



Dunedin Methodist Parish

Finding Good in everyone Finding God in everyone

www.dunedinmethodist.org.nz

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PARISH BULLETIN

10th November 2013

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 17th November

9.30am	Mornington	C Gibson
9.30 am	Mosgiel	R Masterton
11.00 am	Glenaven	C Gibson
11.00 am	Wesley	R Masterton
1.00pm	St Kilda	TBA
6.00pm	Broad Bay	H Watson White

GLOBE THEATRE FUNDRAISER

If you want to assist the Globe to repair its roof and enjoy some first-class entertainment at the same time, phone the Theatre at 477 3274 to book for one or both of two programmes of readings by John Watson, entitled *Marley was Dead: Readings from the novels of Charles Dickens*. Programme I (extracts from the novels) runs Thursday 14 November 7.30 and Saturday 16 November at 2.00; Programme II (a shortened *Christmas Carol*) runs Friday 15 November 7.30 and Sunday 17 November at 2.00. There is a flat entry price of \$20, so no group booking rate.



ROD MITCHELL has brought with him a little more than a mere “breath” of fresh air to the services he has led, mainly at Mornington & Glenaven. Some might say he has ushered in a gale-force of change. The big flat screen TV has been brought out of the closet and is as much a feature of the worship as the brass cross, the patterned organ pipes and the flickering candle. Rod’s *CONNECTIONS* article last Sunday described the idea of a “flipped Church” and maybe that’s a good term for the style of thoughtful, stimulating sermons Rod has brought to his ministry - where visual power generated from a laptop is coupled with the more traditional word power so much the mark of traditional preaching. Rod has invited us to “put out best creative thinking caps on” and to become much more active participants, “detectives” even, in exploring Christian faith. For some of us, grown rather too familiar with, and dependent on, someone else’s carefully prepared sermon, this is a real challenge. For a younger generation, Rod’s approach is simply bringing church into the 21st century. It’s a challenging journey for us all. Photos show Robyn Abernethy reading from Micah as well researched graphics on the screen reinforce a well known passage, while Rod extols the endless creative possibilities arising from God’s “Big Bang.”





STORY FROM THE MISSION

Miriam has started Take 3 Streets in Mosgiel; she has spoken with Supermarkets, identified the streets and put out posters. The purpose of 3 streets is to take 3 streets that are likely to contain families but cover different decile ranges – low, mid, high – and run a survey by door knocking and asking a range of questions that focus on activities and services that people use/do in Mosgiel and activities and services they would like to see.

“I’m beginning to think it might be take 3 streets and 3 more and 3 more. Out of 200 houses so far I have 15 surveys and some potentials still to catch. It’s a lot like fishing. It’s very early days to generalise but away I go. Two streets in, High St and Murray St, I am not seeing a bell- shaped curve, more the Loch Ness Monster with three distinct humps above water that are each an island to themselves: the elderly, the comparatively wealthy and the comparatively poor.

I am mapping out the street as I go. If I can get someone to the door they will usually know enough about their immediate neighbours to tell me if they are elderly, have older children or none and if both parents are away working all day. This helps me to target the right homes.

I am finding it really interesting talking to the parents and I love seeing them in their home environment. It makes sense of where they are coming from. Most eligible parents are happy or willing to talk. Many of them seem to be making do around problems and are not aware that there could be help available. For example the mother whose 3 year old is able to unlatch the front gate and go on to the street. She actively supervises her little boy when he plays on the front lawn rather than secure the gate so that he can't get out. It's not a particularly relevant example but I'm describing a mind-set. They are doing the best they can with how things are and don't know what to ask for or what they can change or how to change it.

Parents I've met

1. Don't know what is available
2. Are frustrated because available material is out of date
3. Are frustrated that available services are running to capacity and have long waiting lists
4. Are waiting until the child is eligible for the 20 free hours scheme because the cost of kindergarten is prohibitive
5. Cost of Parent Centre prevents them joining unless they really feel they can use all its services to get value for money

The most isolated families I'm seeing are asking for things like coffee groups to meet other Mums and be able to take their children, a central place where they can get information for all age-groups, free activities and activities for mums with babies, a place in town where they can breastfeed babies; these ones don't have children in any pre-school education yet.

I am seeing some families who are quietly struggling to feed and clothe their children; heating doesn't even seem to get a look in. Their aspirations are enough money in the bank for petrol to drive to the beach on the weekend and buy an ice cream on the way home.



Chicken and Egg Sunday ("The Great Story", Part 2)

Hi Jo

The story of "The Great Story" so far

You may not remember, but on 8 September I began to examine the faith implications of the Great Story, the term given by Lloyd Geering to cosmic events since the Big Bang, including the very recent appearance of humankind. What got me started was the church lectionary's Season of Creation, which on that day happened to feature Flora and Fauna Sunday. I can't claim that today is officially Chicken and Egg Sunday, but I'll explain that title shortly.

In Part 1, I suggested that there are three areas (**history**, **destiny** and **theology**) in which the traditional Christian Story is now inadequate on its own to fully convey the magnitude and mystery of the Great Story. I got as far as proposing that, in the Great Story, **history** thoroughly dwarfs us and **destiny** practically ignores us. Both downsize us from our proud sense of entitlement as a race and religion. All bets are off now, even for Christianity. Which brings us to the third area that's up for grabs:

How might the Great Story affect theology?

We can no longer chicken out from asking whether even our fundamental theology needs to be reexamined in the light of the vast new backdrop to the whole of our existence. To illustrate, let's take a snapshot from just one twenty-year period in the course of the rise of modernity.

When Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, the title itself unintentionally reflected something even bigger than the shattering implications of his investigation into the evolution of life forms on planet Earth. The very word "origin" captured something of a broader interest of the time.

Just 18 years beforehand, a young German philosopher, Ludwig Feuerbach published *Das Wesen des Christentums*. Now, even in

translation, *The Essence of Christianity* has no popular recognition in our own time and tradition, so would it not be preposterous to imagine that it could even hold a candle to Darwin's great work? But what if I were to suggest that it might just as well have been titled *On the Origin of God*? It did in fact cause a minor philosophical controversy in its day, and it was championed by no less a revolutionary than Karl Marx. But don't let that put you off.

Nowadays it *is* recognised as a seminal work and a classic of humanism. It is one of the most formative expressions of the notion that far from God creating mankind, it is mankind that has created God. In other words, when we worship God as the supreme first cause of creation and the divine designer of our own highest nature, we are, so the argument goes, actually projecting our inward nature to construct a being modeled on our own desires and dependencies.

Lacking a suitable privy council for ultimate appeal on such matters, I don't propose to issue a ruling on this conundrum, but I do want to stress the great importance of our being aware of it. And this is why I'm introducing Chicken and Egg Sunday into the Christian calendar.

Which came first, the chicken or the egg?

This age-old riddle on the processes of emergent life has perplexed generations of philosophers and ordinary folks. The dilemma appears to be still unresolved, even within modern science. I have come across conflicting opinions published within just the last seven years by serious scientists (or "eggsperts"). It would be fascinating to go into their arguments but I'm only raising the question as a way of illustrating the problem posed by the case presented in *The Essence of Christianity*. To put it bluntly, "Which came first, God the Creator as the antecedent of our thought (à la faith forever singing) or creative thought as the antecedent of our God (à la Ludwig Feuerbach)?"

Such debate, like the chicken/egg question, will probably go on ad infinitum. Either side can always crow over the other. The one might say, "You can nullify God as a projection from within us as much as you like, but God will still be God beyond us." Equally, the other might say, "You can posit God in whatever way you like, but the God you formulate beyond us will always be an invention from within us."

So what's the point of affirming ambiguity in the depths?

To begin with, it's an honest approach to a big and baffling question, though the benefits of honesty may not be immediately clear. There may be periods of considerable discomfort and anxiety to follow, with only brief glimpses of a new state of stability in motion.

But it also helps to foster understanding and tolerance of the otherness of others. Once we can accept that all concepts of God are at the very least flavoured by a believer's inner world, we can become more accepting not only of views that have no appeal to us, but even of portraits of God that we may find repugnant.

Consider, for instance, a common Christian view of God as an offended deity demanding the sacrificial offering of his innocent offspring in order to pay the price of divine forgiveness. That same image, repulsive to many of us, may be seen in a slightly different light if understood as in part the psychic projection of a dependency and guilt widespread among human cultures across the centuries.

Above all, an openness to the paradox of faith and belief can be enriching and inspiring. There's a common phrase, "the best of both worlds", which refers to benefiting simultaneously from two seemingly incompatible realms. Few seem to have applied it to this area of conflict, but go down deeply enough and the worlds of humanism and theism may be as close as either face of the same coin. On one side, God as a name for humankind's highest aspirations, and on the other side, humanity as the embodiment of the creative work of God.

So how about introducing a Chicken and Egg Sunday? Not the chicken *or* the egg. Rather, the chicken *and* the egg. Two mutually dependent expressions of life, both productive of each other. Find a parable in the paradox. Expand our sense of history, destiny and theology. Celebrate the Christian Story and the Great Story together.

Perhaps we could liken the Christian Story a bit more to the egg, the smaller and more mystical manifestation. And perhaps we could see in the chicken more of the grandeur and fullness of the Great Story. Could we not try embracing them both together in church and community? What a difference it could make to celebrate the joy of not having all the answers.

David Kitchingman