

Portobello Spiritualist Church

PRESIDENTS ADDRESS 2011

Good evening. It is a pleasure to see so many of you here in the church. I'm not going to say too much about the year that has passed since our last AGM as others will touch on church events but rather I'd like to take you behind the scenes if I could put it like that. If you were to ask people what we do in the church the first thing they would probably mention is the "messages", evidence of survival and the "addresses" from the platform, provided by the many mediums who serve the church. They might also mention the excellent work done by the Healers in the church or Development if they are in the Circles. But that is only part of the picture and I'd like to give you a little glimpse of the pastoral work of the church.

Often this is the side only seen when required and then only by those directly involved. There are the happy events when babies are named and weddings take place. Then there are the sadder occasions when people pass to Spirit and relatives must be helped by the minister for the funeral services. Sometimes the people are well known faces and attend the church on a regular basis sometimes the church connection is through parents or Grannies but all need the church at such times.

But there is yet another aspect to the church. If people have an enquiry or something is puzzling them about the Spirit world or they are not well, feel lonely and just want a little chat with a friendly voice or have a need to feel they matter to someone, they phone this church. Many times they are people who don't attend the church or attend very infrequently or have once visited, twenty years ago, but never the less they too need the church at such times.

And then there are those members who for various reasons can no longer visit the church but want to keep in touch as they have such fond memories and feel they still have a connection with us. Some keep in touch from other towns in this country for example, Moira MacKinlay who with her husband ran Windygates Church for many years, sends us good wishes for tonight. But some messages come from further a field, Bettina Bartel from Germany, who is revisiting us next week, and many of you will remember Kim and Celia Pritchard and their two sons who were named in the church, they keep in touch from New Zealand. More recently Avril Johnstone-Craig, now in Australia, forwards news and I'm going to tell you a little story passed onto me by Avril.

A man and his dog were walking along a road. The man was enjoying the scenery when suddenly it occurred to him that he was dead. He remembered dying and that the dog walking beside him had been dead for years. He wondered where the road was leading them.

Eventually, they came to a high stone wall along one side of the road. It looked like fine white marble. At the top of a long hill, it was broken by a tall arch that glowed in the sunlight. When he was standing before it, he saw a magnificent gate in the arch that looked like mother of pearl and that the street that lead to the gate looked like pure gold.

As he and the dog walked toward the gate he saw a man so he called out, “Excuse me where are we?” “This is Heaven, sir,” the man answered. “Wow would you happen to have some water?” the man asked. “Of course, sir, come right in and I’ll have some iced water brought up” The man gestured and the gate began to open. “Can my friend the dog, come in too?” the traveller asked.” I’m sorry sir, but we don’t accept pets”

The man thought a moment and then turned away and continued on the road he had been going with his dog. After another long walk and at the top of another hill he came to a dirt road leading through a farm gate that looked as if it had never been closed. As he approached the gate he saw a man leaning against a tree, “Excuse me!” he called to the man, “Do you have any water? Yes there’s a well over there come on in.” How about my friend here?” the traveller gestured to his dog. “There should be a bowl by the well help yourselves” said the man

After the traveller and the dog had drunk until they were full, he asked the man, “What do you call this place?” “This is heaven,” was the answer. “Well that’s confusing there’s a place down the road that was Heaven as well”. “Oh, said the man, you mean the place with the pearly gates? Nope that’s hell.” “Doesn’t it make you mad that they use your name like that?” asked the traveller. “No we’re just happy that they screen out the folks who would leave their best friends behind

As Avril said when you are very busy but still want to keep in touch you forward e-mails. So for the folks who need this church and in recognition of all the work seen and unseen, by an incredibly able, well qualified and experienced team of volunteers, just for tonight I’m going to tweak our motto a little. Instead of “Onward ever Onward” I going to say “Forward ever Forward” because as Avril said in her e-mail “a forward lets you know you are still remembered, you are still important, you are still loved and you are still cared for.” Long may our church live up to such a motto.

June