



Dunedin Methodist Parish

Finding Good in everyone Finding God in everyone

www.dunedinmethodist.org.nz

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PARISH BULLETIN

8th July 2012

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 15th JULY 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
4.00pm	Broad Bay	H Watson White

MOSGIEL LEADERS MEETING

Tuesday 10th July at 7.30pm.

WESLEY LEADERS MEETING

Wesley Church on Tuesday 10th July, 10.30am.



OPEN LECTURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

“Key events in the life of the historical Jesus: A report on recent research”, Professor Darrell Bock, Tuesday 10th July, Archway 2 Lecture Theatre, 5.15pm.

MOSGIEL MID WEEK SERVICE

Wednesday 11th July at 2.00pm. All welcome.

MOSGIEL MID WINTER LUNCH

22 July after Church. Pot luck lunch. Bring a friend.

PHONES CALLS TO MISSION/PARISH OFFICE

The phone lines for Little Citizens/The Hub will be transferred on **Friday 13th July** due to their move to Forbury. This will affect the Administration and Parish Office as we will be without phones for the majority of the day. For urgent enquiries please contact Siosifa on 027 241 2926.

OTAGO DISTRICT METHODIST WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held at Wesley Methodist Church,
Saturday 21st July 2012



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| 10.30 | Welcome & Cup of Tea |
| 11.00 | AGM |
| 12.30 | Lunch - finger food lunch, tea/coffee provided
Soup for a small donation |
| 1.15 | Speaker |

Our Speaker will be Laura Black talking about the Family Support Fund and Mission News

Collections for Social Services – going to Family Support Fund

Story from the Mission

We attended the ITF Literacy Forum in Wellington to present our Storybook Dads programme and research with the hope of attracting a partner to work with us to deliver the programme in Wellington and Christchurch prisons. The presentation went really well with a lot of positive feedback about how impressive the programme is, as well as several organisations who showed interest in finding out further information with an interest to partner. We are following up on these with promising results.



The year is 580 AD somewhere in Ireland. A Christian monk sits at his wooden writing desk in a little stone-walled cell in a monastery, using a quill pen to write on vellum, a page made from calf skin, with ink made from a local plant. He is composing a religious poem in Gaelic, the language of the Celtic people of Ireland. He forms the letters carefully because vellum is expensive and hard to make.

The first line runs, ‘Rob tu mo bhoile, a Comdi cride’. Eighteen hundred years later we will know it as ‘Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart’. It’s a very long prayer, with sixteen verses—monks had plenty of time to think about such things and recite them—and some of it would sound very strange to us, so we sing a tidied-up version that leaves out a lot of the original verses.

For instance, the original poem talks about God as the King of the Seven Heavens. What could that mean? Well, when the poem was written all those centuries ago no one thought that the earth was just one of the planets circling around the sun. Everyone knew that the earth was at the centre of the universe, and believed that God ruled over a universe made of seven great crystalline spheres rolling round inside each other, each of them with one of the seven planets circling inside it. These spheres were called ‘heavens’, so the idea was that God was master of the universe, ruler of the seven heavens.

Thirteen centuries later a scholar sits at a well-lit reading desk in the National Library of Ireland, Dublin, turning over some ancient manuscripts that have survived centuries of warfare, theft, neglect and decay, and thinks the lines beginning ‘Rob tu mo bhoile, a Comdi cride’ are so beautiful she wants to translate them for her own age. She is a brilliant scholar and expert in the old languages of Ireland her name is Mary Elizabeth Byrne. Mary’s translation is a literal word for word one: it runs, ‘Be thou my vision O Lord of my heart, none other is aught but the King of the Seven Heavens’. It is yet other Irish woman, Eleanor Henrietta Hull (1860-1945), who decides to put Mary’s words into singable verse, and it is probably Eleanor who settles on the tune we now use, too.

Both of these women were highly intelligent people who loved ancient Irish culture and wanted to preserve and show it to the world. Mary became a member of the Royal Irish Academy, and with another scholar created a dictionary of the Old and Middle Irish language (a bit like the great *Oxford Dictionary of English*). Eleanor became a researcher and author and poet, and founded a learned society to study and publish ancient Irish texts, like this one.

The melody we now sing with the words of this ancient hymn is very old, but not as old as the words. Nobody knows who wrote it. It’s an Irish folk tune, probably created in the eighteenth century, and gathered in the late 1800s with hundreds of other old Irish melodies by Patrick Weston Joyce, who went around the Irish countryside listening to and writing down the old songs sung in country villages, in homes and village pubs. These old songs had never been written down before: their singers remembered them from hearing their parents sing them, and their

grandparents before them, and passed them on to their children, often down many generations. They were published by Patrick Weston in 1901, in a book *called Old Irish Folk Music and Songs*.

When Patrick Joyce collected this tune it wasn't a hymn tune at all; it was the music for an old love song, 'On the Banks of the Bann', a ballad about a penniless wanderer, a stranger, who falls in love with a beautiful and wealthy young woman:

When first to this country a stranger I came,
I placed my affection in a girl that was young,
She being fair and tender, her waist small and slender,
'Twas nature that formed her for my overthrow.

But it was an easy tune and a natural fit to the words of the sixth-century Irish monk. It carries the name SLANE. But Slane is the name of a large hill rising above the river Boyne in County Meath, in Ireland. Why should a hymn tune be given the name of a hill?

Well, Slane is a special hill, because it was a sacred place from very earliest times—even before the Celtic people came to Ireland. In prehistoric times, the great hill of Slane was the burial place of the first tribal kings, and the site of a sacred well. Later on the Norman invaders built a stone fortress there.

It has a particular link with Christianity because, according to tradition, it was on this hill that Saint Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland and the first Christian missionary there, lit a fire celebrating the Christian festival of Easter for the first time in Ireland—in defiance of the pagan King Laoghaire, the High King of all Ireland, who was accustomed to lighting his own people's great fire to celebrate the beginning of the spring festival of the pagan Mother Goddess Eostre, on the neighboring hill of Tara.

So giving this tune the name SLANE was intended to remind its singers of that dramatic moment when Christianity challenged the old pagan world of Ireland.

The year is 2012 and a Methodist congregation in far-off New Zealand stands to sing those familiar words to a familiar tune, 'Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart'. And I start to play the tune on the organ, with a little prayer of thanks in my heart for all the connections which brought me these words and this music. Thanks to the unknown Irish monk, to St Patrick and Mary Byrne and Eleanor Hull, to the unknown village singer and to Patrick Weston and to the editors of all the hymnbooks down the generations to the present.

Colin Gibson