



# Sea of Faith – Dunedin

Exploring Meaning in Life

Newsletter **OCTOBER 2016**



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

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

## **From the ‘Chair’**

Our meeting space has been enhanced by a sound system provided by Bruce Spittle, which has the luxury of two microphones – one for the speaker and one to pass to members during discussion and comment. This works very well indeed, and we thank you Bruce.

Very unfortunately, having got ourselves settled with a pleasant venue of good size, with tea/coffee facilities and a good sound system, it seems we will have to move. The Highgate Church staff have advised us that the church needs significant attention re earthquake stability, and their congregation is moving too. Our November meeting may or may not be in the Highgate Church Hall; meetings next year will definitely be elsewhere. Watch this space.

*Gretchen*

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## **Our Next Meeting**

Our guest speaker this month is Dr Najibullah Lafraie. Originally from Afghanistan, where he was Minister of State for Foreign Affairs from 1992-96, Najibullah Lafraie joined the Department of Politics at the University of Otago in July 2002, retiring in December 2015, and he is a research fellow with the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies.

Dr Lafraie will talk to us about Islamic education. He knows we have a special interest in the proposed Islamic school for boys here in

Dunedin, and also in education for girls, so he will have plenty of time for questions. In addition, he is currently in Afghanistan (soon to return to New Zealand) so we may hope he will tell us a little about his visit there.

## **Home Again**

After three months in Europe visiting a number of cities in Ireland, England and Norway I can truly say that I have not seen anywhere that I would rather live than Dunedin. We all know that we have to go away to appreciate what we have at home and I have always believed that to be true of Otago.

We are so lucky to have such a rich range of things from which to choose to be involved and all within close range. I was told today that Dunedin is known as the 12 minute city – taking

## **Islamic Education**

**Dr Najibullah Lafraie**

**Thursday, 27<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER**

**Highgate Church buildings,  
Maori Hill  
Tea and Coffee  
will be available from 5.30pm**

**The programme will start at  
6.00pm**

***Contribution - \$4***

about that long to get from anywhere to your destination.

I am impressed by the number of cyclists I have seen on roads overseas and Oslo caters for them with well-separated cycle lanes. People there also use road skis (long thin skates – always travelling too fast for me to count the number of wheels) driven along with ski poles. They don't seem to have caught on amongst our young folk in Dunedin yet but when they do – look out.

### **Alcohol**

New Zealand is trying to address the issue of harmful drinking. The police spend 18% of their budget dealing with it, and it is a problem in our society that we cannot ignore.

There are several Dunedin premises which supply alcohol whose licence renewals are being opposed by police and university as it is believed that easy availability of the substance encourages its abuse. Certainly police and hospital emergency services will attest to the ridiculously high proportion of incidents they deal with at weekends which are alcohol fuelled – and I'm sure we would all wish to see those events reduced.

In Norway there is a much higher purchase price placed on alcohol (and wages are not correspondingly higher) than here. Only beer can be bought in some supermarkets – no wine or spirits. Any alcohol over 4.3% has to be bought at one of the few state monopoly shops, and I didn't find them attractive places at all. It is not easy to get sets of statistics to compare like with like across the two countries – but certainly as Norwegian high school students approach their final exam time they go on what seems to me to be a crazy (but a long-standing tradition) month of parties and binge drinking – called *The Russ*.

Some university students in Dunedin told me recently that there is a good deal of alcohol-fuelled sex amongst the youngsters here, and sadly the participants are often unable to remember what happened next morning.

Remorse can lead to accusations where it is so difficult to attribute responsibility. People would be well advised never to have sex with a drunken partner in case there are later recriminations.

So what can Sea of Faith members do? We do wish to make an intelligent and useful response to the issue.

In our lives we can ensure we have good accurate information – the *Alcohol Action Group* <http://alcoholaction.co.nz/> produces newsletters which outline happenings in the field; Government policy, industry reaction and so on. We can subscribe to that newsletter and read them so that in our doorstep and supermarket conversations we know what we are talking about.

Doug Selman (from the University of Otago, Canterbury Campus) deals with addiction and is one of our members. He endures constant brickbats from industry and liberals who wish to see more alcohol available and consumed. He is not alone in this as our Vice-Chancellor, Harlene Hayne, comes in for her share too. Neither of those folk are wowsers – but they would like to see people enjoying and controlling their drinking instead of the drink controlling them.

James Connolly (executed by a British firing squad because of his leadership role in the *Easter Rising* of 1916) argued in 1900 that workers in Ireland were drinking because of the oppression by the master classes who were exploiting them. He asked if immediate abstinence by the workers would stop the oppression.

Maybe there is some chime with Connolly in 2016 New Zealand drinking culture.

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