

Opoho Signal

The newsletter of Opoho Presbyterian Church

50 Signal Hill Road, Opoho, Dunedin 9010



Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

February 2023

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Opinions expressed in the *Opoho Signal* are those of individual authors, unless stated otherwise.

Editorial: Theology in Its Place

There is an old story, often told, of a revivalist preacher in Scotland who built up to a vehement declaration, ‘...and there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth!’ Only to be interrupted from the congregation by an anxious, ‘But I ha’e nae teeth!’ Preacher: ‘Teeth will be provided!’

That’s a silly story, but in fact much of what we think of as Christian doctrine had its origin in similar, if less bizarre, situations. Someone in authority was challenged and, instead of saying ‘I/we don’t know’, made a plausible response which was remembered and in time became part of the Christian story. St Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) was often asked formal questions. One was: ‘Is it true that there is a Book in heaven in which the names of the redeemed are recorded?’ (as many believed). Thomas: ‘I do not see any reason why we should believe that there is an actual Book but those who believe this do no harm and should be left in peace.’ It is typical of Thomas, for whom I have a special respect. Somewhere, some time ago, someone had thought of an interesting image that people could relate to – the security of a Book in which the names of the redeemed are permanently recorded. But it had no basis and was not necessary, just part of a clutter of ideas that now confuse rather than help us. There is a nice theological concept in Islam: ‘Not necessary to know’ – it is better, when pressed for answers, to recognise our limited knowledge than to make something up – even if it seems at the time to be apt and helpful.

Two expressions occur often in Thomas’s writing: *derisus infidelium* (the mockery of unbelievers) and *articulus fidei* (the joints of faith – like the joints of our body – that keep our faith integrated and flexible). The ‘Articles of Faith’ people talk about are not chapters in religious journals! To preach what seems nonsense or naïve to the hearers leads to mockery, not faith. The second phrase led Thomas to urge, centuries before the Reformation, a safeguarding of the central truths of our faith by separating out the accumulated mass of often officially recognised ‘church doctrine’. Two things were essential for Thomas. The central truth of the Gospel must be safeguarded and human reason must be allowed space to reflect and explore, not constrained by a mass of ‘official’ doctrine.

All this was for the Gospel. On his way to the Council of Lyons and, fearing he might be made a cardinal, Thomas asked God to let him die if his work as teacher and preacher was to end. Unwell on the journey, he took refuge in a Cistercian monastery where he was cared for and his last days carefully recorded. He received the last rites before commending himself to Jesus: ‘Jesus for the love of whom I have studied, for the love of whom I have lain awake keeping vigil at night, for the love of whom I have given lectures and preached...’ Study, prayer and teaching – the life of a Dominican

preaching friar, called to take the Christian message outside the churches and monasteries, to where people gathered. It was recorded that, ‘He kept the fine points for the school (the University of Paris), to the people he gave solid instruction, suited to their capacity.’

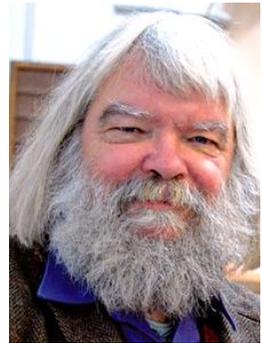
The task of theology is two-fold. Firstly, it can help us organise what we know and believe (as grammar helps us to organise the language we use). Secondly it is a tool to challenge what we believe: is it consistent with what we know of God and coherent with what else we know and believe? A 20th century Dominican theologian, Edward Schillebeeckx, described Thomas as ‘... a saint also in his rational thinking. And our rational and technological age, above all our Western culture today, has special need of such saints.’ As we contemplate the rampant irrationality abroad in this new century the need grows ever more urgent to clear our minds of what no longer makes sense for us and our contemporaries and seek for what is true.

Simon Rae

Many readers will have seen the *Together at Christmas* festive concert from Westminster Abbey, hosted by the Princess of Wales, and broadcast on Christmas Day. By request of the King, it included the following poem by Malcolm Guite, read by Dame Kristin Scott Thomas. Malcolm Guite (*below right*, born 1957) is an English poet, singer-songwriter, Anglican priest, and academic based in Cambridge.

Refugee

We think of him as safe beneath the steeple,
Or cosy in a crib beside the font,
But he is with a million displaced people
On the long road of weariness and want.
For even as we sing our final carol
His family is up and on that road,
Fleeing the wrath of someone else’s quarrel,
Glancing behind and shouldering their load.
Whilst Herod rages still from his dark tower
Christ clings to Mary, fingers tightly curled,
The lambs are slaughtered by the men of power,
And death squads spread their curse across the world.
But every Herod dies, and comes alone
To stand before the Lamb upon the throne.



Parish Council News

The final (brief) meeting of the Parish Council for 2022 was held on 15 December – and was followed by dessert. The Council decided to have a retreat in February, separate from the usual monthly meeting, to discuss plans for the parish for the new year.

Gregor Macaulay on behalf of the Parish Council

Property and Finance Committee Update

Our final meeting for 2022 had us enjoying ice cream in cones as we each reflected on our activities over the year and plans looking forward. No pressure, however – the task was for each of us to identify something we felt proud of and what we'd like to achieve in 2023.



Here's a summary of our discussion; there were so many things all of us could have added to this list but the rules were limited to the one thing that "floats your boat".

- Judy – having Sanel join our committee and looking at further streamlining of the accounts system and reporting

- John – new chairs in the Morrison Lounge and forming a ginger group to look at future and feasibility plans
- Clare – the grounds and painting the office, top room, and Morrison Lounge
- Michael – the functioning church bell and internet and screen for Morrison Lounge
- Benjamin – garden and painting inside and out
- Miriam – Gisela's rug on the church wall and new members joining our committee

Achievements over the previous month included: nesting tables donated for Morrison Lounge, small cushion for new chairs (four more needed), bag in Morrison Lounge for sun hats for Fellowship Group and others on those sunny days, mural on garden back wall washed down, cobwebs cleared from high ledges, further garden developments on Farquharson Street garden.

We are planning a working bee early in 2023 but would welcome you weeding a small patch of garden at any time to keep our grounds moving forward.

Please let us know of any health safety or maintenance issues and ideas.

Miriam Vollweiler (Committee convener)

Donations to Opoho Presbyterian Church

Thank you to all those who participate in the life of our church and help make it possible to support its work. If you are not already an electronic donor through online banking and would like to donate in this way, the details are:

ANZ bank, Opoho Presbyterian Deacons' Court;

Account Number: 06 0909 0010868 000.

Please put your name and the word Donation in the data fields. It would be helpful if you could let our Treasurer, Judy Rodda, know, so that receipts for charitable donations can be sent to you. Her email is [Judith L Rodda opohopcbusiness@gmail.com](mailto:Judith.L.Rodda@opohopcbusiness@gmail.com)

As well as regular outgoings there are maintenance items on the building and grounds which we will be seeking to raise funds for over the next few years. If you are interested in supporting these, please be in touch.

We acknowledge that people's circumstances are personal, and that they vary over time and with things that happen in our lives. It is important to know that there will be times when it is appropriate to reduce your giving to the church, and you do not need to apologise for doing that.

The income and expenditure of the church is examined each month by the Property and Finance Committee and reported to the Parish Council. The church's financial year runs to the end of June and an annual budget is presented to the congregation at the Annual Meeting. Thank you.

Property and Finance Committee



Community Carols

We were fortunate to get a warm sunny day for our community carol service on the afternoon of 11 December and what a great vibe it had. Clare's sidewalk chalk invite and postings on the Opoho and Valley Facebook pages along with a leaflet drop had about 50 singers of all ages attending. Benjamin (who had previously put up Christmas trees and other decorations in the hall and Morrison Lounge) rang the bell to commence proceedings and Abby had us all confidently singing old and familiar tunes with David on the piano and Philip and Kirk on guitars. People stayed for a cup of tea and Abby's Jam Palace did a brisk trade (last count 43 jars, netting \$260). We had a koha of \$154 for the hospice and a marvellous donation of items for the food bank. The smiles on people's faces, the joy of singing, and the sense that this event is the model for an annual celebration with our community is something that "warms the cockles of our soul". Thank you to Anne Marie and Gretchen from the Opoho community who helped in the kitchen.

Miriam Vollweiler (whose idea it was – thank you Miriam!)

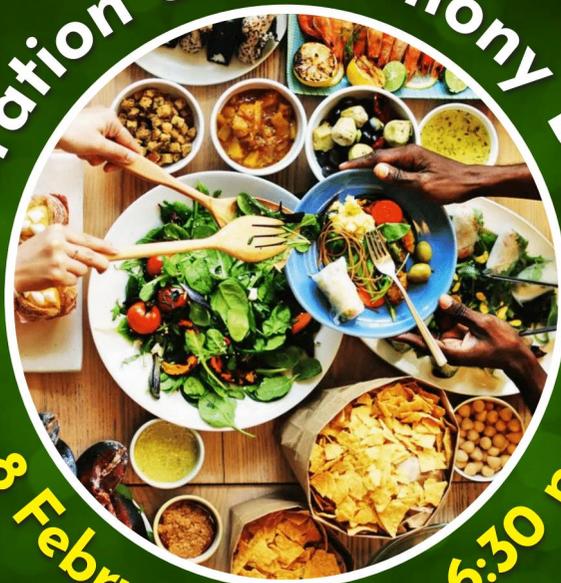




WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK
The Official UN Observance in the 1st Week of February

Celebration of Harmony Dinner

8 February 2023 - 6:30 pm



VEGETARIAN POTLUCK: Bring a vegetarian meal or dessert to share
WHANAU-FRIENDLY: Face-painting and other activities will be provided
FEATURING: Musical items, guest speakers readings, and more.

Everyone is Welcome!

Organised by the Dunedin Interfaith Council.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
14 Fenton Crescent, St Clair, Dunedin

Poems Prayers Psalms & Prose – Opoho Writers’ Group

Wednesday 15 March, 7 p.m.

Marine Science tea room,
first floor, **310 Castle Street.**



Directions:

310 Castle Street is a square brick building (the old nurses’ home) located almost on the corner of Frederick Street and the one-way south, between Cumberland and Hayward Colleges. You can park in the spots between Cumberland and Marine Science. There is an entry on the south side of the building, facing Cumberland’s front door. A large propellor is stuck to the wall next to it, so you can’t miss it!

I will meet you there at 7 and let you in.

The tea room has cups, plates, tea, coffee-like powder, milk, sugar, and hot water. Maybe bring a small plate of something to share.

You can reach me on 027-606-3552 if there is any problem or question.

Abby Smith

Keeping in Touch at Opoho Church

Opoho Church has a website, www.opohochurch.org, where you will find (among other things) links to recent sermons, downloadable copies of the Orders of Service for the two most recent Sundays, downloadable versions of the newsletter, and an on-line version of the Church Calendar.

The church also has a Facebook page (you don’t need to belong to Facebook to see the page) www.facebook.com/OpohoChurch

This newsletter is emailed to all who have requested to receive it this way. If you are not already on the email list, and would like to be, please send an email to the editor, Gregor Macaulay, at gregor.macaulay@outlook.com

Fellowship Group

Our Christmas Fellowship gathering is always special and that on 8 December was no exception as the photos below show. In part this is due to the welcoming and wonderful effort Chris Young puts in to hosting us all and serving up an afternoon tea of our dreams. It's also special because we have got to know each other so well over the year as we have taken turns to share our life stories. We discussed our plans and views about Christmas and stretched our brains and memories with a quiz that covered everything from Selwyn Toogood and Barton's Butchers to the history of the Morrison Lounge.





We have a range of plans for our monthly gatherings in 2023 and look forward to our first meeting at 2 p.m. on Thursday 9 February, in the Morrison Lounge. All are welcome.

An important part of Fellowship Group meetings is our participation in the Fellowship of the Least Coin, as we give our least coins at each meeting.

*The praying hands lotus, symbol of
the Fellowship of the Least Coin*



Andrea Johnston and Miriam Vollweiler

Operation Cover Up

Thanks to those who keep knitting squares and donating wool. So far seven blankets have been completed since July which is great. Please keep knitting those squares. Donations of wool gratefully accepted too. Contact me if you have any questions at 027 473 6026 or weavermariane@gamil.com



Marian Weaver

Lectionary for February and March

Sunday 5 February – 5th Sunday after the Epiphany			
Is 58: 1-9a (9b-12)	Ps 112: 1-9 (10)	1 Cor 2: 1-12 (13-16)	Mt 5: 13-20
Sunday 12 February – 6th Sunday after the Epiphany			
Deut 30:15-20	Ps 119: 1-8	1 Cor 3: 1-9	Mt 5: 21-37
Sunday 19 February – Transfiguration			
Ex 24: 12-18	Ps 2 <i>or</i> Ps 99	2 Peter 1: 16-21	Mt 17: 1-9
Wednesday 22 February – Ash Wednesday			
Joel 2: 1-2 12-17 <i>or</i> Is 58: 1-12	Ps 51: 1-17	2 Cor 5: 20b-6: 10	Mt 6: 1-6, 16-21
Sunday 26 February – 1st Sunday in Lent			
Gen 2: 15-17 3: 1-7	Ps 32	Rom 5: 12-19	Mt 4: 1-11
Sunday 5 March - 2nd Sunday in Lent			
Ps 121	Ps 121	Ps 121	Ps 121
Sunday 12 March - 3rd Sunday in Lent			
Ps 95	Ps 95	Ps 95	Ps 95
Sunday 19 March - 4th Sunday in Lent			
Ps 23	Ps 23	Ps 23	Ps 23
Sunday 26 March - 5th Sunday in Lent			
Ps 130	Ps 130	Ps 130	Ps 130

A New Year, a New Colour

The pink has gone from the Minister's office, replaced by $\frac{1}{4}$ Spanish Cream.

No-one is sure how these two came to be trusted with paint.



The James Webb Telescope 2



The James Webb telescope is a technical marvel. It can tell the physical make-up of a planet far away. It was looking for exo-planets, planets that can be seen to traverse their star. The planet in question was *wasp-39b* and the Webb Telescope was able to tell that its

atmosphere contained a measurable amount of carbon dioxide.

Astronomers do not think that *wasp-39b* is capable of supporting life. There are two reasons: it is much too close to its sun and thus very hot, and there was a lack of methane in its atmosphere. It is thought that both these chemicals must be present for there to be any question of life on a planet.

The Webb telescope will be looking at nearly a 100 of these planets in the coming months. And who knows what it will find?

Jane Anderson

Coming Events at Opoho Presbyterian Church

5 February ~ Sunday	10 a.m.: Worship, the Rev. Clare Lind, Communion
6 February ~ Monday	Waitangi Day – public holiday
8 February ~ Wednesday	7.30 p.m.: Property and Finance Committee, Morrison Lounge
9 February ~ Thursday	2 p.m.: Fellowship Group, Morrison Lounge 7.30 p.m.: Christian Development Committee, Morrison Lounge
12 February ~ Sunday	10 a.m.: Worship, Simon Rae and Gregor Macaulay
16 February ~ Thursday	7.30 p.m.: Parish Council, Morrison Lounge
18 February ~ Saturday	1.30 p.m.: Parish Council Retreat, Morrison Lounge
19 February ~ Sunday	10 a.m.: Worship, the Rev. Clare Lind
20 February ~ Monday	Material due for March <i>Opoho Signal</i>
26 February ~ Sunday	10 a.m.: Worship, the Rev. Clare Lind, Harvest Thanksgiving
5 March ~ Sunday	10 a.m.: Worship, the Rev. Clare Lind, Quarterly Communion
8 March ~ Wednesday	7.30 p.m.: Property and Finance Committee, Morrison Lounge
9 March ~ Thursday	2 p.m.: Fellowship Group, Morrison Lounge
12 March ~ Sunday	10 a.m.: Worship, Abby Smith
15 March ~ Wednesday	7 p.m.: Poems Prayers Psalms and Prose – a friendly writing group, 310 Castle Street
16 March ~ Thursday	7.30 p.m.: Parish Council, Morrison Lounge
19 March ~ Sunday	10 a.m.: Worship, the Rev. Clare Lind
20 March ~ Monday	Otago Anniversary Day Material due for March <i>Opoho Signal</i>
26 March ~ Sunday	10 a.m.: Worship, the Rev. Clare Lind

Deadline for next *Opoho Signal* – Monday 20 February

Please send all material for the next *Opoho Signal* to
Gregor Macaulay, 88 Forfar Street, Mornington, Dunedin 9011,
email gregor.macaulay@outlook.com