

Sea of Faith

Exploring Values, Meaning and Spirituality

Newsletter

Turning the Tide #5

At the beginning of this year, the Committee set an agenda for exploring how to reverse what appeared to be a worrying decline of the Sea of Faith in New Zealand. Four aspects of our organisation were identified as being useful to focus on, particularly in order to attract new members, including younger members. These were: holding a shorter, more outward-looking conference; strengthening the relationship between local groups and the national organization; reviewing the name Sea of Faith; and improving communications within and beyond the organisation. Here is the latest progress by the Committee on two of these aspects – the conference and the potential change of name.

1. The Conference

The November Christchurch Conference is now appearing on the horizon. Exciting! The abstracts of the four main keynote presentations in this newsletter show that we will be treated to broad stimulation on our ambitious topic *“Transforming Communities: Finding meaning in a consumption-driven world”*. You will notice a particularly favourable registration fee for people under the age of 35 years, which we hope will encourage a good group of younger people to register for the conference and share their view of the modern world with

our aging membership and talk about what gives them happiness and meaning to their lives. The line-up of three keynote presentations (Bronwyn Hayward, David Hanna/Hana Olds, Merv Dickinson) and three introductions to the theme at the outset (Amelia Dewhurst, Catherine McFedries, and Jim Consedine) are eagerly anticipated. There is a rumour that Sir Lloyd Geering may yet put in an appearance to the Conference as well!

2. Reviewing the name Sea of Faith

The Committee has continued to work on this item from the time of the face to face meeting in February through to the current time. The aim remains to bring two really good alternative names to the AGM in November at which time there will be further discussion involving the whole membership, further followed by a two-stage voting process. The first vote will be on which of the two new alternative names is preferred; and the second vote will put that preferred name against the existing Sea of Faith name. Over 100 different names have been submitted to the Committee by various members this year. Over the last few months, while trying to reduce the list down further, three new names were submitted - SOLA (Sea of Life in Aotearoa), Open Minds, and Faith & Reason. These three were considered at our most recent Committee Meeting discussion as part of a group of eight names which also

included Reimagining Religion and The Lloyd Geering Network. Each of these five alternative names were considered in the end to not be as good as the following short-list of three as follows:

Rethinking Religion

SOFIA (Sea of Faith in Aotearoa)

The Quest Network

By the time of the next newsletter in October this short-list will be reduced to two. We welcome members' comments on these three alternative names as we now consider which one to drop in preparation for the November AGM.

The by-line - **Exploring Values, Meaning, and Spirituality** – remains a consensus recommendation by the Committee, for which we have only received positive feedback from members.

We look forward to seeing everyone in Christchurch in November!

All the very best meanwhile in the Sea of Faith.

The Committee 2019

Is There a Future for Religion?

The Auckland Sea of Faith group had Peter Lineham, the recently retired Professor of Religious Studies at Massey University, speak on this theme. The following are some excerpts from his PowerPoint presentation. We are grateful that he has graciously given permission to use his material in this newsletter.

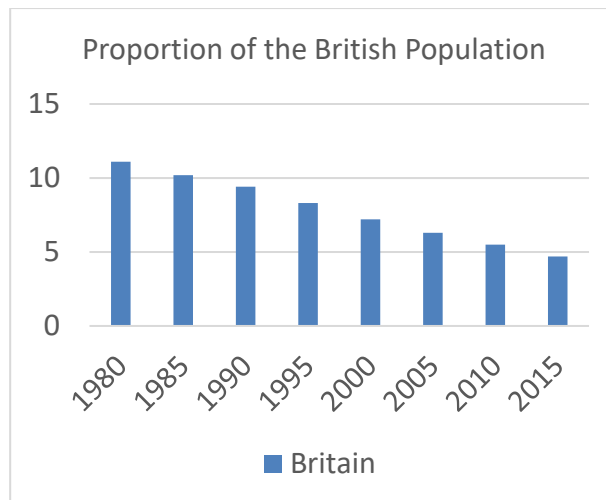
Guessing the result of the 2018 census, he estimates that 46% claim they are non-religious. Australians are significantly less secular than New Zealanders.

What does 'not religious' mean?

- It means not adhering
- The crucial shift lies in attitude to children and religion
- Generational increase in never identifying with a religion
- Growing disconnection
- Growing sense of exploration

- Wilberforce report distinguished a group of 20% "spiritual not religious"

Church attendance in Britain shows a steady decline:



Reassessing secularisation theory

- Charles Taylor, in *A Secular Age* argues that modernization produces pluralism but does not necessarily bring decline
- Almost all the causes of secularisation are present in China and don't "work" [religion in China is thriving – Ed]
- Globalisation has a significant impact
- The narrative of religious decline has blinded us to the narrative of religious change

The spiritual search

- Religion in contemporary society is very diverse
- Growth of individual significance of religious and spiritual despite decline in participation
- Taste for spirituality
- Maybe 30% of people change their religious identity as adults
- Mix and match beliefs and practices
- Secularisation clearly does not mean a decline in religiosity, whatever the theories say

All about us

We are an association of people who have a common interest in exploring religious thought and expression from a non-dogmatic and human-oriented standpoint. We follow similar organisations in the UK and Australia in taking our name from the 1984 BBC TV series and book by the British religious academic, Don Cupitt. "Sea of Faith" traces the decline of traditional Christian influence in the West in the past 250 years and invites the viewer to consider what might replace it. In New Zealand, Sea of Faith provides a forum via Conference and Newsletter, for the continued exploration. The Sea of Faith Network itself has no creed. We draw our members from people of all faiths and from those with no attachment to any religious institution.

Committee

Our national Committee publishes a newsletter, maintains a website at www.sof.org.nz, assists in setting up Local Groups, and organises an annual Conference.

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Life Members

Sir Lloyd Geering ONZ, Don Cupitt (UK), Ian Harris and Noel Cheer (deceased). Also Suzi Thirwell, Yvonne Curtis and Peter Cowley.

Publication deadline for the next Newsletter is 1 October 2019.

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Conference 2019

Transforming Communities: Finding Meaning in a Consumption-driven World

Midday Friday 1 November – 4.30 pm Saturday 2 November

All Souls' Church Complex, 30 Church Lane, Merivale, Christchurch

Lloyd Geering Lecture: Bronwyn Hayward

Self-Transcendence and the Assurance of Meaning: Merv Dickinson

Making Meaning and Transforming Community: a Father and Daughter Reflect:

David Hanna/Hana Olds

See page 12 for the Programme and the previous Newsletter for accommodation options.

Lloyd Geering Lecture

Understanding “Well-Living” in a changing world: why world views like Hauora; Va-Pacific and buen vivir are vital ways to support youth flourishing

Understanding the issues facing young people in a rapidly urbanising world is crucial as we strive to achieve both the Sustainable Development Goals and the ambitions of the Paris Climate agreement. In this presentation Bronwyn Hayward reflects on insights from CYCLES, a Children and Youth in Cities Lifestyle evaluation study she leads, of children and young people aged 12 to 24 years growing up in seven world cities. Funded by the UK ESRC & part of the wider Centre for Understanding Sustainable Prosperity (Surrey University), CYCLES identifies low carbon ways we can support young people to live well. Beyond issues about how we get around, and get away, heat our homes, and access fresh water, the study highlights why ideas of collective well living (rather than individual well-being) are crucial for sustaining young citizens and meeting their long-term hopes and dreams.



Dr Bronwyn Hayward is Associate Professor in Political Science and International Relations, University of Canterbury, New Zealand. She was a Lead Author for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) special report 1.5 Degrees, and a coordinating lead author of the IPCC new chapter on cities and infrastructure issues in the AR6 special report. She also leads a seven nation study of children and young people's life styles in cities with CUSP: Centre for Understanding Sustainable Prosperity, a UK ESRC funded research group. She was the 2017 Canterbury Fellow to Oxford University College and Blonavick School of Government, author of a new book *Sea Change: Climate Politics and New Zealand* with Bridget Williams Books and won a 2019 Kiwi bank New Zealander of the year Canterbury local hero award.

Making Meaning and Transforming Community: a Father and Daughter Reflect

David, a baby boomer (born in 1962), remembers the strong community aspect of his growing up. Weekly church services, youth groups, sports clubs, weekends without shopping, no internet or smart phones. He reflects on a journey of helping to trigger community-led development in communities across NZ. He draws on the collective insights gained via Inspiring Communities – an organisation dedicated to gathering and sharing how communities can transform themselves.

Hana, a centennial (born in 1999), is a young person growing up in a highly connected world that values consuming, instant responses and rapid technological change. A student, a hospitality worker and a 19-year-old without social media, she reflects on the generational shift in what

shapes how communities look like now and explores how she finds her place to stand in a world constantly moving.

With exponential change and the experience of climate change characterizing our time, transforming community has never been more essential. Are there differences between the generations in how we approach this? What's in common and what's different? What are the insights and challenges that are offered by the young generation? How are these tempered by the previous generation? Threading these questions into conversations reveals that despite the difference across the ages, David and Hana share common hopes and thinking about transforming community. These conversations have been honed and shaped by their many whanau discussions around the kitchen table. In this natural evolution, they move to reflecting and challenging ways communities of Aotearoa can contribute to the systematic change we urgently need.



David Hanna is a fourth generation Tangata Tiriti - Pakeha, a partner and father of four children. A central strand of his working life has been supporting people to develop and maintain healthy relationships that sustain vibrant human communities. His roles have included time as a National Youth Director Methodist Church, a policy manager in Central Government, a consultant on positive child / youth development, consultant for World Bank, and now as the director of Wesley Community Action and member of the Inspiring Communities team. Projects he has led include; In Our Hands - NZ Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy, Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa, championing community led development in local communities across NZ and partnering with the Mongrel Mob and Black Power to run leadership development programmes.

Hana Olds is a fifth generation Tangata Tiriti, the pōtiki of a family of six. Hana attended a full-

immersion Reo Māori School and is now in her second year at Victoria University studying Te Reo Maori, Māori Studies and Cultural Anthropology. She is a member of her local Time Bank and works part-time in hospitality. Since she was little, Hana has always been focussed on creating change through her words and actions. She was a self-published author at the age of 12 and through her book she raised \$40,000 dollars for research into alternative cancer treatments. At 14 she was both a finalist in the Inaugural Women of Influence Awards and finalist in the youth section of Wellingtonian of the Year awards. Speaking at over 20+ local, national and international conferences including being the youth speaker at the opening of He Tohu exhibition, National Library, she has a wide scope of public speaking experience that informs how she articulates her thoughts and experiences. The heart of her passions lies in kaupapa Māori and indigenous knowledge frameworks, community-led development and art. In an age defined by powers that divide, she seeks to promote interconnectedness and intersectionality in the collective consciousness.

Self-Transcendence and the Assurance of Meaning

The question to be answered is not “What is the meaning of life?” but “What is it that makes life meaningful?”

Every living creature is aware. It gathers information about its world. And that information needs to be meaningful. The kind of meaning required varies from one species to another, depending on its level of awareness. The self-awareness possessed by humans requires that we find contextual meaning – that we recognise, in our conceptual maps and narrative accounts of what's happening in our world, the larger whole(s) to which we belong.

Many in contemporary western society appear to have lost this sense of belonging and connection. More or less emptied of contextual meaning, they seek to fill their emptiness from a cornucopia of consumer goodies. And this diminishment of meaning may be precisely what is required to continue fueling our consumption-driven economy.

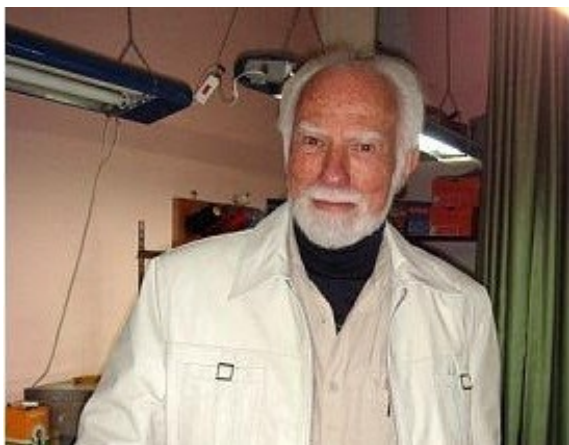
The world's spiritual traditions point to another (some might say “higher”) level of awareness said to be potential within us, in which our sense of being a separate self is

transcended in an all-embracing unity. In the Hindu, Jain, and Sikh traditions it is called moksha. In Buddhism it is called nirvana. And in the Christian tradition it is variously called the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, and eternal life.

Contemporary transpersonal psychology points to the same possibility, characterised by what Abraham Maslow called “peak experiences,” Jenny Wade “transcendent events,” Ken Wilber “spontaneous spiritual awakening,” and Michael Washburn “incursions from the Ground.”

By whatever name, this experience of self-transcendence delivers what Martin Buber has called “the inexpressible confirmation of meaning.” When we experience our oneness with the Whole, “meaning,” he said, “is assured. Nothing can any longer be meaningless. You do not know how to define the meaning of life, and yet it has more certitude for you than the perception of your senses.”

In our consideration of this subject, we will reflect on our own experiences of self-transcendence, the assurance of meaning it delivers, its implications for a seemingly meaning-hungry society, and the kinds of transforming communities in which it may be cultivated.



Canadian-born, **Merv Dickinson** completed his formal education in Canada and the United States, receiving a BA (Philosophy) and BD (Theology) from Victoria University in Toronto, a PhD (Counseling Psychology) from Boston University, and a post-doctoral Diploma in Theology and Psychiatric Theory from the Menninger Foundation in Topeka, Kansas. Ordained to the ministry in the United Church of Canada and recognized as a presbyter in the Methodist Church of New Zealand, Merv served parishes in Massachusetts and Taranaki.

The greater portion of his career has been spent as a Registered Psychologist – working as a psychotherapist, training clergy and other helping professionals in the art of counselling, lecturing in psychology at universities in Toronto, and serving as a leadership consultant to public and private sector organisations in the United States and New Zealand. The consistent theme running through his life has been his intensely personal search to understand and realise, if possible, what it means to be fully human. A year spent as resident members of the Findhorn community and eco-village in the north of Scotland was a turning point for both Merv and his wife Bella, leading them to emigrate to New Zealand in 1981. Merv has written and posted online a number of academic papers, mostly around the theme of our deeply human need to find meaning in life. Last year, following Bella’s death in 2015, he published a grief memoir titled *Conversations with Bella: A love story, a spiritual odyssey, and the gift of a broken heart*. It is available online from Amazon and the Book Depository. Merv’s three sons and assorted grandchildren are scattered throughout the world. He now lives with his partner Gayle in a retirement village in Christchurch.

A Sad Farewell

We learnt with sadness that Barbara Purchas has died. She was the leader of the Palmerston North Sea of Faith group and a proof-reader for this newsletter. She will be sadly missed. You are invited to share any memories or impressions of her and send them to John Thornley (johngill@inspire.net.nz). More in the next newsletter. *The Editor*

Problematic Formatting

A reader pointed out that the newsletter number and publication date no longer appear on the front page. Your editor deliberately tried to simplify the layout on the front page, but his attempts to add this information to the front page footer resulted in its inclusion on every footer. This might be an obscure bug in Word. At any rate, in the meantime, the situation is unchanged. If you want to find out the date or issue number of a newsletter, turn it over and look at the header on the back page.

The Editor

Matthew Fox Visit

Auckland was privileged to have a visit in July from Matthew Fox, the world-renowned religious spiritual teacher. His four talks were held at different centres of liberal Christian thinking: from the Selwyn Library opposite the Anglican Holy Trinity Cathedral to St. David's and St. Luke's Presbyterian Churches.



Matthew Fox

Long ago, Matthew Fox fell foul of the Catholic hierarchy for emphasising what he called Creation Spirituality and contrasting Original Blessing with Original Sin. This led to his expulsion from the Dominican Order in 1993, whereupon he became an Episcopalian.

Today, Matthew Fox is passionate about the urgency of the ecological issue (according to the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, we have only twelve years to reach the Paris Agreement's goals on limiting earth's temperature increase to less than 1.5 degrees and avoiding runaway climate change). There is no time left for intricate theological debate and it is 'all hands to the pump'.

However, the solution will not come from technical knowledge alone; we need to recover a sense of the sacred and to reconnect science and spirituality. Religion begins with experience and we need to cultivate that experience; it is something that young people hunger for. At Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, for example, hardly anyone goes to mass any more, but 700 people turn up for yoga. Ireland has seen a dramatic drop in church attendance; we have "runaway Catholics" - people can't

get away from the Church fast enough. We need "deep ecumenism" that is influenced by many traditions. Experience is nourished by a practice, so it is important that we have rituals.

Matthew Fox's talks were passionate appeals for action, for becoming more deeply human and for experiencing awe and wonder at the cosmos. These appeals were supported by anecdotes and short quotations from a great variety of thinkers and from mystics in his Roman Catholic tradition, especially Meister Eckhart ("God is the denial of denial").

- Consider for example the image taken from the Voyager 1 space probe; earth is just a tiny dot in the distance, insignificant in the vastness of the cosmos.
- Reflect on what you could do with the \$57,000 per second that is spent on the military, if you had the power to choose what it is used for.
- Consider that Einstein said that our values come from intuition, not from rationality. Jung said that modern consciousness has severed our minds from its connection with the cosmos.
- Consider the Jew who was told that there is no mysticism in Judaism, so ended up going to India to learn under the Rajneesh.



Matthew Fox explaining the Stations of the Cosmic Christ at St. Luke's Presbyterian Church

Four Spiritual Paths

Matthew gave us an introduction to four spiritual paths that summarise his interpretation of the Catholic mystical tradition:

- The *Via Positiva* is the positive way, the experience of awe and wonder at the cosmos to which the response is gratitude and reverence.
- The *Via Negativa* is the negative way, the experience of silence and stillness, of emptying the mind and calming the reptilian brain. Both meditation and sport are expressions of this path, as is the experience of loss, grief and suffering.
- The *Via Creativa* is the creative way, giving back and giving birth to something new, because you have tasted deeply.
- The *Via Transformativa* is the transformative way, the path of compassion and justice. "The prophet is a mystic in action," he says.

Stations of the Cosmic Christ

Fox has encouraged the use of dance, music and art in ritual. Among the examples he gave was the Sixteen Stations of the Cosmic Christ. Developed together with artists, this provides a meditative mini-pilgrimage that updates the traditional Stations of the Cross.



*Station 1 of the Stations of the Cosmic Christ:
"In the Beginning Was the Word...Fireball...
Flaring Forth...Big Bang...Void..."*

Order of the Sacred Earth

Religious orders pop up, Matthew Fox said, when religion declines. So he has co-created one; the Order of the Sacred Earth. Copies of his book on the subject were all sold out before his last talk. The order has only one vow: "I promise to be the best lover and defender of Mother Earth that I can be." Members of the order gather in pods to discuss how they can put this vow into practice. Pods interconnect using Zoom.

Evaluation

I am critical of his core concepts: Creation Spirituality, Original Blessing and the Cosmic Christ. It seems that he assumes an insight or revelation common to all his medieval mystics and beyond, one that comes directly from nature itself and has no need of the themes of sin and salvation. As a result he harmonises and homogenises diverse voices. However, he does focus on what is important – the ecological crisis, the need for something more than scientific rationality, and the importance of elders getting off the golf course so that they can communicate with upcoming generations.

The Editor

Fox on the Cosmic Christ

"A Cosmic Christ is an Eco-Christ for as Thomas Berry teaches, "ecology is functional cosmology." Albert Einstein says that the next era of humanity must be marked by a "cosmic religion" grounded in conscience. The practice of the Stations of the Cosmic Christ allows us to move into that new era. They are also ecumenical since the Buddha Nature teaching in Buddhism and the "image of God" in all beings in Judaism and the "primordial man" in Hinduism and the "sparks of the soul" in Sufism all point to that same archetype of the divine in all things."

matthewfox.org/stations-of-the-cosmic-christ-1

Religion Classics

The Idea of the Holy

This book was published in 1917 and has subsequently had a considerable influence on many thinkers. It has been translated into 20 languages and is still available. In contrast to many works of German theology it is quite readable. The author, Rudolf Otto, was a liberal German Protestant theologian. Accordingly, he moved in the philosophical world of Immanuel Kant and the theological world of Schleiermacher. He was also widely travelled, understood that religious conceptions had evolved over time, and later wrote a book (*Mysticism East and West*) comparing Meister Eckhart and Śhaṅkara. He even learned Sanskrit.

The Idea of the Holy aims to evoke in us an experience of the holy or the sacred. This is something to experience, not investigate rationally. In Otto's words, it concerns the non-rational rather than the rational. While William James investigated the wide variety of religious experience, Otto was concerned to discern the common features of such experience, irrespective of the religious context in which they occur. Those who are unable to access such experience are asked to read no further (p22).

The Numinous

To describe this experience, Otto coined the word "numinous." Just as the Latin word *omen* gives rise to the word *ominous*, so Otto derived *numinous* from the word *numen*, meaning the special divine force of an object or anything that inspires awe.

The numinous evokes awe and dread, even shuddering. Its source is thought of as holy, sacred, even uncanny, weird, or eerie. It is like a ghostly appearance that sends shivers down your spine. It gives rise to the view that a place is haunted.

Mysterium Tremendum

The numinous is something 'wholly other' than the ordinary. It is *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* (a mystery that is at once terrifying and fascinating).

The Tanakh (Old Testament) is a rich record of numinous experiences. In Genesis 28.17, Jacob says, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of Elohim.' There is the chorus 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of hosts' in Isaiah 6. In 2 Samuel 6 we have a strange story:

6 When they came to the threshing floor of Nakon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. 7 The Lord's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore, God struck him down and he died there beside the ark of God.

In this, the numinous is understood primitively like a charge of electricity that strikes out indiscriminately against anyone who does not respect its sacredness. The fact that Uzzah had the best intentions towards the ark and indeed wanted to save it from tipping over, counts for nothing.

Otto understands the 'wrath of God', which people like Richard Dawkins love to hate, as an expression of the numinous.

The Holy as 'Righteous?'

The holy also has the association of 'morally upright, completely good ethically'. In the course of the 19th Century, religion had tended to collapse into ethics or morality. Kant regarded morality as something sacred. Views of right and wrong may vary across cultures and epochs, but the "thou shalt" remains constant and is something absolute, which he called the categorical imperative. Matthew Arnold viewed religion as 'morality tinged with emotion'. or, as many in the Sea of Faith would say today, orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy. *The Idea of the Holy* was written to counter this 'bias to rationalization'.

The Sea of Faith group in the North Shore recently discussed the question whether the holy was something subjective, just in our minds, a human creation, or something in the world out there. Otto believed it was something 'a priori', pre-given and existing prior to any experience. It is intrinsic to our experience of the structure of reality.

The Editor

Meditative Moments

In an overwhelmingly busy world with endless distractions, what is more needful than to withdraw into silence, to quiet the ceaseless chatter and to get in touch with your inner self? Meditative Moments aims to draw attention to the world of meditation. SoFers are often rather cerebral thinkers and too much intellectual work can distance you from any real-life experience and alienate you from your feelings. SoFers have most likely heard of the current fashion of mindfulness and of an earlier one of transcendental meditation. They are aware that meditation is central to the practice of Buddhist monks. They are less likely to know anything about Orthodox Christian monks and their ceaseless repetition of the Jesus prayer, which has significant parallels to mantra meditation.

The Relaxation Response

This book by Herbert Benson, first published in 1975, is a classic in the field of meditation. It represents one of the first attempts to look at the benefits of meditation from a scientific perspective. There is nothing 'mystical,' 'metaphysical' or 'speculative' about this book. Benson was an Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and worked in particular on hypertension. He brings a scientific approach to meditation, aiming to quantify the benefits and to provide explanations based on medical science.

Stress and its effects (hypertension, atherosclerosis and heart attacks) are a major issue. We have evolved a "fight or flight" response to dangers and although for us, most physical dangers are absent, we still respond to the non-physical stresses of our time. Our autonomic nervous system, which regulates many functions not under our voluntary control, can become overstimulated. Various techniques can elicit what Benson calls the Relaxation Response, which quiets the autonomic nervous system, countering the effects of stress. This response can be measured: oxygen consumption, respiration rate and heart rate



all decline. Blood pressure also reduces in those with hypertension.

Benson briefly surveyed several techniques (Zen and yoga, autogenic training, and hypnosis) before concentrating on transcendental meditation (TM). Not because he believed that TM was better than the other techniques, but because the TM method was standardised, so scientific measurements would be more consistent between subjects. It is noteworthy that TM practitioners approached him asking to be investigated, because they believed in its effects.

In Chapter 5, Benson surveyed meditation practice in various traditions: Christianity (both East and West), Judaism, Buddhism, Taoism and in Romanticism (such as the poet Wordsworth). His aim was to illustrate that meditation is an age-old practice that transcends religious differences and belongs to our humanity.

The book closes with an appeal to incorporate relaxation in some form into our lives.

Herbert Benson MD (with Miriam Klipper). *The Relaxation Response*. London 1976

The Editor

Book Review

The Book of Evan

The work and life of Evan McAra Sherrard.
Keith Tudor (editor). Waimauku:
ResourceBooks 2017

This book isn't quite your normal biography. It is a mixture of biographical information, personal reminiscences, sermons and other documents that Evan Sherrard produced during a life that encompassed agriculture, ministry, education and psychotherapy. It also includes information about the prostate cancer and heart attacks that led to his death in 2015 at the age of 81.

In the late 60's when I was studying for the Presbyterian ministry at Knox College, I regarded the Cameron Centre as a model of church work. Usually, there is a divide between church services (attended by the good people) and the church's social work (provided to the problem people). Cameron Centre straddled the divide. Evan Sherrard was associate Minister at First Church and also the director of Cameron Centre. Those who went to church also attended programmes at the Cameron Centre, mixing with the 'problem people.' What I didn't know, but learnt from the book, is that Evan founded the Cameron Centre (which opened 1967) and so was responsible for setting up this system, providing therapeutic insights to both sides of the divide.

From the book I also learnt what happened to Evan after he finished at the Cameron Centre. He went overseas again for further training, at a very interesting time. A great ferment was just beginning. There was Carl Rogers and non-directive therapy, Transactional Analysis, Gestalt and Psychodrama. The churches were waking up to this ferment and about to embark on Clinical Pastoral Training. This taught the practice of relating to others, not just the theory of it. He returned in 1976 to work in the Auckland Presbyterian Social Services Association. He became a fully credited supervisor in Clinical Pastoral Education.

During his time with the PSSA, he developed a programme of psychotherapy training in what was to become the Auckland University of Technology. The first intake of students was 1989. He became highly qualified in transactional analysis (was a supervising transactional analyst) and also in psychodrama (was a psychodramatist trainer, educator and practitioner).

The book provides ample evidence of Evan's qualities as a person, and of the great influence he had on others. He also continued with a theological interest and was influenced by Lloyd Geering, even preaching an interesting sermon in 2014 with the title 'Geering and Feuerbach'. We can be grateful to those who put a lot of effort into producing this record of an important and pioneering New Zealander.

I am left wondering what happened to all that ferment in the 60s and 70s. Many became captivated by the new methods and moved out of the church sphere. There wasn't much interest in reflecting theologically on this new thinking. Maybe connecting theology and pastoral care/ psychotherapy, recovering a sense that Jesus' healing work was a therapeutic endeavour, is a task that is still ahead of us?

Nine Geering Ideas

(from page 48 of the book)

1. We created the concept of God
2. Jesus was not divine
3. The resurrection was symbolic
4. There is no life after death
5. The bible is not divinely inspired;
it is often wrong
6. Fundamentalism is a danger
7. Religious beliefs develop over time
8. We need a new ethic and new rituals
9. The new God is our planet

PROGRAMME
Sea of Faith 2019 Conference
All Souls Merivale, Christchurch
Friday 1 – Saturday 2 November 2019

FRIDAY	SATURDAY
12.30 Registration Desk will be open	8.30 Singing
1.45 Conference Opening, Welcome, Mihi Whakatau	8.50 Welcome
2.00 Introduction to the theme: – Amelia Dewhurst, Catherine McFedries, Jim Consedine	9.00 2 nd Keynote – David Hanna/Hana Olds - Making Meaning and Transforming Community: a Father and Daughter Reflect
2.30 Core Groups	9.45 Core Groups
3.30 AFTERNOON TEA	10.45 MORNING TEA
4.00 AGM	11.15 3 rd Keynote – Merv Dickinson – Self-transcendence and the Assurance of Meaning
6.00 LIGHT DINNER	12.00 Core Groups
7.20 Music	1.00 PACKED LUNCH
7.30 1 st Keynote – Bronwyn Hayward – The inaugural Sir Lloyd Geering Lecture. Understanding “Well-Living” in a changing world:	1.50 Music
8.30 SUPPER AND SOCIALISING (for all Lecture attendees)	2.00 Panel Discussion – Chaired by Adrian Skelton
9.30 End of Day 1	3.00 Poroporoaki
	3.15 AFTERNOON TEA and informal farewells
	4.30 End of Conference

When I was little, we were taught that we couldn't go into someone else's church. Now we are beginning to realise that our respect for one another is biblical. You and I have a lot to learn from the Jewish tradition, the Protestant tradition, the Buddhist tradition, the Hindu tradition. We have much to learn about the face of God from the many faces God has taken in this world. Life is rich with God, thick with God, full of God. God says, "I have come that you may have life – and have it more abundantly." That's where it's at. That's where God is.

Joan Chittister OSB (Benedictine sister, author and international lecturer)