



Dunedin Methodist Parish

Finding Good in everyone Finding God in everyone

www.dunedinmethodist.org.nz

Presbyters:	Rev. Siosifa Pole	455 2923
	Rev. Dr. Rod Mitchell	477 3700
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Mornington:		

PARISH BULLETIN

8th May 2016

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 15th May

9.30 am	Mornington	Explorers
9.30 am	Mosgiel	S Pole & Mosgiel LMT
11.00 am	Glenaven	Explorers
11.00 am	Wesley	S Pole & Mosgiel LMT
1.00 pm	St Kilda	TBA

SUNDAY, 15 MAY, PENTECOST SUNDAY. A red letter day in the Church calendar, so let's wear something red to help celebrate the birthday of the Church and the gift of the Holy Spirit. At Mornington the St Mary's Anglican congregation will be visiting, continuing a little tradition of having combined services on this special day.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY to Naomi Pole who turns 7 on 10th May!

PENTECOST EVENSONG - A Contemporary service of prayer and praise. Sunday, 15 May 7pm. St Luke's, 67 Gordon Rd.



THE JIHAD OF JESUS: HOW CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS CAN WORK TOGETHER FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

Dave Andrews, Christian Heritage College, educator for TEAR Australia
Archway 2 Lecture Theatre

Tuesday 10 May, 5.30pm-6.30pm

Followed by supper and ongoing discussion with Dave Andrews from 6.45pm at All Saints' Church Hall, 786 Cumberland St. All welcome.

Please feel free to bring "finger food" to share. This can be dropped off at the Hall between 4.30 – 5.10pm.

CAN RELIGION AND POLITICS MIX? - Join us for the next Open Education presentation, on Wednesday May 18, when Dunedin's David Clark, prominent politician and an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church, addresses this thorny question from his own experience in the New Zealand parliament. Mornington Methodist Church, Galloway Street, 7.30pm. A koha of \$5. Ring Judy Russell (455 3727) for your place at the pre-session meal, starting at 6pm. This is a subject of general interest: bring a friend. All proceeds go to the Syrian refugee families now in Dunedin.

A VERY WARM WELCOME to the Inner-City Churches Pentecost Evening Service at Knox Church 449 George Street on **Sunday 15 May at 7 p.m.** Everyone is invited for a **shared meal at 6 p.m.** in the Gathering Area behind the Church. We want to enable people informally to meet each other over a meal before the service.

A REMINDER that the second event for the 2016 Faith Thinking series is beginning next week.

Understanding the Book of Job

Presented by **Revd Dr James Harding** (Department of Theology and Religion, University of Otago), **7:00 – 9:00pm; Wednesday May 11, 18 and 25**, Burns 5 Seminar Room, Arts Building (Albany Street), University of Otago

DUNEDIN VISIT of Stephen Bevans
from Catholic Theological Union in Chicago

Topic: **SPREADING THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL**

Date and Time: 4.00 – 5.30pm on Sunday, May the 8th

Venue: Holy Name Church, Great King Street

VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS IN WEST PAPUA
AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND TOUR MAY 2016

Rev. Socratez Sofyan Yoman

*West Papuan author, courageous human rights defender and President
of the Fellowship of Baptist Churches of West Papua*



Monday 16 May

**12pm Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Otago,
518 Castle Street**

7.30pm All Saints Anglican Church, 786 Cumberland Street

BIBLE AND ATTITUDE TRAINING - We invite the Lay Preachers and Worship Leaders and everyone who would like to further their understanding of the Bible and its relation to our life today to join us at Mosgiel Church on June 1st at 1pm to 3pm. There will be seven sessions for everyone to participate. We would like to know how many people might participate on this training. Please indicate to us through email or phone contact your wish to join. Thank you, Rod and Siosifa (4773700/ 4664600)

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING - At Mornington Methodist Church on Wednesday 11th of May at 7.30 pm. Members of the Parish Council are expected to be there.

THERE WERE ABOUT 30 TO 40 CHILDREN and young people who joined together to celebrate the Faka-Me celebration last Sunday at St Kilda Church. They performed various creative items like drama, song and actions, Bible memory verses, and singing. Each item has a message for life and relationship. Parents, friends, and visitors enjoyed and at the same time inspired by these young people's talents and messages.



STORY FROM THE MISSION



Next Step Training: On the Mondays of 11th and 18th of March, Making the Link was delivered to our Youth students. Making the Link promotes help-seeking for cannabis use and mental health problems. By seeking help early, young people are less likely to develop long term consequences as a result of mental health and substance use issues. Making the Link teaches young people how to help each other to seek professional help. It promotes the idea that "Mates Help Mates". It reduces the barriers to seeking help from professionals. It also

educates teachers about how to assist their students to access professional help. Our youth say that it contained good information and that they felt they would be more confident about helping a friend.

MARION KITCHINGMAN'S focus on the extraordinary life of VERA BRITAIN is the result of eight months research, and the putting together of a very effective presentation, first delivered at the Mornington MWF's meeting on April 27. It was repeated yesterday at the District MWF meeting. Marion's presentation focuses only on a ten year period of Brittain's life, 1915 - 25, when she became a notable and often controversial character, a nurse at the front in WW 1. a writer, feminist and pacifist. Marion succeeds

in the play by entering into conflicting emotions as cherished young men in her life are wounded, maimed or killed in the war, and she reflects bitterly on the senselessness and waste of it all. Her pacifism again came to the fore during WW 2 when she was vilified for speaking out against the saturation bombing of German cities. She wrote articles against apartheid and colonialism, and in favour of nuclear disarmament. All

who witnessed the play appreciate all that Marion put into the performance.



RADIO CHURCH

a weekly service presented by Dunedin Inner City Ministers' Assoc
Otago Access Radio 105.4FM & 1575AM and online www.oar.org.nz

8.30am Sunday



‘God be in my head’ or ‘God happens in our heads’?

On the left, a 500 year-old hymn, still a favourite. On the right, a 21st century theologian’s assertion. One is the anonymous composition, ‘God be in my head and in my understanding’, published in 1514 by one of the first [printers](#) of English books, Richard Pynson. The other was written this year by Ian Harris whose ‘Faith and reason’ articles often appear in the *Otago Daily Times* and *Touchstone*. There’s a superficial similarity of expression, but each sits on either side of a gulf between opposing beliefs about God – as objectively real or a product of human thought.

The difference is vast, but the distinction is difficult. That’s because we can never jump out of our brains when talking about the Godhead. If I say God is real, I am expressing a human thought about something beyond all thought. On the other hand, if I say God is not real, that too is a thought, and subject to error, which in turn is also a thought, though one that most of us can agree on. This tends to lead to a stalemate in the debate between the two sides, but that doesn’t seem to quell its intensity in some quarters.

An interesting example of the controversy, in a mild enough way, occurred when Ian Harris contributed his February article to the ODT, entitled ‘God happens in our heads, or not, as the case may be’. That was followed by a rebuttal from Professor Murray Rae, headed ‘God is our creator, not the other way around’. Sir Lloyd Geering then joined the fray in support of Ian Harris with a column on ‘God’s history in “thought world”’. Ten or so letters to the editor showed public interest from both camps.

The Explorers Group in our Parish was also interested to follow the arguments, as we have done over a number of years. We have had discussions and shared some individual papers of our own. We could

see strengths in the arguments from both sides, but we were also surprised to notice some weaknesses too. An obviously fallacious argument popped up in each case. This is usually known as the argument from authority, by appealing to the status of those who support your view. We were told by one contributor that ‘leading-edge Christian thinkers’ see it one way, while another claimed that ‘numerous eminent theologians’ have the opposite view. Perhaps as a group of amateurs we were more likely to notice such an error, since we cherish the right of all individuals to their own insights, especially in matters of faith.

But reflecting as a group, we can safely say that the most important discovery we have ever made is that not only do we have a substantial variety of opinion amongst us, but we are also capable of sharing disparate ideas in an environment of mutual respect and encouragement. That, of course, should come across as quite unremarkable in a church group. Unfortunately, there seems to be a deep reluctance in church circles to venture into such challenging conversations, and that is seriously inhibiting our growth and adaptability to change. While this God debate was chugging over in the public square, the churches, as far as I am aware, simply ignored it. Worse, it seems that the higher up one goes in the formal hierarchies the less open we are to dealing with fundamental issues.

It’s enough to drive one back to the hymn and contemplate its supplications. ‘God be in my understanding, in my looking, in my speaking and in my thinking’. If, as Christians generally (if not universally) believe, God is ontologically other, then we should expect that God-given thoughts, observations and communications will be of a far higher order than our unaided nature provides. In other words, a sign of God’s presence amongst us would even be an openness and empathy for those for whom God’s absence is their prevailing perception. The God who seems worth believing in, indeed the one modelled in the life and teaching of Jesus, does not impose any rigid

orthodoxy of belief on us, and demonstrably avoids compelling us to bow down and worship.

If that is a salutary reminder to believers not to push their case for defining God too hard, unbelievers are also reminded by the hymn not to oversimplify their own argument, by focusing only on God as a mental construct. The hymn goes on to plead, 'God be in my *heart*'. In a paper for the Explorers Group, I noted that 'a crucial factor in addressing the whole issue is that faith and belief are not primarily intellectual matters. They arise from the depths of our psyche. This was superbly expressed by Blaise Pascal: "The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know. We feel it in a thousand things. It is the heart which experiences God, and not the reason. This, then, is faith: God felt by the heart, not by the reason". So the God debate will never be settled in the court of "Faith and Reason" columns in the manner in which it has so far been conducted.'

But finally, since this has turned into a meditation on an old hymn as much as on the current theist/atheist debate, we should consider the closing line of the hymn: 'God be at mine end, and at my departing.' From asking God to be *in* all the present aspects of life, it abruptly anticipates a need for God to be *at* the overwhelming event of death. We may well agree (with James Morrow) that the saying 'There are no atheists in foxholes' isn't an argument against atheism, but an argument against foxholes. Nevertheless, human mortality is an undeniable factor in faith formation. Even so, the inscrutable ambiguity of phrases such as 'the departed' should help us to soar above divisive analytical arguments to a much more mystical appreciation of what goes on in our heads and hearts, whether or not that be 'the true light which enlightens everyone' (John 1:9). So let God be, in whatever way he happens to be.

David Kitchingman