



Dunedin Methodist Parish

Finding Good in everyone Finding God in everyone

www.dunedinmethodist.org.nz

Presbyters:	Rev. Siosifa Pole	455 2923
	Rev. Dr. Rod Mitchell	477 3700
Parish Stewards:	Mrs Hilda Hughson	487 6226
	Mrs Earlene Owens	489 8146
Tongan Steward:	Mr Kaufusi Pole	455 0096
Parish Office:	Siosifa: parish@dmm.org.nz	466 4600
	Katrina: admin@dmm.org.nz	
Parish Prayer Convenor	Elaine Merrett	489 7663
Pastoral Convenor	Beryl Neutze	476 7447
Mornington:		

PARISH BULLETIN

28th August 2016

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 4th September

9.30 am	Mornington	R Mitchell
9.30 am	Mosgiel	S Pole – Service of recognition
11.00 am	Glenaven	R Mitchell
11.00 am	Wesley	S Pole
1.00 pm	St Kilda	TBA

I'M CURRENTLY WORKING FOR THE RED CROSS as a refugee support volunteer. Our former refugee family are being very well looked after, but could do with one or two items for their house - a largish rug (to go under a dining table), 2 dining chairs, 2 comfortable lounge chairs. Some firewood would also be useful since their donated load will soon run out. Give me a call after the weekend on mob 021 168 9272, home 478 0491, or email mcleanwinter@clear.net.nz. Thank you - Jenny Winter.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY to Juliet Wilson, who turns 4 on August 30th!



A REMINDER that our fourth discussion meeting on the Future of our Dunedin Parish will be on Saturday Sept 3rd, 2-4pm at Wesley hall. Everyone welcome! Please come with ideas for Parish Strategies which will flow from our mission statement and Aims. We have made good progress at our previous gatherings. Afternoon tea provided.

Hilda (ph 4876226)

A QUOTATION from Rod's presentation last Sunday was memorable. **"Try to imagine a culture where arguments are not viewed in terms of war, where no one wins or loses, where there is no sense of attacking or defending . . . Imagine a culture where an argument is viewed as a dance,** the participants are seen as performers, and the goal is to perform in a balanced and aesthetically pleasing way (Lackoff & Johnson). Many photos from our archives, especially those of our growing kids, unselfconsciously expressing themselves in the drama and dance of various productions, pre-empt such a culture. Kids that have danced such a peace culture when young are surely more likely to live it as adults.



PEACE LECTURE AND OPEN EDUCATION - Were two events happened on the same night, 24th August in Dunedin, focussing on the value of "Peace." I was present at both events and they were both inspiring for both audiences. Imam Afroz Ali spoke from an Islam perspective on its legal basis for its spirit of peaceful coexistence and Colin Gibson spoke diligently about the music of Karl Jenkins and summed up at the end with a DVD on his performance on stage that is known as "The armed man: A Mass for Peace" with the picture of a dove on the background. I came home inspired by both speakers because that's what the world needs and more so in the present time. Thanks for both speakers.

EXPLORERS GROUP - We meet this Sunday (28th) at 4.30 pm in the Mornington Lounge. New members always welcome.

FAITH THINKING

In September, this course will be held:

Going deeper into the Gospel of Mark

Professor Paul Trebilco, University of Otago

7:00 – 9:00 pm Thursday September 15, 22 and 29

Burns 7 (Albany Street), University of Otago

Each course costs \$20. Please register online at

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/continuingeducation/index.html>

For further information please go to:

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/news/otago055227.html>



STORIES FROM THE MISSION

Take 10 Streets: Over the last few weeks Dawn has got to meet quite a few more of the residents of the Take 10 Streets area, particularly those who live in Reid Road and Melbourne Street. A new theme which has begun to emerge, particularly in Melbourne Street, is residents and their visitors parking their vehicles inconsiderately, as well as the road being used as part of a speed circuit. However, the predominant theme for change remains the desire for a shopping centre with a better and more varied selection of shops, for South Dunedin to have its own library and the desire for better quality housing. Two men Dawn met were particularly down about the poor quality of their homes, one was a single parent to a small child, both frightened to ask the landlord to make improvements as they were concerned it would result in rental increases they couldn't afford. In both cases Dawn was able to pass on information about the insulation project being currently run to help landlords update their properties at little or no cost; they also discussed some of the things they could do to help improve the warmth and health of their homes. The man who was a single parent was also very interested in the information about the 'Habitat for Humanity' organisation, he told Dawn that she had made his day and never in his wildest dreams did he think there could be a possibility of owning his own home.

Early Years Hub: There have been some busy weekends and evenings at the Hub this month. These have included the Plunket Antenatal Classes on the first weekend in the month both Saturday and Sunday and also

a class on Tuesday evenings; Parenting through Separation; Antenatal Breast feeding classes and one of our regular families had a small birthday party for one of the children. The Hub also hosted a group of parents and children from the New Zealand Sign Language community for a series of sign language classes for four Sundays.

Client Support: Lack of social housing is becoming more of an issue for our community. We currently have two clients with young children living out of motels awaiting housing. One of these clients with a young granddaughter found herself about to be in a homeless situation. This was reflected in her ORS 14.2 score where she was very concerned about what she was going to do. A trip to Work and Income and they have placed her in a motel to provide safe accommodation for her and her granddaughter. Her ORS score skyrocketed to 34 as this provided a safe place, reflecting the safety she feels being out of her original housing situation. They have now been in the motel for four weeks while working with Housing NZ to find a house as well as searching for appropriate private rental place. She has had numerous appointments with Work and Income around housing, and support with bills – Work and Income have been helpful and supportive. She really appreciates this and Housing NZ working to try to secure a place for her and her granddaughter, although moving now into the fourth week is starting to cause a little further stress and worry. After writing this story, the client has let me know she is now in a lovely private rental. Good work W&I.

If you would like to support the Mission's work with a donation, please visit www.givealittle.co.nz and search for The Methodist Mission.



SUBLIME AND RIDICULOUS

They're an odd but familiar couple.

I was reminded of them in a roundabout way last weekend. On Friday night and Saturday morning I attended the Faith Thinking Course on 'Science, the Bible and Theology: Historical Perspectives', presented by Associate Professor John Stenhouse. On Sunday I dropped in at the Art Gallery and viewed an exhibition of works by four contemporary New Zealand artists currently working in Dunedin, entitled 'Ridiculous Sublime.' The common denominator between these two attendances was Thomas Paine, the 18th century English-American revolutionary writer, and a fierce critic of Christianity.

At least that's what he became. Born of an Anglican mother and Quaker father he was a contemporary of John Wesley and became intrigued with Methodism and the way Wesley took his message to commoners. Paine noted that 'Methodism demonstrated that the excluded majority were a social force to be reckoned with. Commoners do not need to be talked down to, ignored, pushed aside, or hanged for criminal offences.' One of Paine's well-known sayings was: 'The World is my country, all mankind are my brethren, and to do good is my religion.' Sounds familiar? 'The world is my parish', said Wesley, and: 'Do all the good you can'. Where they parted ways was in defining the good they tried to do in the world.

Paine's name and especially his famous work, *The Age of Reason*, cropped up in the Faith Thinking Course which covered the so-called warfare between science and religion over the centuries. Then I discovered that the 'Ridiculous Sublime' exhibition at the Art Gallery drew on a quote **from the same work** (Part II, 1795): 'The sublime and the ridiculous are often so nearly related that it is difficult to class them separately. One step above the sublime makes the ridiculous and one step above the ridiculous makes the sublime again.'

On further investigation, I found that the original context of the quote was Paine's demolition job on the Biblical account of how Joshua made the sun stand still upon Mount Gibeon. Paine argued that it 'shows the ignorance of Joshua, for he should have commanded the *earth* [my italics] to have stood still.' Such was the ridiculousness of the attempt to depict an act of divine sublimity that day. One can sense Paine's derision as he lingered over the closing words of the passage (Joshua 10:14): 'And there was no day like that, before it, nor *after it* [his italics], that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man.'

Paine wasn't quite the first to express the tight interplay between the sublime and the ridiculous. Some 20 years earlier, a French author, Fontenelle, put it even more succinctly: 'From the sublime to the ridiculous is only one step.' Napoleon Bonaparte is said to have expressed the same thought as he turned back home after his pivotal defeat in Russia.

Turning back home to a less epic stage in the Dunedin Art Gallery, how are the two epithets applied to artistic works? The Gallery suggests that 'the distinct vision of a contemporary artist can offer a new lens through which to see our everyday – reshaping the intersections between the familiar, the ridiculous and the magnificent.' A critic, Monique Hodgkinson, writing in *Critic*, agreed that the works of the four exhibitors, Nick Austin, Jane Dodd, Scott Eady and Rachel H. Allan, are 'simultaneously kitsch and stylish, artistic and absurd, hilarious and thought-provoking'.

In the world of modern art especially, it would be widely accepted that 'ridiculous' and 'sublime' often jostle for position. But so too in just about every field of human endeavour – I'm not quite sure about mathematics, but it's probably the case. Certainly in sport and politics it's true. A gold medal Olympian may swim sublimely one day and act like a chuff the next. A politician may make an imposing speech one

evening only to be brought down to size in the newspaper cartoon the next morning.

But are there any spheres in which the risk is supremely high? I suspect it must be in the areas of ethics, religion, spirituality and the like, for the simple reason that the higher you aim the bigger you may fall. Christianity of course is not immune. We can merely note how Thomas Paine had a field day in exposing the pomposity of Biblical literalism.

Jesus seems to have been supremely conscious of the dangers and held up some behaviours for ridicule. A stark example is the parable of a Pharisee, strutting the temple stage, and a tax collector, tucked away in a corner. Each offers a prayer, one of thanksgiving, the other of confession. One is ridiculous, the other sublime. End of story? Not quite. Generations followed and many Christians make a fetish out of confession and a few even indulge in self-flagellation. If 'we are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under Thy table' does that make God's dog more acceptable?

As Paine so perceptively wrote: 'One step above the sublime makes the ridiculous.' Things that are noble and magnificent are never far from things that are trivial and laughable. We really have to reckon with the ridiculous and the sublime as virtually two sides of the same coin. There is good news and bad news. There are hazards and hope in nearly every situation. While remaining wary of the hazards, the great challenge is to spot the chance to turn a faintly ridiculous situation into something sublimely hopeful. Can we think of one?

David Kitchingman