

### **Views from the Pews - Old and New**

Those of you familiar with Dunedin may have noticed several cathedral spires on the central city horizon. On a recent visit, one caught my attention, lit up against the night sky, with its aspirational beauty. Two years prior, it was encased with scaffolding, for earthquake reinforcement.

Walking past the next day, I noticed a new, modern sculpture, now sited in the grounds. The juxtaposition of ancient and modern struck me on two counts. Firstly, decision makers had deemed this old cathedral worthy of protection. By being proactive, they have possibly prevented it suffering irreparable damage and falling into disrepair. Over time it could have then ceased to form part of Dunedin's city landscape and the lives of its residents and visitors.

You could ask would this matter? While I appreciate that earthquake proofing carries a significant cost, I believe "yes" it does matter. In 1 Kings 5-8 we read that Solomon believed in fulfilling his destiny in the building of the temple to glorify God, and the importance of its visibility and integration into the lives of the Israelites. He also believed it reminded Israel's enemies of who was that nation's protector.

For us, "out of sight" eventually leads to "out of mind", and over time Christian faith would cease to be a conscious part of New Zealand's religious heritage. In a post-modernist world, removal of sacred spaces creates a void, which may invariably be filled with something less beneficial. This rationale can also be applied to other aspects of a civilized society, gradually leading to our cultural impoverishment.

Secondly, the new sculpture is significant, resembling a mature mustard tree. This spoke to me of God, creating and making all things new, and bringing his children to maturity.

The question then, is "Are we open to this maturing work of God, in a way that leads us to eagerly share our faith with the unchurched, as well as nurturing others in our midst, who are new to faith?"

Last year an immature pear tree, grafted from very old root stock, was donated to the cathedral. It was intentionally planted towards the sun to encourage strong, upright growth. Our cathedral community, 'planted' on Pukerangiora, has, over years, put down deep roots into God. Our ongoing maturity and subsequent fruit bearing is therefore dependent on how strongly we are grafted onto God, the source of all life.

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