



LIFE @ central

April 2019

Central Baptist Church, Pretoria

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

2 Corinthians 5:17



PASTOR'S CORNER

by Charles de Kiewit [Senior Pastor]

Life at Central in the current season

Dear Friends

The title of our publication *Life@ Central* has prompted the theme for my input this month. The question "What is life at Central like in the present season?"

Just when we thought we were making progress in finalizing a call to an anchor pastor at the Hill and thus having a full complement of pastoral staff and really being able to make giant steps forward in our ministry; the Lord has seen fit to call Lukie and Natasha to another congregation in Rietfontein.

I am fully convinced that God works all things together for the good of those who love him and are called according to His purpose. Transitions in staff therefore don't leave me in despair. Instead I believe these movements and vacancies give us an opportunity to really seek the Lord as to what He would have us do.

Let us then pray that we find clear leading in a situation where we need to be like the men of Issachar **1 Ch 12:32 ...men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, 200 chiefs, and all their kinsmen under their command.**

We do need to know what the Lord would have us do so as to meaningfully proceed with the pastoral staffing in our church. We would welcome your input as we consider the way forward.

In the mean time I am happy to confirm that Isaac and Melissa Pinto have accepted the invitation to take the role of assistant (anchor) pastor up at the Hill. We are looking forward to working together with them in the years ahead.

My burden in leading the congregation this year has leaned toward us being challenged in our love for Jesus and to be more focused in what we do in ministry. There is always the danger that our hearts grow cold as other priorities get our attention; as well as cluttering our lives with so much activity that we drift from God's agenda in Gospel ministry.

Let us then do as the writer to the Hebrews writes: **Hebrews 12:1-2 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.**

May God be pleased to do His work through us as He continues to unfold His redemption plan in building His church.

God bless,

Charles

IN CHRIST ALONE

*In Christ alone my hope is found
He is my light, my strength, my song
This cornerstone, this solid ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm
What heights of love, what depths of peace
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease
My comforter, my all in all
Here in the love of Christ I stand*

*In Christ alone who took on flesh
Fullness of God in helpless babe
This gift of love and righteousness
Scorned by the ones He came to save
Till on that cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live*

*There in the ground His body lay
Light of the world by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ*

*No guilt in life, no fear in death
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell, no scheme of man
Can ever pluck me from His hand
Till He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand*

Words by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend. Written in 2001.

THE POTTER

by Alan Sylvester

Jeremiah 18:1-6

The Potter and the Clay

¹The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: ²“Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words.” ³So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel. ⁴And the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to do.

⁵Then the word of the Lord came to me: ⁶“O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? declares the Lord. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.

The Book of Jeremiah's prophecy, like many other books in the Old Testament, reads like a conversation between God and His servant, in this case Jeremiah, through whom God sends a message to His people regarding the problems associated with their behaviour and their walk with God.

The background to this passage is that God's chosen people, the children of Israel, had forsaken their commitment, obedience and worship of God. Some were still going through the motions, but were now worshipping idols. Even the Priests were compromising and dishonouring their God-given leadership roles in their service in the temple. And the people were no longer respecting the Sabbath, but

were continuing to do business on the Sabbath – in other words **business took first place**.

Listen to some of the warnings in some verses from Jeremiah chapter 16 verses 10 – 13. **Speaking to Jeremiah God says:**

"And when you tell this people all these words, and they say to you, 'Why has the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? What is our iniquity? What is the sin that we have committed against the LORD our God?' then you shall say to them: 'Because your fathers have forsaken Me, declares the LORD, and have gone after other gods and have served and worshiped them, and have forsaken Me and have not kept My Law, and because you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, every one of you follows his stubborn, evil will, refusing to listen to Me. Therefore I will hurl you out of this land into a land that neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favour.'

Now of course **we** don't worship and revere idols made of wood or stone, but perhaps instead we worship at the altars of metal (cars), bricks (houses), education (degrees & diplomas), wealth, status, or worshipping people, celebrities and there are many other possible idols!

Thus God had given, through Jeremiah, warnings regarding the consequences of the peoples' behaviour if they refused to repent and return to Him, i.e. they would incur God's wrath and be taken into captivity by their enemies.

So let's take a closer look at ...

The Potter - the Wheel - and the Clay

If you have never had the opportunity to watch a potter making an article in the old-fashioned way, not using an electric motor to drive the wheel while standing or sitting, then you would not fully appreciate the lesson that God was wanting to teach Israel by speaking through the prophet Jeremiah, and this is also a lesson for us!

Regarding the scene at the Potter's house, this is what Jeremiah saw:

- The Potter had to use his **feet** to operate the wheel
- His **eyes** to ensure that his intended article is taking the right shape
- His **hands** to shape and mould the clay
- His **mind** to formulate the design; to control the wheel and the clay; and to ensure that all was going according to plan

In other words, he was totally committed to the task of molding the clay to make a vessel fit for use – fit for a **specific** use! It was not a case of mass production – although many of the articles may have looked similar, yet each individual piece was unique – just like people!



Now just as there are many different types of people, likewise there are a variety of different types of clay - some may be rather acid; some rather gritty; rough; coarse; some rather sticky; some too dry, etc. However, only clean clay is useable - specially cleansed and selected clay. Some of these things can be fixed, but if there are impurities, any foreign matter, hard lumps, stones, etc., problems arise! The vessel cracks, and starts to fall apart on the wheel - it loses its

cohesiveness, and no matter how hard the Potter tries, the only thing that he can do is to remove the clay from the wheel - just as sometimes God has to remove a person from service until the obstacles to achieving His will - invariably sin - has been dealt with.

Does the Potter then toss the spoiled lump of clay onto the scrap heap? No! But before he can start again, the impurities **must** be found and **removed**. Then with infinite patience the Potter begins again to make the clay "into another vessel, as seems good to him".

How comforting it is to know that our Father God does not discard US when we fail Him, but welcomes us with open arms when we repent and return to Him as did the prodigal son in the parable that Jesus told!

Sometimes the vessel is being made for utility purposes, very plain but very practical - a "working vessel". Other times it's ornate and is designed to display the Potter's skills and his art - but both are to bring honour, profit and praise to him, even as the articles that he makes serve others. How often we look for the maker's name under a cup or saucer... especially if it is a very fine piece of porcelain!

When the vessel is completed to the Potter's satisfaction, he takes it off the wheel and places it on a shelf for a few days to cure, and then... he places it in the fire. No vessel that he has made is fit for use until it has been "fired". Painful for the vessel, perhaps, but essential if it is to be of any use! But here again the Potter knows that too much heat will ruin the vessel, and too little will also render it useless. So he has to ensure that the heat of the fire is just right for the vessel's size, type of clay, etc.

The message to Israel was: ***"Oh House of Israel, can I not do with you as this Potter?"***

The message to us is the same: We may not like being tested to see if we are suitable material for the particular service that God has planned for us; nor do we like having the hard resisting lumps of sin removed. Neither do we enjoy

being “on the wheel”, having the pressure of the Potter’s hands squeezing, molding and shaping us - sometimes through tough times. BUT He has our good in mind, and wants to make us both a useful and an attractive vessel for carrying the good news of the Gospel to others, and thus bringing glory, praise and honour to Him.

To do this our heavenly Potter has a plan - a design and a purpose in mind for each one of us, and He uses everything to do so - His love, His Word, Calvary, the Holy Spirit, circumstances, other people... and testing!

But before He can accomplish **anything**, the material that He is to use must be pure, clean, with no foreign matter, no resisting “hard lumps or stones”. **We must be done with sin!**

The wonderful thing is that when there are impurities, “foreign matter”, **“sin”, He does not discard us** – If He has called us He will simply remove the impurities, painful though that sometimes may be for us, who, like the clinging clay, we do not easily release the foreign matter – we often cling to our sins.

Notice that the vessels that the Potter makes are not able to boast as if they had made themselves, or had any part in the production, other than being subject to the will of the Potter - available and flexible in his hands. They have no merit of their own! And they can only be useful as long as they are whole, are not cracked, and do not leak.

And then the fire!



This is why it is sometimes necessary for us to go through hard times – times of testing – and we feel that we are “going through the fire,” but, like the vessels made by the potter, the “fire” hardens us. The times of trial and testing confirm our faith and strengthen our character, forcing us to abandon our self-confidence and trust God to see us through.



What kind of “clay” are we? And what kind of vessels are we? Are we useful? Do we bring honour and praise to our Potter? Do we cling to the hard lumps, the foreign matter, the things of this world? Are we marred in His hands?

Isn’t it wonderful to know that whatever befalls us, if we are in the Potter’s hands, He has an end result in mind for each one of us; and He works, - even when we are marred in His hands - to make of us “another vessel”.

But what a pity, what a lot of wasted time and effort, when the Potter has to start all over again! That vessel could have already been in useful service during the time that it took to re-make it.

Now the question comes: What is required of **us** if we are to become a useful vessel, maybe even both a useful AND a beautiful vessel for the Master’s use and to bring glory to our God?

From the foregoing it almost looks as though we just have to be clean and submissive and then God will do all the work. In a certain sense that is true, for despite all **our** best efforts, **unless GOD is using us**, our efforts are in vain

and of no value whatsoever, for Jesus has told us that without Him we can accomplish nothing!

However we DO have a role to play! In order for us to become all that He has in mind, in addition to submitting to His will we must take note of the following:

In **Romans 12:1-2** the Apostle Paul writes: *"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."*

And in **Phil 2:5** we read: *"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus"*.

We are to be like Jesus! ... *having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust* (the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life - 1 John 2:16).

While in **1 John 3:1-2** we are told that we are *"called the children of God"* (in other words we ARE His children) "but that it does not yet appear what we **shall** be, but we KNOW that when we SEE Him we shall be **like Him!**"

WOW. What a future to look forward to! The trials and testings, the removal of sin, the molding and the fire that we face are all intended to mould us and prepare us for that which God has in store for us in the future – serving Him here on earth, and then to be **like Him and with Him** for all eternity!

Is it worth it? Well, Jesus thought that WE were worth it when He went to Calvary to pay the price and take the punishment for our sins – so what do WE have to complain about if God is testing and shaping us to make us conform to the image of His Son, ... to make us ready to share in His glorious Kingdom?

I am sure that we have all found through experience that generally making "New Resolutions" does not work. However, with the help of the Holy Spirit we CAN have success in conforming more and more to the image of Jesus, the Son of God, for if this was **not** possible God would not require it of us.

On the other hand, remember that some of the Potter's clay may have been lying as part of the heap for years before the Potter actually picked up that particular lump. Therefore even if you are "old" it does not mean that God cannot do a new thing in your life – it may even be for the very first time! Remember people like Abraham and Moses and others who were old when God did a new thing in their lives!

So let us remember what God said to Israel: ***"O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? declares the Lord. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel"***.

Surely God can do the same for you and me? He **can** make us over anew – maybe even into another vessel, as seems good to Him!

But are we willing to be cleansed, obedient, submissive and pliable clay in His hands? Are we willing to accept and comply with **His** plans for our lives – maybe even in our twilight years - no matter what the cost?



Life in New Zealand

by Patrick Kennedy

None of us are exempt from having to make a living, whether we take off to settle in another country, or get called somewhere for missionary work, or remain where we are out of choice (or perhaps the lack of it). We all do what we deem necessary to take care of ourselves and our families, and those who seemingly find shortcuts in life by either winning the Lotto or scoring big on Bitcoin, rarely end up being happy. I do believe that is because God has always meant for us to work, not as a curse due to sin, but as a blessing even before sin raised its ugly head.

Genesis 2:15: The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

And again, in the New Testament, we see God's continual expectation of us to earn our living.

2 Thessalonians 3:12: Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.

1 Timothy 5:8: But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

At the time of writing this, it has been just over a month since I went ahead of my family to New Zealand. The start was very challenging to say the least; trying to set up all the most crucial components of day-to-day living, coping with the pressures of a demanding new job, winding down my business in South Africa, physically adjusting to the 10-hour time difference while emotionally trying to support my family in South Africa who were facing their own set of challenges.

At some point during all that busyness, I realised that I have been neglecting the One without whom nothing I do means anything at all, and I was reminded of the fact that making a living, is not the same as having life.

Acts 17:28: for 'In him we live and move and have our being' ...

For all of humankind, the truth is that there is no life to be found outside of God. When Paul preached in Athens and gave testimony to the one true God and said: "In him we live and move and have our being", he was talking about the inclusion of all of us in God as our Creator, our sovereign ruler, the One without whom we cannot take our next breath, the One that grants common grace to all people, despite our rebellion towards Him. What Paul was not talking about, was our automatic inclusion in Christ as Saviour. Paul was not a Universalist.

John 14:6: Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." ...

The believer in Christ knows that there is no spiritual life outside of Christ. Unbelieving man is like the walking dead; a spiritual zombie that has no life, even though he manages to make a pretty good living. But to us who believe, spiritual life has been granted, and although we have it, we are yet unable to fully explain it. It is a life that remains mostly hidden.

Colossians 3:3: For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

No amount of Biblical exposition will ever lay bare the full meaning of Colossians 3:3. Much of what we have as children of God, we experience without being able to explain it. We all at some point subjectively experience things like God's forgiveness, God's joy, God's mourning, God's restraint, God's guidance, God's yearning, God's discipline, God's peace, God's being a Father to us. And it is also true that when we neglect God, as I often do when I get very busy, that we can sense the absence of God's life in our lives. When that happens though, how do we get back to a life filled with God's life? Believe this promise from God...

James 4:8: Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you...

What a wonderful promise! This is something we should never forget; firstly, that seeking God is never in vain; and secondly, that we actually need to seek Him. There is no use in sitting in sack and ashes because you do not experience God's hand in your life, but then remain unwilling to draw close to Him. The very essence of spiritual, eternal life is based on a reconciled relationship with God through Christ Jesus. That life does not merely result in a relationship with God, but the very communion we have with Him is the life He gives. Just think about the significance of these words from Jesus:

John 17:3: And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Do you know God, or just know much about Him? Do you think about Him a lot, but never really pray to Him? Do you have much Bible knowledge, but never hear what God says to you? Do you read the Bible, but always as if it is information meant for someone else? Do you go to church, but only because it is expected of you? Do you love people, but only because it returns social capital? Do you manage to pull off the Christian look and lingo on the outside, but know yourself to be unrepented on the inside?

Returning to God requires the removal of double-minded, double-hearted intentions from us. The second part of that wonderful promise in James 4:8 reads....

James 4:8: ... Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

When we approach or re-approach God, it should never be just to get something from Him, but rather to have Him personally. As for the method; do you ever stop and think what it is you're doing when you pray, or when you read the Bible?

How incredible that a creature may talk to and petition the eternal, absolutely holy One that exists far beyond anything that we could theorise to be a dimension. He is more than supernatural; He is the creator of both the natural and the supernatural. He is outside of and beyond anything, yet conscious of

the exact movement and destiny of every quark and lepton in the universe, never mind the amount of hair on your head. Think about Who it is you're talking to when you pray. Look up at the stars and be in awe of Him. Love God for all His graces towards you!

And then, the reading of the Bible...

Matthew 4:4: ... It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

It is the words of God that are the source of any life, and it is the Word of God, Jesus, through whom we receive eternal life. The problem is that Jesus is not with us anymore, yet He is, by means of the Holy Spirit. It is one of those profound mysteries though, that God has determined for his Spirit and his Word to never work independently of each other. Biblical patterns show them to be inseparable and always interoperating. At creation, God's Spirit was hovering over the formless waters of the earth, seemingly in waiting for God to speak; ready to create according to His command (Gen 1:2) In the New Testament, we see that the only way that Scripture is life-bearing, is when it is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Conversely, the Holy Spirit is only life-giving where the Word of God is present. That is precisely why people are only saved through the gospel message. It is also why there are no other words, no other books but the Bible, that provides spiritual sustenance to the believer.

Can you be honest and sincere about the intentions of your heart? Can you pray? Can you read or listen to the Bible? If your answer is yes to all three these questions, then you are exactly as far or as close to God as you want to be. God has made a promise. It is up to you to react.

And so, it is also up to me to react, while making a living in New Zealand. There are many great and equally disappointing things I can tell you about life in New Zealand, but what matters most, is that Life in New Zealand, is the same as Life in South Africa, is the same as Life anywhere. We praise God for never leaving nor forsaking us. He truly is Emmanuel!

"The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"



WOMEN'S VALUE

Compiled by Natasha Dercksen

A Letter from Carol

Dear Friends

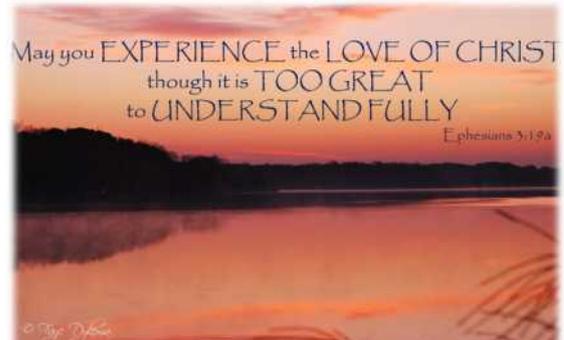
We are well into 2019 and it has been a sad year so far. The loss of Ellen Sher will leave a hole in our women's ministry. She was very involved in our young mum's Bible study as well as the cradle roll and keeping the crèche stocked at The Hill. We will miss her terribly.

As you know, the King's Rubies theme for 2019 is "Dancing in the Rain". We are going to be considering themes which high-light the fact that we can dance even when there is a storm all around us because we have a Father who loves each one. We have some exciting programmes lined up for 2019, including discovering your spiritual gifts entitled "mirror, mirror on the wall". Our next programme is entitled "beauty from brokenness" where we will be discovering how it is possible for abused women and prostitutes to come to know Christ. A blind lady will be coming to speak on "living the vine life". So ladies if you do not attend King's Rubies maybe you will change your mind and come and join us this year.

Now let's focus on the love of Christ:-

What we should know about God's love

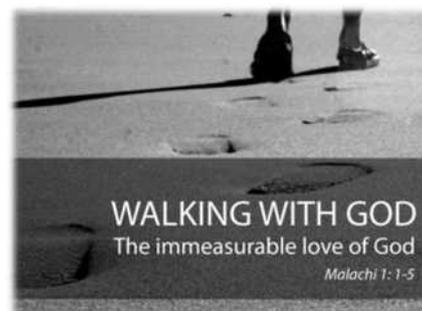
- ◊ God's love is not generic but He loves us individually, even with our warts and pimples, our failures, our inconsistencies and our unfaithfulness.
- ◊ God's love is incomprehensible. God is incomprehensible. We cannot define God's love. How do we fathom the love of God?



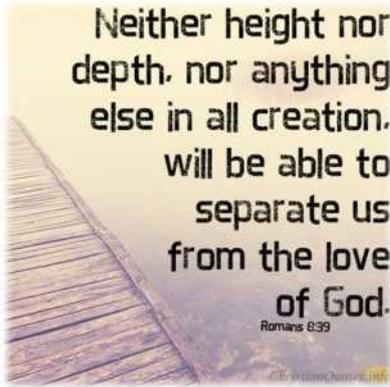
- ◊ God's love is different to ours, we love conditionally, Christ loves unconditionally.



- ◊ God's selective love is for those who embrace Him and walk in His ways.
- ◊ God has a special love for those who belong to Him.
- ◊ We need to understand that God's love is immeasurable. We cannot conceive the immeasurableness of God's love.



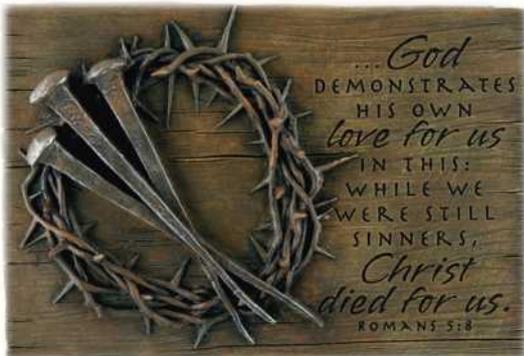
◇ God's love is eternal – Psalm 136:1.



◇ God's love is merciful, patient, kind and faithful – Psalm 86:15.



◇ God's love is free.
◇ God's love is complete.
◇ God's love is fruitful it brings us life.
◇ God's love is great – Ephesians 2:4.
◇ God loved us so much that He sent His Son to die on the cross so He can forgive us of our sins. Do you comprehend that? Often we have been a Christian too long and have forgotten what Jesus did for us and we look over the magnitude of this amazing sacrifice.

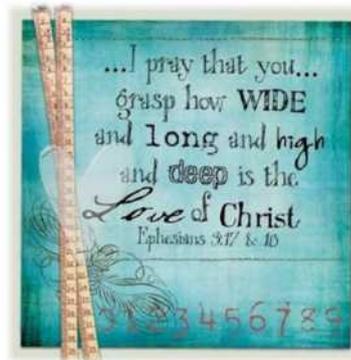


◇ This love of God should inspire us to love others because He first loved us – 1 John 4:19.
◇ Man's love will fail you but God's love never gives up.

◇ God loves us regardless of our shortcomings.



◇ God's love extends grace and mercy to us when we fall short of His glory – Romans 3:23.
◇ Finally this is how much God loves us:



There's a song about the love of Christ which goes like this:

Higher than the mountains that I face
Stronger than the power of the grave
Constant in the trial and the change
One thing remains Your love will never change

Your love never fails It never gives up
Never runs out on me
On and on and on and on it goes
It overwhelms and satisfies my soul
And I never ever have to be afraid
One thing remains

In death in life I'm confident and
Cover'd by the power of Your great love
My debt is paid there's nothing that
Can separate my heart from Your great love

May you this day discover the preciousness of God's love for you.

YES YOU.



WOMEN'S VALUE

Seasons change but God stays the same

by Natasha Dercksen

I write this letter to all the ladies at Central with a heavy heart and streams of tears rolling down my face as I will truly miss you all.

It has been the biggest privilege for me to be part of the ladies ministry at Central. In the past years that we have been members at Central, the ladies at Central were not only my sisters in Christ, they became part of my life. I will truly miss each one of you very much and will treasure you all in my heart forever.

I have learnt a lot from my fellow sisters, especially Carol de Kiewit who I love dearly. Although I will implement all I have learnt in the new season of our lives, I will truly miss my sisters. I want to thank all of you for just being you. Although seasons change, God stays

the same! Remember to keep your eyes on God, no matter what. **Psalm 34:8: "Open your mouth and taste, open your eyes and see - how good God is. Blessed are you who run to him".**

No matter what the season in our lives, we should all run to God! He is our rock.



Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

Psalm 90:2



WOMEN'S VALUE

During the family getaway weekend of 8 - 10 March 2019, the ladies of Central had great fellowship with each other



Fun, fun and more fun! Our ladies had a whole lot of fun!

We have talented ladies at Central



Photo's by Natasha Dercksen

Our ladies at Central are always willing to serve



Christobel Ansell and John Thomas



THE CRY OF THE CRUCIFIED

Written by Rev Dr Roger Scholtz, submitted by Valerie Cotton

In 2004 the entire world gasped in horror as a massive tsunami devastated SE Asia. Monster waves struck dozens of countries with terrifying force, bringing death to hundreds of thousands of people, and unspeakable grief and misery to millions more. The sheer scale of the suffering was beyond comprehension and I, like many others, was left with hard questions for which there are no easy answers.

When suffering of such magnitude occurs, the world cannot help but notice. But the truth is that tsunami-like experiences happen to regular people all the time. The scale of such suffering may be less, but not the impact for those who are involved.

A misty road, screeching brakes, a sickening thud, and suddenly an entire family is engulfed under waves of anguish and grief.

A careless sexual encounter leads to positive results on an HIV test, and suddenly a promising young life is plunged under waves of remorse and despair.

An unexpected call from the boss who's waiting with a grim look on his face and a letter of notice in his hand, and suddenly a breadwinner is swamped under waves of anger and fear.

Tsunami-like experiences happen every day, devastating people's lives and leaving them with hard questions for which there are no easy answers. Questions like "Why?" and "Where is God?" You may be living through such an experience right now.

So what can be said in the face of suffering that is so rife in our world? Is there a word from God for us? There is! You see, God's word comes to us not in letters and syllables but in flesh and blood. God's word comes to us in a person - his Son, Jesus, who also found himself caught up in a tsunami-like experience of his own.

It all began way back across the vast ocean of

human history, when a seismic event took place that shifted the very foundation plates of the world. It involved a man and a woman in a garden and the fruit of a forbidden tree. It might have seemed insignificant at the time, but that bite of disobedience set in motion a devastating force that grew and grew in power and scope and intensity. It was the force of sin that swept relentlessly across the ocean of human history, gathering up in its path men and women in every age.

Until Jesus entered the world. He was unlike anyone who had ever lived for he was without sin. And so he was able to stand in the face of this tidal wave of sin, refusing to get caught up in it, refusing to become a part of it. He lived a life of unparalleled beauty as he declared in his person the kind of life God had intended for us all from the very beginning. He was God's word. And as he stood, his life a sermon, so he marked the ground of God's Kingdom that the powers of sin could not breach.

But still they tried, and so suddenly this beautiful, innocent life was engulfed by the conspiring powers that swept over him. Betrayed. Abandoned. Denied. Falsely accused. Rejected. Mocked. Whipped, Hated, Crucified.

On the cross Jesus was plunged into the depth of the human condition, all of the mess and the muck and the violence and the hatred and the selfishness and the greed of the world flooded over him. And for the first time, he went under.

What would God's word have to say now?

Matthew tells the story like this. As Jesus hung on the cross, from noon until three in the afternoon, darkness came over the whole land. And then, at about three, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

These words mystify and worry us - Jesus expressing his sense of being forsaken by God. We're not too

sure what to make of them or how to handle them. We try to lessen their awful impact.

It is more satisfying to find in John's Gospel his last words, "It is finished!" Or we turn to Luke and hear him saying, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit".

But that's not how Matthew tells the story. The only words from Jesus on the cross that Matthew records are these, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" He's quoting from Psalm 22, which goes on to say, "Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer".

Here's a sobering thought; as Jesus dies an agonising death upon the cross, drowning under the tidal waves of sin, there is silence from heaven. Not a word. The voice that spoke at Jesus' baptism and again on the Mount of Transfiguration, the voice that he was the beloved Son of God with whom God was well pleased, that voice was now silent.

It offers no answer to Jesus' heartfelt question, "Why?"

And so a second time Jesus cries out in a loud voice and then, just like that, he is gone - dying as one who felt forsaken by God. That is how Matthew tells the story of the cross.

How could this possibly be good news? Well, Jesus' experience on the cross sounds very much like ours when the tidal waves of life engulf us. For like Jesus, the most common question people ask of God in the face of the inexplicable suffering is the question, "Why?" "Why can't I fall pregnant? Why does my child have cancer? Why did he suffer so long? Why did this tragedy happen? Why don't you do something? Why? Why? Why?" And, like Jesus, the answer most people get to this question is silence.

For some people this is reason enough to abandon their faith, to give up on this God who keeps silent in the face of suffering. "God doesn't care" they say, "God doesn't love. If he did then surely, he would break the silence. Surely he would speak". If that has been your experience, I want to say two things to you which I hope will be good news for you.

The first is this. *Don't make the mistake of thinking that because God is silent, God is absent.* The truth is that God's silence points to his presence with us in a fuller way. Not even God offers slick and easy answers to the difficult question around suffering. Even when God is blamed, he doesn't rush to his own defence. He honours the rawness of our predicament, he acknowledges the depth of our pain.

In silence, in holy silence, he hears our cries - the cries of the crucified. He receives our anguish. He holds our feelings. He is a silent companion, a silent comforter. In the silence, God is present. It's the experience of many who have lost a loved one - how in the desolation of their grief it's the people who come, not with clever words or trite answers, but simply with their loving presence who are the true mediators of God. God somehow finds them in that place which is beyond words and holds them there. With a presence that is real. This same God who would find you and hold you today.

The second thing is this: *remember that God has spoken a decisive word to the world.* It's the word God has spoken in the person of his Son, Jesus. And God trusts that word to be sufficient. That Jesus really is the answer to all the hard questions of life, for he has been there.

So listen to him. Listen to his life. Listen to him echoing your questioning cry. Listen to the cry of the crucified. Listen to him sharing your feeling of being forsaken, and you will realise that you cannot be forsaken, because you cannot be alone. Hear what Christ says from the cross, not just the words from his lips, but those of his life and his love. It is good news.

When the tsunami of sin and death broke over Jesus on the cross it consumed his life, but in doing so its power was spent. As he breathed his final breath, so the tide turned. The blood that had poured from his veins seeped into the earth. In a gathering, growing grace-full stream. A new wave was flowing over the world - a wave of forgiveness, and healing, and wholeness. That wave promises to wash over your life, today, tomorrow always.

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On a cruise around

Great Britain



by Gisela Nicholson

Last year I was privileged to join a cruise "Around Great Britain" from 26 August to 6 September 2018, with *Hand-in-Hand Tours*, a German Christian Touring Company. The crossing of the Channel from Bremerhaven, Germany, to London was a bit rough, and I felt a bit queasy. We arrived in London at 5:00 in the morning. Because I had been to London before I chose the bus trip to Leeds and Canterbury. Leeds Castle has an interesting history and a



beautiful park and garden around it – and that is where, after taking many pictures, my camera battery ran out. I had not thought of buying a spare one, so could not take any photos in Canterbury (the Cathedral, in any case, was being renovated and surrounded inside and out with scaffolding). The next stop was Falmouth from where we enjoyed the bus trip to Land's End through beautiful Cornwall with many old mineshaft structures testifying to its main source of income, namely the mining of tin, copper, gold and silver until the middle of the 18th century after which many families emigrated because there was no more work.

By the time the ship reached the next stop – Dublin, capital of the Republic of Ireland, - the companion of a friend who was also on the ship had found some cables, one of which fitted my camera, so that I could recharge the battery and so take photos again! After battling its way through the traffic in Dublin the bus stopped in

a park with beautiful big trees. Later we could exit the bus and take a later shuttle to the ship, so I walked around the city



and had a real Irish lunch in a pub. From the ship I took a photo of this bridge in the shape of a harp which is the emblem of Dublin.

Belfast, our next stop, was quite different, and I was struck by the signs (especially graffiti) that the fighting between Catholics and Protestants was still a very recent memory. We even stopped at an up to 18m high "peace wall" separating Catholic and Protestant areas. I was reminded of the Berlin Wall and found it rather depressing.



Then we sailed right around the Scottish Highlands and Islands to stop in Rosyth harbour from where a bus took us into the centre of Edinburgh. Here I joined the group that was guided by my friends Isolde and Paul James-Griffiths to be taken on a tour to see significant places of the City's Christian heritage. After lunch with them I slowly made my way to the shuttle stop, skipping from building to building in the pouring rain (the first and only rainy day on this cruise!) as I had not brought an umbrella. But near the bus stop

I had the best mug of tea of my whole Germany-trip and some Scottish cake to warm me up.

The last harbour to visit was Newcastle. A bus took our group to Durham and we walked up to the famous



Cathedral – a huge building with some interesting interior which we were, however, forbidden to photograph (ladies and gentlemen in gowns everywhere made sure we did not transgress!). While we were there tables and chairs were being set up inside the cathedral for a gala dinner of some secular organisation in Durham). After sailing through the North-Baltic Sea Canal during the night the cruise ended on the morning of 6 September in Kiel, Germany.



This is one of the orchid species named **The Flower of the Holy Spirit**. It starts blooming during the Pentecostal period once a year. Before bloom, it looks like praying saints, and when the flower blooms, it looks like a flying dove. How amazing is God's Creation!

Submitted by Noel Woodbridge

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HAPPENINGS @ CENTRAL

BIRTHS



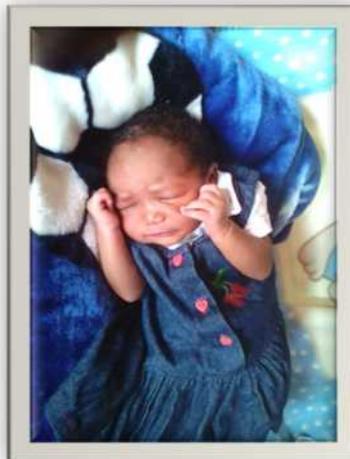
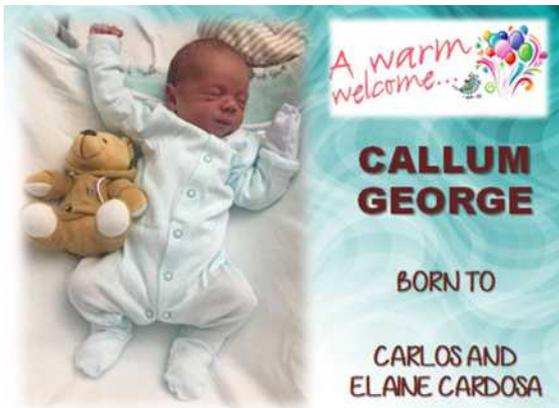
James, Kerryn, Brad and Sarah Salzwedel with Matthew



Warrick and Jess Jubber with Matthew Jude



Gloria N'Samba



Elina Hlanu



Baraka Ezra Piet



Brad and Janine Boman with Keziah



Phil and Charlene Harrald with Hannah Rebekah



BAPTISMS



Ayabonga Meko



Joshua Broli



Beauty Bankole



Tshildize Mahumela



Tanya Goxo



Christian Frische

MUMS AND TWEENS DAY OUT



ENGAGEMENT



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WEDDINGS



Daniel and Gabby McKee



Aubrey and Jess Lesetsa

OASIS CHRISTMAS TEA



JANUARY 2019 RAISED TO PRAISE



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"Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world." -James 1:27

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Starting a new year is always a mixture of joy and anticipation for the many possibilities and unknowns that God will bring into our lives.

Bethesda is filling a tremendous need here in Hammanskraal with so many orphans and vulnerable children and we are grateful to be a part of this ministry.

2019 promises to be a year that will stretch our faith, our finances, and give us opportunities to again glorify God as He meets our needs and draws us closer to Him.

Will you pray with us as we continue to rescue and raise children and develop additional means to help the vulnerable children in our area. -Rudi



"The orphan is not a cause. The orphan is not an issue. The orphan has a human face, and that face is Galilean. Jesus tells us that when we see the poor, the weak, the vulnerable, the tossed aside, we see Him there."

-Russell D. Moore—author of Adopted for Life and other books



THE CHRISTMAS OFFERING RESULTS ARE IN!



\$54,000/R730,000 RAISED!

This is the final number we have (to date) for our 2018 Christmas Offering. We are blown away by God's gracious gifts to us through all of you! Thank you!!

These funds will be used for two purposes:

- Development and establishing of a Temporary Safe Care home(s)
- Development of South African staff/leadership

Thank You for your Generosity to Bethesda

Go to our website and read our latest blog written by one of our houseparent couples.

“Worship Matters” by Alex and Mutinta Phiri

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NEW YEAR...NEW TEACHERS...NEW STUDENTS



Jabulane Christian Academy started the year with several new teachers, and a new admin assistant in the JCA office. We want to welcome Agnes, Karen, Matthew, and Joan to the JCA staff. We also opened a second Grade 2 classroom this year to keep up with the larger classes in the lower grades.

Overall, we have lost several students due to moves and other issues so you can pray with us that God will bring additional students in the first part of this year.



Have you ever wondered how you could help orphans and vulnerable children?

Here are some easy ways to get started:

- Pray for children in your own church and community
- Provide for some of their needs (school supplies, clothing, tutoring, teach a skill)
- Help the helpers by babysitting, taking the child(ren) out for an afternoon or providing transport to activities.
- Give money to people who are working with orphans—like Bethesda or missionaries who are working in this ministry.

Have a look at our resource page for more information and ideas

www.bethesdaoutreach.org/resources/



ANDY THE ANT



The "Andy the Ant" series of children's stories, written by Max Ansell, follows the adventures and experiences of Andy and his friends at a Mission school in Swaziland.

SONGA, THE CATERPILLAR

***"Seek first the kingdom of heaven and His will."
Matthew 6:33***

"Hey, Songa," shouted his sister, Singa, while he was sitting beneath a bush in the shade nibbling away at a fresh, juicy blade of grass and reading a caterpillar storybook, "have you heard the news?"

"What news?" asked Songa rather grumpily having been interrupted.

"Cindy the Caterpillar is going to spinning lessons so that she can learn to spin a cocoon and learn how to fix it to the branches so that she can turn into a butterfly," his sister explained.

"Bah!" snorted Songa angrily. "What nonsense, Singa. Don't tell me you believe those silly stories too? Caterpillars turning into butterflies! Ha! Ha! Ha! Next thing you'll start telling me you believe the Missionary's story about children of earth going to live in heaven. Grow up, Singa, it just doesn't happen."

"I think I do believe those stories the Missionary tells," said Singa quietly but not loud enough to start an argument with

Songa. "I do believe that butterflies come from caterpillars, I'm even going to join the same spinning class as Cindy."

Songa returned to his book. After a while he moved over to the rose bushes. He was a clever caterpillar, or so he told everyone and he know how to keep out of danger. He knew how to avoid insecticides and how to watch out for his enemies. He kept all the caterpillar rules very carefully.

"Bah!" he said again kicking a stone aggressively as he walked along. "I'm a good caterpillar and I certainly don't believe all this nonsense about becoming a butterfly." He spotted Andy the Ant. "Hey Andy," he called, "do caterpillars become butterflies?"

"I think so." Andy replied.

"Have you ever seen it happen? Have you ever seen a caterpillar become a butterfly?" Songa demanded aggressively, as if the whole thing were Andy's fault.

"No," admitted Andy, "but then I haven't lived very long."

"See, see" Songa went on, hardly listening to Andy, "it's all old wives tales."

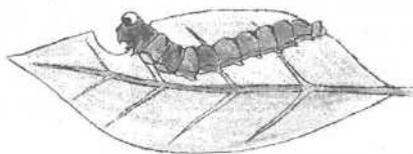
"I think you had better make absolutely sure of that Songa." Andy said wisely. "It could be very important for you to know." But Songa had already begun to move away and was no longer listening.

A few days later Songa was crawling near the plum tree when he looked up and saw Cindy busy in the branches. "What are you up to Cindy?" Songa asked, forgetting for the moment about caterpillars and butterflies. "What are you doing?"

"I'm spinning a cocoon, Songa. I'm going to change into a butterfly. You'd better start getting ready soon too." Cindy advised.

"Ha! Ha! I don't believe those stories," Songa laughed, "so don't bother me by telling me to get ready for something that will never happen. You sound like the Missionary when he warns the students to get ready for heaven and the return of Christ. Ha! Ha!", and with that he crawled off laughing.

The next day Songa woke up feeling a bit stiff in the joints. "Hullo," he said to himself. "I feel stiff and seem to be a darker brown, must be something I've eaten."



His stiffness grew worse, so he decided to pop in to see Doctor Dassie. Doctor Dassie

turned pale when he saw Songa. "What are you doing here?" he wanted to know. "Why are you not busy spinning a cocoon?"

"I don't know how to," Songa replied, "and anyway, why should I?"

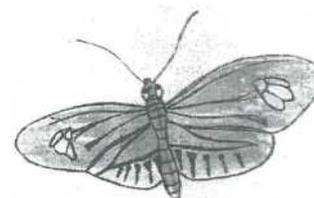
"Because you are busy changing into a chrysalis so that you can become a butterfly" came the answer.

"But I don't believe all that nonsense." Songa protested.

"Believe it or not, it's happening" said Dr. Dassie, "and I'm afraid that you are too late. You have no warm cocoon in which to prepare for your new life. You will freeze to death, that is, if something doesn't eat you first." Dr. Dassie looked sadly at Songa.

"Too late, too late!" he said shaking his head.

"Songa reminds me of some boys and girls who are very foolish," said the Missionary to the students a while later holding up the remains of Songa's chrysalis. "He was a good caterpillar, but he didn't prepare himself for the life of a butterfly. There are children who live their life on this earth well and to the full but are entirely unprepared for life in heaven. The Bible says that the only way to really be prepared for heaven is by receiving Jesus as your Saviour and following Him as your Lord. By doing this you prepare for yourself a home in heaven which cannot be destroyed."



GOD LOVES YOU

²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Matthew 10:29-31

A design of two sparrows on a mimosa branch by Kruger Gray – an engraver at the British Royal Mint – was depicted on the farthing from 1923 to 1960 and on the half cent between 1961 and 1964. A new sparrow design (based on a painting by Dick Findlay) by the renowned South African engraver, Tommy Sasseen, appeared on the one cent from 1965 to 1990 and on the half cent between 1970 – 1981. With the launching of our new coin series, a design by William Lumley, based on the original Kruger Gray design, was approved for the one cent. This design was depicted on our smallest coin in 1991.



The Cape Sparrow (*Passer melanurus*) is found throughout South Africa – except in the extreme east – in grasslands, cultivated land, and near human habitation. Sparrows

breed throughout the year, the incubation period

being 12 to 14 days. Their characteristic call is a clear, piercing chirrup-chirrup and chissik.

During the Anglo Boer War (1899 – 1902) a group of women in the Bethulie concentration camp adapted Matthew 10:29 as their motto for survival. These women vowed that if ever South Africa issued a farthing, a halfpenny, or a cent they would aspire to have the sparrow – their symbol of faith and hope – depicted on a coin. With the support of Mrs. Steyn, widow of the last President of the Orange Free State, the women honoured their vow and from 1923 the sparrow had been portrayed on South Africa's previously lowest denomination.



Submitted by Margie Martin

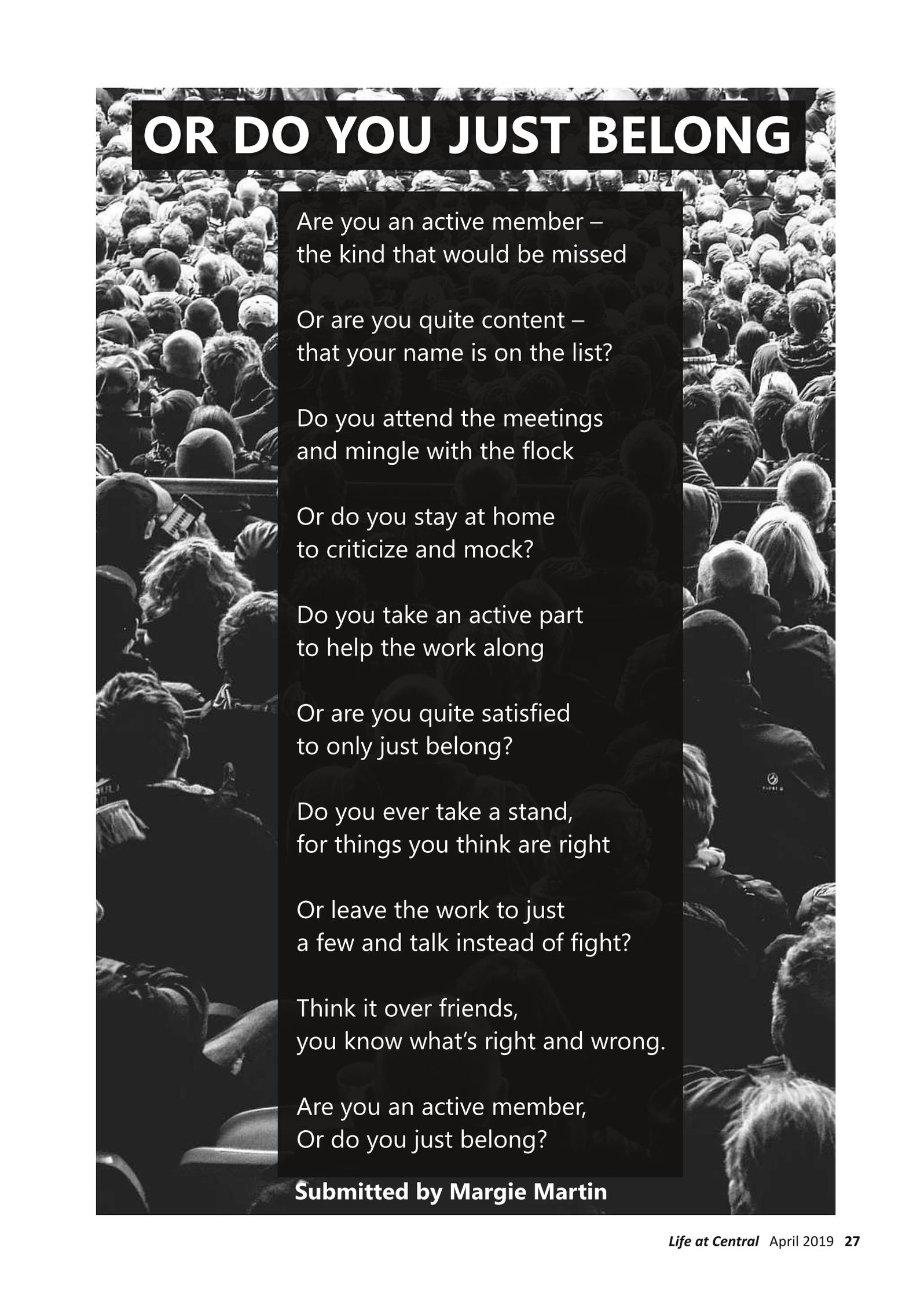
The *Life at Central* Magazine

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this edition! Any articles or contributions for the next edition can be emailed to life@central.org.za.

Download the magazine in pdf format (colour) from the Central website: <http://www.central.org.za>

Previous editions (2006 to 2018) are also available.

Articles for *Women's Value* compiled by Natasha Dercksen. Edited by Daniel Salzwedel.



OR DO YOU JUST BELONG

Are you an active member –
the kind that would be missed

Or are you quite content –
that your name is on the list?

Do you attend the meetings
and mingle with the flock

Or do you stay at home
to criticize and mock?

Do you take an active part
to help the work along

Or are you quite satisfied
to only just belong?

Do you ever take a stand,
for things you think are right

Or leave the work to just
a few and talk instead of fight?

Think it over friends,
you know what's right and wrong.

Are you an active member,
Or do you just belong?

Submitted by Margie Martin

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