

DUNEDIN METHODIST PARISH

Finding Good in everyone Finding God in everyone

www.dunedinmethodist.org.nz



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PARISH BULLETIN

16 April 2023

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 23 April 2023

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

HARVEST SERVICE @ MOSGIEL

On Sunday 23rd April the Mosgiel Service will reflect on Christ as First Fruits of the Resurrection and with that the Harvest. You are invited to bring seasonal produce to the Service, this will be given to the Foodbank.

BLACK COMPOST BINS AND FLOWERS:

We now have a couple of large black compost bins located in the back yard by the garden shed (can access through door in women's bathroom, or the back of the church). Please put any flower clippings or old flowers in these bins, as the stems make holes in the black rubbish bins when discarded there.



An irreverent Reverend

In late March the family and friends of Rev Dr Mike Riddell marked a year since his unexpected death, in the Ida Valley home he shared with wife Rosemary, at the age of 69. Although he had been treated for prostate cancer, it was not this that killed him; he died in his sleep, just after a family celebration of his birthday.

In the days after Mike died in 2022, there was an extraordinary outpouring of collective grief on Facebook, where he had been a prolific and generous writer on all sorts of subjects, including his own health and the Riddell family journey. He had become well-known in the South, particularly for his involvement in what might be called 'the politics of water'— in the (as yet) unfinished debate around the fragile state of the Manuherikia River, which after large takes for irrigation flows through the Maniototo before joining the Clutha/Mata-au at Alexandra.

As I said in my last Connections article, I met Mike (who was studying for a PhD on the spirituality of James K. Baxter) at the beginning of my theology study in 1999, when he taught a fascinating course on Contextual Theology. After that I was in a small Auckland class meeting every day for a week in a liberal Baptist Church near the top of Queen Street. There, he led us through the values of the Church and the late

twentieth-century world, and the places and times in which they were especially interconnected, or opposed.

Mike, who by the time I met him had become Catholic, had himself been a Baptist minister of an unusually dedicated kind. As his daughter Kat Riddell reflected on Facebook: 'From a young age I was taught that being a Christian was to be like Jesus; to love the broken. I have memories rich with these actions. Going to boarding houses in Central Auckland each Christmas Day with gifts and cakes taught me so much as a child. Seeing my father on the front page of the *NZ Herald* for stripping to his undies at the Auckland City Council meeting protesting for the rights of the mentally unwell...' The official account of this incident (from *Wikipedia*) reads thus: 'In 1991, Riddell was involved in a confrontation with Auckland City Council over the proposed sale of Council housing in the Freemans Bay Area. He informed the councillors that they were stripping their city's poor of their dignity and leaving them naked.'

These same boarding house residents were the (fictional) subject of a novel Mike wrote in 1997 called *The Insatiable Moon*, which was also translated to the big screen. Directed by Rosemary Riddell, this much-admired film, also called *The Insatiable Moon*, was released in New Zealand in 2010. Along with Ian Mune it starred Rawiri Paratene, *Whale-Rider* co-star and father of the Green Co-leader and MP Marama Davidson. Both father and daughter, like many others, became Mike's close friends, Marama expressing gratitude for the care and mentoring he gave her over the subsequent decade. It was Mike who urged her to read the stories of writer Jacquie Sturm, wife of James K Baxter, 'as if it was wrong to only read Baxter's work without knowing of her talent'.

This was a very characteristic thing for Mike to do, to point to the women who have achieved much in the background, rather than in the spotlight, in a country that has been very ready to cut down tall poppies. After a succession of theology books – to name a few, *Threshold of the Future*, *The Prodigal Project*, *Deep Stuff*, *God's Home Page* – Mike wrote

a memoir about his own life with Rosemary, their loss of daughter Polly in the prime of her life, his illness and their long faith journey together. It was called *Until the End*. His death was not of course the end of life for Rosemary who, following his example, published her own fascinating memoir *To Be Fair: Confessions of a District Court Judge* in 2021.

It has been a privilege for me to be asked to write about both the Riddells. Some years ago, they joined forces to produce a play about James K Baxter called *Jerusalem, Jerusalem* which they took to the Edinburgh Festival after it was performed in New Zealand, and locally at the Globe Theatre. I reviewed that production for the *Sunday Star-Times*, and my review of Rosemary's *To Be Fair: Confessions of a District Court Judge* was published in *Landfall Review Online* in April this year.

Rosemary may become the subject of another Connections article. Although the pair worked on many projects together (including a short film *The Cake Tin*, starring Glenaven's Louise Petherbridge) her life story as an actor, director, lawyer then a travelling judge, is uniquely her own.

Helen Watson White