



The Avenue Uniting Church

Sunday 26th November, 2023

"The Way of Christ"

Colossians 3:12-17

As GOD's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to GOD.

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to GOD the Father through him.

Today marks the end of the Christian Calendar, with the Christian festival known as "Reign of Christ". Next week we begin the new Christian year, with the season of Advent – the time of preparation for Christmas.

Most of you will be aware that I find the language of the 'reign of Christ' and its predecessor "*Christ the King*" problematic – mostly because Jesus rejected it as a title for himself on several occasions. As he saw things, it was never about him being exalted, it was always about the Holy One to whom he pointed.

My difficulty with the language though, doesn't dampen my conviction that the way of Jesus is the way I want to follow in life, as faithfully as I can.

More than that, I'm convinced that what I see of the way of Jesus offers the world a creative and sacred way of being. I respect deeply, people who follow other paths to sacred living: for me, Jesus the Christ is the leader on that path.

I was thinking about that during a quiet moment at last week's meeting of the Uniting Church's Victoria Tasmania Synod. It helped me reflect and name some of what I was experiencing in the meeting – in a good way!

It struck me that I was seeing the 'way of Christ' in action in what we were doing together, and how we were going about it.

I was seeing it in the storytelling, prayer, and challenge that was shared with us all by members of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, particularly in relation to the recent failed referendum. I saw genuine compassion, careful listening, and deep prayer.

I was seeing it in the discussions of the various proposals that were brought forward: most of them discussions of justice, ranging from ethical and sustainable use of resources, to safe and pastoral ways to care for people with drug addictions. None of these were easy conversations; they were conducted and led with grace, respect, and deep faithfulness.

We spent time together in prayerful discernment on the future of the Uniting Church, nationally and locally: again challenging subjects, the future isn't clear.

We ate together – the way of the table – as our people have always done.

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There are other things I could talk about too, and will do so when my energy level is a bit higher and my Covid is gone

For now I simply want to share with you the encouragement that I've gained through reflecting on Synod as 'the way of Christ' in action. (Trust me, I haven't always felt this way!)

It put me in mind of the reading from Colossians 3, which is why I chose it for today. I love the imagery of this passage, of 'clothing' ourselves to walk the way of Christ together.

So I'd like to read it again to finish:

*As GOD's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.*

*Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.*

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to GOD.*

*And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to GOD the Father through him*

**Grow 4 your life!**

Listen. Remember. Share. Act.