



Photo supplied by Ben Smith

# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

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'We are all just walking each other home.' Ram Dass

Friendship can and has been described in so many ways. One thing that comforts me though, in this ever-changing world, is that some things are constant: Love, patience, compassion, friendship.

Some years ago, a contact from high school sent me a message to see if we could connect. We were Facebook friends, but we didn't really socialize together in school or afterwards. We knew the same people and lived in a similar area. When we got chatting, she asked whether I would conduct her marriage with her now husband. I said of course, and it was an amazing wedding – in fact, its the only wedding ceremony where I've been asked by the bride, I think every few minutes, 'can we kiss yet?!' In the years that followed, we kept in touch and our families have formed a wonderful friendship. About 18 months ago, Lauren reached out to me to let me know her father was dying. He had a progressive illness which didn't leave him long to live, and she wanted to make some funeral arrangements with me prior to his passing. Her and her family were travelling overseas for Christmas, and there was some nervousness about making sure things were in place as there was the possibility of his passing while they were away travelling. Their travel came and went, and sometime later in the midst of the Victorian Covid lockdown in 2020, Laurens father passed away. With only 10 people in the vast chapel, we laughed and cried with grief as the family shared their memories. It was



an absolute privilege to be a witness to those stories and that grief, a day I will not forget.

Sometimes friendships strike in the most beautiful ways. My friendship with Lauren, though sparked over 20 years ago, really became real in the presence of God.

This edition of the Herald explores that beauty through stories from around our nation, and indeed, the world. From personal stories to theological invitation, we take a moment to journey with each other through the friendships of old and new. It's an invitation to explore your friendships, how you foster and nurture them, and how you might value them. Our connections as a community are everlasting, and sustain us through challenging times. This year has provided us significant challenge, and friendships have been sustained through distance and other communicative methods. This is now a new dawn for us, and an opportunity to drink in that dawn, as David Brock so beautifully puts it. My hope is that we may find new ways to develop deep and lasting friendship with each other, and the stranger in our community.

*Ben Smith*

Editorial Team Member