A VISION FOR THE DUNEDIN METHODIST PARISH IN THE 21ST CENTURY

By Colin Gibson

The Covid pandemic has provided a rare opportunity for quiet reflection and even a little dreaming. I have taken thought about the kind of faith community I would want to seeing emerging from the lock-down, in a world freed at last from the destructive effects of the virus—a world probably changed forever.

Such a community would be Christ-centred, expressing its devotion to God and concern for the world we inhabit through quality worship, effective pastoral care and intelligent social and ethical action.

Such a community would be one which values and respects people, whatever their faith or

individual form of spiritual life, age, gender, sexual orientation or social status. It would actively express an equal respect for the integrity and wellbeing of the natural world.

Such a community would support education for all ages, and be diligent in whatever might deepen our spiritual life. To do that it would need to draw on all the arts, especially (since we are Methodists) the art of music.

It would be a community which keeps abreast of contemporary theology and scientific inquiry, is responsive to technical innovation and open to reform and experiment.

To my mind it should be a community which confidently contributes ideas, affirms values and generally engages in conversation with the world outside its domain. The public silence of New Zealand churches and their leaders during the current epidemic has been painful to me.

The community I want to see emerging from this crisis would be ecumenical in spirit and respectful towards all faiths, yet consciously and proudly Methodist in heritage, allegiance,

organisation and activity.

And it would need to be self-sustaining, seeking to attract others not by evangelical campaigns of the old style or boastful declarations of its own unique purity, but by its corporate life of Christ-like love, intellectual openness, social activity, vital worship and joyful living.