

## Some thoughts from Debbie

Our human lives as individuals in a human family are bound together, whether we like it or not. We travel as individuals, yet share personal common stories, no matter the circumstances into which we are born, or the choices we make in how we spend the time God gives us.

I took up my first appointment as a Pastoral Worker the week before the bushfires hit. I learned first-hand how great a leveller trauma is, for instance. No matter who we are, how rich we are, how confident, or how frail, when we are forced to rely on resources outside of ourselves for survival, we are all rendered equal. Stripped of our own sense of control, we allow others to help because we have to, the illusion of our own self-sufficiency shattered. In a similar way, when it comes to our personal spiritual journey, our search for closer union with God who is the centre of our soul's very existence, we cannot allow ourselves to think that we can be self-sufficient. We cannot control God in any way. God himself faithfully offers to lead us through life, our part to play in our blossoming relationship with him is to trustingly open our eyes, ears and hearts to feel his direction.

If we try to lead, we will very quickly lose the path. If we trust, and follow, wonderful things can happen. Our paths to him will differ, because we are all individuals, and loved for ourselves, valued for who we are. Some of us may be scholars, gaining great knowledge from the wealth of experience and thinking of our fellow spiritual travellers. Others may never read even one spiritual book during our lifetime. God speaks to us as his much-loved personal friend, dealing with us as individuals with differing needs and preferences, whilst providing our community of faith to support us and to encourage and nourish us along our path to him.

Our life-long mission to come home to our creator will naturally take us on mountain climbs, through adventures that can, at times, threaten to overwhelm us. It can also lead us to leisurely moments of tranquil refreshment, where we find renewal and encouragement, those restful waters that 'The Lord is my Shepherd', Psalm 23, speaks of. When our spirit 'drips', the Good Shepherd is right beside us. God himself directs us through every breath we ever take, from our first breath to our last, and beyond. He draws us, he challenges us and he encourages us to grow in him, faithfully keeping us as close to him as we can allow him to be. We can trust that he will not leave us, ever. If we turn our eyes away, we need only to refocus, to glance back towards his reliable presence, and we are accepted and loved as if we had never been away. We may not hear his voice, we may not see his hand stretched out before us to lead us, yet we can trust that we are safe if we try to follow his gentle prompting with a sincere heart.

Leaving behind our own sense of personal control can be difficult to do, we are so used to trying to control every situation we face in life. Our role in our blossoming relationship with God is as simple as being open to his touch. I love the reading from Romans 8, "the Spirit comes to help us in our weakness. For when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the Spirit himself expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words...". Beautiful! How comforting it is to know that even when we have no obvious compass to follow, the Holy Spirit's commission as our promised guiding light keeps us in God's loving embrace. We need not let our hearts be troubled.

