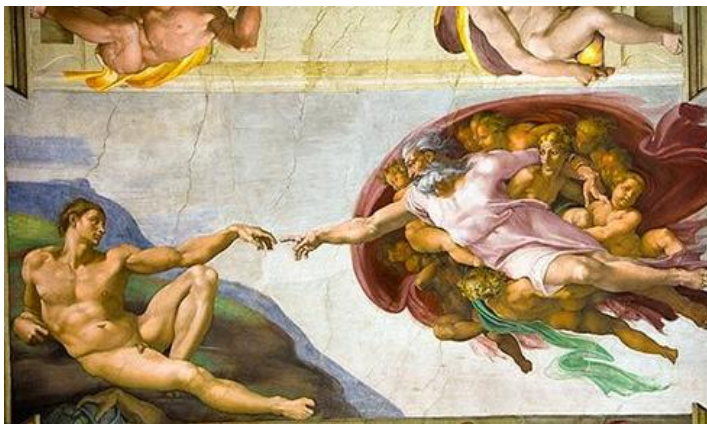


Presbytery of North East Victoria
Chairperson's letter of Encouragement, June 2026

A few years ago some American visitors wanted to know where I came from, so I took them beyond Hay onto the One Tree Plain where we camped overnight. (It wasn't quite where I came from, but the country looked the same and was a lot closer). As the campfire sank, and the darkness immediately around us grew, we saw a night sky that few see anymore. The Milky Way stretched from horizon to horizon and there were so many stars that I had to work hard to find the Southern Cross. Between the stars in the Milky Way there was not darkness but a lesser light - light that looked like clouds ebbing and flowing - and there was movement of a different kind. Whole star systems, as though held at a central point, turned on an axis across the sky. It took my breath away. My spirit soured. It was one of those moments where I felt more alive, more in tune, more connected. In that moment I knew myself one with the holy other. Amazing, uplifting, deeply joyous.

The author, John V Taylor, talks about moments like these, and others that happen in the very ordinary moments of life, as the work of the Spirit of God and I agree. The work of the Spirit seems to me to be to awaken us to life in ways that are more vital than it otherwise would be. It is the work of the Spirit to awaken us, to alert us, to draw us to the holy.

We sometimes think of those who have gone before us as less sophisticated, but the writer of the second story of creation in Genesis, knew exactly this. The Spirit of God carried on the breath of God, is breathed in by the human and the one who has been described by name as lifeless - lifeless as dirt or as clay (the meaning of the name Adam) is enlivened.



The artist Michaelangelo understood this with a slightly different image. Look at the hand. Adam, with all the bodily potential for vigour, is listless, and the figure representing God is dynamic, transmitting life, transmitting vigor, with the merest touch of a finger tip.

I have experienced this enlivening before and since my trip beyond Hay and I know that you have too, to greater and lesser degrees, in the ordinary things of life. In moments of birth and death, in the quiet warmth of friendship, in walks by the

river or through the bush, moments in gardens and favourite places. My book friend, Annie Dillard, introduced me to the idea that the Spirit is at work, that the holy can be seen, even in things that we might be accustomed to think savage or ugly or repulsive. Given attention, there is a quickening in us as the fish strikes its insect prey with precision and beauty of movement, in the hunter and the hunted. If we look with eyes that seek understanding, we can be awakened to awe at the self-giving sacrifice of the moth irreversibly drawn to the beauty and power of the flame. With eyes seeking understanding we can experience the same sense of awe as we contemplate Jesus' self-giving on the cross for the sake of love. To give oneself for something bigger- these things have the power to touch us deeply.

We struggle sometimes to find ways to talk about our faith, especially at a time when many are far from the language of faith that is familiar to us. Here is a starting point. Everybody knows that feeling of awe and wonder in a newborn, or a sunrise. A deeper relationship, and the capacity to talk about deeper things begins when the holiness of the moment is named, the tug of the Spirit in our own lives acknowledged and exploration invited. Such a wonderful thing to share, such a wonderful thing to invite people to look for in their own lives. May such blessing be yours,

Gereldine