

DUNEDIN METHODIST PARISH

Finding Good in everyone Finding God in everyone

www.dunedinmethodist.org.nz



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PARISH BULLETIN

11 June 2023

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 18 June 2023

09:30 am	Mornington	D Poultney
10:00 am	Mosgiel	E Merrett
11:00 am	Glenaven	D Poultney



Mosgiel MWF enjoyed an afternoon with Julie Roberts telling us about Bibles ~ to ~ Bowls and much, much more. She is such a clever lady whom we really appreciated her coming. Thank you.



Living with Unintended Consequence.

With horror I have watched on television, the utter devastation the flooding has wreaked mainly in the North Island, to a lesser extent in the South. What a catastrophe!!! Some lost their lives in the raging waters, whole communities decimated and families left, not just homeless, but short on answers re their future. A truly life shattering event. No wonder the people are feeling helpless, marooned in a sea of mud and slash with barely a vestige of their past lives to cling to as a symbol of hope. Government and Insurance companies desperately trying to find some kind of solution to help people re-build and retrieve their lives. At the same time, trying to fathom out how to mitigate catastrophes which will undoubtedly happen in the not too distant future. Everyone has an opinion and everyone wants

action yesterday! Understandably!! People are growing weary and frustrated with the time it is taking to get answers, not to mention action. If I were in that situation, I too would be equally angry, frustrated and stressed to the 'max'.

I don't envy the government, any government in this dilemma. They will be 'damned if they do, and damned if they don't.... no matter what party happens to be in power. Criticism is all too easy when watching from the sidelines, without responsibility and the full picture. It's going to take years to remediate this ghastly situation. As far as the upcoming elections go, the politicians would need to be very, very cautious about what they wish for. It could well turn out to be more than any of them bargained for.

In the meantime, the flood victims watch and wait. Clearing up what is possible; backbreaking, soul-destroying work. The social implications of such an event are far-reaching and the people involved will bear the scars for their lifetimes. People are living with the unintended consequences of 'out of control' human activity. Hope must, for many, seem futile.

As people of faith, how do we respond to this terrible event? There was no ark for these people to shelter in, no time to notice any rainbow which may have arched across leaden skies, a symbol that God would henceforth not cause such complete devastation. No doves or ravens to herald the healing of drowned pasture and a re-imagined landscape.

We have, however, had many warnings that this could happen. Warnings which we, in our wisdom have at worst totally ignored, at best, made a token effort to try and change how we manage

the land and its resources. God, it seems, is powerless in the face of such hubris.

So where was God in all this devastation? Wouldn't it have been better if it hadn't happened at all!!

I do not believe for one moment that this is a punishment sent from on high to get our attention, although it surely has!! Rather it is a consequence largely borne of human arrogance. We have done much plundering of our resources with little thought to what the outcome might be down the track. Now we are finding out what that outcome can be.

Whoever or whatever you perceive the creating spirit to be, it is ever present in the form of the people who risked life and limb to rescue those in danger of flood water and slip. In the people who so willingly provided nourishment and shelter for those whose homes have been demolished. The creative spirit is in all these loving acts of kindness, no matter how seemingly insignificant or dramatic. It is present in people who labour to bring healing to the earth.

Of course it would have been better if it hadn't happened, but it did. It's a 'wake up' call from a tortured earth. We must surely pay heed to this warning and realise that 'having dominion over', is not a license to continue plundering our planet. The creative spirit which nourishes and cares for all, invites us to be participants in the healing of the earth.

That is our hope, the symbol of which is the rainbow, an overarching embrace of the divine, calling us to healing, and wholeness and new birth, without which the future is indeed

bleak.

Colin Gibson expresses this hope beautifully in his hymn ' Come to our Land'

... Come to our land, come to our hearts
Spirit of life, breath of new birth,
teach us to care, for water and air,
nourish the seed and cherish the earth.

And all our people will sing together;
Wairua Tapu, holy your name,
there's one great spirit in all creation,
one great spirit of God!..

Trish Patrick



Intelligent design?

I was struck by the words in a hymn by Thomas Troeger, *Praise the Source of Faith and Learning*, sung recently at Mornington because it made mention of a concept I have been considering lately, *intelligent design*.

*Praise the source of faith and learning,
that has sparked and stoked the mind,
with a passion for discerning,
how the world has been designed.*

The verse talks about the world being 'designed' which got me thinking of *intelligent design*. The term *intelligent design* refers to a pseudoscientific argument for the existence of God. The idea

is that that the universe and its complex life forms cannot be explained solely by natural causes, and thus an intelligent higher power must have contributed to the origins of the universe. An analogy that has been used for the intelligent design of the world is a clockwork pocket watch – a thing of beauty which is so delicate and intricate that it cannot have arisen by natural processes – therefore there must have been a designer.

William Paley (1743 – 1805), an English clergyman, used the watchmaker analogy in his book *Natural Theology, or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity collected from the Appearances of Nature*, published in 1802. In it, Paley wrote that if a pocket watch is found on a heath, it is most reasonable to assume that someone dropped it and that it was made by at least one watchmaker, not by natural forces. Paley went on to argue that the complex structures of living things and the remarkable adaptations of plants and animals required an intelligent designer. He believed the natural world was the creation of God and showed the nature of the creator. According to Paley, God had carefully designed "even the most humble and insignificant organisms" and all of their minute features.

We, and nature around us, are certainly amazingly intricate awe-inspiring organisms. I am, however, a firm believer in evolution, of how conditions on earth have selected for organisms to develop into complex well adapted life forms. But what is also amazing is that there is so much we cannot explain. For instance, thinking of our human bodies, pretty much every cell in our body contains the same DNA, the same blueprint for our design, yet cells throughout our bodies are so different. Why are some skin cells, some bone cells, why do we develop into the shape we do? When all the cells have the same blueprint, why do they only use

part of it? How do cells arrange themselves to form such complex yet well-defined and generally well-replicated structures? Cells can respond to chemical messages from other cells and to various stimuli, but how do cells respond to the incredibly diverse signals they receive from their environment in a time-dependent way? So many questions!

I return to the hymn by Thomas Troeger and another verse:

*God of wisdom we acknowledge,
that our science and our art,
and the breadth of human knowledge
only partial truth impart.*

This sums it up nicely, all our knowledge of science and art is still only part of the truth and God may well be in the, *why?* of what we know, and in the *how?* of what we have yet to learn.

Richard Cannon