



# Dunedin Methodist Parish

*Finding Good in everyone Finding God in everyone*

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

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|-------------------------|---|----------|
| <b>Presbyter:</b>       | Rev. Siosifa Pole   | 455 2923 |
| <b>Parish Stewards:</b> | Dr George Davis   | 453 6540 |
|                         | Mrs Hilda Hughson   | 487 6226 |
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## PARISH BULLETIN

26<sup>th</sup> MAY 2013

### WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> JUNE 2013

|          |            |             |
|----------|------------|-------------|
| 9.30am   | Mornington | S Pole      |
| 9.30 am  | Mosgiel    | D Phillipps |
| 11.00 am | Glenaven   | S Pole      |
| 11.00 am | Wesley     | D Phillipps |
| 1.00pm   | St Kilda   | C/W         |
| 4.00pm   | Broad Bay  | S Pole      |

### EXPLORERS GROUP

Meets today, at 4-30pm in the Mornington Church lounge. All interested people most welcome.

### COMBINED CHURCH SERVICE TONIGHT AT KNOX CHURCH

The Dunedin Inner City Ministers' Annual combined service will be held tonight, 26<sup>th</sup> May, 7pm at Knox Church. The preacher will be the Rev David Brown (Church of Christ).

Our Tongan Methodist Choir will sing. Everyone is welcome to come and enjoy this ecumenical service and to celebrate our unity in Christ.

## **GOSPEL BICENTENARY - AN OPPORTUNITY!**

2014 will be the bicentenary of the Gospel in New Zealand. To celebrate the 'Jesus - all about hope' initiative plans to share the reasons for our hope in Christ with every home in NZ through multiple media in the weeks leading up to Easter 2014 (during lent).

A Roadshow is traveling throughout our nation to give believers an opportunity to hear about this first-hand. Please consider getting along to **Mornington Presbyterian Church at 7:30 p.m. on the 31 May** to hear about it.

For more details see <http://www.hopeproject.co.nz/>

## **DUNEDIN INTERFAITH COUNCIL**

The Dunedin Interfaith Council was formed in February of this year, and is meeting monthly in the buildings of various faith communities around Dunedin.

Our June meeting will be held at **Mornington Methodist Church on Sunday 2nd June from 2.30-4pm**. If you are interested in finding out more about the Council you are welcome to attend.

More information can be obtained from Greg Hughson or David Kitchingman.

## **NEW ZEALAND TOUR: POST ARAB SPRING**

### **Its impact on Christian Minorities**

We are pleased to be hosting Dr Patrick Sookhdeo (International Director of Barnabas Fund) at **St Matthew's Church, 30 Hope Street, on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> June at 7.00pm**.

He will be sharing insights into the after effects of the Arab Spring and we'll also have a chance to hear from their projects director about the work they are doing among the persecuted church.

Patrick is a courageous voice for the suffering church and also a prophetic voice on the issue of radical Islam today.

**A VERY WELCOME ADDITION to the Mornington congregation this year has been ESTHER OH.**

She is a second year pharmacy student at Otago Uni. The complete package of Esther includes her flute, which she uses to accompany the hymns - in concert with the pipe organ or the piano. The haunting notes of the flute provide another dimension to the hymn singing, and a welcome one as far as the singers are concerned. Esther has been playing the flute since the age of 7, and it is obvious she has reached a high skill level. And she plays solo as well!

And neither is Esther a stranger to Methodism. She is the daughter of our co-District Superintendent the Rev Martin Oh of Alexandra, and his wife Sunmi. The Oh family moved to New Zealand from Korea in 1997, originally to serve with the Korean Methodist Church in the Auckland region. But Martin applied to transfer to MCNZ and was eventually appointed to the Alexandra Union Parish in 2007. Music runs in the family. Her older brother, Harim, is a clarinetist doing a music degree at Victoria Uni. Welcome Esther!



**Information from the Parish Council Meeting last Wednesday night -**

- WANTED - a Parish Steward for Dunedin, contact Rev Siosifa Pole, Hilda Hughson or George Davis with possible nominations.
- There will be a meeting on 5 June between the Connexion officers and PF&R representatives on the matter of the future of Methodist buildings post earthquake.
- The Parish Council voted to contact Hon. Peter Dunne as Assoc Minister of Health supporting the government position preventing the sale of K2 and associated products. Local papers to be notified.
- Congratulations: to Helen Watson-White to be confirmed in full Lay Preacher status; Rachel Masterton attaining full Lay Preaching qualifications; Andrea Mosley representing the Parish on the Hospital Chaplaincy Board.
- Progress has been made in the 0.25 appointment of Rev Dr Rod Mitchell to the Parish.

**STORY FROM THE MISSION**

Received a referral from CY&F and Whanau Ora regarding a family consisting of a young Dad with six children parenting alone after his partner died. The family had been re-housed by HNZ in Mosgiel. They needed curtains, a washing machine, a fridge, a microwave, mattresses. Liaison with other services resulted in collaborative process to meet the immediate needs of this family. Five of the children were enrolled in local schools, who supplied uniforms for them, the two year old enrolled in a local kindergarten. The five school aged children all enrolled in the Arahina holiday programme. The family is now enrolled in the local Medical Centre, one child in local soccer club, one child in music group, and the others will come to Arahina after school programme. Public Health Nurses on board, and CY&F sitting in the background along with Whanau Ora. The success for this family is about community connectedness. An example of how services can work together to meet the needs of a family so they can move forward with their lives. This has been a short sharp intervention with achievable outcomes to transition this family into their new community.



She has a mischievous twinkle in the eye as she describes herself as a "professional Methodist" and I have to make a spot decision as to whether I respond to the friendly bait on her tantalising hook.

*A "professional" Methodist? Can there possibly be any such thing? Many Methodists are professionals but their Methodism is not defined professionally. They turn up on Sundays at their local Church - they sing lustily the hymns of Charles Wesley or Colin Gibson. They listen respectfully to sermons on grace or assurance, they confess their sins, real or imagined, they pray for the poor and the afflicted, and when all is done with the familiar weekly rituals they enjoy a cuppa tea and a Griffins biscuit with their fellow Methodists. O yes, and their names, addresses and phone numbers are included on the pastoral roll of a given Methodist Church. Such are the Methodists of Aotearoa/New Zealand, admittedly a diminishing number, but a warm-hearted, well-meaning, mildly liberal community that baptises babies, opposes a range of social ills, and cherishes the elderly. We're the Methodists, and proud of it.*

Wisely, I think, I didn't rise to the bait. It's true Laura Black is not a Methodist by any of those familiar and comfortable definitions. Church-going doesn't feature in the priorities of the Director of Methodist Mission Southern, and manager of 68 paid staff working out of four work sites here in Dunedin.

But here is the irony. Is there anyone among the local Methodists more passionately committed to achieving social outcomes she so unhesitatingly associates with the Methodist tradition? I doubt it. Indeed, as I walked away from our interview earlier this week - me a Methodist by any traditional definition you care to name - it was with renewed respect, and a "heart strangely warmed" from my encounter with this "professional Methodist."

Laura's pathway to her present position has helped shape the imperatives that drive her life today. Born in Bolton, England, she came to New

Zealand with her family at the age of 3 months. Her father was an academic in the field of English history, but seeking work in a British university with a pronounced Yorkshire working class accent was no easy task in 60's Britain, still beset with the toffee-nosed snobbery of a class society.

But New Zealand had no such qualms, rather the reverse, and little Laura was raised a Kiwi - though a very mobile one in her younger days, later a student at Wellington Girls College where she did well in three languages, and later still an OE that lasted 5 years. It was a well-rounded up-bringing that eventually brought her back to Massey University and a degree in business management.

Laura held administration positions in various places, among them Nelson, from whence she came to Dunedin in 2000 to head the Alumni & Dvpt Office at Otago Uni. It was a good job, and satisfying enough for her area of expertise. But asked why she responded to a 2005 advertisement in the ODT from Methodist Connect for a Manager, her answer was simple enough - she had fallen in love with Dunedin as a place to live, and she was attracted by the challenge to work with and among people in a dynamic community-facing role, albeit at a significantly lower salary. Needless to say, Laura got the job.

I made an unfortunate suggestion, that perhaps Laura's tenuous relationship with the parish life of Methodism is a disadvantage. Her rebuke was kindly, but firm. Not at all. She embraces her "boss," the Methodist Church of New Zealand, te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa, and the frequent interaction she has with Methodist leadership at both Connexional and MMA (Methodist Mission Aotearoa) level.

Clearly she places a very high value on the bicultural partnership so integral to New Zealand Methodism. And of course she is directly answerable to the Board of the Dunedin Mission, several members of which give her a direct line to the life of the Parish.

Indeed, tap into the passion Laura Black brings to her role in growing an increasingly dynamic social service agency in the name of the Methodist Church, and she will spell out exactly what it is she draws from the Methodist tradition as inspiration and encouragement in her leadership role at the Mission.

- The innate dignity of the individual person. The Methodists have rebelled against so many attempts to characterise people with judgmental labels, whether as sinners, losers, foreigners and all manner of other ways of defining some as "them," as against "us."
- Methodism at its best has been in the forefront of change, and in so doing has discovered that the process of change is in itself transformative.
- Effective change cannot be delivered from above, trickle-down. Methodism has been a hands-on movement, often "down and dirty," prepared to sit where they sit, stand where they stand.
- Methodism has often been criticised for its pragmatism, its lack of clear definition and dogma. But in the fast-moving world of the 21st century, pragmatism is seen in its best light, to do what needs to be done to achieve the best result. Creeds and dogma have had their place in Christian history, but a church that is genuinely pragmatic, hanging loose, has an advantage.

One of the early changes initiated by Laura was to ditch the briefly embraced title "Methodist Connect" and restore the tried and recognisable term "Mission." But it was not a move aimed at re-capturing conservative values. Quite the reverse. The term "Mission" encapsulates all that is best of Methodist endeavour, imperatives from the Gospel that drive us out from the cloisters - John Wesley style - to confront all that make us humans less than we might be, both as individuals and communities.

The Methodist Mission in Dunedin must of necessity be different from the Mission of L. B. Neale, and others, that ranked in their time so highly in the estimation of this community. It is safe to say that the most potent gospel image for today is not the Good Samaritan, but other images just as powerful, conveying prophetic justice, fair and compassionate dealing, and unconditional love. Under Laura's leadership the Mission has turned its attention more markedly in those directions, and there are ample signs that the community at large is recognising the relevance of that shift.

Laura's analysis of the forces at work in the Dunedin community were shared last week with an appreciative audience in the Open Education series at Mornington Church. That she won our confidence goes without saying, but hers is an uncomfortable message to Government, City Hall and those resting too complacently in soft leather chairs. Just one quote

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from her address seems sufficient to sum up the thrust of what moves her, and the Mission she leads.

"As Dunedin is a disproportionately low-waged city in a disproportionately low wage nation; with high youth unemployment, climbing rates of teenage pregnancy, and climbing rates of unaddressed mental health issues, we are currently far from being *one of the world's great small cities*, as the Council's economic and social wellbeing strategies would have us be.

Those for whom the market economy has worked, are quick to claim that others need to take advantage also, by working harder, taking more risks, sitting up straighter, presenting a firm handshake, and smiling more."

She quoted Herman Melville *Of all the preposterous assumptions of humanity over humanity, nothing exceeds most of the criticisms made on the habits of the poor by the well housed, well warmed and well fed.*

Thanks Laura.

***Ken Russell***

