



Toorak Uniting Church

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Still thinking—Gratitude by Christopher Page

It is good to be back at TUC after almost 2 months away. It has been a very “interesting” time taking leave after my head injury and pondering the seriousness of the possible consequences of my actions! I wrote some time ago about how life can change in a matter of minutes or even seconds. It is important to live by the truth that for each of us life is a gift and as a gift we do not have ultimate control over it. It is true that with care we can minimize the harm we may do to ourselves or to others, but there always remains a degree of chance and even randomness in what happens to us.

In the last couple of weeks I have read the autobiography of Oliver Sacks (the bump on my head doesn't seem to have left any residual cognitive impairment. But time will tell!!) Sacks was a neurologist who held the belief that the brain is the most incredible organism in the universe. No doubt time will prove him right or wrong. From his studies of the brain he became increasingly interested in people and the lives they lived, which were formed by the activity of their brains. He observed psychotic and neurotic behaviours and wrote several books from his intimate knowledge of these people and the functioning of their brains.

But his autobiography is more than neurological tales. Sacks who died last year at the age of 82 from metastases that had migrated from an ocular tumour to his liver and brain, lived a full and rich life. He revealed late in his life that he had always been homosexual, painful shy and at the age of 41 almost died from a hiking accident.

Nevertheless, he wrote that at the age of 81, there was one attitude that remained primary in his life and that was a sense of gratitude. He wrote: *“[...at the end of my life] my predominate feeling is gratitude. I have loved and been loved. I have been given much and I have given something in return. Above all, I have been a sentient being a thinking animal, on this beautiful planet and that in itself has been an enormous privilege and adventure.”*

Welcome to Toorak Uniting Church

We welcome all people irrespective of race, religion, political views, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, or age. Wherever you are on your faith journey, wherever you have come from and wherever you are going to; whatever you believe, whatever you do not believe, you are welcome here at Toorak Uniting Church.

Please come and join us after the service for fellowship and a cup of tea or coffee.

After spending the last 2 months contemplating my own life and the possible ramifications of my rather foolish actions, my predominant feeling is gratitude. But not only for the reason that I was not seriously injured, which I am of course grateful; but for the many cards and letters I received expressing love and support for me in my recovery. It is truly humbling to be loved and to be the recipient of care and compassion. I am thankful to all who showed their love for me in word, thought or deed and particularly because I think that compassion is the truest way in which we can show the love of God. I'll finish with a verse from one of my favourite hymns:

*Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done, in whom his world rejoices;
who from our mothers' arms has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.*

Christopher

Greetings from Liliana and Wolfgang Stahlberg in Denver, Colorado

We are delighted to pass on to our congregation the Christmas and New Year Greetings from our recent Roach Exchange Minister, Rev Dr Wolfgang Stahlberg and his wife, Liliana. They both fondly recall the wonderful times they had at TUC and thank everyone for their hospitality and loving care of their family while they were here.

They have been busy resuming their lives in Denver and holding their own Christmas celebrations with their congregations. For Wolfgang, January is particularly busy as he plans for his retirement from the Denver Community Church at the end of January 2016. He will then continue to do interim work for local congregations in transition. Liliana is enjoying being back with her congregation in Denver and plans to continue her ministry for 6 or 7 more years, as well as continuing research studies about how to link childhood development with ways of presenting Christ's message.

From the Roach Exchange Committee

Next Sunday February 14 there will be after church discussion in the Faichney Room after morning tea between 11:45am – 12:30pm. Christopher will lead the conversation around the theme of Sir Lloyd Geering's 'Exploring The Future of Religion'.

Planned Giving Envelopes for 2016 are now available. Please collect your set. If you would like to join the Planned Giving Stewardship Programme of TUC, please contact Stan Laugher on 9813 5242 or email stanlaugher@acslink.net.au.

TUC's Email address & Website

Please note that our email address and website have changed.

Please update your contacts to reflect our new email as: office@toorakuc.org.au
and the website as www.toorakuc.org.au

Whole Church Family Service

Our First WCF Service will be on Sunday February 28 at 10:15am (there will be no 9am service that morning). The service will be followed by a light lunch in the Faichney Room—all welcome.

Diary Dates

Mon	08 Feb	10.30am	Drop in Card Day	Faichney Room
Wed	10 Feb	6.30pm	PB Handbell Beginners	Wettenhall Room
Wed	10 Feb	7.45pm	PB Handbell Advanced	Wettenhall Room
Wed	10 Feb	7.30pm	Finance Committee	TBC
Thur	11 Feb	9.00am	UAT meeting	Faichney Room
Thur	11 Feb	7.45pm	TEM meeting AGM	Our Lady of Lourdes
Sun	14 Feb	9.00am	Family worship service	Wal Baker
Sun	14 Feb	10.15am	Morning worship service	Christopher Page
Tue	16 Feb	4.30pm	Management Team	Wettenhall Room
Thur	18 Feb	10.00am	Morning Group	Faichney Room
Sun	21 Feb	9.00am	Family worship service	Christopher Page
Sun	21 Feb	10.15am	Morning worship service	Christopher Page

Time for Fellowship

We have discontinued the monthly luncheon, but instead will hold morning tea at 11:00am on the last Monday of each month (February 29).

The topic for February will be: "What I did after Christmas"
Everyone welcome. Ask Lenore or Jean for details.





A Compleitive Circle at
The Wellspring Spirituality Centre, in Y St Ashburton

Wednesday, February 17, 2016
from 10am – 12:30pm

A Contemplative Circle draws on Parker Palmer's bestselling book, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey toward the Undivided Life*, and is a place to explore one's inner life with others through readings, poems, symbols, story and conversation.

By accessing ancient and contemporary wisdom, a deeper spiritual approach to life can develop. The Circle meets on the third Wednesday each month and uses the "outer landscape," such as ocean, mountain, desert, forest and the seasons as metaphors and images of our inner life.

Parker Palmer is an author, educator and activist who focusses on issues in education, community, leadership, spirituality and social change.

All are welcome

The cost of each session is \$22:50 for concession and Wellspring members and the full price is \$28:00. There is also an annual retreat in Glenburn in the Yarra Valley and all are welcome to attend

For more information call Chris Page on 0417 506 338

What you are in love with and what seizes your imagination, will affect everything in your life. It will decide what gets you out of bed in the morning; the person you are and the care you will show to others... (paraphrase)
Pedro Arrupe: Compassion in the Heart