**Shaking hands**

By Bill Pugh

We enjoyed watching the Beijing Olympics. Such a wonderful display of expertise. Athletes enduring ice, snow and wind to compete for a medal.

Such athletic jumps over obstacles, wheeling around corners, doing somersaults. Training for months, even years, to compete.

What sacrifices must have been made. And it all can be in vain if a terrible injury happens. Yet the challenge is worth it.

As I watched, one human reaction stood out. They were fierce competitors. But win or lose, they ended up with words and hugs for their opponents, whatever the result.

They celebrated their sport. They were thankful to be able to compete.

**Reflection:**

The attitude and spirit of those athletes is a comment and example of how we are called to live life. Paul in his Letter to Timothy epitomises the reward of the athletes, who live the good life.

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.”

And there is a prize to come. Worth all the endeavour.

“From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on the day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.” (2nd Timothy 4:7)

**Keeping your home in order**

By Bill Pugh

Wherever we live: home, flat, rental or as an owner, we have a responsibility to care for our property, to keep it in order.

Not only for upkeep of that property but also for our responsibility as owner, buyer or tenant.

For the Christian, maintenance and care is a lesson in stewardship.

There is a spiritual lesson in regard to maintenance and care. It measures our ability to prepare for our home in the next life.

Proverbs reminds us that “by wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established.”

The Psalms remind us that the master builder is the Lord. And all construction to be successful has his guidance and patience.

Jesus teaches that excellence in little things fits us for greater responsibility. Paul reminds us of our responsibility to care for family and relatives.

And in Colossians he reminds us of our responsibility to live and work in love. To be bound together in harmony.

**Reflection:**

In sum, the lesson of Bible teaching is that this life is a preparation for living in the home of many mansions above.

How we work and act, here and now, prepares us for the life above. There is no vision of a heavenly home where we will live in absolute luxury.

We will be in the presence of a working, creating God. And we will have responsibilities and stewardship, in line with his creative purpose.

We begin by keeping and leaving our earthly home in order.

**The faith of Easter**

By Bill Pugh

For most of us Christmas was great. Family, dinner, presents, carols and being together.

Not so in many places and countries. Covid did not go away. Injections provided helped and lessened the impact, but Covid did not go away. A variant called Omicron has emerged, spreading everywhere. Hospitals are not coping.

The psalmist praises a God who heals all diseases. What do Christians make of this? So many dying from Covid?

We live in a world where we are subject to sin and disease and death. The promise of Easter is that whatever happens in this life there is new life and a new beginning.

There are many crosses to bear on our journey. But the cross of Good Friday becomes an empty cross on Easter Day.

God raised Jesus from the dead. In church we affirm the faith of Easter, that nothing can separate us from the love of God.

**Reflection:**

The promises of Jesus ring true for every situation in life: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.”

Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:1-7)

**The open door policy**

By Bill Pugh

A friend has retired from his day job but he is busier than ever.

Community service fills many hours. He is active in the garden too, as he helps his wife, who has green fingers.

He is very involved in his local Anglican Church.

A new vicar has arrived. He wants to have the church available for people to come in and pray on week days.

There is an “open” sign placed outside the front door every week day.

A volunteer is inside in a quiet corner, available if anyone needs help.

Our friend is on the roster.

Quite recently a man came in, sat for a while, and left in tears. Nothing was said, no communication was made. All our friend could do was to pray for the needs of a stranger, assuring him of God’s presence, sensitivity and understanding.

The open door was the avenue to our Father.

**Reflection:**

“It shall come to pass that before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear, says the Lord.” (Isaiah 65:24)