**St Andrew’s on The Terrace. Sunday, 18 November 2018 Transgender Day of Remembrance ‘Holding the opposites in tension’**

**Readings for the Gathering**

**Gospel Matthew 26: 36-39**

**36**Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” **37**He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. **38**Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”

**39**Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

**Contemporary reading from “Jung and the New Age’**  by David Tacey

But Jung argues that conventional religions morality has misread its own religious symbols. The way of Christ is not, he argues, a way that leads to the privileging of the light above the dark, but a radical way that leads to the integrative or both/and perspective. This is why Jung often argues that Christ is a symbol of the Self, namely, the archetype that leads to psychological integration and whose dynamic energies lead to ‘wholeness’. For Jung, the symbol of Christ upon the Cross is a major world-symbol for the inevitable suffering that results from the human experience of being pulled in opposite directions, or from enduring the pain of the tension between the archetypal opposites.

**The Reflection**

I was thrilled to get an academic paper sent to me last week from Frances Bird. Frances has been awarded a PhD on her thesis on the Glamaphones! She’s also written a paper from the thesis specifically on the relationship between the choir and St Andrew’s. Fascinating. Today, in just a few minutes, I want to bounce off one of the comments Frances quotes in her paper. It’s about what we might call the elephant in the room – the great big cross at the front of the building!

Crosses aren’t popular these days when waved by a conservative and domineering, abusive church. Yet they are popularly used on roadsides at crash sites. I’ve just been in Dunedin where 4,000 white crosses made by the local Menz Shed have been a feature of the armistice commemorations at the cenotaph. The triumphal use of the cross as a trademarked logo contrasts with this use of the cross as a symbol of sacrifice. But, suggests David Tacey in our contemporary reading, perhaps neither have it quite right. (David is a Jungian lecturer of English literature, now retired, but at one-time lectured at La Trobe in Melbourne.)

The meaning to which Tacey refers is important today when we are enjoying having the Glamaphones with us and as we commemorate the struggle and in too many cases, the deaths of transgendered people here and overseas.

Though this cross here at St Andrew’s is larger than life and imposing, built in dark wood and shining with varnish, it is in fact an Iona cross. This echoes the spirituality of the Celts, an Earth-friendly, organic spirituality with a grounded, rooted quality. The circle at its centre symbolises wholeness, the completeness which comes when we achieve authenticity ourselves and in our relationships. A key word for a transgender day of any sort; *authenticity* is the ultimate goal in the search made through gender transition.

The Christian cross is one of many examples of a tree of life. Like the more rooted and branched tree of life symbols which you will have seen, the cross connects earth and heaven – it keeps contact between our ordinary human lives here in the mud and glory of life with the joy and love and lightness associated with the word heavenly. Just as a little child sees Christmas lights going on and raises their hands in joy and wonder, so the cross points us up into joy and into light, yet remains rooted in reality.

The horizontal bar of the cross is like arms stretched wide open in an accepting loving embrace, wide enough for the whole world to be included. But even more than a wide, loving embrace, the cross also can be seen as one person – Jesus is the Christian example of this - stretching wide to hold the opposites of our life together. To keep the lovers and the haters in dialogue, to keep those who suffer in the circle, to keep male and female connected, for as a female makes the transition to male or a male to female, they find that still within is the Other. It is not rejecting one for the other, but embracing each, though perhaps in a different proportion than before.

It is here that our wholeness is forged, here in the intersection of our groundedness and our lightness, here in our holding together of the opposites which are inevitable in our human existence. And the Iona cross gives us that symbol, above all cross shapes, with the circle of tension and struggle right at the intersection of those continuums – for some of us not only two continuums crossing each other here at the point of struggle, but multiple continuums as we deal with being lover, sister, brother, wife husband, colleague and friend and more…

Some suggest the circle at the heart of a Celtic cross comes from the pagan symbol of the sun God. Supremely, that suggests all our lives are crucibles in which we are being refined more and more into our true likeness, into wholeness and authenticity. For Christians the cross is a reminder that Jesus knows about pain and struggle and is with us in solidarity in so many of the dark moments of our lives

It is no wonder it is hard work sometimes simply being human, that it is hard work transitioning our mode of being human, that it is hard work coming out and being true to yourself. It is no wonder that life expectancy for trans people can be as low as 35 years in the Americas, even worse if you are a person of colour. For when we deal with all these changes and rearrangements and returns to ourselves we are ‘making’ ourselves, we are holding opposites together in tension.

Let us make that tension a loving, creative one so we can all grow from it. When we do that we are doing God-work.

And, thank God, there are moments, sometimes even within the struggle, when we experience the joy of being fully alive because we have endured the struggle.

That is what Christianity is about, not triumphal waving of a dominating cross-symbol of pain and torture to keep victims down.

It’s about a cross which shows us all standing tall and proud on this earth, holding opposites together in tension.

It is about loving ourselves as we are.

It is about loving others enough to die for the right if needed as Jesus died.

And for most of us it is about living well here and now

so the right and the good, tolerance and justice will flourish on the Earth

for all of us.

Susan Jones