



# Dunedin Methodist Parish

*Finding Good in everyone    Finding God in everyone*

[www.dunedinmethodist.org.nz](http://www.dunedinmethodist.org.nz)

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

## PARISH BULLETIN

30<sup>th</sup> October 2016

### WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 6<sup>th</sup> November

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

**CLOSING OF WESLEY CHURCH** - With the sale of Wesley Church pending, the church's chattels are being offered to the other Dunedin Methodist churches. If there are any items you would like, please write to Ian Bartlett (28a Belgrave Crescent, Roslyn, Dunedin) who will facilitate the consideration of all requests.

**REMINDER:** Combined Mornington Churches meet tonight at 6:30 in Mornington Methodist Church.

**MOSGIEL MWF** next Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> November @ 1:30pm in the hall when Tristian Kavanagh from Age Concern will be speaking to us. ALL WELCOME.

**FRIDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2016** 2pm COFFEE @ BLACKSTONE please phone 489 7663

**OTAGO-SOUTHLAND SYNOD** - The Synod meeting will be on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> of November in Alexandra, 10am. Those who need a ride to the Synod please contact me. We will leave from Dunedin at 7am on Saturday. Siosifa 455 2923

**EXPLORERS GROUP:** Next meeting Sunday 6 November, 4.30 pm in the Mornington Lounge. The programme will include a report by Ken Russell on the recent Sea of Faith Conference at Silverstream in Upper Hutt. Welcome, all.

**INTERFAITH VISIT to Arai Te Uru Marae, Sunday 6 November, 2.00pm.** This invitation from the Marae is to all who may be interested and will offer insights into Maori spirituality. The visit has been arranged by the Dunedin Interfaith Council which promotes unity in diversity. If you would like to participate in this special event with others of our Parish who have become active participants please contact David Kitchingman or Hilda Hughson during the week beforehand.

**SYMPATHY** - On behalf of the Mornington Methodist Church and the whole of the Dunedin Methodist Parish I would like to convey our sympathy and condolences to Alan Hughes' family for his death. I would like to thank George Davis for the tribute that he did on our behalf at Alan's funeral on Tuesday at Hope's chapel. It is our prayer that God's peace be upon you during this period of grieving.

**PIN FOR PARISH BULLETINS 26 October 2016 - Prisons, Justness and 'Decarceration'** - Eighteen hundred new prison beds at \$.5million per bed – a total of \$1 billion plus 1.5 billion in operational costs over 5 years. Is this what government policy of social investment should mean? Is it a sane response to offending, and methamphetamine

addiction? Installing 1000 additional police is just as inadequate. This model of punishment and blame is not working – crime and imprisonment is growing. . Instead of punishment, we prefer an approach that recognises social harm from offending and looks to restorative processes. Lives of scarcity and deprivation lead to prison. \$2.5 billion should be going to stop deprivation and abuse and towards housing.

**MOSGIEL HELD ANOTHER** successful AGM & followed it by Dinner at the Mosgiel Station & Function Centre on Sunday 23rd October. 1st photo - general photo with Siosifa & Naomi Pole, Allison & Bill Walls, Fay Richardson & Anne D'Arcy. 2nd photo Kakala & Naomi Pole' enjoying the children's area.



## STORY FROM THE MISSION

*Brief Drink Driving Programme (Gore Probation):* This was a very responsive group. They showed considerable interest in spending time on the driving simulator. This may be because there were 3 men under 20 years of age in the group. They found things on the simulator our tutor did not know were there! There was very good participation in the board and card games. The group also had a lot of fun with the "Booze Goggles" and doing the obstacle course.

If you would like to support the Mission's work with a donation, please visit [www.givealittle.co.nz](http://www.givealittle.co.nz) and search for The Methodist Mission.

**A NOTABLE EVENT** - Last Sunday afternoon in the Mornington Methodist church we dedicated our battered blue and orange Cross brought from the island of Lampedusa, the first staging post for thousands of refugees from Syria and elsewhere in Africa. We did so in the presence of many distinguished guests, including the Catholic and Anglican Bishops of Dunedin, Clare Curran, the MP for South Dunedin, Professors from the University of Otago's Department of Religious Studies and the Centre for Public Theology, and Sue Price, the remarkable Red Cross person responsible for co-ordinating the arrival and housing of Syrian families now reaching Dunedin, after fleeing their native land. A prayer came from the Vatican, written by Archbishop Moxon, a New Zealander who now represents the worldwide Anglican Church at the Holy See; the choir sang a new Colin Gibson song addressed to the Cross as a witness of terrible events that should never have been. A magnificent all-colour programme (thanks Cam Weston) included a message from Francesco Tuccio, the humble Italian carpenter who made the first of such crosses after witnessing too many drownings just off the island. We handed over a cheque for nearly \$2000 to the Red Cross Syrian Refugee appeal, raised from Open Education pre-session meals and the sessions themselves. The Press turned up, and the newspaper printed an article and photograph, showing Bill Torr, the Dunedin craftsman responsible for the beautiful Rimu base now enclosing the Cross proudly carrying it towards the



communion table for its dedication. Even more remarkable, the Muslim community was represented by Paul Gourlie who gave readings from the Koran (most of the refugees are Muslim) with the permission and co-operation of the Iman presiding over Dunedin's mosque. The Lampedusa Cross (only the Vatican and the British Museum have such crosses) is now moving around the parish, and will next travel between the co-operating Mornington churches before being released for even wider travels. Contact Colin Gibson (453 6662) if you wish to make a booking.



## *Parish Links*

### **MORNINGTON METHODIST CHURCH NEWS**

This week 26 small parcels for newborn babies were delivered to the Methodist Mission's Early Years HUB for distribution to new mothers. So far this year Mornington Methodist Women's Fellowship have parcelled and delivered 90 of these gifts which comprise a face cloth, a hand knitted hat and booties, sometimes a singlet or other baby garment depending on what has been gifted to us for distribution, plus a small soap sample or baby shampoo. The hats and booties are mainly knitted by the Women's Fellowship members but the group also receives contributions collected by the HUB from other sources for us to include. Last year the Women's Fellowship applied for money from the '*Let The Children Live*' campaign and were successful in receiving \$500. This helps with the purchase of wool, face cloths, cellophane packages and curling ribbon to make a very attractive parcel.



**SHE'S A MINISTER** of the United Church of Canada and she's been raising a storm. So why? A moral scandal, a dibble into parish funds, or is she just a troublemaker? Actually, none of those. Her 'indiscretion,' deemed by her judges in the higher echelons of the Church to warrant dismissal, is the deliberate and frequent use of the a-word to describe her approach to faith and in her practice of ministry.

I met Gretta Vosper at the Sea of Faith Conference near Lower Hutt three weeks ago. Believe me, she has not the appearance of a blasphemer. An attractive 57-year old, smartly attired with big bold bling that instantly draws the eye, she knows well how to make a fashion statement.

It is when she begins to speak, however, that the more superficial assessments become less important. She speaks quietly but confidently in an unmistakably Canadian brogue of her nurture in the United Church and her journey to ministry in the Church that first ordained a woman as early as 1936. She speaks of her huge sense of satisfaction at the opportunity to hone a faith by constant reference to the best scholarship, and to embrace a life-time of research and discourse as integral to the discipline of professional ministry practice. She became, by her own admission a minister in a Church that exemplified everything that was good in the liberal tradition of the Christian faith. (A reality that invigorated me for the duration of a six-month ministry exchange with Central United Church, Toronto, in 1988. It had the feeling of a big church, truly catholic, broad in its sympathies and deep in its tolerances.)

But not catholic enough, it seems, to contain Gretta Vosper! After due consideration, and two steps of a 3-step interrogation, the United Church has deemed the atheist-professing minister unfit to continue. For Vosper, however, removal from the pulpit would be nothing short of a "betrayal" by her church. "It has created who I am. It has been a major force in my life. It has taught me what I know. It has given me the tools to explore. It has demanded that I do that, and so I've done that and here we are."

To reckon with Vosper is to reckon with her relationship with West Hill United Church, Toronto, because it has been in the open and totally honest nature of that relationship that she and they, together, have shaped the character of

a non-theistic faith and practice. Indeed, it is the strength of the transparent bond between minister and congregation that characterizes the very public dispute that is capturing the attention of Canadian media, and far beyond.

The last word in the Gretta Vosper saga has yet to be spoken and the many dimensions of the United Church's seeming determination to rid itself of an annoying cleric cannot possibly be covered in this small article. Let me limit myself to an attempt to put myself and the more liberal of my New Zealand ministry colleagues in Vosper's shoes. And imagine a hypothetical situation where a complaint is laid against one of us, evidence of a repeated claim that he/she is an *ATHEIST*. What action would be taken, if any? And is this the ultimate self-condemnation for a minister of the gospel?

You may well say 'yes' and close the conversation. And many will agree. But consider this. A-theist defines in a single word a rejection of the theistic God of traditional Christianity, one who it is assumed intervenes in human affairs, answers prayer, takes sides for the good against the evil, and dolls out rewards and punishments on a case by case assessment of our respective earthly record, good or ill. Many of us have been rejecting theism by that definition for years, and years, while avoiding the unduly provocative word a-word.

In my own case I seriously began to ask the hard questions long before ordination and have gone on asking them ever since with the successive erosion of untenable beliefs, starting with the virgin birth, moving to the literal resurrection, the trinitarian godhead, etc etc and more recently the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth. Anyone listening to my sermons over those 50-odd years would know of my agnosticisms-going-on-atheism, but they would also know where my passion lies, not to deny the traditional faith but to affirm with every fibre of my being the on-going metaphorical nature of traditional doctrines, and to explain and interpret as best I could along the way..

Unbelievably for this day and age, the United Church has required Vosper to reaffirm her ordination vows, commencing with "do you believe in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit" - to which with disarming honesty she gave a short answer, "no" and then a very much longer one exposing the pitfalls of a continuing adherence to *a being who presides over earth from another realm*,

*a supernatural one, from which it has the power to intervene in the natural world – capriciously or by design – by responding to our prayerful requests, or altering our minds and so, too, our actions, or intervening in the natural world with or without provocation or invitation etc etc.*

You get the drift. But Vosper is much more than a deny-er, and she went on to leave the examining committee with no doubt as to what she does believe.....*positive values that came to me through a heritage that is rich in church and in the religious denomination into which I was born and raised. It is rooted in a family that, like many families, transmitted positive values to its children....*

She then proceeds to list the ‘non-doctrinal things’ that star in her faith journey. Love, Truth, Courage, Justice, to mention just four of fourteen that, not by co-incidence, also rate a big mention in St Paul’s list of ‘gifts of the spirit.’ In other words, here is Gretta Vosper before her UCC inquisitors, simply affirming what all of us liberal preachers have affirmed for decades that “*how we live*” and “*with what graces*” are what count, and not “*what we believe.*”

Gretta Vosper’s fate at the hands of the United Church is a crucial case in point for all churches that aspire to broad church appeal. Her only ‘sin’, if sin it be, is to be too brutally honest for her own good. It is said that more than half the ministers in the United Church share her views yet remain silent as she is shafted. I can hear them, self-righteously, mouthing their petty advice ‘if she had only had the horse sense to be more circumspect in the use of the wretched a-word and called herself a non-theistic Christian, or some other equally inoffensive substitute, no one in the church would have had an interest in calling her to account.’

But in the event, by contesting the charges at every turn it looks odds on that this remarkable church-loving people-loving woman will be defrocked - an appalling prospect. Forget the rack, the thumbscrews, and the fire, the spectre of the inquisition has revisited 21st century Canada with the same-old impossible demand for doctrinal conformity and verbal purity. And is the a-word such an offense among those raised in a tradition of liberality and tolerance? Surely not. Just more of the L-word please.

*Ken Russell*