



Dunedin Methodist Parish

Finding Good in everyone Finding God in everyone

www.dunedinmethodist.org.nz

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PARISH BULLETIN

5th AUGUST 2012

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 12th AUGUST 2012

9.30am	Mornington	Explorers
9.30 am	Mosgiel	R Masterton
11.00 am	Glenaven	Explorers
11.00 am	Wesley	R Masterton
1.00pm	St Kilda	TBA
4.00pm	Broad Bay	No Service

MOSGIEL MIDWEEK SERVICE

Wednesday 8 August at 2pm. All Welcome.

MOSGIEL M.W.F.

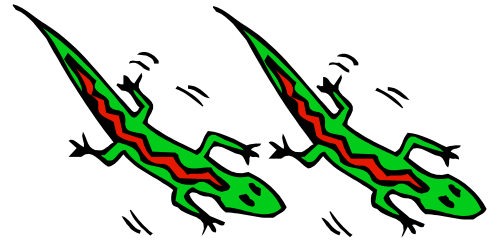
Tuesday 7th August at 1:30pm in our Church Hall Lounge. Lyn Hocking will be speaking to us about "Living in Germany in the 60's" all other M.W.F. groups very welcome.

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

There will be a Parish Council Meeting at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 15 August at Wesley Church. Council members please check this date as it may differ from the provisional date you noted at the last meeting.

OPEN EDUCATION AMONG THE GECKOS

For our 22 August Open education session (note the date) we have a special treat. A world-famous conservation ranger will talk to us about the precious jeweled geckos of the Otago Peninsula. Under threat from poachers and careless landowners, the colony on the Peninsula was once guarded by Paul Every of the Broad Bay congregation; now Department of Conservation ranger Carey Knox has won an International Parks Forum award for his pioneering study of our unique geckos. This session will be followed by supper, all for a modest charge of \$5. Don't miss it!



As usual, Judy Russell will provide one of her famed pre-session meals at 6pm (charge \$15). Sign in at Mornington, or ring her to book your place now (455 3727).

MAJOR MARGARET HAY of the Salvation Army was a gifted and hugely interesting speaker at a recent meeting of the Mornington Womens Fellowship. What a range of experiences she has packed into a life of service in many parts of the world. From Wellington to Zambia to Hong Kong to London she has been wife and mother, teacher, trainer, prison chaplain and evangelist, and clearly wherever she has been she has been a motivator. Brim full of energy and enlightenment for the Good News of the Gospel. In the picture Major Margaret holds up a teacup of special memories as she recounts her memorable experiences.



PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Wellsprings – Family and Whānau Wellbeing - a Toolkit for responding to public questions and social issues. A new Public Questions resource will be on the website this week. The Toolkit works with ‘wellsprings’ as a theological reference, for example Psalm 104 reads ‘He sendeth the springs to the valleys, which run among the hills’.

‘Wellsprings’ suggests centres of wellbeing which flow to communities. The toolkit provides five topics to support activities related to wellbeing in communities: Introduction, Working with Communities, Local Councils, Submissions and Petitions, Advocacy and Campaigns. See http://www.methodist.org.nz/public_questions_network

If you would like hard copies of the resources please email: betsan@publicquestions.org.nz

Books of interest

‘Children, Citizenship and Environment’ by Bronwyn Hayward. With change in mind, this book addresses young people facing the challenges of environmental responsibility and a transition to a green economy with changing prospects in employment. Ecological Citizenship is proposed as a way to encourage involvement of young people for communal wellbeing. Half of the proceeds of the book will go to child poverty projects in Christchurch.

‘**How Communities Heal**’, edited by Vivian Hutchinson. These are stories of leadership, initiative and hope in New Zealand communities. Different contributors introduce innovative projects in lots of areas, including on entrepreneurship, housing, mentoring programmes, rethinking crime and punishment. For PDF’s of chapters and orders <<http://www.nzsef.org.nz/howcommunitiesheal>>



PUBLIC MEETING

**James Veitch PhD (Birm) ThD (ACT) FRSA
will address the question:**

**Who did Jesus think he really was?:
building blocks for a 21st century faith**

Dr Veitch was formerly Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Victoria University, is a Fellow of the Westar Institute and a long-time member of its Jesus Seminar.

**Thursday 23rd August
6.00 till 7.30 p.m. Highgate Presbyterian
Church Hall, corner of Highgate and Drivers Road**

ALL WELCOME

Story from the Mission

When all else fails contact the Mission ...

It is becoming well known in the social services sector that The Mission has a welcoming and 'open door' policy who don't apply a strict entry criterion for people needing support. For this reason we are seeing an increase in referrals, especially, for those clients who present as different and who come with diverse and complex needs that sit outside the realm of typical referrals.

When talking with clients I always like to ask how they came to contact The Mission and to gain an understating of what other services they have contacted or are involved with. The responses I get have a similar theme in that prior to coming to The Mission they have already been declined access to other services because they don't met criteria. At this point and through frustration and sometimes desperation they call the likes of Citizens Advice and are referred to The Mission 'are probably the best people to help out with that kind of thing' and as a recent client said "I was in Shit Street before I came here." While this can make our work challenging it is motivating to know that our agency does keep its doors open to those people who are less likely to be supported through the usual services.





Hi Jo

This poster wasn't my idea, but it seems to work, doesn't it? At least it caught *my* attention, even though it was stored behind obscure glass along the West Lane of the University Library. Whatever actual information had once been appended to it was no longer visible. Now the poster itself has disappeared, so I have no idea what it was all about.

**NOW THAT
I HAVE
YOUR
ATTENTION**

But this may be my one big opportunity while I have your undivided attention. I should say something I think is really important, so here it is:

“Attention” itself is number one. That's my point. But can I prove it?

I need only point out that gaining attention is the very first thing we engage in as human beings. The newborn's piercing cry is the secret to survival. Thereafter, how much we ourselves have to offer in life depends on how we are responded to. So not only does attention come first in our lives; it is also ranked first among our faculties. One of the earliest authorities on the subject, Edward Titchener, put it this way: “The doctrine of attention is the nerve of the whole psychological system.”

Why then does attention get so little attention? Because, paradoxically, it generally flies beneath the radar. It's so fundamental and universal that we don't normally bother to notice it or comment on it.

Except when it's missing – that's when we are more likely to become aware of how vital it is to human interaction. Unfortunately, just getting attention can be a major obstacle in itself. We're all often guilty of inattention, so perhaps we can benefit by reflecting on what it's like to be denied attention. Examples abound from family life to politics. Even within

the church our Parish Council has experienced a peculiar difficulty for well over a year in having its deep concerns listened to *attentively* by church authorities.

The primary place of attention (or “mindfulness” as it may also be called) in the field of psychology may seem a little surprising. But what if I were to suggest that it is also foundational to spiritual life where it is even more disregarded? One odd reason for the theological neglect of the word is its absence from the English Bible, at least from the Authorised Version on which my generation was brought up. That’s contributed to its virtual invisibility in church discourse. I wager that you won’t find it in any dictionary of theology or list of virtues. But if you looked up a concordance to the Contemporary English Version it would begin to come out of the woodwork, or at least the paperwork. In that translation, one of the sayings most frequently attributed to Jesus is rendered: “If you have ears, pay attention!” Now, there’s a strong word!

Take another example to help track it down, and to demonstrate that it’s like an elusive but essential subatomic particle (a Higgs boson, if you like). In the parable of the Good Samaritan, after the aggravated robbery, three travellers all saw the victim on the road. The first two then passed by on the other side – that’s all we’re told about them, apart from their occupations. What was going on in their minds at that moment? Very little in fact. They were suffering from a rigid mindset following years of conditioning. They had long since made what psychology would term a “premature cognitive commitment” not to get involved in any nasty business. So they simply continued on automatic pilot, giving the man, not their attention, but a wide berth.

Not so the third traveller, who saw the man and “had compassion”. Yet even that extra phrase telescopes the actual process. Before compassion kicked in he first paid full and active attention. He surveyed the scene, assessed the man’s predicament and recognised him as a fellow human being in dire need. Such mindfulness can be almost instantaneous and didn’t need to be spelt out in the story, but it was critical to the difference between the Samaritan and the other two men. And if he hadn’t been attentive his compassion would not have emerged.

I sometimes worry a bit about The Charter for Compassion. It’s a noble document and one of the great messages to our time. It calls upon all men and women “to restore compassion to the centre of morality and

religion". We as a Parish and Church are pledged to promote it. But is it persuasive enough as a stand-alone statement? Might it not be stronger if it took more account of the dependence of compassion on the primal human processes of attention?

To illustrate. On 24 July the Otago Daily Times had a fine Editorial entitled "Responding to massacres". It was referring to the first anniversary of the slaughter in Norway of 77 people by Anders Breivik, and also to 9/11 and the recent killings in Aurora, Colorado. The Norwegian Prime Minister has spoken of the people's commitment to "more openness, more democracy, more humanity, but no more naivety". AS the ODT put it, "Liberal democracies have to be open and robust while also having boundaries." A contrast was drawn between the measured Norwegian response to their crisis and the Americans' reflexive lashing out after 9/11. It was the difference between adopting mindfulness and falling back on mindlessness.

In so much of our life and world affairs, what counts first is the level of attention achieved, before the question of compassion has even arisen. Attention is so often the necessary prerequisite to give the Charter for Compassion the oomph to get through to the behavioural level of human dynamics. Love without listening seldom gets to first base.

I've been singing the praises of attention – thorough consideration of each situation on its own merits and in its context, free of the dictates of previous mindsets. But no word is perfect. Just as "faith" and "love" can be misused so can "attention". If you've ever had to face an army sergeant on a parade ground screaming at you, "*Uh-ten-SHUHN*", you'll know what I mean.

But that only proves the point. Everything – right down to each word we utter (and how), each conversation we hold, each choice we make, each conflict we face – may need our mindful attention. That's an impossible counsel of perfection but it's worth having a go. There's absolutely no shortage of opportunities for practice, even today. I'm thinking about it.

David Kitchingman