



# 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>Mornington:</b>		

## PARISH BULLETIN

7<sup>th</sup> June 2015

### WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 14<sup>th</sup> June

9.30 am	Mornington	G Abernethy
9.30 am	Mosgiel	S Ungemuth
11.00 am	Glenaven	G Abernethy
11.00 am	Wesley	S Ungemuth
1.00 pm	St Kilda	TBA

**EXPLORERS GROUP.** Meets this Sunday, 7 June at 4.30 pm at Mornington. Brief AGM followed by session led by Rod Mitchell on the role of story in passing on the flame.



**HAPPY BIRTHDAY** to Matthew Gray who turns 10 on 9<sup>th</sup> June!

## **PUBLIC ISSUES FOR PARISH BULLETINS 19 MARCH 2015**

### **A Pentecost Moment**

The Holy Spirit is the gift of the ever-present word and spirit of God. It brings the perpetual empowerment of responding to what matters in our time and situation.

We are in a big moment, a year when all nations are asked to put their commitments to climate responsibility on the table. A very short time was given for public submissions; they are due 3<sup>rd</sup> June. This means not only setting a target to reduce emissions; it means creating a pathway with milestones to get there. We need to respond in solidarity with Pacific Nations.

Let me know if you have points to make for the Public Issues submission.

Blessings, Betsan

[http://www.methodist.org.nz/public\\_questions\\_network/index](http://www.methodist.org.nz/public_questions_network/index)

**IT WAS A BUSY DAY FOR SOME OF US** - last Sunday, that is. Mornington Choir turned out twice, at the Parish Service at Wesley and the ecumenical service at St Mary's later in the day. St Kilda Choir never disappoint, and their choral item at the Parish Service was appreciated.





The greatest treat, perhaps, was reserved for a very small audience who turned out in the afternoon to hear the Queenstown duo of Mark & Emma Wilson bring their presentation *Seeds of Faith* - songs of unity love and praise written

and presented by Mark and accompanied by Emma on recorder or trumpet. Theirs is a truly uplifting story of turning adversity to good, of seizing opportunity when it comes, and some of us hope a Sunday morning return visit can be arranged later in the year.





**IN WORSHIP THIS SUNDAY** you will be introduced to the evolution of NZ Post. A Big Red Bin (not unlike our old post boxes) will be available in the church foyer, to receive your “posted” contributions towards upcoming services.

From Sunday, July 5<sup>th</sup> we will begin exploring the theme of plants, and this first Sunday will focus on their ability to teach us how to use Earth’s resources more efficiently. On Sunday, July 19<sup>th</sup> the focus will be on food and healing. So, if you come across articles, images, prayers, hymns, poems, or web sites you think might be helpful for this service, please post them in the Big Red Bin, (feel free to add your name, email or phone no. to your contribution). When you open the lid of the Bin, you will find two memory sticks; these can be used for depositing images or videos. If the Big Red Bin is not your way of sharing, then my email is still open for receiving material: [roddieg@xtra.co.nz](mailto:roddieg@xtra.co.nz)

I have appreciated all the contributions which people have made to the series of services on our new evolutionary themes over last two years. So here begins another challenge as we begin our exploration of plants and their links to life on our evolving planet.

### **STORY FROM THE MISSION...**

The Incredible Years Programme is going well and the parents have really engaged with the positive behaviour support material that is being delivered. They are seeing results in terms of children being more co-operative and a happier home atmosphere and they are learning that these techniques will take them forward into the future, laying the groundwork for better family relationships when children reach the difficult teenage years.



One of the techniques taught is to praise and reward the behaviours you want from the child and ignore unwanted behaviour. One parent explained how she had used a sticker chart to reward her child for good

behaviour and had been ignoring his unwanted behaviour, rather than 'growling' as she always used to do. His unwanted behaviour had stopped for the first time and he was proud of his achievement. Their relationship has improved and she now feels more in control.

A parent commented how much more effective it was when she spoke calmly and politely to her daughter when asking her to do something, compared with some of her family members, who she now noticed were often yelling at their children. Another parent said that there used to be a lot of shouting and arguing in their home but now she knew how to stop this happening and create the kind of happy family atmosphere that she wants for her children. This parent had previously sought support from other services, but it hadn't worked for her family and she said that the Incredible Years programme was teaching her the skills to change things at home.



*For a second week, **Connections** has not arrived. In its place we reprint a shortened version of last Sunday's Trinity Sunday sermon by Glynn Cardy at St*

*Luke's Church, Remuera. Acknowledged with thanks.*

### **Trinity Thoughts 2015**

The Westminster Confession, chapter 2, article III reads: "In the unity of the Godhead there be three Persons of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son."

The Confession even comes with 'proof texts' for this – a sure sign that it was a statement to be argued, rather than a prayer to be prayed, or a dance to join.

This clause, like similar statements in the three great creeds of the Church, is an attempt to paint God with words. It's an attempt to capture the infinite and unknowable in finite and knowable language. It's trying to lock God down. No wonder Meister Eckhart once pleaded, "I pray God, rid me of God".

Yet, although we might quarrel with the language of Westminster's painting – locked in culture and time as all language is, the attempt to paint a God that is both true to our tradition and relevant to our times is on-going. There is no escape from the need to use images and metaphors to talk about or pray to God, but there needs to be an escape from over-reliance on a singular or dominant image/metaphor, otherwise we risk God being secured in a cage created by us.

So in relation to the Trinity, the Progressive approach asks not how accurate the imaging of God is in relation to a philosophical extrapolation from biblical texts, but how the imaging of God encourages us to love, care for, and seek justice for this planet and all its creatures. In other words, does the picturing of God as Trinity encourage us to follow Jesus?

From ancient times human beings have responded to experiences of the divine with works of art. They have used metaphor and image to describe what they have seen with their mind's eye. Individual expression of personal experiences of the divine have often challenged rigid religious traditions [think of Julian of Norwich's metaphor of "Christ as Mother"]. . . . .

The spiritual genius of many ethnic groups through the centuries has been responsible for profound images of faith. The drawing on the walls of prehistoric caves and early sculpture are powerful witnesses to highly developed spiritual as well as artistic sentiments of peoples who lived centuries before the birth of the traditional religions of the East and West.

Indigenous civilizations, like in New Zealand, Australia, and the Americas, which flourished prior to the arrival of explorers and

missionaries from Europe, have struggled to survive the onslaught of Christianity. Images of faith were often condemned before any attempt was made to understand the experience which gave birth to these images of the spirit. Religious authorities, reflecting their patriarchal bias and their patriarchal god, were especially fearful of the role of feminine images in these cultures. Male clerics and theologians were careful to exercise control over the images to be used in worship and devotions.

Maori, indigenous Australians and Americans, Africans, Asians as well as early European traditions saw their religious traditions and images cast aside in favour of the Christian images current at the time. Little effort was made to see any connection between indigenous faith and images with the heart of the gospel of Jesus. Treasures of faith were lost as cultures were systematically destroyed by colonists and conquerors. . . . .

In an icon by Robert Lentz three women are depicted from different races in order to extend the Celtic image to a more global perspective. The snake – now primarily associated with evil by Christians – was another feminine image. It represented life, fertility, and rejuvenation. Devouring its own tail it represented immortality. Although the snake is primarily associated with evil/Satan by Christians, there is an interesting episode in Numbers 21:8, 9 where a snake, lifted up on a pole, is a means and symbol of healing. A careful reading of John 3:14, 15 – based on that episode from Numbers – will conclude that the snake is used as an image for Jesus, the healing reconciling Jesus.

Feminine images have suffered greatly under Christianity – pushed to the margins by the predominance of a male god and male priesthood elite. Robert Lentz's icon is part of the reclaiming. . . . .

Some Christians reject the doctrine of the Trinity altogether – rejecting what they see as a male club used to subjugate other religions and cultures. They rightly say that Jesus, as a devout Jew, and his first disciples, also devout Jews, would not have agreed with this

doctrine. Jesus was a strong monotheist. Likewise the Bible predominantly encourages monotheism. And predominantly God is addressed with a singular pronoun.

..... The lack of biblical support for the Trinity [a word that doesn't appear in the Scriptures] infers that either there simply was no understanding of a trinitarian God at the time the books of the Bible were written, or that the concept was so unimportant to the faith of the New Testament authors that it mostly wasn't mentioned.

So I think we need to be very careful when Creeds and Confessions make acceptance of the theory of the Trinity an 'essential' for salvation. Other Christians of course, including me, like the notion of Trinity. I like it as a way to paint the movement of God, and encourage one another to join in that movement.

Trinity grew out of the early Jesus' movement's experience of God, not as I said out of its Jewish faith. The Trinity doctrine, to use C.S. Lewis' metaphor, is like a map based on the experience of many Christians over the first few centuries. Lewis' map helps us to understand the Trinity as a guide to a reality, not the reality itself.

..... For me it makes more sense to paint God as perpetual movement, flowing, weaving, in, between, and beyond us – a movement of creative energy, of Jesus justice, and of spirited love-that-brings-hope. So the dancers are not three divine beings – rather we are the dancers in the dance called God.

I think Trinity is best painted or prayed, or simply lived, with lots of colour and awe and love. If we need to use words, I would simply say, like the prayer written for this day, "teach us to move as you O God move: in common, in communion, by love, by mutuality, by justice; until the dance [you O God] and the dancers [us] are indivisible. Amen.