



Methodist Parish

Finding good in everyone Finding God in everyone

www.dunedinmethodist.org.nz

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PARISH BULLETIN

1st May 2011

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 8th May 2011

9.30am	Mornington	H Watson White
9.30 am	Mosgiel	S Pole
11.00 am	Glenaven	H Watson White
11.00 am	Wesley	S Pole
1.00pm	St Kilda	N Pole
6.00pm	Broad Bay	No Service

EXPLORERS GROUP

Meets today 4-30pm in the Mornington Church Lounge

MOSGIEL MID WEEK SERVICES

Starting again on Wednesday 11th May at 2pm. Followed by afternoon tea.
Enquiries to Elaine 489 7663.

MORNINGTON METHODIST WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

The next Meeting will take place on the 9th May in the Church Lounge at 7.45 p.m. The Guest Speaker will be Laura Black from the Mission.

MOSGIEL METHODIST WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Meets next Tuesday 3rd May 1:30 PM in the hall where Mrs Teresa Christie Community Board Member will speak to us about her recent trip to Thailand and Vietnam

HOME GROUP BIBLE STUDY

Tuesday 3rd May at 7,30 pm at the home of Ian & Dot Pearce. We commence a new 5 week study entitled "How can I know what God wants me to do?" Tel. Ian.453 6312 or Geoff. 473 0193.

COMBINED DUNEDIN CHURCHES RESURRECTION SERVICE

7pm Sunday 1st May, The Dunedin Town Hall.

Over the last three years, Churches in Dunedin have been coming together on the first Sunday evening after Easter to worship and celebrate the risen Lord Jesus. Our desire is to produce a service where as many as possible in Dunedin churches come together to celebrate our risen Lord Jesus.

Our goal in putting this service together is to create a service which seeks to connect with as many different church traditions and age groupings as possible. We are working hard at doing this. A range of different churches are already involved in a combined churches worship team, and also a combined churches children's choir is planned.

BERTHA DIMES

We note the death last week of Bertha Dimes, formerly a member of both Glenaven and the Central Mission congregations. Bertha was in her 91st year. Noted as a very private self-effacing person, people at her funeral spoke of her few strong friendships, and her little acts of unexpected generosity. Bertha served in the finance dept of the City Council for some 25 yrs. Joan McDonald was a speaker at the service, and shared warm memories of one who played her part in the community life of the Glenaven Church.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS FORUM

The next meeting of the Dunedin Methodist PQF will be 7pm Monday 2 May at the Middleton Road Community Centre. Come in through the main carpark entrance (on Middleton Road). Bring your favourite Social Justice “hobby-horse” and some nibbles to share!



Happy birthday to the following children who celebrated Birthday’s recently:

- 26th April – Jacaranda Horsfall
- 29th April – Rachael Pitts
- 6th May – Alicia Horsfall
- 6th May – Kirstie Kopi

EASTER IN DUNEDIN PARISH

A range of Easter experiences were offered to Parish people commencing with the Tenebrae service at Mosgiel on Maundy Thursday evening through to a very successful youth camp at Iona Camp near Oamaru for the St Kilda Tongan congregation which concluded on Tuesday. It was good that our new ministry family of Siosifa & Naomi Pole were so fully involved in these events, and thanks to all who put such good preparation into the services.

On the next page are 4 pictures from many that could have been taken - Mornington's [Y@M](#) GROUP gave a compelling and thoughtful presentation of the Good Friday message to a packed Church from four neighbouring congregations;

Robyn Freeth created an arresting visual tribute to the sad story of Good Friday;

Broad Bay people hosted some early risers at 7am for a beach service on a breathtaking Easter morning, followed by a fish breakfast; two young worshippers, Naomi Jr and Kakala Pole tucked up warm at the beach service.



THANK YOU

I would like to express words of thanks to all those who were involved in organising the Fund Raising events in our parish for Christchurch Earthquake. To Judith Davis, Judy and Ken Russell and those who participated in one way or the other, and also those who donated money. On behalf of the parish, I thank you for your love and care. Your effort is appreciated and acknowledged. I also thank those who prepared the morning tea on Good Friday for your hospitality. I am sure those from other denominations felt welcome by your hot cross-buns. Indeed, it helped to create a loving and friendly atmosphere where we had a wonderful time together. May the spirit of Easter will sustain you as you continue to serve God.

Siosifa Pole (Parish Superintendent)

YOUTH AND FAMILY WORKER

The Kapiti Uniting Parish is seeking to employ a Youth and Family worker to facilitate activities in the parish involving families and children - part time.

We need a person with a vital Christian faith, who is enthusiastic, creative and has a passion for working with parents and young people. Weekend work is involved.

For a full Job Description email kapitioffice@paradise.net.nz or telephone 04 902 5809 (Mon-Fri 9-12)



Shaky Grounds

Among recent “Connections” articles dealing with aspects of the Christchurch earthquakes, one by Elizabeth Brooke-Carr touched on comments made by the Lyttelton writer, Joe Bennett. In his newspaper column, “Sleeping Dogs” (ODT, 10 & 24.3.11), Joe had claimed that “self-appointed representatives of a loving and omnipotent god ... getting in on official ceremonies and offering thanks upstairs” are on shakier ground than the rest of us.

Elizabeth’s article provided an evocative defence of ceremonies and ritual. In other respects she chose to “let sleeping dogs lie”, but added the thought, “I’m not sure who is on shakier ground – Joe Bennett or God’s representatives”. Unfortunately for me, two weeks later, the dogs had woken and I could hear them snarling. I was going to have to deal with them as best I could.

Perhaps I could calm them a little if I started by pointing out that I don’t want to take sides on the particular dilemma that Liz has raised. Certainly, I said, Joe isn’t on shakier ground than the reps, but neither vice versa. That last phrase didn’t seem to make much sense to the dogs so I tossed them a bone while I went on. Both Joe and God’s reps, I explained, are on shaky ground. They are both equally subject at all times to unpredictable catastrophe and devastation. I avoided direct eye contact.

There is a difference between them, however. It’s not the common ground of human (and for that matter animal) frailty that they and we all

stand on. It's what they try to build on top of the ground that makes the difference. Comparatively speaking, the dogs and their master, despite minor damage to their Lyttelton home, can take things more easily. One or two tails began to wag.

But God's reps are operating on an entirely different scale. They believe they are building the kingdom of heaven. Even their physical edifices tend to reflect that aspiration. Spires reach for the sky, stained glass windows stretch across like rainbows. Church buildings are by design much more prone to fail in earthquakes than casinos. Gambling houses make sure that not even the time of day can be reckoned from within.

But the contrast goes much further than in the physical sense, of course. God's reps are agents for, I've said it, God! Yet once again, Joe has the advantage. Not to put too fine a point on it, he need only say that there is no God. God's agents not only have to sell God, but also his very existence. The faith quest is humankind's most ambitious project. It is possible to make a strong case for ritual, but doing so for religious realism is another matter. It is hard going and increasingly liable to failure.

About ten days ago the following gauntlet, inviting response to the problem of human tragedy, was thrown down on the Methodist Liberal Society's email blog: "For anyone whose theology is based on an all-powerful creator God there are some tricky questions to answer." As yet there hasn't been any reply, but there was no shortage of responses in the newspaper and other forums to Joe's earlier critique.

The commonest defensive argument seems to be twofold. The first, expressed negatively, excludes God from any direct involvement in natural disasters. Such interventionism, according to the Dean of Dunedin, would be "a very anthropocentric construct for God".

Phew! The dogs had suddenly gone back to sleep. At least they could now be spared my having to report that at least one contributor maintained that "earthquakes and other natural disasters are the inevitable consequences of sin entering the world and bringing death to everyone and everything". That would surely have made them vomit.

What a relief, then, to find many examples of the second line of mainstream Christian defence. This is expressed positively. God is to be

found in community and compassion. A representative example would be along the lines of words from the Dean of Christchurch Cathedral, that “God is in the midst of all this ... weeping with those who weep”.

But, like a dog with a bone, I can't just leave it there. The positive argument is all very well for those willing to believe. To the sceptic, however, it suggests a shrinking defence that will ultimately paint itself into a corner. The challenge, as I see it, is not to come out of the corner with fancy footwork or arms flailing, nor even to retreat further and staunchly defend the last bastion. It is to admit to the deep mystery enveloping us all and allow that to colour every aspect of our demeanour. I sorely wish that faith defenders could be more contingent, even to the extent of faith in God as God.

A few months ago a member of my family lost a close friend in a car accident caused by a drunk driver. Tom, not a churchgoer, memorialised his friend's life and death by composing a quintet. His programme notes concluded thus: “After the huge dissonant chord of death, we hear two tui calls, indicating that the beauty of nature persists through all suffering.” In its own way, the melody of the tuis introduced a further dissonance – the shock of joy and solace in the midst of pain. Tom's music mirrored the best responses of God's representatives, though without feeling any need for spiritual terminology.

We all welcome joy and solace if they come, but they are not necessarily to be expected, nor are they readily explicable. These are not times for superior wisdom and confidence. The church often allows itself to be overly influenced by certain scriptures (scriptures of certainty). A prime example is the parable of the two builders and the two homes, one built on rock and the other on sand (Matthew 7, Luke 6). That story came out of a civilisation unaware of plate tectonics and the shattering power of seismic tsunamis.

Where is our sense of vulnerability? Nothing is unshakeable, not even faith – and more especially faith in God. Joe Bennett's broadside has done us a service by reminding us of that. There are no guarantees. In human life there are no absolutes, not even this one. Semicolon.

David Kitchingman