



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
Parish Stewards:	Mrs Hilda Hughson	487 6226
	Mrs Earlene Owens	489 8146
Tongan Steward:	Mr Kaufusi Pole	455 0096
Parish Office:	Siosifa: parish@dmm.org.nz	466 4600
	Katrina: admin@dmm.org.nz	
Parish Prayer Convenor	Elaine Merrett: elaineross@xtra.co.nz	489 7663
Pastoral Convenor	Beryl Neutze	476 7447
Mornington:		

PARISH BULLETIN

11th December 2016

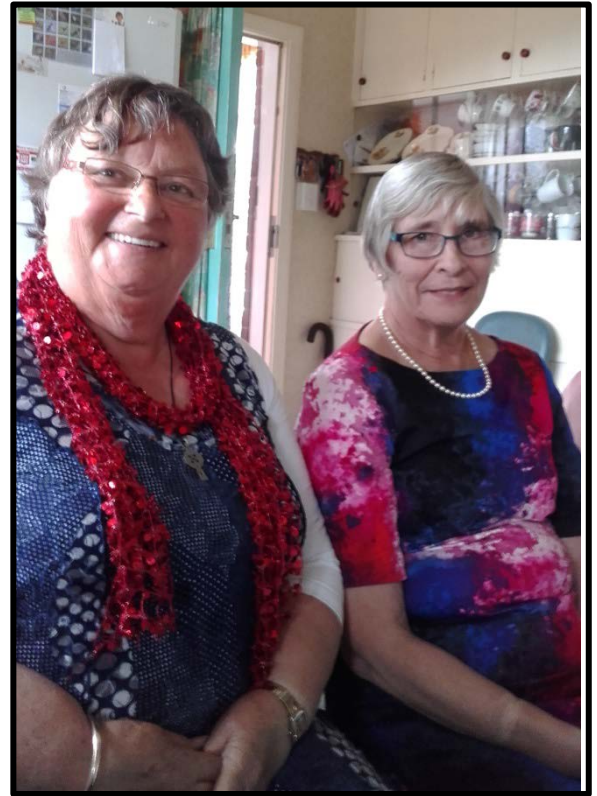
WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 18th December

9.30 am	Mornington	Explorers
9.30 am	Mosgiel	G Hughson
11.00 am	Glenaven	Explorers
1.00 pm	St Kilda	TBA

ANNUAL HOLIDAY - I am taking one week holiday, starting from Tuesday 13th to Monday 19th of December. While I am on leave Rod Mitchell will take responsibility for the administration of the Parish.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE - Just a reminder that the Christmas Eve service will be at the Glenaven Methodist Church. It will start with supper at 10.30pm, the service starts at 11pm. We are looking forward to a joyful service and also good support from the wider Parish.

MOSGIEL MWF CHRISTMAS MEETING was held @ 40 Forth Street on a very sunny Tuesday afternoon, where we played pe'tanque & croquet & enjoy sumptuous afternoon tea.



CHRISTMAS CAROLING Sunday 18th Dec leaving Mornington Church at 6:30p.m. Join the walking choir, singing a selection of Christmas songs new and old at 8 residences. Come and enjoy sing in wide open spaces and enjoy the company of fellow choristers while ambulating across the rise and fall of Mornington. Bring a plate and enjoy a bit of talk and a nibble and drink after exerting all that effort.





VISITORS ARE ALWAYS A PLEASURE at Sunday morning worship - they bring with them the stimulus of other traditions and expectations, to which we need to be sensitive. But they also enrich our own small communities, and remind us that our services of worship need to cater beyond the confines of our familiar congregation. Plucked for a photo from a large group of many conversations last Sunday, this group were quite animated about "something or other." Two are familiar faces but three need introductions: Rachel Toh and Max Chan are Asian students, she doing Ph.D in psychology, he in Law. Ricky Waters co-ordinates tertiary chaplaincy in the Auckland region, and was visiting Dunedin for a chaplaincy conference.



ORDERS OF SERVICE & BULLETINS OVER CHRISTMAS BREAK



The Mission Office will be closed from midday Thursday 22nd December and although we reopen on Monday 9th January, I do not return to work until Monday 16th January. Could you please ensure your Orders of Service over this period (between 22nd Dec & 16th Jan) are sent to me admin@dmm.org.nz no later than **12 noon Friday 16th December**.

The final bulletin for 2016 will be the 18th December edition and the first bulletin for 2017 will be 22nd January.

Thank you everyone, wishing you a very happy Christmas. *Katrina*



DEPTHEISM

Never heard of it? No worries. Neither has anyone else until now. You won't find it in any dictionary. You won't even find it in

Google, at least not until this Connections article has been made available on the internet via the Parish website. But at least my spell checker approves – it decorates it with a wavy red underline.

So it's a neologism, and every now and then we need to neologize when things change or new thoughts turn up. But do we really need any new variations on the oldest entity behind the Big Bang, referred to by the ancient Greek word theos? Shouldn't we be content with theism, deism, polytheism, ditheism, tritheism, henotheism, monotheism, pantheism, panentheism, and autotheism? Not to mention the good, the bad and the indifferent – [eutheism, misotheism and dystheism](#). And definitely not to mention igtheism, nontheism, antitheism, and atheism (new or old), unless we come full circle round to antiatheism.

The intellectual aridity of all those words to date, including the bluntly negative variants, can be very off-putting. And yet despite, or perhaps because of, the plethora of theistic terminology there may well be a growing need for a new term. It's a crowded field but none of them quite matches what might be an emerging approach of our time. Couldn't there

be a term that acknowledges the indestructability of the root expression in human culture and the psyche, whilst retaining its inscrutability and ambiguity?

A couple of examples will illustrate how the once starchy world of theos-talk and the simple standoff of theism v. atheism have become more lively and chaotic, particularly in the last decade. The most dramatic case has been that of Gretta Vosper, a minister of the United Church of Canada. In 2008, with the enthusiastic support of John Spong, she published her first major work, *With or without God*. In 2013, while pastor of a Toronto congregation she publicly embraced the term atheist. The fallout is still continuing as she challenges the Church's recommendation to declare her 'unsuitable'.

An oddly parallel case is that of Frank Schaeffer, an American film director and author, and once a prominent fundamentalist. In 2009 he published *Patience with God: Faith for people who don't like religion (or atheism)* and in 2014 he came up with *Why I am an atheist who believes in God*. Schaeffer put it this way: 'Maybe we need a new category other than theism, atheism or agnosticism that takes paradox and unknowing into account'. Perhaps apatheism, post-theism, transtheism or syntheism would be more to his taste, but I don't think he's settled on any particular model as yet.

So why offer **deptheism**? For four reasons:

1. As a blend of 'depth' and 'theism' it goes beyond cerebral stuffiness to encompass a broader framework of faith.

Unlike all the related words noted above, deptheism isn't just an intellectual expression. It acknowledges the profundity and emotional intensity of the God question, without which the intellectual analysis can be barren. It suggests not just a theory but an exercise of mind and spirit. Compared with other dimensions, length, breadth, and even height, depth is the most suggestive of the scale of comprehension and encounter at stake.

2. Deptheism resonates with a powerful interpretation of faith in the modern era that still retains historic Christian (and other) links.

The Bible speaks of 'the depths of God' (1 Cor 2: 10 NRSV) and makes considerable use of the metaphor of deepness and 'the deep' (Gen 1: 2). It also, of course, makes much use of other metaphors, notably 'height', especially through the image of God in the highest heaven. But whereas height has become increasingly problematic in a Copernican universe, depth in relation to experience of God has acquired greater prominence in the contemporary world. The German-American Lutheran theologian, Paul Tillich, was the first to assign it to a central position:

'The name of [the] infinite and inexhaustible depth and ground of all being is *God*. That depth is what the word *God* means. And if that word has not much meaning for you, translate it, and speak of the depths of your life, of the source of your being, of your ultimate concern, of what you take seriously without any reservation. Perhaps, in order to do so, you must forget everything traditional that you have learned about God, perhaps even that word itself. For if you know that God means depth, you know much about him [sic]... He who knows about depth knows about God.' In *The Shaking of the foundations* (1949), quoted by John A.T. Robinson in *Honest to God*, 1963.

To that may be added both support for Tillich and Robinson and some qualifications from a leading Catholic theologian:

'God is not another name for nature or humanity... God is not the unconscious of which depth psychology speaks... God is the transcendent depth of the encompassing ground of being... If the image of depth helps contemporary human beings to make present the transcendent reality of God, then it is even necessary. Still, one has to keep in mind that it, like the image of height, is an image and like all images has limits, it cannot say everything.' Heinrich Fries in *Fundamental theology*, 1996.

The proviso regarding all God-talk is essential, but depth as a primary signifier of God seems well established. In a New Zealand context, Bishop Richard Randerson's approach in *Slipping the moorings* (2015) and in the seminar he presented this year in our Parish is very much in tune with the idea of God as the transcendent depth within us and among us.

3. Deptheism also offers respect for and inclusion of genuine agnosticism and even non-militant, 'on balance' atheism (as distinct from New Atheism).

Some depths are fathomable and some are unfathomable. Should it be any surprise or any shame that for many (not just non-churchgoers) the God of the depths – the God at the deepest realities of human existence – is an unfathomable mystery? Some people spend years of their lives prayerfully plumbing the depths and have to admit to exhausting failure. For such, it's some comfort to find Biblical support from the likes of Ecclesiastes: 'The truth is beyond us. It's far too deep.' (Eccl. 7: 24, CEV).

This is what makes the concept of deptheism so very different from the other isms. It stands for an attitude not an achievement. It embraces far more states of mind and spirit than a conventional Christian congregation supposedly does. It could become the badge of a new style of worship. It could pose a powerful challenge to our Parish as it explores its future strategy.

4. 'Deptheism' offers at least a provisional name for a developing broad spectrum spiritual phenomenon that needs to be identifiable by way of a shorthand label.

Joseph Conrad once declared: 'You perceive the force of a word. He who wants to persuade should put his trust, not in the right argument, but in the right word. The power of sound has always been greater than the power of sense... Give me the right word and the right accent and I will move the world'. Deptheism may not be quite the right word, but what it stands for begs for a word or two that will spell the potential for a more deep down basis for our spiritual life. So, as Siosifa said in the previous Connections column, 'Finding new words is not good enough without finding new actions and new meanings.'

David Kitchingman

WORSHIP SERVICES - DECEMBER 2016 & JANUARY 2017**Sunday 18th December**

9.30 am – Mosgiel

9.30 am – Mornington

11.00 am – Glenaven

**Christmas Eve, Saturday 24th December**

11.00 pm – Glenaven, with supper at 10.30 pm

Christmas Day, Sunday 25th December

9.30 am – Mosgiel

9.30 am – Mornington (combined with Glenaven)

Sunday 1st January

9.30 am – Mosgiel

9.30 am – Mornington (combined Mornington Churches)

11.00 am – Glenaven

11.00 am – St Kilda

Sunday 8th January

9.30 am – Mosgiel

9.30 am – Mornington at St Mary's Anglican

11.00 am – Glenaven

Sunday 15th January

9.30 am – Mosgiel

9.30 am – Morn/Glenaven combined at Mornington Presbyterian

Sunday 22nd January

9.30 am – Mosgiel

9.30 am – Mornington

11.00 am – Glenaven

Sunday 29th January

10.00 am – Glenaven (Parish Combined Service)