

Seeking shalom together



(L-R): Bishop Ken Howell, Deputy President, Queensland Churches Together (QCT); The Rev'd David Baker, General Secretary, QCT; The Rev'd Yvonne McRostie, Presbytery Minister, The Downs, Uniting Church in Australia; Bishop Cameron Venables, Bishop for the Western Region; The Rev'd Helen Paget, President, QCT; and, Valerie Joy, QCT delegate from the Queensland Quaker community

One of my most profound experiences of prayer was when someone just mentioned the word, 'praying'.

I was about 19 or 20, and a mate had asked me to come with him to King George Square between Ann and Adelaide Streets in Brisbane; a man was walking around the world carrying a cross, and he was going to be in the square, so we went.

While waiting for the event to begin, a couple of women near us opened conversation. One asked, "Are you guys Christians?" I replied, cheekily, pointing to my friend, "He is and I'm not!" So began a discussion with them as to why I wasn't and why I should be. I parried well, having been familiar with this approach, but was stumped at the woman's last riposte, as she looked me in the eye, "Well, David, it's been good talking with you; I want you to know something: I'll be praying for you."

I think I feigned a smile, but I know my knees wobbled! Literally! Somehow I knew in my heart that I was a goner. My rebellion was doomed!

Entering into the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, I wonder how we approach it?

The last couple of decades have been a very mixed bag for those whose hearts were inspired by the ecumenical vision that flourished in the years after the Second World War.

We have seen so many cultural and communal divides broken down; a hospitality of life and spirit between the denominations that has, overall, made us a more welcoming and appreciative people. We've grown to understand each other better, and see the value in our diverse traditions.

We've collaborated together on many issues, spoken with – nearly – one voice on issues of human dignity and the stewardship of creation.

Yet there is still a long way to go. A deeper journey into unity beckons us. It is a journey in the way of the cross – a journey of dying and rising.

We seem to have reached, in institutional terms, a fairly comfortable and benign accommodation.

Sometimes the vision of unity around the table of our Lord is an upland that seems too hard to face, let alone begin to climb.

Yet surely, it is our calling, a definitive sign of our unity in Christ.

So the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity comes around again in our yearly cycle. The theme for this year is "Abide in my love, and you shall bear much fruit", from John 15, Jesus' parting words with his disciples before Good Friday.

Love's founding work is to seek truth and communion, justice and reconciliation; to seek shalom. It's a journey into vulnerability that demands a confidence that the journey is worth it, the cost of failure too great; the value of success, compelling.

As we enter into this week of prayer, contemplating the command, the love, and the hope of Jesus for us, his disciples, will our knees wobble and our hearts be moved at the great call upon us, his people, his body?

Sunday Devotions • Monday 3 May 2021 • By Eleanor Reid, Emma Williams

Sunday Devotion: 9 May 2021, Sixth Sunday of Easter

Bearing fruit through ministry

Main Readings: [Acts 10.44-48](#); [Psalm 98](#); [1 John 5.1-12](#); [John 15.9-17](#) or [John 16.16-24](#)

Supplementary Readings: [Psalm 112](#); [1 Corinthians 15.28-34](#); [Acts 13.44-14.7](#); [Psalm 99](#); [John 15.17-27](#)

"You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last." ([John 15.16](#))

We met in 2018 while leading Ichthus Camps together. Over the years we have seen dozens of teenagers experiencing awareness of God at these camps, sometimes for the first time. We have seen one teenager, in particular, go from being completely disinterested in God to then being curious to then being willing to explore faith more deeply.

We feel called by God to bear fruit by leading Ichthus Camps and being part of our intentional community, Community of the Way, based at St Francis College. Other Christians are chosen to bear fruit through other ministries. This line of scripture from John 15.16 helps give you a sense of purpose, as you know that God has chosen you for your role. When you see teenagers come through the camps and then become leaders, you see "the fruit that will last" and the knock-on effect of people sharing their faith with others, who then have the confidence to share their faith, and so on.

It is reassuring to know that you are chosen and have a purpose. This equips you to bear fruit, which creates this knock-on effect.

This week, maybe you can think about what ministry you are called to or how the ministry you are currently involved in is bearing fruit.