



# Dunedin Methodist Parish

*Finding Good in everyone Finding God in everyone*

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

<b>Presbyters:</b>	Rev. Siosifa Pole	455 2923
	Rev. Dr. Rod Mitchell	477 3700
<b>Parish Stewards:</b>	Dr George Davis	453 6540
	Mrs Hilda Hughson	487 6226
	Mrs Earlene Owens	489 8146
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<b>Pastoral Convenor</b>	Beryl Neutze	476 7447
<b>Mornington:</b>		

## PARISH BULLETIN

17<sup>th</sup> August 2014

### WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 24<sup>th</sup> August

9.30 am	Mornington	R Mitchell
9.30 am	Mosgiel	S Pole & G Davis
11.00 am	Glenaven	R Mitchell
11.00 am	Wesley	S Pole & G Davis
1.00 pm	St Kilda	TBA

**EXPLORERS GROUP** meets at 4.30pm at Mornington on Sunday 24th Aug, please note the change of date from the usual last Sunday of the month. Professor Paul Trebilco of the Department of Theology and Religion will speak on recent biblical studies research into the role of eye-witnesses in safeguarding “records” of Jesus life, teaching, death and resurrection (in an oral culture) from 33AD until the first gospel (Mark) was written.

**MID WEEK SERVICE** Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> August 2pm at Maran-atha, everyone welcome, if you require transport please phone 489 7663.

**“COUNTDOWN” OPEN DAY** Mosgiel in our hall to tell us what is happening next door to our church SATURDAY 30<sup>th</sup> from 9:00am to 3pm pop in anytime. All welcome.

**THE DUNEDIN BRANCH OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN** New Zealand is holding a meet the candidates evening to enable **you** to come along and hear the views of Dunedin candidates on designated topics. At the conclusion of the evening candidates will take further questions from the floor. The candidates are:

- Michael Woodhouse, National
- David Clark, Labour
- Jen Olsen or Kay Murray, Alliance
- Denise Roche, Green Party
- Guy McCullum, Act
- Rob Stewart, Internet/Mana

Chair is Professor Nicola Peart, University of Otago, Law Faculty.

Date: Monday 25<sup>th</sup> August 2014

Time: 7.30 pm

Venue: Salvation Army Hall, Princess Street Dunedin.

### **STORY FROM THE MISSION**

The Story Book Dads programme is again proving to be popular with dads at the prison. The feedback from the men has been very positive. Some of the comments refer to the environment in the class room being relaxing, giving them an opportunity to do something calming, while thinking about their children. This programme gives the men a place where their children are paramount, helps them think about what their children like and also about the developmental changes of their growing babies; something they miss considerably. I reiterate how fortunate I am to be part of an amazing programme that brings a high level of humanity back into the prison system.

**OTAGO-SOUTHLAND SYNOD** met at Lindisfarne Centre, Invercargill, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2nd August 2014. Dunedin was well-represented, though neither presbyter could attend.

1. Broad Bay church sale requires a land story, which was done for previous land sale and will be re-sent to Connexional office.
2. March residential Synod and School of Theology – will try a different venue; some ideas for programme shared.
3. Methodist property in Cromwell to be sold when tenants vacate.
4. Long Leave for presbyters: recommendation to Conference that parishes pay 2% of stipend into a central fund to pay for long leave. Annual leave still paid by local church/parish.
5. Synod Superintendent: Rachael Masterton finishes her term in Nov. June Synod preferred model of lay and ordained co-superintendents. We are looking for someone to replace Rachael. We also need a lay person for the national Taiwi Strategy Group, someone to replace Earnest Willis on the PAC committee for 2015 and a new Synod secretary to replace Jenny Winter next year.
6. We discussed a paper about holding conference every 2 years. Not supported. Needs to be yearly for ordinations. Perhaps a group could organise it each year in main centres so that it is more streamlined and cheaper for people to get there.
7. I reported that there was a good Methodist turnout to hear Rev Dr Lord Leslie Griffiths speak in Dunedin – National Interfaith Forum, Annual Peace Lecture and Combined service at Knox.
8. Next Synod in Alexandra 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov. Will include a farewell to Rev Martin Oh.

*Hilda Hughson.*

### **PARISH PRAYER REQUEST**

While our parish is still in the process of discussion and consultation about its future in terms of properties and mission, I urge us all to seek God's guidance through thoughtful and prayerful meditation. Our faith reminds us the importance of prayer at this time.

Thanks, Siosifa Pole.



**MORNINGTON'S Y@M** group had a lesson in gardening on Sunday. A sickly FIG TREE featured in the story told by Jesus. No fruit for several seasons, and the commercial gardener has lost patience with it. Get the chainsaw.

Cut it down - at least it is good for firewood. But the private gardener has nurtured the tree, and with it the belief it can still bear fruit. It needs even greater care, good feeding, and patience. And so he persists. The FIG Tree is given a reprieve. There are no guarantees, and the eventual fate of the fig tree is not told. But clearly Y@M had a lively discussion and the continuing challenge of the Jesus story was lost on none - particularly in election year. To fund or not to fund. To cut or enhance support for the community's weakest and most vulnerable. It's an election issue that will easily get lost in the raging arguments about budgets, profits and losses. Y@M reminds us to hear again the storyteller, Jesus, and to resist hasty harsh solutions. A great turnout of a doz Y@Mers display their fig trees.

**AN ALMOST NEW** electric hair cutting set needs a new home. Anyone interested, please ring 453-3103.

**MUSICAL SOCIETY CONCERT** Sunday 17 August 2.30pm, at the Mornington Methodist Church. Come and hear Colin Gibson leading the choir singing "Songs of the Night", also piano solos by Tom McGrath and some lovely vocal duets. All welcome. Adults \$2.



**MORNINGTON METHODIST WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP** - The August Meeting will take place on the 27th August in the Church Lounge at 2p.m. The Guest Speaker will be Mr Maurice Haywood - his subject being "Flashbacks". I am sure the Members that have lived here all their life, as well as some of us who are only "new" will be very interesting in this illustrated talk of early Dunedin. Please remember your small change for the Fellowship of the least Coin. All welcome.

**THE OTAGO COMBINED CHRISTIAN GROUPS**

warmly invite you to

**WHO IS JESUS?**

An evening of unity, worship and love.

All are welcome.

Guest speaker: Karan Banker from Dunedin City Baptist Church

Where: Main Common Room, Union Hall

When: Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> August 2014

Time: 7.00 pm

Supper and hot beverages provided.

[www.oagoccg.co.nz](http://www.oagoccg.co.nz)



**Gloria in the vale – and in excelsis**  
**Christian communes and congregations**

Hi Jo

A pity you missed the TV2 programme last month (17 July) about the Gloriavale Christian Community on the West Coast, inland from Greymouth:

**“Gloriavale – A World Apart”**

It was an impressive subject. The sheer size of the commune is remarkable enough – over 500 people within 80 families. And it's

lasted so far for 45 years, having transferred from Springbank near Christchurch in the 1990s. Also impressive was the sensitive manner in which the documentary was made by Pacific Screen Ltd.

It particularly followed the courtship and marriage of two of the younger members. Theirs was the equivalent of an arranged marriage but they exhibited an appealing tenderness. At the same time, the primacy of the male shone through clearly, whether in the role of husband or in the group of twelve senior men who preside over the community, all in accordance with Biblical principles of course. It seems that the only event that might stand in the way of the newly-married couple's family reaching double figures will be the return of the Lord, eagerly expected in the next year or so, but if not then almost certainly within their lifetime.

At one point in the programme we were able to observe a lesson in the community's own school. We learned that the gigantic size of the dinosaurs did not pose an accommodation problem in Noah's ark. Noah would have been able to select baby dinosaurs for the rescue mission.

Not surprisingly, a follow-up article appeared in the ODT on 30 July, headed "Ex-members of Gloriavale speak out". This presented "the other side of the story", by stating that hundreds have left over the years and that many have experienced the pain of never being able again to see family members left behind. On the other hand, the *other* side of the other side of the story is the research that has shown that the more sacrifice a commune demands, the longer it lasts.

Be that as it may, the apartness of such groups from the rest of human society and the tightness of their leadership structure through to God made me wonder if there might be laws of theol-dynamics to match the laws of thermodynamics. Perhaps the first such law would take the form of an  $x = a + b$  equation. That is to say, the risk of an unauthentic and derivative faith ( $x$ ), increases with the distance from meaningful communication with the wider world ( $a$ ), in combination with the

degree of direct subordination to authority figures who mediate the will of God (b).

But then, two days after the screening of the documentary, an article appeared in the ODT (19 July) under the heading:

**“Church’s world fades like childhood dreams”**

David Loughrey, a feature writer, had plunged back four decades in time to the altar of his youth. He returned to St. Michael’s Church in Elliot St, Andersons Bay, to find it almost unchanged. The surroundings were deeply familiar yet he felt a foreigner. “They speak a language you once spoke, but which, no matter how hard you concentrate, you no longer understand.” Clearly, for Loughrey, this was another case of “a world apart”.

He reflected that forty years ago St Michael’s teemed with life; birth, childhood, joy, sorrow, illness and death all played out within its walls, cloaked in a quiet dignity and reverence. But his recent return for the 10.30am service found a much quieter suburban church. Just 11 older parishioners turned up. “They continue to observe the rituals that are for many lost in time. And these ordinary Christians may be among the last in this small church.”

Loughrey had spoken with the Bishop of Dunedin, the Rt Rev Dr Kelvin Wright, for whom the decreasing and ageing congregations, and the future of churches like St Michael’s, are –

“a question I live with almost every day. The short answer is, I think that some of them have no future. You look at the age of the congregation and it doesn’t take much imagination to think that, give it five years, 10, and they won’t be there... The future would be in different sorts of congregations, although “those people have been faithful all their lives and deserve our support and encouragement. But to ask them to make the big changes necessary to appeal to another generation is simply not fair on them.”

It might seem a big step in some respects from the world of Gloriavale to that of St Michael's, but surely not from St Michael's to our own small world:

### **Dunedin Methodist Parish**

I don't know whether the St Michael's buildings share any of the structural issues that our parish faces, but regardless we have more than enough in common. Indeed, even with Gloriavale we have creedal aspects in common. "Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again" is intoned in some form or another in each of the three assemblies, but even past members, let alone those who have never darkened the doors, may struggle to comprehend.

I was intrigued by Bishop Wright's remarks. They were candid and considerate but also challenging. "The future would be in different sorts of congregations." Can Anglicans and Methodists grapple with such a thought? Yet now, as never before, is the time for our parish to do just that.

I do however have reservations about his concluding thought, that "to ask [the faithful] to make the big changes necessary to appeal to another generation is simply not fair on them." I'm afraid that if others are to dictate the big changes it probably just won't work. It's time for the faithful themselves to make the last big step of faith before it's too late.

At the Mornington Leaders Meeting on 5 August, Rod Mitchell challenged us to have faith in the capacity of our aging congregations to adapt to the new world we face. Even David Loughrey, despite his apparent dismissiveness, said of St Michael's: "Its occupants hold something strangely precious in their collective memory". If a successful recipe is to be fashioned it will have to be a blend of old and new ingredients. The "Gloria in excelsis Deo" must not be lost, but somehow the "Joy in the depths of humanity" must also be found.

David Kitchingman