

We Start With...

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

Our Last Meeting

At the August meeting Marjorie Spittle reminded us our Sea of Faith group has a long history of discussing euthanasia. She read a paragraph from a presentation by Roberta Higham, whose wisdom is as relevant now as it was nearly ten years ago, and David Kitchingman gave us a piece he had written in 2015.

Marjorie provided an overview of David Seymour's bill, which will be debated next year if he is returned to parliament at the election. From our discussion, it seems there is a gulf between what we want for ourselves, and our loved ones, and what we'd wish to see in an Act of Parliament. The latter is a really vexed issue, and needs lots of debate between people such as ourselves, as well as in the Select Committee process. We will watch, and discuss, with interest.

The morning after Marjorie brought us up to date, the Opinion Page of the ODT carried a Faith and Reason piece by Ken Bragan which for me progressed the debate. He suggested that, in cases of extreme suffering, a person's spirit can be broken and they long to die. A society-sanctioned way to end the suffering could be acceptable, even desirable. On the other hand, others can experience extreme suffering yet retain their strength of spirit. For them euthanasia, or assisted dying, may not be appropriate. While we could take such an important consideration into account for ourselves, or our loved ones, this would not be at

all easy to legislate for. Ken's piece is at <https://www.odt.co.nz/opinion/loaded-words-must-not-be-used>

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Next Meeting

On 7th January 2015, an attack was carried out at the offices of the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo. It was in response to cartoons published by the magazine which portrayed Allah in a way offensive to some Muslim radicals. They killed 12 and injured 11 others. A refusal to accept the violence and an expression

Freedom of Speech

Discussion led by

Alan Jackson

Thursday, 28th SEPTEMBER

**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

of solidarity with all those around the world who prize freedom of expression came into our vocabulary “*Je Suis Charlie*”. World leaders and millions of others used the phrase, and marches were held around the world in support of freedom of speech.

This was not the first time extremists had reacted violently to cartoons. A Danish newspaper published 12 cartoons in 2005 – later demonstrations led to 200 deaths (according to an estimate in *Wikipedia*).

In May 2017 Stephen Fry and *Radio Telefis Eireann* were investigated by Irish police after an interview on a TV show in which he asked “Why should I respect a mean-minded, stupid god who creates a world so full of injustice and pain? Because the god who created this universe, if it was created by God, is quite clearly a maniac, an utter maniac, totally selfish. We have to spend our lives on our knees thanking him. What kind of god would do that?”

The host of the programme, Gay Byrne, said that Stephen hadn’t wished to cause offence. But that’s what the internet is for, controversy, debate and people’s opinions.”

The police dropped the investigation because there were no injured parties.

In recent times, the visit to New Zealand by the Dalai Lama attracted opposition from China. The University of Otago and the Dunedin City Council came under huge pressure to prevent him from speaking, and the Mayor had to plead alternate engagements and deputise Counsellor Jinty McTavish to hold the interview which was held in a Town Hall packed with New Zealanders (including several of you and me) who were keen to hear what the Peacemaker had to say.

Very recently there has been a Palestinian Christian speaker whose visit to New Zealand has been opposed strongly by Zionists. He spoke about the possibilities of peace and the two-state solution for Palestine – Israel.

In a play Henrik Ibsen showed how a medical doctor with evidence which might harm the economic welfare of the community (but likely cause harm to visitors by drinking the polluted waters from the spa town) might be denied the right to bring his views to the attention of the community – and the doctor was labelled *An Enemy of the People*.

We have some famous whistle-blowers; Karen Silkwood who investigated problems at a nuclear power plant (immortalised in the film bearing her name), Chelsea Manning, Edward Snowden, Julian Assange are all well-known names. If you Google “Whistle-blower” you will see a huge list of people who have opposed cover-ups. They are vigorously opposed by those (mostly in power) who would wish their actions to remain secret.

The investigation into the US-Vietnam war by the US Department of Defense was leaked by Daniel Ellsberg and led to an accusation in 1971 by *The New York Times* that the Johnson administration had lied to Congress and the public.

Everyone remembers Watergate – the Democratic National Committee headquarters which was broken into in 1972 during the reign of President Richard Nixon. He resigned as a result of the revelations by *The Washington Post*.

Prof David Tombs highlighted the CIA lies to Senate over torture in a recent Archibald Baxter Memorial lecture.

Openness, the right to know – freedom to speak, where do we draw the line?

This is the topic for the month.

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