

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

17th January 2021

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 24th January 2021

9.30 am	Mornington	D Poultney
10.00am	Mosgiel	E Merrett
11.00am	Glenaven	No Service
1.00pm	St Kilda	TBA

DATES TO REMEMBER

Mon 25th January 2021 – D Poultney on leave for a week
 Sun 31st January 2021 – 10.00am – Joint Service at Glenaven Church
 Wed 3rd February 2021 - 6.30-8.30pm – Harmony Dinner
 Sun 14 February 2021 @ 10.00am – Joint Service at Mornington Church

LEAVE

David will be on leave from Monday 25th January for a week.

JOINT SERVICE - 31st January

On Sunday 31st January, there will be a joint service at Glenaven Church at 10.00am. You are invited to bring something to share over coffee and teas afterwards.

JOINT SERVICE - 14th February

On Sunday 14th February there will be a joint service at 10.00am at Mornington. The President of MCNZ – THE Rev Andrew Doubleday – will be with us to lead worship and to induct Rachael Masterton and David Poultny as co – superintendents of Otago Southland



John Wesley: action and compassion beyond belief

In his book *The John Wesley Code: finding a faith that matters*, James Stuart notes John Wesley left Methodists with a set of sermons and a commentary on the New Testament that affirmed a flexibility of thinking and considerable freedom in doctrinal matters. For Wesley the bottom line was summed up in his concern that Methodists think for themselves and let others think for themselves. What mattered was not orthodoxy in thought but the quality of love given and received. Wesley affirmed that, “We may not know much, but we can love much.”

Similarly, although the faith traditions of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism differ in their doctrinal beliefs, as observed by Karen Armstrong in her book *Twelve steps to a*

compassionate life, they share a common understanding that the principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions and it calls us to always treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves.

How compassion is put into action varies with what the issues are at a particular time and place. William Wilberforce (24 August 1759 – 29 July 1833) was a British politician, philanthropist, and a leader of the movement to abolish the slave trade. Wilberforce, born in Hull, Yorkshire, England, was a small, sickly and delicate child with poor eyesight. In 1767, he began attending Hull Grammar School, headed by a young, dynamic headmaster, Joseph Milner, who was to become a lifelong friend. Wilberforce profited from the supportive atmosphere at the school, until, when he was aged 9 years, his father died and, with his mother struggling to cope, the nine-year-old Wilberforce was sent to a prosperous uncle and aunt with houses in both London, and Wimbledon. He spent his holidays in Wimbledon, where he grew extremely fond of his relatives and became interested in evangelical Christianity due to his relatives' influence, especially that of his aunt Hannah, sister of the wealthy Christian merchant John Thornton, a philanthropist and a supporter of the leading Methodist preacher George Whitefield. Wilberforce's staunchly Church of England mother and grandfather were alarmed, at these nonconformist influences and at his leanings towards evangelicalism, and brought the 12-year-old boy back to Hull in 1771. Wilberforce was heartbroken at being separated from his aunt and uncle. His family opposed a return to Hull Grammar School because the headmaster had become a Methodist, and Wilberforce therefore continued his education at nearby Pocklington School from 1771 to 1776. Influenced by Methodist scruples, he initially resisted Hull's lively social life, but, as his religious fervour diminished, he embraced theatre-going, attended balls, and played cards. In October 1784, Wilberforce embarked upon a tour of Europe which would ultimately change his life and determine his future career. He travelled with his mother and sister in the company of Isaac Milner, the brilliant younger brother of his

former headmaster, who had been a Fellow of Queens' College, Cambridge in the year when Wilberforce attended the university. They

visited the French Riviera and enjoyed the usual pastimes of dinners, cards, and gambling. Wilberforce's journey to faith seems to have begun afresh at this time and he underwent an evangelical conversion, regretting his past life and resolving to commit his future life and work to the service of God. Inwardly, he underwent an agonising struggle and became relentlessly self-critical, harshly judging his spirituality, use of time, vanity, self-control and relationships with others. He became a Member of Parliament and focused on ending the slave trade. On 26 July 1833, Wilberforce heard of government concessions that guaranteed the passing of the Bill for the Abolition of Slavery. The following day he grew much weaker, and he died early on the morning of 29 July at his cousin's house in Cadogan Place, London.

John Wesley (28 June 1703 – 2 March 1791) was concerned for the wellbeing of many in need including the poor, those affected by various troubles and those in prison. He wrote, as recorded in *The works of the Rev John Wesley, M.A.*, edited by T Jackson, London 1872, volume VII:117-27) "One great reason why the rich, in general, have so little sympathy for the poor, is, because they seldom visit them. Hence it is, that, according to the common observation, one part of the world does not know what the other half suffers. Many of them do not know, because they do not care to know: they keep out of the way of knowing it; and then plead their voluntary ignorance as an excuse for their hardness of heart." As noted by John Singleton in *At the Roots of Methodism: Wesley fought for Prison Reform* (United Methodist News Service, Sept. 10, 1999) the Gospel imperative to visit those in prison was picked up very strongly by John Wesley and the early movement that he started. The appalling conditions of the prison system were a cause of great concern to Wesley, who was an inspiration to the movement for prison reform in the late 18th century. The great campaigner for prison

reform, John Howard, drew spiritual strength from Wesley, and statues of both men can be seen together in London's St Paul's Cathedral.

Howard once told a group of Wesley's preachers about the challenge and lasting inspiration he had derived from a sermon by Wesley on the text, "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Wesley's admiration for Howard was equally keen. Following an extended conversation with him in 1787, he expressed the belief that the heroic prison reformer was surely "one of the greatest men in Europe." Wesley himself was a constant friend of prisoners. He considered the infamous Newgate Prison in London (where the Old Bailey courts of justice now stand) to be the nearest possible earthly approach to hell. He once raised money to procure clothing and blankets for French prisoners of the Seven Years War detained in English jails, and he encouraged all his preachers -- when they were permitted to do so by the authorities -- to visit and to minister to the needs of prisoners. His brother, Charles, is also said to have spent a great deal of effort in prison visiting. Just how familiar John Wesley was with the prisons of his day can be gauged from the fact that in a period of nine months he preached at least 67 times in various jails -- institutions that he had been known to describe as nurseries of "all manner of wickedness." Indeed, it was because of Wesley's often fearless criticism of prison conditions that he was sometimes banned from visiting inmates there. This led him to make the caustic remark in his journal that he was "forbidden to go to Newgate for fear of making them wicked, and to Bedlam for fear of driving them mad!"

In 1759, Wesley walked to Knowle, near Bristol, to see a company of French prisoners of the Seven Years War. His report was revealing. "About 1,100 of them, we are informed, were confined in that little place, without anything to lie on but a little dirty straw, or anything to cover them but a few foul, thin rags, either by day or night ... I was much affected and preached in the evening on "Thou shalt not oppress a

stranger; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 23.9). He then set about raising money with which to buy linen and wool cloth to make into clothes. These were distributed to the prisoners in greatest need. Later, the city’s governing body sent a large quantity of mattresses and blankets, and later contributions flowed in from other parts of Britain as well.

In early 1761, Wesley wrote a letter to a newspaper commending the transformation that had apparently occurred in Bristol’s Newgate Prison. That prison, he observed, was now “clean and sweet,” there was no fighting or brawling, contending parties were heard face to face before the keeper, no drunkenness was suffered, and women prisoners were kept separate from the men. Furthermore, industry was encouraged by the free provision of tools and materials and by the payment to prisoners of a “moderate profit” on all articles made. A public service was provided every Sunday, and a sermon was also preached every Thursday. Free medical treatment was given to the sick, and “a large Bible was chained on one side of the chapel, which any of the prisoners may read.”

So remarkable was the transformation from the “filth, the stench, the misery and wickedness” of previous days that Wesley declared the prison to be wearing a ‘new face.’ He called for the blessing of God and man upon its remarkable keeper and his amazing achievement. Although Wesley does not mention the fact, the Bristol Newgate prison was run by a Mr. Dagge, an early convert of the evangelical revival.

But how different was this keeper's prison from those up and down the country! “Meanwhile, will no one follow his example?” asked Wesley in his final sentence. In the opening sentence, he had protested that of all the “seats of woe on this side of hell,” few equaled Newgate prison. For decades, in the early 18th century, there was little public conscience to support reform of the prisons, which were ridden with gross cruelty, graft and corruption inflicted upon people, often debtors, whose crimes

would seem petty by today's standards. It was only after Wesley began to awaken the soul of England and Howard gave his life to prison reform, that progress occurred.

The recent rioting and fires at Waikeria prison, New Zealand, resulting in the damage of the top jail, which was built in 1911, indicated that prison conditions in NZ were still a cause for concern. The report by Judge Boshier in August 2020 noted that a visit in 2019 found most cells in the high security complex were double bunked and cramped. Inmates were unable to sit upright on the bottom bunk because of the proximity of the top bunk. Prisoners ate meals on the bunks near an uncovered toilet in poorly ventilated and uncomfortably hot cells. The bedding was in poor condition and there was a lack of towels, sheets and pillows. Prisoners expressed concern about a shortage of clean and suitable clothes.

It is admirable that the concern of Wesley for prison reform is still reflected in the compassionate action of the Methodist Mission Southern with its intensive "contextualised learning" prison literacy and numeracy programmes in the Otago Corrections Facility in Milburn.

Bruce Spittle



WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK

The Official UN Observance in the 1st Week of February | Love of God & Love of the Neighbour

Celebration of Harmony Dinner 2021



Wednesday, 3 February, 6.30 pm - 8.30 pm

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Fenton Crescent, St Clair, Dunedin

Vegetarian Potluck: Bring a vegetarian meal or desert to share

Whanau-friendly: face-painting and other activities will be provided

Featuring: readings, stories, entertainment and more

Everyone is Welcome!

Organised by the Dunedin Interfaith Council. Any enquiries phone Ruth on 455 1777