

# DUNEDIN METHODIST PARISH

*Finding Good in everyone Finding God in everyone*

[www.dunedinmethodist.org.nz](http://www.dunedinmethodist.org.nz)



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## PARISH BULLETIN

3 JULY 2022

### WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 10 JULY 2022

9.30am	Mornington	C Gibson
10.00am	Mosgiel	D Poultney
11.00am	Glenaven	S Hamel

### PREACHING ROSTER

The July to September Roster is complete and some A4 versions will be available at each Church today, A5 copies will be available next week.

## STUDY LEAVE

Please note I am on study leave the weekend of the 17<sup>th</sup> July and on Synod business the weekend of the 24<sup>th</sup> July. David P

## *Congratulations* TO PROFESSOR RICHARD CANNON

In the Otago Daily Times on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> June, it was reported that Professor Richard Cannon had received an International Association for Dental Research Distinguished Scientist Award in recognition of his outstanding research in oral microbiology. So, a warm congratulations from your Methodist friends. We will glow in your wonderful success Richard, and may this award be an encouragement for your future research.



## HAERE MAI, COME JOIN US

**In celebration of the Mission's 132 birthday -  
June's newsletter <sup>was</sup> is a bumper read - Did you miss out?**



There is a range of options;

- Pop-up form on our website
- Facebook link to form
- email [julier@mmsouth.org.nz](mailto:julier@mmsouth.org.nz)
- phone 02722678140
- ask Julie at Women's Fellowship

Get in touch to receive the Mission's e-newsletter.  
Read the stories which tell of our mahi and impact.

Come, walk with us.



My recent experience of Covid 19 and a week of home quarantine led me to reflect both on Covid 19 itself and my own experience of it. Epidemics of course are nothing new. What does the pandemic mean for us as people and what place is there for faith to speak to the human condition in times such as these?

At the dawn of Western literature, in the Iliad, Homer tells the story of King Agamemnon who angered the gods through his arrogance. Apollo responded by causing a plague to erupt among the Greek army besieging Troy. In our more secular age, we do not need recourse to mythical stories about the gods to explain -19. We understand that disease, epidemics and, occasionally, pandemics are not exceptional in human history. Bacteria and viruses predate humans and, in the evolutionary tussle which characterises our world, outbreaks of infection naturally occur. Nonetheless, especially in the case of a once-in-a-century outbreak (at least in our part of the world), we are shocked, shaken.

For me both from the outset of the pandemic and more so in my experience of it there has been the realisation of how fragile and threadbare our individual autonomy is, I am not alone in this. Commentators have noted how our prized autonomy is suddenly revealed as somewhat threadbare. Indeed Boris Johnson, of all people, has gone on record repudiating the infamous “there is no such thing as society” aphorism of Margaret Thatcher. Terms like solidarity and the common good have gained new currency.

A global pandemic may be particularly bewildering for us because we live in a secular age where, as Charles Taylor noted, we inhabit an “immanent frame” of reference which leaves us poorly equipped at a public level to discuss issues of ultimate meaning. We have to a large

extent lost our literacy about religious matters; we are unfamiliar, as the late Nicholas Lash often pointed out, with the grammar and syntax of speech about the divine. At its best, this immanent frame allows us autonomy and freedom, transparency and respectful democratic inclusion in a neutral space that is only possible “if reference to religion and the transcendence of God is excluded or maintained privately.” The disenchanted world of modernity has at its heart a perception of the cosmos as impersonal “in the most forbidding sense, blind and indifferent to our fate.” It is true that post-modernity has, in different ways, argued for a “re-enchantment” of our world, but it often does so at the cost of the reduction of knowledge to personal opinion, within a relativism which is dismissive of what it sees as the tyranny of objectivity.

But there are signs that a contrite Modernism has begun to see the sense of re-admitting religion to the public square. Thinkers like Jurgen Habermas and others have argued for the necessity and usefulness of the religious focus and discourse on what is missing, in particular on issues of suffering and failure. The currency of post-secularism has gained validity as a more open secularism, flowing in harmony with the more generous liberalism at its roots. This post-secular stance recognises its own limits and fosters an awareness of the ability to find allies for its progressive instincts among the ranks of believers. It is in this context of building bridges rather than erecting walls that I turn to a more explicitly theological consideration of the crisis we face, hoping that non-believers and people of goodwill will feel welcome as partners of the conversation.

*David Poultney*