



Dunedin Methodist Parish

Finding Good in everyone Finding God in everyone

www.dunedinmethodist.org.nz

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PARISH BULLETIN

27th November 2011

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 4th DECEMBER 2011

9.30am	Mornington	K.Russell
9.30 am	Mosgiel	S.Pole
11.00 am	Glenaven	K.Russell
11.00 am	Wesley	S.Pole
1.00pm	St Kilda	Comb Wesley
6.00pm	Broad Bay	K.Russell

EXPLORERS GROUP

Meets for the final time for 2011 at 5-30pm on Sunday 27th for a potluck tea at the home of Hilda and Greg Hughson, 10 Corstorphine Rd. Thank you Hilda and Greg for offering this hospitality.

STAR OF BETHLEHEM LIMITED – A TOURING PRODUCTION

A new Christmas play, written by Ginny Kitchingman and performed by YAM (Youth at Mornington), will be touring Dunedin Methodist churches in December. *Star of Bethlehem Limited* is not exactly your traditional nativity play but it has the Christmas message at its heart. Come along and enjoy this high energy and light-hearted piece of drama and get into the Christmas spirit. Performances are scheduled for:

- Mosgiel - Sunday 11 December, 9.30 am
- Wesley - Sunday 11 December, 11.00 am
- Mornington - Sunday 18 December, 9.30 am
- Glenaven - Sunday 18 December, 11.00 am

THANK YOU - I would like to thank all those who have expressed sympathy and condolences during the death of my brother. On behalf of Naomi and my whole family, thank you for your care and concern. We are encouraged and empowered by your support during this sad time. Siosifa

PASTORAL CARE - This is a prompt reminder to the whole parish that Marion Kitchingman is our Pastoral Care Co-ordinator. If anyone in the parish has a pastoral concern that is required attention you have to contact Marion and Marion will contact me when is necessary. Siosifa

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Lachlan Jones who will be 10 years old on the 29th November
Ryan Elkins who will be 11 years old on the 3rd December

MORNINGTON WOMENS FELLOWSHIP.

27 members enjoyed a dinner and good fellowship at the home of JUDY RUSSELL recently. The ladies gather around the dinner table.



Tea Party Topics

Hi Jo

You may be reading this on the morning after the General Election. I'm writing it three nights before the election, and "I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son" (Amos 7:14). Nonetheless, as a Kiwi (rather than an American) at this time, you may already have a hunch about what I want to discuss. In a roundabout way you would be half right. The topics that I want to raise are those that any polite tea party is supposed to studiously avoid.

In this respect, as one of the contributors to the Connections column, I'm in good company. What we deal with most frequently are the two subjects that are traditionally taboo around the dining table – religion and politics (disregarding dieting which might come in at number three). To that extent we

show a little bravado, yet even we are not as uninhibited as you might think. Let me show what I mean by dealing with each subject in turn.

Politics

I am surely entitled to comment on the election, the most topical event of the week. But surely, too, you are entitled to ask what are *my* politics? To which I could respond that my views are not important (how true!). Or I could appeal to that great safeguard of democracy – the secret ballot. If I were in some sort of representative capacity, that might well let me off the hook. But I'm just an ordinary member of a Methodist congregation. Now once upon a time being a Methodist was likely in itself to place one statistically somewhat left of centre on the political spectrum. As an oldie, that would be true of my own background, coming from a working-class family that had struggled through the Depression. But I suspect such a generalization no longer applies. Our politics may be about as diverse as our musical tastes. Applied Christianity means one thing to one church member and something quite different to another.

So, you might ask, which party will I have voted for on Saturday? I'm going to tell you, for six reasons. (a) Why can't we be more open and transparent about where we happen to stand personally? (b) It's not really a big deal – it only represents the present state of my mind which is as fallible as anyone else's in the church. (c) It simply offers you a grinder on which to sharpen your own judgements – it's not a hammer that attempts to coerce you in any way. (d) It doesn't represent my sworn allegiance to the whole party line at all – in fact, I have disagreed with my preferred party on some issues. (e) In any case, by Sunday I'll be too late to be open to any charge of attempting to influence anybody. (f) And finally, which party I decide to support is arguably less important than why I support it.

So, here it is. My party vote goes to the Green Party. And why? In a nutshell, because for me it represents the furthest step beyond mere party politics to a vision that stretches to the broadest constituency, exceeding even humankind, and because it also takes the longest perspective, extending even beyond our grandchildren's generation. And now, with polling day past, you'll know whether to thank me, blame me, or dismiss me as irrelevant.

Religion

Having got politics off my chest, and if we're still seated at the same table, how about my views on religion? Feel free to excuse yourself if you would rather not know. This may be more delicate than politics but I would still like to share what I think, even though in this case I can't claim that "making one's decision" will be all over by the time you read this. Religiously, we may be almost as varied as we are politically. Some of the reasons I gave for owning up about my politics apply as much to my religion. In other words,

you are entitled to know what I as a commentator believe. Yet coming up with a couple of sentences to summarise my faith position is more difficult than for politics. I'll put it this way. I am deeply religious and well out of my depth on "God". Jesus of Nazareth matters greatly to me, without supremely defining my worldview. To go a little further, I prefer to speak allusively.

A few days ago I watched a starling alight on the corner of our neighbours' roof. It toppled into the spouting and disappeared under the iron flashing. Soon it re-emerged and flitted around the back of the house. Then it seemed to come back from the other side with something dangling from its beak. Once again it vanished but another starling flew in with similar baggage and I twigged that I was dealing with a pair of breathtaking bird brains. These two assemblages of primeval star things had somehow, without the benefit of Nesting and Breeding 101, learned about flight, navigation, transport, construction, collaboration, fertilization and egg-laying, to name a few avian skills. Two starlings on their day can evoke as much wonder as seventy years of religious and scientific instruction.

But I'm not quite finished. What if the two prohibited topics double up? As they do in:

Church politics

The mere thought of such a thing is for some in the church almost beyond the pale, let alone a matter for discussion in a semi-public Methodist forum. Yet tonight I attended the Parish Council meeting at which we received a letter from our Church authorities. It was a response to a resolution of the Council raising its multiple concerns over the way that the Church has acted this year in dealing with the part-time ministerial supply vacancy in the Parish. The evasive reply left me gasping. If such differences as we have encountered during this dispute were to be put into the unmentionables basket then we would have no right ever again to pronounce on any political or behavioral issues outside the Church.

We all (or most of us) enjoy a cup of tea together. It's a part of our ethos as a church. Usually such occasions call for no more than bland conversation. The weather, especially Dunedin's, has a handy role to play. Sometimes we pluck up courage to talk about more controversial matters, such as whether the all-weather stadium is good for the ratepayers or not. But occasionally we need to really grow up, acknowledge our different views and deal meaningfully with the big and divisive issues. That requires less fudging of talk about party politics at the national level. It challenges the church to cease taking the content of our religion for granted, since it is so variously experienced at the soul face. And it even demands that we avoid turning a blind eye to church politics when they fail to meet minimum standards of clarity and care.

David Kitchingman