

**“More than enough” a sermon based on Ephesians 3:14-21 and John 6:1-21
preached by Kerry Enright at Knox Church Dunedin New Zealand on 29 July 2018.**

Ephesians is thought to be a circular letter sent to several churches. Perhaps it got its name because the Ephesians were the first to receive it. So, down the line, here is a prayer for us. Bill Loader calls it a rollicking prayer of tumbling phrases.

“For this reason I bow my knees. I pray that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through God’s Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.”

Relating to this, the philosopher Simone Weil wrote: “To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul. Uprootedness is by far the most dangerous malady to which human societies are exposed, for it is a self-propagating one.”

Those who are truly uprooted, she says, either fall into a “spiritual lethargy resembling death,” or they set out, often by violent means, to uproot those not yet uprooted ... To have a strong and dependable system that provides nourishment, to be grounded, sure of who you are and what your life is about: this is indeed one of the most important needs of the human soul.”

Grounded in love ... I came to know him when they joined the congregation of which I was minister. A couple - their children had grown up and moved away. He had been a school teacher and had become what were called school inspectors in those days, a senior school inspector, helping teachers and schools improve. A long time in that role he had served in the north and south and in parts of New Zealand where families struggled. Now he was retired. He decided against committees. He had a capacity for friendship. He would take the bus in order to meet people. He would sit on the park bench in order to meet people. He would go early to the bus stop in order to meet people. He would come to church early in order to meet people. I was never sure where to see him sitting. He might not initiate the conversation but often did. In a respectful, unobtrusive, safe and quiet way he would start a conversation that would enable the other person to feel at ease, to feel secure, to have a warm, kindly presence beside

them. People invariably left his company heartened. I left his company heartened. He heartens me still. That couple did as much as any for the renewal of that congregation.

Grounded in love ... She was new to church, new to Dunedin, a student. After a couple of Sundays of being here, she saw that we were distributing some gifts to people who were not able to leave the places they lived. Shut in, some people call them. She asked me – is there anyone I could visit? And she did. Sixty years difference in age. When she could. To a retirement village. And another student, new to Dunedin, asked one night – is there anyone I could help? And as he asked me, an older person was walking past and I said to the older person – do you need any help? And the man's face lit up. They made an appointment there and then. And so the student helped the older man move his belongings. It happened as easily as that. And another – 95 years old – not entirely mobile but fine on the phone. There were some she phoned once a week, for conversation. Some less mobile than her. No burden. Just natural.

A strong and dependable system grounded in love.

Our nation is still dealing with uprootedness. Tangata whenua, whose land this is, yet where I grew up the land was confiscated, torn away. Uprooted.

People coming here from countries where their families have long lived, torn by war and violence and oppression. Uprooted.

People will increasingly come from low-lying lands. Already in Fiji and Samoa, villages have moved inland and their cemeteries have been left exposed to the sea. Uprooted.

People where home is unreliable, where affection is erratic, where violence erupts, or where people have to earn love. How uprooted people can come to feel.

By contrast, in the words of Simone Weil, there are ways of becoming together a strong and dependable system that provides nourishment, so people are grounded, sure of who they are and what their life is about.

It happens ordinary. Ordinary people. Ordinary humanity. Ordinary interaction. Everyday. Until it becomes dependable.

There is more than enough love here for giving away. God's love is not rationed. And it can spread from the most unlikely.

A boy with five loaves and two fish. Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, distributed them, and twelve baskets were left over. Love is not for rationing or keeping. In Christ, given and received, love multiplies.

The prayer is that we may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ.

Ten years ago, I sat with a small group in Ambon, Maluku in Indonesia. Young people had formed a group called Young Ambassadors for Peace. The city had been riven with deadly deep conflict between Muslims and Christians. 5000 people killed. 700,000 people displaced. Deep distrust and hatred.

After some time a young Christian woman, displaced from her home, reached out to Muslim people living nearby. Relationships developed. Distrust diminished. The group was formed. Over time they trained civic and church leaders in the way of peace. I participated in one of their week-long workshops and we had come to the last event. People had named their bitterness, their prejudice, their stereotyping and now we were sitting on the floor, lighting candles. It was too much for a young Muslim man, and he shouted out and swept the candles aside in a dramatic flourish. He was not sure he wanted peace with these Christians that had done so much harm. And so we waited, and young people gathered around him, and embraced him and talked quietly with him. And after a while, he indicated he was willing to try again. So we began the process of each person lighting a candle in front of them until there was a circle of light.

Over time, from that small group, peace spread. While I was there, a Muslim taxi driver had an accident. Some Christian people took him to the hospital. The rumour spread that the Christians had abducted him. Years before that would

have been enough to provoke destruction. But the young people's group had established such a network, that the rumour was quickly silenced.

Love is not always that dramatic. Love may be so ordinary we hardly notice. Whether it is ordinary or dramatic, abundant life comes from living the expansiveness of this love. When I became part of the church as an adult, it was accepting love that I noticed most. That was what drew me in and sent me out. It still does.

Adapting the words of the King James Version – “Now unto God who by the power at work within us is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

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