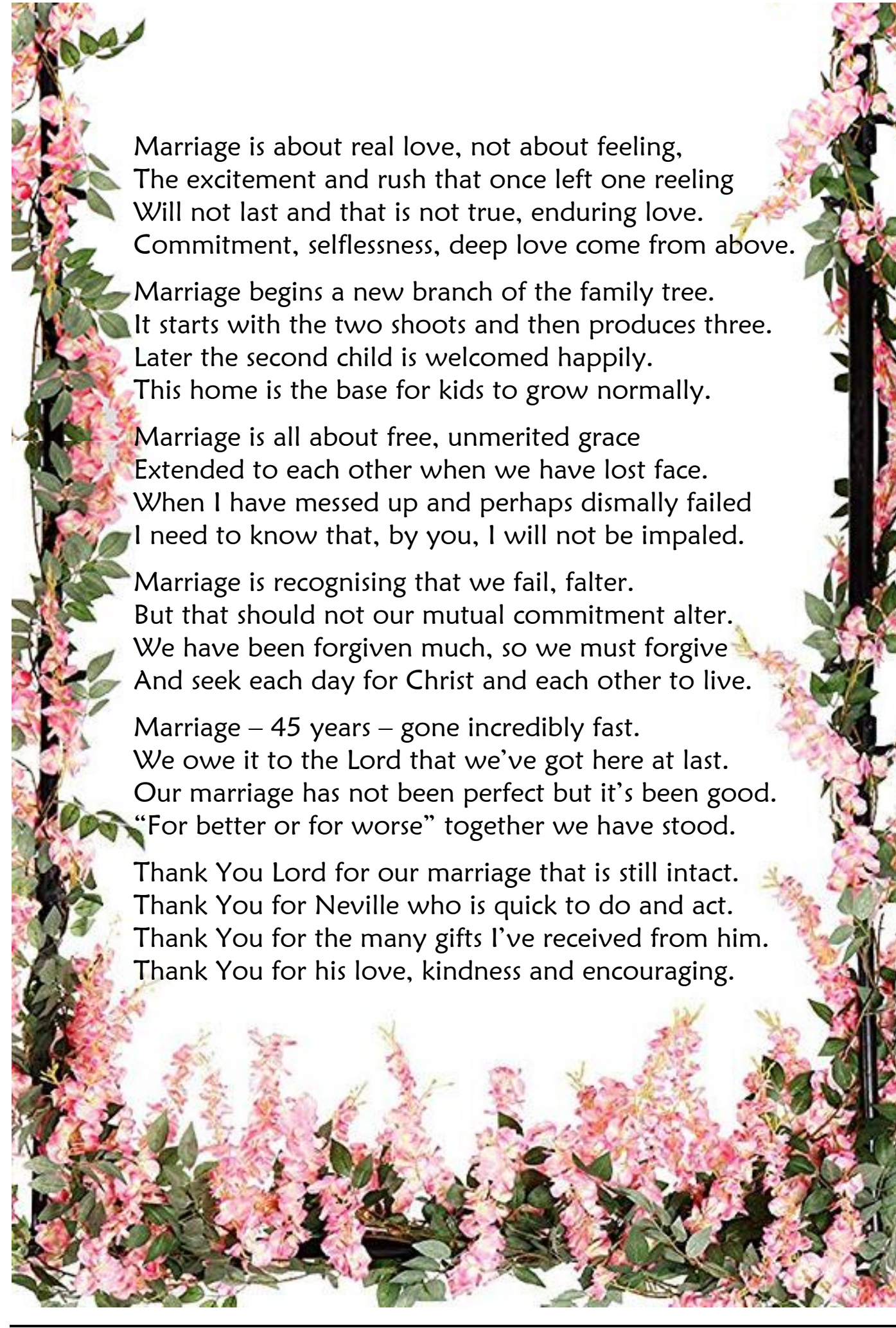
Marriage is a permanent, exclusive contract.
We two freely have made that challenging compact.
'Forsaking all others', we both agreed and said –
"You only in my mind, affections, heart and bed".

Marriage is about strong commitment, honour, trust.
Loyalty to each other is an absolute must.
Friendship should set a stable and strong foundation
For sharing our struggles without condemnation.

Marriage is talking to God, while holding my tongue;
Not speaking in anger words that can't be undone.
I commit myself to Him Who knows all I do;
My attitudes, reactions, motivations too.

Marriage means both of us receiving and giving;
Accepting each other – warts and all – forgiving.
Putting ourselves in the other person's tight shoes
Brings understanding that should lengthen a short fuse.

Marriage means denying ourselves in the right way.
God has ordained this and it enhances each day.
Submitting to, loving, each other brings God's peace.
Grumbling, reproach, resentment and blame can then cease.

The text is framed by a decorative border of pink flowers and green leaves. The flowers are small and clustered, resembling bougainvillea. The leaves are dark green and oval-shaped. The border is on the left, right, and bottom edges of the page.

Marriage is about real love, not about feeling,
The excitement and rush that once left one reeling
Will not last and that is not true, enduring love.
Commitment, selflessness, deep love come from above.

Marriage begins a new branch of the family tree.
It starts with the two shoots and then produces three.
Later the second child is welcomed happily.
This home is the base for kids to grow normally.

Marriage is all about free, unmerited grace
Extended to each other when we have lost face.
When I have messed up and perhaps dismally failed
I need to know that, by you, I will not be impaled.

Marriage is recognising that we fail, falter.
But that should not our mutual commitment alter.
We have been forgiven much, so we must forgive
And seek each day for Christ and each other to live.

Marriage – 45 years – gone incredibly fast.
We owe it to the Lord that we've got here at last.
Our marriage has not been perfect but it's been good.
"For better or for worse" together we have stood.

Thank You Lord for our marriage that is still intact.
Thank You for Neville who is quick to do and act.
Thank You for the many gifts I've received from him.
Thank You for his love, kindness and encouraging.

ODE TO THE YELLOWWOOD

22 October 2017

If I'm to be perfectly frank and not pc,
Though indigenous, you have disappointed me.
I anticipated you'd grow impressive, tall.
You have not met these, my expectations, at all.

Instead, for years you have occupied the same spot,
Barely surviving with the energy you've got.
What was your problem? Thought you belonged in this land.
Don't like underground water, or is it the sand?

You never spread your branches, and offered no shade;
No cones on you; for what reason were you made?
You could not even have been chopped down, sawn and planed;
Made into a kist. From you nothing could be gained.

However, this year you appear in better health.
Through this mild winter you have been growing by stealth.
Your foliage is more luxuriant and green.
In fact, you are looking the best I've ever seen.

Do I imagine it? Seems you have added height,
There's hope you're on your way to be a lovely sight.
Also, you have received a wonderful reward –
Usefulness, significance, purpose – threefold cord.

Your living leaves are hiding a secret that's new.
One that's safely hidden from watching creatures' view.
The olive thrush pair have deemed you a secure place
Where their eggs can be hatched in a green shrouded space.

The site was chosen instinctively, carefully.
Bit by building bit, the woven nest came to be.
These birds saw your potential as a sanctuary.
Never seen a nest built so low, so trustingly.

They think your covering sufficient camouflage
To protect their young from predators cruel and large.
You will acknowledge that you owe all to God's grace
Who, through us, placed you in our garden, in your place.

He created you, provided the rain and sun
That kept you alive, though for years a stunted one.
Now extending your growth you're the chicks' nursery.
Happy, more useful years ahead, Yellowwood tree!





DOWN!

Last week it was rain drops, falling down**Unceasingly.**

Today a cloudy sun's shining down **Inspidly.**

Small leaves of the Cape Ash, drifting down **Sporadic'ly.**

Slight breeze moving blue-green blades, hanging down **Gracefully.**

Dove hogs bird table, with head bending down**Selfishly.**

Two, three Sparrows watching, flying down..... **Courageously.**

Scared by Dove's size as they're touching down..... **Expectantly.**

The small birds retreat, fleeing up – not down – **Cowedly.**

Cape Dove lifts, on branch plumping down **Satiatedly.**

Now there's place for Laughing Doves, looking down **Hopefully.**

Red-Winged Starling descending, gobbling down..... **Greedily.**

From my chair, observing, sitting down..... **Contentedly.**

July 2019



INTERROGATION

I'm a woman with an eternal destiny,
But how have I lived this life? Was it Biblically?
This is the crucial question that comes to my mind
As I interrogate the decades left behind.

Did I always have my priorities just right?
Was I really willing to walk in His clear light?
Or was I often following my own agenda –
One that I thought would more satisfaction render?

First in my life, He had to be the only Lord.
That meant living by His Spirit and by His Word,
Without deceiving myself or hypocrisy.
Fact – I know I have not been all that I should be.

There were times when to myself I have feared to die,
Wanting the easy way; not self-will to deny;
Dismayed at the thought of personal suffering,
If Noreen should be faithful to her rightful King.

Second in my life, I promised to love, obey
A man, who after God, was to be first in every way.
Did I pray much for him, as I should?
So that he could be holy and honest and good.

As he faced life's pressures, temptations and trials
Was I there with affirmation, kind words and smiles?
When I failed to give him respect that was his due,
Did it hurt him, demean and devalue him too?

Did I consider him and his comfort each day?
Love and appreciation through my actions convey?
Did he return to a warm and relaxing home
Where he was welcomed when his stressful day was done?

I don't think I meant to be a "contentious wife",
But could I have unintentionally caused some strife?
I should "do him good, not evil all my days"
Is what Proverbs chapter thirty-one verse twelve says.

Forgive me, dear Lord, for the failures of the past.
Help me to be the kind of wife you planned, at last.
Enable me to put his interests before mine.
So that for Your glory our two lives may combine.

God is kind. I experienced fulfilment and joy
When I became the mother of a girl and a boy –
Such precious babies, such lively kids and daring teens.
In training and teaching, did I use the right means?

In guiding them, was it to God's will that I bowed?
Did I fail them in what I forbade or allowed?
I know that I loved them; tried to encourage them too.
But can't help feeling there was more that I could do.

While they were growing, life seemed to fly by so fast
That before I knew it their childhood had gone past.
Were there opportunities missed and books unread?
I was busy but too soon forming years had fled.

However, I may question the years that have gone,
The truth is that there is nothing that can be done
To change one single imperfect part of my life –
Wherever I look back the shortcomings are rife.

Yet, I'm also encouraged by my history;
'Cause God has been at work – great mystery.
The God of grace "will perfect that which concerns me".
The past is forgiven. The best is yet to be.

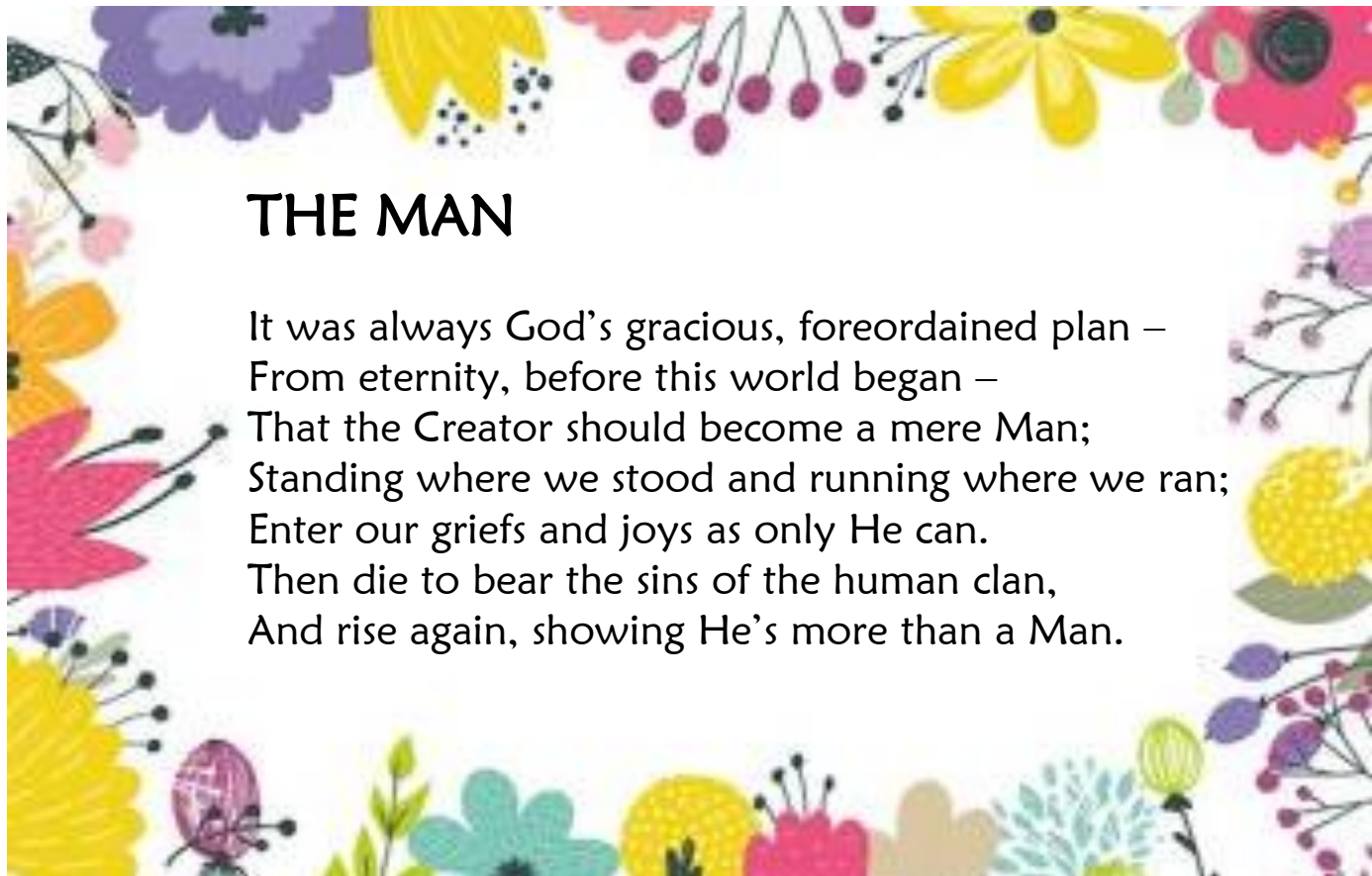
WOUNDED

THE BODY IS HURT, the Body is bleeding.
Where is the remedy that we are needing?
Who can stop the haemorrhage or staunch the flow
As this wound's desperate consequences grow?

THE BODY IS WOUNDED, the Body's in pain.
Deep hurt returns to plague again and again.
Where's medication to halt the agony
Of parts excised so excruciatingly.

HIS BODY WAS WOUNDED to make us all one;
We who've been made whole by the Father's dear Son.
Have we failed and some of His healing undone?
Unity, victory at such cost He won!

2015



THE MAN

It was always God's gracious, foreordained plan –
From eternity, before this world began –
That the Creator should become a mere Man;
Standing where we stood and running where we ran;
Enter our griefs and joys as only He can.
Then die to bear the sins of the human clan,
And rise again, showing He's more than a Man.



CAPE WINTER

October 2018

The sky is divided into grey, white and blue.
On deciduous trees, few leaves of faded hue.
Bright colour in muted garden scenery –
Poinsettias and Brazilian pepper tree.

Hidden bird is tweeting a plaintive, sorry call.
Where they find shelter, I can't imagine at all.
The wind is gentle but cold and piercingly keen.
An odd dove or thrush, only creatures to be seen.

There are rays of sunshine on the boundary wall;
Evergreens – gale survivors – standing firm and tall.
A white butterfly flits on by, keeps on going –
That says nasturtiums have surfaced and are growing.

Yes, it's the cold time, and I am feeling my age.
Quiescent garden and I seem on the same page –
This luke-warm desire to be actively doing
Loses its suit to winter apathy's wooing.

Yet not all is as, on the surface, it appears.
This time of quiet preparation's for future years.
I know the garden will come to brilliant life
Though now we see inertia and wind tossed strife.

Under dank, damp and mouldering, organic soil
Apparently dead bulbs, tubers, tree roots that coil.
Insignificant seeds suggest morbidity.
But resurrection time's coming to set them free.

Yes, I am in the winter of my history.
It seems that the end and death are coming for me.
But don't be fooled when I'm placed out of human sight,
I'm alive and will rise in resurrection light.



HIDDEN TREASURE

2014

Once we were young, supple, strong and carefree.
Endless life stretched before us endlessly.
In that far-off time, we had no idea
Of the challenges facing a senior.

Across our land there are millions of us
Who've now reached the age of 70 plus
We are living on borrowed time it seems.
We are long past our youth and hope-filled dreams.

That we're transforming's a fact, you can't miss.
Superficial changes are obvious –
Snow-capped heads, furrows on the hands and face.
And all systems work at retarded pace.

We can't rush around as we did before.
We can't burn the midnight oil as of yore.
We have to know there's a "facility"
When we travel or venture out for tea.

Many deal with daily difficulties:
Ill health, sore hips and unbending, stiff knees,
Hearing problems cut communication.
No more car, loneliness, isolation.

The nervous system is less efficient.
Strength to face trauma, change, insufficient.
Thoughts of the future can engender fears.
Poignant memories will reduce us to tears.

We find it hard to remember last week,
But of childhood we can easily speak.
We've lived through many historic events.
Tales to tell, have older ladies and gents.

We've lost our figures as well as our looks.
Lost spectacles spoil enjoyment of books.
As to the teeth – we won't even go there.
Control of bladder may be a nightmare.

Some have sadly been deprived of spouses.
Many parted from possessions, houses.
Reduced to flatlet or sharing a room.
Do they live their lives in glumness and gloom?

The courage, cheerfulness, sense of humour
Of seniors, is not idle rumour.
Faced with poor digestion, itching and pain
They'll greet with a serene smile once again.

Treatment as has-beens they find unnerving.
They are adults, of respect deserving.
Though forgetful they have their dignity.
Glad, wisdom, life skills to impart – freely.

The young seldom see how accepting, brave,
The aged who in the past much service gave,
But now are restricted, sometimes ignored.
They long to matter still – not be outlawed.

Our world has an undiscovered treasure
In its older folk, who have the leisure
To listen, empathise and wisely share.
Where the younger ones now are, they've been there.

Facing hard times, life's knocks without complaint,
Some exhibit the patience of a saint.
Great role models and source of history,
Let's cherish those of seniority.



AFTER THE WINTER

16 September 2014

In our own Plumstead garden grows a modest May tree.
Most years it produces scanty blossoms, stingily.
Yet come this Spring season and it's blooming profusely
Covered with white, minute-petalled flowers, gen'rously.
On the far side of the lawn this lovely sight I see –
It's the very epitome of lavish beauty.

Why – this year – is our May tree acting so differently?
I think back to the Winter in its severity –
Cold winds, gales, hail and rain pouring down incessantly
Such unpleasant damp days we endured, reluctantly.
And what of the May, battered and bent unceasingly?
Not big and strong like the well-rooted, tall Cape Ash tree.

Not leaning against the pillar or wall for safety,
Like the Cup of Gold or vine clinging coweringly.
But standing on its own, amidst the tumult, bravely.
Mind you, it must have had its roots grounded solidly
To remain; to have survived so spectacularly.
Rooted, plus Winter, the May is the best it can be.

Sturdy survivor, your white splendour's speaking to me.
When hard Winter comes, may I respond courageously;
And emerge in the Spring bearing hope unstintingly.
But I'll need to have my roots planted in God – deeply.
Only then will my life blossom, bringing Him glory,
By reminding others of His pure grace and beauty.



THROUGH THE STORM

July 2015

When life's all storm, hurricane and lashing rain
And you're tossed to the depths of sorrow and pain;
On life's sea, overwhelmed by mountainous waves;
Questioning, "Where's God, where our Master Who saves?"

As breaker builds on breaker, and you're adrift;
Looking in vain for light, for the clouds to lift;
To this spar you can cling – He's still in control;
Will not allow grief and blows to drown your soul.

He'll provide the faith so you, His precious child,
Will not cease to trust though the gale's strong and wild.
You're not alone in this heart-breaking tempest.
God Who calms the fury, guides you to His rest.

"Why do howling winds, threat'ning thunder arise?
Why has the sun disappeared, and the blue skies?
Why does security and safety elude?
Where is the solid land on which I once stood?"

Though you're lifted, then dumped, on the swirling swell;
God's promise to you is that all will be well.
In spite of loss, He will bring all together.
Beyond the horizon there waits calm weather.

While you're treading water, struggling to survive;
There's the hand outstretched of One Who is alive.
He'll share with you the present storm's rage and strife.
He can walk on water. He'll restore your life.

BLESSINGS IN OUR SENIOR YEARS



“Old age is not for sissies” is what seniors declare.
There’s need of courage, as for constant challenges we prepare.
Our bodies, sometimes our minds, are certainly wearing out.
Though daily we can be inwardly renewed, there’s no doubt.

It’s wonderful to know that we are in our Father’s care.
“Forsake me not in old age”. He surely answers that prayer. (Psalm 71:9)
We may have aches and pains. We may be walking more slowly.
But our God is at work that we may become more holy.

We are getting much nearer to the end of this life’s race.
While we’re still running, there’s often need to pick up the pace.
At times we collapse and seem to be crawling to the goal,
But the blest Comforter is there when trouble takes its toll.

We are yet in the thick of the battle, though veterans.
And daily we must acknowledge we are overcome by sins.
But the blood and the Cross remain God’s certain guarantee
Of our present standing and the ultimate victory.

There are anxieties and fears that sometimes may increase.
Bringing each one to Jesus, He will restore rest and peace.
With inflation, we get concerned about temporal affairs.
Will we live too long for our budget? Our concerns, He bears.

What amazing resources God graciously provided
To face advancing years with a heart whole, undivided:
His Spirit, His Word, His unfailing real presence with us –
Enabling to face life, suffering and death without a fuss.

So many Scripture verses bring us much comfort and joy.
As we absorb them, they continue our spirits to buoy.
Whether grieving or feeling forsaken and devalued,
There are gems in God's Word to change our perspective and mood.

Although we sense our life's hourglass is rapidly falling,
There's enough time left for an intercessory calling:
To pray for our fam'lies and the rest of the Shepherd's flock.
Sleeplessness is opportunity to pray round the clock.

The less we can do, the more time we have to meditate
On God's promises, which sluggish souls will invigorate;
With fellow trav'lers we can these amazing riches share;
And reminded of heaven, thankfully, thoughtfully prepare.

While life is narrowing, our minds, hearts should become more broad.
Interested in other people, there's no need to be bored.
We can be thinking of the needy – in love reaching out.
Knitting, collecting, giving is what it is all about.

God's granted a blessing in old age – a sense of humour.
Instead of dismay, we can laugh when silly things occur.
Like finding it hard to stand on one leg and put on pants.
Or the foot goes to sleep and feels like it's crawling with ants.

God has His purposes for us even in our old age.
He is all powerful, sovereign. His ways we may not gauge.
The darker the circumstances the brighter we can shine,
As He whispers, "Have faith in Me, beloved child of Mine."

If we should be weak, helpless and in other people's hands,
Jesus the Son went through that, so He fully understands.
The Father has made provision for each of life's seasons.
The Spirit strengthens, encourages to trust His reasons.

God's grace has been promised though undeserving we may be.
His loving kindness will not fail until His face we see.
The end of the journey is closer than ever before.
Our special home is prepared. One day we'll step through the door.

May 2014



Maggie Apollos, I owe you an apology.
You came to work for us from your home in far Mamre.
You faithfully stayed with our family for many years.
I'm sorry. We took you for granted, it now appears.

You were only Maggie – washing up, cooking daily;
Sweeping, cleaning, ironing; expected to bring the tea.
Mostly responding with good humour, as I recall.
Sometimes you grumbled and did not seem happy at all.

After all the house, a five bedroomed double storey,
Became harder with your increasing white-haired glory.
Plenty of dusting, climbing stairs, polishing, serving.
Of more consideration, you were then deserving.

We were fond of you, thought of you affectionately,
But never saw you, a person of equality;
Did not realise you were solitary, alone;
Far from your mission “dorp” and relatives of your own.

You were brought up in a cohesive community;
Raised “properly” despite challenges and poverty.
Your speech was not refined due to scant education.
Your “taal” was Afrikaans; accent an indication.

You'd teeth missing and were a darker colour than me.
Your hair was black, then speckled white, but always frizzy.
We did not consider your small, cramped room to be wrong;
Just enough room for your bed – not that many feet long.

Part of the furniture, always there – dependably.
Seldom appreciated your care sufficiently.
I did not always enjoy your cooking, must admit.
You overcooked the cabbage and the stews quite a bit!

When I went into the yard, climbing the loquat tree,
You were in your room with colourful embroidery.
Using chain stitch, your own, simple flowers you designed.
Both creativity and industry you combined.

They were gifts for the time you went back to family;
Presents to pack in your suitcase, eventually.
You were missed when you left on your annual holiday.
How could the Lilleys cope when Maggie had gone away?

There's so much I did not know about your history;
Wish I had thought of it and asked you interestedly.
Forgive me for being self-absorbed, not caring more.
You were our maid but a person of value at core.

I never thought enough about you personally;
Did not recognise you, a woman of dignity.
From me you deserved honour, respect and gratitude
I should have shown real concern, a better attitude.

When Grandpa died you too were sorrowful and so sad.
At the interment, from you a posy – all you had.
The home was given up and you left permanently.
Our Maggie Apollos – grey haired – returned Mamre.

September 2015

GRANDMA LILLEY

February 2013

Florence Lilley was my maternal grandmama.
Alive in my memory now, she was a still star
In the skies of my sometimes-turbulent childhood –
Stable and strict, consistent, imperfect and good.

My grandmother was born in Victorian times
To an English couple who moved to warmer climes;
Her father, a printer of Yorkshire weaver stock;
Halifax Sunday School gave her mother a clock.

Growing up, Grandma was destined to learn a trade.
As a milliner, lovely women's hats she made.
Second eldest of six girls, she was first to wed.
Soon her family increased with more mouths to be fed.

Giving birth to her ten children successively
She was always busy as the proverbial bee:
Got water from the well; the stove was fired by wood;
Washed clothes by hand; starched and ironed for her growing brood.

Life was hard but she was always a true lady.
Her speech and manner were fine. She faced life bravely.
She disciplined her children; did not spare the cane.
But they loved her and through her training, found much gain.

Though life was no picnic, she could enjoy good fun
She'd a sense of humour when all is said and done.
She knew heartache, tragedy and maternal loss;
Yet learnt with courage to bear the onerous cross.

Her husband, Albert Evitt Lilley, was a handsome man;
Just short of seventy-nine years was his life's span.
He had wanted, and struggled, to be his own boss.
The books sometimes showed no profit; rather a loss.

Grandpa had his own barber shop in Montagu;
Klipfontein, a lime kiln; Wynberg, sanded floors new.
Their marriage was not all they wanted it to be,
But it lasted fifty-six years – amazingly.



Grandma played an important part in my young years;
Naughtiness penalised with a hiding and tears;
Never doubted she loved me and wanted my best;
Childhood illness soothed when in her bed I could rest.

Grandma's standards and values were inculcated.
In English, Christian ways I was educated.
No dishonesty nor any profanity;
No pride, rebellion, shouting or vulgarity.

No cards, no alcohol – such things she did not need;
Only some sherry for the trifle was decreed.
In her home Sunday was a very special day –
Best clothes, church, a roast, English china on display.

I remember Grandma: meagre hairs on her head
Rolled in silver curlers before she went to bed;
Never left her home except in a flower trimmed hat
And her good dress (wearing her best corsets at that).

I grew up. Grandma and her house mattered to me;
Loved to go for a chat; "Maggie, please bring the tea".
For years she was a dressmaker of some renown.
I am proud to claim that she sewed my wedding gown.

My grandmother was the connection between me
And a long line of our forgotten ancestry.
She was the reminder of those earlier days,
Lived at a slower pace and in more sedate ways.

She was soft, she was plump, comfortable and kind.
She was a clear influence on my young heart and mind.
I never perceived her difficulties and pain,
But she offered her strength and love, for me to claim.

How to honour this special person on my life?
Who was a daughter, mother, grandmother and wife.
Who lived modestly without a great life epic,
Yet impacted on us with her Christian ethic.

I am grateful for such a caring grandmother.
She never tried my initiative to smother,
But freed me to express myself and romp and play –
As long as it was done in a ladylike way!



RUMOUR OF SPRING

August 2014

There's a whisper of spring –	Just a hint of something.
Almond tree blossoming;	May bush, buds fattening;
Noisy birds twittering;	Sun on pond glittering;
Grass green and growing;	Snowdrops bloomed, and going;
Ferns reaching, uncurling;	Tall Arums unfurling;
White jasmine stars trailing;	Poinsettias failing;
Plants proliferating;	Oak tree, green creating;
End vine leaves appearing;	Clivia heads stirring;
Nasturtium leaves spreading;	Aloes – dead-heading;
Narcissus perfuming;	Impatiens blooming;
Earthworms wriggling and pink –	Spring on the very brink.

In a world of killing	With so much blood spilling;
Questioning, despairing –	Where is our God's caring?
There is hope in the Spring –	Not here yet, but coming.



SPRING RAIN

September 2014

The rain is gently falling.	“Witogies” hush their calling.
Dry soil, greedily drinking;	Newly planted roots, sinking;
Coral clivia, blooming;	Bees resting from their zooming;
Arums unfazed, and standing;	Drops on the next leaf landing;
Our garden, damp and cooling;	Refreshment quietly ruling.

In the Cape ash, sap rising;	Spiders, their prey appraising;
Snails, determinedly crawling –	Their appetites appalling;
Like Eden’s snake, appearing –	Beauty, life and hope clearing.
Wherever growth is showing,	Caterpillars are mowing.
Pests, fresh green shoots destroying.	This is really annoying.

But the garden’s surviving,	And most of it is thriving.
Though tip wilters are feeding;	Grey beetles, stem juice needing,
Season’s short. They’ll be going,	While foliage keeps growing.
God’s soft spring rain descending	Will have a happy ending,
With daisies multiplying;	Scented roses replying.

WHO AM I?

Just an ordinary kind of woman you may say;
One who lived the usual kind of life from day to day;
Not likely to leave an imprint in world history's clay;

But

Loving some of the adventures that did come her way.

Brought up with standards of virtue and morality;
Taught to be not just a female but a young lady –
With manners, politeness, honesty and modesty;

But

Loving cast-off dance dresses and high heels “like Mommy”.

A plain girl from the working and lower middle class,
Without pretensions to a fortune – or other brass;
Not dumb. Each school grade without sweat, she'd easily pass.

But

Loving literature most – whether tragedy or farce.

Born just one year before the Second World War began;
Broken home, yet part of an extended fam'ly clan.
Once matriculated, her nursing studies began;

But

Loving caring for each patient – child, woman or man.

She married her special beau like most girls of her age;
Became mother and grandmother at a later stage;
Whether she made a real difference, only they can gauge;

But

Loving writing on ev'ry child's and grandchild's life's page.

It's a fact no one has claimed that she was a beauty;
Though she may be thought to have done her civic duty;
Definitely a nerd, seeking fam'ly trees like booty;

But

Loving Tchaikovsky above songs like “Tutti-frutti”.

Who's this unexceptional one of whom you've been told?
This roundish lady, nearly seventy-four years old –
Thinning, greying hair that long ago was almost gold;

But

Loving life, glad of Neville still “to have and to hold”.

Here's the secret. She's really royalty in disguise;
Having the most powerful Father King to advise;
And with an older Brother Who answers to her heart's cries;

But

Loving her, egging her on to reach for His great prize.

Once she was held captive by an awful, evil one.
Then was rescued, adopted and her damaged heart won;
Legally made King's child and sister to the true Son;

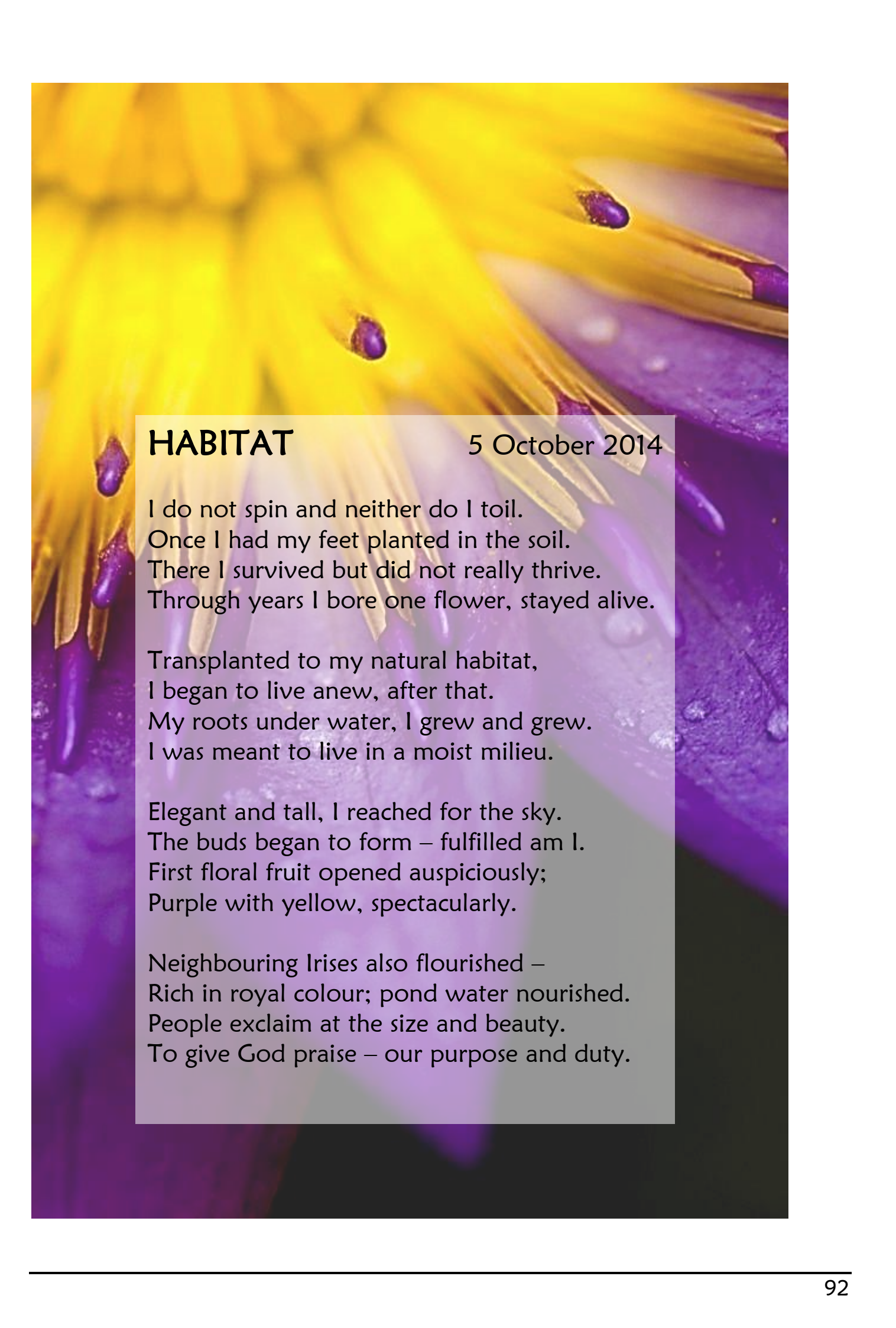
But

Loving being a royal princess – for nothing she'd done.

While she has been living down here – not always too well;
(Still she knows that she's loved – even the times when she fell);
They're preparing her royal home on the other shore;

But

Loving for now her role as the King's ambassador.



HABITAT

5 October 2014

I do not spin and neither do I toil.
Once I had my feet planted in the soil.
There I survived but did not really thrive.
Through years I bore one flower, stayed alive.

Transplanted to my natural habitat,
I began to live anew, after that.
My roots under water, I grew and grew.
I was meant to live in a moist milieu.

Elegant and tall, I reached for the sky.
The buds began to form – fulfilled am I.
First floral fruit opened auspiciously;
Purple with yellow, spectacularly.

Neighbouring Irises also flourished –
Rich in royal colour; pond water nourished.
People exclaim at the size and beauty.
To give God praise – our purpose and duty.

THE ROBIN

September 2014

An orange throated robin,
unaware of watching eyes,
Complacently perches – over-head,
green leaves his allies.
On a slender, curved branch –
unperturbed, unmoving, at rest.
Cocky robin, why are you waiting?
Where's your hidden nest?



He's the other side of the window, wearing his black mask.
Why do you lie so still, neglecting your foraging task?
He braves the cold evening air, wind coming from the south east.
I don't want to scare him, as on his beauty my eyes feast.

Along comes a witogie – by contrast nervous and flitting.
Joined by a second one looking for food that is fitting.
They're descending towards the bird bath, quite confidently.
But macho Robin does not approve; moves in rapidly.

Chases the intruders in his perceived personal space.
Then claims the higher perch on a tree – the conqueror's place.
He is bigger. He was there first. He has exclusive right.
Little birds have no power to challenge. They take to flight.

Robin with orange throat and tail, your beauty's impressive.
Never thought that you were a bully, and so aggressive.
What is your lame excuse? Your nesting place was built elsewhere.
Did you have to use your size to give weaker ones a scare?

Through Adam and Eve sin entered the world, the Scriptures tell.
Not only humans, but the whole created order fell.
Man uses power over others to live selfishly.
And a robin will react with paranoid rivalry.

God's great plan is to redeem the whole of His creation,
That until today fights, wounds, starves to emaciation.
No person, no animal, no bird will ever oppress
In His new heaven and earth filled with perfect righteousness.

WALKING ON WATER

Matthew 14:22-33

Written for missionary friends going through a traumatic time.

Where are You, Lord? When I'm feeling so far from home?
Surrounded by friends, I'm alone. In this dark time, why don't You come?

Where are You, Lord? I am very tired and washed out.
Circumstances lead me to doubt. I feel I could cry, scream and shout.

Where are You, Lord? I feel deeply troubled and tense.
Life simply does not make much sense. The cloud I'm in is deeply dense.

Where are You, Lord? There's something I don't understand.
You brought me away from my land. Yet things are not as I had planned.

Where are You, Lord? I need to feel Your comfort now;
To know there's a purpose – somehow, as in this storm I bend and bow.

Where are You, Lord? I want Your presence, calm and peace;
Feel the fears, anxieties cease; find in you a sense of release.

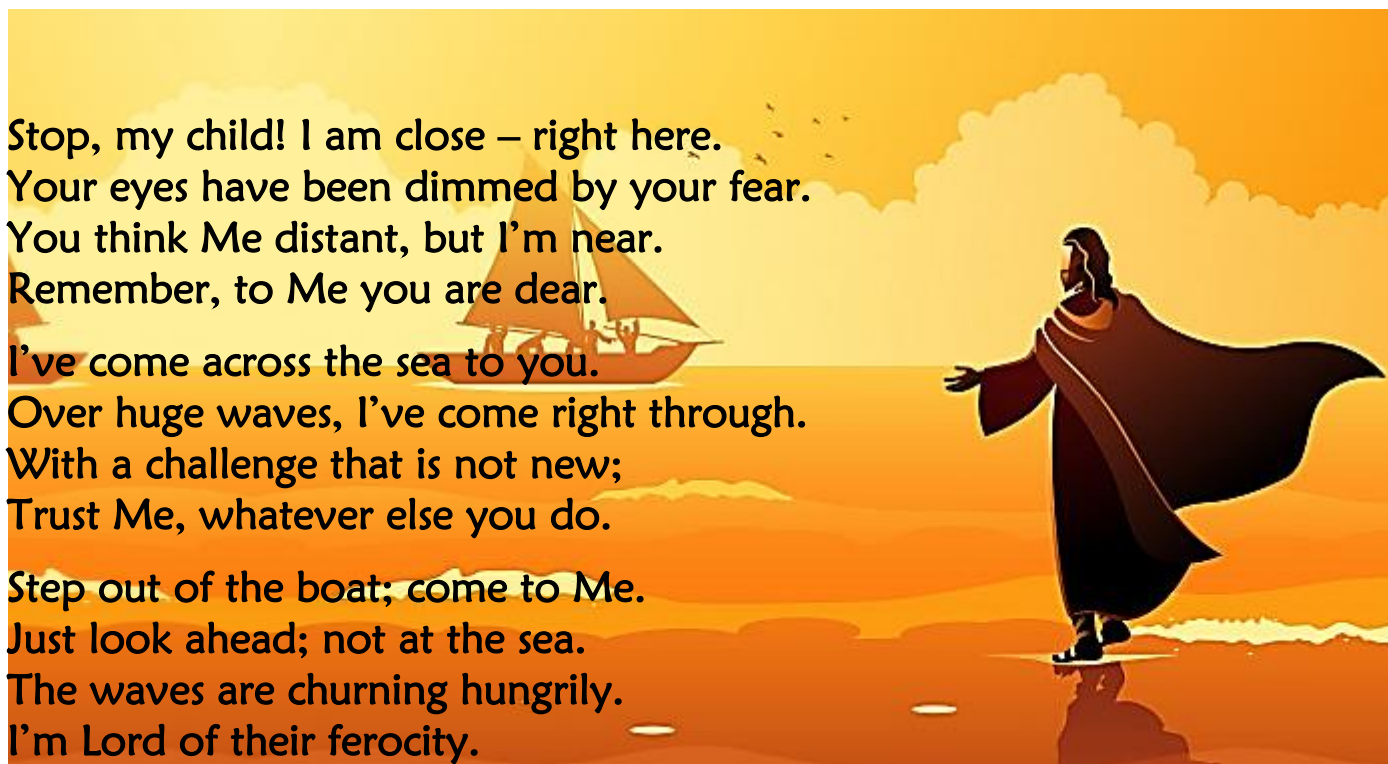
Where are You, Lord? Those I care about are in pain.
In times like these I see no gain. On my whole being, it's a drain.

Where are You, Lord? You know that it's change, which I hate.
My life has been shaken of late. I'm upset. My mind's in a state.

Stop, my child! I am close – right here.
Your eyes have been dimmed by your fear.
You think Me distant, but I'm near.
Remember, to Me you are dear.

I've come across the sea to you.
Over huge waves, I've come right through.
With a challenge that is not new;
Trust Me, whatever else you do.

Step out of the boat; come to Me.
Just look ahead; not at the sea.
The waves are churning hungrily.
I'm Lord of their ferocity.



Arms open wide above the storm,
I wait for you my child forlorn.
Though your heart and mind have been torn,
After night there's always a dawn.

I've got you. I'm holding you tight.
I'm in the darkness – through the night.
You'll see Me turn darkness to light;
Calm the storm; make the blackness bright.

When you look at the depths, you sink.
My hand pulls you back, from the brink.
Not abandoned, though so you think.
With Me, you'll not drown in the drink.

Now I want you to take my hand.
On storm-tossed seas I'll make you stand;
Walking on water can be grand.
Together we shall reach dry land.

So here is the crucial question –
You trusted Me to save from sin;
Lift it's curse and make you My kin –
Will you trust Me this war to win?

Let Me be Who I am truly –
The King who has the victory;
Who reigns over the enemy,
And I will reveal My glory.

What do you see – shipwreck and loss?
Look again. See a shameful Cross.
There I showed Satan who is Boss.
Grace reigns supreme. All else is dross.

I sit enthroned above the flood.
The shore shall be gained through My blood.
Out of this distress will come good.
With Me on water you have stood.

December 2011

NO GREATER LOVE

John 15:13-15 Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down His life for His friends. 14 You are My friends, if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from My Father I have made known to you.

There is One Who is so different to me;

True Son of God from all eternity;
Great Creator and Sustainer of all;
Before Whose glory, I worship and fall.
Yet to pay sin's price, He left heaven's bliss
And graciously calls me a friend of His.

**Chorus: No greater love; such amazing love without end –
That the God-Man laid down His life for me, His friend.**

There is One Who is so different to me;

Sinless, perfect in His humanity;
Humbly submitted to His Father's will –
Yes, even to death on Golgotha's hill.
Though I'm a sinner and deserve His pain,
He gave Himself for my eternal gain.

**Chorus: No greater love; such amazing love without end –
That the God-Man laid down His life for me, His friend.**

There is One Who is so different to me.

My substitute He became – willingly.
And He never considered it a loss
When, as a criminal, He died on that Cross.
Why then should I not obey His commands;
Say, "Yes", to my Friend in all He demands?

**Chorus: No greater love; such amazing love without end –
That the God-Man laid down His life for me, His friend.**

There is One Who is so diff'rent to me;

He Who from death rose in full victory;
Ascended to heaven and intercedes
For His forgiven friends with each day's needs.
Unworthy, yet I've One on heaven's throne
Who calls me His friend, His beloved, His own.

**Chorus: No greater love; such amazing love without end –
That the God-Man laid down His life for me, His friend.**

There is One Who is so diff'rent to me;

In grace called, sought for me – His enemy.
I feared that He planned my life to enslave
But instead it was liberty, He gave.
“I call you My friend, not servant,” He said.
“I'll share My Word and you'll be safely led.”

**Chorus: No greater love; such amazing love without end –
That the God-Man laid down His life for me, His friend.**

There is One Who is so diff'rent to me;

Who wants you also His close friend to be.
There on the Cross He gave up His last breath,
That you might be reconciled through His death.
Jesus calls you to turn from your own way
And give your life, yourself, to Him today.

**Chorus: No greater love; such amazing love without end –
That the God-Man laid down His life for me, His friend.**



DAY'S ENDING

17 October 2014

Light wind through the drooping fir prances.
Johannesburg Gold sprightly dances.
Overhead, vine courteously bows,
As white butterflies lift, dip, carouse.

Loud sound of birds squabbling, objecting.
Their happier songs they're neglecting.
Salmon Hibiscus, unmoved, content.
Double pink daisies nod agreement.

Two doves like grey phantoms disappear.
Sun's shining but day's ending is near.
Coral tree leaves meet, greet each other.
Then stillness comes, their sport to smother.

Small blossoms are emerging unseen,
With leaf clusters where berries have been.
Buddleia, oak, flame, wild peach and fig –
On their staid trunks, twigs, leaves trip a jig.

Female olive thrush lands on a tree;
Calls for its mate, encouragingly;
Darts on the top of a high wall,
Still sharing its shrill, high pitched bird call.

Noisy hadeda flies overhead
With its raucous cries and ibis head;
Settles on our neighbour's red tiled roof;
Gives a challenging cry of reproof.

Ripple of water in the bird bath.
Tadpole in the pond takes a swift path.
No sign of five, red, hidden goldfish –
No eyes, nor fins, nor tail with a swish.

Right through the garden, shadows growing,
As bright rays are gradually going.
And all the time the cascading sound
Of my Love, trailing hosepipe around.

A CRY FROM THE “SLOUGH OF DESPOND”



Lord, I'm not in a good place at all today.
I feel insignificant in every way;
Neville and I are unappreciated;
No recognition; neither praised nor feted.

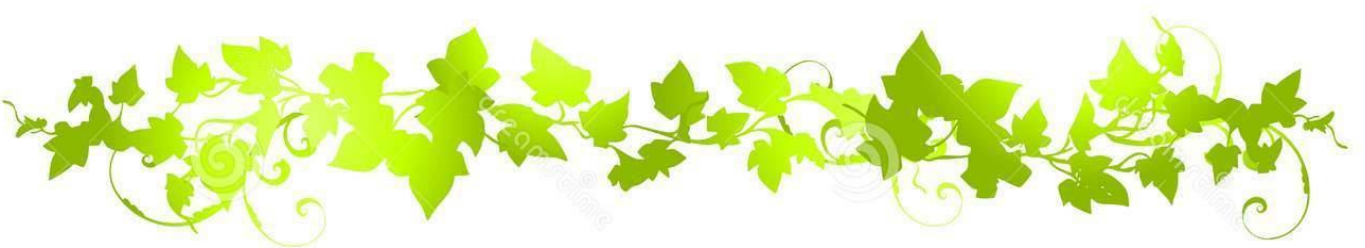
Others are more important and looked up to,
But we don't count, it seems – whatever we do.
I'm feeling weepy and really down and sad.
I'm ashamed of thoughts of self-pity. It's bad!

I know my reactions are not pleasing You.
I should be thankful; praise You in all I do.
Lord, forgive and pardon Your straying child
For untamed thoughts – unreasonable and wild.

Would you pull me out of this “Slough of Despond”,
And deal with this “self” of which I'm over-fond.
Help me to get my eyes solely fixed on You.
Pardon the pride that wants acclamation too.

I do not enjoy being told when I'm wrong.
It's a failing I have had for far too long.
What can I say but, I repent, dear Saviour.
All that counts is not man's praise but Your favour.

January 2012



CREEPY



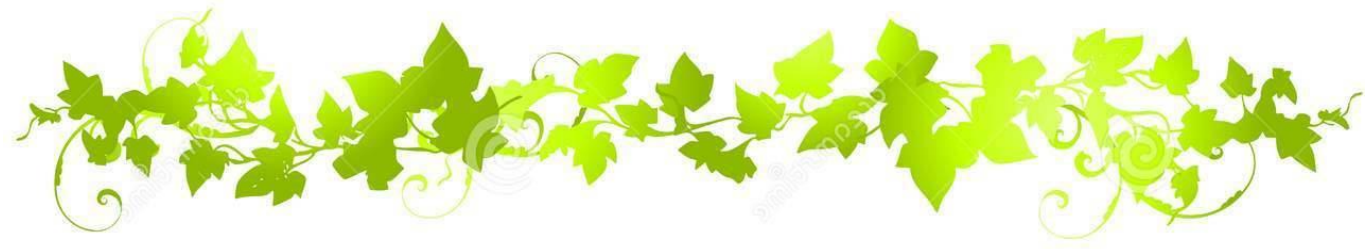
Their roots are firmly anchored and they love to explore.
The desire to travel further, you cannot ignore.
They are the adventurers, forging a pioneer road;
Seeking more light and more space, always in active mode.

Some provide cooling shelter from baking noonday sun.
Others disperse breath-taking flowers as on they run.
There are those that dangle floral bunches like tresses.
While many bloom singly in magnificent dresses.

These, the creepers, the ramblers crawling on wooden beams.
In our garden, the place with snaking, climbing things teems.
And we love the sense of extending, growing plant life;
Struggling on, never satisfied, worlds-to-conquer, strife.

There's the ornamental Vine with its protecting shade;
The hardy Bougainvilleas whose blooms stayed and stayed;
Creamy stamens surrounded by purple or bright red.
They like to rough it. Don't overwater this plant's bed.

Cup of Gold, profusely, magnificently bearing;
Sturdy and rampant; extra-large buds and blooms sharing.
Honeysuckle, sweet-scented, trumpets lemon and white.
Isn't God's creation a satisfying delight?



CRAWLIES

Snake vine, an unlovely name for a lovely creeper;
Flowers like gold dog roses, as stem rises steeper.
A “No-name brand” climber with its hanging, mauve clusters
That later, popular-with-birds, small, red fruit musters.

In pre-spring the winding Jasmine shoots small stars of white;
Perfume permeates the air, descending from its height.
Come autumn, Canary creeper, each year newly grown,
Bears multiplied yellow florets, uniquely its own.

Lastly but not least the rambling roses – such a treat!
Sending out an alluring scent from their mid-air seat;
Pearly, pale, peachy-pink petals – count about a score.
Roses in groups, one by one, opening their beauty’s store.

Our Creator’s wisdom is seen in varied designs,
Of climbing, growing, shading, rambling creepers and vines.
He who has given us all things richly to enjoy,
Is worthy of praise. To this end I my pen employ.

October 2014





OUR COMMON AMAZING RACE

God has set before us an amazing, challenging race.
It began at a set time, in a particular place –
When we accepted Jesus as Finisher and Starter;
Found entrance was free; we could neither earn it nor barter.
God orders the proceedings and He determines the course.
His participation principles we had to endorse.

We started and ran with great enthusiasm and speed;
Going straight for the goal; others’ warnings we did not heed –
Until we tripped, stumbled and fell, badly grazing our knees.
They had to be well cleansed and dressed, despite our pain and pleas.
Having lost time, we set off at a sustainable pace;
Our renewed aim to run a worthwhile and prize-winning race.

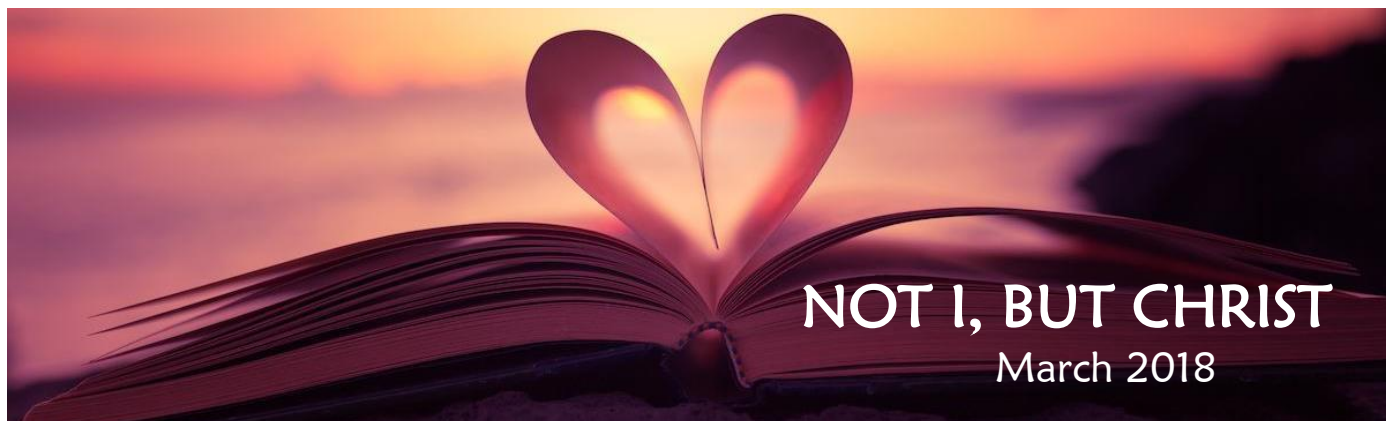
We’d been humbled; listening to advice, ran more carefully;
Watching out for hidden obstacles that there might still be.
We tried to run carrying some unnecessary things.
Found we were hindered; that worthless, extra weight, trouble brings;
Jettisoned that which depleted our strength and held us back.
Then kept going. Stayed hydrated, wanting to be on track.

Sometimes running was tough, the way continually uphill.
The rough road was pitted with potholes and deep dongas still.
We had misgivings. Would we wear a crown of victory?
Maybe we'd not persevere and fulfil our destiny.
When we got our second wind, life was great, the path level.
We enjoyed the route. In its pleasant scenes we could revel.

As the time progressed, we got weary, wanted to fall out.
Whether it was worth the sweat and pain, we began to doubt.
At times our muscles were aching. We were panting, wheezing.
“Why am I exhausting myself and who am I pleasing?”
But people encouraged and egged us on along the way.
“It is worth it in the end. Keep going”, is what they say.

So, we continued with many ups and downs on the road.
Dimly across the bends and through the trees, the goal line showed.
Again, human weakness overtook and cramped our style.
We might have to crawl at the end – that last eighth of a mile.
Waiting, cheering us on is the Finisher of the race.
His arms will be there when we collapse into His embrace.

July 2014



NOT I, BUT CHRIST

March 2018

Is Jesus Christ truly the centre of your life?

Is the Bible the basis for your world view?

Be aware there is philosophical strife,

Where the focus is not on Your God but on you.

Self-improvement, self-development is the goal.

Surely there is nothing wrong with such an idea?

If it's kept in perspective, as part of the whole,

There is possibly nothing that you need to fear.

But if we get priorities wrong, there's trouble.

God will not ever be content with second place.

"Not I, but Christ", is not just froth and bubble.

We dare not put "self" in His allotted space.

He has called us to take up the cross every day;

To deny ourselves; our minds through His truth renewed;

Talking, walking according to His will and way;

Filled with the Holy Spirit, with His power imbued.

The world is full of those who claim independence

From their Creator – almighty, gracious, caring.

Our Father wants us to live in glad dependence,

With Him all the ups and downs of our lives sharing.

I'm not "master of my fate, captain of my soul".

Life is far too complicated to think that true.

We do our best but some things we cannot control.

The Sovereign Lord is the One I should trust. Do you?

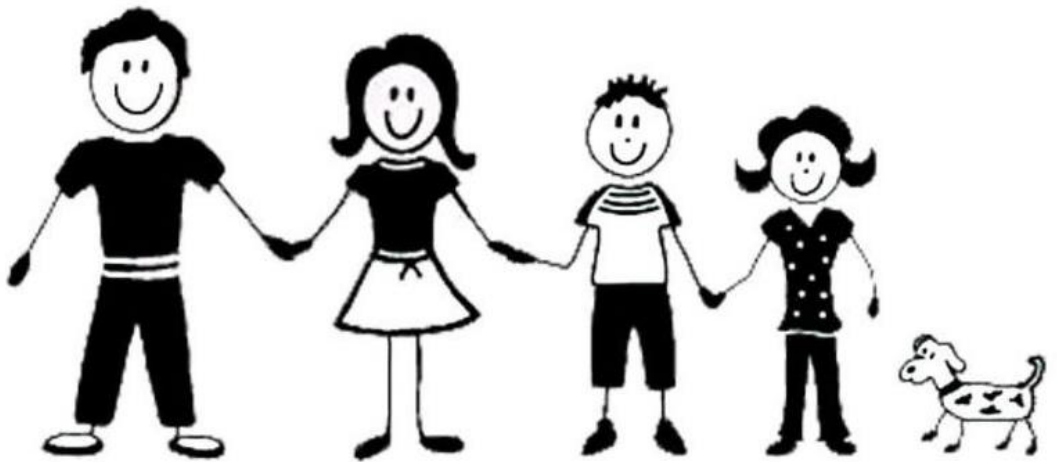
Be the best you can be in all of life's game;

But don't make this world's success your ultimate goal.

The true reason for living at which we should aim:

Pleasing God – "not I, but Christ", as years onward roll.

FAMILY AND GOD'S GRACE



I look at my family, and I love them so.
But all imperfect, each of us flawed, I know.
Wonderful truth, good news – in Christ, we're accepted;
In Him we're perfect; His life in us reflected.

Lord, help me not to dwell on the weakness I see;
But recognize You at work – in them and in me.
“Accepted in the Beloved”, I am complete.
Please let my standing and practice more closely meet.

Help us appreciate each other – warts and all.
Prayerful, not judgemental, if one should trip and fall.
Fill us with your unconditional love and grace,
Encouraging each to endure through life's tough race.

While we serve others, for fam'ly may we be there –
You, Lord, source of strength and joy, as trials we share.
May we all, with those generations yet to come,
Enjoy, and extend, grace. Thus honouring the Son.

March 2018

NASTURTIUMS

October 2014

They grow wild along the railway line;
Up and down many a steep incline;
Non-indigenous, yet they're at home;
Untended in fields, on hills they roam.

On our pavement and in our plant pots;
From year to year they sow themselves – lots!
We have an abundant crop each spring,
Of bright flowers gaily parading.

What a palette of colour they show –
From rarest red to palest yellow;
Orange and pinkish-tinted between,
Artistic stripes and spots can be seen.

Nasturtiums are such cheerful flowers.
They seem to have magical powers
To lift the mood when we're feeling down;
To transform to a smile, from a frown.

Their shades of optimism and hope,
Encourage us to feel we can cope.
They light up and brighten every room
That seemed tainted with trouble and gloom.

They can be a triple health blessing:
Mixed salad with favourite dressing;
On sandwiches the leaves delicious;
And chewed for a sore throat, propitious.

By bees greatly appreciated;
From their nectar, honey created.
Cabbage butterflies visit each day
Caterpillars keep munching away.

To pick, give to others is a joy.
Spreading God's cheer, glumness may alloy.
And they can give second-hand delight –
Watercolours in shades, tints of bright.

Humble, blooming unpretentiously.
Fragile, off'ring themselves gen'rously.
No rain, wind, or heat, their colour dims
Thanks, Lord, for lovely Nasturtiums.



WHERE ARE YOU?

March 2018

Do you see the suffering of Your own people, Lord?

And are You there?

They are dying in Pakistan and North Africa.

But do You care?

They are prison inmates in Iran and China too.

So, is that fair?

They've been kidnapped and decimated in Nigeria.

A cross they bear.

Yes, I am fully present there.

You can be sure, I deeply care.

One day, I'll make all right and fair.

Till then – you too, My cross must bear.



THE JASMINE

The Jasmine crept up, wrapped itself over the water tank;
Flourished pre-spring, and after, rising from soil dark and dank.
I love the Jasmine climber, but season is nearly past,
It bloomed early but all that white magnificence can't last.

There are still fresh pink buds to open in various parts,
But most blooms have faded, and the beauty that touched our hearts.
With regret, there will soon be no more fragrance to inhale.
Many star-like flowers have died, fallen; leaves too will fail.

Each white cluster gave pleasure – whether picked or left in place.
They evoke memories of purity, perfume and grace.
Like the Jasmine, I'm getting near the end of my season;
My hope is that I'll leave sweet memories, for good reason.

October 2015

ALL MIXED UP

November 2014



They say we should have an indigenous garden.

Our erf is rather a mixed-up place, I'm afraid.

The number of intruders, I hope they'll pardon.

We love these foreigners and the difference they've made.

What would surroundings be without these trees –

Brazilian Peppers, Fiddlewood, Fir and May;
Oak, Gums, Hibiscus, Almond from over the seas.
Red, yellow Poinsettias, Bottlebrush must stay.

We love the scent of cream and pink Frangipanis,

And the Christmas Hydrangeas in their pastel shade;
Bright Cannas, Inca lilies, Fuchsias and Daisies;
Bear's Breeches, Narcissus, Snowdrops of white and jade;

Red Geraniums, Begonias, Marigolds;

Anthuriums, Nasturtiums, jewelled Impatiens;
The white St Joseph's lily that perfumed unfolds;
God's horticultural treasure that never ends.

Not forgetting the Roses and Maiden Hair fern;

Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow – purple, mauve, white;
Various plants whose real names we still have to learn;
Creepers, Climbers – blooming, shading from fierce sunlight.

Add to the above Lavender, Mint, Rosemary;

Origanum, Peppermint, with Basil and Thyme.
Climbing tomatoes that flourish prodigiously;
There's hope one day the Lemon tree will reach its prime.



But we're not complete traitors in the plants we chose.

We've hordes of acceptable nationals as well –
Indigenous, local – scattered in beds and rows.

Many thrive and greatly increase, as their ranks swell.

Blooming in Spring, orange Clivia – and yellow;

Clumps of Arum lilies either side of the lawn;

Pelargoniums, Gazanias freely grow;

Tall, proud Strelitzia – blue and gold like the dawn.

Wild Irises and freesias and Agapanthus;

The orange Crocosmia, as Falling Stars known;

Ground cover, and bushes of blue, pink Plectranthus;

Succulents, Aloes whose blooms in winter are shown.

Golden Cape Gooseberries easily multiply.

The wild Cape Fig forms hanging fruit on its main stem.

Three Cape ash trees grow strong, tall, reaching for the sky.

When the young Keurboom flowers it will be a gem.

Coral trees covered in leaves but so far no red.

The Flame tree does produce its share of bright scarlet.

Yellowwood continues slowly in the far bed.

Tree of dark leaves, unknown name, where birds nest and sit.

Wild peach with cyanide in its leaves and its fruit,

Chewed by caterpillars of orange butterflies;

The Buddleia, multi-stemmed, rising from its root;

Cream florets from which delightful perfumes arise.

Our garden is all mixed up, as I said before;

But like our country, for each one God has a place.

Origins varied, but South Africans at core;

Each one needed and wanted, regardless of race.

THE CREATOR



The great Creator – of a myriad galaxies and stars;
Of our solar system (sun encircled by Venus, Earth, Mars);
Of this planet with its volcanoes, mountains, rivers and seas;
Growing Disas, Strelizias, Fynbos and Baobab trees;

Of lions and leopards, lizards, toads, sparrows and ladybirds;
Of people, all colours, shapes and types, sportsmen, scholars and nerds
Chose to become a true part of the disparate human race;
Conceived, born, olive-skinned, brown-eyed, an appealing infant face.

Like us He was a toddler, exploring His own hearth;
Mud, sticks and wood shavings; grubby, busy child, needing a bath.
Who is this running, jumping, joyful and active, first-born boy?
Always helpful, learning, an “apprentice” Joseph can employ.

He too stumbled and fell. And He bled from that painful, grazed knee.
He felt hurt when His young village friends treated Him unkindly.
Parents He honoured but sometimes there was misunderstanding.
Undeserved rebuke on His sensitive, listening ears landing.



Each Sabbath day He went regularly to the synagogue.
In the week, He studied the Torah, memorised – a hard slog.
With His own eternal Father, He found time to be alone.
Succeeded in pleasing Him each day. This by His actions shown.

He was a teenager with His hormones fluctuating too.
He had to grow, develop into a normal, adult Jew.
Like others He sought to fulfil God’s holy, demanding Law.
Unlike us, He obeyed from the heart all in God’s Word He saw.

For years He worked as Carpenter in an unimportant town.
The wealthy and the noble on His origins would look down.
At thirty He started to teach with simplicity and wit.
Shank’s pony was His travel mode – fortunately He was fit.



For three years the Master Craftsman, wrapped in our humanity,
Proved His divine ancestry, while fools questioned His sanity:
Healed the sick, calmed wind and sea, multiplied food, the hungry fed;
Broke Satan’s bondage, restored sight and hearing, raised the dead.

He challenged. He predicted His own death and He prophesied.
Courageously reached out to “the fallen”, social norms defied.
To confront religious hypocrites, He did not hesitate.
Speaking the truth to earthly power, He knowingly sealed His fate.

Kissed by a traitor, deserted by those who proclaimed loyalty;
By unjust, imperial court condemned, mocked as fake royalty.
With direct access to untold legions of heavenly might,
He yields to earth’s feeble forces – agents of darkness and night.

Attached to the wood by iron, He hung on a Cross, suffocating;
Undignified, exposed, jeered at by men filled with raw hating.
Dehydrated; forgiving; agony of body, of heart;
Thinks of mother; forsaken by Father; a man torn apart.

Heaven draws down shades of deepest twilight on the awful scene.
Earth trembles at its Maker’s last cry. Death reigns where life has been.
In our place and for our sin, the eternal Creator died.
To save His undeserving creatures, Jesus was crucified.

His body tended by compassionate, rich men who took charge;
Cushioned in aloes, linen wrapped, sealed in reserved grave – new, large,
The bruised and battered form was left to its perpetual rest.
Left behind – anguish, remorse, despair, in fear and sorrow dressed.

Was it possible decay could triumph, and morbidity?
Consequence of evil overpower righteous Deity?
The answer was an overwhelming, “Never, never, ever”!
He’s alive! He alone abled chains of judgement to sever.



What joy, regret and restoration, resurrection day brought.
Tables were turned – not defeat but permanent victory bought.
He was with them – living, and with nail-scarred hands sharing their bread.
A fairy tale ending, but it was true. Christ rose from the dead.

Forty days – “Go” the last charge to His disciple band, less one.
All power in heaven and earth are His. The Father’s will is done.
From the soil He made, through the clouds He formed, up into the sky,
Before wide, wond’ring eyes their Creator Lord ascends on high.

April 2018





THE ICON

Table Mountain is impressive – a world renowned icon –
With a flat top that even the unfit can walk upon.
The young and healthy may slog up the indented ravines,
While rock climbers get there through skill and mechanical means.
By the cable car or dogged pluck, all hope to arrive,
And look down on slopes, sea and city that appears to thrive.

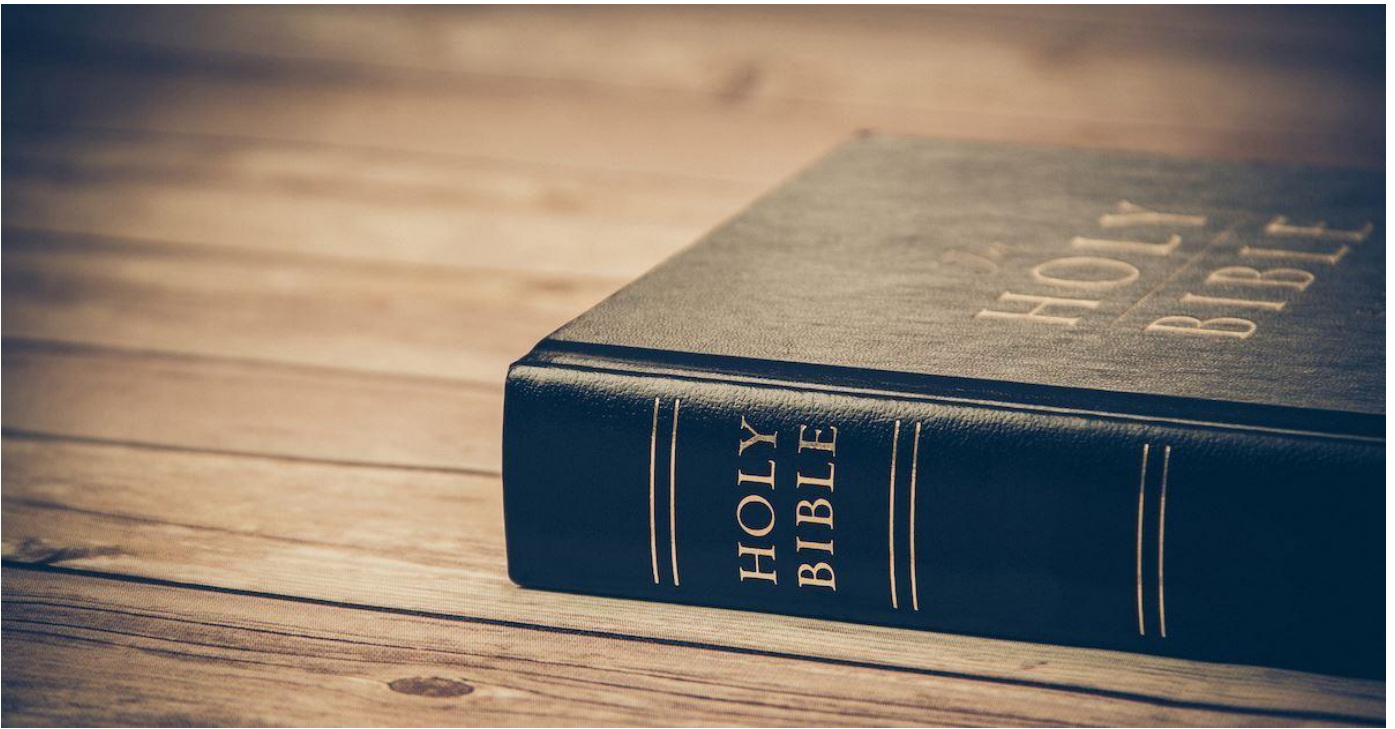
Table Mountain is home to dassies – plump and appealing.
Hungry and awake, unguarded snacks they might be stealing.
There are cobras and other snakes some prefer to avoid –
Harmless or venomous – to be safe don't get them annoyed!
You may see a Cape mountain zebra – not docile, but wild.
There are various buck keeping their distance – shy and mild.

Here are types of fauna you are unlikely to observe:
Elusive Table Mountain Ghost frog's found in the reserve.
The large Leopard toad also in the area resides.
Judging from its defined spoor, a real leopard somewhere hides.
Amongst the crags an eagle builds its precarious nest.
While sugarbirds and sunbirds look for nectar without rest.

Rocks of famous Table Mountain sandstone are all around
Special fynbos, surviving sturdily, fills up the ground –
King proteas, suikerbossies, pincushions, Blushing Bride as well,
Watsonias, ericas – more species than I've time to tell.
The red Disa blooms there, floral symbol of the Cape West.
Wild peach, Keurboom and Silver trees grow in gorge and on crest.

God has formed, in the midst of Cape Town, a wonderful place;
Available to all, regardless of class, creed or race.
So much beauty, variety and unending wonder –
Pools, streams and waterfalls that dropping down, softly thunder.
But man's evil can spoil it all through sad, vicious attacks.
Despite all His goodness, many have shown to God their backs.

March 2018



ONLY ONE

March 2018

We live in a culture of tolerance, relativity.
But that same culture certainly won't show tolerance to me.
Because I want to share the truth many do not want to see –
There's only one, holy, sovereign God, and that god is not me.

Three persons in the great Godhead, yet indivisibly One;
Only one way to know the true God, through the Cross of the Son;
Only one Book that narrates the story of what He has done.
His love and justice there clarified, has my needy heart won.

There is only one objective truth that leads to Salvation;
And only one Saviour – Jesus – the Lord of all creation;
Only one Holy Spirit who works in me transformation.
Only one church, with each of God's children my close relation.

Only one way I can give homage to my heavenly King –
Seek to live according to His will and Word in everything;
Thoughts, motives, reactions, attitudes under His control bring.
Though flawed my life, may it draw to Him, others His grace praising.

VALUE

Two Cape sparrows, three, winging through the low trees,
Unhindered by the soft rain and gentle breeze.
Nimble hopping down onto the wet cold soil;
Unseen, the object of their quiet, humble toil.



Saw few sparrows for a number of seasons.
Glad that they are back, for various reasons.
Seems not all of them have suffered from the blows
Of the claws and beaks of those intrusive crows.

Somehow these small birds have managed to survive.
There they are in our garden – flying, alive.
I admire the splendid coat of the plump male;
His mate by comparison, quite drab and pale.

Good to know that somewhere they must have a nest,
Where eggs are laid; where parents can brood and rest.
One day in late spring we may hear the clamour
Of fledglings – half-feathered, lacking in glamour!



The little birds set off a wide train of thought –
Of a gift of love, for me, my husband bought.
There they sit on the windowsill – five sparrows,
Cast in white, brown; towards the base it narrows.

Inanimate, silent, flightless little birds –
But reminder of another Lover's words:
"Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins?"
And to this question, He a conclusion joins.

"God cares for small birds. Won't He take care of you?
Do you not know, you're of much greater value?"
So cheap were sparrows, that the fifth one was free.
So valuable am I – God's Son died for me.



27 September 2014



What's that feline doing on our roof?
I'd like to make our garden cat-proof.
I want birds to be safe, unafraid;
Not fear this predator on a raid.

Though we would provide a sanctuary;
Nowhere on earth's there security;
Neither for avian creatures small;
Nor for any beast or man at all.

This life is full of uncertainty,
With danger a possibility.
But we can still have a mind at rest,
Though Satan stalks like a feline pest.

The Predator has been overcome –
Depth of victory, I cannot plumb.
On the surface, threats my life surround
Through the Cross, in safety I am found.

October 2014



In that Great Day, what will you be? A goat or a sheep?
Will it be a day of rejoicing, or will you weep?
Will you look down and away with shamed, sorrowing eye?
Or will you gaze with wonder at the great King on high?

Will you praise Him thankfully for all that He has done?
Will you be changed, like Him, exactly like God's own Son?
Will you stand without a tremor when all is revealed?
Will you then be confident when the books are unsealed?

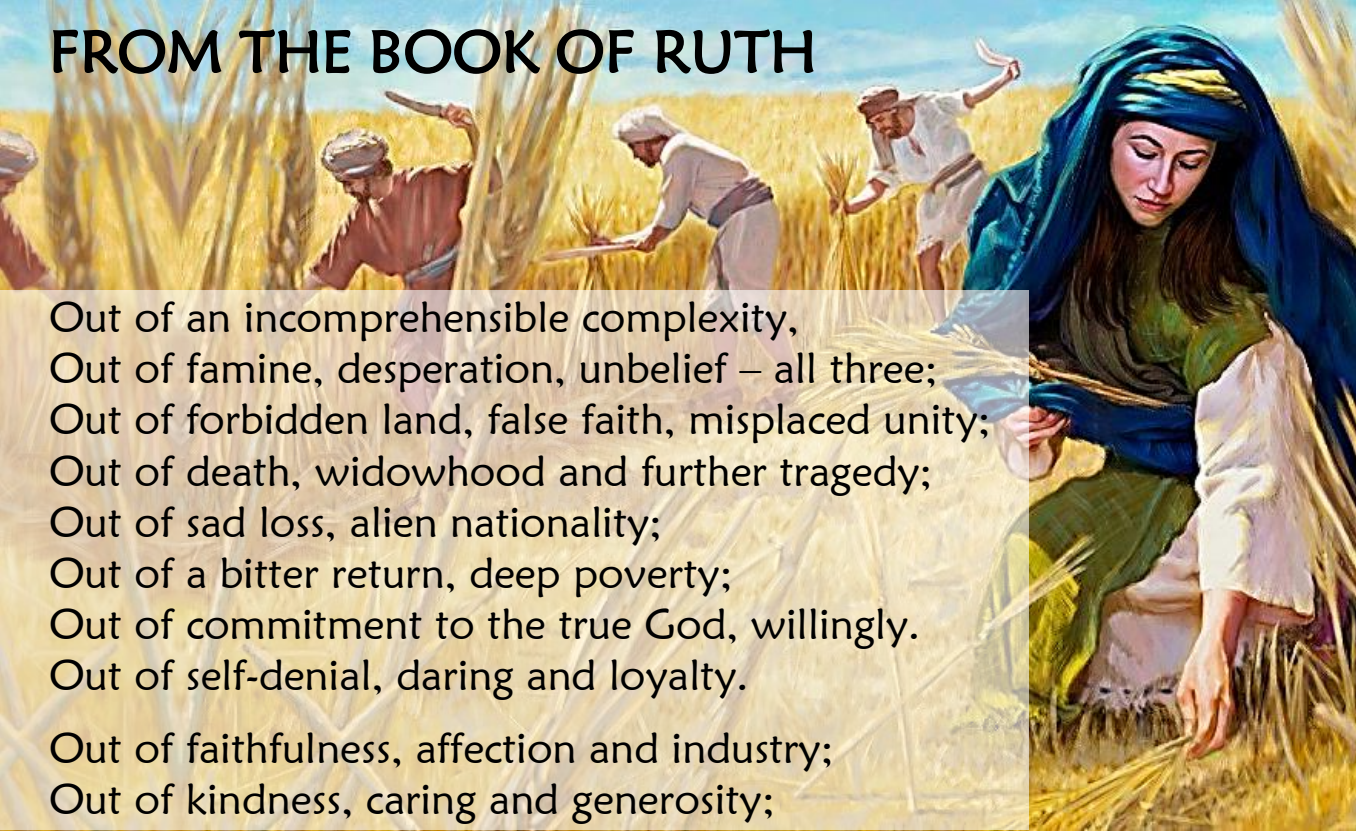
Or will you want to shrink away, wishing you could hide?
Will you regret your past rejection, arrogance and pride?
Will you be sorry you wanted your way from the start?
Will there be remorse for pain caused to God's loving heart?

Will you have an Advocate, as you face Law's demand?
One Who'll present, as evidence, the scars in His hand?
Will you be acquitted through God's compassionate grace?
Find justice because Someone was punished in your place?

On that Great Day, the true Judge will divide the nations.
People will have diff'rent reactions and sensations –
Fear, because each will get what is deserved by a goat;
Or joy as a sheep, though most undeserving, please note.

March 2018

FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH



Out of an incomprehensible complexity,
Out of famine, desperation, unbelief – all three;
Out of forbidden land, false faith, misplaced unity;
Out of death, widowhood and further tragedy;
Out of sad loss, alien nationality;
Out of a bitter return, deep poverty;
Out of commitment to the true God, willingly.
Out of self-denial, daring and loyalty.

Out of faithfulness, affection and industry;
Out of kindness, caring and generosity;
Out of wisdom and culture and humility;
Out of riches, concern, responsibility;
Out of action, shrewdness, accepted duty;
Out of consummation, love, domesticity;
Out of childbirth, contentment, genealogy;
God wove His greater plan in divine sovereignty.

And we may view our lives in their complexity.
We never planned to fail so spectacularly.
Sometimes an unholy mess is all we can see.
Do not despair or succumb to life hopelessly.
God is amazing. Bring all to Him trustingly.
He forgives a yielded heart unreservedly.
Out of the muddle of our dreams' morbidity,
He can make a perfumed and lovely pot pourri.

He works despite past we review regretfully.
God takes us where we are at this time – presently;
Sorts the tangled threads of circumstances kindly;
Helps us pick up the stitches dropped so carelessly.
Where consequences remain, gives grace ceaselessly.
His plan is greater than mistakes made wilfully.
Above all, He cares about our growing to be
Like His Son – in selfless love, goodness and mercy.

4 April 2018

CAMEOS OF OUR GARDEN – Pre-Spring

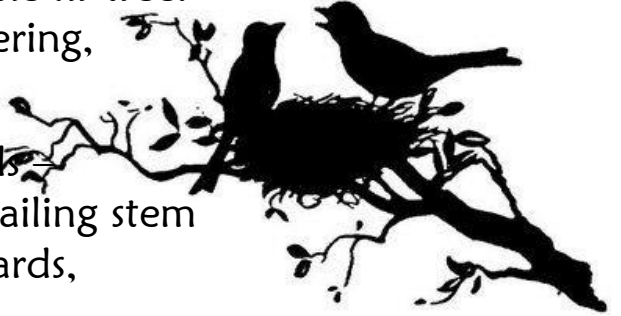
19 August 2015

It is a cold, miserable August morning.

The skies are cloudy, dingy white and vaguely grey.
There's no indication of sun ever dawning
On this unpromising, depressing winter day.

But one creature is busy preparing for spring –
An olive thrush, building a home near the fir tree.
In its beak a long-tailed something is fluttering,
As this artisan builds a nest instinctively.

It's a great recycler, using dried-up discards –
Like the old arum leaf with withered, trailing stem
Or a rotting piece of grass, it jealously guards,
And similar rubbish, it considers a gem.



Quite unconscious of int'rested, observing eyes,
Carries a small bit to add to the masterpiece.
In and out, in and out this busy female flies.
Until all the work is complete, she will not cease.

The olive thrush has many things to say to me:
Getting on with necessary work of the hour;
Expecting a future of hope it can't yet see;
While persevering whether there's sun or shower.

This bird is not troubled by any anxious doubt.
The Creator is faithful, and the spring will come.
The great God will never His own promises flout.
To hopelessness and fear the Thrush will not succumb.

And she won't neglect the wearying work assigned –
To lay and keep eggs warm, though the task is boring;
Sitting for weeks on the nest she wove and designed,
When she could have been free and flying and soaring.

The Thrush carries out God's purposes, though lowly –
To raise some chicks in a place made of things despised.
But she brings praise to God – caring, wise and holy.
She's the Lord's Praise Singer, in soft feathers disguised.

It's the second day of the building construction.

Our olive thrush is a very youthful novice.
The long bits of plant in stages of destruction
Hanging from surrounding trees, make this obvious.

She has more material in nearby branches
Than in the very slowly growing, little nest.
But it's not going to demolish her chances
Of maternity. Therefore, she'll pursue her quest.

She won't be discouraged, nor will she be deterred,
Despite her apparent, time-consuming mistakes.
Flying to the bushes, seeking matter interred,
She returns to build for future progeny's sakes.

It certainly is an industrious creature,
This young olive thrush wearing her dull orange vest.
Though final product may lack the special feature
That an experienced bird would surely do best.

Yet God has programmed her with the inbred instinct
To build and mate, lay eggs, raise offspring, let them go.
So there'll be later generations who are linked
With similar species, created long ago.

A living picture of perseverance supreme,
She keeps on going, using the beak and her wings –
Flying, searching, carrying. Tireless it would seem,
Weaving with unwanted, decayed, dissolute things.

Out of the dead she raises a liveable home,
That will be safe shelter and a sanctuary
For the young to grow under the heavenly dome –
After she's warmed embryos to maturity.

Yesterday was unpleasant and dimly dull.
Today the sun's out there in an unblemished blue.
Regardless, the Thrush labours without any lull –
One focus, one goal, one important work to do.

Maybe she works without thought and instinctively.
But we've minds to learn from the olive thrush's ways –
Perseverance, patience and creativity,
Prioritising the primary task always.



SCOTLAND

Land of magic, damp mist and mystery;
Tradition, legend and Celtic history;
Drizzle, greenest fields, ancient leafless oaks.
St Andrew's blue flag, white crossed, pride evokes.

Land of the tough, dour, tartan-kilted men;
Piper and bagpipes sounding through the glen;
Comradeship and warm hospitality;
Oats, haggis, shortbread, geniality.

Land of woolly sheep and moist, mossy stones;
Border wars and mouldering warriors' bones;
Crumbling castles and abbeys from the past –
Still their arched and pillared forms, shadows cast.

Land of heroes, kept in their memory –
William Wallace who fought to be free;
Livingstone – explorer, missionary.
Liddell – Olympian, integrity.

Land of ill-fated Queen of Scots, Mary;
Her nemesis, John Knox, thought contrary;
The Covenanters, most stubborn and brave,
Ready to fight and die, their faith to save.

Land of writers and poets – Scott, Doyle, Burns;
Scientists of note, praise for Scotland earns:
Lister – antiseptic; Watt – steam engine;
Bell – telephone; Fleming – Penicillin.

Land of mountains, hills, sea coasts, lochs and streams –
Ben's and burns and braes – from Gaelic it seems;
Heather, thistle, bluebell, gorse and primrose
Wildly or gently on slope or field grows.

Land of the stag whose antlers do battle;
And rugged, dark, hairy Highland cattle;
Shepherd's Border collie – black mixed with white;
Feisty Scotties – terriers, ready to fight.



Land of Highland games – caber toss, hill run;
Reels, Fling and Sword dance – with pipers each one;
Home of golfers and first Sevens Rugby,
St Andrews and Melrose known globally.

Land of the Border, the Low- and Highlands;
Islands – each of them solitary stands;
Aberdeen, Glasgow, Inverness, Perthshire,
Edinburgh, outlined castle and spire.

Land of ships and building and industry;
Scholarship, research and theology;
Emigration – descendants spread widely
Still look back to Scotland over the sea.

Land of past sagas and ancient ages;
When Gaels, Picts, Vikings wrote on its pages;
Rome and England subdued varied regions;
Hadrian's Wall raised by Empire's legions.

Land of St Ninian and Columba;
The Bible and the Isle of Iona;
Robert the Bruce and his famous spider;
Stories and legends passed on, spread wider.

Land of Scone Stone – royalty's coronation;
Kirks, presbyteries since Reformation.
James Stuart the Sixth; England bowed the knee;
Bonny Prince Charles from Culloden must flee.

Land of Holyrood, Royal Mile, auld "Reekie";
Highland reg'ments combined – reluctantly;
Men in trenches, on beaches bravely stand;
Piper leads the Scots on Normandy sand.

Land of Firth of Forth Bridge, and of the Clyde;
Great shipbuilders gone – past reviewed with pride;
Linlithgow – rugby fam'ly connection;
John Buchan's "Thirty-nine steps" – Direction?

Land of the brogue, on the foot and on tongue;
Glasgow Rangers' fans – the old and the young;
Platforms, rigs, off-shore North Sea gas and oil;
"Flying Scotman's" rails start on Scottish soil.



Land of Loch Ness monster and Douglas fir;
Auld Lang Syne, Hogmanay and the new year;
Cathedrals and Edinburgh Tattoo;
Ben Nevis, tundra and Fortingall Yew.

Land of crofters, crofts – inland and near sea;
Fishermen, their small boats moored securely;
*Ceilidhs, strupaks, bannocks and Scotch pancakes;
Through snow and cold – bog peat a warm fire makes.

Land of air-borne doctor, rural midwife;
Sound common sense, thrift and a zest for life.
Black, and red grouse – table delicacy;
“Tatties” and “neeps”, black pudding, Scotch – whiskey.

Land of named clans – some with “Mc”, some without;
Fresh water fishing – pike, salmon and trout;
Lairds, estates and ghillies for deer stalking;
Many trails on heather moors for walking.

Land of Fair Isle jerseys – patterned, unique;
Shetland ponies – trusty, sturdy and sleek;
Isle of Skye, Isle of Mull, Lewis, Orkneys;
Harris Tweed – home woven in Hebrides.

Land of Callanish standing stones, and cairns;
Redheads – men, women, lads, lassies, wee bairns;
Scotland’s sons and daughters spread through the earth;
New cities, nations, they helped bring to birth.

Land of both past defeat, and victory;
Once joined with England; some reluctantly;
United Kingdom now in jeopardy;
Independence – some hearts yearn to be “free”.

Land of the Thistle, prolific and tough;
Symbol of Scots who’ve seen times hard and rough.
They’ve survived, as a cohesive nation,
Wars, unemployment, assimilation.

Land of Inner and Outer Hebrides;
Holy Spirit in power visits these.
In the Revival God worked sov’rignly;
Many a laddie, cailleach bowed the knee.

Land of given names worth recitation;
Morag, Fiona – clear designation;
Angus and Alistair, Bruce and Murdo;
Gaelic plus other roots from long ago.

Land of unexpected anomaly;
Persian design is the west coast's Paisley.
Tam o'shanter both a poem and a hat;
Argyle sweaters, socks, of this shade and that.

Land of kilt's sporran, furry and ornate;
Plaid worn on shoulder by lowly and great;
The sheathed, sharp dagger known as a dirk;
MacBeth – tragedy, that is Shakespeare's work.

Land of medicine – Royal Infirmary;
Learning – Edinburgh University;
Desire's end destination – Gretna Green;
Where many an elopement has been seen.

Land of Otters – in the sea and inland;
Post fishing, Grey Seals rest on rocks and sand;
In the Atlantic, whales swimming and diving;
Without man's harpoons, the pods are thriving.

Land of Kenneth Grahame – ducks, Mole and all;
"Wind in the Willows" – river and Toad Hall;
Robert Louis Stevenson and "Kidnapped";
Barrie's "Peter Pan" in fantasy wrapped.

Land of harsh cold; milder days that are fair;
Waves, lochans, streams, rain – water everywhere;
Lighthouses, ferries, clachans, cliffs and capes;
Men in cockleshells brave narrow escapes.

Land of memories – Scotch kippers were best!
Daughter wore tartan skirt with childish zest;
Neville had jacket of rough Harris tweed;
Wedderburn forebears – Border men indeed.

Land of Scotties and Scots, Scottish and Scotch;
Ports, dominies, broth, rest of the hotch potch;
Of North Ireland's history a large part;
Scotland – dear to many a distant heart.



May 2018

GOD'S VICTORY

Written after reading 1 Samuel 4, 5, 6.

The Enemy had won. The vanquished retreated.
God's ark was taken, and His people defeated.
They all misread the lesson, unfortunately:
The only true God always wins – ultimately.

The conquerors placed the Ark in Dagon's great house.
Dead idol they worshipped could not God's judgement douse.
Next morning early the rested foe came to gloat.
Instead, found humiliating setback of note.

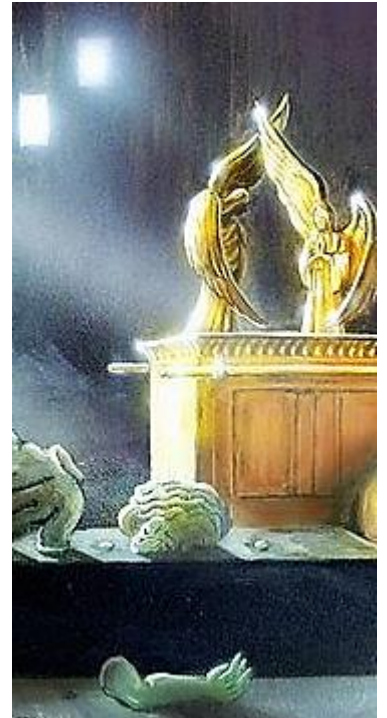
Before God's holy Ark, Dagon lay on his face.
Unrepentant, they lifted him back in his place.
But things were worse the next morning to their dismay.
Helpless statue had just its torso on display!

Broken the head with which it's meant to see and hear;
Spoiled the hands supposed their heathen affairs to steer.
Still they have faith in this object they themselves made,
Till bubonic plague gave them cause to be afraid.

Symbol of Jehovah's presence they could not bear;
Passed it to other cities which was hardly fair.
Then all agreed, "Send the Ark back to its own place."
So they did – plus articles of gold at its base.

God's power and glory were both vindicated.
His might over worthless idols indicated.
In our lives when it seems the Enemy has won,
Remember God's ultimate vict'ry through His Son.

Trust Him to overrule in His great sovereignty,
Despite past failure and present adversity.
Never give up in hopeless and fear-filled despair.
God beheads the Dagon, and leaves them lying there.



April 2018

CONCLUSION

White butterflies in the sunlight darting;
Meeting, greeting, suddenly parting;
Upwards, downwards, dizzily descending;
On fragile, fluttering wings depending.



Their erratic flight is swift as lightning;
Each graceful move our keen eyes delighting.
To the nasturtium flowers they're dipping;
On orange, red or yellow petals gripping.



Shades of next season's blooms, they're deciding;
Cross pollination, colours dividing.
Butterflies charm, logic defying.
They bring us joy, there's no denying.

Deceptive beauties, gracefully winging;
Destruction in their wake, they are bringing.
Under nasturtium leaves they are dispatching
Sweet, miniature eggs; soon they'll be hatching.



Caterpillars, their patterns defining,
Chomping; the plant's situation declining.
Assuaging their hunger, leaves decimating;
The host's condition, deteriorating.

Would we like to be without butterflies?
Therein the bittersweet conclusion lies.
If you want to enjoy beautiful wings,
You will have caterpillars, spoiling things.



22 October 2014



TRUST

Mark 9:24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.”

The Lord had asked me, “Will you trust Me?”
I wanted to say, “Yes”, sincerely.
Yet to the problem my thoughts still strayed;
I continued anxious and dismayed.
In my fear I had then to confess
There were doubts that I could not repress.
“I do believe. Help my unbelief.”
He came once again to my relief.

Later the Lord said, “Leave it to Me”,
When my own efforts failed dismally;
I could not see the rest of the way;
But must trust Him to have the last say.
My troubled thoughts now under control;
Dependence on Him, still is the goal.
“Lord, grant me the faith and grace I need
To wait for Your time, that You’ve decreed.”

May 2018

SAWDUST AND WOOD

April 2018

Matthew 7:3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye,
but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

I look around our church and there what do I see?

A cross-section of imperfect humanity.

The specks in those eyes are quite evident to me.

Their faults are glaring. I'm not like them – happily.

I look at the world out there, and what do I see?

Such great people who're living life successfully.

They're doing good stuff. I look on admiringly.

Why do I need those “saints” – pain in the neck to me.

Why should I be part of the church community?

When I could do my own thing very easily.

I can connect with new ideas; be really free.

Why hang out with losers? Others are calling me.

Stop! I am not in a good place – dangerously.

This is Christ's church I reject so dismissively.

Judgemental, not loving unconditionally,

I'm ignoring the plank in my own eye – blindly.

True, some are not real, act hypocritically.

They need to hear and be challenged, concernedly.

But most of the people own God's paternity –

Each a work in progress, not reached maturity.

The church is God's idea – His own community.

Reading God's Word, that fact will be shown most clearly.

If I truly am filled with God's Spirit – fully –

I shall have God's view, God's love for His family.

Each one has flaws and needs forgiveness constantly.

We should encourage, rebuke, teach, help, grow humbly;

Some of us have difficult natures – obviously.

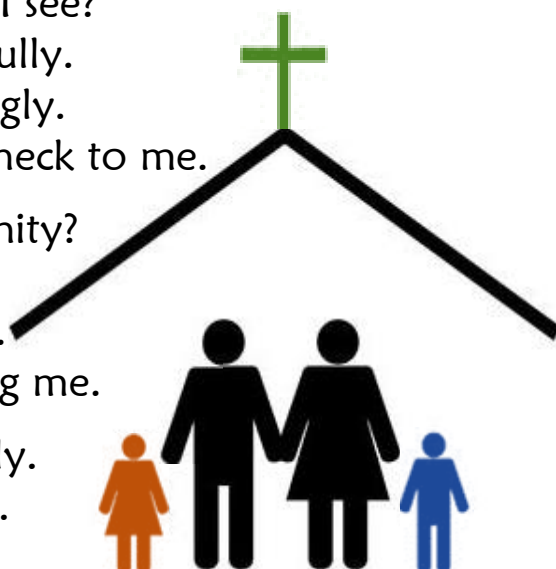
But God has gracious patience and works ceaselessly.

So I ask myself, “Where am I on my journey?”

If I love Christ, I love and support His family.

If I'm not concerned, what does it say about me?

Time to reflect, repent and with God's grace agree.



RECYCLED

Our house is sixty years old plus some years more.
In the bathroom once was an old-fashioned tub;
At each round corner an ornamental claw.
In that old iron our children would bathe and scrub.

We renovated the aging ablutions;
Tossed out the heavy, tired, enamel-lined bath;
Moved to the yard as the best of solutions,
It was set against the wall, next to the path.

Now filled with rich compost and quick-draining sand,
The dead metal gives rise to fresh, living things.
It's become breeding ground of beauty unplanned;
Glorious growth, with the delight that it brings.

To look at the old bath gives us such pleasure.
It is filled with roses – yellow and white and pink.
Each one scented and each one a rare treasure,
As from the cast-off's contents they feed and drink.

There are Icebergs bearing like candelabra;
Pink tinted buds turning to white, centred with gold.
The stately Princess Margaret; rose coloured star;
Many petalled. To open cup they unfold.

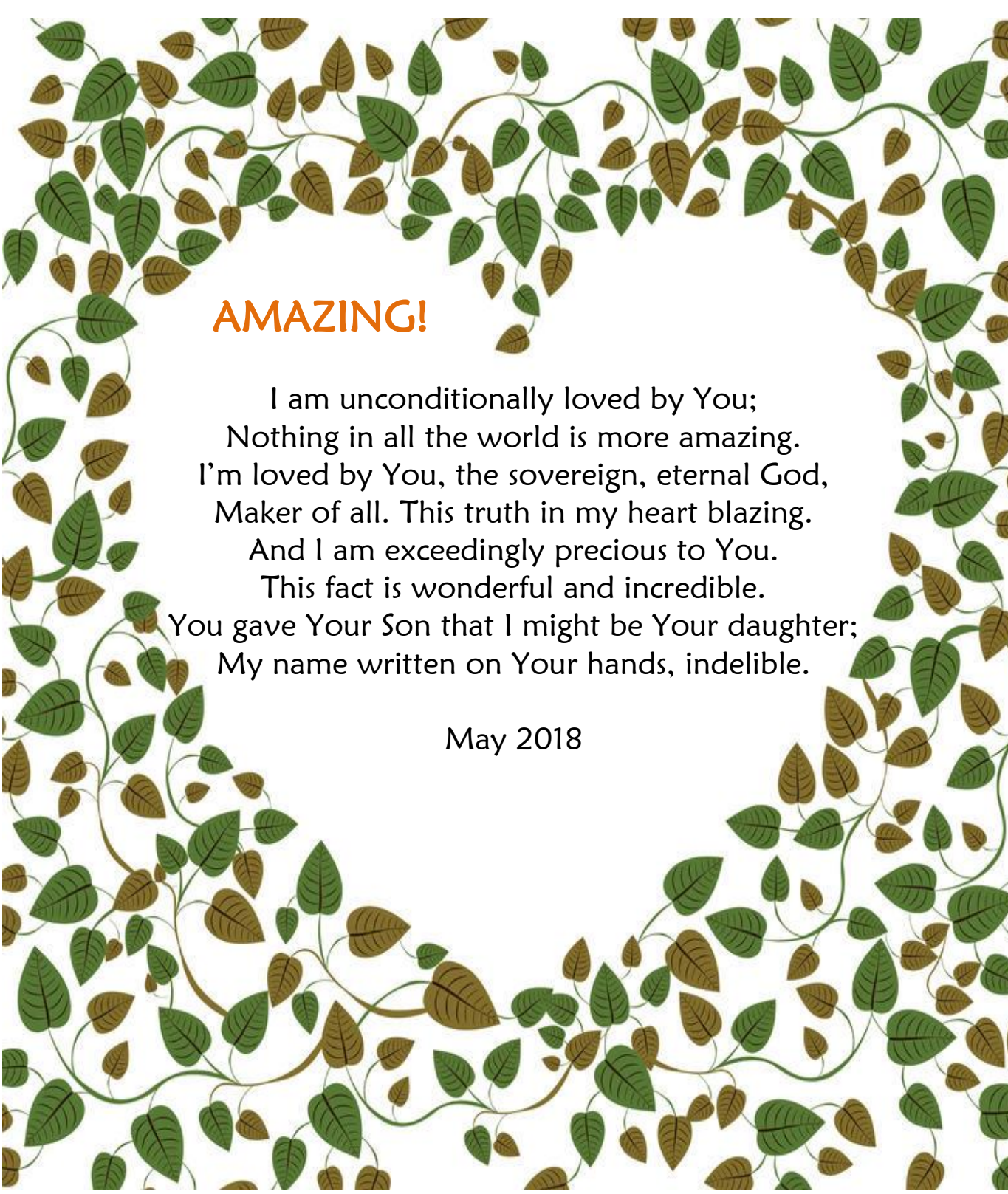
We also are blessed with the famous Peace rose –
All creamy yellow edged in pinky crimson.
Next to green mint guardians this strong hybrid grows –
Symbol of end of war and its ghastly din.

Then there is a rambler, full of potential;
Not produced small, pink, double roses as yet.
Planted a stick, grew roots – that's evidential.
Should have died but, in the bath, life and hope met.

The nearly-antique, iron bath was a discard.
Still it has proved to be a much-valued place.
If we are willing – although life may be hard
God can recycle us, fill our lives with grace.

October 2014





AMAZING!

I am unconditionally loved by You;
Nothing in all the world is more amazing.
I'm loved by You, the sovereign, eternal God,
Maker of all. This truth in my heart blazing.
And I am exceedingly precious to You.
This fact is wonderful and incredible.
You gave Your Son that I might be Your daughter;
My name written on Your hands, indelible.

May 2018

THE RACE THAT IS SET BEFORE US

Hebrews 12

June 2018

Keep going. Don't fall out. Stay with it to the end.

The route is long no doubt; unknown what's round the bend.

Keep going. Walk or run. Don't look back to the past.

Goal ahead is the one you're aiming for at last.

Keep going. Persevere – Not smiles from all, but frowns.

The race will cost you dear – So many ups and downs.

Keep going, though you're bored with sameness of long road.

The end Prize is no fraud. Endure in steady mode.

Keep going, this great day; weather sunny and fine.

Running feels like child's play; scenes lovely, air like wine.

Keep going. Life is tough. Challenges multiply;

The way stony and rough; strength ebbs. "Enough", you cry.

Keep going. Heaven's crowd cheering you on above.

By hardship don't be cowed – There's grace in One called Love.

Keep going. Let nothing – Hold you back, cause dismay.

Your eyes on Jesus, King, He'll give your crown one day.



I AM LOVED

I look in the mirror,
and who's looking back at me?

An ageing, wrinkled,
older woman, nearly eighty.

I comment to myself,
"Jy's lelik, but God loves me!"

Though everyone, everything
should fail miserably,
What a wonderful
truth to surely grasp, "God loves me".

"Jy's lelik" is Afrikaans for "You're ugly"!

BEWARE “THE ANGEL OF LIGHT”

2 Corinthians 11:14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

Beware “the angel of light”; comes in alluring disguise;
Appears incredibly bright; draws gaze of admiring eyes.

Beware “the angel of light”; is not who or what he seems.
He’s full of darkness and night, while promising you your dreams.

Beware “the angel of light”. He is out to capture you;
Claims to lift to higher height; age-old deception’s not new.

Beware “the angel of light”; guarantees he’ll set you free;
Plans instead a sorry plight; enmeshed, trapped in slavery.

Beware “the angel of light”. He is subtle and clever;
Pretends he’s your hero knight; but he’s a knave forever.

Beware “the angel of light”. He wants your life to destroy;
He hates righteousness and right; will rob you of peace and joy.

Beware “the angel of light”. He’s a liar all the way.
You’re in a desperate fight. Jesus – Victor in the fray.

Beware “the angel of light”; Lucifer is his real name;
Cowers before Christ’s great might – The True Light Who overcame.

July 2018



AN EARLY SPRING?

When September arrives, we shall declare, “Winter is past
With its furious storms, drenching rains, north-westerly blasts”.
But the Birds are announcing, “There’s to be an early Spring”,
With much noise and activity and communal singing.

They do not know it is only the middle of August.
Seem to be joyfully saying to each other – the gist,
“We got through the coldest Winter, and happily survived”.
God-given instinct tells them that Spring has arrived.

Now they are getting on with the business of preparing
Their own nests, to receive enclosed embryos for caring.
Chicks should hatch to bear parents’ likeness – a demanding brood;
While adults will wear themselves out with foraging for food.

Wonder which other garden creatures are getting out of bed;
Waking up to a more fruitful period that lies ahead?
The Golden Mole is tunnelling under the sleeping lawn.
Tip wilts will re-appear to leave fresh shoots old and worn.

Young Hard-nosed beetles are bent on spoiling – as expected.
Caterpillars progressing; duties never neglected.
Snails and slugs eagerly welcome the new floral season.
There’s more sustenance for them. Spring is the reason.

The Squirrels seen recently, no longer seem to be around.
Are they too expecting? In a hollow tree, gone to ground?
God’s order continues as long as the old earth endures.
One day, His Plans and the Cross, new heaven and earth procures.

August 2015



PRECURSORS OF HOPE



The Birds seem convinced there's going to be an early Spring.
You have never heard such excitement and twittering
As in the nearby trees, on this cold winter morning –
With the clouds up above and no warming sun dawning.

Not just the Avian Choir our hopes of Spring inspire.
There's the Almond tree wearing its pearly pink attire.
And the pure white Arums with their lemon hearts on fire;
The Narcissus blooming, of whose scent I never tire.

The Oak tree is waking from its gaunt, brown, winter sleep.
Rose and white Jasmines begin their annual tryst to keep.
Cup of Gold flowers, as parent continues to creep.
Many Incas pushing, thrusting from out of the deep.

I still feel cold and there are flannel sheets on the bed.
Aloes have not finished bearing in yellow and red.
The bell-shaped Snowdrops have unfinished business ahead.
Undoubtedly Winter is here and has not yet fled.

But today I'm filled with hopeful anticipation
And encouraged by the precursors' demonstrations.
As God promised, Spring will come without hesitation.
Till Time's end, seasons will follow without cessation.

August 2015

THE WARRIOR KING

Hebrews 7:25 Now He ever lives to make intercession for us.

Judean Wilderness – inhospitable and bare;

This dry place whispers softly of death rather than life;
A Man all alone faces an ordeal none can share;
Confronts the Foe's enticements – a time of prolonged strife.
The balanced Truth, a powerful weapon, is His sword.
Wise beyond all wisdom, unyielding, He will not bend.
Enemy's attack and reasoning shown to be flawed;
The Warrior King, tired, hungry, conquers in the end.

Jerusalem – supposedly God's own holy place;

A Nazarene Prophet is causing a real problem.
Some religious men, thought to be the best of their race,
Plot His demise and hope He will be torn limb from limb.
He knows all about it and is concerned for His men.
Peter, protesting loy'ly, will fail; so will the rest.
Adversary demands he sift and try Cephas then.
Warrior King fights in prayer. Their faith will stand the test.

Gethsemane – Jesus leads His friends through olive trees;

With three of them, looks for a better place to engage;
Struggles, with bloody sweat, single combat on His knees;
Accepts His Father's will, as He's done at every stage.
Chosen trio could have supported, strengthened Him there;
Weary, thought of themselves, unwilling to watch and pray.
They were warned; slept on duty, of danger unaware.
While the Warrior King fought, they deserted the fray.

Praetorium – a sign of far Rome’s oppressive rule;

There stands One condemned – silent, whipped, tormented and weak –
Wearing a kingly garment, but treated like a fool;

Blindfolded for their game; pulling the hair from His cheek;
Useless, worthless reed sceptre He, uncomplaining, holds;

On His head a crown of nature’s thorns cruelly pushed down;
The spit of vulgar men slides slowly down His robe’s folds;

Warrior King renounces His glory and renown.

Place of the Skull – fit name for site of execution;

Written “King of the Jews” – their accusation made plain.
Impaled on wood, facing “the ultimate solution”,

He prays, forgives, and assures of His ultimate reign.
Who can understand the lonely conflict He endured,

As He fought all the rebellious forces of hell?
Becoming sin for us, Christ our acquittal procured.

The Warrior King overcame and triumphed as well.

Heaven’s Courts – Risen from death, ascends in victory;

Returns to Father’s home to be acclaimed and adored;
Principalities, powers – captives unwillingly;

The Conqueror we acknowledge – Jesus Christ is Lord.
The war has been won but skirmishes continue still.

We who own His kingship must not retreat or be scared.
The vicious onslaughts may be on our minds, homes or will.

The Warrior King fights with us. Stand firm. Be prepared.

May 2018

THE TRUTH

Half truths, distorted truth, downright lies – they are all out there.
Search the internet; read books; films; seminars; on the air.
Alluring and dangerous, ages old philosophies;
New and ancient gods; long ago rejected heresies.

Jesus is the Way and the Truth and the Life – He alone.
His Lordship, His authority, the false prophets disown.
For His true word, His dear church, they have no care nor concern.
From the true God to the false, they deliberately turn.

Yet some are seeking the truth, but they are in the wrong place.
Trying themselves to improve, they have not understood grace.
Never known, or forgotten, that there is One who still waits,
Arms outstretched in welcome, Who died outside the city gates.

LEBANON

Lebanon, country of so many contrasts;
Memories that will remain while my mind lasts;
Many wonderful scenes, yet I must confess
There are also those that cause me some distress.

North to south runs a narrow, flat, coastal plain.
Tall apartment buildings cause it height to gain.
The coast ends in one sandy beach after beach;
Privatised, they're beyond the poor people's reach.

Blue Mediterranean laps at its shores;
Sea's romance once polluted by garbage stores.
Cities, scented orange groves, salt pans, palm trees –
Along the coastal highway, sights that one sees.

The natural beauty was a constant delight –
Stunning impact of mountains bathed in sunlight;
Range on range, until Saneen is reached at last;
Sandstone, limestone, sculptured rocks shaped by the past.

Part of this landscape was being eroded,
As careless men their heritage exploded;
Dug out whole sides, tops of the hills, with pine trees,
To get sand for building, “raped” the land's beauties.

Beqaa Valley – from high ground, down to the plain;
Nomads, villages, pillared temples remain.
Patchwork of vineyards, veggie farms, sugar beet;
Sheep, shepherds, towns, Litani Dam, snow and heat.

This area, an international route,
For birds migrating north, south, as seasons suit.
There are wetlands and a research sanctu'ry
To keep them safe on their extended journey.

Sound of guns going off on a quiet Sunday.
Is this why local avians scarce? Flown away?
Men, boys standing by the roadside, holding strings
Of dead, little birds, all flight fled from their wings.

Beyond to Ante-Lebanon – inland border;
Not always an asset to law and order.
To south-west, white crowned, peaceful Mt Hermon stands;
“Jebel al Sheik”, rivalry between three lands.

Lovely Lebanon, Switzerland of the east;
Bathe in sun, ski in snow, on much beauty feast.
So much given by God, but some spoilt by man.
Part of our brief, conservation, in His plan.

Lebanon, country of a long history;
Past ages known, but also some mystery.
Yet of all that happened, now there's a profit;
Vendors, stalls – modern benefactors of it.

Tyre, Sidon, Tripoli, and Baalbek glory;
Tracing the footsteps of their age-old story.
Gebail, Beirut, Beaufort Castle, Beit Eddine;
Museum where ancient artefacts may be seen.

Phoenicians, Hiram of Tyre, the alphabet;
Armies passed – Naher-el-Kalb, you won't forget;
Assyrians, Pharaoh, Romans, Arabs, more,
French, British – plaques are there, of conquest and war.

Also, memorials to recent events
Seen in ruined buildings, and other monuments;
With wounded hearts, shattered families as well;
And devastated lives, more than one can tell.

Of peoples, Lebanese most resilient;
Picked up the pieces; repaired the fabric rent;
Amidst the battles, found a way, made a plan.
Ultimate entrepreneur, Lebanese man.

With claim to democratic constitution,
Their feudal chiefs influence each resolution.
How they come to consensus is hard to gauge.
Through negotiation, end on the same page.



Snow-covered Lebanon
Painted by my husband,
Neville



Tyre Ruins - Painted by my
husband, Neville

Allied to the Arab League, part of the East;
Most espouse Western culture – in dress at least.
Those who emigrate, travel or work abroad,
Return home in summer, drawn by fam'ly cord.

Young people can enjoy state education
But many prefer a private location,
With an English or French orientation.
No shortage of learning for this bright nation.

Of doctors, nurses, dentists there is no dearth;
Hospitals, mostly private – illness or birth;
Some attached to varied universities;
Physicians, surgeons – you will find all of these.

Small population gave hospitality
To fleeing civilians – each refugee,
The Armenian and Palestinian,
Also Syrian, at cost, was welcomed in.

Lebanon, picture of beauty in God's Word;
Land of sturdy cedars that ancient hearts stirred;
Call of their symbolic tree none can refute,
As citizens, army, their proud flag salute.

Though many young Lebanese may emigrate;
Adopt a far habitation, a new state;
Still the pull of traditional fam'ly roots
Brings them back to sun, flat saj bread, luscious fruits.

Summer's not spent in coastal humidity;
Mountain home villages – cooler, hopefully;
Some own fig and olive trees, a few tall pines;
Mulberry, lemon juice, visits under vines.

Time's spent socialising with the wider clan;
Drink coffee and eat bzoorat, man to man;
Women communal tasty dishes prepare,
While young people parade around the town square.

Autumn hardly felt below near restless sea;
High terraces or Beqaa, seen more clearly;
Colours changing to shades yellow, red and brown;
The dying leaves, baring trees, as they fall down.

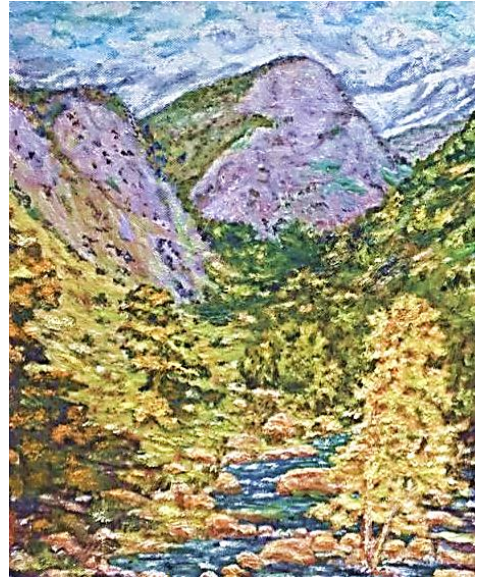


The Aqueduct Road to the
School - Painted by my
husband, Neville

Preparation time at higher altitude;
Lay in the olives, preserve, dry other food;
Be sure you have heating mazoot or firewood;
Carpets down, lahafs redone, ready and good.

Winter is wet, damp and rainy near the coast;
In the mountains freezing cold as you can boast;
Sparkling with deep snow that invites you to ski;
Blocked roads have played out sporadic tragedy.

Icy, elevated, kapok-like cov'ring
Will eventually run down as it's melting;
Form streams, fill rivers that run down to the sea;
Or flowing inland, add to the Litani.



**Lebanon Scene – Painted
by my husband, Neville**

Spring's amazing, wonderful on every hand;
Judas trees, gorse, broom, in blossoming state stand.
Wild tulips, orchids, cyclamen, white daisies,
Primroses, violets, scarlet anemones;

Red poppies, yellow chrysanths, day iris blue;
Sweet lavender on the hillsides freely grew;
Dog rose, rock rose, shrub oak and umbrella pines
Precariously cling to fragile inclines.

Middle Eastern land – strange melting pot;
Places unchanged, as though these by time forgot;
Others like a modern Paris boulevard –
Street cafés flowers, high fashion, wealth to guard.

Scattered architect'ral gems of dressed sandstone,
With red tiled roofs, standing in groups or alone.
Arched windows and doors; buildings, homes new and old,
In varied mixtures of pale brown, beige and gold.

Whether part of urban or rural landscape,
Religious expression you'll never escape:
Mosques and churches, convents and monasteries,
Bells, call to prayer, crosses, crescents – all of these.

Statues and icons, prayer beads and rosaries;
“Abuuna”, “Ya Sheikh”, “asees” – if you please.
Prayer books, Korans, Bibles, priests, imams and all.
But who will respond to the love of Christ’s call?

If with Lebanese food you aren’t acquainted,
Be assured, it’s as good as it is painted.
Delicious, varied, healthy – what more to claim?
There’s a reason their cuisine has gained such fame.

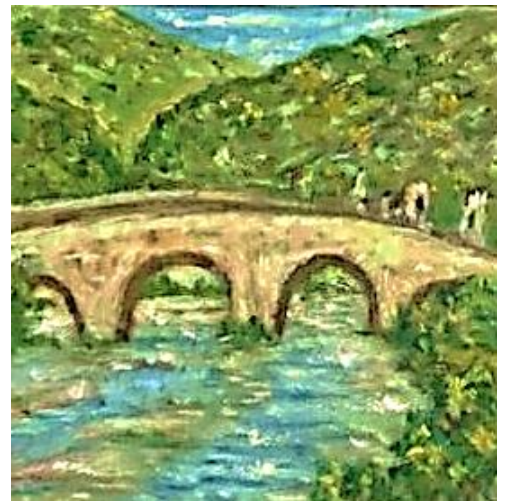
Yoghurt, cheeses, herbs, pulses, pickles, eggplant,
Lamb kebabs, fresh pita bread – the best, you’ll grant.
Kefta and chicken, with nuts of every kind,
Vegetables stuffed and vine leaves filled you’ll find.

Mezze of many dishes – absolute feast:
Hummus, Baba Ghanoush, haloumi at least,
Labne and Fattoush, olives and olive oil,
Tabbouleh – fresh food raised on Lebanese soil.

Halawi, and don’t forget fruit, for dessert –
Large, tasty strawberries that grow in the dirt,
Watermelons, peaches, apricots, cherries,
Figs, pomegranates, grapes, bananas, berries.

Lebanese friends taught me generosity;
Importance of the support of family;
That before the work, relationships came first;
Christian commitment, though you’re despised and cursed.

Lebanon – birthplace of those precious to me;
For this will I love, excuse you, endlessly.
I have been blessed to share in your varied life.
You’ve challenged; God taught me – through peace, war and strife.



Dog River - Painted by my
husband, Neville

June 2018



THE SPRING QUEEN

23 September 2015

Clivia Miniata – floral queen of the Cape Spring;
A breath-taking beauty offering, yearly presenting
To its Maker – Creation’s brilliant Designer-King.

From out of the strap-like, shiny, dark green, perpetual leaves
A mysterious, covered package to its secret cleaves;
In the garden trees’ shade a veil of expectation weaves.

Gently, surely, slowly the tough, white sheath will be unpeeled;
A unique head of many, hidden flowers then revealed –
Each bloom a six-pointed star, at last no longer concealed.

They are mostly salmon pink, or is it an orange shade?
There is also a pale lemon, that’s lovely when displayed.
We do enjoy these indigenous beauties God has made.

Sadly some flowers never make it to maturity.
Ravenous snails have no eye for artistic purity.
That all the plants will flourish and bloom, there’s no surety.

Yet it’s amazing that such loveliness can be so tough.
They grow with scant attention – for them little is enough.
Most of them bloom brightly though sometimes conditions are rough.

They don’t need to be pampered or with fertilizer fed;
But just rest where they’re planted in a soil and leaf mould bed.
Then blossom gorgeously in the Spring when Winter has fled.



THE PATIO

15 September 2015

Wooden beams heavy, some repaired; Extending vine – free and ensnared;
An outside room with open sides; Green and brown roof midday sun hides
One wall and Grecian pillars white; Overhung by tree of some height;
Brick floor, decorated with sand; Fern and shrub beds on ev'ry hand.

Water feature – rock-bound fish pond where red aquatics swim and bond.
In the moisture, soil containers form Water Iris restrainers.

Clay and other pots with flowers exposed to the wind and showers.
Two pretty tiles with gard'ning theme; creeper boasts beauties of deep cream.
Wings and feathers darting right through; doves on cross-bar plumage renew;
Noisy chirping up in the tree; “Informal settlement” is free.

Memories of a pink tea set; Milky drink, sugar; table wet.
Grandma with children, time enjoyed; Conversational skills employed.

Place of shady quiet for the guest; The goal of paths from south and west;
Archway leads to a double view – Far mountain, higher sky of blue.

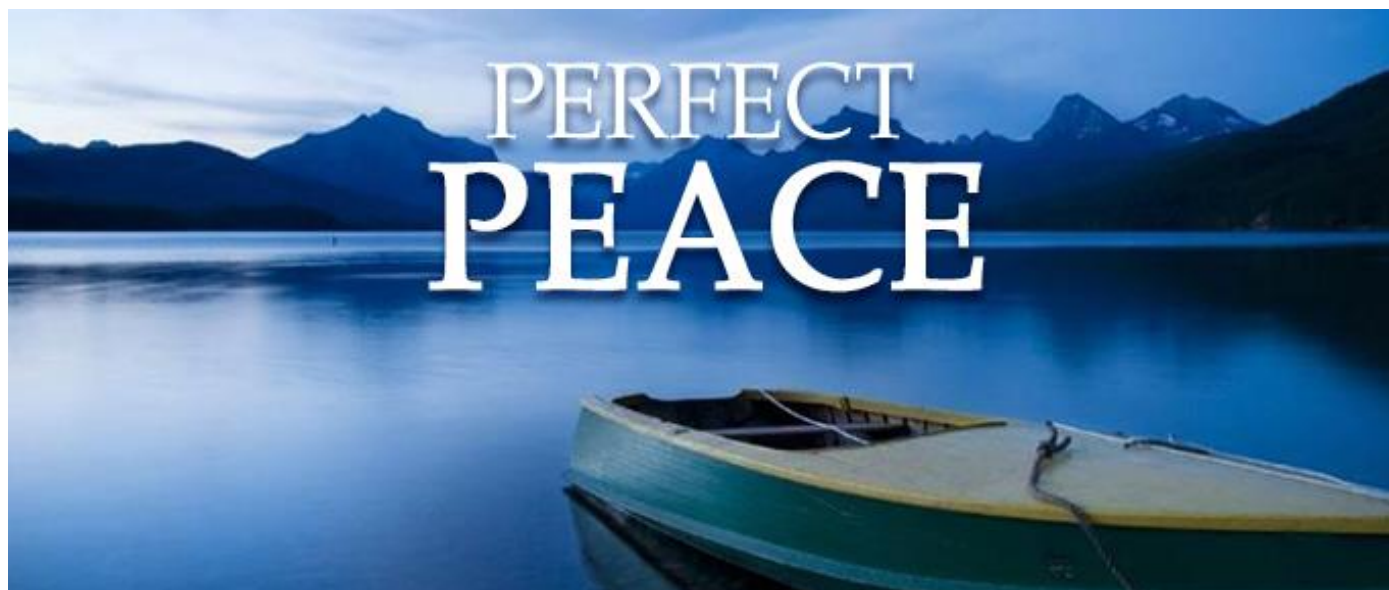
Protection from dazzling sun's glare; To verdant carpet, thoroughfare;
Privacy by screen of bamboo, bushes with green and yellow hue.

One wheeled table and two green chairs – A welcome the patio wears;
Invites to rest, relaxation; Outdoor room for restoration.

But security door reminds not all is well, and that one finds
Life is imperfect at its best in spite of pleasant place to rest.

Adequate for warm and mild days; Shielding blistering solar rays;
But in the winter's storms and gales, as covering refuge, it fails.

One Sanctuary is always there – When life's stormy or weather's fair.
Though circumstances may dismay, there's a Sure Shelter. Turn and pray.



Isaiah 26:3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.

Sometimes when I am confused, anxious or concerned,
I go back in my mind to the things I have learned.
The verses memorised long ago have returned.
God's character, through the written Word, is discerned.

On the God of the universe I concentrate;
Realise afresh that He is incredibly Great –
Sovereign Lord Who Rules over all, not cruel fate;
Transcendent, immanent – to Him I can relate.

The Only God, Personal, the Unchanging One;
The Father, the Holy Spirit and God the Son.
He's the Rock of Ages; to His shelter we run.
Perfectly Holy – but for grace, we'd be undone.

God the Righteous and God the Just Judge of us all;
God the Compassionate, kind to me when I fall;
All-Seeing, Omniscient One on Whom I call;
The Redeemer, Who has broken down sin's wall.

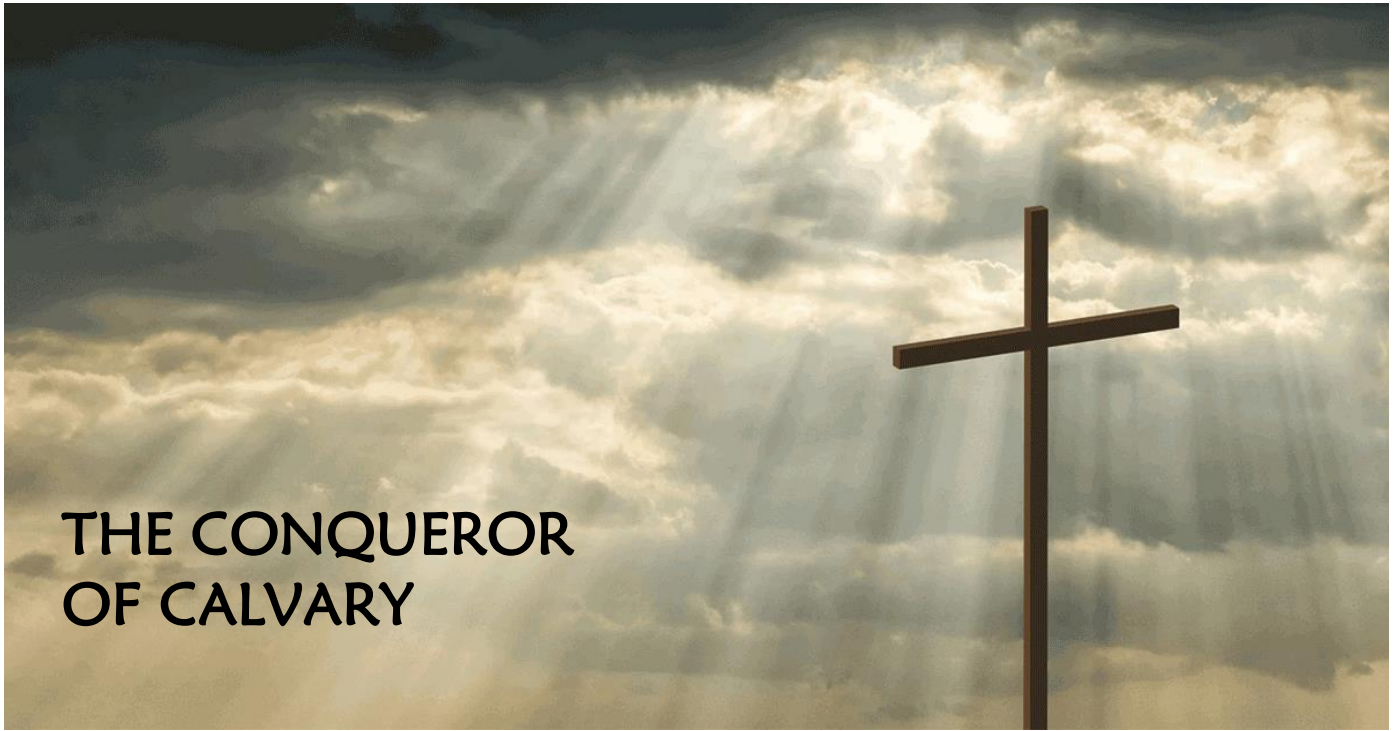
The Eternal God of Mercy, also of Grace,
Loves with undying Love, people of every race.
To each He offers freely a heavenly place;
Repentant, sins forgiven, removed without trace.

The God Who Hears with infinite Understanding;
Who Restores, Heals the results of Satan's branding,
His cooling Rest on our feverish lives landing;
Puzzled, hurt, broken hearts with tenderness handling.

Omnipotent God, Reigning Supreme on His throne;
Omnipresent, He is with me, I'm not alone.
Generous – so much Goodness to us He has shown
God of All Comfort, Father of Mercies, I own.

So why was I confused, anxious and filled with fear,
When this Wonderful God lives in me and is near?
My mind is now resting in His Real Presence here.
I have peace, trusting in One so faithful and dear.

May 2018



THE CONQUEROR OF CALVARY

My hands are tightly tied. There is nothing I can do.

Then I remember the Conqueror of Calvary –
The King who triumphed in that unbelievable coup,
When the Usurper lost his throne and authority.

Conqueror of Calvary, I call. Come to my aid.

That Enemy's still working illegitimately,
Trying to win hearts of those for whom Your blood was paid;
Confusing, blinding and enticing alluringly.

Rescue from entanglement in false philosophy.

Turn these hearts back to You, Your people and holy Word.
Unto the damage that's been done intellectually
Through what they have accepted, experienced and heard.

Unbind them from the bondage of Satan's heavy chains,

Though deceived to think they are quite unhindered and free.
Spoil the Despoiler, strip him of his ill-gotten gains.
Redeem the captives, true Conqueror of Calvary.

UNDERESTIMATED

On the southern side of our northern wall,
Array of lilies – proud, prominent, tall.
Beautiful, charming, sophisticated,
They’ve been despised, underestimated.

Some degraded them with the name of “pig”,
Though they are pure white, elegant and big.
Others’ view has been slightly more refined –
With poverty’s grief, graveyards, blooms aligned.

Their loveliness, when open and unfurled,
Was hailed in other parts of the wide world.
Suitable for a royal bridal sheaf.

“Unworthy” was here a common belief.

Ranged in varied heights – simple and streamlined;
Spectacular, by God’s own hand designed.
In our garden and by the roadside vleis,
Each year afresh they delight and amaze.

There are tens of thousands of them that grow,
Wild, in damp, marshy ground, where the winds blow –
Unappreciated and all unsung,
Nourished by water, mud, perhaps cow dung.

Arum lilies, native to our south land,
Impressively in white and green you stand.
The yellow stamens look like golden swords,
Pointing up to God, in your lowly hordes.

I salute you, the bringer of pleasure.
You’re a wonderful, joy bringing treasure.
God’s blessed us by allowing you to grow
Wild in the Cape, where southeaster winds blow.

September 2015





THE GIFT

We were visiting friends. Like
And offered us a Hibiscus
It had been pruned and trimmed
But from its container,

Into ordinary garden soil,
Took on a new life, with all
So it grew higher and
Spreading its roots and

Beautiful with generous,
Gently nurtured by pump water
Successively appearing, each
Lovely, like illumination

While friends set their sights
Moving with lock, stock
A pair of hungry squirrels
And from the sunroom, larger-than-

others, they planned to migrate;
plant in a pot-bound state.
to a top-heavy, standard shape;
there was no possible escape.

the shrub was transplanted;
the space to grow it wanted.
wider into a fair sized tree,
taking advantage of liberty.

velvety, deep red flowers;
and God's own rain showers;
one outdoing the next –
of mediaeval text.

on a future in Australia;
and other paraphernalia,
enjoyed their gift's greener parts,
life blooms gladden our hearts.

October 2015

THE CYCLE

Hear that loud, importunate “supplicating”,
From throat of each neighbouring, hungry fledgling.
The air with those uninhibited cries ring;
Expectant of moist morsels the parents bring.

Exhausting, the ongoing work of feeding,
Such a brood always more sustenance needing;
Never satisfied, continually pleading –
No break or rest to the supplier’s ceding.

The adult birds selflessly go on toiling.
Their dainty, sharp claws in the search they’re soiling.
Young ones with their demands keep kettle boiling.
While progenitors these young ones are spoiling.

Hardly any time since we heard them crying.
Yet suddenly they are fluttering, flying.
Still young, fluffy and mature feathers vying;
Sadly vulnerable, some will be dying.

The harder survivors keep on growing;
One day, building their nests – to’ing and fro’ing;
Courting and mating, the cycle keeps going;
Eggs laid; embryos to chicks without slowing.

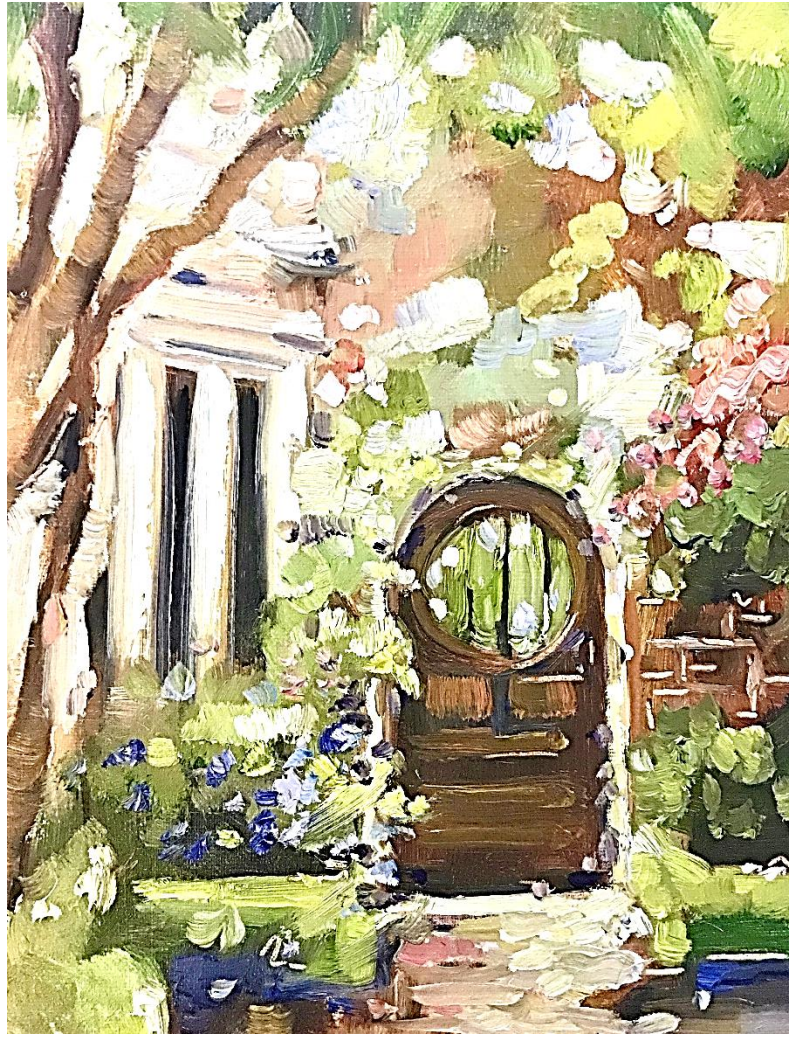
Their Designer Who is a God all-caring,
Knows how all of these feathered ones are faring;
What camouflage and colours each is wearing;
Or if a hidden predator’s still staring.

Year by year the cycle is continuing,
In the garden varied birds we are viewing;
Through genes and instincts on annu’l renewing;
Praise to their specie’s Creator accruing.



October 2015

SPRING MORNING CAMEO



It's a necessary, imperative; need to capture
This scene in words. Too melodramatic the word "rapture"
But "appreciation", "gladness", "thankfulness", "gratitude"
More accurately interpret my warm Spring morning mood.

If I were an artist who could put it down on canvas...
The sunlit picture in our yard – how can I describe this?
My language inadequate to paint the reality,
Bear with me, close your eyes and, imagining, try to see.

Climbs a light purple Bougainvillea, higher height won;
Below, three white pots – Gazanias waiting for the sun.
Of intricately curved iron-work, an open, arched, white gate.
On each side a wall in a Kirstenbosch green-painted state.

Hung on garage wall, white ornamental plant containers;
Swamping them, rampaging Nasturtiums without restrainers.
On the ground terracotta-coloured, old bath with Roses
In varying colours and sizes, numbers and poses.

Hardy, scented Icebergs – white, gold-centred clusters are rife;
Rather cramped, a pale orange Rose with an enduring life;
Large-leafed cream Peace Rose, has completed its blooming for now;
Pink Princess Marg'ret – one ageing royal left on the bough.

Overlooking these in Ali Baba pot, the next link –
Standard Rose, prolific in carrying shades of deep pink.
Another gen'rous Iceberg – a multiplied, growing spread;
Sweet-scented white and lemon Honeysuckle overhead.

In recycled bin – nameless, rewarding, rambling type Rose;
Extends perfumed groups of pale peach as it tangles and grows.
This one grew from a cut-off branch and happily flourished –
Soil, water, compost, bone-meal its vibrant life has nourished.

Neighbouring receptacle contains hybrid – rather slow.
Has been tardy in growth. It's hidden colour yet to show.
Last but not least, special coral Rose that's starting anew.
It flowered before. Now it's set itself fresh work to do.

The frame may seem full but our work of art is incomplete.
Other plants thrive 'gainst the north facing wall, in sun and heat.
White St Joseph lily, with sweet scent, opening slowly.
Small Petunias by contrast unassuming and lowly.

Part of the mix are simple, red Carnations and green Mint;
Double pink Daisy bush – lasts long, produces without stint.
Single Geraniums and another with complex head –
Each one displaying variations of the colour red.

The background to God's masterpiece contains the tops of trees;
An unsullied blue sky up there, joined by a gentle breeze;
Zooming here and there the nectar-gathering honeybees;
Sporadic'ly white butterflies gracefully joining these.

So why this imperative, this pressing need to express
What I see through our kitchen window of spring loveliness?
In a land with much hatred, anarchy, violence and blame,
Through God's floral gifts, there's a balm for the soul we can claim.

October 2015

We are expecting! Waiting for the birth of the flowers
On rambling roses, this morning-dew dropped by light showers.
The pregnancy is well advanced with multi-budded sprays;
A few emerging from their tight green wombs in forceful ways.

They are as yet prematurely born and tightly folded;
Into a globular bud, the peach pink petals moulded.
The parent plant is spreading and growing in girth and size,
Producing even more beauty that is still in disguise.

It's delightful this sense of waiting anticipation,
For when the ramblers will live up to our expectation.
It is like hidden life that's felt by movement in the womb –
There's growth, there are emerging buds, soon we'll see the full bloom.

We look forward with hope to the enjoyment that's ahead.
Remember from last year – scent produced by each branch's head.
Expecting life and loveliness, with roses blossoming;
A joy to us; glorious praise to our Creator King.





A NEW SEASON

2017/2018

The harshest, severest winter is always followed by the spring –
New life, new growth, new hope,
sprouting, shooting, growing in everything.

Tall and taller still, the Arum lilies in white, green, gold arise.
At a higher height, large, deep peach flowers adorn the Hibiscus.
Half hidden, orange-stamened, yellow Clivia delight our eyes.
Rising, reaching, long finished blooming, the blue and pink Plectranthus.

Drooping downwards, the spreading, stunted,
perfumed, lemon-scented Gum;
Impatiens – deep pink and other shades – in the sunlight shining;
Long delayed, young Yellowwood leaves to
spring's encouragement succumb.

Various bushes, give privacy, the east patio lining.

Changing colours – purple, white, mauve – Yesterday, today, tomorrow;
It's lingering whiff of perfume, spread around by the frisky breeze.
Tendrils of the climbing vine, from the pergola, support borrow.
Spectacular Cup of Gold shares the wood beams; finds it a close squeeze.

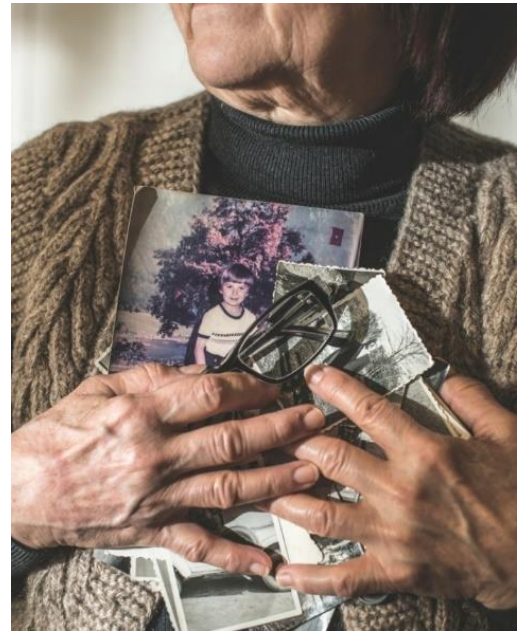
Iceberg roses successively produce in humble purity.
Pale, peach-pink ramblers offer full posies of scented loveliness.
Living colours, butterflies and birds' song give renewed surety
Of an incredible Creator Who planned His creatures to bless.

Yet in spite of this annu'l miracle, all on earth is not well
One day there'll be eternal, unspoilt spring is good news we can tell.

HER LOST WORLD

May 2014

This is written to remind those not yet aged that there are many people, especially women, suffering loss after loss as their lives draw to an end. Are we aware? Do we care? What are we doing to assure them of our concern and love as family, individuals and the church? (I could have made the list of losses much longer!)



First, she parted with her children – suffered empty nest syndrome. They went overseas – travelling, working, settling far from home. Her father and mother aged and departed this earthly scene. Though sad, it was expected. But life was not what it had been.

Time is inexorable. The most painful loss of them all, When her husband of fifty years, heeded the grim reaper's call. Never considered she'd be the surviving spouse who was left. How could she carry on, feeling so torn, lonely and bereft?

She needed to sell the house for which they had long sacrificed. It was another blow, a tough wrench, for which no words sufficed. With all the memories and shared history, they had built up there, The trauma ran deep – and he was not present, her grieving to share.

Had to relinquish furniture, porcelain, paintings, books. And her garden with its Strelizia and shady nooks. Entertaining, baking, floral arrangements had made their exit. In that complex for the mature, her canine friend could not fit.

But life moves on. Philosophically she accepted that; Moved to the retirement centre, into a miniature flat. Adjustment was so difficult – cramped quarters, loss of space In this new, strange, more secure but rule-bound, residential place.

Time came when she was no longer permitted to drive her own car. That cherished independence received it's severest blow by far. She was now dependent on others or was forced to stay at home. No longer free but restricted without liberty to roam.

And missed going out to tea; visiting with long cherished peers.
Those still alive no longer got about, hindered by their years.
The few older relatives who lived in fair proximity
Were unable to meet due to problems of mobility.

But there was always that useful instrument – the telephone.
Those bonus weekend calls meant she'd converse and not be alone.
Then as the time passed it became harder to communicate.
Loss of hearing caused the usefulness of the phone to abate.

Her nervous system was running down, causing anxiety –
Fears of decreasing finance, health issues – a variety.
With ordinary stress of life, she could no longer cope.
The least little setback caused her to fret and relinquish hope.

So, the downward spiral accelerated. She had a fall.
Was fortunate not to fracture a bone, though bruised over all.
To assist her, she now needed a walker to get around,
As others feared she might frequently make contact with the ground.

Her short-term memory was increasingly mislaid and lost.
She was urged to employ a carer. Could not afford the cost.
Long term memory, at least partially, was vivid and clear;
Living in the past with remembered ones, to her heart still dear.

Through the arthritic pains, itchy skin, blurring of once clear sight,
Gradual loss of movement, reduction in taste and appetite;
None caused her as much grief as the feeling of abandonment –
Her children, her church little time gave, no message of love sent.

Came the long-dreaded day when she became more fully aware –
Though at times confused – that she was moving into the frail care.
Loss of privacy, revealing dropped abdomen, sagging breasts;
Losing all decision-making – even her own times and rests.

To be completely at the mercy of – not loved ones – strangers.
She feared they would not treat her with respect, and other changes.
Would they be kind and gentle or rough, insensitive carers –
These unknown women, of her life the most intimate sharers?

With patience, when lucid, she endured the loss of all her things.
Everyone she cared about, all she enjoyed had taken wings.
Gone a meaningful life, laughter, sharing, gone her dignity.
Alone, unconscious, shed her body, entered eternity.



THIRTIETH SEPTEMBER

Imagine a Cape country scene,
 With rough oaks that are freshly green;
 Small cottages, white-washed all white;
 Scraggly, thatched roofs that look just right.

Fruit trees still exhibiting blooms;
 Antique print press; heritage rooms;
 Old Moravian church and school;
 Stone channels, water damp and cool.

Graveyard with an arch to walk through.
 Peaceful and quiet, grass wet with dew.
 As you enter, "In weakness sown";
 Leaving, "Raised in pow'r", truth you own.

Genadendal, Valley of Grace –
 What a lovely, romantic place;
 And great historical setting;
 In the time of love – it was Spring.

God chose the right time and venue
 To start our journey – me and you.
 September thirtieth the date.
 We remember and celebrate.

The oldest African mission.
Men obeyed the great commission.
We were not there by chance or fate,
Legacy to commemorate.

For us the conf'ence was a first.
Till then even church life was cursed
With segregation from others.
Genadendal – all were brothers.

Visited the peaceful graveyard.
Those Moravians' lives were hard.
Bodies buried in foreign soil,
With children, wives who shared their toil.

Sunday – a large congregation.
Post-church, with determination,
Led to the blossoming pear tree.
There expressed your love openly.

In response, I too freely shared –
How my heart, the Lord had prepared.
Seeing you cry, I was surprised –
As God's greatness you realised.

And so began our joined journey.
God has kept and led faithfully.
We certainly never foresaw
The amazing plans, He'd in store.

We look back on fifty-two years,
With gratitude, praise and some tears –
For His mercy, goodness and grace.
Genadendal – that blessed place.

This happened in 1962; my future husband, Neville, and I were attending
a conference, when God led us to each other.

1 October 2014



ONCE AGAIN, SPRING

Once again, I have woken to a Cape Spring morning.
The sky appears clear at the tail-end of day's dawning.
Through the bedroom window's burglar bars thrilled to see,
In the pond, irises blooming magnificently.

Green, tall stalks, proudly lifting rich, deep purple flowers,
Under the shade of freshly extending vine bowers.
A dove is cooing somewhere, maybe in the ash tree.
Our white mongrel Maltese runs in, jumps up, greeting me.

I hear the sound of my spouse's latest work project –
Turning patio bricks round, seemingly his object.
I consider myself a woman who's greatly blessed –
A good man, family, garden, home, a heart at rest.

Although today I'm enjoying this life of plenty,
It's possible things will change, my hands be left empty.
Our house with china, paintings – all these beautiful things –
Will in the unknown future fly away on time's wings.

And much as I love my very precious family,
All our lives on this earth are only temporary.
But while I am still here, I will thankfully accept
The goodness of God, through Whose grace I am daily kept.

So, I'm looking forward to heaven's perpetual spring,
In a lovely home where the blessings are everlasting.
Trust I'll see children, grandkids too at end of their days,
Nothing will ever be lost as on Infinite, Perfect Beauty we gaze.

March 2018

IRRATIONAL

Jeremiah 2:13 For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

Colossians 2:3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

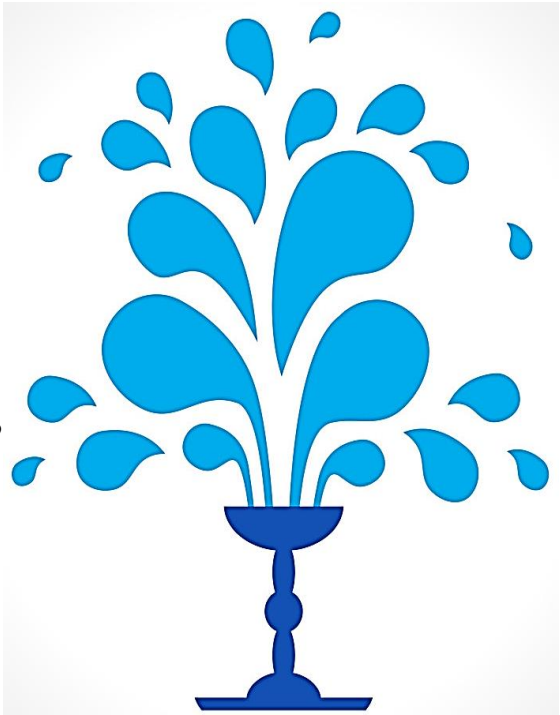
John 6:35 And Jesus said unto them, “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.”

Revelation 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let him that heareth say, “Come.” And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Why do we try to slake our thirst
From broken cisterns that leak,
And are totally drained at the worst,
Leaving us dehydrated and weak?

Why have we forsaken the True –
The Fountain of Living Waters –
And turned to the poor dregs so few,
Of dwindling supply in damaged quarters?

Treasures of knowledge and wisdom –
All found in the One who satisfies.
Water of Life, filled to the brim,
Slakes thirst; our deep need gratifies.



November 2018



THE SUNROOM

Sun shines through, unhindered by neighbouring cotton wool cloud,
Over the rooftops, between tree branches, as it's allowed;
Under the red, fading, Autumn vine, through the glass windows;
Arrives warm and gentle, while outside the North-Wester blows.

It settles on the tiled sill, the couch, lazyboy, my knee.
God's blazing star's heat and light travelled far to reach me.
As I sit here with Earl Grey tea and sleeping canine friend,
I'm comforted by Father's many blessings without end.

On the small table, for company, two different books.
"William" for laughs; Thomas Hardy – country ways and nooks.
I can see. I can read. I can hear, move and think clearly.
I can cook, knit, pray. I'm praising in the sun, gratefully.

May 2018

HOW GOOD YOU ARE!

O God, my loving Father, how good You are!

I see it in rain clouds, every drop of dew;
The warming sun, the moon and each night sky star;
The sea, the mountain that through the arch I view.

All around our house, Your goodness speaks clearly:
Spectacular Poinsettias – winter cheer;
Red clusters on Brazilian pepper tree;
Sound of birds, sight of birds – flying, perching near.

Inside our house, I am reminded of You;
Your provision of many beautiful things –
Furniture, paintings, bric-a-brac, antiques too.
Once lost our home, but Your care abundance brings.

In our family I see Your gracious hand –
Neville, who never forgets my morning tea;
Two precious children that You certainly planned;
Now with spouses and their own brood – happily.

Your own, true children at church are a blessing;
Each unique, imperfect and precious as well.
Together the Triune God we're confessing,
Praising, caring, seeking the Gospel to tell.

You are good. We experience it each day.
But what of challenges to faith – here, out there?
Such evil, suffering, even though we pray.
Omnipotent Father, where's Your love and care?

In OUR relationship, I know Your great love.
Through Your Word, You speak comfort, encouragement.
My questions and fears I can share with You above.
To be Your child, Your friend – this is contentment.

In life no doubt there is often mystery.
All the whys and whats, I do not understand.
Trusting Your goodness – because of Calvary
I know peace; see your caring on every hand.

July 2019



THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

Matthew 7:13-14 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Not the road so many have embraced,
But the narrow way that leads to life.
On God's sacred Scriptures firmly based,
In a world where false signposts are rife.

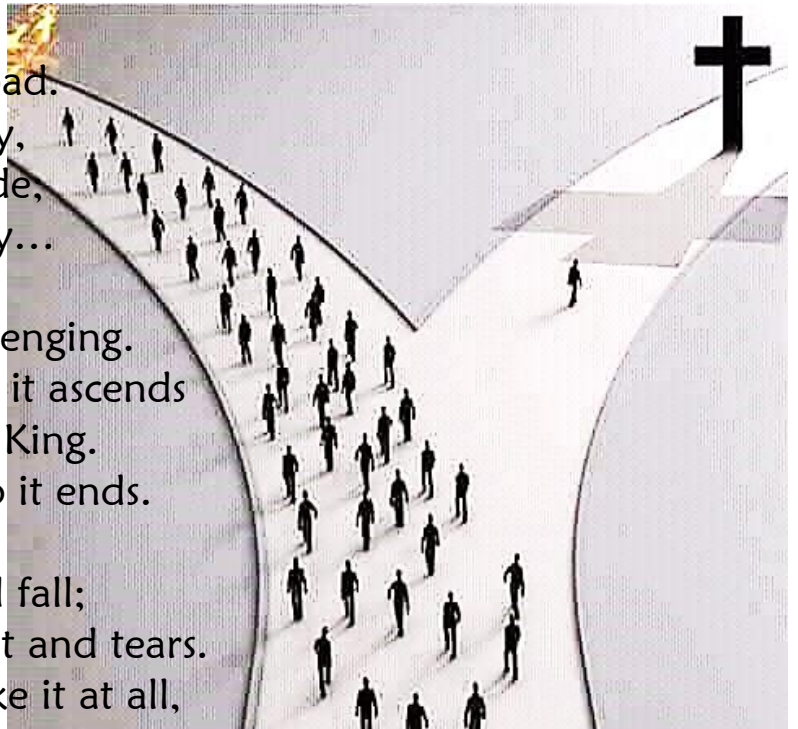
There's only one entrance where you start,
When by faith you gaze on a bleak Cross;
See the God-man, pouring out His heart
For your sin, for your gain suff'ring loss.

Leaving your past culpability;
Relieved of that which once weighed you down;
Now on a road, boundaried but free,
Start the race to a victor's crown.

Not overcrowded is this long road.
Most decided for the easy way,
That is broad, tolerant, a la mode,
But eventually will rue the day...

The route you've chosen is challenging.
There are ups and downs, but it ascends
Leading on to the throne of the King.
In love, light, joy and worship it ends.

On the way to the line, you will fall;
At times know disappointment and tears.
There may be doubts you'll make it at all,
Dragged down by discouragement and fears.



If you're focussed on the final goal
You'll make it through the hot, tough places.
Once more you will be refreshed and whole
As you pass through cool, shady spaces.

There are dangers on the way. Beware!
A lion lurks – his plan to devour;
Wants to attack, dismember you there.
Resist, and depend on Jesus' power.

There are by-lanes you need to avoid.
They will waste your time and hinder you.
Purposeful living ends in a void
When you leave the way that's tried and true.

On this path of opportunity,
Discover God's good and gracious plans –
Then serve Him enthusiastic'ly;
Be on earth His compassionate hands.

You'll find fellow travellers' company
Often a blessing, help and delight;
As they urge you on, unselfishly,
To persevere and to travel light.

So, continue the great adventure;
Never know what may be round the bend.
While you may earn your culture's censure,
This road leads to a glorious end.

January 2019

FOOD AND TO SPARE I

August 2014



“Food and to spare” – those words flashed into my mind this morning,
As I enjoyed my hot breakfast of good, nourishing oats.
1994 – folk thought “There’s a bright, new day dawning,
When all will have to work and plenty of food and extra coats.”

Now 2014 – the optimism was unfounded.

While I have a more than adequate diet and food to spare,
There are more and more people whose hopes are all confounded.
Their desperate circumstances seem beyond all repair.

But what’s to be done to fix the growing situation?

Migrants pouring into the big city from way out there
Until townships and squatter camps are near saturation.
No income, no jobs, no hope; while I have “food and to spare.”

The politicians made promises that cannot be met.

“We want government to give us houses”, people declare.
Except for a few, most are going to be most upset –
No brick dwellings with flush toilets, and little food to spare.

I am uncomfortable with their dire circumstances.

I think, probably, so are you, as we’ve food and to spare.
While the disillusioned shout, burn tyres, and do their dances,
Many of us are still wondering what, and how, to share.

August 2014



FOOD AND TO SPARE II

I have food and to spare,
But so many out there
Are hungry. Do I care?
Our cast-off clothes they wear.
At our snug homes they stare.
In shacks, how do they fare?
At their protests we glare.
Disturb our peace? They dare!
Folk destroy, burn and tear,
And cry they want their share.
Some give in to despair.
Who can their lot repair?
They poverty's load bear,
While I've food and to spare.

Lord, teach me **HOW** to share.

August 2014

MY SISTERS AND I



Mother's Day

We had a mother but she's with us no more.
Mother's Day can never be the same as before.
Her love, patience, interest, concern are all gone.
Without her my sisters and I have to go on.

My children they love me, spoil me and praise me
And I am so thankful their mother to be.
But our own mother's not here for Mother's Day.
We miss her. Yes, we miss her, I have to say.

Mother's Day 2007



THE PLAQUE

We are here to encourage and comfort each other –
Four sisters together, remembering our mother.
At last laying her ashes to rest in a garden.
The delay and years passed, she would gen'rously pardon.

Never one to expect and seek for attention;
She was happy in the background, without a mention.
But today we honour her long life and memory.
Thankful, grateful for much in her unique history.

Her life on earth could not just be ended without trace.
So, we have put her name on the small plaque in this place.
But there's another place where God's fam'ly never part.
For now, she lives on here in our thoughts and in each heart.

2017

CARELESSNESS

The small laughing doves built their hopeful home
In my favourite, crimson Hibiscus tree.
Like other doves, it's badly constructed
With criss-crossed sticks, ugly and untidy.

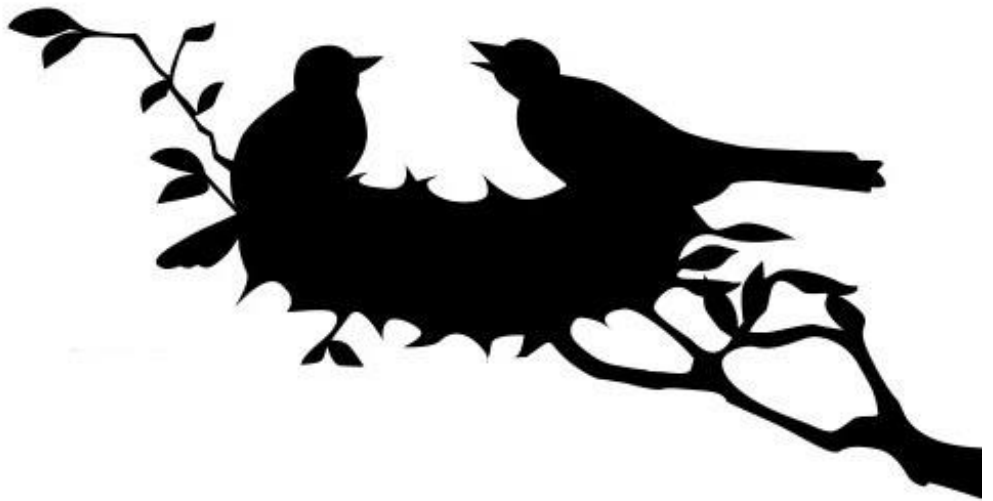
She laid two white eggs on that fragile bed.
They took turns incubating hopefully.
Flew to the bird table to gobble bread.
Returning later, where could those eggs be?

The young embryos were developing.
An egg should have produced a baby bird.
But the rude foundation on which they lay
Was carelessly made, unsafe and absurd.

What caused the disaster, have no idea.
Was it the blustery wind on that day?
Or was it a predator – bird or cat?
The young lacked protection in every way.

There exposed on the lawn lay broken eggs.
Sadly, I saw a minute bird-to-be.
Life was spoilt, wasted, expended, cut short
Because parents acted, built carelessly.

Spring 2019



WONDERFUL

Wonderful world we live in – wonderful but flawed;
Incredible colours and amazing design;
Sounds that delight – birdsong, crashing waves, Bach that soared
Variety, complexity – the hand Divine.

Wonderful Creator Who made this space-hung ball.
He, the Ultimate of Perfection, said “It’s good”.
Our ancestors rebelled, brought decay to it all;
Imperfection, yet beauty in our neighbourhood.

Wonderful surroundings – Table Mountain outlined;
Arches of rose branches and the entwining vine;
Mixed, pastel colours of fragile flowers aligned;
Tall trees – shade and shadow alternates with sunshine.

Wonderful family – God-given and caring;
Gratitude for the following generation
And their precious progeny, with us life sharing;
Maturing young – four adults in preparation.

Wonderful knowledge – I’m a daughter of the King,
Dressed in the robes of His pure, perfect righteousness.
To One Who gave His Son for me, I worship bring;
Through the Holy Spirit, the Triune God confess.

31 January 2019



TIMEKEEPERS

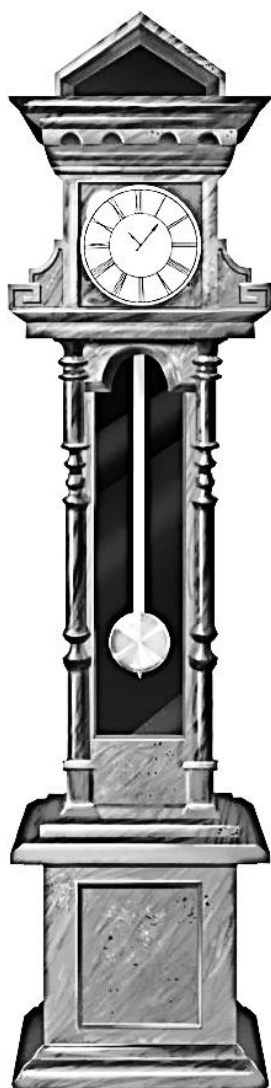
Our home is a house of various clocks.
Night and day here one ticks and there one tocks.
Through routine, sadness, joy and levity –
Constant reminders of life's brevity.

Silent at night till dawn's light comes to stay,
Kitchen regulator cheers up the day.
Each hour a different melody plays,
As from side to side the pendulum sways.

Quiet antique, with a war damaged face,
Watches over the technology space –
Polished wood and, hopefully, polished brass;
From war's depredations, devoid of glass.

In the hall a stately grandfather clock;
Soundless with long pendulum, key and lock.
Weights are pulled up. Grad'llly, fall they must;
Old fashioned fam'ly relic held in trust.

Daily, nightly in our bedroom we hear
This living, working, swinging timepiece near.
With golden, metal pendulum and face,
It requires frequent winding to keep pace.



Lounge chimer – much travelled, much history;
Linked to golf renown and matrimony.
Wound with key, behind glass a swinging piece,
Hourly and half hourly chimes never cease.

The sunroom holds a light sensitive one;
Christmas décor; Carols respond to sun;
Brought from the winter of the Middle East
To hot African festival and feast.

At our address there's always company –
Clocks that are alive, working constantly.
Some need winding, regularly, gently;
Others, batt'ries to perform perfectly.

But they are a reminder – life is brief.
Time is passing, and Time can be a thief.
Don't let hours, minutes rob you of the best.
Live for Jesus, an active life of rest.

February 2020

SIGNIFICANCE

An avian creature sat on
the side of our bird bath;
Settled, still. We never knew
it was preparing to die.
There next to the living flower
bed, near to the brick path,
Expired a Cape turtle dove
that once soared on high.



We thought it strange the bird stayed in the same place all that day;
Wondered if it was possibly sick – poisoned or ailing?
Never realised it had simply, quietly passed away,
Having sought refuge in our garden when strength was failing.

You were a beautifully, perfectly formed adult dove;
Plump, with distinctive black ring behind your sleek, rounded head.
Did you build an untidy nest in the tree high above;
Protecting fragile eggs till they hatched on that unsafe bed?

You used to drink thirstily from water we provided,
And bathe there too with many a scattered splash.
Drying off, preening, your beak the soft feathers divided.
Then to pursue business your own, darted off like a flash.

Your life came to a natural, abrupt end in our garden.
It might have seemed only we knew you were ever alive.
But your Creator knows, and His great heart does not harden,
Though many doves – and sparrows too – a day may not survive.

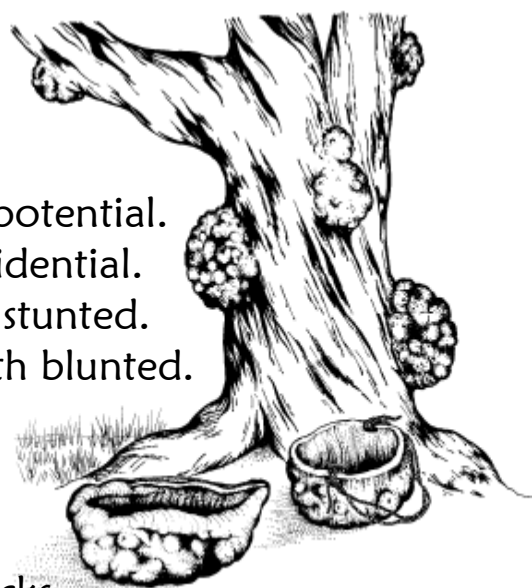
You were just one of thousands of small birds who fly about.
They procreate, forage and fly, fight and die as did you.
Little grey dove, your life was brief and uncertain no doubt.
Did it have significance, and what was its value?

Those contours, with physics and the mechanics of swift flight;
Plus, colours, feathers, textures, habits and seasonal ways –
Courting, breeding, nesting, hatching, with fledglings a delight –
All glorified your Designer, as you ‘cooed’ bird song praise.

May 2014

ODE TO THE GUM

Lemon-scented gum, you once had amazing potential.
But that real life has been tough on you is evidential.
Instead of standing tall and majestic, you are stunted.
The serrated bow-saw repeatedly your growth blunted.



You're courageously resilient in spite of setbacks.
Though decapitated, new life appeared through the dead cracks.
Again, your fragile branches climb, extending red and green.
Drawing nourishment from foundations that cannot be seen.

And for us, your damage and scars have been providential.
To smell lemon perfume, reachable leaves are essential.
You have been tremendously hindered in your height and spread.
We benefit – as we pick, crush leaves, enjoy scent instead.

Additionally, we appreciate the sawn-off parts.
Their blazing share in our winter fires comforted our hearts.
When outside all was dreary darkness, gales, cold, rain and storm,
Inside our home your dry, sacrificed branches kept us warm.

Rising once more from trauma, you're a parable to us –
When life lops part of us off, not to create a big fuss;
To trust there can be restoration beyond the loss
And blessing to others though our lives have been sawn across.

So, take courage, it is ever God's encouraging way,
To use devastating blows in life and redeem the day.
In a fallen world, He still has purposes for His own –
Where pain and trauma have been, branches of fresh life are grown.

January 2015

13



Bread on the bird table is mouldering,
Soft breezes through the leaves of trees sighing.
Listen – sweet whistle of red-winged starling.
A laughing dove is startled and flying.

Balash on her pillow quietly sleeping.
Neville in sunroom on the couch lying.
Me – in the children's room busy folding
Saturday's wash that's been long in drying.

Nostalgia – thinking and remembering.
All around the house memories vying.
Long gone people and places recalling.
There was joy, hope, adventure and crying.

A clock with scarred face, war indicating.
Brass clasped Bible bequeathed by the dying.
Rosewood bookcase – Mom Holmes still connecting.
Antique pan used for warming, not frying.

Wedding gift – art, of Glenda reminding.
Choice china beyond value of buying.
Three Arab coffee pots with spouts curving.
Into my heart's depths, these and more, prying.

Grandparents, parents – as though still living –
On photos, recollections relying.
The old albums are there, some retaining
Jeanette's, Paul's childhood – details supplying.

On our own history I am reflecting –
Life was not perfect, though we were trying.
What lies ahead? Believing and trusting.
Framed grandkids – future hope, no denying.

Through this home, God's faithfulness I'm seeing,
In my mind all the threads I am tying,
Past, present, future – part of His planning.
“Thank you, Lord”, to these thoughts I'm replying.

June 2019



LOOKING THROUGH THE GLASS

I open the curtain and what sight do I see?
A robin hopping on the wall opposite me.

I open the curtain and what sight do I see?
Red poinsettias growing magnificently.

I open the curtain and what sight do I see?
Branches of crimson vine leaves, red as red could be.

I open the curtain and what sight do I see?
Yellow poinsettias, blooming unusually.

I open the curtain and what sight do I see?
Clusters of pretty berries in the pepper tree.

I open the curtain and what sight do I see?
The bare oak tree, exposing itself nakedly.

I open the curtain and what sight do I see?
A pale blue sky and five fast birds flying freely.

I open the curtain and what sight do I see?
A partly slumbering garden – green and wintry.

Winter 2019

DELIGHT

There's so much joy in Clivia,
Though they only bloom once a year.
But when they make their presence felt,
We know winter's begun to melt.

Plants, eleven months unnoticed,
Tough, unimpressive, and unmissed;
Willing to simply grow and wait,
Uncertain of their future fate.

Dark green, leathery straps above,
Below tubers give soil a shove.
Slowly, slowly the blooms emerge
As new warmth causes growth to surge.

Closed in a sheath, then the young buds,
Many grow up but some are duds.
Thick stems can be chewed through by snails –
That bouquet of hopeful life fails.

Most flowers reach maturity,
Showing off spectacularly.
Bright coral lights up the garden.
My boasting and pride, please pardon!

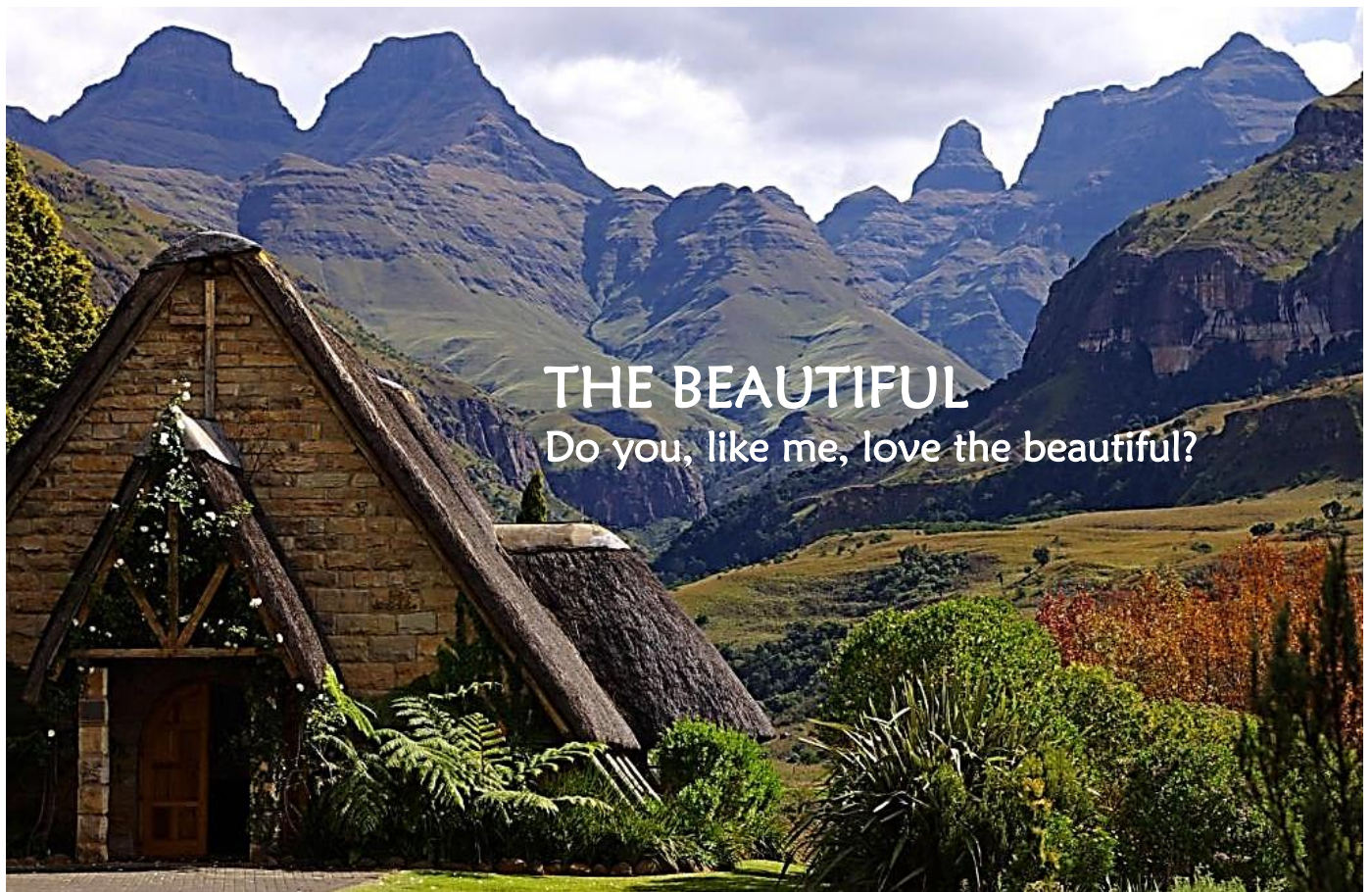
Here, there, large clusters of colour
Push up from other plants' cover.
Clivia announces the spring –
Not quietly, but loudly shouting.

Imagine, elsewhere they grow wild;
Indigenous, Africa's child.
Such an amazing, lovely sight!
No wonder they're my joy and delight.

Plus – their beauty, colour and line
Point to Intelligent Design.
Someone created. It was meant.
Thank You for pleasure, heaven sent.

September 2019





THE BEAUTIFUL

Do you, like me, love the beautiful?

Scenery breath-taking and majestic; near and distant mountains –
Brown, green, blue, mauve, or purple;
Colours change as sun and shadows move;
Distance plays its part; light coloured sandstone;
And sculpted limestone play their part too.

Basins of farm sprinkled valleys; white-washed, gabled houses;
Defined approach-avenues of trees;
According to the seasons,
Green, scarlet, yellow vineyards and orchards;
Water dams – reflections in these; gently erratically turning windmills
Blown by the much-needed breeze.

Splashing on irregular rocks, turbulent seas;
The vast extending expanse
Of ocean spreading out and beyond
To the horizon's edge;
Across the bay a white-sailed yacht travelling from, or returning to,
Its own home spot.

Day skies blue and clear or muted with decorative
Cirrus, cotton wool white;
Sunset and sunrise different each day,
Painted in unbelievable shades
By the Consummate Artist;
The dome of darkness pierced
By distant, shiny points of brightness – down-lights in the arching ceiling
Of the unclouded night;

Old and weathered oaks, dressed in the freshness
Of youthful, Spring green;
Camellias in pink or white or red;
Pale peach rambler roses;
Assorted flowers in a multitude of colours –
Subtle and soft or bright and brash; an orchard in full blossom;
Pergola of wisteria cascading in delicate mauve.

A newly washed and dried white, curly haired puppy
Or a dark one all sleek and shiny;
The male Cape robin sporting
His orange coloured throat,
Hiding behind his mask; a lesser double-collared Sunbird
Showing off its shimmering, green head.

So many adorable infants – Sleeping, sitting, standing, crawling,
(Preferably not protesting and crying)
Children, teenagers, adults, the aged –
Charming photos with engaging smiles –
(But that is only a moment in time);
Beautiful faces, joyful and alive for now;
Active bodies, graceful movements; swan Lake;
Life so vibrant and so fragile;

And I could go on ad infinitum about the beauty in our home –
Furniture with memories – old and polished wood;
Carpets, paintings, china, brass and clocks,
Cut glass and embroidered linen,
Gold embossed old books,
And the wonderful world inside familiar volumes; so much enjoyment,
With appreciation and gratitude.

What also of beautiful sounds? The subdued trickle of a
Cool, clear, brown-coloured
Table Mountain stream on a hot day;
Classical music – gentle or stirring;
Handel’s Hallelujah Chorus;
And hymns long cherished;
The voice of one beloved;
The murmur or roar of the ocean; birdsong as the day breaks.
And the ticking, chiming of a clock.

We could talk of beautiful fragrances;
The garden and life are full of those;
Also what of the feel of soft material –
Velvet, silk and satin, mohair wool?
And beauty in food – colour and texture;
Tastes of sweet melon, roast lamb and mint jelly;
Beauty – simple and profound –
Encountered daily in many varied forms.

Yet at the end of the day, not one beautiful sight or sound
Satisfies fully – they are shadows of a deeper Reality;
An emptiness remains. There is a longing for the Ultimate,
For Perfect Beauty personified;
Our reaching out, our desire, the sense of incompleteness
In all our appreciation of all other beauty,
Truly finds fulfilment in Him.

Isaiah 33:17 Your eyes will see the King in His beauty. They will see the
land that is very far off.

February 2020

CONVERSATION WITH THE BIRDS



Why are you afraid little, brown Sparrow – When we put out food for you?
What made you flee from my very shadow, though daily kindness you knew?

Where are you hiding orange-bellied Thrush? You were eating bread we gave,
But you disappeared in a frightened rush – Up into your high, green cave.

Robin, with your black mask and coloured throat, why did you fear,
fly and hide?
All I did was admire your feathered coat, through the window from inside.

Flitting Witogie, war paint round your eyes, you enjoy your frequent bath.
Let me get closer, and away he flies over the grass, down the path.

Bulbul with tuft of hair and yellow spot you are nibbling at red fruit
Hanging on our creeper. You gorge a lot; leave all, at sound of my foot.

Avian inhabitants of our trees, I mean you only great good.
We chase the cat, charge you no rental fees, provide ablutions and food.

But you don't trust us whatever we do; think we've our own agenda;
Prefer me to keep my distance from you, yet my heart's soft and tender.

There's Someone Else provides and shows His care,
but when He comes near I flee.
I would prefer Him to stay way out there, fearing that He threatens me.

The birds don't trust us; sometimes I'm the same. God wants to get close to me. Though I know He's good and Love is His name, I prefer flight and safety.

31 October 2016

SOUTH AFRICAN AND SOCIAL ISSUES POEMS





September 2014

You are my black sister and you, my brown brother.
We all are closely related to each other.
The same ancestors gave to our forefathers' birth.
There's no one who is not my kin in the whole earth.

We have treasured divisions, not our unity;
Forgotten that we're members of one family.
Some claim descent from great Shaka the Zulu
Or look back to Abraham, because he's a Jew.

I too have interest in my British history;
But that's a relatively recent legacy.
So, when I go back to the original root,
I find that of one couple, we all are the fruit.

God formed Adam and Eve, from the rib in his side.
In obedience they had offspring; multiplied.
Through them people of each era, in ev'ry place
Are linked whatever their looks or their supposed race.

On this Heritage Day, I greet you my Friend.
May the squabbles our clans have had, come to an end.
Can we relinquish the hurts of our common past?
Should we not live, one fam'ly, united at last?



ANNUAL DAY OF RECONCILIATION

The sixteenth day of December – menace was abroad.
Boers felt threatened by an overwhelming Zulu horde.
From the British occupation they had trekked away,
Only to be confronted by a worse fate this day.

The proud Zulu nation and impis had a great name;
Defeating, subjugating lesser tribes, gained in fame.
Dingaan, as their chief, did not welcome white invaders;
Come to take land and perhaps swoop down as cattle raiders.

Boers with ox wagons joined together in a laager,
Prepared for battle; wrote a fresh page in their saga.
“Only God can assist us in our extremity.
We vow to keep this day if He gives us victory.”

Against overwhelming odds, they managed to hold on.
At the end of the day the Boers knew that they had won.
After their descendants lost to the British in war,
They eventually took power; got what they fought for.

Sixteenth December ironically called Dingaan's day
Became known as Day of the Vow, as the Nats held sway.
Boers resisted the British for the freedom they sought.
Denying the rights of others, it was dearly bought.

Boers and English settlers were more or less reconciled.
But restrictive laws got Zulu, Xhosa, others riled.
There was trouble, sabotage, riots, threats and tension;
Arrests, trials, imprisonment without detention.

Boers looked back to Blood River with Dingaan and his crew;
Men feared for their children's future: "Daar kom die Zulu".*
Sixteenth December was still their own "Day of the Vow",
While the rest of us had a holiday anyhow.

Eventually there were talks, unbannings and some peace;
Constitution, the vote for all – wonders never cease!
Some compromises were made in an unselfish way;
Boer and Zulu now share Reconciliation Day.

December 2013

* "Here comes the Zulu"

ABOUT ANCESTORS



I will not malign them, and neither will I ever blame.
I'll not put them down – my ancestors who to this land came.
I'll not say that they were wrong to come to a colony –
“Arrived legally in a place of opportunity;
The Western and Eastern Cape under the rule of their Crown;
The just, deserved spoils of war, by a treaty written down.”

They dared all, coming to a partially developed place
With rough roads, wild animals and unknown dangers to face.
Of course, towns and dorps were growing. In some they felt at home
Grahamstown, Cape Town; later to Jo'burg, Harrismith they'd roam...
They dared travel by ship. It was not a cruise, nor luxury.
Then by train, stagecoach across mountains, plains wide and empty.

They left behind in Yorkshire everyone and all they knew
To build a better life; later, a nation that was new.
They experienced homesickness, and at first that deep pain –
Never to see parents and extended family again.
They were honest, God-fearing people; belonged to their time.
They were courageous, adventurous, committed no crime.

Great-grandfather, as Master Printer, worked for the Cape Times;
Used his skill, as people were informed of events and crimes.
As editor in Harrismith, believed press should be free;
Experienced the Boer war in hostile territory.
An entrepreneur, he established his own printing press;
No connection with drink nor dance printed at that address.

They espoused the building of a truly Christian nation,
Supporting the work of missions, churches, education.
Their six daughters were taught, skilled and trained to make their own way.
The youngest, principal of a Sea Point school, in her day.
They would have been kind to the poor, needy and the down trod:
Have believed the way to uplift is to turn hearts to God.

If they were racist, paternalistic, they never knew.
Lived in an earlier age with a different point of view.
So, I'll not apologise for them, nor will I demean.
My ancestors – their memory, contribution I'll esteem.
So, pull down Rhodes's statue and Queen Victoria's too,
But don't criticise my forebears – brave, hard-working and true.

April 2015

CRY, OUR BELOVED LAND

22 Feb 2015



1994 – South Africa’s people hoped for a fresh start.

But our much-admired constitution and vaunted democracy
Are now being bartered in the narrow, exclusive self-interest’s mart.
The result – down-spiralling law and order, indeed anarchy.

People have the right to object. What democrat would disagree?

Yet there are regulations regarding permission, place and time.
Why most days are there demonstrations – here, there – held illegally?
Meant to be peaceful, protests are occasions for violence and crime.

Legal marches are allowed. But is there a legitimate cause?

It sometimes seems evil men have sinister and hidden designs,
Playing with people’s lives – like a cat with a mouse between its paws –
Directing the disruption and destruction from behind the lines.

Trade unions are encouraged and could do a great deal of good;

Protecting their members from exploitation and improving things.
But unreasonable strikes at the drop of a hat, is the mood –

Threat’ning, hurting, blackmailing, killing, with the fear and debt it brings.

If workers don't play fair, by loafing and not giving of their best
 And undermining the very enterprise that provides their pay,
 Neither are some employers consid'ring their employees' int'rest.
 What about their benefits, pensions and welfare from day to day?
 Abuse of women, kids, foreigners, the aged, defenceless and weak;
 Murders, hijackings, robberies, vigilante killings and rape;
 Often no accountability. Where is the justice we seek?
 And toddlers molested and killed? Too late the yellow, crime-scene tape.
 Often, we're a society emphasizing only our rights,
 With limited understanding or acceptance of boundaries.
 "I don't care if others suffer while I disturb their days and nights.
 I'll have my dues. Don't talk to me about responsibilities."
 "I shall live according to my will, my happiness, my pleasure" –
 This a common philosophy of our benighted day and age.
 We should mourn over the broken lives, wounded hearts, beyond measure;
 Since the discarded value of family unity reached this stage.
 Meant to be one nation, we are a divided land. Some don't care.
 Our mutual racism was to be put behind us in the past.
 But in so many ways its unconquered, ugly head is laid bare.
 Laws, comments, attitudes, indifference, callousness cause it to last.
 Parliament, Provincial Councils in deplorable disarray,
 Causing us to be disgraced before a bemused and watching world.
 Schemers, for selfish ends, insisting on bending rules their own way;
 Wasting the country's time as their shameful, true colours are unfurled.
 Not without reason are we feeling deeply dismayed and distressed,
 When so much has been bungled and corruption is said to be rife.
 But our lawmakers' reactions should be dignified – not a mess
 Of bad manners, poor taste, ruffianly behaviour, inviting strife.
 Once the West's blue-eyed democracy, none of us should be surprised
 At our failure. We put our trust in sinful men, who'll disappoint.
 After years of injustice, lawlessness, how was it we surmised
 That a land of saints would emerge to fix things that were out of joint?
 There is just the one way forward if we're to have a land that's great.
 Only God can cure our malady, changing one heart at a time.
 Renewed, regenerated citizens who love and cease to hate
 Can change South Africa; bring an end to selfishness, greed and grime.



South Africans are at last declared to be free;
But with the years, freedom has been taken from me.
When I was young the front door was open all day.
Now all outside doors are locked in a fool-proof way.
I had never heard of a security gate.
Each entrance has one today, locked – early and late.

We lived in our home with wide open sash windows.
“Burglar bars – what on earth are those?” Nobody knows.
There were lower fences; an unsecured front gate.
We’ve changed to tall walls (not higher than 2.8)!
All chatted to neighbours over the friendly fence.
But now hiding behind barricades for defence.

Our friends visited any time on the day clock;
Entered by the gate, up the path, a gentle knock.
Nowadays by appointment, we ring, and we wait
For the crackling intercom at the guarded gate.
By permission of technology we get in
And are locked inside because of another’s sin.

Electric fences, barbed wire and fierce dog guards
Were then reserved for wrongdoers and prison yards.
We freely entered, exited shops and airports.
Now scanners make us feel like criminals of sorts.
Once private driveways were thought to be safe, secure;
But with the present carjackers you can't be sure.

Cars stood safely out in the road by day and night.
No gear locks, alarms set off to give us a fright.
House alarms, sensors, were unheard of at that time,
We had police not Combat Force to prevent crime.
As for security systems of any class,
We never imagined we'd come to such a pass.

We travelled safely at night on the bus or train
Railway police and conductors kept us free of strain.
Now train doors, windows you cannot open easily
While station barriers stop one moving freely.
Then it was alright to use the railway subways –
Descend into safe gloom and ascent to sun's rays.

We mostly walked to school and did not come to harm.
No adult? We were fine. Parents felt no alarm.
We played in each other's houses or on the street.
No gangster or drug pedlar did we ever meet.
When I was out cycling, none my bike tried to steal.
Left in the school shed it was safe – chassis and wheel.

Children went and played in the parks all on their own.
The old were safe out of doors, even though alone.
We climbed Table Mountain; never heard of a crime.
Camped out, went to beaches and were safe all the time.
Medical doctors and nurses were sacrosanct;
Teachers were respected, and kids out of line got spanked.

It was fine to go out with a ring on your hand,
Or a necklace, locket, a Swiss watch, gold arm band.
Now we leave those behind, if walking in the street –
Lest some covetous person we happen to meet.
The smart handbag is also often left at home.
There might be someone out there whose fingers will roam.

As for banking, mutual trust waning it appears.
Some may cease to use ATM's for scamming fears.
Don't know the bank manager; have to be FICA'd.
As for at-risk cell phones, we need to be RICA'd.
To keep women safe, we plan a yearly campaign;
Turn on the news – a woman's been abused again.

How can we have become so restricted and bound
That complete freedom of movement is hardly found?
Fettered by apprehension, real or perceived threat,
We're securely caught in the security net.
Yet many who would harm us know how to escape,
And continue freely to rob, hijack and rape.

Present South Africa makes me claustrophobic –
Feel locked in, unable to get out. Help me, quick!
Are we helpless? It's easy to be a coward.
Living anxiously, we become disempowered.
But how can I agree that we are truly free,
When I am behind bars, deprived of liberty?

Though life is very challenging in this our land,
It is a precious place from the Cape to the Rand.
And in spite of this expressed negativity,
I must admit we've been kept in security.
I feel sad for those who have been through crime and loss.
It might seem God does not care – but look at the Cross.

THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

Once “Great” King Herod killed the Innocents,
And, of course, we obviously condemn.
Sweeping on, Genghis Khan did not spare babes;
Causing bloody slaughter, grief and mayhem.

Adolph Hitler made a name for himself –
Relentless dictator, murdering Jews.
We look in horror at Auschwitz and more.
Youth gassed, and all of their future to lose.

The “free world” has no right to point fingers.
We have destroyed far more innocent lives
Than Hitler in his final solution,
And still the abortion industry thrives.

Millions, millions of the unborn,
Their lives cut short with the sanction of law.
How did we get to such a godless place?
Consciences seared, no guilt felt any more.

Who declared it to be open season
On the small dependent, without a voice?
How can a woman choose death for the one
Who, at this life stage, cannot make a choice?

Since when did it become a mortal crime,
That’s punishable by physical death,
To be conceived, develop and grow?
This a reason to deny life and breath?

If we would just open our hearts and ears;
Hear each small victim cry, “Choose life, Choose life.
Don’t execute me, deny me my rights.
Why condemn, kill me with a surgeon’s knife?

I am inconvenient? Not my fault.
It was never your choice to have a child?
Whatever your problem, I still exist.
Don’t let your hands with my blood be defiled.”

October 2017



A SIMPLE PROCEDURE

They said it was a simple, safe, surgical procedure.

That troubling condition would be dealt with quite easily.
She was reassured. Her life's plans would be unchanged, secure.
“Best to get rid of this unwanted thing”, thought, queasily.

There were her studies and future career to think about.

Her fam'ly might be disappointed in her and ashamed.
Not to mention nine difficult, waring months, no doubt.
Her choice, perfectly legal. So, she could never be blamed.

In O.T., for mother and staff, all went smoothly and well.

(The other one involved was quiet – had nothing to say.)
Now it seemed her predicament was solved. No one would tell.
But none mentioned how sad, guilty she'd feel after that day.

“It was just a foetus, not a human being,” they'd said.

Yet her heart reproached her, “This was a child in the making.
And with the help of medical people, that child is dead.”
All complicit – God's law, Hippocratic oath forsaking.

In desperation she had chosen to believe a lie.

How to live with the knowledge of that fatally flawed choice?
Responsibility she could not escape nor deny.

She'd decided, "Do it." But the child was given no voice.

The days, weeks and months passed and she tried vainly to forget.

Still the "inconvenient" pregnancy she remembered –
The little, uncompleted life snuffed out haunted her yet;
The execution; the small frame torn from her; dismembered.

Sleep was troubled. She hoped, given time, the nightmares would cease.

Clock could not be turned back, nor life restored that was taken.
Where might she seek resolution and where would she find peace?
"Is there forgiveness here or am I by God forsaken?"

She struggled Christ's unconditional pardon to believe.

Why, when before Him she pleads guilty to infanticide,
Should she free grace, restoration from a just God receive?
"I helped destroy His creation. Where can I run and hide?"

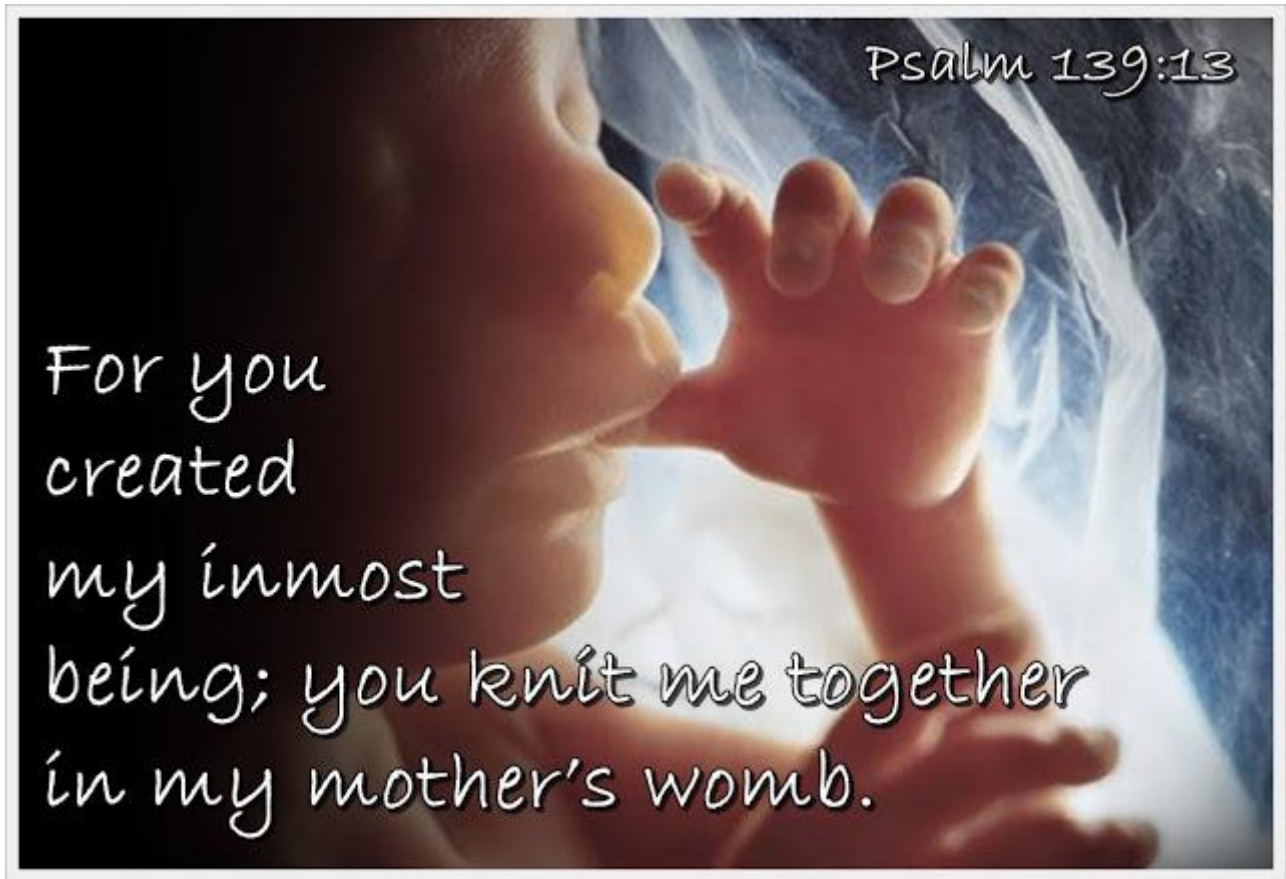
Her child abandoned, allowed to die, like one rejected.

But there was true forgiveness, comfort and renewing grace.
Because God abandoned His Child to death, she's accepted;
Jesus, her Substitute, paid the penalty in her place.

And what of the little growing one who needlessly died?

Though denied a full life on this revolving, busy globe,
I have no doubt this child is not far from the Saviour's side –
Through the Cross, included, and wearing God's righteousness robe.

I AM FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE



Psalm 139:13 You have knit me together in my mother's womb. I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Hear the cry of the children:

The unborn children;

The unformed children;

The undeveloped children;

The underdeveloped children;

The abandoned children;

The deprived-of-future children;

The unwanted children;

The inconvenient children;

The threatening-to-spoil children;

The unloved children;

The discriminated against children;

The cruelly treated children;

The non-human children;

The denied children;

The despised children;

The hated children;

The disallowed children;
The unrecognised children;
The voiceless children;
The abused children;
The imperfect children;
The unelected children;
The unaccepted children;
The unacceptable children;
The unplanned children;
The never-to-become children;
The unfulfilled potential children;
The condemned to death children;

They were put to death for the crime of existing
and developing; for being a dependent;
The surgically removed children;
The suffering children;
The murdered children;
The scientific experiment children;
The deprived-of-life children;
The legally dead children;
The deliberately dead children;
The incinerated children;

Through no fault of their own:
Children of carelessness;
Children of excess;
Children of immorality;
Children of desperation;
Children of incest;
Children of rape;
Children of violence;
Children without rights;
Children without choice;
But still children-in-the-making with the right to life and a future.

30 October 2017

CULTURE OR SCRIPTURE?



In these days we hear many an assertive, ungodly voice –
Even in churches – where men, women insist on their own choice.
The prevalent culture and the Bible's truth do not agree.
We cannot have a foot in each camp, with real integrity.

Why would I be “progressive” when it means “going backwards fast” –
Away from God's standards, the only ones that count and will last.
Philosophy of the present destructive, decadent age
Is based on a godless presumption and an anti-god rage.

They have tried to escape from the idea of a Creator.
They do not want anyone they fear will be a dictator;
Prefer self-constructed values, nothing to block their own way.
Answ'erable to a personal God? Anathema today.

You may do as you like, just as long as it feels good to you.
There's no objective yardstick to measure what is right and true.
Your truth is your truth; and mine, though opposite, is true as well.
Where are the boundaries, the logic, the guidelines? Who can tell?

God's way – live for Him; care for others; life's not just about me.
Love your enemies, even pray for those who treat you badly.
Man's way – Me first. If it's not inconvenient, do some good.
Avenge yourself. Honesty does not always pay as it should.

God's way – no sexual encounter till you come to nuptial bed;
Marriage: man, a woman pledge to each other for life and are wed.
Man's way – no restrictions, sleep around, shack up just as you please;
Serial “marriage”, “free love”, polygamy, adulteries.

God's way – raise children in a stable, nurturing family.
Parents train, love consistently. Kids respond, respectfully.
Man's way – children born of multiple fathers to one mother.
Some are not born alive; child's future at clinics they smother.

God's way – young people grow up with good role models to follow.
They know who they are, and have confidence facing tomorrow.
Man's way – many teenagers confused, even suicidal.
With less security, purpose, emotions have no bridle.

God's way – pay taxes; obey your governing authority;
Respect others' rights; yours, curtailed by responsibility.
Man's way – no one shall stop me from doing my desired thing;
Violence, damage to property; valid part of protesting.

If we could realise God is not bent on stopping our fun.
He cares about the lives that we live and the race that we run.
His Word is there to direct us on the best way we might live.
He's the Manufacturer. Instructions on use He should give.

As God's people, whose ultimate citizenship is not here,
We need to live Christ's counter-culture without excuse or fear.
God's chosen for us a better way – and He gives the power
To live out our heav'nly nationality each day, each hour.

THE WOMAN WHO DID NOT HAVE AN ABORTION

There was a young woman of courage, true bravery;
Made the decision not to terminate pregnancy.
Although in her culture, death might be the penalty
And an abortion could have been obtained for a fee.

At the end of nine months, interminable and trying,
Was born a strong, healthy boy, both breathing and crying.
And we two had a precious son, in his crib lying,
Full of joyful life, instead of invasive dying.

We thank you lady of Lebanon, wherever you are.
You chose the best, and also the harder way by far.
The baby has grown up and proved to be a bright star.
As an example to others, you lifted the bar.

November 2017



CHRISTMAS POEMS



A CHILD CONCEIVED

For this blossoming young girl – happiness ahead;
Parents have arranged a betrothal, in her stead.
Suitor is a godly, kind and honourable man;
Suitable, respected in their joint tribal clan.

Fam'ly roots are planted in royal David's town,
Nazareth, where they live, socially a step down.
But Joseph is known for his skill, integrity,
Well able to support a wife and family.



Mary dreams of the wedding day when he will come,
With his close kin, and conduct her to the new home.
Not knowing when their troth will reach consummation,
Bridal gown prepared, she waits in expectation.

The teenager is alone in her parents' place.
From nowhere – a stranger, who makes her pulses race.
Awe-stricken she gazes at this blazing being.
“Am I dreaming? Is this a vision I’m seeing?”

In his first words a hopeful note is detected.
“Rejoice! The Lord is with you” – words unexpected.
“Blessed are you among women.” This is puzzling.
The message from the Angel Gabriel, troubling.

Before startling news, he reassures, “Do not fear.
God’s promises are starting to come true. They’re here.
You are the chosen vessel through whom God will bring
One to be named Jesus, Israel’s long promised King.

Son of the Highest, the Child Who's to be conceived;
Great and reigning forever." This can be believed.
Mary, perplexed as to how such a thing could be,
Questioning her maiden state, the difficulty.

Gabriel clarifies the issue that same hour.
The Holy Spirit overshadowing in power
Will initiate conception of Holy One –
Mary's child to be born, yet God's eternal Son.

Infant still to be conceived in her unused womb,
To grow till new-born, He bursts forth as from a tomb.
God in flesh, to become her Jewish, baby Boy.
What privilege, responsibility and joy.

She embraces God's purpose unreservedly.
"Behold the handmaid of the Lord" and bows the knee.
How the miracle happened she never knew.
Inside her virgin self the Infant grew and grew.

Nine months pregnant, census, long trip to Bethlehem,
Unsatisfactory lodgings for all three of them.
Fruit of conception matured, delivered at last –
Earth's Hope of the present, the future and the past.

December 2016

A CHRISTMAS DIALOGUE



Mary: “Joseph, Joseph, my husband-to-be, my betrothed, my dear,
You cannot imagine – my surprise, my shock and my fear.
God’s awesome angel, Gabriel, appeared to me today.
I am to bear a child in a very unusual way.

For through the Holy Spirit’s power I will have a Son,
(You will be his adoptive father – the very best one).
He is also to be great and the Son of God Most High.
It is unbelievable but you know I would not lie.”

Joseph: “Mary, what do you mean? I’ve never heard such a tall tale.
You must admit that you’ve done wrong –
it’s quite beyond the pale.

If folks find out in Nazareth – or, worse, your family –
You will be in such trouble and it could end fatally.

I should take back my promise to marry you that is sure,
But neighbours will be asking, ‘What are you doing that for?’
Our bright future is ruined. The betrothal will have to end.
I had such hopes that you would be my wife and my best friend.”

Later: “Mary, my dear, I just dreamt that an angel came to call.
He encouraged me to marry you. God has planned it all.
He also said that Jesus is to be the Baby’s name.
He will save us from our sins. Life will never be the same.”

9 months later

Mary: “Joseph, I’m really glad we are near to Bethlehem town.
The Baby wants to be born now and I need to lie down.
Please, act quickly, find a warm, private place where we can stay,
Because this child won’t wait for a more convenient day.”

Joseph: "My dearest wife, I'm afraid we have no other option
Than to take the quarters offered – a stable for oxen.
But the straw should be dry for you to lie on – and it's warm.
The manger will be a safe crib where He'll come to no harm."

Mary: "Joseph, isn't He precious? – so small, yet active and strong.
Look at His cute little toes and His fingers – they're quite long.
Now I must wrap Him in this swaddling cloth, clean and secure.
My boy, so human and yet – God's Son, holy, perfect, pure."

Joseph: "Mary, how extraordinary that those shepherds who came
Told us of angels; having seen Jesus now spread His fame.
What a strange roller coaster the last, long, nine months have been,
Becoming part of God's planning for His grace to be seen."

33 years later

Mary: "Joseph has gone and now only I am left here to tell
What became of my son Jesus, once called Emmanuel.
Babe to boy to Man He developed, and in favour grew.
A sinless life of love, grace and power, He lived – through and
through.

Then soldiers nailed Him to a cursed Cross and there He died.
My precious Son; the Son of God; He was dead – crucified.
Simeon prophesied that a sword would pierce my own soul.
That word was certainly fulfilled – not in part but the whole.

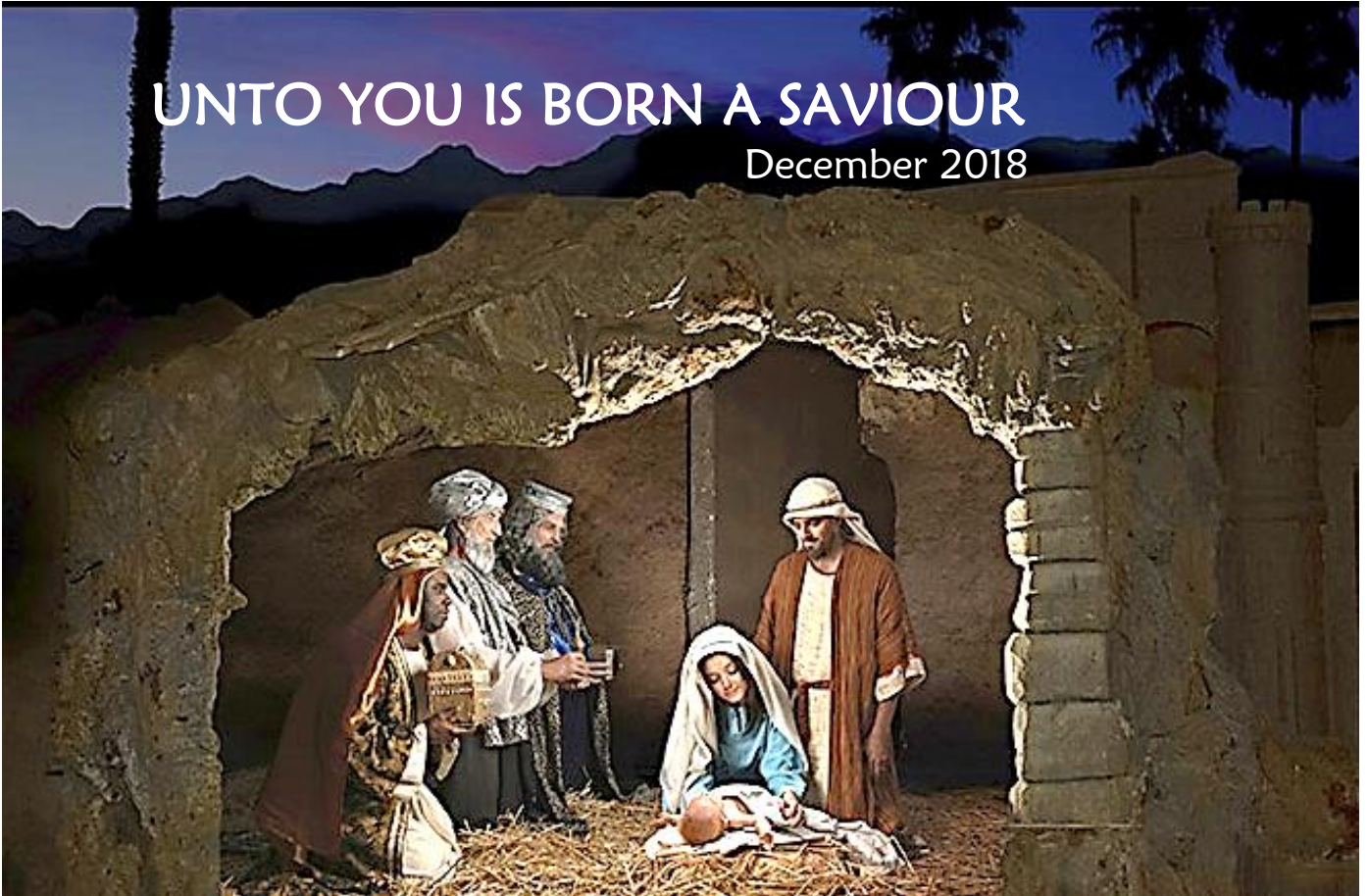
'The story has such a sad ending', you may well exclaim.
'What of Christmas, the angels, the star, the wise men who came?'
Yet the whole point of Christmas is that God became a Man;
Lived perfectly where Adam failed and died to lift God's ban.

Death was not the end. He rose and will reign eternally.
God Incarnate – I now worship and adore, gratefully;
Thankful to have been a part of God's Salvation story.
To forgive and restore you and me. To Him be glory."

December 2011

UNTO YOU IS BORN A SAVIOUR

December 2018



Desperate and hopeless is man's sorry plight –
Physically living, spiritually dead;
An outer façade covers thoughts dark as night;
Hide from the Creator Whose presence they dread.

Meant to live unshackled, eternally free,
But now bound with chains of selfishness and pride,
Men, women struggle to live in harmony –
Fears, family feuds, tribal wars on every side.

In spite of varied efforts to make things right –
Blood sacrifices, rules and regulation;
Efforts to appease their God (or gods) of might –
There's no one who can change the situation.

Yet the true God has promised to send Someone
(Seed of the woman) to crush instigator
Of the chaos and evil that has been done:
Satan – source, deceiver, guilt castigator.

Yes! One (Abraham's Seed) will bless each nation,
Undo the results of rebellion's curse.
David's Descendant turns the situation,
For He will restore and renew and reverse.

Thus we arrive at the crux of the ages,
When God had all prepared, everything in place –
Rome's census, village couple, shepherds, sages.
Dawns the long-awaited time of promised grace.

To Mary, Gabriel brings disturbing news
Of her imminent and costly pregnancy.
Through a dream Joseph abandons his false views.
And both receive a message of clarity.

The Baby shall be called Jesus, for He's come
To save – the guilty, condemned and despairing;
To lead the estranged, unreconciled back home,
Out of sure judgement to a Father's caring.

Hence an Infant was born in Bethlehem town
Of a young, chosen, virgin, Jewish mother;
Tight swaddled, in an animal crib laid down;
Like us, yet Divine – unlike any other.

To save His people from their sins, He is born.
To translate them from deep darkness to full light,
This child's soft skin would one day be pierced and torn –
Price of our pardon, deliv'rance from death's blight.

The message angels brought to the shepherds' field –
"To you, born this day a Saviour, Christ the Lord."
The Saviour for all sinners there was revealed –
The Perfect One, God's gift to a world that's flawed.

Heaven's answer – a dependent, Baby Boy?
Salvation is wrapped up in strips of limp cloth?
But this is God incarnate – O day of joy!
We, I, can be saved from sin and wrong and wrath.



He is merely an infant, utterly dependent and weak;
Asleep, breathing gently, dark lashes sweeping His chubby cheek.
How can this Peasant Child bear the weight of great and profound names
Attributed to Him, explaining His nature and high claims?
He is Seed of the woman that gave hope to Adam and Eve;
Abraham's Descendant, promised before Sarah could conceive;
The Passover Sacrifice, saving from death, our Substitute;
The Lamb of God, paying for the sin that left us destitute.

This soft Bundle of Joy is the Rock in the wilderness.
Descends to earth willingly, to be the Lord our Righteousness.
He's the Branch; the Root out of dry ground; ancestor Jesse's Stem;
Anointed One; the Ruler who wears the sovereign's diadem.
He is the Son of Man; the Servant, and the Arm, of the Lord –
This small Innocent under threat of King Herod's sword.
The crying Babe, Who in a month or so will be full of smiles,
Is the Glory of His people, Israel; Light of the Gentiles.

In the rough stable's feeding trough, swaddled, lies Emmanuel –
God with us. We rebelled. He reaches out to save us from hell.
This suckling, new-born Boy whose goings forth are from ancient times;
Alpha and Omega, here to atone for our sins and crimes.
Though He is the great I AM, Jesus is His ev'ryday name;
Clearly proclaiming that it is for our Salvation He came.
It's no wonder the angel says, "A Saviour is born to you",
And celestial choir sings, "Glory to God" for His goodwill too.

The night shift shepherds understand He's Lord; humbly bend the knee.
Trav'ling Magi, led by the star, bow before His Majesty.
Simeon declares that God's Salvation for all, he can see.
Anna announces, "Redemption's here", giving thanks gratefully.
Fragile Scrap of Humanity, eyes fixed on Your mother's face –
Incredible! You've arrived! The Embodiment of God's Grace;
Come to crush Satan's head, although he will bruise Your human heel
You fulfil each of Your names. Before You, we worship and kneel.

December 2014

HE CAME TO PAY A DEBT
HE DID NOT OWE
BECAUSE WE OWED A DEBT
WE COULD NOT PAY



CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

A flickering lantern, a smoky light
Hangs in a Bethlehem stable tonight;
Casting shadows on the rough, grimy walls
And on an ox and donkey, in their stalls;
Reveals an ordinary feed manger,
Cradling living, breathing, new-born Stranger.

A brilliant, prophetic star blazing
Seen, interpreted by men sky gazing.
Never had there been one like it before,
As they considered, consulted in awe.
A short or long journey might lie ahead,
But had to find the King, of whom they'd read.

An insignificant campfire of wood
As shepherds the weary night watches stood.
Beyond their secure circle all was dark;
Nothing to hear but a bleat or dog's bark.
Life never changes, it's always the same –
Guiding, protecting sheep, tending the lame.

A supernatural choir on the wing
To unlit fields, heaven's brilliance bring.
Shocked, frightened men can hardly bear the glow,
Lighting skies – normal a minute ago.
The angel's message to them: "Not to fear;
Good news – the Saviour, Christ the Lord is here."

Two thousand years later a white fir tree;
Twinkling lights, thanks to electricity;
Grateful parents remember the birth of the King;
Holding their own child, heartfelt thanks they bring.
Christmas shines for them as never before;
God the Son, born a baby – they adore.

December is still symbolised by light;
Though round their peaceful home, men hate and fight.
Illumined by love and filled with much joy
Nativity now included their boy.
Candle radiance is the nightly norm.
Eyes shining with hope, they ride out the storm.

Through the years the family multiplied:
Add Cape Town man and American bride;
Boy, girl, boy, girl – the next generation
Watch lit-up green tree with fascination;
Hearing the story of God come to earth,
With brightness that shone at Mary's Son's birth.

The Light of the world – Jesus, we confess;
Healing in His wings, Sun of righteousness.
Born our dreadful darkness to enlighten;
Come to heal blindness and sin that frighten.
Through the Cross, sinners tried to quench the Light.
But He shines forever. He gives us sight.

November 2015

THIS WAS THE NIGHT

This was the Night in all the long millennia of time
When God, Who had promised, unwrapped His Gift of Gifts sublime;
Sent to a world of oppression, rebellion and grime,
That He might lift us up, out of our self-made pits of slime.

This was the Night foreshadowed through all the centuries past;
Realised in flesh and blood – a reality at last!
God's predestined plan, unbelievably gracious and vast;
At this crucial, pivotal point – proceeds suddenly, fast.

This was the Night the Incarnate Son was fully revealed.
Since conception the Holy One's maturing growth concealed.
But now the jealous womb has its secret at last to yield –
Boy with lusty lungs Who will an eternal sceptre wield.

This was the Night of mind-blowing, Divine condescension –
The Creator wrapped in human skin, without pretension.
To share in fallen humanity's sorrow and tension
Emerges Father's Beloved – no fanfare, no mention.

This was the Night when the Almighty God appeared to us;
Truly human, born like any infant, without much fuss;
Steeped in His mother's culture – swaddling cloths, bound like a truss.
Mary's Babe, asleep in a manger; others saw Him thus.

This was the Night a helpless, small Person opened His eyes
On a challenging, new world, comforted by lullabies.
There in bodily form, the fullness of the Godhead lies
In crowded Bethlehem, hungrily crying infant cries.

This was the Night insignificant beasts made history,
Not understanding that they were gazing at mystery;
With Mary and Joseph formed the solemn consistory,
Confirming Virgin's Son's birth. Add one to Rome's registry.

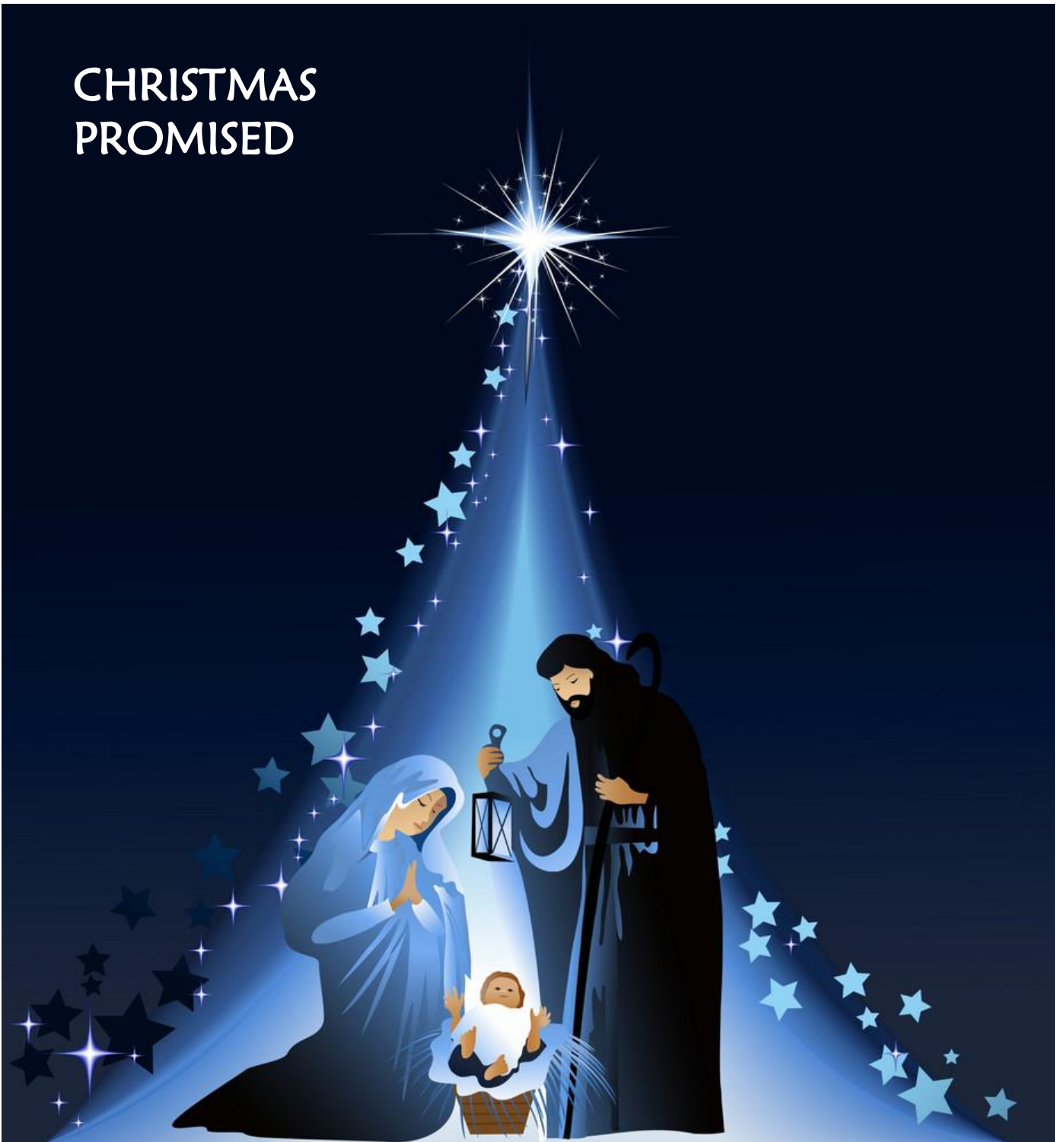
This was the Night heaven rejoiced, angelic hosts proclaim
The glorious truth of the Infant's unsuspected fame.
They praised God; clarified His ultimate, merciful aim.
Through their directions, shepherds to the stable and Child came.

This was the Night of the birth of the everlasting King,
Whose blazing star, from the east, a group of Magi would bring
To offer rare gifts, and seeing Him, fall down – worshipping,
While Herod's courts with harsh commands for infanticide ring.

This was the Night that led to a Friday eventually;
The Child, now a Man – condemned, led away nailed to a tree;
Gave up His spirit, after suffering tremendously;
Bearing my sin, the Incarnate Son – born to die for me.

Christmas 2015

CHRISTMAS PROMISED



Isaiah 9:6-7 For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

“Unto us a Child is born” – wonderful Miracle;
God’s gracious love revealed in this act empirical;
Delivered by a virgin betrothed, not yet a wife –
To a breathing, living, human boy, Mary gave life.

“Unto us a Son is given” – but whose Son is He?
Holy Spirit conceived, no sinful paternity.
This Gift, the first, most perfect Christmas present of all –
God’s Son, before Whose manger bed we worship and fall.

“And the government shall be upon His shoulder” – true!
He’s born a King, destined to rule the world, me and you.
Housed in a stable without pomp or ceremony,
The angel hosts announced His royal nativity.

“And His Name shall be called the Wonderful Counsellor” –
Spirit filled, Wisdom Personified, Unique Teacher.
Yet this day He communicates with a new-born’s cry
Lacks vocab’lary to convey thoughts profound and high.

“The Mighty God” – this Child Who on Mary’s shoulder hides –
“In Him all the fullness of the great Godhead resides.”
Humble grace – the Divine nature in a human form;
In a Babe, wrapped in swaddling bands, nurtured and kept warm.

“The Everlasting Father” – this title for the Son?
Remember His great claim, “I and the Father are One”?
He would reflect the Father in providing, caring;
Though, dependent for now, a mother’s milk He’s sharing.

“The Prince of Peace” – the One Who came to make, and give, peace
Under His sovereign rule, alienation would cease.
With His birth a marvellous message from heaven came:
“On earth peace, goodwill to mankind, glory to God’s name.”

“Of the increase of His government and peace, no end.”
North and south, east and west the glorious good news send.
Local shepherds and foreign Magi worship in awe.
To Christ’s reign and Lordship, each must open his heart’s door.

“Upon the throne of David, and over His kingdom” –
Jesus, born in Bethlehem – God planned, not Caesar’s whim.
Davidic descent shown – maternal and paternal.
As was promised, the temp’ral throne becomes eternal.

“To order, establish it with judgement and justice.”
What an impossible task for a Baby is this!
And yet the God/Man in His real, true humanity
Bears my judgement, dies in my place, gains justice for me.

“From this time forward, even forever and ever.”
Since the Child’s coming, God’s purpose and sure endeavour
Continues throughout millennia of history –
Until time surrenders to timeless eternity.

“The Lord of Host’s zeal will perform this” was prophesied.
It was being fulfilled, when a new-born Infant cried.
His coming was joyful, pivotal in God’s great plan –
To send us the Saviour Who’d reconcile God and man.

Christmas 2017

THOUGH HE WAS RICH



He lived in heavenly splendour;
Now sleeps in animal manger;
Was known, worshipped by angel hosts;
Here an unrecognised Stranger.

He wielded incredible power –
This Baby born in Bethlehem,
Whose strongest instinct is to suck.
Human Child, come from Jesse's stem.

Whole universe belongs to Him,
The Nazarene carpenter's Child.
Wrapped in peasantry's swaddling bands,
Rests on prickly hay slightly piled.

From His holy, spiritual home
To this physical world descends.
Born of a simple, virgin girl;
On imperfect parents depends.

From realms of immortality,
He enters a world of dread death.
Sharing our frail humanity,
For us He will breathe His last breath.

Glorious beings round His throne,
But tonight, rough shepherds attend.
They glimpse the glory of His state,
As angels skies with glad news rend.

Giver of all, humbly receives.
Star-led men travel, see, adore,
Bringing gold, frankincense and myrrh
To a village home's open door.

Once immersed in approbation,
Soldiers His harmless Person seek.
Herod wants His life to destroy,
Small as the Infant is and weak.

Promised by God through the ages,
Here is the fulfilment at last.
Great God the Son humbles Himself.
Through love, with us His lot is cast.

He lives perfectly, dies for me,
To shoulder my guilt, in my place.
Free pardon through His sacrifice,
Bethlehem Babe demonstrates grace.

Heaven's richest One became poor
To save us in our poverty,
That we may enjoy His riches
Through all time and eternity.

December 2018



In a most unusual delivery ward – for humans that is –
Slept a darling, first-born Son, swaddled warm, vulnerable, helpless.
Mother and adoptive father, exhausted by what went before –
Journey, labour, birth – tried to rest on a thick heap of scattered straw.

But what a commotion was unleashed by this humble village scene;
What repercussions, particularly in heaven, there had been.
An army of angels called up for duty, mobilised, then sent
To a particular place on planet earth, unerringly they went.

In fields outside Bethlehem, sleepy shepherds had an awful fright,
As first one, then many, bright angels lit up the dark night.
You may ask, “Why on earth did heaven make such an enormous fuss –
Even to sending angels to tell ordinary folks like us?

Wasn't it a bit of overkill? Angel hosts for a baby?
If say, He'd been the High Priest's son or a great prophet's – maybe.
But for a peasant child of doubtful parentage, angels appear
To smelly, scared, simple shepherds, encouraging them not to fear?

Then giving the message of not just a child's but a Saviour's birth,
Followed by massed heavenly choirs, 'Glory to God, Peace,
goodwill on earth' ”?

Why did the angels sing? We need to understand; really need to know.
What was so important about the Child that the whole sky was aglow?

The explanation starts before creation – in eternity.
Before time this night was fully planned by the Triune Deity.
God created a universe, a world, a woman and a man.
Sin spoiled it, but God already had His own great rescue plan.

From the day man sinned, God made promises of the Saviour to come
Who would save us from our sins – His own, special, sinless, Holy One.
From Abraham down through the prophets over centuries and years
Details unfolded; gave God's people hope through exile, grief and tears.
Then – four hundred years of silence. Had God forgotten His great plan
To send a Saviour who would reconcile holy God and sinful man?
God waited for just the right time; for powers to wax and wane
Till Rome ruled the known world, over land and sea,
with her might and main.

Their world had a time of relative, although sometimes parlous, peace.
Superb roads were built to join the empire that they needed to police.
Communications had never been so good for God's news to go
And reach all – through the lingua franca, Greek – known all over the show.
When all was ready, the virgin's child was born – God and man in One –
Marvel of marvels this human baby is also God the Son.
No wonder the angels praised – God's plan had come together that night.
Heaven was rejoicing, glorifying God at the astonishing sight.

Of God's Son, Who stooped so incredibly, unbelievably low –
God in flesh, born in the usual way, covered in vernix from head to toe.
Dependent on a mother's breast for His necessary food.
God's plan was in place – full of wisdom, grace and amazingly good.

So, the angel's glad message is for me – and it's also for you,
God gave His best, the curse and condemnation of my sin to undo,
The small Baby grew to be the perfect Man Who died painfully,
To give life and hope to guilty, helpless sinners, like you and me.

This Christmas I'll sing with the angels – obviously not as well,
I want to give God glory and of His fulfilled, finished plan tell.
What God planned before time, will bring me to His eternal home –
Part of His family, I'll sing with the angels for ages to come.

But what about you, my friend? God waits for a response from each one.
Beyond time will you be chanting praises to the Incarnate Son?
If you understand what the angels sang on that first Christmas night,
The truth of that song ensures you a future that's gloriously bright.

Christmas 2010

AN ORDINARY BIRTH



A New-Born is sleeping in a Bethlehem stable tonight,
Swaddled and warm, dark hair peeping through in the hazy lamplight.
A recovering, post-natal girl watches with tired joy
This perfectly formed, miraculous, precious, small Baby Boy.

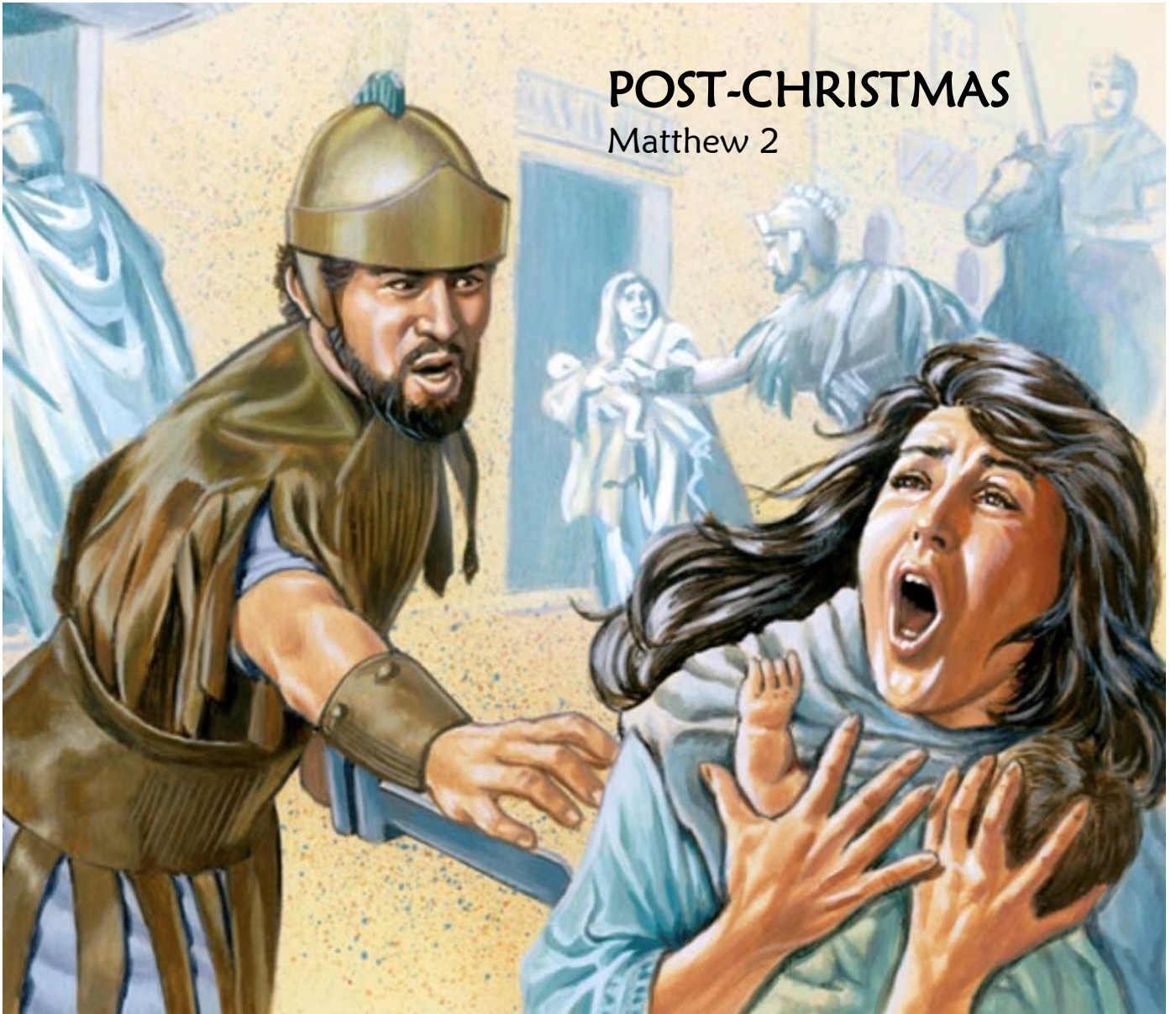
The wet, bloody mess of delivery has been cleaned away;
And God the Son, in full humanity, rests on manger hay;
Entered our world through this unexceptional normality.
“I Am” stepped down from His throne, arrived without formality.

But there is an unexpected, strange reception committee
Made up of rough shepherds, into whose watch broke the heavenly.
Bearers of an incredible message of peace and goodwill,
Conveyed by angels who broke through the darkness, the skies to fill.

The men responded with haste and eagerness to the great news;
Found Infant and manger; rev'rently each one his Saviour views.
Excitedly and thankfully they pass through Bethlehem town;
And share the wonder of it – “God is with us. He has come down.”

Though no angels have appeared in your sky nor spoken to you,
We have God's record; through the Holy Spirit, we know it's true.
Are you thrilled, rejoicing, sharing with others what God has done?
This year be like the shepherds, worship, broadcast news of the Son.

December 2019



POST-CHRISTMAS

Matthew 2

Lord, when I think of Christmas – your nativity –
Part of the story comes across disturbingly –
That little boys, toddlers under the age of three,
Were caught and killed – executed summarily.

The virgin conceiving – miraculous and great;
Caesar Augustus; the census; the perfect date;
The Angel Gabriel – these I appreciate;
And the dream Joseph dreamed when he was in a state.

The stable; manger; Your birth that amazing night;
God's angels who overwhelmed the darkness with light;
Shepherd duties transformed by wonder, awe and fright;
And the portentous, new star abnormally bright;

The Magi with their gifts, including myrrh and gold
Offered to a “carpenter’s child”, not very old;
Wise Simeon making his declaration bold;
While Widow Anna the news to everyone told.

What an incredible, marvellous, true story
Telling of mercy and grace, bringing God glory;
Ven’rable history – relevant though hoary.
So, what of the massacre – gruesome and gory?

Though heaven’s angels rejoice and God’s praises sing,
Yet Herod the Great – and merciless – is still king.
This gives to the tail of our Christmas tale – a sting
That is upsetting, confusing and heart-rending.

Why did those innocent, small children need to die?
Why did nurturing, caring mothers have to cry?
Why’s life like that? When angels down from heaven fly,
Treachery, sorrow, pain can also be nearby?

While we all know that first Christmas there was no dearth
Of promises come true – when You came down to earth –
Why then amongst the good news, the joy and the mirth
Was prophesied tragedy – mixed up with Your birth?

I can question but I don’t have to be a sleuth
To acknowledge what I’ve always known – since my youth –
That we live in an imperfect world – that’s the truth –
Where kids could be killed by soldiers, rough and uncouth.

Why a sovereign God allowed it, we can’t explain,
Though we dimly comprehend free will, sin and pain.
When God came down to us, angel hosts in His train,
Did we expect such foul deeds to be on the wane?

Yet, why surprised when man was unchanged, still the same –
A sinner, a rebel, a transgressor by name?
“Me first”, “my own way”, “my rights”, “my ease” – our main aim.
These led Herod to “Innocents’ Massacre” fame.

Thankfully the Saviour came to us here, to be,
Not just a weak baby sleeping innocently.
No! Our great God took on human flesh so that He,
The Lamb of God, died for me – vicariously.

Though I am still in the dark about many things,
I believe and worship just like the Magi kings;
Grateful for the Cross from which the great utterance rings,
“It is finished”. My questioning mind, and heart sings.

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Sometimes we may feel that life is just the pits;
Instead of a linked chain, it’s all pieces and bits.
When life won’t make sense – “I’m at the end of my wits” –
I trust one day we’ll realise everything fits.

We’ll see puzzle pieces, God has put together;
And broken links that He’s joined from top to nether;
Dark clouds have been the precursor to fine weather;
Crushing burdens found to be light as a feather.

If the Father allowed the death of His loved Son
At the hands of ungodly men – each single one;
Through that defeat, victory eternally won;
I’ll leave unanswered questions till this life is done.

January 2012



SPECIALLY FOR SENIORS

Christmas was about new life, a baby, angels with wings;
A young mother, virile shepherds and trav'ling eastern kings
But what about the older folk whose lives were nearly spent?
Who were prepared to take down and fold up this earthly tent?

If they'd seen the brilliant angel hosts with their dimming eyes,
Would their dull hearing have picked up the message from the skies?
They had neither the balance nor kinetic energy
To haste to the stable where stiff joints could not bend the knee.

Too far to Bethlehem; no offerings of gold or myrrh.
Instead God sent His Son to them, restricted though they were.
To Jerusalem Mary and Joseph came with the Child,
To fulfil what the Law said, so they would not be defiled.

Only six weeks old – that was this small infant's tender age,
When dedicated in the Temple at this crucial stage.
The Holy One of God, on human beings dependent;
Who would have thought this boy to be King David's descendant?

So, they brought the first-born son to the God of Israel,
According to the Lord's requirements that they knew so well.
There SHE was, a familiar figure in the Temple courts –
An aging, wrinkled widow – one of those eccentric sorts.

All her time she spent in God's place, heart lifted up in prayer.
You would hardly have noticed her if you could have been there.
Rather insignificant was her ancestry – Asher was her family tribe;
They were taken captive by Assyria, wrote the scribe.

There's no record of the Northern Kingdom's restoration;
Yet, here's a daughter of Asher found amongst her nation.
Anna, daughter of Phanuel, was 84 years old
With a tragic history, such as others could have told.

Childless, and widowed just seven years after she was wed;
For many years a solitary path she had to tread.
What was the meaning and purpose of a life lived that long?
From every objective point of view, so much had gone wrong.

Though deprived of human comfort, her life exalted God –
His prophetess, to challenge those across whose paths she trod.
With all her heart, she continually served her mighty Lord –
Night and day, near His House, she lived for Him and kept His Word.

Neither tragedy, loss of status, nor age dulled her trust.
To live for Jehovah, her life's one imperative "must".
How wonderfully God led Anna's steps that special day;
How amazing His exact timing of her place and way.

She'd been worshipping, waiting for God to send the true King
Who would redeem His people and their full Salvation bring.
And there He was – held in the crook of old Simeon's arm,
With the Child's mother watching to see He came to no harm.

A Baby, the Anointed One, Who'd been promised so long.
Anna's croaky voice disallowed a hallelujah song.
Joy bubbled up in her aging and madly pumping heart.
"God with us" – exultation across her aged features dart.

She's overwhelmed with praises, with gladness and gratitude,
For this bonny bundle of joy Who burped and cried and coo-d.
Did she fully grasp that He was not only the Child born
But this Jesus was the Son given – God in human form?

Did she comprehend in this Child, the Creator of all;
This Seed of the woman sent for her, to reverse the Fall?
Did she realise redemption implies a price, a loss;
That the baby's certain destiny was a Roman Cross?

She did know He was Messiah, the One come to redeem.
The light she had, showed her Salvation was wrapped up in Him.
To each one who would listen, she imparted the good news:
“He has come. He is here. It's all right. We've nothing to lose.

The Romans may still occupy our land, but He is here.
The future does not look that bright, but His presence is clear.
My life will soon end, but He has come so all is now well.
God's promises are really coming true, this I can tell.”

So, for every one of us this Christmas time – young or old –
There is the same good news. It's essential that it is told.
“The Babe born and the Man Who lived, and rose after He died
Is Jesus, the Saviour – the Grace of God personified.”

Like Anna, our lives are significant in God's great plan
To share the truth of redemption with each child, woman, man.
Whatever's happening this Christmas, He does and He will reign.
He has come. He is here. He is surely coming again.

December 2012

HE HAS COME

HE HAS COME from realms of eternity;
Conceived without human paternity;
By the Holy Spirit overshadowed;
The virgin's womb His first earthly abode.

HE HAS COME. Yes, wonder of all wonders;
Not with a strong, mighty voice that thunders
But with the heartbeat of an embryo
That continues to develop and grow.

HE HAS COME from vastness of heaven's court
To an inn where no lodging could be bought;
To a Bethlehem town, quite unaware
That soon the King would nestle in His care.

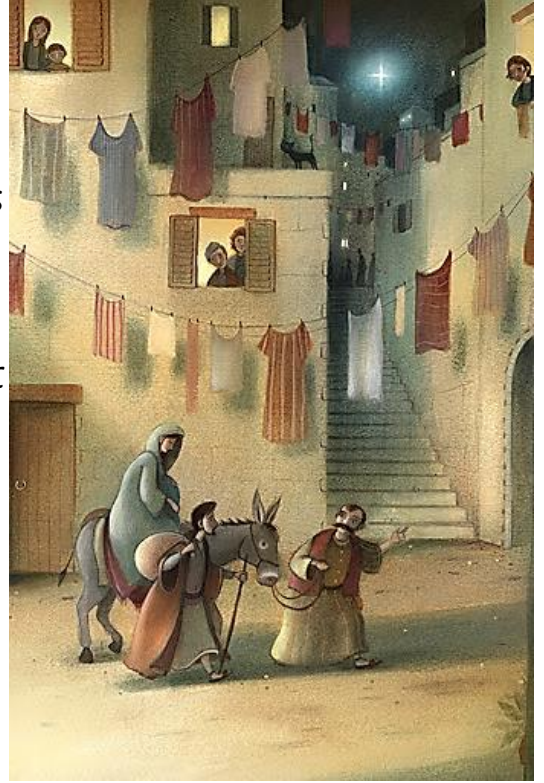
HE HAS COME from the glory of His throne;
To be born in a stable built of stone.
The promised Seed, of David's descendants,
Farm animals His only attendants.

HE HAS COME; with His Father's plan concurred
To speak God's message, as the Living Word,
Through the welcome cry of a new-born Child –
Human, but by Adam's sin undefiled.

HE HAS COME – Majesty in a manger;
Welcomed, swaddled, nurtured, kept from danger
By His mother – a maternal novice –
And Joseph who protectively hovers.

HE HAS COME, Who made, owns the universe,
To a life where everything's in reverse.
He owns neither crib nor a royal layette,
Nor crown – on His little round head to set.

HE HAS COME and there's no earthly herald
To tell good news to a world imperilled.
But Heaven published His coming with song,
Through the joyful choir of the angel throng.



HE'S COME from where adoring cherubim
Worshipped, exalted, forever praised Him.
Now none hail or guard Him with sword and shield
But His first courtiers smell of sheep and field.

HE HAS COME, the awesome, eternal God –
Flesh of our flesh, bone of our bones and blood.
He is hungry, cries for His mother's breast.
He needs His diapers changed, just like the rest.

HE HAS COME in grace and truth, willingly –
Son of God sent that we God's sons might be;
Matured like us, but lived obediently;
Served, suffered, died for me, aged thirty-three.

HE'S COME – into the world, out of the grave –
Our Substitute, here to redeem and save.
Rejoice this Christmas in the First Advent;
Expect the Second – HE'LL COME as He went.

HE WILL COME – not a Child but King of Kings;
Trumpet blast, a shout with which heaven rings;
In glory and splendour, triumph and might,
Surrounded by all the forces of light.

HE WILL COME acclaimed by living and dead
As the Father's Son and the Church's Head.
Every knee will bow to the Lord of all
And we with joy before His feet will fall.

JESUS HAS COME, demonstrated God's love.
In great power HE WILL COME again from above.
Happy Christmas; a blessed one to you –
Share your joy with all, and the good news too.

Christmas 2013

FOUR CARPENTERS

December 2013

It was skilfully and simply made of wood,
By a village carpenter who understood
How to construct a crib for a bovine beast;
A container where horse or donkey might feast.
But that night, not filled up to the brim with hay,
Within its contours a new-born Infant lay.
The maker of the manger could never know
God, on his workmanship, honour would bestow.
There the Incarnate Son could be safely kept.
There in the crib-turned-cradle, heaven's King slept.
Carpenter's sweat and toil abundantly blest,
The fame of that crib he hardly could have guessed.



A Carpenter's Apprentice learnt His trade;
With His father, as teacher, cribs and ploughs made.
Wood was thoughtfully chosen; cut carefully;
Each new article finished off perfectly.
When Joseph, His presumed father, passed away,
The Carpenter of Nazareth worked each day;
Supporting the family industriously,
The Incarnate Son of God they failed to see.
After three years of ministry had begun,
Folk queried His credentials – “Just Joseph's son”.
“Carpenter from an insignificant town,
This backwoods ignoramus must be put down.”

Somewhere there was someone who cut down a tree.
A carpenter trimmed, prepared it roughly.
Commissioned, paid by Roman authority,
The Cross was prepared for an atrocity.
At His birth the wood surrounded and cradled.
In His life the wood provided and enabled.
At His death wood was the place of destruction,
But three days later there was an eruption.
From Bethlehem's cradle to Golgotha's Cross:
Birth to devastating death, apparent loss,
He yielded Himself to His Father's great plan –
Jesus – Carpenter, ever-living God-Man.



FOR OUR SAKES BECOME POOR

Out of heaven to an animal stable;
Out of eternity to God's timetable;
Out of His rainbow throne to common manger;
Out of security to earthly danger;

Out of power to an infant's helplessness;
Out of order to a long-fallen world's mess;
Out of sufficiency to dependency;
Out of His home to Satan's territory;

Out of endless wealth to peasant poverty;
Out of rest to His selfless activity;
Out of plenty to frequent deprivation;
Out of kingship to human subjugation;

Out of serenity to calamity;
Out of joy to suffering humanity;
Out of sovereignty to weakness and attack;
Out of love and light to a world dark and black;

Out of God's peace to mankind's multiplied wars;
Out of compassion to an empire of force;
Out of faithfulness to His friend's betrayal;
Out of integrity to His life for sale;

Out of adoration to condemnation;
Out of Father's favour to separation;
Out of praise, "Worthy" to shouts of "Crucify!";
Out of the grave. All done. Ascended on high.

December 2013

PROMISES FULFILLED

God With Us

December 2012

- 1) Christmas is about promises that were fulfilled;
How God kept His Word working things out as He willed;
Christmas stretches far back into eternity;
Reaching forward into a future yet to be.
- 2) After Adam and Eve yielded to temptation,
God engaged them briefly in a conversation.
Their Creator looked for them when they tried to bolt;
Made them face the consequences of their revolt.
- 3) The death sentence had been pronounced. How could they cope?
Woman's Seed Who'd crush the serpent's head was their hope.
The virgin's Child, the woman's long-promised Seed, came
To foil Satan's power – born to die, taking our blame.
- 4) God promised Abraham a Special Descendant.
To bless all the nations on earth, He would be sent.
We know Abraham was in Jesus' family tree.
The Babe would fulfil the prophecy perfectly.
- 5) Near the end of life, Jacob had a new insight –
Always Judah's tribe would have the royal right.
The infant Jesus was indeed of Judah's tribe.
'Lion of Judah' on His manger we might inscribe.
- 6) God taught Moses His Name was "I Am that I Am",
And ordered the Jews to kill the Passover Lamb.
Animals were sacrificed to deal with their sin.
The Perfect Child, final, full atonement would win.
- 7) A promise was made to King David by the Lord,
That he'd have an eternal throne. God gave His word.

Baby Jesus was King David's much greater son.
His reign and kingdom would never ever be done.

- 8) Prophet Isaiah through the Holy Spirit wrote
Of a Child Who was to be born – a Boy of Note.
He was also God's precious Son, Who would be given
For us all – who by sin are defeated and driven.
- 9) Through the same prophet God spoke to Ahaz the king
Of a virgin-born Child, of God's own providing.
And His name would be "God with us – Immanuel".
Mary's Boy Child was God's presence with Israel.
- 10) The Baby was born in the town of Bethlehem
Just as Micah the prophet foretold way back then.
Even Herod's advisors knew that was the place
Where the Magi should look for the true King of grace.
- 11) Jesus lying in the manger, a humble Child;
God the Son in human form – pure and undefiled.
He, the fulfilment of His Father's perfect plan
To reverse the results of sin in fallen man.
- 12) God kept His promised Word in the Incarnation.
The Creator became part of His creation;
So, He might live obediently where Adam failed.
Then die in my place on a rough, Roman Cross nailed.
- 13) Christmas – time of wonder; time of joy; time of grace –
That God came my multitude of sins to efface.
Lord before your faithful love, I bow and adore.
Then the Infant; now my King, help me love You more.

Bible references:

Verse 2 and 3	Genesis 3
Verse 4	Genesis 22:18 cross reference with Galatians 3:16
Verse 5	Genesis 49:8-10
Verse 6	Exodus 12:1-28 cross reference with 1 Corinthians 5:7; Lev 16 cross reference with John 1:29 and Hebrews 13:20
Verse 7	2 Samuel 7:16 cross reference with Luke 1:31-32
Verse 8	Isaiah 9:6
Verse 9	Isaiah 7:14
Verse 10	Micah 5:2

GOD'S CHAIN



The Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of Luke;
The Christmas narrative based in history –
Joseph's family line is traced from Abraham;
Mary to Adam, her genealogy.

Each year we rejoice in the Incarnation;
Repeat again about Angel Gabriel,
His appearance to Mary in Nazareth
The astonishing message he had to tell.

But the lists of those difficult ancient names,
Reading them as part of the celebration?
They do not charm us like Bethlehem's stable –
Weird monikers of ancient Hebrew nation.

The heavenly choir we want to emulate.
Like them, sing carols about the gracious news.
As they did, we love to share the Christmas joy.
But we would leave out those lists if we could choose!

Yet the Holy Spirit ensured all those names
Were inserted as part of this great story.
Not as well-known as the wise men or shepherds,
But meant to bring to our God, praise and glory.

Two genealogies, mostly of the men,
In an unbroken generational chain.
Some lives ordinary, unspectacular;
Others were famous; a few were born to reign.

The women included – not very many –
And we should probably not have chosen them.
God elects dubious types and foreigners
To receive His grace; to save and not condemn.

Those long, boring lists of impossible names
Point to a faithful God who keeps His pledged Word.
In Abraham's Seed the whole world would be blessed.
David's Son is the Shepherd King's greater Lord.

The Eternal God came down as a Baby.
He was truly human, Joseph's legal son.
Matthew established the Child's credentials.
Jesus was the Messiah, the Promised One.

Not only legally but genetic'ly
The Saviour was to descend from Abraham.
Through Mary's line, He is a true Israelite,
David's offspring and also the great I Am.

While we concentrate on the manger, stable,
Angels, shepherds, star and the trav'ling Magi,
Part of the wonders of the Nativity
Are those names that form God's chain. Don't pass them by.

They each had a greater purpose for living
Than most of them realised or had in view.
It all culminated in Bethlehem town
With a New-Born come to bring us life that's new.

December 2019

CHRISTMAS REFLECTIONS



Great Augustus Caesar rules supreme in pagan Rome
Lauding it over a kingdom of lands not his own;
Arrogantly considers himself to be divine;
Surveys his dominions with satisfaction – “All mine!”

God Almighty has a clearer, more transcendent view.
Caesar rules by God’s decree that he God’s will, may do.
When Augustus declares a census in every land
Unwittingly, like a pawn, he moves at God’s command.

Along the famed Roman roads and across the deep sea
The message is sent of the census that is to be.
At the heart of empire and in far off Galilee
The plan unfolds, as God’s prophets foretold – exactly.

In Nazareth strange and glorious beings appear.
At God’s bidding, come from another sphere,
Speaking to a skilled carpenter and his betrothed girl,
As the historic, glad story begins to unfurl.

Seed of the woman; Offspring of David and Abraham;
Overshadowed by the Holy Spirit – Great I Am;
The Holy One – conceived, growing Child in Mary’s womb;
Mystery – Man and God; come to save us from sure doom.

Trav’ling to Bethlehem, a man and his pregnant wife.
What a time to be on the road, expecting new life.
Heedless of their plight, in Rome Augustus has decreed.
So, to ancestor David’s town they go with slow speed.

Unfortunately, the others got there before them.
The whole place is crowded with women, children and men
Come to be counted like herds of cattle, flocks of sheep.
There was no free place for Joseph and Mary to sleep.

Joseph is desperate, while Mary is in such pain
As the contractions come and go, rise and fall, wax and wane
No time to look further or make another, better plan.
The stable is shelter, though meant for beasts, not man.

And thus, from the timeless vastness of eternity
God slipped into our world as a dependent Baby.
He Who owns the universe – greater than we can tell –
For love of you and me, He became Emmanuel.

Mary and Joseph rejoiced as the Infant Boy slept.
Surprised when shepherds arrived; nearer the manger crept.
Quietly, silently and with deeply reverent awe,
Responding to angels, they came, they marvelled, they saw.

But did they understand the message the angel bore
When he said, “Unto you this day is born a Saviour?”
They could not know He would only live to thirty-three.
That He was born to end His life on a Roman tree.

There is no way that I can at present comprehend
God’s incredible love that never comes to an end;
That sent His only Son to this spoilt and sinful earth
To die for us as Saviour. This, the theme of His birth.

There’s just one response I can make, though inadequate –
“My poor heart is Yours, and only in Christ am I fit
To praise You and love and serve You for all You have done
In sending Jesus Christ of both God and man the Son.”

So, Rome came and went and lost its once important place
History moved on and great Augustus left little trace.
But the Baby of Bethlehem rules eternally.
He’s King of Kings, Lord of Lords and Lord and King of me.

December 2009

EASTER POEMS





Palm branches on road and in enthusiastic hands;
Children running, jumping, clapping, in small happy bands.
There is euphoria, with hope, great expectations –
King David's greater Son hailed with loud acclamations.

The King is betrayed in the night by a subject vile.
Cross questioned by Establishment in farcical trial.
His royal status, they won't acknowledge willingly.
Their main aim – to find a reason He should not go free.

Roman governor is the one to pronounce sentence.
Mere mortal man dispenses "justice" that's just pretence.
"Are you a King?" Pilate questions Him curiously.
But still the mob cry for injustice, furiously.

Wearing scarlet robe, excruciating crown of thorn,
Figure of fun for the uncouth, back bleeding and torn,
The King is mocked and spat upon, His sceptre a reed.
There is no loyal homage to the Prisoner in need.

So, the King of Kings is paraded along the street.
An unsuspecting North African they “chance” to meet.
Not knowing the honour, Simon thought it shame and loss;
Served the Heavenly Court, by sharing that heavy Cross.

Centurion, soldier of the great Caesar at Rome,
And his men, serving in Palestine, far from their home,
Went about their unpleasant duties most faithfully.
With hammer, nails pinned their true Sovereign to a rough tree.

Above Jesus’ scratched head in Greek, Latin and Hebrew
Is hung the damning charge sheet – “Jesus, King of the Jew”.
But the Creator King died for more than one nation,
So that anyone might become a new creation.

At Golgotha few recognise His regal estate.
One guilty criminal, facing his final, dread fate,
Understands that Jesus in a much greater realm reigns,
Asks to be remembered when the King His Kingdom gains.

The terrible travesty and awful tragedy –
The King of Glory, stripped of all human dignity!
Heaven darkened the skies on the soul sickening scene –
Of my Sinbearer, enduring such suffering keen.

“It is finished” – triumph cry of the Saviour King.
Forever, for us sinners, His kingdom opening.
He died, He was buried, but third day rose from the grave;
Eternally reigns, ready each needy one to save.

Give homage, loyalty to your now exalted King –
Surrendered, willing spirit, body, mind to Him bring.
For love of you He humbly died, in grace gave His all.
For love of Him, humbly go, share His love, at His call.

Easter 2018

THE CENTURION



We were not exactly pleased when the announcement was made
That our barracks, for a far outpost, we would have to trade.
Roman officer, I'd no alternative, no voice.
To obey military orders, was my only choice.
Part of Caesar's disciplined troops, we sailed across the sea,
To reach the harbour at Caesarea, eventually;
Gladly left the confined ship with its captive, rowing slaves.
What would Palestine bring – honour, ignominy or graves?

Jerusalem garrison had challenges all its own.
Such a town in which to be – for prophets and protesters known.
Hot and dusty in summer and often the teeming crowds;
Snow in winter – the buildings like bodies covered with shrouds.
As well as keeping order, part of our unenviable lot –
Oversee executions on a predetermined spot.
Life was cheap; some of these people, rebellious and wild.
We were harsh. They did not understand treatment that was mild.

It happened in the spring – that hope-filled season of the year;
Wildflowers flourishing before heat came beauty to sear.
The city was overflowing. They had come from all parts
To share in Passover, one of the feasts dear to their hearts.
There was extra movement and noise, the bleating of scared lambs;
Confusion, congestion, camel and donkey traffic jams.
Incident in the temple involving the Nazarene;
Lambasted money changers; drove merchants' stock from the scene.

Days later throng baying for His blood, shouting, "Crucify!"
Governor, Pontius Pilate dared not their blackmail deny.
Though the poor Prisoner never broke any Roman laws,
Incited mob was against this Carpenter and His cause.
So, his Excellency washed both hands of the whole affair.
No comment on this verdict, while the Emperor's arms I bear.
The company of soldiers who were under my command
Took charge of the sentenced Man – "Crucifixion on demand."

He was scourged and humiliated, given a hard time –
Although we knew He was not guilty of any known crime.
He was so quiet, He just asked to be bullied and teased.
The rest of the garrison enjoyed the fun. They were pleased.
Bored and fed up with these people and this hostile, backward place,
They dressed Him in a scarlet robe and spat upon His face.
Taunting Him, jeering, kneeling, pretending He was their King,
Crowned with thorns – heard Praetorium Hall with laughter ring.

Dressed in homespun clothes, carrying His Cross, we led Him away
Through the streets – some were cheering, others lamenting the day.
He stopped to speak to women who were wailing, in distress.
Couldn't understand Him...He wanted to calm them, I guess.
Obviously, an outdoor Man, He was now struggling, weak.
To get Him to the place of death, a helper we had to seek.
Conscripted an onlooker the heavy burden to share –
A strong out-of-town man from Northern Africa somewhere.

We reached Golgotha – Aramaic for Place of the Skull;
Calv'ry in Latin. To the people's shouting, there's a lull –
Just the solemn sounds of a hammer driving in the nails;
As the iron to the wood, through bones and flesh, the Man impales.
Naked and exposed, lifted up for everyone to see;
All day sagging, suff'ring, dying excruciatingly.
His condemnation was transcribed and hung above His Head –
“The King of the Jews”, in Greek, Latin and Hebrew, it read.

And even while we tortured Him, caused unbearable pain,
He made eye contact with us; our indiff'rence was in vain.
He loved me even while I crucified Him in Rome's stead.
From compassionate grace in His searching eyes, my gaze fled.
Then He prayed to His God using the strange name of “Father”,
Not for retribution but that He'd forgive us rather.
Why type of Man are we killing here? Was my puzzled thought;
With laboured breathing, interceded – for us pardon sought.

Task for now complete, we sat down to oversee and wait.
It would be a long day and I knew we'd be there till late.
My men passed some time sorting out His clothes – spoils to the strong.
Cast dice for His tunic. With four men, the odds were not long.
Natives passed by, reviling, swearing, spitting and staring.
He did not reply, reproach or vent. Contrast was glaring.
Unusual Prisoner – pain and pity etched on His face.
He seemed in charge, though weak, dying, a captive in disgrace.

We were required that day by law to execute three men.
This was our duty; never flinched – not ever and not then.
On either side of Jesus, two robbers shared His sure fate.
Up there on the three crosses, then began a strange debate.
The one thief reproached the King, while the second defended.
To him Sov'reign said, “You'll be with Me before day's ended”.
Their words reported to me – lest their friends planned mutiny.
Strange talk of a kingdom and paradise between those three.

He also spoke a few words to a group, standing nearby –
Presume family, judging by their grief – tears, a sob, a sigh.
Quite a few women and just one young man. Why no other?
He led a crying lady away – maybe the Mother?
Something very strange happened. Darkness came over the earth;
Abruptly ending the watching scoffers' insults and mirth.
For three hours in the middle of the day the darkness stayed.
I had a sense of foreboding. I was truly afraid.

He was amazing, even on that Cross never complained.
He uttered no curses; in severe anguish, was restrained.
Then He called out to His God in terrible agony –
Deserted – “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”
This was the translation into Latin from watchers around.
Never heard such a desolate, heartbroken, wounded sound,
Though I've supervised many executions on Calv'ry.
How could this good Person have so tragic a destiny?

Three in the afternoon the final, fatal climax came.
Again, He called on His personal God, “Father” by name:
“It is finished, into Your Hands I My Spirt now yield”.
So died a courageous young Man on a Cross, in a field.
There followed an earthquake – in my life, and the rocks and land.
It was life changing. Suddenly I seemed to understand.
At that moment my blind, pagan eyes were wholly unveiled.
I knew then Who He was and Him as “the Son of God” hailed.

The Father answered, forgave, as Jesus died for our race.
My sin, my guilt, culpability removed without trace.
Though Roman oppressor, of Gentile genealogy,
God there grafted me into Abraham's great fam'ly tree.
Now the one I'd crucified became my older Brother
As for the Thief – together some day, we'll love each other.
I was the executioner. I was the enemy.
Yet through my King's Cross, freely given life eternally.

In spite of this new insight, I still had a job to do.
Joseph wanted to claim His body. So soon? Was it true?
Dead already? Pilate sent for me to check on the fact.
I had evidence through my one soldier's post-mortem act –
He thrust his spear into Jesus' side – blood, water flowed out.
The Man was irretrievably dead – there could be no doubt.
So back at the Cross, we gave the Body to His two friends.
You might justifiably think here's where the story ends.

As an aside – the leg bones of the two thieves, my men broke
To please Sanhedrin – hasten death before Holy Day woke.
It was dark, and all three of the accused were safely dead.
Mission accomplished. I was exhausted, ready for bed.
My new life was just beginning, though I had killed my Lord.
I knew this was not the end. My King would have the last word.
Sunday rejoiced, not surprised, at news He rose from the grave –
Son of God, the Man, Who died a Centurion to save.

Easter 2015

THE FOUR GARDENS



The Garden of Eden

A garden was planted by God, after creation.
There He put the man – of His works, the consummation.
There He joined Adam to his complement – Eve, his wife.
They lived in perfect harmony – no sadness or strife.

Around them cool, colourful, river-fed beauty –
All theirs, but one fruit bearer. To obey, glad duty.
Tending, enjoying, eating from those prolific trees,
Their lives are joyful and innocent. Great God they please.

The reptile-disguised Enemy gate-crashes that place.
Succumbing, the first pair, brought disaster on our race.
Refusing to trust the word of their eternal Friend
They rebelled; brought the close relationship to an end.

Amongst the verdant loveliness, our ancestors hide.
The Holy One's voice and presence, they cannot abide.
He seeks. Cowering and ashamed, they answer His call.
Spoilt by guilt and despair, Paradise – site of Man's fall.

Stunned, they find He is a God of grace. All is not lost.
He will send the Seed of the woman, Who'll bear the cost.
Eden's garden – first delight, then death's desolation.
But there is the Promised Hope, Who'll bring restoration.

The Garden of Gethsemane

The story of another unique garden has been told –
Silvery, dull green trees, fruitful, perhaps gnarled and old.
Across the Brook Kidron, eleven weary men went.
Three chosen ones, with their Master, hours of darkness spent.
In the Garden of Gethsemane's deep-shadowed shade
The Son of God, the Son of Man, knelt and three times prayed.
Down to the place of conflict – of plant matter made –
Heaven's angel was sent, administ'ring strengthening aid.
Jesus sweated blood, in anguish fought the battle, wept –
While exhausted, careless trio ignorantly slept.
The famed olive grove witnessed the final battle scene
Between the Lord and the Prince of Darkness venting spleen.
Victorious, Christ embraced His Father's precious will –
Prepared for separation, sin-bearing on a hill;
Committed to be the sacrificial Lamb of God –
About to suffer under scourge, hammer, thorn and rod.
Gethsemane's garden was the scene of further pain.
Betrayed by a close friend with a kiss – for futile gain.
As the "forces of order" their own will asserted,
Mount of Olives saw Him by followers deserted.

The Unnamed Garden

An unnamed garden – home of a new-hewn, unused tomb.
Three men (one dead), distressed women watching through the gloom.
The corpse is laid on the slab; stone rolled shut in its groove.
Away from that pretty place of grief, the mourners moved.
Quiet night, clink of weapons, footsteps of guarding men.
The soldiers stand sentry duty, looking round again.
What a fool's task, to watch over a crucified man –
Dead as dead, spear-pierced, job well done as only Rome can.
These tough men are terrified early Sunday morning.
An earthquake, an angel, the stone moved at day's dawning.
To women, an amazing message, "Look where He lay.
He is not here; has risen in triumph today."

But still they had not seen the risen and living Lord.
In the garden to Mary M. The honours accord.
“Rabboni!” He is truly alive this very hour;
Declared without doubt to be the Son of God in power.

That garden saw the finished work of our Salvation;
The good news that is still spreading to every nation.
God loves us and made atonement for our guilt and sin.
Eternal joys in Christ ours, when we invite Him in.

The Future Garden

There is still a future garden that will surely be;
One that can never die but will last eternally.
When all earth’s beautiful gardens have finally died,
New heavens and an unspoiled earth our God will provide.

The description given; we don’t fully understand.
But wonderful life and surroundings have been planned.
Coming from God’s own throne, a river that’s crystal clear.
This is life giving. Its purity you need not fear.

The cooling water runs down the middle of the street
From the place where God and the Lamb have their ruling seat.
On either side are trees. The species is “Tree of Life” –
Like the other in Eden with Adam and his wife.

Now there’ll be no danger; man will live for evermore
In disobedience and sin, as there was before.
God’s resurrected ones – praising, serving ceaselessly –
Will know no evil but live in the light, joyfully.

Each month of the year trees bear fruit of a diff’rent kind.
Full satisfaction, service the perfected saints find.
For all nations, the leaves provide healing properties.
God’s coming garden – filled with His glory, presence, peace.

Easter 2017

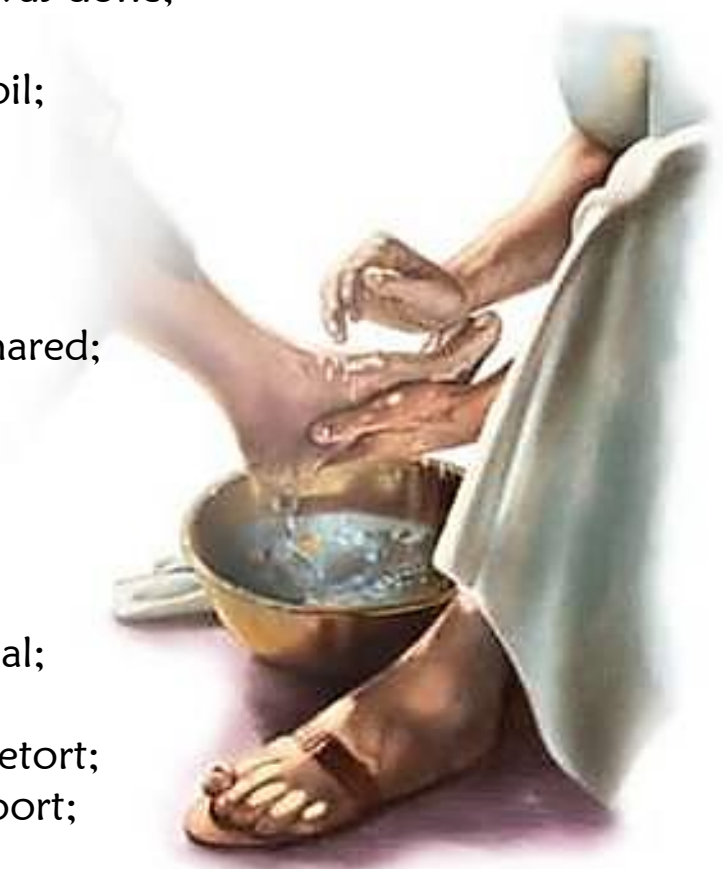
THE HOLY WEEK – Places, Animals and Things

Clothes, palms as children danced and sang;
Donkey and colt while praises rang;
Temple cleansed by the Righteous One;
Doves, livestock cleared when all was done;
Flask of costly essential oil;
Two mites given, that cost much toil;

A pitcher carried by a man;
Upper room for supper, the plan;
Table for Passover prepared;
Bread and wine by thirteen men shared;
Basin, towel before betrayal;
Thirty silver coins – Man for sale;

Olive garden of agony;
Swords and clubs for captivity;
Lanterns, High Priest's house for trial;
Fire, courtyard – place of denial;
Gate, porch, rooster – the wrong retort;
Blindfold, for crass men to make sport;

Clothes of Caiaphas torn and rent;
Ropes with which He was bound and sent;
Pilate's Roman judicial seat;
Praetorium where soldiers meet;
Basin of water to wash hands;
Scroll with seal – unjust judgement stands;



Whip wielded, wounding and scourging;
Scarlet robe, crown of thorns, merging;
Wooden Cross of backbreaking weight;
Calv'ry, where condemned met their fate;
Heavy mallet striking with strength;
Sharp iron nails of just the right length;

Wine mixed with myrrh, He had no need;
Three-language title, all could read;
Single-seamed robe; dice to decide;
Sour wine, a sponge and reed to guide;
Darkness, earthquake that made men quail;
From top to bottom, a torn veil;

Linen piece, cut and divided;
Both aloes and myrrh provided;
A new grave for the newly dead;
A sep'rate cloth bound round His head;
A large, heavy and sealed stone door;
Empty tomb – alive evermore!

Easter 2015

SHADOWS

Deep shadows beneath twisted olive trees;
Sweat-drenched brow; a bowed Man upon His knees;
Agony intense; none can understand.
His will yielded, all shall be as was planned.

Shadows recede in torches', lanterns' light;
Hostile mob; Peter's spoiling for a fight;
Removes an enemy's ear with his sword.
"No!" Captive heals, restores. He is still Lord.

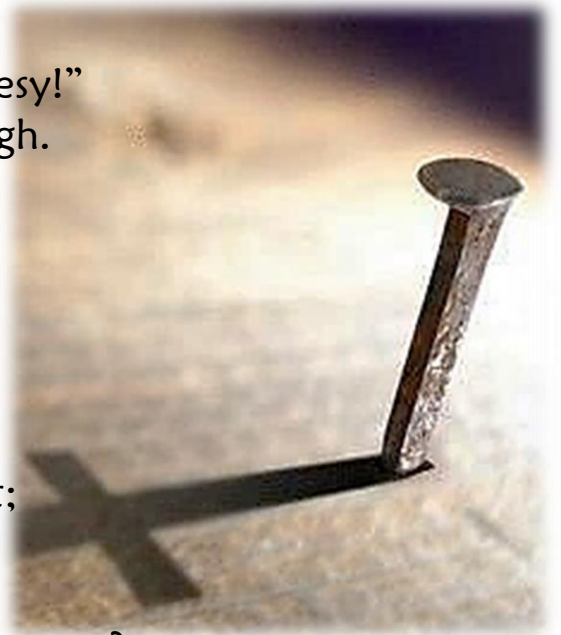
Scattered shadows in the High Priest's courtyard;
Leaping flames warming the night cold and hard.
In the hall, a Carpenter stands accused.
Outside, Betrayal begs to be excused.

On His cheeks, shadows caused by a blindfold,
As cruel men interrogation hold;
Demand to know, "Who struck you? Prophecy!"
Blind hearts, blasphemed the Majesty on High.

The folds of a gorgeous robe shadows cast.
Herod is glad to see this Man at last;
Hopes for spectacle; no satisfaction.
Rejection, contempt, Tetrarch's reaction.

Praetorium's arched shadows; Rome's might;
Pilate half-heartedly tried to do right.
Now washes his hands of the whole affair.
Let them have their "Victim". Why should he care?

Crown of thorns; shadows on a bleeding head;
Piercing, paining, slow drops of blood are shed;
Derision, trav'ling spit from others' glands;
They struck Him with reed sceptre in their hands.



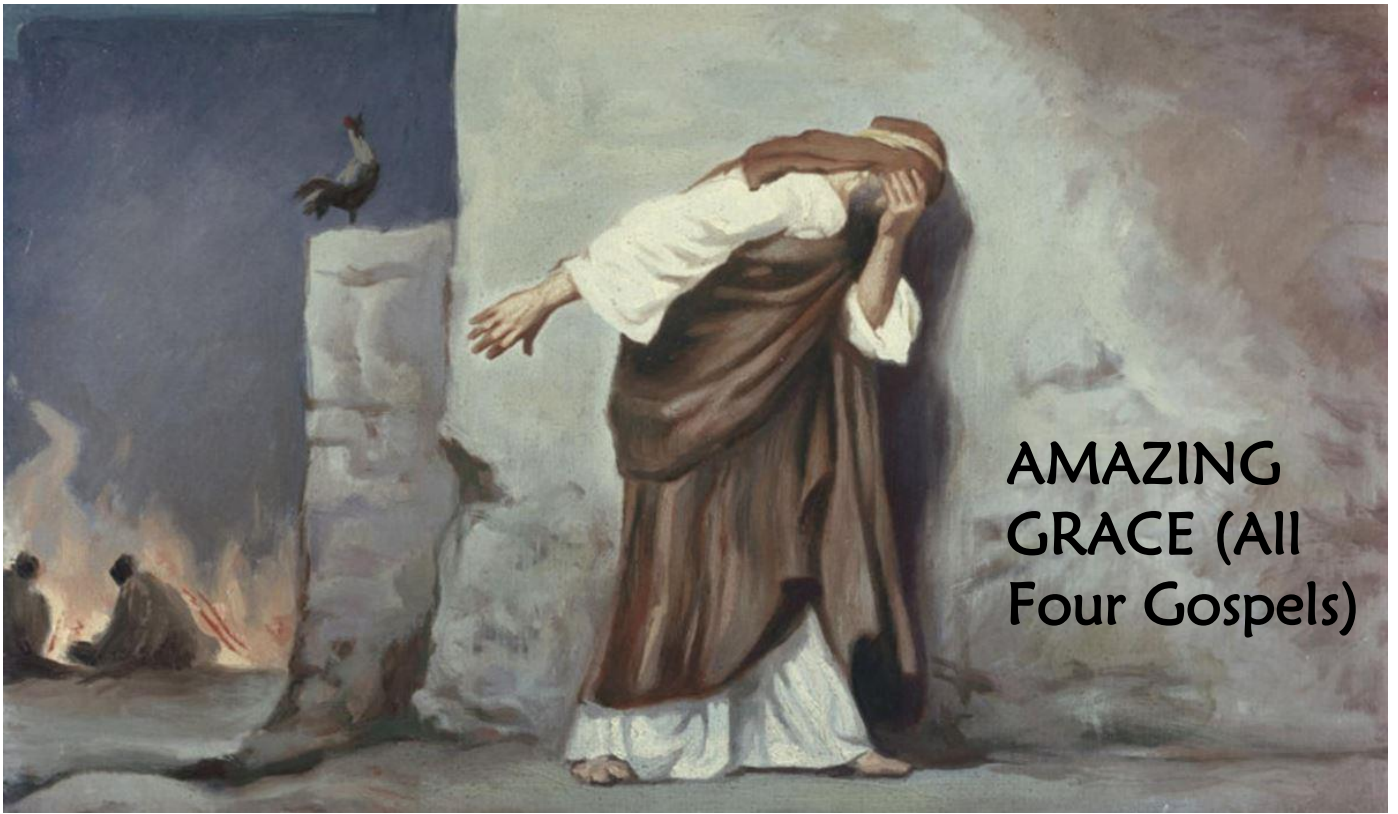
Three crosses, three shadows, Hill of the Skull;
Darkness deepens. Sight unseen, there's a lull.
At last, "It is finished", comes the Man's cry,
As the Creator bows His head to die.

Deepening shadows near an unused tomb.
Dread, final death has swallowed joy in gloom.
Wealthy men, shattered women – all grieving.
To the darkness, that bound corpse they're leaving.

Three days of mourning and hopeless sorrow;
Through the trees, sun rises on the morrow.
The dawn, and then full day, has come at last.
Death's shadows relegated to the past.

Sin, mortality both overtaken
By One Who was crucified, forsaken.
Now the shadows have eternally fled.
Our Saviour lives, has risen from the dead.

Easter 2019



AMAZING GRACE (All Four Gospels)

“Simon, Simon, indeed Satan asked for you;”

Strange words of Peter’s enigmatic Master.

Self-confident apostle, felt himself true;

Could never foresee the coming disaster.

Christ added, “Satan wants to sift you like wheat”.

The words made little sense to the fisherman.

He, the rock, was solid; he could not retreat.

If bad men threatened Jesus, he had a plan.

“But I have prayed for you,” the Carpenter said.

That Cephas appreciated, understood.

“We all need prayer for safety and daily bread;

If He prayed for me, that can only be good.”

“That your faith may not fail,” Jesus’ puzzling prayer.

Peter fail? He’s faithful and ready to die;

Prepared to defend his Lord, no matter where.

Why should his faith fail? Can you please tell me why?

“When you have returned to Me, strengthen them all.”

What could He mean, when Peter was at His side?

For three years he had followed the Teacher’s call.

He, Simon, would be loyal if tested and tried.

Later a more precise and pointed warning:

“Peter, three times you’ll deny that you know Me –
Before the rooster crows thrice in the morning.”

The apostle heard this disbelievingly.

One of the favoured three to share Christ’s travail;

Yet nodded off; heedless of danger he lay;

Wasted the time – an unconscious, weary male.

“In case you enter temptation, watch and pray.”

It all went wrong in Gethsemane’s Garden –

The crowd, the soldiers come to arrest his Lord.

Simon would not ask permission or pardon

But lopped off the ear of Malchus with a sword.

Surely he was now a hunted, wanted man;

This follower of Jesus, wielding his blade;

Acting impulsively, as only he can!

Fierce retribution might not be long delayed.

The Master retrieved a tense situation;

Healed the wound and wholly restored the cut ear.

Did Peter dread results with consternation?

Was it this rash act turned his courage to fear?

For Malchus was the servant of the High Priest.

That explains why Simon fled like everyone;

Was filled with trepidation at very least

When later he entered the courtyard with John.

For the devil, he was now an easy mark.

The Lord arrested; on trial, likely to die.

Fear filled Peter’s heart, as he lurked in the dark.

Thrice he betrayed, denied, told an outright lie.

The night was colder, getting towards the dawn,

When clearly, thrice came the sound of the cock’s crow.

Suff’ring King turned, looked at his subject forlorn.

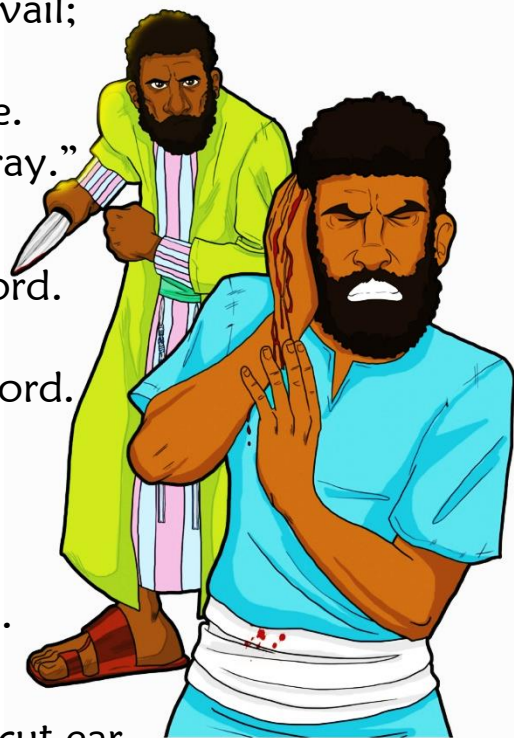
Simon slunk away, weeping; “I’ve sunk so low!”

While Jesus suffered rejection, pain and scorn;

Died for Simon’s sins on a rough, Roman Cross;

Was dead, buried, entombed till the third day’s morn;

Simon suffered – he’d deserted, all was loss.



The apostles regrouped – shamefacedly they met.

Only John had been there when, at last, He died.
Fearing they'd be caught in authority's net,
Behind locked doors, the broken men tried to hide.

Sunday early, with unbelievable news,
Women came to say He had risen from death.
Hope revived but could they believe women's views?
At the tomb Peter, John arrived – out of breath.

No one there! Indeed Jesus' body was gone.
What to think? What to believe? Could it be true?
"But if He's alive, He will know what I've done."
Then word from the Lord, "Tell them – and Peter too".

What happened, when on that first day of the week
The risen Lord appeared specially to Simon.
How did he express his deep repentance meek?
We know Jesus showed grace to His erring one.

And when they all again met in Galilee,
In grace the Lord restored him – to serve Him still;
To care for His lambs and His sheep tenderly;
To follow Him, to live and die in God's will.

The Master continues to caution His own,
"Satan is asking also for you by name";
He wants you to fail and fall; your Lord disown;
And when you do, he'll heap on you all the blame.

Still, for each one of us, the Saviour prays;
Knows our weakness in face of the enemy;
Warns as we impulsively go our own ways;
His concern – that faith survives despite frailty.

Like Peter I've denied Him – three times and more;
Even so, in grace, seeks my soul to restore.
The One who died for me and won the war,
With forgiving love, calls me to serve as before.

Easter 2012



THE STONE'S STORY

I once was a solid part of a mountain side,
Then rough men came with picks; excavated and pried.
They parted me from neighbouring, ancestral rock,
Rolled me down the steep descent, an unwieldy block.

With strong ropes, pulleys and ancient engineering
Hoisted me on a cart, oxen lowing, peering.
We travelled, bumped, our way to the stone mason's yard.
They worked to push and pull me down – the landing hard!

Then the stonecutter commenced work, paring me down
With hammer, chisel and a concentration frown.
He ruthlessly chopped and chipped each long, weary day.
So much of me he discarded and threw away.

The result was a tribute to his art and skill alone.
I was now a beautifully hewn and shaped stone.
Once more a rope, pulleys employed with men's, oxen's strength,
Delivered me to my destination at length.

Rolled through a garden to the front of a new grave,
Chiselled from rock, like me, by skilled men and brave.
Static, strong, unused and time passing, I waited
To fulfil the purpose for which I'm created.

One evening, two wealthy men with their attendants;
Nearby a few weeping women – their dependants?
They are conveying a covered, dead corpse with care.
They pass me by, enter the tomb and leave Him there.

At last I was useful, and with their exertion
I became the tomb's door – by my planned insertion.
I protected that most precious human remnant –
All that was left of a body scarred, ripped and rent.

There in the dark garden I played my humble part,
While guarding soldiers at every noise stare and start.
My sturdy guardianship was abruptly ended
By a bright being who suddenly descended.

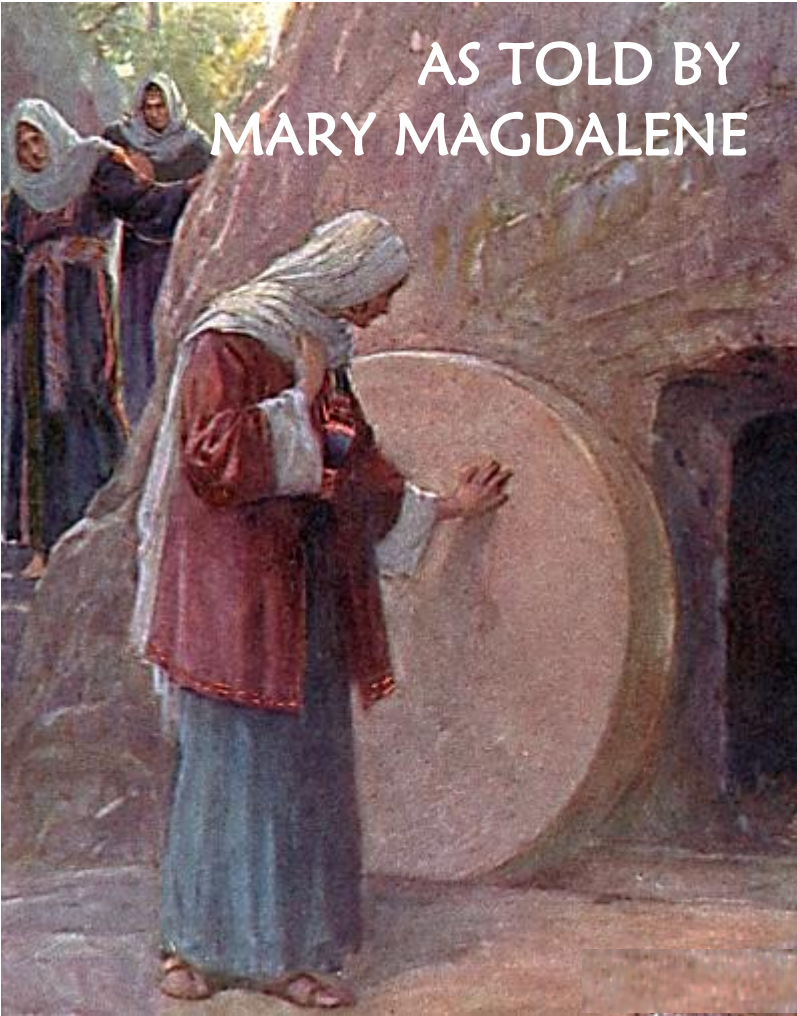
What happened next is impossible to explain.
I was relieved of my task, moved away again.
This angel sat upon me and I saw with awe –
The dead man – alive – emerge through the open door.

This was then my appointed task – strange destiny –
To be moved aside so that all the world could see
The tomb was empty and dread death had retreated,
The Son of God declared Victor, sin defeated.

I was removed but He was that day clearly shown
To be God's only Chosen, Chief Cornerstone.

March 2016

AS TOLD BY MARY MAGDALENE



Here is my story. My name is Mary Magdalene.
My life was a mess till Jesus arrived on the scene.
The result was emancipation and liberty
From the unclean demons who'd enslaved and haunted me.

Galilee of the nations was my old hunting ground.
By evil intent, disruptive thoughts my soul was bound.
I was fully possessed, not just once but times seven.
Entrapped, I had no hope of release – or of heaven.

I could not help myself nor escape from inner pain
Until the Son of God's authority snapped my chain;
Freed me from deepest anguish of body, soul and mind;
Led me to that tranquillity I could never find.

Forgiven, restored, made new, gratitude filled my heart.
I followed the Master and tried to play my small part,
Serving Him and the Twelve, with Joanna and others.
We were gladly received as their sisters and mothers.

I saw Him helping and healing and doing much good.
I heard Him teaching with wisdom as only He could.
I observed grace and love to the fallen and despised;
Anger to self-righteous hypocrites, who were surprised.

We were told how He calmed the terrible storm at sea.
Lepers were cleansed, touched by His hands compassionately.
Creator's pow'r provided food for multiplied crowds.
By His Word the dead were raised and released from their shrouds.

Then one year, at Passover time, my world imploded.
You'll perhaps know of the tragedy that unfolded –
How the most loving, purest, wisest Man ever known
Was arrested and tried, betrayed by one of His own.

He was innocent but unjustly condemned to die.
The mob had one demand, "Crucify Him! Crucify!"
For those of us who loved Him it was one long nightmare.
He was taunted, ill-treated beyond what man can bear.

The sound of the hammer as they nailed Him to the Cross,
Shattered my heart and there was such a sense of deep loss.
Yet how much worse it was for dear Mary at my side –
The mother of Jesus who saw her Son crucified.

We stood near the Cross – Mary, her sister, John and I;
Saw His suff'ring, heard Him cry, "It's finished" – watched Him die.
John took the grieving mother to live in his own home.
I felt sick to my stomach – abandoned and alone.

Through our fast falling tears and fears and feeling of doom,
A few of us women followed Joseph to the tomb;
Sat and watched as he and Nicodemus laid Him there,
The body was wrapped in fine linen, handled with care.

After the Sabbath day of rest, we planned to go back,
Taking spices for His body, so there'd be no lack.
It was the least we could do, although all hope was lost.
We wanted to serve Him still, no matter what it cost.

It was a sad, sombre, confusing time without hope.
There was doubt and dread. Dreams shattered, I could hardly cope.
Some of us were disillusioned, others were ashamed.
Where was God? What about the kingdom? Who should be blamed?

I went to the tomb at dawn the first day of the week,
Found the place empty of the body I came to seek.
Amazed, I saw two angels where His body should be.
They asked who I sought and why I wept so bitterly?

And then I turned and through my tears saw a living Man;
Mistook Him for a stranger with a watering can.
He also enquired about my obvious distress.
I asked Him if He was responsible for this mess?

But when He said, “Mary”; addressed me by my own name,
My heart nearly stopped – and life has never been the same.
You cannot imagine the bubbling joy I knew then.
He’s alive! This most incredible Saviour of men.

The Teacher, our Master, my Lord was no longer dead
But forever more the Conqueror, our Living Head.
All His suffering, the scorn, the anguish and the pain
Had meaning and purpose and it was not all in vain.

For me He died: paid for my past, present, future sin;
Made a way so that His Father could welcome me in.
Our deep doubts and dark fears, our sorrow was cleared away,
Seeing the risen Lord that first resurrection day.

If some had been uncertain of His identity,
We now knew Him to be God the Son eternally.
Living, dying, rising, victorious in the strife,
In grace, God came down to us, transforming death to life.

Well, that was only the beginning and not the end.
For 40 days He walked, ate and talked with us – our Friend.
Then ascended to His Father and kept His pledged Word –
One week and the Spirit came – our ever present Lord.

Easter 2013



FROM DOUBT

TO WORSHIP!

You'd think my brain would work a little faster
After three years with such a brilliant Master.
I was dull, and I clearly misunderstood
When I enquired about His next neighbourhood –

“Where are You going?” Compounded my mistake
By stating we didn't know the way to take.
Answered my ignorance with simplicity;
“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life”, claimed He;

Added, His Father was the culmination.
Through Jesus, we would reach the destination.
So, all that last evening and into the night
He continued to teach and set our thoughts right.

And then came the devastating, dark nightmare.
Judas, the traitor, kissed, caught Him in the snare.
With the other ten, I panicked, turned and ran;
Deserted – like Judas, a cowardly man.

Jesus had warned us, and He always was right.
He was arrested, unfairly tried that night.
Spineless Roman Gov'nor gave the final word.
Having mocked, scourged Him, they crucified my Lord.

I did not understand the profundity
Of His death on that cruel execution tree.
From my narrow-minded, blinkered perspective
There was no point to the soldiers' invective;

No sense in His suff'ring, rejection and death –
From when He was caught till He breathed His last breath.
It appeared He was not the true Messiah;
The One people waited for with such desire.

But what of the miracles and signs we saw?
What of His teaching and the love that He bore?
And there were the amazing claims that He made.
Yet He was dead. In Joseph's tomb had been laid.

The past three years – were they but an illusion?
Were we the followers of a delusion?
Unansw'erable questions went round in my mind.
No rational solution could I then find.

Friday late to Sunday we were all so sad.
Each one of us had failed. We felt pretty bad.
The future stretched out unbelievably bleak.
We trusted in Him. He just gave in – so weak!

Know what you're thinking – "Didn't He prophesy;
Warn you that He was going to suffer and die?"
I guess we were in some sort of denial.
Who'd imagine they'd take Him, put Him on trial?

Unbelievable tales kept coming my way
From early morning till late on the third day.
When the others told me they had seen the Lord,
I simply wouldn't accept their hopeful word.

I am a man who needs to see to believe.
Jesus risen from death, I couldn't conceive.
If only – but it was too good to be true;
Like a mythical tale with a twist that's new.

You will know the conditions that I set out –
“Unless I touch scars, I'll continue to doubt.”
He was not there listening, as far as I knew.
I waited eight days, hoping it might be true.

The doors were shut tight. Suddenly He appeared
With a word of peace – He, Himself – nothing weird.
But He knew what I had said previously.
“Touch My hands and My side. See that it is Me.”

Eyes opened to the presence of Deity,
“My Lord and My God,” I said believingly.
Now I knew that He was not only a man
But God in flesh; fulfilling redemption's plan;

Suffering the cruel Cross for my Salvation;
Raised from the dead for my justification.
All He had taught us painstakingly, was real.
Assurance of the facts at last I could feel.

Saw Him risen and can gladly testify,
But I missed out, wanting to see with the eye.
You are more blessed according to our wise Lord –
Without sight you accepted; believed His Word.

Easter 2012



CONFUSION CONFOUNDED

Easter 2014

Once upon a time – but this is true, and no fairy tale –
Two disillusioned people travelled on a country trail.
Their world had imploded. They were troubled, confused and vexed.
Heart-broken and sad, these disciples were deeply perplexed.

Had they trusted Jesus; even followed Him – all in vain?
He was dead, when many expected Him as King to reign.
Why did the Master have to die in that terrible way?
What was the meaning of the darkness and earthquake that day?

They had seen His miraculous healings and caring deeds;
His provision for men, women and children in their needs.
Hadn't He raised Lazarus, four days dead, to life again?
Was He not "Teacher Par Excellence" amongst learned men?

How could Judas have betrayed Him – the Man Who was his Friend?
How could High Priestly leaders condemn Him to such an end?
How could the Roman trial be an unjust travesty?
The events added up to a meaningless tragedy.

It was just three days since Jesus was cruelly crucified –
Three days of sorrow, confusion and fear. All hope had died.
What would happen next? The worst? No one could possibly tell.
Would the authorities hunt down all the others as well?

Where was His body that Joseph had laid in the rock grave?
What of the women's story of a message angels gave?
He publicly died. Declared dead. How could He be alive?
Peter, John checked. Corpse was gone. No fresh fact could they derive.

As Cleopas and friend shared their mutual bewilderment,
A Person joined them; to their sad news, His attention lent.
To Scriptures written in the past, He opened their eyes.
It was all in God's plan – the Messiah for our sin dies.

From the Old Testament Writings, He elucidated
The truth about Jesus – unmistakably stated.
Through Genesis to Malachi, God's Word pointed to Him.
How could they be so slow to believe; their eyes be so dim?

We all know what happened when they got to Emmaus –
They recognised the Lord. He vanquished their mental chaos.
The one seven-mile journey in a day was not enough.
They travelled the same road once more though the going was rough.

In Jerusalem they joyfully their news began to share,
When suddenly Jesus, Himself – risen, alive – was there.
Once again, He showed from Moses and the prophets of old
The truth about Himself which long ago had been foretold.

Two millennia later we still have God's Word in hand.
And we have the Holy Spirit Who helps us to understand.
Even this Easter Jesus wants to walk through life with us,
And teach, as He did with two on the road to Emmaus.

He dealt with their confusion, sadness, troubled minds and doubt.
He gave them insight, understanding, fear was cancelled out.
We too need God's Word to impact our lives and bring true change.
As we allow the risen Lord, in our hearts, to have full range.

AMAZING GOD

I am so conscious of my faults and flaws
Yet for so long You have put up with me.
Thank you for Your eternal, patient love.
Amazing God – I worship gratefully.

In thought, word, reaction, I let You down.
Yet again You forgive me endlessly.
Thank You for the Cross where my Saviour died
To make me Your child – reconciled, set free.

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