

We Start With...

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

From the ‘Chair’

At our last meeting each year we invite all present to offer their thoughts on a particular word or concept. Prayer and Spirituality have been two recent topics. The range of views gives us food for thought over the summer break ☺

This year, our topic will be ‘**What does Christmas mean to me?**’ and each person at the meeting will be asked for their comment (say 2-5 minutes). It could be thoughts about the Christmas story – from when you were young, or more recently – or about your own Christmas, past or present, or maybe other thoughts on this tradition that is widely celebrated throughout the world, and not only in ‘Christian’ countries.

Do consider coming to this welcoming, low-key, and thoughtful meeting, which we will start with some festive fare,

Gretchen

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At our October meeting, Frances Smithson and I reported back from the Sea of Faith annual conference, where the topic was ‘Responding to an increasingly uncertain future’. In the following discussion we were asked ‘What can we (as individuals) do?’ to which we found some answers:

- Lloyd Geering’s strong recommendation (when he was asked the same question at the conference) was to join and become active in a political party (any party)

- Signing petitions – either on paper or electronically – can be effective particularly if the petition is seen as having strong and rapid support
- Writing to an MP (or the PM) either electronically or – much better – by handwritten letter, was proposed as being particularly effective.

Some days after the meeting I heard from David Kitchingman further on this topic:

Sea of Faith is good at grappling with matters of the greatest import to the future of humanity and the planet. Yet it shies away from any whiff of activism. I can understand such reluctance on most

What Does Christmas Mean To Me?

Everyone

Thursday, 26th NOVEMBER

**Highgate Church buildings,
Maori Hill**

**Tea and Coffee will be available
From 3pm**

NEW TIME

**The programme will start
at 3.30pm**

Contribution - \$4

matters of social policy etc. but I can't help but wonder if there may be a limit to simply acting as a clearing house for approaches to major issues. I assume that the Conference didn't make any substantive resolutions at the end.

David is right on two counts. Sea of Faith has a policy of not taking a stand, or taking action, on behalf of its members – acknowledging that we have members with the widest range of political, religious, and other viewpoints. And he is correct, the Conference didn't make any substantive resolutions at its end.

This is a matter of importance, and events have brought it to the agenda of the National Sea of Faith Steering Committee. We have been invited to add our name, as an organisation, to the Wise Response initiative. This might be seen as an initiative all Sea of Faith members would support – but we need to review our policy first. Part of this review should be to ask members what they think about Sea of Faith taking a stand on some matters, and what those might be.

Indeed, the Wise Response initiative could be exactly such an issue. I summarise their aims, available on their web site:

In the name of all our children and grandchildren we, the undersigned, call on the New Zealand Parliament to face up to this situation now by dispassionately assessing risk levels in the following five areas. Then, if found necessary, and with public input, design coherent, robust cross-party strategies and policies to avert these risks and give future generations the very best chance of security, peace, social justice and opportunity for all.

1. Economic security: the risk of a sudden, deepening, or prolonged financial crisis.

2. Energy and climate security: the risk of continuing our heavy dependence on fossil fuels.

3. Business continuity: the risk exposure of all New Zealand business, including farming, to a lower carbon economy.

4. Ecological security: the risks associated with failing to genuinely protect both land-based and marine ecosystems and their natural processes.

5. Genuine well-being: the risk of persisting with a subsidised, debt-based economy, preoccupied with maximising consumption and GDP.

I'd be interested in your thoughts. We might set aside a little time for discussion at our November meeting, with a view to continuing our discussion next year.

And finally, another way to express your personal concerns about 'our increasingly uncertain future': the Dunedin People's Climate March, on Sunday 29 November, leaves from the Dental School for the Octagon at 1 pm – be there at 12.45, it is expected to be a big march. We will be joining marchers up and down New Zealand and – I think – marchers all over the world, to give the Paris Climate talks the strongest possible message of support for urgent action.

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