

Words of life for those on the Way



My time is well taken up in the mission ship," Mrs Baddeley said. "Because there are plenty of interesting things happening all the time. We land twice a day as a rule, and I go ashore and visit the villages and talk to the natives [sic] as well as I can while my husband takes a service."

My granny was referring to life on board *The Southern Cross* – the mission ship belonging to

the Anglican Church of Melanesia – where she spent much of the first years of her married life with her husband Bishop Walter Baddeley and their infant son (my uncle Martin).

Granny had some terrific stories of life on board – of storms and running aground in the night, of flying fish and visits to tiny islands. *The Southern Cross* was central to the mission of the Church in the Solomon Islands enabling the Bishop to reach even the most far-flung reaches of the Diocese.

The Southern Cross, my granny knew, was in fact the seventh *Southern Cross* ship (there have been two more since) after number six was wrecked on her maiden voyage from England just before Bishop Baddeley arrived in the Solomons. [The Centenary Book of the Melanesian Mission](#) talks about the importance of the ship:

"On all sides the developing evangelistic, educational and medical work were woven together into the texture of sound Christian life by the ceaseless work of the "Southern Cross" and her smaller sisters."

On the wall in my mother's house hangs a wonderful painting of the seventh *Southern Cross* – a precious reminder of the great work in those times.

In my study hangs another reminder of *The Southern Cross* vessel – the Australian Naval pennant from 1941 when the mission ship was requisitioned during World War II. While *The Southern Cross* was used mainly for troop and cargo transport, the naval pennant hanging in my study serves as a constant reminder of how we are able to use even the best of things for purposes for which they were never intended.

The Southern Cross, so important in "the developing evangelistic, educational and medical work" in the Solomon Islands, was for a short time an instrument of war.

I was reminded of this lamentable capacity mid-year when I saw images online of Donald Trump holding up a Bible for a photo-op outside an Anglican church in Washington after sanctioning the use of tear gas and rubber bullets to clear peaceful Black Lives Matter protestors near the White House. In response, The Episcopal Bishop of Washington The Right Rev'd Mariann Budde said:

“The president just used a Bible, the most sacred text of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and one of the churches of my diocese, without permission, as a backdrop for a message antithetical to the teachings of Jesus.”

This kind of jarring disconnect also happens when particular pieces of scripture are taken out of context and weaponised for use ‘against’ particular people or groups of people. The scriptures, which are the great treasure of our tradition, reveal to us again and again the faithfulness of God to a faithless people – they are words of life that can enhance our capacity to live fully and freely as humans. Yet, rather than a message of love and hope, so often the Bible becomes a weapon used to exclude, alienate or punish.

Echoing throughout the scriptures is a vision of God’s kingdom where the last and the least are first, the mighty are cast down, the hungry are fed and the captives are set free. As ones who are ‘on the Way’ with Jesus we are called to do our part in making this kingdom come, on earth as in heaven, through Jesus’ way of love.

Our time, too, could be ‘well taken up’ with this Way rather than giving ourselves over to violence and spite.

Sunday Devotions • Monday 21 September 2020 • By Susan Dennings

Sunday Devotion: Sunday 27 September 2020, Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

The timelessness of the Exodus experience

Main Readings: [Exodus 17.1-7](#); [Psalm 78.1-4, 11-16](#); [Philippians 2](#) or [2.1-13](#); [Mathew 21.23-32](#) [[Ezekiel 18.1-4, 25-32](#); [Psalm 25.1-9](#)]

Supplementary Readings: [Psalm 96](#); [Matthew 19.23-30](#); [Exodus 18.5-24](#); [Psalm 25.1-9](#); [Romans 15.14-22 \(23-29\)](#) [30-33](#)

“I will be standing there in front of you...Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink” ([Exodus 17.6](#))

In June my husband Randal and I travelled to Darwin to support our daughter and son-in-law when their first child was born two months prematurely. We arrived knowing we would be required to isolate in a hotel for two weeks. Leaving the familiar behind in a time of uncertainty, we asked ourselves, ‘What do we bring with us?’, ‘What do we leave behind?’, ‘What is important?’ It was a brief time of wilderness for us all.

The Tribes of Israel looked to Moses for leadership and to God for provision during their uncertainties. When my grandchild was born prematurely, we also had to look to the leadership and support of the medical teams, and when overwhelmed with questions and doubts we needed to exercise restraint, instead trusting in their care.

The living waters that sustained us from the wonderful faith community at Christ Church Anglican Cathedral in Darwin, as well as from our home parish of St Matthew’s, Holland Park were an upwelling of prayer and support – as welcome as water in a desert oasis.

The time of wandering for the Tribes of Israel brought their fears and physical needs to the fore. Because of Moses’ obedience to God’s direction, their needs were met. So, may we look to God to meet our needs and quell our fears in this time of great uncertainty.