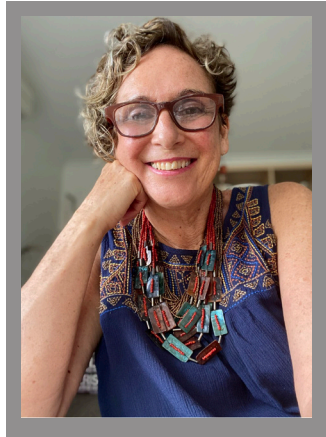


LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

LIVING THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

When Joey Williams recounted his story to me last year, I was moved by his generosity. The story starts when he was a young university student, giving what he could, and has spanned decades. Moreover, his support and generosity has continued to this day. In editing his interview that appears in this edition, I thought, "If only I were that generous," but then, this week I received a surprise call from Gift. He wanted to meet for coffee.



I first met Gift when he and his wife came to do some landscape gardening at my home several years ago. Gift and his wife Merry travelled two hours by train from Campbelltown to get to my home in Epping. I was blown away with how much work they could both complete in a day at my home. Gradually, over the time they worked for me, I found out about their family and their life. Like many migrants their story was a convoluted one. They had travelled from Nigeria to Australia seeking a better life for themselves and their children. I found out the reason they were catching the train. Their car had just blown up and they could not afford to get it fixed (It was a fancy European car that someone had sold to them cheaply, probably knowing it had major problems). To fix, it was going to cost double what they paid for the car. At the time it just seemed too much of a coincidence that I was needing to sell my late husband Peter's old Datsun. (Yes Auntie Jan - your old car is still going strong!). So I paid them for all the work they completed and then said, to Gift and Merry - "You can have Peter's car, you don't have to pay for it."

That was how I found myself last Sunday having coffee with Gift, catching up on his life since we had last met. His clothing had changed. He now had the trendy look of a young IT professional from Melbourne which was where he had relocated to. We talked about the supportive community he had found at church there and about some of his ongoing family challenges. As we parted he thanked me. "You will never know how much your help and care means to my family." He said.

Going home it struck me. I had forgotten about my own generosity.

I wonder, "Does that happen to you too?" I wonder if that is how it is meant to be; that when we are living from the heart of the gospel, we hardly even notice it. Maybe when we are at our best it has 'settled into our bones' as Katie Harmon McLaughlin says, so that both ourselves and others are transformed. Is this what happens when we embody a faith that is real?

This whole Australia Herald edition is about love that is at the centre of our faithful walk with Christ. It is about having courage to allow it to show up authentically in conversations and actions - Here, Now, Today as Richard Betts says. It is about us expressing it in solidarity with the marginalized and our earth as Steve Veazey shares and as Tyler Marz says it's about uniquely, divinely and authentically expressing God's imprint within us in community.

As Editor in chief, it was the late John Taylor who inspired the theme for this edition. Yesterday, as I was downloading onto my computer previous recordings of Australia Worship Online I came across some text he had written into a chat box. The message that jumped out at me read, "I'm inspired to have more empathy for those who need me."

I quote his words with sadness that he is no longer with us, with feelings of grief for his family, and with a resolve to do better; to have more empathy for those who need me. May this be your prayer too.

SHALOM!

Anne Bonnefin

Editorial Team Member

