###### logocolour**DUNEDIN METHODIST PARISH**

###### *Finding Good in everyone Finding God in everyone*

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**PARISH BULLETIN**

**20 November 2022**

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| **WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 27 November 2022** | | |
| 9.30am | Mornington | S Hamel |
| 10.00am | Mosgiel | G Hughson |
| 11.00am | Glenaven | H Watson White |

**MEETING OF THE MORNINGTON METHODIST WOMEN’S FELLOWSHIP**

Wednesday 23rd November 2022 in the Mornington Methodist Church at 2pm.

All members of the Fellowship and friends of the Church are invited to attend our Christmas Celebration Meeting. Please come and share the Christmas Spirit and join us for an afternoon tea of traditional Christmas treats.

**ORDERS OF SERVICE & BULLETINS OVER CHRISTMAS BREAK**



The Mission Office will be closed from Midday Friday 23rd December with the Parish team returning to work Monday 16 January 2023.

Could you please ensure that your Orders of Service over this period (the dates 18th December through to 15th January 2023) are sent no later than **12noon Wednesday 14th December** ([bulletins@mmsouth.org.nz](mailto:bulletins@mmsouth.org.nz))**.**

The final bulletin for 2022 will be Sunday 18th December and the first bulletin for 2023 will be Sunday 22nd January.

*Many thanks, Methodist Mission Parish Team*

**VISITING PREACHER AT MORNINGTON**

On Sunday 27th November at 9.30am; the Rev Dr Tony Martin will be our preacher, during a service led by Greg Hughson.   Tony and Greg have been friends since the mid-seventies when they attended Massey University together.  Tony will share a reflection on Armistice Day, war and peace. For many years Tony was a Chaplain with the British army.  He recently retired after a year as Anglican Priest in the Mosgiel and Otago Peninsula Parishes. Please come along next Sunday if you can and invite friends.



**THE OLD AND THE NEW**

In our Spring Thanksgiving at Glenaven last week we read Luke 5: 36-37, the parable beginning "No one tears a piece from a new garment and sews it onto an old garment" and ending "new wine must be put into fresh wineskins."

Putting aside my natural inclination to agree – I believe, for instance, that newly-picked flowers require not only fresh water but a clean vase ­– I want to point out a paradox around this idea as it appears in Luke and Acts.

In Luke 5, with his healing of a paralysed man, Jesus says "the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins," whereas hitherto for Jews, only God could do that: the new wine replaces the old. Again, Jesus says his disciples don't need to fast like the Pharisees, but may eat and drink to celebrate his presence among them: the new order replaces the old. In Luke 6, similarly: "The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath," says Jesus, meaning he can do good by healing on any day, including the one on which Jews used not to be allowed to work. New rules for old; everything has changed.

Yet the balance between old and new is actually in favour of the old, in the Scriptures we have inherited. It's pretty obvious to Christians that there would not even be a "New" Testament without the pre-existing "Old" Testament. In the gospels and the letters of Paul-who-was-Saul, there are countless points at which the First Testament is quoted in the Second. My Oxford Annotated Bible is chock-full of such references; it's like a verbal patchwork – an old wineskin patched with significant additions.

In the Pentecost chapter of Acts where the phrase "new wine" is again used, we learn of a diverse crowd of devout Jews gathered in Jerusalem, who were astonished to witness the gift of the Spirit, accompanied by a "violent wind," that gave people power to understand each other's languages.

All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others sneered and said "They are filled with new wine."

There's something pretty attractive about this new wine that has such potency. Peter takes advantage of its affective power to preach the gospel of a new dispensation:

"These [people] are not drunk, as you suppose," he says, "for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel [to be specific, Joel 2.28-32]: In the last days it will be, God declares,

that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,

and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,

and your young men shall see visions,

and your old men shall dream dreams..."

So, although this is considered a heady "new wine", the foundation of Peter's sermon in Acts is, ironically, something very old: the prophecy of Joel, the Hebrew prophet, proving that Jesus is the Messiah who was promised in the Hebrew Scriptures. This seems something of a paradox: where exactly is the "fresh wineskin" for the "new wine?"

There's not long to wait for an answer. The intent of Jesus, to provide a new way of being, is reflected in a hitherto unknown response among the people: "All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need".

This, I suggest, is the new wineskin that the gospel required: a structure without hierarchy, such as had never before ­­been tried: EQUALITY! "Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit..." And that did happen: Christianity became famous for including women and slaves, citizens of Rome and citizens of nowhere.

Many social structures have risen and fallen since these events. Huge church empires have arisen in West and East, with complex systems of rules and dogma far surpassing those of the Pharisees with whom Jesus took issue. The end result is that we now have the patriarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church supporting Putin's despotic behaviour, as they supported the Czars. What was the new wineskin of a classless church has become an old wineskin, one that does not serve the good news of a gospel of liberation.

What difference does it make now? Quite a lot, actually. People who might consider joining a church in 2022 are unlikely to be attracted to the old hierarchical forms – the opposite, really, since those forms have led to gross abuses. If, however, they look at good people's practice, both in and outside the church, they may want to join groups making a difference to the environment, or to political decision-making; they might be attracted, as I am, to a society of equals that looks after ALL its members.

I believe the drive for equality, for universal human rights – which began in the church then went beyond it – is still growing and still essential, not only to Christianity, but to the world. As a movement, rather than an institution, it is a living thing, and has the capacity to change with the times.

– Helen Watson White