

# Sea of Faith

Exploring Values, Spirituality and Meaning

[www.sof.org.nz](http://www.sof.org.nz)

Newsletter 139

February 2019

## Joining Sea of Faith

Were you, like me, shocked when it was revealed that the average age of Sea of Faith members is 79 and rapidly approaching 80? In the past, we have looked at subscriptions to our newsletter, noticed that they were declining a little, but concluded that we just needed to remind people to renew their subscription and all would be well. However, the numbers attending Conference tell a different story.

## Why WE became involved

Sea of Faith came into being as members of mainline Protestant churches began questioning what had previously been unthinking assumptions. We were attracted to the Sea of Faith because we were looking for a forum where we could openly explore and not be made to feel guilty for questioning the official line of our various denominations. We also tired of having to deal with objections from those who felt threatened by such questioning. We needed more freedom.

## Why become involved NOW?

Our members often have a strong background in a mainline Protestant denomination. Today, few have such a background and the widespread ignorance of the basics of our Western, Christian tradition would shock you.

There was also a time when the older generation's role was to pass on their culture to the younger generation. This does not happen any longer and each year's cohort

mixes almost entirely only with those of the same age, right through the school system. We need to be asking what Sea of Faith can offer people like this.

## Turning the Tide

Sea of Faith has generally been a fairly introspective organisation, serving the needs of its members for an open, non-judgmental space to explore the issues that seem important to us. We have no interest in becoming a missionary organisation, out to convert others. And we do love debating religious ideas, whether it be the existence of God, the views of St Paul, the reliability of the gospel accounts of Jesus, the sources of our moral convictions, or the aberrations of Medieval Christendom.

However, we are now faced with the reality that if we continue in this mode, Sea of Faith will steadily decline and become extinct.

The alternative is to give the organisation a face-lift and increase its public profile. Your Committee is looking for ways to do this. Change like this is nothing unusual. The two companies I worked for (Trimble and Tait) have both changed their name and engaged in expensive rebranding exercises, as market conditions changed.

You have probably never heard of NZCSICOP, the NZ Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal. In 2007 they changed their name to the Skeptics Society, which enabled them to develop a high public profile.

Just consider that most people haven't even heard of the Sea of Faith. *The Editor*

## 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 also from those with no attachment to any religious institution.

## Committee

Our national Committee publishes a newsletter, maintains a website at [www.sof.org.nz](http://www.sof.org.nz), assists in setting up Local Groups, and organises an annual Conference.

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**Membership Secretary and Webmaster: Peter Cowley** email [prcowley@gmail.com](mailto:prcowley@gmail.com)

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**Other Committee members:** Ian Crumpton, Brian Ellis, Jan Calvert, Andrew Calvert.

## Newsletter Team

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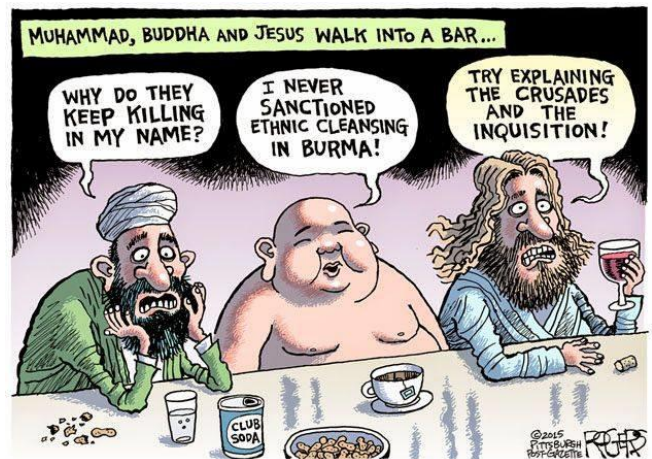
## Life Members

Sir Lloyd Geering ONZ, Don Cupitt (UK) and Ian Harris. Also Suzi Thirwell, Yvonne Curtis and Peter Cowley (appointed at the 2017 AGM).

**Publication deadline** for the next Newsletter is 14 April 2019.

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# Conference 2019

## **Transforming Communities: Finding Meaning in a Consumption-driven World**

Midday Friday 1 November – 16.30 Saturday 2 November

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

Speakers: to be advised

- Mark your diary now
- Book flights soon for the best deal
- More details in the next newsletter

## Annual Face-to-Face Committee Meeting



Your committee at work at its face-to-face meeting, held on 2 February 2019 at St Andrews-on-the-Terrace.

It did the following:

- Changed its name from “Steering Committee” to “Committee”.
- Decided the theme of the 2019 Conference.
- Debated many suggestions for a name change and selected five for ongoing discussion.
- Received a report on Constitutional matters and made decisions on its recommendations.

For more detail, see Turning the Tide - #2 below.

# Turning the Tide - #2

Following the first Turning the Tide (on the Sea of Faith) in the last newsletter we are reporting on the Committee's progress on the five things previously identified as vital to reverse the worrying decline of the Sea of Faith in New Zealand: a shorter, more outward-looking conference; strengthening the relationship between local groups and the national organization; reviewing the name Sea of Faith, increasing social media presence; and increasing public profile in mainstream media – the latter two now amalgamated under the general heading of improving communications.

## 1. Changing the nature of Conference

The 2018 Conference feedback revealed that 78% of respondents supported the idea of a shorter conference, which was strong endorsement for this upcoming experiment of a 2-day, non-residential conference in Christchurch at the end of this year, 1-2 November. It will be held from midday Friday to 4.30pm Saturday at the All Souls' Church Complex, 30 Church Lane, Merivale, Christchurch. There will be three keynote addresses with the first being a public lecture publicized as the Lloyd Geering Lecture. There will be three core groups, and the ending Panel as usual. The registration fee will deliberately incentivize people under the age of 45 years to come and costs are being kept down overall with the addition of a shared tea on Friday night to which we will all contribute a little food. The Committee reached consensus for the theme of the Conference: *"Transforming Communities: Finding meaning in a consumption-driven world"*. A number of potential keynote speakers have been identified and there is a feeling of excitement within the Committee at the people we will be approaching. Ian Crumpton, Tricia Crumpton, and Doug Sellman are the core of the local organising group.

## 2. Strengthening the connection between local groups and the national network

Jan Calvert has taken on this role on the Committee this year and already made significant progress. She organized a national ZOOM meeting of local group leaders to which the majority were able to attend. This is the first time, outside of meetings at conferences, leaders have been able to come together and talk about their groups and national issues – the wonders of modern technology! It is clear there is still a lot of life in many local groups; and sharing ways in which local groups are working was invigorating. The opportunity was also taken to reflect together on how local groups could attract new members. Another ZOOM meeting is being planned a little later in the year.

The issue of membership was debated at the recent strategic planning meeting of the Committee, particularly in relation to a suggestion that a new type of membership - affiliate membership – be established for regular members of local groups who are not members of the national organisation. In the end the vote was strongly against this idea, but out of the discussion came the suggestion that leaders of local groups actively encourage local members to join the national organisation and therefore support the overall endeavour of the Sea of Faith and be part of the larger national network of comradeship and friendship. The \$20 membership fee is not considered onerous but does help fund the endeavours of the Committee and other members who put in a lot of voluntary time.



### 3. Reviewing the name “Sea of Faith”

Many people have sent in ideas, and we are grateful to all who have taken the time to do this. We had 41 possible alternative names suggested which we grouped into five categories as follows: Names similar to Sea of Faith; Names with religious terms in them; Names with Lloyd Geering’s name in them; Names from left-field; and Other. After an initial hour of discussion and debate, and addition of several further alternative names, we were left with 18 that we felt could possibly work as a new name for the Sea of Faith. After lunch we spent a further hour of discussion and narrowed the list to seven names.

An important guideline for choosing alternative names was how it might sound if there was a member being interviewed by Guyon Espiner on Morning Report... “We have with us this morning to talk more about this issue Dr Bob Smith from .....

The Committee then took a vote on the seven names yielding the following top five, which we now submit to the wider membership for further discussion (in alphabetical order):

#### **Quest**

#### **Reimagining Religion**

#### **SOFIA (Sea of Faith in Aotearoa)**

#### **The Lloyd Geering Network**

#### **The Religious Enquiry Network**

We are envisaging the current SoF by-line - Exploring Values, Meaning, and Spirituality - to be retained for each of these alternative names.

We welcome your comments and feedback on these five alternative names, including any better names if you can think of them. Note: There is an interesting discussion in the Australian Sea of Faith *Bulletin* last December on the issue of renaming Sea of Faith in Australia. We will be continuing to think about this issue over the next six months and then will make a decision on the best two or three alternative names to bring to the AGM for discussion in November.

### 4. Improving communication

As well as social media presence and public profile in mainstream media we have included the Newsletter, the Website and other possible new forms of communication both inside as well as outside the Sea of Faith, especially in order to attract new members.

Philip Grimmett has taken on the role of leading the Committee’s deliberations and discussion on improving communications (in addition to being Treasurer!) and has already formulated a range of ways in which we can better communicate and market the ideas and kaupapa of the Sea of Faith in New Zealand. These include notices in church newsletters, community noticeboards such as at libraries and supermarkets, and community newspapers.

At the recent strategic planning meeting the Committee decided that while we are reviewing the name of the Sea of Faith, we would put most of our energy this year into internal communications. We will wait for the decision about a possible new name for the Sea of Faith before making a major push to advertise the organisation to the wider public of New Zealand.

We welcome all comments and suggestions on any of these four strategic areas or any other matters that relate to the continuing survival and health of the Sea of Faith.

February 2019

#### **Committee 2019**

Doug Sellman – Christchurch (Chair)  
Steve Collard – Auckland (Secretary)  
Phil Grimmett – Wellington (Treasurer)  
Jan Calvert – Hamilton (Local Groups)  
Ian Crumpton – Christchurch  
Brian Ellis – Auckland  
Andrew Calvert – Hamilton (co-opted)  
Natali Allen – Wellington (co-opted)  
Pete Cowley – Gisborne (ex-officio)  
Laurie Chisholm – Auckland (ex-officio)

## How to Contact Your Local Group

Below are email addresses of the convenors of each local group. If you want to know more about your group, or to find out when they next meet, just drop them a line.

Location	Convenor	Email
Auckland	Marion Hines	david.hines@xtra.co.nz
Hamilton	Michael Templer	m.templer@xtra.co.nz
Tauranga	Eddie Orsulich	orsuliche.m@Kinect.co.nz
Gisborne	Peter Cowley	prcowley@gmail.com
Hawke's Bay	John Warren	johnwarren@gmail.com
Palmerston North	Roger and Barbara Purchas	purchas@inspire.net.nz
Kapiti Coast (Ephesus)	Maureen Roxburgh	wandmroxburgh@xtra.co.nz
Wellington	Philip Grimmett	grimmettphil@gmail.com
Wellington (Ephesus)	Margaret Rushbrook	mrushbrook@xtra.co.nz
Blenheim	John Craighead	jcraighead@xtra.co.nz
Christchurch	(in recess)	
Timaru	Betty Manning	newmanning@xtra.co.nz
Central Otago	Noeline Watson	noelinewatson@gmail.com
Dunedin	Gretchen Kivell	gretchen.kivell@xtra.co.nz

## Internet Corner

The Internet has now become the dominant feature of contemporary life. The big companies (Microsoft, Google, Apple, Facebook) are now all Internet-centred.

If you ask an ordinary person why the Internet is so important, they will answer by telling you how useful it is to them. You can send and receive mail, watch the news, check your bank account, find the best route to wherever you want to go, see the weather forecast, book flights, read books, watch TV or a movie and listen to music. The Internet is astonishingly useful.

Ask an engineer and you are likely to get quite a different answer. They are more interested in understanding the underlying principles that make the Internet important. These are based on the huge number of people who can connect to it. The best analogy to help you understand this is the telephone network. If only two people have telephones, they can talk to each other, but that's of limited use. If everyone in your city has a telephone, you can talk to anyone who lives there. With the addition of trunked lines, you can make calls to anyone in New Zealand, or even the world. That dramatically increases the usefulness of the telephone.

## Metcalf's Law

Things are similar with the Internet. Its usefulness increases with the increase in the number of those who can access it. The first attempt to formalise this principle is called Metcalfe's Law, which states that **the usefulness, or utility, of a network equals the square of the number of users.**

In 1993, the Internet consisted of roughly 2.5 million host computers. By November 1997, this number had increased to 25 million. Today it is over 1 billion.

## Moore's Law

Engineers have another law (Moore's law), which states that the number of transistors on a computer chip doubles every two years, while the costs are halved. This rapid increase in capability and decrease in cost is another factor leading to the Internet revolution.

## Personal Profile

### Betty Manning

Betty is a long-term supporter of the Sea of Faith. She was born in Fairlie, in rural Canterbury. Her church there was served at that time by Jim Reid, a home missionary and the father of Lester Reid, whom many of you will know. As a promising young member of the bible class, she attended a church leadership camp. This resulted in her being appointed at the young age of 20 as the live-in matron of Thomas House, a hostel for pre-school boys attached to Timaru Boys High School. She was there for 8 years, after which she moved to Wellington and then to Auckland, where she became involved with St.Luke's Remuera, which at that time ran Te Whetu house for Maori girls from isolated areas to enable them to have an education.

In 1965, she married Robert, a secondary school teacher. After 11 years of marriage he died, so she went back to work. In her spare time, she helped Steve, a solo parent, with the task of bringing up his three children. (She had no children of her own.) Their friendship has continued up until the present.

Betty is a founder member of the Timaru Ephesus group. This was formed by John Meredith and others who were disillusioned with the mainline denominations and wanted a more liberal approach. This group is still active, but struggling. She attended the third Conference in Dunedin, and many thereafter. She has had many key Sea of Faith people stay at her place when visiting Timaru, including John Spong, Stephen Bachelor and Lloyd Geering. She also went to Israel with a tour group led by Lloyd Geering.

Betty is very much a people person. She is more practical than academic. In her time on the Committee, she was mainly concerned that the practicalities of organising Conference were seen to. Life currently is mostly taken up looking after her garden and caring for her friend Steve, who is not in good health. She continues to attend St. Mary's Anglican Church in Timaru and will celebrate her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in April.

*The Editor*



*Betty Manning with friend Steve Newman after Evensong at St. Mary's*

# Religion Classics

*The mass media generally publish book reviews at or before their initial publication. A book is old news three or four months thereafter at the latest. Older books are rarely taken notice of. We older SoFers are much more influenced by classical works, many of which have played an important part in our personal stories. We need to pay attention to major writings from the past, which have played a part in the religious situation we find ourselves in today. Consequently, your Editor plans to have a section in the newsletter that focusses on religion classics from the past 200 years or so.*

## Ludwig Feuerbach

The first of these columns looks at Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872). He is probably the earliest religious thinker that this column will talk about, but there is something to be said for beginning at the beginning. Modern theology is often thought of as beginning with Schleiermacher, at the start of the nineteenth Century. Feuerbach comes just a few decades after.

“Theology is Anthropology.” That is the shortest possible summary of his thinking. By this he means that what purports to be affirmations about the divine is actually about what it is to be human. By anthropology he does not mean the modern science that explores the way different societies function, but rather that area of philosophy concerned with the nature of being human. His whole aim is to expose theological statements as effectively statements about us humans, thus undermining the whole project of theology, which is to make statements about God.

You might think that this makes him very similar to the new atheists (Richard Dawkins and others), but there is an important difference. Feuerbach was not against religion; he held it in high regard and was fascinated by it all his life. However, he aimed to critique and expose theology as an academic discipline. His overriding purpose in negating “the false or theological essence of religion” was to affirm its “true or anthropological essence.” Accordingly, he classified himself not as an ‘atheist’ but as an ‘anthropotheist.’ He was also critical of the philosophy of the time, claiming that “the absolute Spirit [a key concept in Hegel’s

philosophy] was nothing other than the absolute Professor.”

Probably no-one except Lloyd Geering and professional philosophers reads Feuerbach’s actual writings nowadays, in spite of the fact that his writing is way clearer than most other authors of his time. Mathilde Blind, author of a biography of George Eliot, who translated *The Essence of Christianity*, wrote the following:

“Unlike his countrymen, whose writings on these subjects are usually enveloped in such an impenetrable mist that their most perilous ideas pass harmlessly over the heads of the multitude, Feuerbach, by his keen incisiveness of language and luminousness of exposition, was calculated to bring his meaning home to the average reader.”

When we in the Sea of Faith take religion seriously as a human phenomenon or view God as a human creation, we are heirs of Feuerbach. Feuerbach also marks the beginning of the end of idealistic philosophy as represented supremely by Hegel. Feuerbach was more of a debunker of the thinking of his time than the creator of a new philosophy. He viewed spirit or consciousness as a product of our human nature, rather than as something transcendent. Karl Marx was to take things even further and see human nature as a product of social structures. He thought that philosophy had done enough interpreting the world and that the time had come to change it.

Three main writings give effect to Feuerbach’s project to reinterpret theology as anthropology:

1. *Thoughts on Death and Immortality* (1830). This was Feuerbach’s first book. It was published anonymously, but it later became known that



Feuerbach was the author. This torpedoed any hope of an academic career.

2. The Essence of Christianity (1841). This was his most famous work, in which he attempts to expose all the traditional affirmations about God as actually about humanity. Take, as an example, divine omniscience. Each individual is strictly limited in the amount they can know. By contrast, the human species as a whole is effectively unlimited in what it can know. Religion splits the holders of knowledge into limited individuals and an unlimited God, by transferring what actually belongs to the species to God. Now you might not find this argument particularly convincing but his general approach certainly found favour at the time.
3. The Essence of Religion (1846). Just from the title of this and the previous work, you can see that Feuerbach's aim was to penetrate beyond the surface to the core of what constitutes religion.

SoFers who think of Lloyd Geering and Don Cupitt as the first to really critique traditional Christianity will be surprised at how radical and revolutionary the 19<sup>th</sup> Century was. Hegel attempted to rehabilitate Christianity by absorbing it into a broader philosophical framework in which history, as the unfolding of the divine Spirit, postulates Christianity and then moves beyond it. Schleiermacher located religion in the domain of feeling, specifically the feeling of absolute dependence, effectively abandoning any cognitive claims. Feuerbach undermined both traditional Christianity and the idealistic philosophy of the time. He saw spirit, consciousness and free will as realities that emerged from and are dependent on our biological nature. As a consequence, he rejected the idea of personal immortality. He was also suspicious of all metaphysics.

Few people today are interested in Karl Barth, but the neo-orthodox movement associated with him was a valiant attempt to counter the perspectives of

Schleiermacher and Feuerbach. When all his theological teachers supported the war politics of the Kaiser, leading up to World War 1, Barth became convinced that their thinking must be fundamentally flawed. So he began an ambitious counter-movement to the collapse of God-talk into talk about human beings. Karl Barth's view was that you don't begin by describing the existence of the Christian human being, but by talking about the Word of God, the way God has communicated himself to us. This attempt was not successful, but then are we able to do any better?

We actually follow Feuerbach in many ways. We think 'bottom up' rather than 'top down.' In trying to understand the great mysteries of consciousness and free will and the power of anxiety in human existence, we tend to begin with the reality of the brain rather than with *a priori* philosophical convictions. *Editor*



Ludwig Feuerbach

Religion is indeed essential to or innate in man, but this is not the religion of theology or theism, not an actual belief in God, but solely the religion that expresses nothing other than man's feeling of finiteness and dependency on nature. ... **I distinguish religion from theism**, the belief in a being distinct from nature and man. ... Today theism, theology, the belief in God have become so identified with religion that to have no God, no theological being, is considered synonymous with having no religion. But here we deal with the original elements of religion. It is theism, theology, that has wrenched man out of his relationship with the world, isolated him, made him into an arrogant self-centred being who exalts himself above nature. And it is only on this level that religion becomes identified with theology, with the belief in a being outside and above nature as the true God. Originally religion expressed nothing other than man's feeling that he is an inseparable part of nature or the world. *Ludwig Feuerbach*

# Interesting Texts

## 'Songs of the Spirit'

John Thornley's monthly programme on Radio NZ. March to August 2019

Since starting in 2016, I have been a guest of Bryan Crump's Nights, sharing music and talk after the news/weather at 7 pm. We title the show 'Songs of the Spirit'. I go down to Wellington, via train or bus, to pre-record each show. I have fond memories of Wellington days for university study in the late 1950s and, when we returned in the 1970s, for editing and teaching work. So I appreciate the opportunity to revisit the city.

It's both fun and challenging to share the airwaves with Bryan, dealing with 'religious' issues in music on secular national radio. Bryan makes it clear he is not a 'religious' person, but often contributes wise words on 'spirituality'.

I divide my music interest into two strands: first, the singer/songwriter line, starting with Leadbelly and Woody Guthrie; second, the African-American line, from spirituals to rap. From 1996 to 2015 I edited and published a biannual journal, *Music in the Air*. In its columns, along with other contributions, I explored my lifelong journey with popular music. Those interested can access the contents of the forty issues via the National Library website.

One quotation sums up a key conviction underlying my thinking and writing about the 'religious/spiritual' foundations to popular music. The UK Anglican writer, David Edwards, a founding editor of the SCM Press, and later, parish minister and bishop, writes:

It is estimated that at least 45 million Africans were shipped as slaves to America. There they gave to the world, as voices for their patience and courage, the Negro spiritual and jazz. Most of the popular music of the modern West is one long echo of Africa's resurrection across the Atlantic (*God's Cross in our World, SCM paperback 1963*).

The opening 2019 shows, for March and April, relate to two key moments in the

public ministry of Jesus: first, John the Baptist's calling people to repentance and, second, the events of Easter Weekend. The church lectionary doesn't always give me hooks for my selection of material! But, as I'm introduced as 'Methodist lay preacher', I welcome it.

The March songs are Leonard Cohen's 'The Future' and 'Anthem', both featured on the 1992 CD titled *The Future*. The title song 'The Future' echoes Bob Dylan's 'A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall', in sharing the theme of apocalypse for the End Times, but with different imagery. Adopting the voice of despot in a materialist culture, nothing is spared in Cohen's words of judgment on the sins of the present age. The opening verse:

Give me crack and anal sex  
Take the only tree that's left  
And stuff it up the hole  
in your culture.  
Give me back the Berlin wall  
Give me Stalin and St Paul  
I've seen the future, brother  
It is murder.

One can only assume that St Paul gets included for anti-semitic and chauvinistic verses, though it is now accepted that many of these have been wrongly attributed to him.

The righteous anger continues to the enigmatic chorus:

Things are going to slide  
In all directions  
Won't be nothing you can measure any more  
The blizzard, the blizzard of the world  
Has crossed the threshold  
And it has overturned the order of the soul.

Chorus: When they said repent, repent  
I wonder what they meant (repeated)

In the chorus he shifts the narrative viewpoint from the 'despot' to himself, prophet and poet of Hebraic/Christian heritage, and responding to the street corner evangelist or the wider secularist culture. Or

is it just an ironical aside by one who certainly knows what repentance is all about?

The answer to this John the Baptist preaching for the End Times is the second song, 'Anthem'. The singer opens in gentler tones and simple words of assurance:

The birds they sang  
At the break of day  
Start again  
I heard them say  
Don't dwell on what  
Has passed away  
Or what has yet to be.

Then there is a wonderful chorus in metaphorical language, drawing on Celtic and Christian imagery, along with proverbial wisdom ('The darkest hour is just before the dawn'). Hearers are invited to add their own understandings for this insight from a 'depth' theology of incarnation:

Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in.

Placed between the two songs I quote words of confession/commitment by NZ hymnwriter Shirley Erena Murray, set as a prayer of response, 'God Weeps'. The important word here is 'commitment', as humankind are called to take responsible actions in response to the wrongdoings of our age. The words can speak not just for church people but for all people of goodwill. One may or may not believe in a 'God'. It's our actions, our lives that count.

Leader: God weeps  
at love withheld,  
at strength misused,

at children's innocence abused  
All: and till we change the way we love, God weeps

Leader: God bleeds  
at anger's fist,  
at trust betrayed,  
at women battered and afraid,  
All: and till we change the way we win, God bleeds.

Leader: God cries  
at hungry mouths,  
at running sores,  
at creatures dying without cause,  
All: and till we change the way we care, God cries.

Leader: God waits  
for stones to melt,  
for peace to seed,  
for hearts to hold each other's need,  
All: and till we understand the Christ. God waits.  
*No. 30, Faith Forever Singing, NZ Hymnbook Trust, 2000. Used by permission.*

In this prayer, we have words for a public theology, giving church and community words for a mature discipleship in a secular world.

In the April 'Songs of the Spirit' I play Bill Bennett's 'On a Cool and Autumn Dawn', a Kiwi setting for the Good Friday event, music and words found in Hope is our Song, NZ Hymnbook Trust 2009. This is followed by the African-American gospel group, The Sensational Nightingales, singing 'He Just Hung There'. The words are an unadorned description of the physical pain endured by Jesus on the cross, sung to a rhythm'n'blues boogie beat.

'Resurrection' indeed!

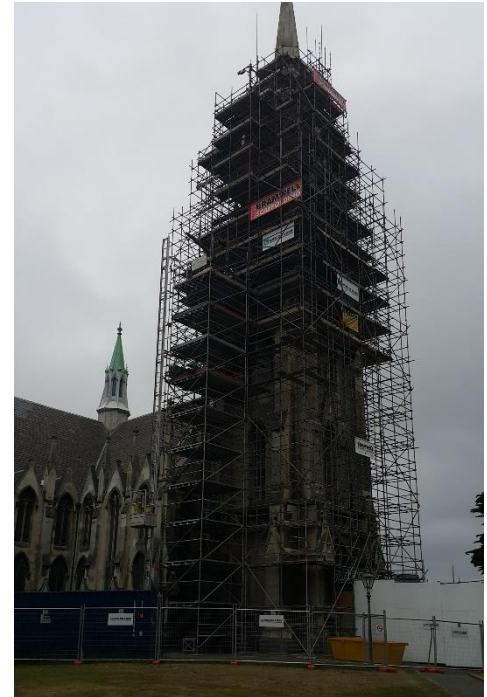
*John Thornley, Palmerston North  
johngill@inspire.net.nz*

## Poems by Bob Geddes

*I was interested, and a little surprised, to discover that Bob Geddes, a long-term Christchurch member, is a poet. Below are a couple of poems that he has submitted – the Editor.*

### Kiwi Presbyterianism

What belongs to the substance of the faith?  
 While there are doctrines and creeds galore  
 And statements of faith  
 To which the ordained give consent  
 There is also “liberty of opinion” in all  
 that is not of the substance of the faith.  
 Not defined this substance of the faith  
 By any court of the Church  
 So “liberty of opinion” prevails  
 For all or any who take relief  
 From doctrinal and creedal strictures  
 And who believes none that affronts  
 Our common sense, the prevailing scientific  
 and social evolutionary thinking  
 And historically based Biblical pronouncements.  
 The way I take, not I think, unlike the way Jesus took  
 About liberating the truths He saw  
 Implicit in a faith that gives “liberty of opinion”  
 The substance matters not to those who live  
 With Love for all life.     *January 2019*



\$600,000 to refurbish Dunedin’s  
 First Church spire. Money well  
 spent, or a vain attempt to restore  
 a bygone era? – the Editor

### Fatalism

Is the easiest of excuses  
 For every unplanned fault  
 Responsibility no more  
 When all goes wrong,  
 Some unknown deity  
 Was against me.  
 Nothing I did or might have done  
 Affects the outcome,  
 Because the fates were against me.  
 I take the praise when I succeed.  
 But how good is this,  
 The mess is not my fault.  
 The good goes down the drain,  
 When what might be done is put aside  
 The mind is closed  
 When fate is said  
 To determine ALL.     *Bob Geddes Jan 2019*