



Dunedin Methodist Parish

Finding Good in everyone Finding God in everyone

www.dunedinmethodist.org.nz

Find us on Facebook: **Dunedin Methodist Parish**

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PARISH BULLETIN

12th May 2019

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 19th MAY 2019

9.30 am	Mornington	D Phillips
10.00 am	Mosgiel	R Mitchell
11.00 am	Glenaven	D Phillips
1.00 pm	St Kilda	TBA

DATES TO REMEMBER

12 May	12.30 pm	Pot-luck Lunch after Glenaven Service
15 May	7.00-9.00pm	Faith Thinking 2019
22 May	2.00 pm	Mornington Women's Fellowship



THIS IS THE FINISHED NEW ROOF looking so lovely at Mosgiel

LUNCH INVITATION - Today's Glenaven service is followed by a pot-luck meal at 12.30 at the Watson/White home, 5 Cairnhill Street, Maori Hill, Tel.467 2936. All welcome, with or without food to share.

FAITH THINKING 2019 - The Inner World and Its Workings: Attention to our inner life of Prayer with the help of Ignatian Spirituality - Father Mark Chamberlain, University Chaplain and Priest, Holy Name Parish

Wednesday 15 May, 7:00pm – 9:00pm

Wednesday 22 May, 7:00pm – 9:00pm

Burns 7, Arts/Burns Building, Albany Street, University of Otago

Each Course costs \$20. Please register online

at www.otago.ac.nz/continuingeducation

MORNINGTON METHODIST WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP - Our May meeting will take place on Wednesday 22nd May at 2p.m., in the Church Lounge. The Guest Speaker will be Deborah Manning who will speak about the development of the food sharing network she created in 2012. Come along and hear this interesting talk. Please remember the Fellowship of the Least Coin.



An unexpected gift- - Driving over the hill from the river mouth to Lake Waihola. Mist over Maungatua (God-Mountain, or more exactly, Mountain-God). I am

on my way to 'get the messages' as we used to say: petrol, panadol, onions if they have any... It's lunch-time, so I go to the tavern/café to eat fish, sit in a corner reading the paper, happy on my own.

Three travellers arrive: an older man with a round cap (a Muslim kufi), a younger man and a boy. Seeing the distinctive head-dress I say '*Salaam*', which makes their faces light up, the two men grinning and the young boy giving me a cross between a high-five and a wave across the room. When they've finished their hot drinks they come over to my table, explaining they have come from Malaysia, from Penang, to assist the brothers and sisters in Christchurch, with counselling and general support after their terrible ordeal. How those people had been so very scared, but they were advised to 'open the door' – instead of hiding away in pain – and that was the best thing they could do, open the doors of the mosques and invite people in. That had proved to be true, I said, and we (non-Muslims) had all benefitted from it, amazed that people who had undergone such suffering were so open and generous to everyone else in succeeding weeks and days. It was a response, said the older man, to the love that was instantly shown them by the surrounding community. We agreed that we'd all discovered, by getting together over this crisis, 'that we are different, but not so different'. And, they added, the police had played their part, calming if not dispelling some of the families' crippling fear.

I explained that after March 15 I had led services relating to the events, using the Arabic greeting *Salaam alaikum* (they smiled, returning *Peace be with you*); that I was a lay preacher in the Methodist Church. Probably the word 'lay' meant little, and the word 'Methodist' even less, but 'church' struck a chord. Pushing the point a bit, I said we are an inclusive church, that we welcome everyone, including gay people. Blankness. Either they were nonplussed, or they didn't understand 'gay' any more than 'lay.' At least I tried... and they did endorse, in a variety of ways, the general point that we had discovered our common humanity. What came through our conversation was the idea of an equality sustained despite major cultural / religious differences.

Asked my name, I instinctively gave, for simplicity, the identity I've had the longest (since 1972) – 'Dr Helen White'. (They understood 'Dr' went with 'church', which is sort of true, although my doctorate is not in theology.) More grins about that. They seemed to get that I wasn't a medical doctor, but associated with the university. I told them I enjoyed meeting many

Muslim students from Malaysia, mainly women, when teaching English literature in the 1990s. These women were often teachers already, who had come to New Zealand to study for a B.Ed; some had husbands and children back in Malaysia, and found it quite hard to be away from them. In fact (I didn't tell the men, but it made me remember), one of them lost her husband while she was in Dunedin, and had to cut short her study and take her baby home. Our last talk was in the Museum cafe during Ramadan, so she wasn't even eating anything, but had wrapped a present to give me, of a beautiful head-scarf. I couldn't believe that even in her terrible stress and shock over her husband's death, she wanted to give something to me, when I should have been giving things to her, looking after her and her small child. I was completely overwhelmed.

Although the Muslim men had done me the courtesy of asking my name, I couldn't reciprocate, as they were getting up to leave; and I could see that what was more important to them was: they had a message for me. The older man proffered a chunky copy of the Qur'-An in English, then was delighted to hear that I didn't need it, because I had one already. I explained about the post-2001 getting-together of the three Abrahamic faiths in Dunedin, and the subsequent Interfaith movement many of us belong to. They did not appear as interested in the other faiths as I was, but appreciated that we three (Jewish, Christian and Muslim) had Abraham in common. As they made their farewell, however, they left me a slimmer booklet, *Muhammad: Mercy for all the Worlds*, by (a Hindu, they pointed out), Prof. K.S. Ramakrishna Rao. Another unexpected gift.

I've received (or rejected) a lot of these kinds of religious tracts in my time, but this one was quite illuminating – perhaps because it is written by a non-Muslim, and sets out to be fair. Contrary to popular prejudice, for instance, it appears Islam gave women the right to own property 12 centuries before the English "Married Women's Act" of 1881.

Of one thing I'm sure: if Muslim leaders can forgive the perpetrators of the recent atrocities, I can swallow my aversion to people thrusting propaganda at me. Our interaction at Waihola tavern was equal, respectful and gracious: an unexpected linking of 'worlds' on an otherwise ordinary day.

– Helen Watson White