

# 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 September 2023

### WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY 10 September 2023

9.30 am	Mornington	R Mitchell
10:00 am	Mosgiel	D Poultney
11:00 am	Glenaven	S Hamel

**GREG'S PHOTOGRAPHIC DISPLAY in the BOUNDLESS PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION & WORKSHOPS is on September 12th to the 20th in the Dunedin Community Gallery**

**MOSGIEL Spring Flower Service  
10:00am in the church.**

**CHURCH DINNER  
Sunday 10th September 12:30pm  
At "Diggers" restaurant Mosgiel R.S.A.**

**REMINDER  
All reports for Mosgiel's AGM on the 23rd to please be in  
by 10<sup>th</sup> September**



Compassion in action

In the sixth step of “action” in her book, *Twelve steps to a compassionate life*” (New York: Alfred A Knope; 2011) Karen Armstrong notes that as a recently professed nun aged 20 she went to a House of Studies where her new superior was dying of cancer. When her superior’s death was imminent Karen said her goodbye to her but was then called back and told “Sister, when you came, I was told that you might have a problem. But I want you to know that you have never been a trouble to me. *You are a good girl, Sister.* Remember I told you so. Karen said that she had never forgotten it. Karen said that it would have been so easy for her superior to close her eyes with relief as they left the room, take her pain medication, and sink back onto her pillow but she made a valiant effort to reassure her because she could see that she was struggling.

Karen said that this one small act of kindness turned her life around. It stayed with her all her life. In the troubled years that followed she often recalled her superior's word at particularly bleak moments. She said that she thought of them when she felt anything *but* good. Karen considered that we can all create "spots of time" for others and that many of these will be the "little, nameless, unremembered, acts of kindness and love" that the poet Wordsworth claimed to form "that best portion of a good man's life."

Armstrong considered that we are not doomed to an existence of selfishness, because we have the ability, with disciplined, repetitive action, to construct new habits of thought, feeling, and behaviour. If every time we are tempted to say something vile about an annoying sibling, a colleague, an ex-husband, or a country with whom we are at war, we reflexively ask ourselves "How would I like this said about me and mine?" and refrain we would achieve *ekstasis*, a momentary "stepping outside the egotistically confined self."

**First**, Karen encourages us to make a resolution to act once every day in accordance with the *positive* version of the Golden Rule: "Treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself." This need not be a grand, dramatic gesture; it can be a "little, nameless, unremembered" act that may seem insignificant to you. Perhaps you make a point of giving an elderly relative a call, help your wife with the jobs that need to be done, or take time to listen to a colleague who is anxious or depressed. Look for an opportunity to create a "spot in time" in somebody's life and this awareness will increase as you become more proficient in mindfulness.

**Second**, resolve each day to fulfill the *negative* version of the Golden Rule: "Do not do to others what you would not like them to do to you." Try to catch yourself before you make that brilliantly wounding remark, asking yourself how you would like to be on the receiving

end of such sarcasm — and refrain. Each time you succeed will be an *ekstasis*, a transcendence of self.

**Third**, make an effort once a day to change your thought patterns: if you find yourself indulging in a bout of anger or self-pity, try to channel all that negative energy into a more kindly direction. If you are in a rut of resentment, make an effort to think of something for which you know you should be grateful, even if you do not feel it at the time. If you are hurt by an unpleasant remark, remember that your own anger often issues from pain and that the person who spoke to you so unkindly may also be suffering.

At the end of the day, Karen suggests we reflect on the day to see if we have performed the three actions. When we find we have not done so, she suggests we have compassion on ourselves, smile wryly at our omissions, and resolve to do better tomorrow.

Bruce Spittle