

# DUNEDIN METHODIST PARISH

*Finding Good in everyone Finding God in everyone*

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



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## PARISH BULLETIN

**23rd August 2020**

### WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 30th August 2020

9.30am	Mornington	D Poultney
10.00am	Mosgiel	C/M
11.00am	Glenaven	C/M
1.00pm	St Kilda	TBA

### DATES TO REMEMBER

Wednesday 26 August, @2pm – Mornington Methodist Womens Fellowship  
 Sunday 6 September – Deadline for Mosgiel AGM Reports

**MONTHLY MEETING of the MORNINGTON METHODIST WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP** Wednesday 26 August, 2020 at 2pm in the Mornington Methodist Church.

The meeting will be held in the Church. All members of the Fellowship and the Church community are invited to attend.

Should we still be in Covid Level 2 all health and safety protocols relating to this level will be upheld and afternoon tea will NOT be served.

Please remember the Fellowship of the least coin. Thank you.



**THE PRESBYTERIANS ARE WILLING TO HOST** the 4:30 pm service on the 5th Sunday, 30th August subject to no further lock- down requirements. It will be cancelled if further restrictions are required.

### **MOSGIEL METHODIST CHURCH AGM.**

Can all those involved with our AGM please have your reports in by **6th September**. This is so we can get them printed and handed out the week before our AGM. Your cooperation would be very much appreciated. Thank you. Elaine.





## **STORIES FROM THE MISSION**

### **Dunedin Little Citizens**

We are still scanning Work and Income application forms post COVID to Work and Income, however this system has taken away the stresses for parents, for example a new parent enrolled her child at the centre as she is going to start study for the first time since high school, which she is very nervous about. With the scanning to W&I, she did not have to make an appointment with them to go in and visit which greater relieved some stress for her.

We had a parent come for a tour of the centre and she commented on how accepting the whole centre is of a choice she has made for her child where she had encounter some negativity from other centres she had visited.

Lovely feedback received from Grants Brae school who commented to a parent on a school visit how prepared her child was with sitting on the mat, listening, engaging and concentrating. On enquiring which preschool she attended she was happy as this child is the first to come from our Centre.

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## HOPE SPRINGS

There is a tension in social services between the *now* of fixing an issue and the *then* of stopping it (or any of its troublesome brethren) coming back; of the resources needed to fight a fire that rages in front of us verses the caution and reflection that might be paid to one or two smouldering embers on the periphery of our gaze.

It helps though, if we are actually paying attention.

Sadly, that seems to not have been the case recently; if the recent reports of the Ombudsman and Children's Commissioner into Oranga Tamariki, or the evidence given by extremely reputable folk to the current, urgent, Treaty of Waitangi case, also against Oranga Tamariki.

They are sobering, awful, reading.

A family court that routinely refuses to let whānau even speak. Judges that close cases so they can get to lunch. Children torn at birth from parents with disabilities for (it turns out) no reason and now six years later when that has been found out, it is too hard to return them to their family of origin.

Treating those with drug and alcohol problems as criminals, not as people in need of treatment. Pregnant women pressured into abortions by social workers under threat of having *all* their children removed. Widespread abuse of ex-parte (that means the family don't

know there is a court process underway) uplift orders, decisions made without expert advice or even consultation with the wider family. Questions even as to the basic accuracy of data kept by Oranga Tamariki on the children in its care (by a former Chief Statistician).

In response, Social Workers are calling for a return to the “old” days when they were still Child Youth and Family.

But the reviews of CYF released in 2016 showed that it was just as broken as Oranga Tamariki is today, overseeing a steadily rising rate of child abuse, heavily criticised by Māori, and deeply dysfunctional.

It is heart-breaking stuff for those of us on the edges. What must it be like to be the subject of this regime?

Every day there are 240 reports of concern made to OT. 40% of those are of sufficient concern that a full assessment is worked up, and 4% of those children are taken into care. That’s around 36,000 children a year that undergo a full investigation and just under 1500 who are moved out of the family home.

For a “team of 5 million” that is too many. Singapore, with only a slightly larger population than New Zealand, had less than 1200 investigations last year.

New Zealand is 28<sup>th</sup> in the world for how well our children are doing.

Australia is 17<sup>th</sup>. Our child mortality rate is half again as much as Australia. Our child homicide rate is double.

But.

We are at least now hearing from whānau, through the Children's Commissioner, through the Tribunal and the Ombudsman, through the media, and soon through the High Court case that will review the Hastings uplift order from last year.

And some things may be changing as a result: Minister Tracey Martin has finally, grudgingly, admitted the law needs to be amended. Judges are starting to question ex-parte requests. Oranga Tamariki has admitted to mistakes and in some cases offered apologies and restitution.

But we need more.

While we have a department of "fire fighters" (Oranga Tamariki) we are going to put all our attention on the raging fires in front. Yet there is so much that could be done if we were only willing to look at the smouldering embers over there *before* they combust.

Things like:

- Increasing the amount of money whānau have to live on, just raise benefits already!
- Improving access to preventative, early intervention support
- Much more kaupapa Māori provision
- Giving whānau more control over decisions affecting them
- Reducing widespread "unconscious" bias at school and in support services
- A less punitive benefits system
- A prison system focussed on reducing recidivism and working with the whole whānau
- A greater focus on child development in the early years

In treating these children and families as if they are emergencies, we risk missing the chronic underlying issues. Poor housing, low income, huge external stressors, racism.

Yes, in an emergency we get to put the flashing lights and sirens on, we can be heroes (says David Bowie, *even if only for one day*); and yes, dealing with the chronic underlying issues is less heroic, less dramatic, and requires more tools and for us to surrender some power to the families we are trying to help.

But turning up every day for all of our children, working through the more complicated situations rather than yanking out the full powers of the state every time just because we can; that is a recipe for success.

I hope very much that the rush of stories in the media, from the Ombudsman, the Children's Commissioner, the Tribunal hearing, might finally help Aotearoa move to a more compassionate, reflective, and ultimately successful embrace of our most at risk children. And of course, there is an election coming.

Laura Black

**Kaihautū** *Director*

Methodist Mission Southern