**Reflections on the future of the Methodist Church in Dunedin and some comments on mental health**

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**The future of the Methodist Church in Dunedin**

Writing some words on religion may be opening a can of worms and it is something I do with some hesitancy as, in contrast to discussions on sport, travel, family, science, and TV and films, comments on religion and politics may disturb deeply held beliefs and fracture relationships. In reflecting on the future of the Methodist church in Dunedin one could do worse that start with the past. As the Spanish philosopher, George Santayana, 1863–1962, noted “Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it.”

Methodism has had a presence in the Dunedin area for over 175 years. In 1837,Waikouaiti, now part of Dunedin City, was the site of one of the early whaling stations in the South Island and owned by Messrs Wright and Long, merchants of Sydney, but a period of great commercial depression there resulted in their business failing and the whaling station was purchased from them in 1838 by Mr John Jones, a man of strong character, determination and great shrewdness. Jones then, in 1839, purchased several thousand acres of land from the local Maori and in 1840 he sent down from Sydney several men with their wives and families to engage in farming and other pursuits. At Jones’ insistence, the Wesleyan Society in 1840 appointed the Reverend James Watkins to look after the spiritual needs of the young community. Watkins was relieved in 1844 by the Wesleyan missionary Reverend Charles Creed who travelled to Waikouaiti from Nelson in the brigantine *Deborah* with Frederick Tuckett, who was searching for a site for a settlement on behalf of the New Zealand Company, the Rev. JFH Wohlers, of the German Missionary Society who established a mission at Ruapuke and David Monro who became the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Waikouaiti was originally situated where Karitane is now located, the name Karitane referring to Charles Creed (Kari=Creed and tane=man).

The Methodist Church in Dunedin has continued to faithfully proclaim the Gospel of a Jesus who preached absolute love and respect for one’s neighbour. Alongside this inclusiveness of being welcoming to all, the Church has kept alive the example of John Wesley of providing practical help in the way that is most relevant to those in need. Wesley founded a school, supported prisoners , even accompanying them from Newgate Prison on their way to the gallows at Tyburn, begged for money to help with the work he was doing with the poor and needy in his neighbourhood, recorded his homespun remedies and experimented with new treatments of illness, such as with using electricity, established an almshouse to provide accommodation for those in need including widows, children and the blind, and established a revolving loan fund that was used to help families with pressing financial needs to manage their affairs and survive their crises. The Methodist Church in Dunedin has continued to combine personal religion and a commitment to social action.

The Mornington Methodist Church is a community of Christians, mainly from the Methodist tradition, who enjoy meeting together and worshipping God. They are an inclusive, reconciling congregation that is non-judgmental, and that is accepting of all people irrespective of age, gender, race or sexuality who strive for spiritual growth through discussion and reflection on an open theology, who enjoy contemporary artwork in a modern church, and who join together in contemporary music, who value the participation of children in worship, who seek ways to serve their community and who enjoy having fun together. The Church has a Women’s Fellowship groups, an Explorers’ Group which discusses theology from a liberal or “progressive” perspective, cares for a stretch of the Kaikorai stream under the auspices of the Otago Regional Council Streamscape project and participates in the Dunedin Methodist Parish Continuing Education Programme.

James Watkins and Charles Creed would feel at home with the faith affirmation often used in the Mornington Methodist Church from the United Church of Canada:

“We are not alone; we live in God’s world.

We believe in God who has created and is creating, who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church: to celebrate God’s presence, to live with respect in Creation, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our model and hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us.

We are not alone. Thanks be to God.”

Thus although we live in troubling times, we might live in faith that God is with us, that although Jesus was crucified he rose, and that in the life beyond death God will continue to be with us.

Although one can be optimistic about the future of the Methodist Church in Dunedin, the reality is that the traditional churches in New Zealand have been declining in membership numbers and many churches have closed because of a lack of members. While revivalistic envangelical preaching at the Durham Street Wesleyan Chapel in Christchurch led to 110 converts being “placed on trial for membership” in 1875, followed by 200 conversions in 1881, 40 penitents in 1886, 80 who sought further blessing in 1889, 300 converts in 1895 and 70 converts and claimants to full salvation, the Methodist doctrine of Christian perfection, in 1897, the gaps between the missions then became longer and occurred subsequently in 1913 and 1918. In 1959, as a result of the Billy Graham crusade in Lancaster Park, Christchurch, there were 60 “decisions for Christ” from people associated with the Durham Street church. By then the impulse for Methodist revivalism was in decline and the denomination strongly opposed the National Council of Churches sponsoring another visit by Billy Graham.

The mission statement of The Methodist Church of New Zealand, Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa is:

“Our Church's Mission in Aotearoa New Zealand is to reflect and proclaim the transforming love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and declared in the Scriptures. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to serve God in the world. The Treaty of Waitangi is the covenant establishing our nation on the basis of a power-sharing relationship, and will guide how we undertake mission. In seeking to carry out our mission we will work according to these principles:

Ko te putake a to tatou Hahi Weteriana i Aotearoa nei, he whakakite atu, he kauwhau hoki i te aroha whakatahuri o te Atua, he mea whakaatu mai i roto i a Ihu Karaiti, me nga Karaipiture. Ko te Wairua Tapu e whakakaha ana i a tatou kia tu maia ai hei tuari ma te Atua i roto i te ao. Otira, ko Te Tiriti o Waitangi te kawenata e whaka o rite ana i ta tatou noho hei tangata whenua, hei tauiwi hoki, ki tenei whenua. Ma tenei Tiriti tatou e arahi i roto i nga whakariterite o tenei whakahau, tono hoki, ki roto ki te ao.

1. *Christian community:* To be a worshipping, praying, and growing community, sharing and developing our faith and working through its implications in our social context;
2. *Evangelism:* To challenge people to commitment to Christ and Christ's way;
3. *Flexibility:* To be flexible, creative, and open to God's Spirit in a changing world and Church, so that the Church is relevant to people's needs. To release energy for mission rather than to absorb energy for maintenance;
4. *Church unity:* To foster networks and relationships with communities of faith having similar goals;
5. *Inclusiveness:* To operate as a Church in ways that will enable the diversity of people (e.g. all ages, all cultures, male and female) to participate fully in the whole life of the Church, especially decision-making and worship;
6. *Every member a minister:* To encourage each person to develop his/her full potential by accepting and nurturing each other, developing skills and providing resources, challenging and enabling for service in the Church and community;
7. *Cross-cultural awareness:* To become aware of, and challenged by, each other's cultures;
8. *Justice:* To work for justice for any who are oppressed in Aotearoa New Zealand, keeping in mind the implications of the Treaty of Waitangi. To share resources with the poor and disadvantaged in Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond;
9. *Peace:* To be peacemakers between people and in the world;
10. *Healing:* To listen for hurt and work for healing; and
11. *Ecology:* To care for creation.

The focus on the mission of the Methodist Church in Aotearoa New Zealand is to reflect and proclaim the transforming love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and declared in the Scriptures. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to serve God in the world.”

 This mission statement can be compared with that of two other somewhat similar religious groups, Progressive Christians and Unitarian-Universalists.

Progressive Christians have described themselves as Christians who:

1. Believe that following the path and teachings of Jesus can lead to an awareness and experience of the Sacred and the Oneness and Unity of all life;
2. Affirm that the teachings of Jesus provide but one of many ways to experience the Sacredness and Oneness of life, and that we can draw from diverse sources of wisdom in our spiritual journey;
3. Seek community that is inclusive of ALL people, including but not limited to: Conventional Christians and questioning skeptics, Believers and agnostics, Women and men, Those of all sexual orientations and gender identities, and Those of all classes and abilities;
4. Know that the way we behave towards one another is the fullest expression of what we believe;
5. Find grace in the search for understanding and believe there is more value in questioning than in absolutes;
6. Strive for peace and justice among all people;
7. Strive to protect and restore the integrity of our Earth; and
8. Commit to a path of life-long learning, compassion, and selfless love.

Unitarian Universalists practice a non-creedal religion. Consequently, their individual beliefs are diverse, and their attitude toward each other's beliefs and traditions is one of tolerance and acceptance. Rather than a focus on doctrine or belief, Unitarian Universalists find primary significance in their shared agreement, or covenant: member congregations agree to "affirm and promote" seven principles and rather than honoring a narrow religious tradition, Unitarian Universalists embrace a "living tradition" drawn from a multitude of sources, including six sources.

The seven principles are to affirm and promote:

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all; and
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

The six sources of spiritual growth and development are:

1. Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
2. Words and deeds of prophetic people which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;
3. Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
4. Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
5. Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;
6. Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

All three faith approaches mention being welcoming to all. The Methodist Church mission mentions “Inclusiveness: To operate as a Church in ways that will enable the diversity of people (e.g. all ages, all cultures, male and female) to participate fully in the whole life of the Church, especially decision-making and worship.” The Progressive Christians “Seek community that is inclusive of ALL people, including but not limited to: Conventional Christians and questioning skeptics, Believers and agnostics, Women and men, Those of all sexual orientations and gender identities, and Those of all classes and abilities;” Unitarian Universalists affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

All three groups also make reference to Christianity. The Methodist Church statement mentions God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit; the Progressive Christian statement mentions Christians who believe that following the path and teachings of Jesus can lead to an awareness and experience of the Sacred and the Oneness and Unity of all life; and the Unitarian Universalist statement refers to Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbours as ourselves.

Much has been written about the changes in the Christian way over time. In his booklet *Religious trailblazers*, Lloyd Geering notes that Friedrich Schleiermacher, 1768–1834, published a book *On religion: Speeches to cultured despisers*, in 1799, in which he noted that some of the intelligent, educated people of the day were distancing themselves from traditional Christianity. Schleiermacher was among the first to realize that one could no longer speak convincingly to modern intelligent people, “cultured despisers of religion,” by simply expounding the traditional Christian dogmas and by appealing for support to the traditional authorities. Geering noted that in the modern cultural climate it has become necessary both to allow and to challenge each person to speak out of their own experience. Schleiermacher has opened the door for all of us, women and men, non-academics as well as academics, to participate in the theological enterprise and to think through for ourselves, in the presence and with the encouragement of others, the significance of those experiences which we personally have found most meaningful, most holy to us, and of ultimate concern.

Thus a pathway ahead for the Methodist Church in Dunedin might be one that continues to include a welcoming approach to all so that a sense of being connected in a caring community may be experienced. The foundation of religion can be seen to rest on experiencing something that is meaningful, that binds a community together. Welcoming all would include welcoming all who wished to attend including young and old, women and men, gay and straight, LGBTQIA+, Christians who believe in God, Christians who do not believe in a theistic God, Progressive Christians, Christian Scientists, Jews, Theosophists, atheists, agnostics, humanists, Muslims, Bhuddists, Hindus, and Sikhs etc. Encouraging all would mean that no one had to leave their brain, pain or shame at the door. Those present, with their variety of views, would need to feel that their differences were something that were respected rather than a problem that needed to be addressed. For everyone to get on together, some tolerance of differences would be needed. Sometimes when pain and suffering are acknowledged differences become less relevant and a sense of a shared humanity can emerge. Persons who have apparently very different beliefs may then share much in common.

The masthead of the Dunedin Methodist Parish has the byline “Finding good in everyone. Finding God in everyone.” This is a statement that appears to equate goodness and God and is similar to what Michael Benedikt discusses in his book *God is the good we do: The Theology of Theopraxy*. After Benedikt’s Jewish parent’s lost their faith in the Jewish religion when the holocaust of Auchwitz was allowed to happen by the omnipotent God they believed in, Benedikt found it more helpful to believe in a God who only existed when people did good. When we stopped doing good, God stopped existing. He was able to give thanks when ordinary every day events occurred such as an electric light going on at the movement of a switch.

In 1841 Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872), a German philosopher and anthropologist who had studied theology in Berlin under Friedrich Schleiermacher for a year and later philosophy under Georg Hegel (1770–1831), published a book *The essence of Christianity.* As summarized by Geering in *Religious trailblazers*, Feuerbach judged the philosophical system of Hegel to be “the last magnificent attempt to restore Christianity” but it had been achieved only be conceiving God to be “nothing other than the essence of thought.” Hegel had thus turned thought into a divine and absolute being. Feuerbach considered that thought was only the creation of the human mind and thus Hegel’s God was, therefore, a projection on to the cosmic backdrop of something emanating from the human mind. Hegel’s God was the creation of Hegel and was what was true of Hegel’s God was true of God generally. Feuerbach maintained that “God” was an idea in the human mind, a concept first created by our human ancestors in the distant cultural past and then transmitted in culture from generation to generation. Feuerbach asserted that instead of God making humans in his own image, humans had made “God” in their own image. He considered that “The personality of God is nothing else than the projection of the personhood we find in humankind.” Feuerbach was seen to be an atheist in the eyes of traditionalists. He fully conceded with atheists that there was no God, if by “God” we mean an “abstract disembodied being distinct from nature and man, who decides the fate of the world and of mankind as he pleases.” However, he did not want the concept of God to be dismissed but rather truly valued for what it was. In monotheism it was gradually fashioned to portray symbolically all that humans have come to value most highly, all the goals they have aspired to, all the skills of power and knowledge they have most admired. There was no conscious awareness on the part of our ancestors that they were projecting their own values in this way. He considered “Consciousness of God is human self-consciousness, knowledge of God is self-knowledge. By his/her God you know the person and by the person his/her God: the two are identical. Whatever is God to a person, that is his/her heart and soul.” The study of God turns out to be the study of humankind. The truth of theology is that it is an exercise in human self-understanding.

While Feuerbach was strongly critical of the supernaturalist religion of the past, he was nevertheless committed to a religious understanding of life, even though he saw religion as a human creation. He considered, “The freethinker is liable to the danger of an unregulated life … The religious man has an aim, and having an aim he has firm standing ground. Every man must place before himself a God, i.e., an aim, a purpose. He who has an aim which is itself true and essential has *eo ipso* a religion.” He ended a course of lectures on *The essence of religion* in 1848 by saying, “We must replace the love of God by the love of man as the only true religion … the belief in God by the belief in man, i.e., that the fate of humankind depends not on a being outside of it and above it but on humankind itself … My wish is to transform friends of God into friends of man, believers into thinkers, devotees of prayer into devotees of work, candidates for the hereafter into students of this world. Christians who, by their own profession and admission are half-animal, half-angel, into people who are whole.” Feuerbach expressed the view that monotheism had caused humans to experience a division between their higher self (which they projected into heaven in the form of a personal God) and their lower self (with which they were left and which made them feel unworthy). So when Christianity preached reconciliation between God and humankind, what was really being proclaimed was a restoration of the state of human wholeness and the end of human consciousness divided from itself. He considered that the real meaning of the doctrine of the Incarnation was that it was love which led “God” to abandon his heavenly throne, empty himself of his otherworldliness, and dwell henceforth within the human condition. In his view, as God had renounced himself out of love, so we, out of love should renounce God: for if we do not sacrifice God to love, we sacrifice love to God, and we have … the God of religious fanaticism.

Various approaches have been taken to accommodate the varying religious viewpoints. In the West Hill Church, Toronto, Canada, led by Greta Vosper, of the United Church of Canada, the trial of whom by the Church has now been dropped, all references to a supernatural God have been removed together with covering up crosses, not saying the Lord’s Prayer and singing only hymns without supernatural theistic references. Her views have been described in her books *Amen: what prayer can mean in a world beyond belief* and *With or without God: why the way we live is more important than what we believe.* At the All Souls, Unitarian Universalist Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA, led by Marlin Lavenhar, a variety of services is held with different degrees of traditional observances. In the more traditional service, the minister wears a black gown, hymns are sung and the readings are from the Bible. In the less traditional service the dress is more casual, the music may be more jazzy and the readings may be from a variety of wisdom and spiritual texts. In the setting of Dunedin, multiple services may not be feasible but, in the spirit of tolerance, room could be made in the same service for recognizing both worship of the theistic God of love and the human values such as love that we should incorporate in our lives.

 In his poem *Dover Beach*, Mathew Arnold recognized that attendances at the Church of England services in England were falling. The poem, which describes the sound of the waves coming in and out on the gravelly beach at Dover, was first published in 1867 in the collection *New Poems*, but surviving notes indicate its composition may have begun as early as 1849 and the most likely date is considered to be 1851 He wrote:

“The Sea of Faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore

Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.

But now I only hear

Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,

Retreating, to the breath

Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear

And naked shingles of the world.”

Many writers including Don Cupitt, Lloyd Geering and John Spong have explored the changing face of religion and one view is that the modern secular world has developed from the Christian way. Although a wide spectrum of religious beliefs may now be held, there is room for a community group that upholds the value of compassion, that is accepting of all, and that can provide a space for reflecting on and experiencing a spiritual dimension of life. By continuing to meet to celebrate, share, discuss and care for one another and the community, the Methodist Church in Dunedin can have a meaningful future.

In his 2008 book, *The John Wesley code: Finding a faith that matters*, James Stuart expressed the view that Methodism is uniquely well placed to address the future for a number of compelling reasons. He noted that firstly, Methodism has always contained the trademark characteristics of a movement rather than an institution. Movements emerge primarily in response to social needs and they very intentionally try to affect the socio-political situation and bring about needed change. Thus, learning from Wesley would suggest that Methodism today needs to begin a process of devolution giving local parishes more flexibility and freedom to respond to their own particular social needs. Methodism was never about building churches and acquiring property but about enabling and empowering people. Secondly, Wesley’s genlus consisted in the fact that he did not bequeath to the people he called Methodists a credo or confession that locked them into an orthodoxy that would lead them down a road of no return. Instead, Wesley left Methodists a set of sermons and a commentary on the New Testament that affirmed a latitude and flexibility of thinking and a considerable freedom in doctrinal matters. For Wesley the bottom line was summed up in his concern that Methodists think for themselves and let others think for themselves. In the end what mattered was not orthodoxy but the quality of love given and received. As Wesley affirmed over and over again, “We may not know much, but can love much.” Finally, Wesley’s emphasis on the character of Methodists was guided by the realization that Christianity stands and falls on the integrity of a people’s life together. It is one thing to profess faith. It is another thing altogether to live the faith, to walk the talk. Stuart’s final word from Wesley was: “We continually declare that Faith itself, even Christian faith, … still is only the handmaid of love. Faith, as glorious and honourable as it is, is not the end of the commandment. God hath given this honour to love alone: love is the end of all the commandments of God. Love is the end, the sole end, of every dispensation of God, from the beginning of the world to the consummation of all things. Love will endure when heaven and earth flee away; for love alone never fails.”

**Some comments on mental health**

A few comments might be made on mental health. Professor Mason Durie developed a model of mental health based on the wharenui, the “big house" or communal house which is the focal point of a marae. With its strong foundations and four equal sides, the symbol of the wharenui illustrates the four dimensions of Māori well-being. Should one of the four dimensions be missing or in some way damaged, a person, or a collective may become “unbalanced” and subsequently unwell. For many Māori, modern health services lack recognition of taha wairua (the spiritual dimension). In a traditional Māori approach, the inclusion of the wairua, the role of the whānau (family) and the balance of the hinengaro (mind) are as important as the physical manifestations of illness.

The four pillars of health are:

1. *Taha tinana (physical health):* This involves the capacity for physical growth and development. Good physical health is required for optimal development. Our physical “being” supports our essence and shelters us from the external environment. For Māori the physical dimension is just one aspect of health and well-being and cannot be separated from the aspect of mind, spirit and family.
2. *Taha wairua (spiritual health):* This includes the capacity for faith and wider communication. Health is related to unseen and unspoken energies. The spiritual essence of a person is their life force. This determines us as individuals and as a collective, who and what we are, where we have come from and where we are going. A traditional Māori analysis of physical manifestations of illness will focus on the wairua or spirit, to determine whether damage here could be a contributing factor.
3. *Taha whānau (family health):* This covers the capacity to belong, to care and to share where individuals are part of wider social systems. Whānau provides us with the strength to be who we are. This is the link to our ancestors, our ties with the past, the present and the future. Understanding the importance of whānau and how whānau (family) can contribute to illness and assist in curing illness is fundamental to understanding Māori health issues.
4. *Taha hinengaro (mental health):* In this dimension, the capacity to communicate, to think and to feel mind and body are inseparable. Thoughts, feelings and emotions are integral components of the body and soul. This is about how we see ourselves in this universe, our interaction with that which is uniquely Māori and the perception that others have of us.

Another model of mental health for Maori centred on family health, developed by Rose Pere, is based on the concept of Te Wheke, the octopus. The head of the octopus represents te whānau, the family, and the eyes of the octopus represent the waiora, the total wellbeing for the individual and family. Each of the eight tentacles represents a specific dimension of health:

1. *Wairuatanga –* spirituality;
2. *Hinengaro* – the mind;
3. *Taha tinana* – physical wellbeing;
4. *Whanaungatanga* - extended family;
5. *Mauri* – life force in people and objects;
6. *Mana ake* – unique identity of individuals and family;
7. *Hā a koro ma, a kui ma* – breath of life from forbears; and
8. *Whatumanawa* – the open and healthy expression of emotion.

The dimensions are interwoven and this represents the close relationship of the tentacles.

Mason Durie has also developed a model for modern health promotion based on Te Pae Mahutonga (the Southern Cross star constellation. The four central stars of the Southern Cross represent four key tasks of health promotion:

1. *Mauriora* (cultural identity);
2. *Waiora* (physical environment);
3. *Toiora* (healthy lifestyles); and
4. *Te Oranga* (participation in society).

The two pointers represent:

1. Ngā Manukura (community leadership;) and
2. Te Mana Whakahaere (autonomy).

Another model of illness is the Popao model, Folau ki he mo’ui lelei, journey to wellness, a Pacific recovery and strength concept in mental health, developed by the Popao Tongan Group in Auckland. The Popao or outrigger canoe has been used as a metaphorical model for mental health service users and professionals shared understanding of the treatment process as a “journey” towards recovery and strength within a Pacific paradigm. The popao is primarily designed for use within the lagoon, not for open sea. Traditionally, the popao was a means of travel and used for fishing and harvesting of shellfish. In the lagoon there are obstacles that may disrupt a journey. Thus, the need to be well prepared for the journey and being familiar with both the lagoon and the use of the popao will ensure a desired destination is reached. A developed awareness of the lagoon will assist the negotiation through, with and around obstacles that may arise in one’s journey. Equally, it is important that one is aware of how each part of the popao is connected and that one understands the strengths and weaknesses of the vessel. Ignorance of the popao may result in the popao sinking. Knowing the popao develops a relationship of identification and relatedness. Consumers utilise parts of the popao as a tool to help them identify support structures in a framework they can understand. Each consumer paddles/Tokoes their own popao towards their desired destination, mapping and personalising their journeys and identifying any obstacles in the lagoon. The popao group meet weekly to share experiences of mental illness alongside community support workers, clinicians and service providers. Various skills and knowledge that have been lost through mental illness may be rediscovered with the support of the appropriate professionals and support. The parts of the popao are:

1. *Fohe/toko*—the paddle/oar, strength,ambition, energy, direction, common sense;
2. *Sea/Tahi*—society, community, environment;
3. *Kafa* (strings or lashings)—communication;
4. *Katea* (main body or hull)— cultural workers, beliefs,values, tradition;
5. *Kahoki* (holders)—cultural workers;
6. *Hama* (outrigger)—clinical team; and
7. *Kiato* (outrigger connectors)—community support services, family, cultural group, friends.

Western models of illness have evolved from a biomedical model with an emphasis on the small and molecular aspects of disease to a bio-psycho-social-spiritual model of illness which allows consideration of the psychological, social and spiritual dimensions. In a YouTube video, *What makes a good life? Lessons from the longest study on happiness*, Robert Waldinger reported on the Harvard Study of Adult Development in which 724 men from Harvard College and a deprived area of Boston who were followed from their teenage years for 75 years. The researchers found that, of the information collected at age 50 years, what predicted good health at age 80 years was not the serum cholesterol but how satisfied the person felt in their relationships. Good relationships protected them from the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. On the days when they experienced more physical pain, those with satisfying relationships did not feel less happy while those without satisfying relationships experienced a lowering of their mood. Waldinger found that good relationships with our family, friends and community keep us healthier and happier. In contrast, loneliness, reported by over 20% of persons in the USA, kills. He noted that it was not just the number of friends that was important but that the quality of the relationships was also important. When the healthy men lost workmates they replaced those relationships by seeking out new relationships based on leisure activities. Those with secure relationships were not necessarily free from being involved in arguments but felt that, if things became tough, they could count on the other person. Waldinger finished his talk by quoting Mark Twain who said, “There isn't time, so brief is life, for bickerings, apologies, heartburnings, callings to account. There is only time for loving, and but an instant, so to speak, for that.”

The Methodist Church supports mental health in many ways including its whanua/family culture which is supportive and welcoming to all, its encouragement of communication and the expression of emotion with music, its pastoral care and its practical support of community initiatives including, in Dunedin, the Hub.

As in other fields of endeavour, mental health is a large topic and any ideas that emerge need to be subjected to an examination of their evidence base before they are recommended as being sound. This is not the place to examine any specific treatments in detail but three thoughts can be raised for discussion:

 (i) In acknowledging the importance of the expression of emotion, a case can be made for the singing of sad songs which may assist with the expression of sadness. Joy may be difficult to experience without allowing the expression of underlying sadness. Many sad songs have been written. Two examples from popular culture are *Hi-lili,hi lo* and *My happiness.* Alain de Botton has spoken on this theme in his YouTube School of Life talk on pessimism;

In a commentary, on Medscape Psychiatry, on 27 November 2018, Robert A. Berezin, MD, reflected on *Why Do We Love Sad Music? Mourning Our Pain*. He wrote:

 “As an experiment, my son and I asked the following question on Facebook: "Looking for the sad song you love to listen to when you're down. Open to any and all genres."

“We received 71 responses in 24 hours. Each person sent their go-to music or even long playlists. All were very enthusiastic about this question. Surprisingly, people put on music that matches their sad mood rather than music to cheer them up. Paradoxically, it doesn't depress us more; it is comforting. People choose music that fits with their mood. Entering the mood space, one is ensconced in the resonance of feeling; one is at home, is encompassed, and feels held.

 “Let's say a loved one has died, or maybe you are going through a bad break up or a divorce. If you are sad, unhappy, feeling miserable, what music do you choose? Sad music carries us deep inside sadness itself. In a state of mourning, one needs to feel the pain. One needs not to be alone and needs emotional holding. Yet one also needs a private space for meditative reflection. One needs time. Music is both a communal and a personal experience. It both joins us together and allows for personal space and time.

“Consciousness is a synthetic illusion created by the brain. Communication can only take place indirectly, never directly. The way we communicate is through art forms: language, physical gestures, reading and writing, visual art, music, theater, prose, poetry, and dance. It is how my consciousness connects to your consciousness. If cortically we share the same symbolic codes of an art form, I can communicate my imagination and feeling expressively, and you can receive my imagination and feeling receptively. When you read this article, your brain reads these 26 black symbols on a white page. You receive what I express and fulfill it with your imagination. These symbols operate through our deeply learned visual and auditory mastery of language via reading and writing,

“Regarding language, if you and I both master English, then we can communicate through the learned art form of speech. If I only speak English and you Russian, it will sound like gibberish. We need shared, learned symbolic form. It is the same with music. If you and I both share the same symbolic code for scales, we can communicate expressively and receptively via music. Music, unlike most other art forms, has no visual referent. It always creates feeling and mood. Music proceeds through the auditory centers, and always through the amygdala and limbic system (generally speaking, our emotional centers). Through creating a mood, you can indirectly paint a visual picture that you can invent with your own imagery.

“Let's focus on sadness: The mourning of a loved one's death is the specific and literal biological operation for the repair and healing of emotional pain. The mourner must face and go through the pain of all of the feelings from losing his attachment. This process digests and deactivates the loss of a deeply held old play where the loved one is present, in order to accept a new play where the loved one is gone.

“Immersed and held in the art trance of sad music, we feel the sadness. It surrounds us...

“Digesting the old story and mourning those feelings can take a long time—many years, even. One has to go through the Kübler-Ross stages of denial— bargaining, anger, sadness, and acceptance. The specific stage where sad music works its magic is, of course, sadness. This is contingent on the musician and the mourner having learned the same symbolic form for the scales.”

 (ii) Indeed, life itself can be considered to be likely to involve suffering and hardship at some stage and preparing for this by being the best one can be. Rather than seeking happiness with mind altering chemicals, life can be difficult and seeking meaning is more important than seeking happiness. Meaning may be found in having a sense of purpose including taking responsibility for one’s self, one’s family and one’s community. This is a theme of Jordan Peterson in his book *12 rules for life: an antidote to chaos*;

(iii) An area, about which some have concern, is the widespread use of medications such as antidepressants, antipsychotics, and medications for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) which may cause a variety of side-effects which may impair rather than assist recovery. For example, as reported in the *Otago Daily Times* on 9 November 2018, Evie Aitcheson, a Kiwi teacher caught up in the devastating 2011 Japan tsunami was one of thousands of New Zealanders being prescribed antidepressant drugs. The 33-year-old Japanese teacher said she returned to New Zealand soon after the disaster with post-traumatic stress disorder feeling lower than ever, and was prescribed antidepressants by her GP. She said she experienced, "seven years of medicated hell". She observed that her friends said that she looked the same on the outside but that it was just her shell and her personality was just totally different. She described feeling numb to the core, losing all social awareness, gaining a lot of weight and being even more depressed than before starting the medication. She said, "It impaired my ability to feel human and to really be present with people and pick up what they were saying. My relationships were hugely affected being on these medications because I just wasn't myself." After taking 300 mg of the commonly prescribed venlafaxine every day for nearly seven years, Ms Aitcheson said she had been slowly weaning herself off the drugs. She said, "Already I am feeling a lot more myself being less medicated. Despite having depression I've pushed myself to get a master's and bachelor’s degree and I think having those goals and people around to support me has been what's helped get me out." A recent University of Otago study showed almost one in eight New Zealanders over the age of 15 are on antidepressants despite their being little evidence the drugs are helping curb the country's alarming suicide rates. An Auckland psychiatrist, David Codyre, who worked for more than 30 years in community mental health, said Aitcheson's case was not uncommon. He commented, "Anyone who has had depression triggered by an event like that, those are the people who really should be offered therapies over medication." However, it needs to be noted that once these medications have been started they cannot be suddenly stopped and any tailing off needs to be done very gradually under medical supervision. Peter Breggin has written extensively in this area. The 2018 Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction, led by Ron Paterson, found areas of concern in the mental health services including a high suicide rate. Along with homelessness and unemployment, a relevant factor in the suicide rate may be the widespread use of antidepressant medications such as the SSRIs (Specific Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors). Paradoxically, the use of the SSRI paroxetine was banned in the UK for women under the age of 18 years because the clinical trials found that it increased suicidal ideation rather than decreasing it.