

God is with us



As Christians, we believe in a God who is a Trinitarian relationship of love, who created our universe out of love and is present in all of creation. God is also a Being who loves us and all creation and is the Ruler of a kingdom. God is love, life and a mystery to us, but God has been and is with us as our companion and/or friend for all of our lives and therefore knows us totally, through and through.

God cannot be seen or photographed by us. God's presence in the universe can be in part likened to air. We may not often think about the air we breathe, but without the correct air for us, with oxygen in it, etc., we cannot live. Like God's presence, we need air around us, and to breathe it in and out of our lungs to live.

The photo on this leaflet can be explained as a photo of the air that we cannot see. It can also be described as a photo of God's presence, also unseen, taken from the platform at Kempsey Railway Station. We see light and darkness in the clouds, suggesting perhaps, joy and sadness, along with trees where birds shelter, a house where human beings live and empty railway lines—all places

where God is present.

Acknowledging God's presence in all creation should influence how we relate to others, human and non-human, caring for them and being cared by them, and respecting them. Trees may need to be maintained to enable koalas to live, plants must be watered if there is no rain, air needs to be kept clean for the benefit of all, and so on.

We can believe that God is everywhere, and is always with us and loving us, but how does God express such a loving hidden relationship with each of us, and can we respond by loving others like God does?

If we turn to the Gospels, Jesus, (God incarnate as a human being and one of us), tells us and shows us how to love. He tells us in the Lord's Prayer that God rules the kingdom of God on earth. We are to pray to God, "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven...". We know that this kingdom is not ruled by domination or controlled by a powerful army belonging to God, rather in it we are allowed, as human beings made in the image of God, (Genesis 1:26-31), the freedom to respond to God and choose to love, obey, serve and be at one with God, or not.

In his life on earth, Jesus gave us examples for us to follow and learn how we might relate to others, be with them, and reveal God's love in that relationship. In John 8:3-11, the scribes and Pharisees are said to have brought a woman taken in adultery to Jesus, wanting him to agree to her being stoned as the law commanded. Jesus quietly, gently and lovingly responded. After bending down and writing on the ground, he told them that the person who had never sinned could throw the first stone. All eventually went away leaving just the woman and Jesus. Jesus did not condemn her, but told her to go and not to sin again.

We are in the season of Easter and have been hearing the gospel readings about the risen Jesus as he met with his disciples, not as a dominating triumphant leader, but often as an unknown stranger appearing in the events of everyday life.

We had Jesus showing care for Mary Magdalene and the other women grieving over his death, and the disappearance of his dead body. Later there was the story of Jesus joining Cleopas and his companion as they walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus. During this journey, Jesus asked questions about what

they had been discussing and listened to their answers, before explaining to them the strange events that were puzzling them. Eventually he revealed his identity when, as a guest at the table with them, he blessed and broke the bread, and joy replaced stress. In these meetings and others, Jesus did not punish anyone for doing wrong. Even the chief priests who demanded his crucifixion were not harmed or chastised.

At present we have wars going on in our world, particularly in the Middle East. In the Weekend Australian 18-19 April, 2026, Pope Leo XIV was reported as lamenting that war was back in vogue, and said, "peace is sought through weapons as a condition for asserting one's own dominion." Cardinal McElroy supported the Pope and declared at the Pope's vigil for peace (April 11), that, "we must be builders of peace among nations, rejecting the pathway of war that lures us toward the ending of civilisations and the pursuit of domination rather than true peace."

To me this seems to reflect how Jesus worked. It could also be applied to the recent acts of anti-Semitism in our country. Our loving God is with us regardless of where we are or what we have done, and accepts us as we are, but works to transform us by encouraging us to love, care for and respect all others, human and non-human, and also ourselves.

Easter with its story of resurrection and new life, can remind us, as Rowan Williams writes in 'God with Us', p.105, "In him (the risen Jesus Christ) our life begins afresh day by day, because he is, and always will be, *God with us.*"

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