

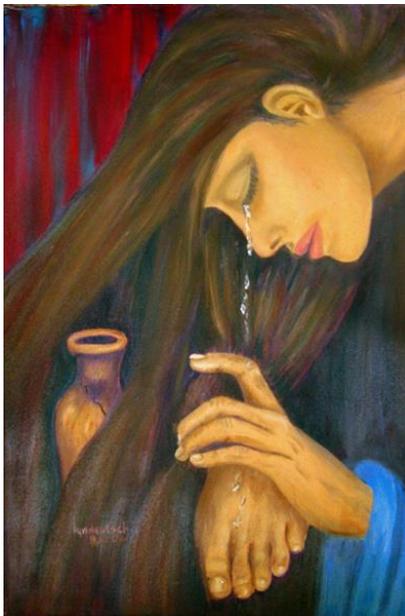
Polwarth – a Compassionate Community

When we are motivated by compassion and wisdom, the results of our actions benefit everyone, not just our individual selves or some immediate convenience. ~ Dalai Lama XIV

Compassion is the human fruit of God's mercy towards us.

God's mercy is an open-heartedness towards wretchedness told and re-told in stories down through the ages.

The timeless story of Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* is the tale of God's transforming mercy towards the unkindness of the self-sufficient; those who harden their hearts toward the needs of others; practical, emotional, spiritual.



While Luke's story of open-heartedness towards the poor and marginalised woman who washes Christ's feet with her tears and dries them with her hair is as challenging now as when first told. *"I tell you that her many sins are forgiven, so she showed great love. But the person who is forgiven only a little will love only a little."*

Both characters receive God's mercy offered unconditionally in the words of Jesus: *Your sins are forgiven.* ~ Luke 7.48

Members of a compassionate community know and experience appropriate sorrow and humility for our individual and corporate histories of shortcomings. We accept responsibility for things done and things left undone which have made the world a less hospitable place.

We also experience how God's mercy transforms and can tell these stories with the joy of Ebenezer leaping from bed on Christmas day or of Christ leaping from his tomb.

When we are able to recognize and forgive ignorant actions of the past, we gain strength to constructively solve the problems of the present. ~ Dalai Lama XIV

Christ's example teaches us that much can be forgiven.

Acts of kindness and self-giving are more significant and far-reaching than our many foolish, ignorant or wicked actions. Christ demonstrated this on the cross when he prayed: *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* ~ Luke 23.34

Like Christ and because of Christ members of a compassionate community understand that we have an unlimited capacity to forgive ourselves and others. The grace to do so is Christ's gift, the choice to do so is ours.



We choose to be kind and to persevere in working together for a more compassionate world by:

Welcoming the stranger with unconditional acceptance.

Practicing simple daily acts of care and kindness – often unseen.

Championing the weaknesses and limitations of others to prevent exploitation.

Respecting and understanding different points of view.

Always assuming the best of a person's intentions.

Being genuinely interested and encouraging to one another.

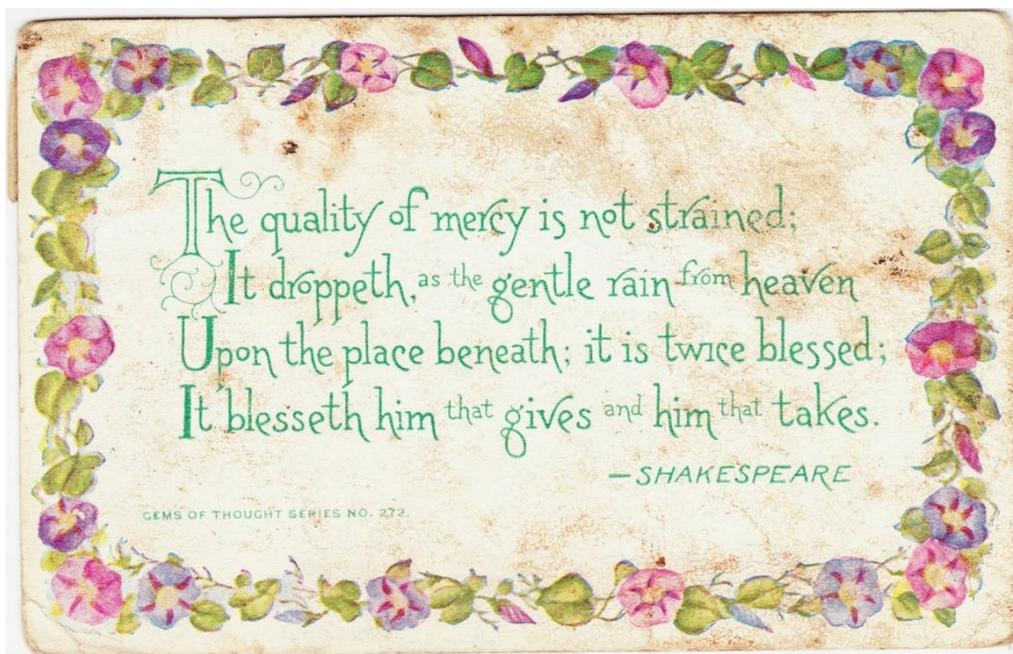
Celebrating one another's joys.

Listening prayerfully and responding appropriately when another shares their story.

Summoning resilience in the face of trials.

Recognising God's providence in the timing of things

Members of a compassionate community exhibit the joy and humility
which only forgiven wretches are free to experience.
Prayerfully we invite God's mercy to drop as the gentle rain from heaven
on individuals and on the community.
Practically we seek to become, by God's grace, the answer to this prayer.



Barbara White (1931 - 2017) was part of the group who met on 8th October 2017 and we wish to dedicate this Charter of Compassion to her memory. Barbara recommended that we each 'do a kind thing every day' and many in Polwarth have been the recipients of her kindness over the years.

Sketch of Scrooge by kind permission of artist Peter de Sève