

“I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me”.
“Even so come Lord Jesus” Rev 22.
Christmas 2019

Dear neighbours and friends,



We began 2019 with a 6day family cruise from Sydney to Gladstone.

We thank the Lord we have had no big dramas this year. Arthur has continued supporting 103.5 FM, the local assembly, Scripture at Cargo, ASReml and Echidna and travelled to New Zealand, England, Netherlands, USA and Bangladesh. Ellen also came to New Zealand and has had several visits to Hobart (where we celebrate her 70th with her sister Mary) and Newcastle.

Poest has finished at Cardiff high school and is enjoying a TAFE course. Daisy has 1 year to go. Truli is enjoying participation in a choir and Sterling completes primary school this year. Julie-Ann had 1 week long work trip to USA while Keith keeps working from home and for the community.

Hannah was devastated when the dogs got into her chooks and killed 3 because Kelvin had not made the hen-house secure. He has found work as a brickies labourer in between working for the church and trips to USA and Indonesia facilitating Bible translation. Kathleen has 3 Cocker Spaniel dogs which she

shows and breeds in between working for an optical surgeon. Hyland and Theo enjoy school and sport. We are delighted with all our grandchildren.

Lois has redeveloped EchidnaMMS.org for me following on from her TAFE course; she continues to live in Glebe and has activities scheduled for most days. Andrew is in Orange helping at church as well as working in IT for a local windows manufacturer.



Figure 1 Groningen Town Square



Figure 2 Gopalganj, Bangladesh

The recent Sydney (University) Alumni Magazine (2019 10::192) includes a research report on the placebo and nocebo effects. Often a placebo works and the patient recovers even when the patient knows the treatment does nothing at all. Healing occurs because the body responds to the idea of treatment. A nocebo effect is when the body reacts as if sick although there is no actual issue. While the effect is real, the mechanism is little understood but is related to the patient's expectation. Just being cared for can improve the expectation and hence outcome.

Jesus told his disciples 'Have faith in God' (Mark 11:22), going on to say we will receive our requests if we believe. So Peter says, 'Cast your care on the Lord for He cares for you' (1 Peter 5:7). It has long been established that just to believe in God results in better health and recovery from sickness. Godly living is associated with better eating, better sleeping and less risky behavior but there is more to it than that. I do not think that God especially intervenes and shows favouritism to believers, but rather He has many contingency plans in place which kick in when we rest on Him. The power of positive thinking is part of the design of life. The greatest contingency plan though is His provision for our evil hearts: we do things we know are wrong leading to a guilty conscience and fear of punishment. Jesus had a pure heart, yet suffered crucifixion as the punishment for our sin so that 'if we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness' (1 John 1:9), thus clearing our conscience. Next time you are in a dark place, look to 'the light of the world' and 'have faith in God'.

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