



# 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>	Mrs Hilda Hughson	487 6226
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<b>Parish Prayer Convenor</b>	Elaine Merrett	489 7663
<b>Pastoral Convenor</b>	Beryl Neutze	476 7447
<b>Mornington:</b>		

## PARISH BULLETIN

27<sup>th</sup> September 2015

### WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 4<sup>th</sup> October

9.30 am	Mornington	G Abernethy
9.30 am	Mosgiel	S Pole
11.00 am	Glenaven	G Abernethy
11.00 am	Wesley	D Phillipps
1.00 pm	St Kilda	TBA

**EXPLORERS GROUP:** We meet this Sunday, 27 September, at Mornington at 4.30 pm. Donald Phillipps will lead a session on the topic: 'Methodism - Church or Movement - or both'. A special welcome to any interested in the topic who may not previously have attended.

**MOSGIEL AGM MEETING** - The Mosgiel Methodist Church will have its annual AGM next Sunday, the 4<sup>th</sup> of October after the service. We will have lunch together after the meeting in one of the local restaurants. Please come and prepare to stay longer than usual.

**THANK YOU** - I would like to express my thanks to Rev Gordon Abernethy and Rev Rod Mitchell, the Parish Stewards and leaders of congregations for taking care of the affairs of the Parish while I was away on leave. The report that I got from Gordon was that there were no major issues while I was away. It is my hope that this support will continue on for the future.

**PRAYER FOR PEOPLE** - Please remember those who are sick and frail, the isolated and home alone in your prayers. Through prayers, we will continue our contact with them.

**VISIT OF TRINITY COLLEGE PRINCIPAL** - it was a scoop for our Open Education Programme to secure a visit from the new and highly qualified Principal of Trinity College as our speaker on Wednesday night. Rev Dr Nasili Vaka'uta gave us more than we could possibly have expected, a comprehensive and finely reasoned resume of the principles of theological education that are already being rolled out under his leadership at the College. It is true to say that all of us who were present felt both privileged and encouraged by what he said. It is impossible in the space available in this bulletin to report fully on what Nasili had to say - but what follows is a section that seemed critical. For a full copy of his notes, email Ken Russell at [juke57@slingshot.co.nz](mailto:juke57@slingshot.co.nz)

Aotearoa is not homogenous in any shape or form, and it has always been like that. We are so diverse in terms of culture, colour, belief, values, interests, worldviews, ideologies and visions. That is very much reflected in our own Methodist household. In such a colourful setting, we need to acknowledge the following:

- First, we can no longer speak of Aotearoa culture in a singular way; our culture is plural. NZ culture is more than just the Pākehā/European; lest we forget, Maori culture deserves our respect. Such an undertaking requires us to depart from our ethnocentric outlook and adopt an inclusive attitude to other cultures as equally valid sites for theological education. Only in so doing that we come close to lessening the dehumanizing and alienating nature of what we do as a Church.

- Second, we can no longer turn a blind eye to our diverse religious and denominational landscapes. We are not in a Christian nation (that's a fact); we have Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist brothers and sisters who consider their own faiths and scriptures to be as sacred as ours. The challenge for faith-based theological education is not to abandon what we have in favour of others; rather we are urged to seriously reconsider our truth-claims (for we don't own or control the truth). In doing so, there is hope to avoid violent and oppressive acts committed in the name of religion.
- Third, we have to take account of our diverse situations, needs, and aspirations. If we don't, theological education and ministry will continue to serve the interests of the rich and powerful minority to the detriment of the poor and powerless majority. We need to learn to listen to the cry of others whom we share this homeland, and thus learn to live with them and care beyond the confinement of our own ethnic, religious, and moral boundaries. Unless we are able to move beyond those socially constructed boundaries, freedom, justice and transformation will remain far from our doorstep.
- Fourth, and finally, let's be mindful of the issues that continue to affect us here in Aotearoa. We still face an economy that exploits people; unemployment and inflation are still high, the housing market is no longer affordable for many; socially, we have high rates of violent crimes, and so forth. Currently we are dealing with the influx of migrants and refugees. In Oceania, the islands continue to face the challenge of social disintegration, political instability, economic hardships, and, above all, climate change. These are the realities at home, and they must inform theological education and ministry training.

Trinity College belongs to the church; it belongs to you; it's your theological institution. We are at the College to serve your theological and ministry needs. You have the right to inform us of your needs, and to question what we do. That is how I work and I have encourage my staff to work likewise. I want the College to work collaboratively with the wider connexion.

That is why we set as a working theme for this year: "Excellence through Collaboration." Collaboration is one of the hallmarks of a professional

learning community. Such a community share and critically interrogate their practice in an ongoing, reflective, supportive, inclusive, learning-oriented, growth-promoting way, and function as a collective enterprise. Within such a community, excellence is attainable. That community is us!

The number of students we have this year is 130 excluding those who have participated in preaching courses nationwide. Last year we had 85 students. About 80% of our students are private students, most of whom are planning to enter the candidating process at some point in the near future. Majority of our students are Pasifika, but we have 10 ethnicities in the mix.

I want to make it clear that you don't have to study at Trinity in order to become a candidate for ministry. Likewise, you don't have to be a candidate for ministry to study with us.

Many of us here at the other end of the country will be surprised to hear that the College this year has 135 students - a rise from 85 last year. Of these, the biggest majority are Tongan, a small proportion Samoan, 10 are palangi, but many other ethnicities are also represented. Not all will proceed to candidate for the ministry but a significant proportion are expected to do so.

Dr Nasili was the bearer of so much good news, the pity is that so few from within our Parish were there to hear him. Photo - Dr Nasili with Dunedin presbyters Shirley Ungemuth and Donald Phillipps.



## *Parish Links*

**OUTREACH? WITNESSING?** Good solid theological terms we're all familiar with, but.....

Doesn't seem my style somehow, and yet I guess in a very simple way it's what I find myself doing every year, albeit accidentally! For many years I've been part of a volunteer teaching programme for Medical Students going through Otago University's School of Medicine, and also with students at the Polytech Nursing Course. My involvement is usually with students at first or second year level, and my goodness, they seem younger every year! The tutorials take place at the University, but I have both medical and nursing students visiting me at home, part of their brief being to learn about how people with disabilities function in the community, what support services are needed, what support services are offered, and thereby learning where perhaps there are gaps. I talk about the usual agency supports, home help and community Occupational Therapists and so on, but I must admit that my primary focus, some might say obsession, is the person to person communication which takes place. As I regularly remind my students, "just remember that patients are almost like real people". And as part of that, during the twelve hours they're required to spend with me, I invite my students to come to Church with me, as my Church family is one of the strongest support structures in my life. They do tend to be a little startled when I get up in the service and introduce them as students who are stalking me, but they get over it quite quickly! They often have no Church background or affiliation, and are sometimes quite apprehensive, but without exception they have said they enjoyed it, and feedback from their course supervisors bears that out, that they have shared the experience with their peers and their course directors seems significant to me. They may never set foot in a Church again in their lives, but if being with me gives them the chance to see that my faith is crucial to me, and that a Church can be a warm, supportive, encouraging, sometimes humorous place to be, then that's okay with me.

*Bev Sutherland*

## ***Vahevahe*: A TONGAN CONCEPT FOR SHARING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN MINISTRY**



In the last two weeks I attended the OBSA (Oceania Biblical Studies Association) Conference in Samoa. It was an exciting event for all of us who participated but especially for those who were in Samoa for the first time, like myself. The theme of the Conference was; *Bible, Oratory and Oceania Literature*. There were twenty presenters who presented papers from various contexts in Oceania on this theme. I was privileged to be one of the presenters who participated in sharing the rich heritage of our Pacific natural resources as a means to extract ideas and concepts which can assist us in our interpretation of Biblical texts, transmitting, and assimilating of ideas through oral tradition and literature. In my presentation, I used a Tongan word *vahevahe*, meaning, 'sharing, dividing, or distributing' as a method to interpret Biblical texts but in particular the gospel of Matthew. I would like to use the same concept in this article in reference to ministry as a sharing task, rather than just one person's responsibility.

Because ministry is a vast area, it is also complex, I believe the concept of *vahevahe* is vital to its effectiveness and fulfillment. *Vahevahe* is a Tongan concept for sharing responsibilities and ideas for the purpose of lifting a burden and stress from someone or from a family. On important occasions such as funerals and weddings in the Tongan context, there are always attempts to share the costs and the responsibilities within the family/*kāinga* who is organizing such an occasion. The main purpose of sharing the responsibilities and the costs is to ease the stress and burden this family/ *kāinga* goes through. It is also for the purpose of allowing others to participate as way of empowering one another. Everyone who is involved in such occasions has the opportunity to give and receive, which demonstrates the value of sharing. There are four ways that *vahevahe* could be viewed as a successful concept for ministry. Firstly, *vahevahe* is reciprocal,

secondly, it is collaborative, thirdly, it is hospitable, and fourthly, it is educational.

Reciprocity is an integral part of communal life. It enables everyone to give and to receive as a way to maintain mutual intimate relationship. Because everyone participates in giving and receiving, it certainly takes away pressure and stress. Being open to give as well as to receive is a vital part of *vahevahe*. You can't receive unless you are willing to give. This reciprocal attitude and practice would certainly create harmony among those who practice ministry. If there is a harmony in relationship then hopefully ministry will run smoothly. It doesn't mean that everyone should agree with each other, or practice the same ministry. However, it does mean that every ministry is different, and they need to exchange and share together. Paul uses the analogy of the human body in 1 Corinthians 12 as an example for reciprocity of gifts in ministry. Because every gift is unique like the body parts, therefore, they all need to be treated equally and to give each of them equal opportunity for ministry.

Collaboration is always an expectation in ministry, especially in a community that is so diverse. It doesn't mean that everyone needs to agree with each other but rather that everyone agrees to work together in the midst of their diversity and to agree to disagree. I was impressed last Sunday with those who were flocking to the Forsyth Barr Stadium to support the World Day of Peace. There were different groups from different faith communities, different ethnic groups, and different dance groups. It was both their diversity and collaboration that contributed to the success of this event. It means that there was no single group that could claim the success of this event, but rather all the groups who involved. Collaboration is important to the success of ministry. We can't succeed with our purpose or goal in ministry unless we commit ourselves to work collaboratively. Therefore, we can't afford to compete against each other. Rather, we must empower each other to work together as a team. Henri Nouwen in his book, entitled,

*Creative Ministry*, states, “Competition has become one of the most pervasive and also destructive aspects of modern education.” (p.12) Although, Henri statement refers to the damage that competition causes in academia it can still apply to ministry. Those who are in ministry need to work collaboratively in the midst of their diversity rather than trying to compete with each other.

Hospitality is so important in strengthening bond in ministry. It is about sharing one own resources to make someone else feel welcome and feel at home. In sharing resources with someone who is desperate, you not only detach yourself from your wealth of resources, but you also encourage the other person to do likewise. Real hospitality is not only one way but two ways. The receiver of hospitality has something to give back as an expression of appreciation and thanks. It doesn't matter how big or small the act of hospitality is, so long as we are willing to share, which again denotes the concept of *vahevahe*. The exchanging of hospitality is not only about sharing resources but also valuing everyone's contribution.

Because the *vahevahe* concept is reciprocal, collaborative, and hospitable, therefore it is educational. The passing and sharing of resources among those who are doing ministry will extend knowledge and deepen understanding. It means that there is no end to learning in ministry. Ministry is not a one person band but a collective of people who have the same passion and determination to take risks in order to make a positive difference to people's lives and communities. I hope that all members of our Parish will continue to be open to sharing our many gifts and resources together, for the improvement and growth of our ministry.

Siosifa Pole