

CONCERN

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THE TRUTH OF THE RESURRECTION

J. B. Phillips (1906-82) is one of the great modern translators of the New Testament. In 1967 he wrote a small book entitled *Ring of Truth: A Translator's Testimony*, in which he comments on the wonderful verses in Luke's Gospel describing what happened on the road to Emmaus. (24: 13-35).

Let us freely admit that the stories of the rising from the dead of the man Jesus are not mounted or arranged as evidence for any court of law – or for that matter for any critic. I should be highly suspicious of them if they were. People who are frightened and despairing, suddenly confronted with evidence which contradicts all their previous experience of life, can hardly be considered to be ideal witnesses. Wouldn't you be shaken to the marrow if a young man, whom you had seen die publicly and in agony on Friday, greeted you with a cheerful greeting on the following Sunday?

Does it *matter* whether there was one "man in white", or two, who spoke to the bewildered women at the opened sepulchre? Can we not understand that a woman half-crazy with grief and with eyes nearly blind with weeping should mistake a male figure in the early morning light for the gardener?

Have we never been so overwhelmed with grief or disappointment, or both, that we literally do not *see* anything else?

I am therefore not in the least worried by the story of the walk to Emmaus (recorded only by Luke, and possibly recovered by him in his patient researches). I see no difficulty in believing that the minds of Cleopas and his companion were so utterly preoccupied with the collapse of their hopes and dreams that they did not recognize Jesus. Obviously all the time that they had been walking with him their despair was melting, and their faith in Jesus, God's Christ, was coming back to life. But the "psychological moment" came when they were relaxed at a friendly table, and a familiar gesture brought instant recognition. It all "clicked into place"

as we say in modern slang, or, as Luke records, "their eyes were opened and they knew him."

Now no one makes up a story like this. No one ever has, or ever will. This rings true: **this certainly happened.**



Clara's Journey*

I am an 86-year-old Senior. My parents did not attend church, but when I was about seven years old a dear neighbour lady took me to Sunday School in the United Church in Bayfield, Ontario. I loved to sing the hymns and listen to the Bible stories. I felt the touch of God's Spirit, but no one told me that I was a sinner in need of a Saviour and that Jesus died for me. That came later when I was 14 and a dear couple from London were holding evangelistic meetings in the Bayfield town hall. A dear lady led me to faith in Jesus at the close of one of those meetings.

During the 30's, 40's, and 50's I continued to serve in my beloved United Church, teaching Sunday School, singing in the choir, and being involved in Young Peoples. But as the Church drifted from the truth of the Apostles' Creed which we recited in every communion service, I left the United Church for a denomination where the name of Jesus is lifted up.

But my roots and memories are still in the United Church, and I remember godly people there who had an influence in my young life and have gone on to glory. So I am thrilled to know that there are still in the United Church men and women who have stood firmly for the faith of our fathers, "in spite of dungeon, fire, and sword." How true it is, as your newsletter said, that this "new age" theology is "Christianity without Christ, Spirituality without the Holy Spirit, and Godliness without God."

God bless all of you in the Community of Concern. He will reward you for your faithfulness.

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* Clara Patrick comes from Goderich, and we thank her for giving us permission to publish her letter.



In Grateful Memory



Those of you who have phoned the COC office from places all across the country will well remember the happy voice and infectious laugh of our Office Administrator, Irma Salmon. Irma died of cancer on December 26 after a lengthy period of poor health.

As I was looking through some of my papers I found this note sent to Irma years ago after John formally resigned from the Presidency and we expected an end to our COC leadership.

Dear Irma,

We can't express how much your wonderful laugh, good sense, and zany humour have meant to us these past 7 years. Quite simply, we were meant for each other!

Irma became part of our staff in 1993, when she was interviewed in our office which was then in Zion United Church. She was hired without hesitation, and was part of the COC family ever since. Perhaps her happiest time was when the office was moved to our daughter's basement, and she became "Grandma Salmon" to the two Martens babies. At Executive meetings held there she always produced coffee and goodies which were very gladly accepted! But her most stressful assignment must surely have been the many demands made on her by our *Faithfulness Today* conferences between 1990 and 1996. At times like this her husband Lawrence was an invaluable helper.

On behalf of all of the COC family, we extend our sincere sympathy to her family. May she rest in peace.

UNITED CHURCH MEMBERSHIP LOSS (1988-2007)

1988-90 (Moderator: Sang Chul Lee)	34,536
1990-92 (Moderator: Walter Farquharson)	43,648
1992-94 (Moderator: Stan McKay)	31,513
1994-97 (Moderator: Marion Best)	41,018
1997-2000 (Moderator: Bill Phipps)	44,646
2000-03 (Moderator: Marion Parady)	44,171
2003-06 (Moderator: Peter Short)	51,564
2006-09 (Moderator: David Giuliano)	27,962*
TOTAL	319,040†

* The figure for the third year of David Giuliano’s term of office as Moderator will be added to this two-year total when it becomes available next year.

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† This figure shows that the massively expensive “Emerging Spirit” campaign to win back the lost generation of 30- to 45- years olds has so far been a spectacular failure – though one might argue that it is still too early to say. What is not too early to say, however, is that the liberal theology espoused by the past eight Moderators over the last twenty years has had disastrous results as far as church membership is concerned.

**REMEMBER THE FUN WE HAD AT LAST YEAR’S MEETING?
COME AGAIN!**

WHEN? Saturday, April 25, 2009, at 10:00 a.m.

WHERE? Ryerson United Church, 842 Main Street East, Hamilton

PARKING? AMPLE PARKING IN THE SCHOOLYARD BEHIND THE CHURCH

WHAT’S GOING ON?

MORNING:

- Worship Service
- Receipt of Reports
- Election of Officers

LUNCH: provided by the church
for a minimum charge

Be sure to look at our Outreach Display!

AFTERNOON: Don’t miss the Hymn Sing!

SPECIAL SPEAKER
Chaplain Jeff Chalmers

NEED A RIDE? CALL US –

We’ll do our best to arrange one.

Come share in the laughter, inspiration, warm
friendship, and Christ-centred worship.

The more the merrier:

BRING SOMEONE WITH YOU!

IT’S WORTH THE DRIVE TO HAMILTON!

Please phone 1-800-465-7186 or 905-318-9244 so that we can predict attendance



Remember this – that a personal religion which remains individualistic and unshared soon loses its own freshness and glow and certainty; whereas a faith which goes forth witnessing confirms itself, and gathers strength and vigour and momentum. To go on holding your peace, when good tidings are in your heart, is eventually to reach the point where even for yourself God’s mightiest works seem drab and common and unmeaning.

To tell the good tidings and to share them with the world that needs them is to keep the flame of wonder and adoration continually alive and burning on the altar of your own heart. Therefore – **send the good tidings on.**

– James S. Stewart as quoted in Rev. J. Raymond Corbett’s *Underlinings: An Anthology of Daily Readings*, p. 60.

Making Ends Meet

These are troubling times. There are terrible accidents, jobs are being lost, and the word “recession” is everywhere. Yet many of us take heart as we remember how our parents weathered the gale during the last depression, cutting back where they could but still giving from what little they had to their church.

It is, then, a time when we wish we didn’t have to ask you for *anything*. But unfortunately even COC can’t run on good will alone. **We need funds to keep going.**

The backbone of our organization has always been the dedicated support of folks like you who believe in what we are trying to do. We were born into the United Church, and it is our dedication to making the voice of reform and renewal heard that feeds our determination to serve and encourage you.

It is remarkable how many people say they can’t afford to give to any charity, but at the same time enjoy a comfortable lifestyle. When John and I were first married we made up a budget with money put away on the first of the month – for rent, for food, for insurance, for our church, and, if anything was left over, for entertainment. Somehow we made ends meet. In the same way, could you put a little aside for COC whenever you can? We want to continue our prophetic witness, and to stand up for what you believe and the values you cherish.

Please help us make ends meet. If you can’t afford much, a small donation can do wonders. Thank you again for your faithfulness.