



# Dunedin Methodist Parish

*Finding Good in everyone      Finding God in everyone*

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

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	Rev. Dr. Rod Mitchell	453 3310
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## PARISH BULLETIN

**13<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

### WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 20<sup>th</sup> October 2019

9.30 am	Mornington	G Davis / R Mitchell
10.00 am	Mosgiel	E Merrett
11.00 am	Glenaven	R Mitchell
1.00 pm	St Kilda	TBA

### DATES TO REMEMBER

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> October    Open Education Meeting – Mornington Church  
11 Nov – 14 Dec              Pre-Christmas Summer School

## **DAVID'S LONG SERVICE LEAVE**

David Poultney is on long service leave and will be back at work on 25<sup>th</sup> October. In his absence the Rev Dr Rod Mitchell is available for funerals and to deal with any pressing pastoral situation specifically requiring the input of a presbyter.

## **OPEN EDUCATION: PEACING THE CONFLICTS**

The final Open Education meeting for the year takes place on Wednesday 16 October at Mornington Methodist Church, starting at 7.30pm. As we have one for the last two years we welcome research students from the University's Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, who will report on their exciting studies into the causes of violence and social inequality, and contemporary attempts to confront and remove them. Come along and support these young people as they probe the modern curses that afflict our daily living. The modest koha (\$5) will go to support them as they continue their studies.

As usual, Judy Russell will provide an excellent meal for \$15: sign in at the Mornington church or ring the Russell home at 455 3727 to book your place.

## **PRE-CHRISTMAS SUMMER SCHOOL PAPER: Theology and the Environment (CHTH224/324).**

In light of climate change, ocean acidification, and our over-use of plastics, to name a few ecological issues, this timely course investigates what Christian theology has to say about care for the environment. The course invites students to look at how theology can speak to these pressing issues. The will taught by Dr. Andrew Shepherd.

Find out more here:

<https://www.otago.ac.nz/summerschool/study/otago714604.html>

Each Course costs \$20. Please register online at [www.otago.ac.nz/continuingeducation](http://www.otago.ac.nz/continuingeducation)

**CHURCH AT MOSGIEL** last week went messy and cafe style. Fay and Rachael took a church service with a difference. The theme was “Growth” and we sat cafe style in the Hall Lounge and potted a plant for ourselves as we listened and discussed readings and stories, listened to hymns from a CD and talked a little about the memories those hymns stirred up for people. As we nurture and care for our marigold plant we will think about nurturing and caring not only for ourselves to grow but also our neighbours and our communities. The service was enjoyed by everyone with lots of appreciative comments for trying something new.



## **STORY FROM THE MISSION CORRECTIONS**

### *Literacy and Numeracy*



There has been great progress in confidence with the two original Virtual Reality Learners. Both have now gained enough confidence to start learning through reading articles which are targeted to their passions - fishing and cars. Both learners are reading articles, selecting words that are new or interesting to them, finding the dictionary meanings and then creating a sentence using that word.

One learner who has now clocked the 'Wrench Engine rebuild' task on VR and has created a list of steps from beginning to end, including diagrams. He wanted to beat his record of completion in a two hour class slot so took his notes back to his cell to study at night and also to teach his cell mate about his passion.

The learners have both given feedback to Jimmy in regards to improvements that could be made to the VR activities such as fishing and the Wrench engine rebuild. They are now waiting for changes to be made so that they can have more of a challenge on it.

On Friday 13th September we had an impromptu Virtual Reality class as the Corrections National Commissioner came to view this class as well as drama, art and music. Both VR classes were merged together. This went extremely well, it was great for our experienced VR learners to be able to show the new learners from another class how far they had come and how to complete specific activities. Our Wrench motor rebuild pro was able to show our new learners how to get started and what they need to do in order to complete the activity. This gave the new learners the confidence to give it a go in class this week.

Our Remand workshops have had successful attendance and learners are well engaged and motivated to come along. We have recently had one learner complete all eight weeks' worth of the workshops and another two are also close to completion. With so many changes in Remand, it can be hard to keep a learner for the full eight weeks, although we are seeing great commitment from learners while they are able to attend.

**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**



## CHARITY IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE WITHHELD

(St Augustine of Hippo, 354-460 AD, Patron Saint of Brewers)

*In which I praise turbulent priests remembering that “every member is a minister”.*

In social service circles it is not unusual to hear a specific complaint about other providers, other agency leaders who are doing well, particularly if the powers-that-be have seen fit to bestow a gong or two.

The complaint is: *They didn’t take us with them.*

Which seems to be saying a) that person did something good (or enviable) and b) that I missed out on being part of (I am envious), c) it’s that person’s fault (not mine) that I was left behind, and d) that travelling together is more important than anyone achieving anything.

I’m hopeful I don’t have to explain how self-serving the back half of that analysis is.

Or how important it is that social services actually achieve, and achieve better than they are doing now; we must always be trying to do a better job.

Psychology coined the term “groupthink” in 1952, late to the party as ever - economics discovered a version (what are now called “Nash Equilibria”) in 1838. But both refer to when the group’s perceived needs – right or wrong – **always** transcend the opportunities for a better outcome.

The reason is that groups usually operate at the level of the most accessible information, so group culture is often dominated by the more populist ideas and characters.

It's challenging, isn't it? We're social creatures, it's not good for our mental and physical health to be socially isolated, and yet when there's a task that needs doing – and social services are very much a task – groupthink is NOT a friend.

And it's really not at all comfortable to be "left behind". We worry that other's think we're wrong and that worry can easily turn to resentment. We confuse being heard with being agreed with, and feel stifled because people not agreeing with us means we're not being heard, and so on into claims of being silenced.

But still. Evolution teaches that without deviation from the norm, adaptation is not possible. We can only do things differently, if someone, somewhere, steps out from the crowd.

The lesson from groupthink is – get too far ahead of the crowd, and they'll cut you off. Muttered complaints is one thing, failure to follow-through with the new adaptations, is another.

I'll give you an example. On 1 July this year Parliament enacted changes to what is now the Oranga Tamariki Act (was Children Young Persons and their Families) allowing enhanced information requests by Oranga Tamariki of NGO providers. Essentially, Oranga Tamariki can ask for whatever they want and we would have to work hard to deny them. There have been no complaints that I am aware of about this change.

Yet in early 2017, the then National Government proposed collecting individual client-level data from providers. To furious, public, backlash from providers who pretty much refused point blank to share the information. It was so bad that several *very* senior officials at Oranga Tamariki ~~were fired~~ resigned.

And yet, aren't they more or less the same thing?

Methodists are called to do things differently. For Methodist Social Services, I believe, St Augustine has hit the nail on the head. Our job is not to “ameliorate suffering” or to relieve the symptoms of an unjust society, but is to try to shift society into being more just.

Of necessity, that means standing out from the crowd. Far enough to lead, not so far as to be kneecapped. It is a difficult balance, and I’m not about to claim that I or the Mission get it right every time.

But if I hear mumbles that we’re not taking the groupthink stay-behinds with us?

I might just be a little bit pleased.

Laura Black