

# The parable of the dancing bees



by Ian Woodley

**T**he week had worn me out. I had been asked to mediate in a particular office dispute that had, unfortunately, not gone well. The whole sordid saga was now sliding into formal disciplinary processes. Glad that my role in it was all over, I felt completely drained.

That's when the two lavender shrubs caught my attention. These two plants, roughly a metre tall and two metres wide, were literally a hive of activity. Drawing near, I could see bees moving around the lavender, collecting pollen. I tried to count how many there were, but due to the insects' constant movement, I gave up. I guess there were around 100 bees, mainly of the bumblebee variety.

How could so many bees, all with the one urgent aim of collecting

pollen from the same two shrubs, manage to continue their task in such harmony? I drew nearer to the plants. Something about the quiet buzzing hum indicated that I had nothing to fear from their powerful stings, even though such a sting taught me to be very wary of bees as a young lad.

Their movement was almost hypnotic. The bees appeared to be performing some kind of dance, gracefully moving from one flower to the next. I marvelled how they didn't appear to collide mid-air and it was therapeutic to find that there was no squabbling going on. Somehow, the bees all managed to stay out of each other's way. They carried on, collecting pollen, seemingly unaware of my presence. Their harmony was infectious: I watched them for the next five minutes, feeling the stress of the day drifting away.

Eugene Peterson, a spiritual writer who passed away in 2018, once paraphrased a biblical sentiment as: "How wonderful, how beautiful, when brothers and sisters get along!"<sup>1</sup>

I like that idea: that such harmony is beautiful. Maybe that's why the dancing bees helped soothe away my stress. I was watching beauty in action.

That day, I learned a great lesson from creation, from the parable of the dancing bees. We can all achieve our aims in life without resorting to warfare with others. It requires some effort, co-ordination, and a large slice of compromise, but if the bees can do it, then surely so can we. And in the process, we may just create a little more beauty in the world.

## NOTE

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 133:1 *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*.