

# Focus on faith



Heather Smith *reflects on* Matthew 14:22-33

Commentators on this story about Jesus walking on the water very often focus on faith. Peter steps out in faith on to the water, but it fails him and he begins to sink. But in the earlier part of the story we read about weary sailors whose boat has been battered by the winds all night and who now find themselves far from land. When they see Jesus coming towards them, their exhausted minds imagine they are seeing a ghost. The alternative, a human being walking on water, is not something they can even begin to process. A ghost is the most likely explanation that their experience and understanding of life can produce.

It is very easy to see only what we are accustomed to seeing, or to interpret what we see and hear based on old, familiar patterns. But God is constantly bringing something new, if only we see it. How often we forget that the Christian life is all about transformation and change. God wants to change our way of thinking, to bring us different perspectives that change our understanding of the world around us. We often see only the old ghosts that haunt us with incidents and feelings from the past. God sends something alive and new, with infinite possibilities, if we grasp them with faith. ☺

God, who blows the wind of change across our lives, help us to feel the breeze it brings and, refreshed, move forward in new ways. Amen.

## Finding God on the smallholding

by Jeni Parsons

It's quiet here in August, although everything is growing, some things faster than others! The poly tunnel is a riot of greens and we can't keep up. Lambs and ducklings seem to double in size every week. The grass is good and the sheep are grazing well.

In the "fat times" it seems easy to take it all for granted and assume that nothing will change and there will always be plenty. That is when I need to look beyond my own small space and be aware of bigger movements, greater events. Climate change and the pressure on land and water in other places, leading to more movement of people as refugees, have to be in my prayers and my political choices. My being here is deeply connected with their lives there, wherever that is. God is not my God, who cares only about me and mine, but is our God, who loves and cares about the whole of creation. ☺

## Summer holidays

by Andrew Lyon

If all holidays are special, holy times, set apart from the world, then what might be the spiritual dimension to this? Is retreating from the world enough in itself, without a simultaneous movement towards something transcendent? Do all our holidays have to be holy days? The absence of our regular routine may be refreshing, and certainly creates

space, but what do we choose to fill that time with? Hopefully there will be fun and relaxation. But will we also make time for reflection and restoration – space to put everyday worries into perspective? And need the two, in any case, be mutually exclusive?

If God is creator, everything in the world is saturated with God. There need be no sacred-secular divide. Quietly orientating our minds towards God in the midst of whatever we are doing while we're on holiday is enough, perhaps, to make us conscious of the holiness that is already at work in our lives. ☺

“When Christ shall come, with shouts of acclamation, and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart! Then I shall bow, in humble adoration, and there proclaim, 'My God, how great thou art!'”

Based on a poem by Carl Boberg (1859-1940), Swedish poet