

## VIEW FROM THE HEIGHTS

### Summer 2022

*“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2: 15 KJV*

Greetings,

This past month, I participated in the dedication of the new Medford library.

It was a blessing to be part of the Medford Interfaith Clergy group again after our long Covid separation. It was also my first opportunity to see Medford's impressive Charlotte and William Bloomberg Public Library. I hope it's main problem will be overuse!

Reading and learning are part and parcel of being a Jesus follower. Ever since he expounded the Torah to both women and men, education has played a crucial role in Christ-ian ministries. Medieval convents provided women with the opportunity for advanced academical study. Harvard University was founded to ensure a learned clergy. And the original “Sunday Schools” enabled poor, working children to learn reading, writing and arithmetic. You can't study Scripture if you can't read!

To walk with Jesus is to assume the life of a scholar – whatever one's age or occupation. Books about religion and spirituality help us grow as people of faith. But so can a good mystery story<sup>i</sup> and quality journalism. The best books and articles challenge us, encourage us to think more deeply about issues, and teach us how to discern among competing claims.

When I applied to the Royal Free Hospital School of Nursing (age 17) the Hospital Matron asked what newspapers I read. When I gave the name of the paper my parents took, Miss Hardiman replied, “*you must always read two newspapers. A nurse must be able to understand more than one point of view.*” The School of Nursing was serious on this point: every student HAD to subscribe to two newspapers which were delivered directly to the Nurses' Home!

The Matron's news advice has stayed with me – like most of my learning from those three wonderful years. We all should be able to appreciate more than one point of view. This does not deny our right to a personal opinion or belief system, but it does make us better listeners to those with differing outlooks. And better listeners to God's Spirit. Unsurprisingly, Holy Wisdom<sup>ii</sup> does not always agree with us – even when we talk of faith. She respects our autonomy too much to act as our “thought police”, but the Spirit is an excellent “thought therapist” if we grant her permission. Her insights are well worth the risk of having to change our minds!

May your summer be blessed with time to read, opportunities to think, and gentle challenges from God's Spirit.

Don't forget to check out the library – and check out a book!

Deepest Blessings,  
Brenda

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<sup>i</sup> Mystery writer, P.D. James (a committed Christian) noted that the best mysteries restore order & justice out of disorder & chaos. A mission that the Hebrew Bible prophets would certainly identify with!

<sup>ii</sup> The Hebrew Bible names God's Spirit as "breath" ("*Ruah*", Psalm 104: 29-30) & "Wisdom" ("*Hokmah*", Proverbs 9: 1-6).