

August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Dear Friends



“I listen for the voice of the little boy inside of me”

Robin van Persie on his transfer from Arsenal to Manchester United

We have spent weeks seriously obsessed with ‘the games’, save that we seem to forget that they are just games! Now we are talking about their legacy in the playing fields of our land and the hearts of our children. Clearly *play* is a more serious endeavour than we imagine.



While our dressage contest prances around the ‘*theology of ordination*’, I wonder whether we might be better served, and be the more congenial if we had a ‘*theology of play*’? It would appear that Jurgen Moltmann came up with such a manifest back in 1967 when I was sweet 16 and a committed, though unreflective practitioner. It seems that he held the view that our world is the outcome of God’s creative pleasure, and it is God’s sense of joy that gives us all cause for hope.

Within Adventism, we have fairly clear ideas about rest and re-creation from which we seek activities that restore our souls. We are clear about our work ethic and the stewardship of time. Most of us, I suspect, regard play as self indulgent childishness, a frittering of time for which we will one day be held accountable? Yet everybody I know engages in some form of play. Why did the Good Lord create us, and other animals with a playful streak?

Francis P Cholle, in his *Intuitive Compass* observes that the purpose of play is to facilitate innovation and agility. It is an activity or pattern of thinking pursued with intent that brings delight and exposes us to new realities unlikely to be discovered through logical endeavour. Play is a creative resource that exposes us to new skills and thought. It creates neural pathways that become useful for survival or innovation. It allows us to explore new thinking tentatively without the pain of mandatory consequence. Maybe if we had a more sincere view of play, we would not be so afraid of *Spiritual Exploration*? Maybe if we recognised the advantages of a playful approach to problem solving we might be less combative, even united?

It occurs to me that *to pray* and *to play* might not be the poles apart we make them to be! Somehow we have come to the view that prayer is the space where we expose our serious concerns and seek relief for our pain before the God that cleanses us of our frustrating failure. Come let us whinge before our Maker! How would things be, if prayer were

- the space where we explore the playfulness of our relationships,
- a place where we seek healing rather than cure,
- a time during which we laugh at the inconsequence of our consuming tensions,
- the wonder of new patterns of thought and belief,
- a time when we find new horizons in our being,
- a time in which we prong like gazelles in fresh pasture?

During the last month, beyond the winning of medals, we have discovered fresh potential in our society to be inclusive creators of fun and harmony. We learned to be celebrators of success from whatever source. Maybe we should learn to dismiss our penchant for fear mongering. Maybe like David, our prayer should be for a new heart and a right spirit, not just for the shame of our sinfulness, but for a sin of shame that denies the sanctity of a playful spirit.

Thank you for the joy and hilarity that you bring to your family and friends and those you faithfully serve.

Best regards

Victor