

DUNEDIN METHODIST PARISH

Finding Good in everyone Finding God in everyone

www.dunedinmethodist.org.nz



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PARISH BULLETIN 27 August 2023

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 3 September 2023

9.30 am	Mornington	D Poultney
10:00 am	Mosgiel	H Watson White
11:00 am	Glenaven	D Poultney



Life force

I have been thinking about weeds recently. The lectionary reading for 23 July was the parable of the weeds (Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-38). In this parable weeds grow up amongst a field of corn and cannot be pulled up without removing the corn. The week before, we had the parable of the Sower wherein seed falls amongst thorns and the thorns grow up and choke the seedlings (Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-23). I can relate to that – the weeds in my garden seem to grow much faster than the ‘non-weed’ plants, and the ‘weeds’ are able to grow in the most inhospitable places. This got me thinking about the forces that appear to drive things to grow, replicate, and survive.

Plants can be classified as non-sentient organisms; they have no feelings, intelligence, self-awareness, or consciousness. However, plants appear to ‘know’ how to move towards sunlight, and they seem to have a ‘desire’ to grow and replicate. Is this a kind of life force? As a scientist I can explain how plants grow out of the earth, towards sunlight, and how roots grow down and can find crevices. Plants demonstrate the properties of geotropism, phototropism, and thigmotropism. Plant roots show positive geotropism and grow down into the earth, plant shoots show negative geotropism and grow upwards. The property of plants growing towards the light is phototropism. Both of these ‘tropisms’ are thought to be caused by a plant hormone, auxin, that affects plant cell growth. Gravity acting on the plant cells makes the auxin travel downwards and makes roots grow down. Light induces the transport of auxin away from the light and the cells there grow and make the plant bend towards the light. In

thigmotropism, contact of plant cells with a solid surface causes ion channels to open and the flow of ions signals the 'touch' and again auxin, and this time also ethylene, is involved in a growth response. Thigmotropism enables roots to 'feel their way' and grow around stones, and it allows tendrils on vines to wrap around stems.

So, I can explain how non-sentient plants can 'sense' gravity, light and solids, but I can't explain why. Why do plants grow towards their energy source and their roots towards nutrients? What provides this 'urge' to live and grow? Is it a universal life force? How about us, as sentient beings, do we experience the same primeval life force or do we have the capability to suppress it or overcome it? As Christians do we also experience a 'God force' separate from a life force? Is this the Holy Spirit empowering us to do God's will? If plants can unthinkingly strive for light and growth, how much more can we achieve harnessing the Holy Spirit's 'God force' to bring light and life to people in all its fullness?

Richard Cannon