

# Peace in the Universe

**John 14:23-29** Jesus answered Judas (not Iscariot): "Those who love me will keep my word, and the Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. 24 Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

25 "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. 28 You heard me say to you: 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. 29 And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe."



**Elaine Wainwright** is a biblical scholar specialising in eco-feminist interpretation and is currently writing a Wisdom Commentary on Matthew's Gospel.

ELAINE WAINWRIGHT suggests that the latest space discoveries invite us to read John 14:23-29 with a whole new appreciation of love and relationship in the cosmos.

**A**t this time of year we ponder more explicitly the extraordinary moments of death and life that weave their way through our experience. These moments are always with us, but at Easter our faith communities invite us to attend to this rhythm of life and death even more intimately.

With attentiveness we can expand our horizons with growing ecological awareness. We recognise that these patterns are woven not just in the human community but in the fabric of the entire universe.

While I was composing this reflection an article by Dennis Overbye arrived in my inbox called "Darkness Visible, Finally: Astronomers Capture First Ever Image of a Black Hole". It opened a whole new appreciation of John's text for me.

As the title suggests, Overbye recognises an extraordinarily new phenomenon — an *image* of the unobservable. A black hole — a cosmic abyss so deep and dense that not even light can escape it.

What could this revelation about the story of the cosmos mean for us enlightened by resurrection?

As we undertake these journeys deep into the cosmos, we are reminded of the relational quality evoked by the

words of the Johannine text: "love me", "love them", "make our home with them".

We have tended to read these texts as being directed to humans only. But an ecological reading goes further. In dialogue with Denis Edwards' work last month (*TM* April 2019), I wrote about our engagement with resurrection as including the "inner meaning of creation". I think that Overbye's discussion of the Black Hole can extend the meaning even further when he notes that "supermassive black holes can be the most luminous objects in the universe". It now seems to me that we are being invited to a new way of reading – to a "universal" as well as "ecological" way.

The Johannine text (Jn 14:23-29) names the recipients of Jesus's words as "disciples". How might this text be expanded if we understand the recipients/disciples to be not only humans but all other-than-human – including the universal?

This means that they, too, are addressed as caught up in the network of right relationships (love) that includes divinity as well as the human Jesus. It is in this new context that disciples are reminded of all that Jesus has taught them. This includes the new ecological perspectives into which disciples are being instructed.

In the Johannine text this new perspective is named peace: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives" (Jn 14:27).

The text recognises that this peace differs from that of "the world" – of the human community. We can now read this text as that peace which includes the ecological and the universal – a peace far beyond what the world can give. **i**



## My Passion in Social Justice

I am passionate about awareness of mental health issues in New Zealand and what we can do to help. I believe this is important because of the huge number who experience depression and suicide in our community.


The reason I am so passionate is because of my own struggles with my anxiety. I also have friends and family who are held down by their mental health issues and I know that people are uncomfortable talking about it. That's why I believe it's important to raise awareness so that it becomes normal to discuss mental health in groups of supportive people.

To help address this topic and initiate discussions about mental health, my goal is to hold an event where we are all free to discuss ourselves and our friends and family. Another idea is to simply discuss mental health because the first step to overcoming mental health issues is to talk about them with family and friends. If everyone was to open up about our issues around mental health, then people wouldn't hide this part of themselves away. I believe that talking about it with others is the first step. **i**



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