

We Start With...

A two minute period of silence. Some people call that contemplation, others meditation, others call it prayer. Whatever you call it, it is a moment of peace.

From the ‘Chair’

Your committee took a momentous decision last month, to change our meeting from an early evening meeting with a light meal, to the earlier timing of 3 – 5 pm with tea and biscuits at 3pm and the meeting from 3.30 – 5 pm. Numbers at our meetings are tending smaller, particularly in the winter months, and we need to cut our cloth accordingly.

We have some wonderful speakers, and we are hoping the earlier timing will encourage more members to attend. David Tombs’ exposition of the place of religion in the history and current situation in Northern Ireland was masterly. It gave confirmation, to those who haven’t met him before, that he will be a worthy and important successor to Andrew Bradstock as the second Professor of Theology and Public Issues.

Amy Armstrong, our July speaker, is another Dunedin treasure. She has recently moved from campus ministry to a wider role in the Catholic diocese of Dunedin, one including adult formation as well as student pastoral care. She will talk about these roles and about Pope Francis, including his ‘environmental’ encyclical. Amy is a thoughtful and engaging person, and should expand our understanding of one of the world’s great faiths

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Archibald Baxter

A few months ago I wrote “watch this space” for news about the memorial. We have a site, in front of the Otago Museum. The Dunedin City Council couldn’t have been more helpful, the Museum Team is fully supportive and the University is right behind the project. Supporters have been asked for donations and over the past few weeks around \$13 000 has been donated. Of course it will take a lot more but now we have asked the local artists, sculptors, landscape designers to rack their brains on designs for the memorial and in less than three months we shall have three designs short-listed. Keep watching.

An interview with

**Amy Armstrong,
Catholic Pastoral Leader**

Thursday, 23rd JULY

**Highgate Church buildings,
Maori Hill
Tea and Coffee will be available
From 3pm**

NEW TIME

**The programme will start
at 3.30pm**

Contribution - \$4

Last Meeting

David Tombs gave us a brilliant display of listening when he asked us at the start of the meeting what questions had we brought to the meeting and what things had we heard about Ireland, peace, violence etc. That gave us all a chance to give a point of view which he then wove into his excellent talk about the background to the violence in Ireland and the peace making that has taken place there.

He did say that reconciliation is a further step in the process and there is still a lot to be done on that front.

As I understand it, one of the Irish Chiefs, in about 1167, had been ousted for taking the wife of another chief. He asked the King of England for help in regaining his kingdom and Henry II sent an army of Normans (they had won the Battle of Hastings in 1066 and conquered England) to help. That was probably the starting point.

Can you think of any other historic conflicts caused by the love of a man for someone else's wife?

Funerals

Earlier in the year we thought about plans for a funeral – do you make your own and plan for the funeral you would like or leave it to the folk left behind working on the assumption that since you are not there, the event is of no further interest to you?

This last week I was involved with the arrangements of a funeral of a friend and was mightily pleased to find that she had left a folder containing items of poetry, favourite music to play and memory sticks with photographs to be projected etc. She was very clear that there was to be no mention of God and I think we carried out her wishes. For friends and family left behind, if we had got that part wrong it would have made a mockery of the way she lived her life.

Terror in Tunisia

Again, violent thugs on a killing spree. They have been called 'Islamic State' but the killers don't have a state and most Muslims reject absolutely the violence carried out in the name of their faith. Some argue that we don't call the IRA 'Christian Terrorists' and so the word 'Islamic' should not be used. Boris Johnson (Mayor of London) devotes his column in the *Telegraph* to asking what to call the enemy which threatens our way of life. What do you think?

David Cameron says that 'we should be intolerant of intolerance'. Is that the same as 'fighting fire with fire', or using violence against violence? Gwynne Dyer in the ODT has a contrary view and is always worth reading.

So far as I can gather, there is no 'violence gene'. It is learned behaviour – but as Voltaire said "All that is required for the triumph of evil is that good men sit back and do nothing". (In a PC world he would have said 'people' rather than 'men' as it is up to all of us).

Fortune Theatre Play

By the time most of you read this, the season at the theatre will be half over. This is not a plug to go to see the play (the ODT has already printed a letter of mine encouraging folk to do that) but rather to encourage you to talk to your grandchildren about the issues of bullying and violence in their schools and in the places they 'hang out'. Are there trigger points where it is possible to see a person reaching breaking point? How do they intervene? What part does the cell phone play in all of this? Do they ever turn their cell phone off? What is the implication for them if they do? Who can they trust when they want to talk about life's hard issues?

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