

From isolated Ken and Elizabeth Joyce to our separated friends.

In your isolation you might be running out of things to do so we thought you might like to read a letter from us – to find out what we have been doing.

In January, before the corona virus was given it's official name and we were free to live normal lives we drove to Woorim Beach on Bribie Island for a week in a home of friends of Chris and Brooke, spending time with family and walking. We visited Lily's brand new and beautifully set up school on its opening day.

The big event however, was on the Australia Day weekend. Christopher's eldest daughter Eliza married Lachlan Goff at her mother's property in a very pretty valley out from Brisbane. The reception was in the local hall lit up like a fairyland and catered by Lachlan's church friends. The weather was perfect and the countryside was fresh and green. Some good rain had refreshed the land after many months of drought.



We had a couple of wonderful concerts in town. One was to raise money for bushfire victims and included David Helfgott. Another had the Bellingen Youth Orchestra string group playing with the Australian Haydn Ensemble. We never cease to be amazed at the skill of those young musicians.

In February we were not yet pinned down but we were up to "elbow bumping" stage.

In March we drove to Tamworth for a lovely visit with Clare, one of the cohort who started nurse training with Elizabeth nearly 60 years ago. The next day we drove to spend a night in the motel in Molong, collecting a stone thrown up to damage the windscreen beyond repair. We could still drive to Canberra the next day and stayed there for the next 4 days in the Canberra Rex hotel.

In the early 1970s we had some exciting experiences in Canberra with the Jesus counterculture and an experimental Christian Encounter Group and the House Church movement. This led to some intense relationships and friendships which have only grown in the nearly 50 years since.

One of the group, Lorraine Loughton had manoeuvred for a couple of years to arrange a reunion which would combine with a 90th birthday celebration for John Brummel. It was a great success even while we fought off the urge to greet each other with enthusiastic hugs and resort to silly actions. There has to be a lot of talking and a lot of listening when catching up with 50 years of news.

We had a wonderful time with John and Laurell over lunch at the National Art Gallery and then Laurell (a volunteer guide at the gallery) took us on a personal tour of the current Matisse/Picasso exhibition. It's a comment on me to admit that I see a lot more in these famous art works when it is pointed out to me.

It had been important to us during our short time in Canberra to have the support of a House Church, mostly with Clive (now with the Lord) and Ruth Monty. The Arboretum was a beautiful place to have lunch with Ruth and with Charles. Both are now widowed.

We had not seen these people for very many years so it was breathtaking how near and dear they all were so suddenly. It will be even more so in heaven together!



We also visited Anna's daughter Elisha and Sam at their unit and went out to dinner with them. The next morning we were out early to watch the hot-air balloons float up and over Lake Burley Griffin on a beautiful, chilly morning.

We drove through the bushfire ravaged country via Nerriga, full of wonder at the way so much is regenerating so soon. What an amazing creation!



In Shoalhaven Heads Elizabeth visited the Monday morning ladies Bible study she had been member of when we lived there, six years ago. Altogether nearly 20 friends joined

us for morning tea at Three Pots cafe and/or Mountain Ridge winery for lunch.

We wandered around what had been our home for over 40 years to see what Clinton had done since he bought it from us. Amazing! What was grazing paddock is now one lush landscaped garden room after another, the driveway realigned as it should have been, the boundaries screened with bamboo. The house has had some changes and much improved and modernised.



The trip to Gosford should have been quick and simple but traffic diversions spoiled that! However, it was great to see how comfortable Colleen and John are in their unit with all sorts of options for activity and a very green outlook into the trees. Ken met John the first day he started teaching in 1969.



While we were away our handyman friend Peter finished remodelling our kitchen by taking out the rusted old oven, putting in the new cupboard and bench top and tiling the floor in front of it. Peter rode over on his horse with a bunch of roses for Elizabeth.

What we DON'T DO now we are back home isolated to our home and garden. Things like walking down town for shopping and coffee, or to church. Bible Study group and weekly prayer meeting are on hold. Concerts are cancelled. Weekly exercise class is off, and Elizabeth only had one lesson with her class in Special Religious Education (Scripture) before it was closed. There is no playgroup to take the kids across the road to, and visitors are kept away.

So what we DO is sleep in, have our usual Bible reading and prayer time, read books - often on our front veranda, watch cows in the valley and see they do not always maintain good social distancing, do some gardening, go to several churches on-line and go out for a walk late in the day when there are even fewer people around to interact with.

We have supplies in hand to keep us going. Anna has offered to bring us shopping, the local IGA will deliver if we phone in an order, as will the pharmacy.

With all this staying at home the main feeling we have is that we are retired.

Remotely we send best wishes for your post COVID19 survival. And have a blessed Easter as we give thanks for our salvation in Christ's death and powerful resurrection.

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