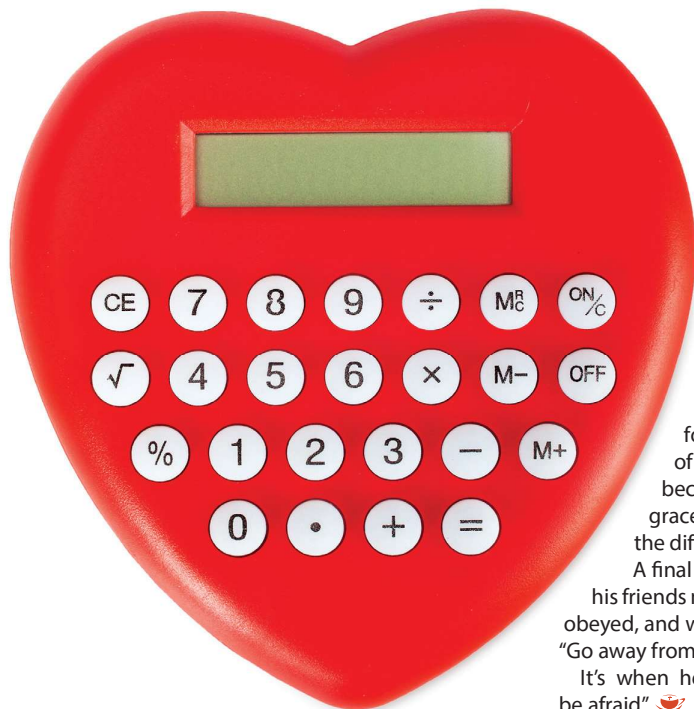


The logic of love



Rob Hayter *reflects on* Isaiah 6:1-8 [9-end], 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 and Luke 5:1-11

In today's readings we see the "logic of love" at work. We begin in the magnificent Jerusalem Temple. Isaiah, a young man, deeply devoted to the Lord, stands in prayer. Suddenly, a vision opens up before him, a glimpse of God surrounded by angels crying "Holy, holy, holy". He is stunned and at the same time deeply conscious of his own smallness and unworthiness. "I am lost," he cries, "a man of unclean lips." It's then, when he realises his own inadequacy, that burning coals applied to his lips seem to sear him clean to the depths of his being. Now he is able to declare: "Here am I; send me!"

The second example is Paul, once a leader in the persecution of Christ's followers, who after his dramatic conversion was led by the hand of a follower of Christ. It was the recognition of his unworthiness that made him fit to become an apostle. "I am... unfit to be called an apostle," he writes. "But by the grace of God I am what I am." It was God's grace, not his worthiness, that made all the difference.

A final example of the logic of love is found in the Gospel. How annoyed Peter and his friends must have been when Jesus told them to launch again into the deep. But they obeyed, and when Peter saw the bumper catch he found himself on his knees, crying out: "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!"

It's when he's overwhelmed, as Isaiah and Paul were, that the call comes: "Do not be afraid". 🍷

Poetry and faith

Part 1 – Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

by Julia McGuinness

A new series in which Julia McGuinness looks at poetry and its relevance for Christian life.

She would doubtless be astonished to know her reputation today as one of America's most important nineteenth-century poets. In her lifetime, only ten of her 1,800 poems were published.

She herself was little out in the world. She dropped out of college and by the age of thirty was living a reclusive life mostly indoors in Amherst, Massachusetts. Within the confines of these walls her poetic

life expanded, as she crafted lyric poems of extraordinary originality and unconventionality for their time. Untitled, written in short lines, with half-rhymes, unexpected capitals and punctuation, they focus on themes of death, immortality and spirituality.

Dickinson professed no Christian faith, though she did attest to the enduring power of hope, which she describes as "the thing with feathers". We know little of the storms of life through which hope's song sustained this poet, only that she is grateful for that "never, in extremity / It asked a crumb of me." 🍷

“ There are two kinds of people: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, 'All right, then, have it your way.'”

C. S. Lewis (1898-1963), writer and theologian

Lord, it's easy to be disheartened by my inability to live up to my baptismal calling. Only when I realise that your name is mercy, can I draw closer to you and become what you want me to be. Amen.

Finding God on the smallholding

by Jeni Parsons

I haven't seen the other side of this small valley for almost a week. It's been mild with thick mist for days – the sort that makes you very wet in a short time. The sheep and ducks cope much better than I do and I feel more like a hen, grumpy with wet feathers.

Thick mist distorts not just my vision but also how sound travels. I can hear a neighbour

hammering posts but I can't see them. There are birds but their song is muted. Are my hearing and sight going? There's a real loneliness in being cut off like this.

That's what waiting for spring is like, that's what waiting for God is like. Yet both God and the spring are just nearby – under my feet in the earth there are new beginnings and God is all around, if I just stop fretting and rest in it all. 🍷