



Sea of Faith – Dunedin

Exploring Meaning in Life

Newsletter MAY 2017



We Start With...

A two minute period of silence - a moment of peace.

From the 'Chair'

At our next meeting we are to hear from Derek McCullough, the minister with the Unitarian Universalist congregation in Christchurch. Unitarian Universalism is found in seventeen countries, and is particularly strong in the USA and Canada; there are UU communities in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Blenheim.

I have found people who have belonged to a UU church before coming to New Zealand, and not living in one of the above cities, have found their local Sea of Faith to meet some of their beliefs and needs.

We extend a warm welcome to all who would be interested to know more about Unitarian Universalism to join us at our May meeting, to hear from Derek and join our discussion.

Gretchen

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Derek McCullough is the Minister of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Christchurch. He writes:

Unitarian Universalism (UU) in its modern form came into being in 1961 with the merger of the Unitarians and the Universalists. The roots of both traditions reach back to the first century of the Common Era. Our Unitarian side of the family maintained the unity of God and the humanity of Jesus (as compared to the trinity of God) and the use of reason in the development

and articulation of faith. The Universalist side of the family believed that God is Love and that a loving God would not condemn anyone to eternal damnation in hell. As such they became known as the *No-Hell Church*. The inclusive, hopeful and liberal spirit of those early spiritual insights continue to find expression in the Unitarian Universalist affirmation of the inherent worth and dignity of every person. Life is a gift, and the meaning in our lives is found in the way we live and the commitments of heart, mind and spirit that we make here, in this great, green world.

We believe in religious freedom and the right and responsibility of each person to explore what he or she truly believes to be good and true and

Unitarian Universalism

Derek McCullough

Thursday, 25th MAY

**St John's Church Hall,
Cnr Wright Street
& Highgate**

Tea and Coffee
will be available from 5.30pm

**The programme will start at
6.00pm**

Contribution - \$5

beautiful. Unitarian Universalism upholds the free and responsible search for truth and meaning and will not be constrained in our faith by arbitrary and unchanging doctrines and dogmas. We, therefore, are a creedless tradition in which participation and membership in a congregation is not contingent upon one's assent to a particular formulation or understanding of "The Truth." Rather we covenant to walk together as we worship, discover, explore and seek to deepen and apply our commitments and beliefs to the realities and practicalities of life in the 21st century.

In our Sunday worship services and religious education opportunities for children and adults, we draw upon the wisdom of many religions and cultures. Buddhism and Christianity, Judaism and Earth-centered spiritualities, religious humanism and Islamic mysticism all are grist for the soul's mill. All are human expressions of people's encounter with the divine, the meaningful, the core.

In my talk I will look at the principles of UU, the source of those principles, and take a brief look at some of our influential forebears, such as Michael Servetus, Francis David, Joseph Priestly, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and particularly our own Sir Robert Stout.

The Reformation

Thanks to everyone for making last month's meeting so productive. It is a huge topic and in Germany the commemorations are going on for ten years – making it a longer period than we are devoting to commemorating the first Great War.

New Zealand didn't escape the consequences of the Reformation and as the early European settlers came here, they brought with them their traditions, religions, friendship groups (such as Freemasons, Gardeners, Foresters, Buffaloes, Independent Order of Oddfellows and so on – there were over 1200 of those societies in Otago and Southland in the early days).

One big influence was religion – Presbyterians, Anglicans and Roman Catholics all had their own very strong ideas about how life should be lived, how schools should be set up and run, what should be taught and what people should do on Sundays as well as how much of the weekly wage should go to the church. Before the days of the welfare state, the churches were the source of much social welfare but we now have a new philosophy that it is the duty of the state to look after its citizens and we pay taxes to expect that that be done. Churches continue to minister to society as far as possible both spiritually and with food parcels, counselling services and the like but looking after the citizenship is a far bigger job than any church could undertake – even if they all unified.

In Dunedin we have Presbyterian, Anglican and Roman Catholic schools as well as state schools. It costs more to send a child to a semi-private school and in England the children's test scores from religious schools usually top the ratings. We all know that our schools are very proud of their ratings and the state schools do exceptionally well here in the city.

There is very keen competition on the rugby field as religion often plays a part in team membership – it does too in football in the great English cities of Glasgow (Celtic and Rangers), Liverpool (Everton and City), Manchester (United and City).

I was recently corrected by a friend who said that he regarded himself as Catholic rather than Roman Catholic – the spirit of the Reformation lives on.

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