

DUNEDIN METHODIST PARISH

Finding Good in everyone Finding God in everyone

www.dunedinmethodist.org.nz



Find us on Facebook: **Dunedin Methodist Parish**

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PARISH BULLETIN

31st October 2021

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 7th November 2021

9.30 am	Mornington	R Mitchell
10.00am	Mosgiel	G Hughson
11.00am	Glenaven	D Poultney
	St Kilda	TBA

DATES TO REMEMBER

2nd November @ 1.30pm - Mosgiel Methodist Women's Fellowship

MOSGIEL METHODIST WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP.

Tuesday 2nd November, 2021, 1:30pm at the Mosgiel Methodist Church. This is our friendship day when all other Mosgiel Women's Church Groups are invited. All welcome. Our guest speaker is Rev Peter Cheyne who will speak to us about a trip to Israel. Our ladies two plates please.

STORIES FROM THE MISSION

Waihōpai YTH

We are also in the process of getting awesome raised (and removable) garden beds. Staff are very excited to start this new project and get the new resident and future residents involved! It can also be somewhat used as a tool to help the rangatahi de-stress!



If you would like to support the Mission's work with a donation, please visit www.givealittle.co.nz and search for The Methodist Mission



Hand in hand: Blending secular and sacred to enlarge the human spirit

Ian Harris's writings on the future of Christianity and the church may not be everyone's cup of tea. Some may find him too liberal, while for others he may be too conservative. However, as John Lydgate of Bury (c. 1370 – c. 1451), an English monk and poet, credited with writing approximately 145,000 lines, observed, "You can please some of the people all of the time, you can please all of the people some of the time, but you can't please all of the people all of the time."

Hand in hand: Blending secular and sacred to enlarge the human spirit is Ian Harris's latest book (Wellington: The Cuba Press; 2021) and follows on from his last book *New world new god: Rethinking Christianity for a secular age* (Wellington: Makaro Press; 2018). Ian grew up in a Methodist parsonage, for a time was editor of the *New Zealand Methodist* and has served as the Director of Communication for the Presbyterian Church in New Zealand. . Since 2001 he has written over 300 bite-sized articles on Christianity, which have appeared in *The Dominion* and *The Dominion Post* (2001–

2009), *The Otago Daily Times* (2004 to the present) and *Touchstone* (2011 to the present). In *Hand in hand*, 59 of his 3-page articles, written in the period 2004 to 2019, are grouped under the headings of (i) Like it or not, we're secular; (ii) Spirituality? In our secular world; (iii) No, no, no God!; (iv) And then there's science; (v) Don't forget the planet!; and (vi) To the churches: Adapt or die.

The title *Hand in hand* appears to refer to how the concept of God and scientific knowledge of the nature of the world, our origins and our nature as people are in a dynamic balance. As secular knowledge of the world is better understood, our knowledge of the nature of God changes in tandem. Harris notes that following the pioneers in scientific or secular understanding of nature and man such as Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Darwin, Freud and Jung, the visionary leaders of the church should be rolling away cartloads of metaphysical embroidery and setting aside the 1,000-year-old science of the Bible. However, he is not holding his breath that it will happen quickly and comments that when Christchurch recently had a golden opportunity to blaze a new trail by saying goodbye to its medieval Gothic cathedral in order to risk a 21st-century architectural statement of faith in the heart of the city it voted to gaze firmly backwards.

Harris observes that on retirement after a lifetime of service to their church, many ministers, hardly ever go to church again. He considered that they came to feel out of sync with what they saw happening there. He commented that many lay people feel the same way and surmised that there was a deep-down dissonance resulting in finding that churchgoing was no longer the energizing, focusing, deepening experience that it used to be. These persons hung on by their fingernails for as long as they could and then dropped out. Harris has concluded that a major reason for kiwis drifting away from church is the churches' failure to allow Christian faith to evolve in a changing world. He found that the churches have clung to creeds, doctrines and practices that made excellent sense in the light of the knowledge of former times but were crying out for a thoroughgoing reinterpretation in our 21st-century world. Harris reflected that some parishioners had voyaged on a faith journey that led them to question the dogma of the church and lamented that the churches had kept silent and denied Christian people access to the thinking of modern scholarship. He reported that it was sometimes the clergy that held the church back and that the timidity of the clergy was killing the church. Sometimes laypeople blocked progressive alternatives believing that any change to ancient formulations would be a sell-out.

For Harris, the future of the Christian faith does not depend on loyally keeping fossils warm, whether they be fossils of creed, doctrine, church order or anything else. The future instead hinged on identifying what was core to our Judeo-Christian heritage and

then working out how people at home in the modern world could relate to this and express it honestly in terms of today.

He saw a need for congregations to muscle up to expand beyond residential chaplaincies for the few and become creative life centres, accepting all comers, sharing but never imposing. They could then add depth and breadth to their communities through tapping into the vital core of their Christian heritage, drawing from the example of Jesus of what it is to love in a transforming manner. Harris recorded a comment that a great deal of what was believed and practiced in Christianity today was superstition, beliefs and practices that had outlived the context in which they were once appropriate. Any true religion for this age needs to fit the way we see reality today, which means it must be secular. The important values for a church are a concern for one another, love, compassion and a readiness to accept the other person, no matter who they are. Churches need to be places where we recognize that we are all part of the evolving universe, and where people can learn to give thanks for and marvel at the universe. Churches need to be places where people can value all forms of life, can value our cultural inheritance, and can celebrate our togetherness, what we are able to be, and work for a viable human future.

In practical terms, if Harris's suggestions were taken up, a number of the sentiments and expressions commonly used in our liturgies might be loaded into the cart of metaphysical embroidery and superstition. Using the liturgy of 24 October 2021 as an example, references to God as a separate being could find a place in the cart, e.g. Creator of the cosmos, of eternity and time be with us in this time; The One who is—God; Our father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come ...; May the reality we build have strong foundations in you, In building up our community may we do your will; We give thanks for the privilege of responding to God's generosity with these gifts and with our lives; and We now embody this light and promise to reflect the light of God's love

Changing our services in such a major way as put forward in Harris's view of the future would be likely to produce some disruption but his view is that a new reformation of the church would be inadequate. What is required is transformation. He laments that although the churches are as certain as ever that they have the answers to the ultimate questions of life and purpose, they are presented in a way that sounds to many, inside and outside, like mumbo-jumbo. They are talking a different language, taking for granted a different world view and failing to connect. Ministers may prefer to let sleeping dogmas lie, for fear of disturbing the peace and unity of the church. Indeed, an American engineer Edwards Deming remarked, "You don't have to change. Survival is not compulsory!"

Bruce Spittle