

### **We Start With...**

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

### **Our Next Meeting**

Our November meeting is the last before Christmas, and this is a sharing time. We suggest you bring along something about Christmas you would like to share: a song, or hymn, or poem, a short story – maybe from your youth, or one you enjoy reading to a grandchild – or else a personal anecdote about Christmas. We have taken to starting our meetings with a time of sharing, and ask you to consider a favourite Christmas, and tell us something of that.

### **Gretchen**

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### **Our Last Meeting**

At our October meeting David Kitchingman drew our attention to the emotions that go with our own experience of spirituality. We each had the opportunity to talk about our early religious (or other) upbringing, and to talk about the feelings we still hold about that time.

### **Christmas Time**

The Christmas meetings are often nostalgic – most of remember the “true” meaning which we have brought from our Sunday school days. There is modern argument about the exact date on which Jesus was born but when offset by the wealth of what he taught and did during his lifetime, that’s a minor detail.

The Dunedin City Library has a collection of Christmas-themed resources in an exhibition

which opens on 17<sup>th</sup> November, just about a week before our November meeting. Those of you who can manage to see it, will have even more to contribute at our last meeting for the year.

### **Heresy – 50 years on**

The commemoration of the 1967 heresy trials involving (now) Emeritus Professor Sir Lloyd Geering which preceded conference showed just how far the mainstream of faith has travelled since then. The views of Bishop John Robinson in “*Honest to God*” have also largely become mainstream. We arrived in this country in 1970 and it seemed everyone was talking about Lloyd’s “trial” – the tumult and the shouting

## **Christmas Thoughts**

### **All Contributing**

**Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> NOVEMBER**

**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***

have died down and there isn't the same level of interest in theological debate since then. It seems that an opportunity was lost.

Lloyd spoke for an hour about the thinking of that time, how it was really mainstream in the seminaries but news to the public in the pews (one has to ask why?) and he spoke of his detractors with no acrimony.

### **Conference 2017**

We learned that our Web Master and National Newsletter Editor Noel Cheer will likely not see another conference. Many of us wrote letters to him by way of encouragement and thanks and I'm sure we all hope that those thoughts will bring peace and knowledge of a job very well done. His memory will be accompanied by smiles, laughs and admiration for his thorough preparation of the TV interviews he did on Triangle Television (talk about broadcasting on the smell of the proverbial oily rag), the content of the bi-monthly Newsletters and his chairing of "The Panel" at the end of every conference.

I had the chance to say a private thank you to Sir Lloyd for the inspiration and spiritual guidance that he has given me over the last almost 20 years. The clarity of his writings has made a lot of sense to a confused world for me. I have bought many of his books, CDs and DVDs and read heaps of his papers which are freely available on the Sea of Faith web site. I do hope that others will write to him to convey their feelings. Sir Lloyd will be 100 next February.

Lloyd was the main keynote and in an address of an hour at the lectern, he covered the sweep of beliefs before during and after the 1517 Reformation and brought us up to date to the present. His view is that whilst some churches are growing with evangelistic fervour, many of them seem to be inward looking, somewhat selfish and don't hold long-term appeal.

So far as fundamentalist Islam is concerned, it is a nuisance as it is associated with seemingly senseless violence but because it really just

wants to turn the clock back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century it is not dealing with the issues of the present and thus doesn't have a lot to offer us in coping with a future which involves stem cells, embryo modification, cryogenics, digital connectivity, space exploration, climate change and environmental destruction.

Conference gave Lloyd a long and thoroughly justified standing ovation.

### **Freedom of Speech**

At the September meeting we discussed freedom of speech. How timely was that? This week the New Zealand Listener Editorial leads with the same theme.

"...a hate speech from Iranian Embassy first secretary Hormoz Ghahremani was reported as giving an inflammatory anti-Israeli address at a mosque meeting at which others called for the annihilation of Israel and denied the holocaust".

This is not the New Zealand way and we repudiate totally all race-hate language by anyone.

The editorial concludes that whilst we should "deplore hate-speakers we also have to accept that banning or over-shouting them will not silence them, let alone change their views. Only free speech, goodwill and truth can do that".

Other diplomats who have demonstrated behaviours which are anathema to us have been recalled. It would be good to think that this diplomat was expelled from New Zealand for that – as a lesson and a statement about where we stand.

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