



Dunedin Methodist Parish

Finding Good in everyone Finding God in everyone

www.dunedinmethodist.org.nz

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PARISH BULLETIN

15 April 2012

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 22 April 2012

9.30am	Mornington	S. Pole
9.30 am	Mosgiel	S. Ungemuth
11.00 am	Glenaven	S. Pole
11.00 am	Wesley	S. Ungemuth
1.00pm	St Kilda	TBA
6.00pm	Broad Bay	

15 APRIL BROAD BAY

A change to the preaching plan: The service at Broad Bay on 15 April will be taken by Helen Watson White, not Siosifa Pole as originally indicated.

MOSGIEL MID WEEK SERVICE

Wednesday 18 April at 2pm. All Welcome.
(note change of date).

MORNINGTON WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP.

The April Meeting will held on the 25th April - in the Church Lounge at 7.45 p.m. The Guest Speaker will be Mrs Dale Meredith - the subject -
"14 Days in Desert Wilderness" - All Welcome

OPEN EDUCATION

We grumble about too much rain; on the Palestinian West Bank wells are drying up, orchards are failing and families are left desperate for lack of water while Israeli settlers build swimming pools. On Wednesday, April 18, Michael Earle, the Church and Donor Relations Co-Ordinator for Christian World Service will present CWS's new project, Water for Life, and a new theme song, 'Water for Life' will receive its premiere. Don't miss this session of the Open Education Programme, held at the Methodist Church, Galloway Street, on Wednesday April 18 at 7.30pm (\$5 charge for supper). As usual Judy Russell will provide an excellent meal, starting at 6pm (profits to CWS), for a charge of \$15. Book a seat by ringing Judy (455 3727).

CELLISTS OF OTAGO

Present a programme of meaningful music including A Sacred Motet - Palestrina; Kol Nidrei (2 Hebrew Melodies) - Bruch; Arioso - Bach; Negro Spirituals, and our very own Colin Gibson's Let Justice Roll Down. Be there at Mornington Methodist Church on Sunday the 29th April at 3 p.m. Admission \$10 adults, \$5 students and children.

Foreign Adventures

Tuesday 24 April at 7 pm Mornington Methodist
Come along and hear two of our young people, Vince and Elisha, talk about their overseas travel last year. Vince Neaves spent a year in Sweden and Elisha Gordon spent three months in France. Light supper to follow.

Story From the Mission

A woman in the community made contact with me looking for support for her and her 3 year old foster son. The child has been in her care since he was 4 months old and they are currently going for permanent guardianship under the Child Youth and Family Act. Mum believes the child may have suffered some kind of abuse in his first few months of life. He displays odd and aggressive behaviors, is very particular about certain situations and has an aversion to his own genitalia. Mum has raised her concerns and asked for an assessment with CYFS to get him seen. Mum tells me CYFS were unhelpful and said once the permanent guardianship is granted, CYFS would no longer be involved. Mum was feeling frustrated, alone in the situation and emotional. We spent some time unfolding her story and the avenues she had tried to get assistance. It became apparent the wee boy had something going on for him. I advised Mum to start with her GP and get a referral to pediatrics'. I then made contact with Barnardo's to discuss his behaviors and seek advice as to where I would be best to refer this family to for support and assessment. Mum and child have now been assessed by Barnardo's, with a referral to Child and Family Services (CAFS) and follow up support from pediatrics. The child has been assessed as being on the Autistic Spectrum and possibly Asperger's. Infant abuse has not been ruled out, but because of his age and ability to communicate this is something that will be dealt with later. I have given Mum information and support group contacts for parents with Autistic children and advised her to seek legal advice on CYFS obligations to help support her through this new diagnosis before the guardianship is granted and CYFS are no longer involved. Mum has been very grateful of the support and continues to keep me up to date with what is happening.

Mission Office Administration

It is time to say good bye and good luck to Nat who leaves us on Monday. She has been an excellent team member as well as providing professional and efficient support to both the Mission and the Parish during her five months with us. As Nat moves onto her next challenge, we welcome back Sarah to the team. To contact the Mission office, please phone Sarah on 466 4600 or email sarahc@dmm.org.nz

PARISH EASTER STUDY: FINDING A VOICE

Session 5, *'Eloquence for evil and stammering for good'* will be held **next Tuesday April 17th** at 7.30 pm in the Mornington Methodist Church. Extracts from the movie, *The King's Speech*, are used as a starting point for Bible study. Everyone from throughout the parish is very welcome to attend; this is the last in the series and will be lead by Siosifa.

Thank you

On behalf of the Dunedin Methodist Parish I would like to express words of thanks to Nat Voight for her role in formatting and printing the Order of Services and bulletins while Sarah was away on holiday.

We wish Nat all the best and hope that she will be able to find a job soon.

Sympathy

I would like to convey a message of condolences and sympathy To Christine and Gary and the rest of the family for the death of Alwen Chapman. It is our prayer that God will give you peace And comfort you during this period of grieving.



The complete text of the Gospel of Thomas is now available to us after over 2000 years. Discovered in 1945 at Nag Hammadi in Egypt, it opens up some fascinating and startling perspectives on some of the little known aspects of primitive Christianity. It also encourages us to broaden and deepen our appreciation of the perhaps too familiar figure of Jesus. Many centuries of familiarity with the canonical New Testament have encouraged widespread complacency: all that is necessary to faith and salvation is contained in its sanctified pages. What the Gospel of Thomas has done - among other things - is to show us a Jesus who is, yes, familiar, but also startlingly new and unfamiliar. It has reinforced the long-held view that there was no one orthodox collection of Jesus' teachings. It has also demonstrated, yet again, that there was no one, uniform understanding of who or what Jesus was. "Certainty" (actually imposition!) only came with the formal theological definitions laid down by the Council of Nicea in 325AD. We still live with those impositions.

There are still those who argue that the Gospel of Thomas is just another heretical Gnostic ("hidden wisdom") gospel - one of many which the early Church dismissed as confusing and irrelevant. This view will not pass muster. For one thing, there is nothing of the complicated metaphysical speculation (on the "celestial hierarchies", for example) which is typical of the Gnostic literature. The Gospel of Thomas is very down-to-earth indeed. It is made up of a collection of 114 "sayings" of Jesus which are concerned with the practicalities of finding the Father's Kingdom

in this present life. The level of practicality is such that the texts are, for the most part, concerned with Jesus' teachings on this. There is no reference to the later themes of crucifixion and resurrection. There is no infancy narrative. There is no reference to Jesus' status as Messiah or Christ. One of the most likely reasons for the absence of these familiar elements is that the Gospel of Thomas was compiled before these Christian themes were fully developed. It follows that this must be a very early text.

Actually, scholars point out that The Gospel of Thomas is an example of the most primitive form of written tradition - a simple list of "sayings". It is not even well-organized. Much of the text does not "flow." In a strange way, this is encouraging to the modern reader because it suggests that the text has not been "polished" for a theologically sophisticated audience. It has not been modified by Church councils! We are at the point where a community's writings have not yet given way to other more complex forms of literature such as the narrative story or dialogue. For this reason, it is suggested, we are close to some of the earliest perceptions of Jesus.

Surely this is very exciting to consider! It is now actually possible to touch some of the original Christian "core" material. Some writers go so far as to suggest that at this very early stage in the history of the Jesus Movement (as it is sometimes called), Jesus was still sometimes "just Jesus" - the friend, the teacher, the brother. Indeed, this gospel may actually be seen as a genuinely new text: roughly half of the Gospel of Thomas sayings have no parallel with the Synoptic tradition at all (Matthew, Mark, Luke). In other words, it seems that Thomas represents a thread of primitive tradition that is autonomous and distinct. When I first read this gospel, I knew that I was seeing a literally unique collection of Jesus' teachings. While the Dead Sea Scrolls had been fascinating, the Thomas material was more so. I was meeting a hitherto largely unknown Jesus.

What was the Gospel of Thomas, then, in its context and time (certainly early 1st century)? Perhaps it was a kind of catechism - a convenient, easily-memorized collection of the teachings of Jesus. If you purchase a copy of the gospel you will see why this suggestion seems sensible. There is no narrative holding things together. Each saying demands individual and deep reflection. One saying might well require many hours (even years)) of focused attention. The sayings are concerned mainly with the many and varied mysteries of the Father's Kingdom. Is it, then, a manual/catechism of Kingdom mysticism? I am inclined to think so. Certainly it is vitally concerned with HOW this Kingdom may be entered, and this "how" involves much more than doctrinal belief or "simple faith."

I will finish by sharing with you just some of the sayings which concern the Kingdom, sayings which are not found in the canonical New Testament gospels. My hope is that you will find them as startling, refreshing and challenging as I did. This is a Jesus you have probably never encountered.

Saying 5 - Jesus says: "Come to know what is in front of you, and that which is hidden from you will become clear to you."

Saying 51 - His disciples said to him: "When will the <resurrection> of the dead take place, and when will the new world come?"

He said to them: "That (resurrection) which you are awaiting has (already) come, but you do not recognize it."

Saying 113 - His disciples said to him: "The kingdom - on what day will it come?"

"It will not come by watching (and waiting for) it. They will not say: 'Look, here!' or 'Look, there!' Rather, the kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the earth, and people do not see it."

Saying 106 - Jesus says: "When you make the two into one, you will become sons of man."

Saying 82 - Jesus says: "The person who is near me is near the fire.

And the person who is far from me is far from the kingdom."

Saying 75 - Jesus says: "Many are standing before the door, but it is the solitary ones who will enter the wedding hall."

Saying 58 - Jesus says: "Blessed is the person who has struggled. He has found life."

Get your own copy! I recommend Stevan Davies, The Gospel of Thomas Annotated and Explained. (Skylight Paths Publishing 2002)

Aelred Edmunds

