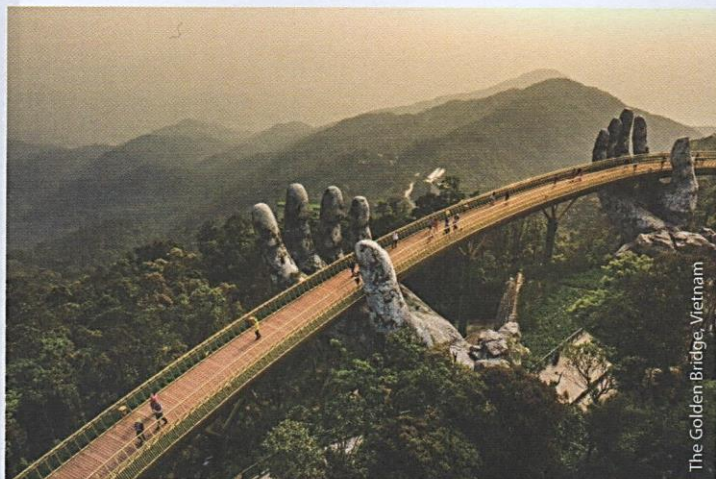


Be the bridge



The Golden Bridge, Vietnam

Lord God, like Peter, Paul and Ananias, we are listening for your command. Whether that is feeding your sheep, travelling great distances, or caring for someone after a life-changing event, show us how we can become the bridge between you and others. Amen.

In praise of pointless activity

by Victoria Scholes

There's an easy nonchalance to the story of creation in Genesis 1. Ocean, sky, land, plants, sun, moon, animals and lastly, humankind, come into existence as if God were experimenting with the fabric of the universe and found it unexpectedly pleasing. We don't know what spurred God into this creative flurry – just that God did it and found it good.

When I gave up paid employment to study art I often found myself called upon to justify what many saw as a pointless

activity – something that should remain a hobby. It reminded me of the story of creation. We live in a world of objectives, mission statements, deadlines and targets. We are masters of purposeful activity (perhaps more slaves than masters). Indeed, during the pandemic, in lockdown, many people reported rediscovering the joy of reviving long-lost hobbies, particularly to support mental health.

How can something God proclaimed to be good be a second-rate pastime, relegated to the margins of life? At the end of the day, I am all for a bit of pointless activity. ☺

“Trying to do the Lord's work in your own strength is the most confusing, exhausting, and tedious of all work. But when you are filled with the Holy Spirit, then the ministry of Jesus just flows out of you.”

Corrie ten Boom (1892-1983), Dutch Christian watchmaker and writer

Caroline Hodgson *reflects on* John 21:1-19 and Acts 9:1-6 [7-20]

After the miracle of the catch of fish, Jesus prepares breakfast for the disciples, before commissioning Peter three times with the task of feeding his sheep. Each time the command is subtly different. The Greek used the first time literally translates as “pasture the lambs”, with a sense of nurturing and feeding. The second time the emphasis is on supervising and overseeing.

In Acts we read the astonishing story of Saul who, after an intense experience of Jesus, is utterly changed in an instant, from persecutor of Jesus' sheep, to someone whose mission is to feed them. In answer to his calling, Paul will travel tens of thousands of miles, write tens of thousands of words (somewhere between a quarter and half of the New Testament), and will be rejected, reviled, persecuted and imprisoned. That's quite some career change.

Paul's conversion experience is so strong that he is literally floored by it. He also loses his sight and is unable to eat or drink for several days. So, although he is changed in the moment of encountering Christ, before Saul the persecutor can become Paul the apostle he needs a little nurturing himself. Up steps Ananias, roused from his sleep, obedient to God despite Saul's fearsome reputation. Interestingly, God uses a human “bridge” between an encounter with Christ and a great missionary life.

How can we act as a bridge for God today? ☺

Philip the Apostle

by Caroline Hodgson

Philip, along with James, is commemorated tomorrow. Caroline Hodgson looks at his apostolic role.

Philip the Apostle (not to be confused with Philip the Evangelist) was one of the twelve. His name is peppered throughout John's Gospel. Chapter 1 (43-49) recounts Philip's calling as a disciple. It was Philip who introduced Nathanael to Jesus. At the Passover, when they were surrounded by a large crowd, it was Philip whom Jesus asked where they could buy bread. It

was Philip who was approached by some Greeks wishing to meet Jesus, and Philip who, during the Last Supper, asked Jesus to show them the Father.

We might describe Philip's role as a small speaking part. As far as we know, he didn't walk on water, nor was he present at the transfiguration, and it was Thomas, not Philip, who was invited by the resurrected Jesus to touch his side.

What Philip did do, though, was to be there. He showed up, asked questions and played his part. We can't all have the big starring roles, but if our calling is as a supporting actor, it's important to do it to the best of our ability. ☺