



Dunedin Methodist Parish

Finding Good in everyone Finding God in everyone

www.dunedinmethodist.org.nz

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Mornington:		

PARISH BULLETIN

21st December 2014

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 28th December

9.30 am	Mornington	D Phillipps
9.30 am	Mosgiel	S Pole
11.00 am	Glenaven	D Phillipps
11.00 am	Wesley	S Pole
1.00 pm	St Kilda	TBA

MOSGIEL CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE is Thursday 25th December at 9:00am followed by Christmas cake and Punch all very welcome.

ADVANCE NOTICE of our next Otago Southland Synod meeting: 20-22 February 2015, Camp Columba, Pukerau, Gore. A time of sharing, learning and reflection. Guest speaker on how to share our faith. Put in your diaries now and more information to come in the new year.

FESTIVE GREETINGS - We are approaching the Festive Season, which is a time of joy and celebration for the coming of Christ. I wish everyone in the Parish a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Siosifa Pole.

A WELL ATTENDED ECUMENICAL ADVENT SERVICE (Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian and Methodist) was held on Sunday night. A refreshing



approach to what once may have been 9 Lessons and Carols, the carols were supplemented by incisive commentary giving a contemporary context to traditional readings. A combined choir sang with welcome volume & depth, and visuals on the big screen did much to make

for a multi-media presentation. Thanks to Colin Gibson for writing the script and to Rod Mitchell for leading the service and preparing the visuals.

Photo shows 8 readers from the 4 congregations. (a good feeling about this service - is the ecumenical imperative still leading us Methodists or will we wait for another Easter or Christmas before we do it again?)

THE EMERGENCY ROOM

at Sacred Heart Hospital, Dunedin, was the scene of Ginny Kitchingman's latest play written for [Y@M](#) and it was a cracker. In the weeks before Christmas the team are called upon to deliver treatment to a series of often bizarre emergencies - an acute case of "sparkle" disease



(tinsil-itie), a fractured (fallen) angel, a Santa suffering a reindeer horn lodged in his skull, a severely haemorrhaged Christmas wallet, and then Christmas herself suffering severe cardiac arrest, with few if any positive life signs. The team work on all their patients with huge vigour. There's nothing they can do for the bleeding wallet despite every kind of

transfusion, but most of their patients recover. The problem remains Christmas herself - sadly, the real heart of Christmas is sick and the team agree that the remedy is not medical. As each of them resolves to restore the spirit of Christmas in their own lives, Christmas' heartbeat returns and she rises from the table to join in the final song/dance "Feliz Navidad I wanna wish you a merry Christmas." Much zest is added by the contribution of online consultants Dr Lobe and Dr Aorta, while radio commentators Belinda Breathless, Earnest Demeanour, Nicola Newsworthy and Susan Straightface dig deep into the significance of the real live situations faced by the emergency team. Very funny, spontaneous, joyful music and incisive. Mornington and Glenaven people loved it. THANKS GINNY and [Y@M](#).



STORY FROM THE MISSION

From Next Step Training: A student who left in July to take up a full-time job opportunity has recently been back in touch. Contact has been maintained with him since his departure and because of recent health issues he now has more time on his hands and has approached Stuart with a view to learning how to set up a web-page for a business venture. He remembered that Stuart taught him some HTML and CSS and was keen to reconnect with this. Our ICT coordinator and our Graphics technician who have recently revamped the Mission website have agreed to spend some time with him.

DUNEDIN CELEBRATION OF HARMONY DINNER (during World Interfaith Harmony Week, February 2015)

Time: Tuesday 3rd February 2015 from 6.30-8.30pm

Venue: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Fenton Crescent, St Clair, Dunedin

Please bring a vegetarian dish or dessert to share. Whanau friendly: face painting and other activities for children will be provided. Featuring: The Dunedin Interfaith Choir (led by Colin Gibson), guest speakers, poetry readings and more! Transport to venue available: contact David Kitchingman 476 7767 or dmkman@es.co.nz

Organised by the Dunedin Interfaith Council. EVERYONE IS WELCOME!



AND JOSEPH ROSE UP

Trish Patrick's beautifully written article of a fortnight ago provided a valuable insight as to what we may yet discern of the original Mary, mother of Jesus. Trish's question –

Who is this Mary of antiquity who, simultaneously, has been elevated and trivialised by dogma, creed and magical thinking, depriving her not only of her humanity but her son?

I'll not attempt answers beyond those ventured in her article, but you will have guessed the picture of the "strong, wise, intelligent woman" rang bells for me.

Before we are quite finished with the year of Matthew, it occurs to me we may just as properly ask the same question of the Joseph of antiquity. Has he too been obscured by the overlay of "dogma, creed and magical thinking" making it equally difficult for us moderns to discern the real father of Jesus?

In giving a resounding "yes" to the question, it is not to suggest that the surviving image of Joseph has undergone an identical process to that of Mary. There's an important difference. If Mary was **magnified** out of all reality by the subsequent mythology of the Church, the evidence equally suggests that Joseph was just as seriously **minimised**. And it's in Matthew that much of that evidence for that is found.

One cannot read the birth narratives of Matthew without being aware of the writer's preoccupation with divine direction through dreams, and his obsession to prove the fore-ordination of all things in the birth of Jesus. A big share of that focus in the early part of the Jesus story falls on the character of Joseph, and while I'm not usually one for proof texts, just a few minutes in chaps 1 and 2 of the gospel demonstrates the pattern.

1: 18-25 Joseph is led in a dream not to "dismiss Mary quietly" for the disgrace of her unmarried pregnancy but to take her as his wife - while having no sex with her prior to the birth of their son. And this, to give effect to the prophecy of Isaiah that a virgin will conceive the promised child of God . . .

2: 13 - 15 King Herod's determination to kill the child identified by the wise men as king of the Jews. Joseph has another dream and is led to seek the safety of Egypt. But again, Matthew attaches an otherwise remote prophetic reference to God's son being called out of Egypt.

2: 19 - 23 Again Joseph dreams - twice - first that Herod is dead and it is safe to return to Israel, and again, that the region around Jerusalem, now ruled by Herod's successor, is just as likely to incur danger for the child. The dream suggests the wise decision is to head up into Galilee and make their home in Nazareth. True to form, Matthew has to find a prophetic justification and he does - another remote and unconnected reference that the messiah "will be called a Nazorean."

My memory of the place given to Joseph in all the Christmas pageants of my youth, and since, is of a dutiful, faithful brown-clad figure, standing well behind the more prominent, but invariably beautiful virginal Mary. He seldom had a word to say - and in terms of the action being portrayed, seemed incidental to the plot - overshadowed by marvelling shepherds and inscrutable magi. But it's an unfair perception. Three times Matthew says of him words to the effect "and Joseph rose up." This was a man with initiative. When required to act to save a bad situation he was decisive and resourceful. He defied moralistic convention to save the relationship with Mary and ensure a good marriage. He kept his pregnant wife safe through the harsh dictates of the census. He had the presence of mind to leave the country to escape Herod, and when the situation improved made wise

enough decisions that led in due course to the family's settlement and growth in Nazareth. And, not least in importance, he was there when it mattered in the development of the son whose life and teaching had so profound an impact on the world. From Joseph, Jesus had the benefit of a stable father-figure, a family life of inestimable value in his formative years, and from his earliest years learned the value of an honest day's work. Shadowy figure he may have been as the Jesus story developed, even given the distinct possibility he died relatively young, but the influence of Joseph on the Jesus of history should never be discounted.

As for the dreams, and Matthew's penchant for finding a text to support a divine conspiracy at every turn in the life of Jesus, today's reader can take it or leave it. I can leave it. Joseph is not the only man to act honourably and own to the fatherhood of an unborn child. Joseph may or may not have been a serial dreamer, but the decisions he made, often under pressure, were those of a clear-thinking adult person intimately bound by relationships with others dependant on him. Nor, I am certain, was the family of Joseph and Mary the only one forced to improvise in the face of Herod's terror campaign and join the small tide of refugees fleeing the carnage. The survival to adulthood in dangerous times of the one they called the 'man for others' was in no small measure the result of good and protective parenting within what may well have been a refugee community in Egypt, in which Joseph himself matured.

And thus to my conclusion, that despite Matthew's penchant to ascribe dreams and prophecies to account for almost everything Joseph did, we can use the same phrase of him that Trish so aptly used of Mary - he was no "push-over", no pawn in the hands of a divine conspiracy inexorably playing out a preordained plan for the salvation of the world. Indeed, in those early years so crucial for the survival of their little family, Joseph was, and remains, a role model for the male of the species in times when terror and violence are rampant. Joseph is replicated millions of times in today's torn and shattered communities. Good, dependable, caring men, seeking first and foremost the opportunity for their families to live in peace and enjoy prosperity. And willing to take any risk to achieve it.

And perhaps that is the witness of Joseph as again the Christian world struggles to reinterpret the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem of Judea.

The 21st century world suffers grievously at the hands of all-powerful males, ruthlessly deploying every device at their disposal to exploit women and children, the poor and the vulnerable. They have in their hands all the apparatus of power - enormous wealth, religious fundamentalism and the fear and blind obedience it generates. And not forgetting the military/armaments industry to do their bidding, and political totalitarianism to enforce their will. Add to that the sheer greed of those who conspire to prosper their own interests regardless of the untold misery of those who fall victim to their schemes. Taliban men not only enslave their women and girls, but think nothing of savagely killing the children of their Pakistani kinsfolk to make a political point. Such is their definition of a "mans' world," ideological, arbitrary, cold and barbarous. By this view the world is not a pretty place.

But Christmas was, and hopefully remains, a repository for other values, gentler powers. Herod did not have the last say. Neither did Caesar. Nor must such as ISIS, the barbarity of the torture culture, and the terror of drone warfare - all male scourges that disfigure the face of the human family.. Young Joseph, with the strong young woman who became his wife, defied them all to bring to maturity their first - born, a man of such peace, love and justice that every generation since has been tested and judged by his self-effacing example. Among the vast swathe of refugees and victims fleeing the power and terror of perverted testosterone thank God for other Josephs using wit and vision to save their children for their God-given maturity - let them be our agenda and our prayer this Christmas.

Ken Russell

On behalf of the CONNECTIONS team, I wish all our Parish readers a happy Christmas, and the grace to look forward to a new year with faith and hope.



DECEMBER – JANUARY SERVICES: (amended)

Sun 21 st Dec	9.30 am at Mornington	9.30 at Mosgiel
	11.00 am at Glenaven	11.00 am at Wesley
Wed 24 th Dec	10.30 pm Supper	11.00 pm Parish Christmas Eve Carol Service at Glenaven
Christmas Day	9.00 am	Service at Mosgiel (combined with Wesley)
	9.30 am	Service at Mornington (no service at Glenaven)
Sun 28 th Dec	9.30 am at Mornington	9.30 am at Mosgiel
	11.00 am at Glenaven	11.00 am at Wesley
Wed 31 st Dec	10-12.00 pm	Watchnight Service at St Kilda

Mornington and Glenaven combined during January 2015, with services at the following places:

- Jan 4th 9.30 am Communion at **St Mary's Anglican** church cnr Whitby and Lawrence Sts, Mornington.
- Jan 11th 9.30 am Service at **Mornington Methodist** church, cnr Whitby and Galloway sts.
- Jan 18th 9.30 am Service at **Presbyterian church**, Maryhill Terrace, Mornington.
- Jan 25th 9.30 am Service at **Mornington Methodist** church.

Mosgiel Sun Jan 4th 9.30am Communion led by Rev Donald Phillipps

Wesley Sun Jan 4th 11.00am Communion led by Rev Donald Phillipps

Mosgiel and Wesley combined during the rest of January at Mosgiel.

Jan 11th, 18th, and 25th 2015 9.30am Services at Mosgiel.

Sunday February 1st 2015:

9.30am Communion at Mosgiel 9.30am Communion at Mornington

11.00am Communion at Wesley 11.00am Communion at Glenaven.