



Rev Linda Murphy

Acts 4:32-35
John 20:19-31

Second Sunday of Easter
11 April 2021

Our community has been busy since Palm Sunday, setting up the labyrinth, washing hands on Maundy Thursday, and gathering on Good Friday, celebrating Holy Saturday at sunset culminating with Easter Day. We have been able to celebrate this time as a community. We have been able to come together, singing "Christ the Lord is Risen Today, Alleluia".

We are now in the fifty days of the Easter season which finishes on the Day of Pentecost. This year is so different to 2020 when we were in lockdown due to the Covid pandemic and were unable to gather as community. Sadly many in the Northern hemisphere still unable to gather as a community to celebrate Easter.

The City Mission has also had a very busy time over Holy Week and this past week. On Maundy Thursday we farewelled our Missioner Chris Farrelly with an emotionally poignant waiata and haka preceded his new journey with his whanau and discovering the joys of retirement.

On Thursday we had a powhiri here at St Matthews to welcome Helen Robinson as our tenth Missioner. The church was full of staff and many Aucklanders associated with the Auckland City Mission. Helen was supported by her whanau mostly from Wellington and the many organisations she has been involved with during her life. Bishop Ross and Bishop Kito installed Helen

as our ten Missioner our second woman to be a Missioner. This was a beautiful powhiri, and I wish to thank Waiora Port for the wonderful support she offered Helen for this special day.

During Eastertide we hear readings from the Book of Acts telling the story of the early believers of "The Way". Today's reading describes an idyllic community:

"Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common".

We know that at that time, communal communities, such as those at Qumran and Essenes, existed so our early followers of the way were probably not seen as unusual in this ancient world. We also know from further reading in Acts that those who had land and property were allowed to keep their property if they wished.

We are a community of hope and because we're a community of hope we don't give up on those who have lost hope. Sometimes we feel hopeless ourselves, but we don't even give up on ourselves.

If God can raise Jesus from the dead, then there is always hope in God. So we are called to be a community of hope: never giving up on others, or ourselves, because God doesn't give up on us.

The Auckland City Mission is an example of a hope community standing with the desperate people of Auckland and we have been doing this for one hundred years and counting.

Our eighth Missioner Dame Diane Robertson had a vision which became known as the Mission in the City. This vision was the development of the site next door where the Mission has operated since the 1980s.

This vision has now been realised in the building that is now nearly complete called Homeground. This building will house forty chronically homeless individuals and forty people who need social housing this will be a new community on our doorstep. Homeground will have a Detox unit that includes both medical and social detox, and medical centre, Calder Health with a dentist to name a few of our new facilities.

When I joined the Mission a decade ago we had a very small team working with the homeless in our city and giving food support to all who came asking however we knew there were many who needed support but were not able to come through those doors on Hobson Street.

During our Covid lockdown last year, with the support of MSD, we housed the majority of the City's rough sleepers. Our Street to Home team now supports nearly two hundred people in housing. Many are still in emergency accommodation due to Auckland's chronic housing shortage.

In preparation to our move to Homeground we have adapted our work practices and employed many new staff. We are a transformed community. We start our working day with waiata and karakia, hearing the Lord's Prayer sung in Te Reo each morning is just joyous and amazing you can feel the spirit of "God is alive in the land".

John's Gospel tells the story of Thomas' doubt about Jesus' resurrection. For me Thomas' doubt seems perfectly reasonable. The resurrection story is difficult to accept at face value. Jesus was crucified, truly dead and then the tomb is empty. Then Jesus appears to the women and later the disciples. A truly miraculous story that requires faith.

"Have you believed because you have seen me?"

When Dame Diane first proposed The Mission in the City there were many doubters and then there was the GFC (Global Financial Crisis) so the project was closed. The homeless

numbers were growing in our City. Chris Farrelly and Helen Robinson, as GM Social Services, along with the board worked to establish Homeground and find the money to complete this huge undertaking, a mere \$100+ million.

The doubters started to believe, the people of Auckland supported the project financially and the government also have contributed. The Auckland City Mission has become a social housing provider, health service provider and offers those in need food security. We have been able to achieve this by having faith and believe ..."*blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe*". A huge amount of work has already happened and there is even more work ahead of us.

We moved out of our Hobson Street site to Union Street in September 2018. We shared our last meal in Drop-in on a Friday and opened the doors at Union St on Saturday sharing breakfast in Haeata...that was remarkable.

There is a team now planning our return in a few months, the task is enormous. However we do have faith and believe that this move back to our home will be as smooth and seamless as our leaving.

As Easter people, a community of hope, we can believe this will happen very soon and a whole new beginning will take place right on our doorstep. The Mission and St Matthews' community will have a new way of living with each other. We may have new members of our congregation, the Mission staff may come more frequently and you may all find ways to come into Homeground to connect with the Mission. Many of you already volunteer in Haeata and I do hope many more will join you.

As we walk through the remaining days of our Easter season, contemplate the wonderful story of a determined doubter who gradually found his way to faith, who came to see the Wounded One as God in his own times.