

SOFiA 2022-2023 Annual General Meeting

This Zoom AGM will be held on Saturday 2nd September at 2 pm. There will be two presenters before the AGM itself starts as follows.

- John Thornley will give a talk "Redemption Song" about Bob Marley, poet and prophet. A movie of Bob playing this song will be presented. Q & A after the session.
- Margaret Gwynn will have a Q & A session on "Challenging the Myth of Economic Growth" (see her April Newsletter article on de-growth). This session will be moderated by Mary Ellen Warren from Napier and member of the national committee.

AGM AGENDA

- Welcome
- Ratification of last AGM's minutes
- Report from the Chair
- Financial report
- Membership report
- Website report
- Local Groups report
- Newsletter report

Invitation for New Members of the Management Committee

We meet online on the second Thursday of each month, 7.30 to 8.30 pm. We warmly welcome new-comers, wishing to share and support our work to promote a progressive theology.

Minutes of the Zoom AGM for the Sea of Faith in Aotearoa, 5 Nov. 2022

Present: Pete Cowley (Chair), John Thornley (Secretary). Mary Ellen Warren, John Warren, Michael Templer, Laurie Chisholm, Jocelyn Kirkwood, Jan and Andrew Calvert, Maria Cash, Stephen Warnes, Gretchen Kivell, Yvonne Curtis, Lynne Tasker (14 present) **Apologies:** Doug Selman, Ian Harris, Natalie Allen Vicki Steel, Carman Goldsmith, Phil Grimmett, Bob Stewart,

Minutes of the 2021 AGM 6 November via Zoom (19 plus present)
(Moved) Mary Ellen/Michael Templer adopted as a correct record.

Chair's Report (Pete Cowley) (Received Pete/Laurie) The future pattern for live gatherings will be the hybrid model with mix of live events and virtual/online participation to the audience. The annual conference held at St Andrews-in-the – City 7/8 November, trialled this approach. Despite some technical hitches, those attending were positive in their responses. Laurie Chisholm's continuing work on the Newsletter was appreciated. Discussion on its future format has begun and will continue during 2023. With the retirement of Phil Grimmett after completing his four year term of service, the incoming Committee has just three members: Pete Cowley as Chair/Treasurer/ Admin, John Thornley as Secretary/ and Mary Ellen Warren, liaison with groups and other online events, covering learning/social needs. New members would be welcomed. The committee's Zoom meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month, starting 7.30 pm.

We thank Phil for his service and look forward to future issues of original poems – a project he began and will continue in 'retirement'.

Treasurer's Report/Membership/Webmaster (Pete Cowley) Covid's closure of the usual live conference with 100 plus attendees and costs for outside speakers, the annual financial balance is \$14,174.30. Current membership 184 as at June 2022. Website continues to receive visits – an annual average of 300 unique visitors ('unique' = not repeating). Pete moved these reports be received. Agreed.

Newsletter (Laurie Chisholm) received. 'The Newsletter continues in pretty much the same way as it has over previous years. Mostly 12 pages per issue and delivered in two variations: electronically and printed, sent by post. It is possibly that with the Covid disruptions and the rise of Zoom and other computer-based ways of meeting that the Newsletter has become relatively more important. We should bear in mind, though, that the real interpersonal connection is invaluable and is perhaps the only way of mediating experience rather than concepts and ideas.' Laurie would appreciate more reports from groups on local activities.

Mary Ellen will follow this up in her emails to groups and contacts. Discussion on future electronic formats will continue during 2023.

Local Groups Report (Mary Ellen Warren) received. Mary Ellen increasingly moves from face-to-face local meetings to zoom meetings. In Feb and July emails were sent to 17 identified local group coordinators (some one individual) . There were six responses. Promoting the Auckland SOF's regular talks (both live and virtual) has been an exciting development. Other help was given to preparing for the Wellington Oct 7/8 conference. ' Identifying accommodation, public transport and restaurant options...It was a joy to welcome 25 attendees to our Wellington Conference and 30 more online.'

General Business

Numbers of new members? Yvonne Curtis asked how many new members had joined this year. Pete could not give the specific figure at the agm meeting, but it would appear in the next Newsletter. Because of the controversial nature of SOF for some people, names would not be included.

Future format for Newsletter. Further discussion was held. Face book as an option was raised, but not warmly endorsed . We need to trial electronic options current available. Irrespective of whatever format is chosen for the electronic newsletter, a print version will be produced for as long as somebody wants it.

Ian Harris Keynote Address at Conference; This will be published in the next Newsletter. Tom Hall, from the States, and who has contributed editorial work for US publication of Lloyd Geering titles, warmly received a copy of Ian's address, and it is circulating internationally. Well one, Ian!

New Life Member With support from members and endorsement by the Committee, Laurie Chisholm was nominated as a Life Member of the SOFiA. The nomination was unanimously adopted by the AGM . Members noted his ongoing participation in conferences, core group leadership, and continued promotion of Sea of Faith activities. His major contribution has been responsibility for regular publication of the Newsletter, where his layout/design skills plus his search for writers that ensured quality contents for the Newsletter. His own writings reflect a theological breadth and depth from both foundational and progressive thinkers and writers. Laurie warmly expressed appreciation for this honour.

Chairman's Report

This year the changes/challenges kept rolling in...

Conference

Despite the ongoing COVID concerns we did manage to hold a conference in November 22. It was a hybrid version with both a physical presence and electronically by Zoom.

It wasn't without its challenges! The TV's in St Andrew's were not functional – they got zapped by a power surge so we ended up with a projector screen near the lectern and a projector in the aisle. The Zoom sound was an issue – the microphone really needed to be very close to the person speaking otherwise the zoom software considered it background noise and filtered it out. As much as I tried to find how to turn this feature off I was unable to do so at the time. This was particularly noticeable when playing the music for John Thornley's presentation and many apologies to John for this.

The number attending conference was very low with about 35 full registrations. There were a number of reasons for this:

- Carbon footprint – we have been talking about trading lightly on the planet in our newsletters
- Cost of travel, accommodation & food. Let's face it, it is not an inexpensive exercise to travel to conferences
- The sheer energy it takes to go to a conference when none of us are spring chickens!
- COVID was still in the community and a risk for us senior people.

The conference broke even on costs which was great, but in future, conferences will be (if possible) run in the regions on a smaller scale. That was the plan. The demise of the Auckland local group (which was the largest and most active group in the country) was a blow to these plans as they had been holding hybrid meetings of members physically in Auckland and Zooming their meetings nationally which quite a few of us enjoyed. Auckland Group donated their fund to the Sir Lloyd Geering Scholarship in Religion administered by Victoria University.

The Christchurch group led by Doug Sellman also disbanded and they were planning to hold the next hybrid meeting from down south.

Gisborne and Napier groups are going to try and organise a hybrid event but nearly all groups are struggling with energy levels and not to mention the technological complexities that arise with audio/video live communications. Most groups seem to be barely functioning. See Local Groups Report for details

Newsletters

Laurie has maintained a high standard magazine which is the key-stone of our organisation. We have now changed the newsletter formats. There is the fully electronic version with clickable links to see the articles as well as a link to the

printable version if wanted. This make reading articles online a lot easier as there are no columns and you can increase the size of the text or use a browser function (at least in Firefox) entitled "Reader". The printed newsletter has also lost its columns and the A3 format folded. This means the printed version is no longer tied to a multiple of four pages and can be any length. We are also using lighter A4 paper – this is important because I have been getting some static about the thickness of the envelopes with the newsletter inside. It was often just over the maximum. The lighter paper has improved this quite dramatically and up to 6 sheets of A4 still fit within the allowed thickness. I do realise that the printed version does not look as good at the tabloid format but that is a small price to pay I feel.

A special thanks to Editor Laurie Chisholm and his team of helpers for putting the newsletter together every two months. It's big job but appreciated very much!

Website

The website continued to be accessed by a good number of people far and wide. It offers a wealth of information and resources. Both of these offer important ways in which potential new members may discover us. See the website report for the actual details.

Financial

Our financial situation is good. We have quite a decent amount of money in the bank and our subscription income is covering our costs year-to-year. See the Treasurer's report for details.

Membership

Overall our membership has shrunk by 15 people over the year. The majority of that is from folk passing away, no longer able to read or feel they have completed their journey with us and retired. Our current active members as at 30 June is 169. See the membership report for details. Only one new member joined in the year.

Committee

Your committee has been small (4) but highly effective – we would welcome some new members. John Thornley has been doing an excellent job as Secretary and his willing participation in all areas has proved most useful. Mary Ellen Warren joined us last year and took over looking after the Local Groups and keeping in touch with them. She has done a great job in keeping the lines of communication open even though it is surprisingly difficult to get some groups to respond to emails.

Pete Cowley

Chair

SOFiA

Sea Of Faith in Aotearoa - Financial Performance Report

Statement of Revenue and Expenditure YTD for the period 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023

2020-2021	<u>Revenue</u>	<u>Note</u>	2022-2023	2022-2023
Actual		No.	Actual	Budget
3,240.00	Subscriptions		\$2,911.00	\$3,200.00
12.82	Interest less Bank Fees		\$15.24	\$12.00
20.03	Conference Revenue		\$2,000.00	\$1,500.00
421.66	Sundry income		\$0.00	\$0.00
\$3,694.51	Total Receipts		\$4,926.24	\$4,712.00
	<u>Expenditure</u>			
	<i>Committee Meeting Costs</i>			
0.00	-Conference phone calls		\$0.00	\$0.00
225.57	-February meeting		\$153.28	\$0.00
	<i>Newsletter</i>			
1,343.36	-Photocopying		\$823.60	\$1,350.00
645.30	-Envelopes/Postage		\$585.17	\$650.00
0.00	Conference Expenditure		\$2,121.38	\$1,250.00
150.00	-Grants		\$0.00	\$150.00
0.00	-Stationery		\$0.00	\$0.00
0.00	-Sundry Expenses		\$0.00	\$200.00
0.00	-Resource Centre		\$0.00	\$0.00
	<i>Other</i>			
350.00	-Website		\$360.00	\$360.00
0.00	-Sundry		\$0.00	\$0.00
\$2,714.23	Total Expenditure		\$4,043.43	\$3,960.00
\$980.28	Surplus(Deficit)		\$882.81	\$752.00

Statement of Financial Position as at – 30 June 2023

Members Funds

Represented by:

Assets

\$14,174.30	Bank Accounts - KiwiBank	\$15,057.11
	Conference Advances	\$0.00
	Total Assets	\$15,057.11

Less Liabilities

		\$0.00
\$14,174.30	Net Funds as at Balance Date	\$15,057.11

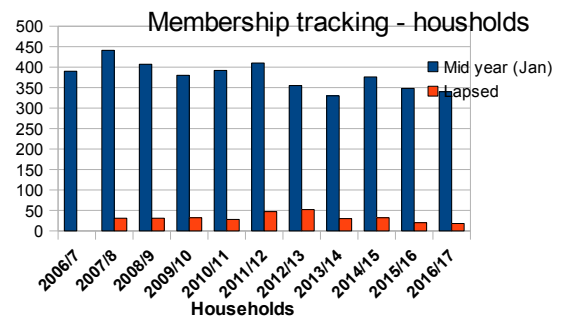
Membership report to 30 June 2023

Pete Cowley
Membership Secretary

Membership changes so far this year: Added - 1 Removed - 16

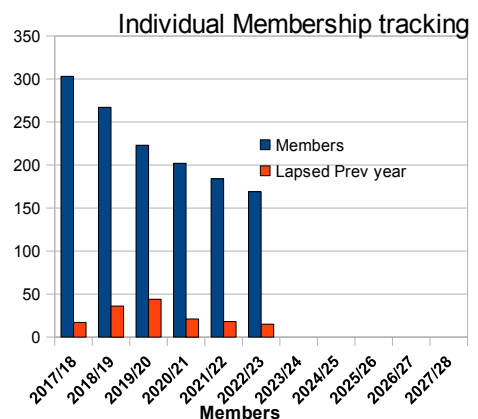
	May 23	Current Month – June 2023					
Year ending	Members	Members	Printed N/L	Email N/L	N.Z.	Foreign	Comments
9999	30	30	4	26	29	7	Gratis memberships
8888	6	6	3	4	5	1	Life members
2025	1	2	1	1	2	0	Paid in advance
2024	18	20	5	16	20	0	Paid in advance
2023	69	68	25	45	68	0	Paid in advance
2022	37	35	2	33	35	0	Paid in advance
2021	8	8	0	5	8	0	Paid in advance
Total Active	169	169	40	130	167	8	total

Yearly Stats	Mid year (Jan)	Lapsed
2006/7	390	
2007/8	441	31
2008/9	407	31
2009/10	380	32
2010/11	392	28
2011/12	410	47
2012/13	355	52
2013/14	330	30
2014/15	376	32
2015/16	348	20
2016/17	340	18



Membership tracking - Individual Members

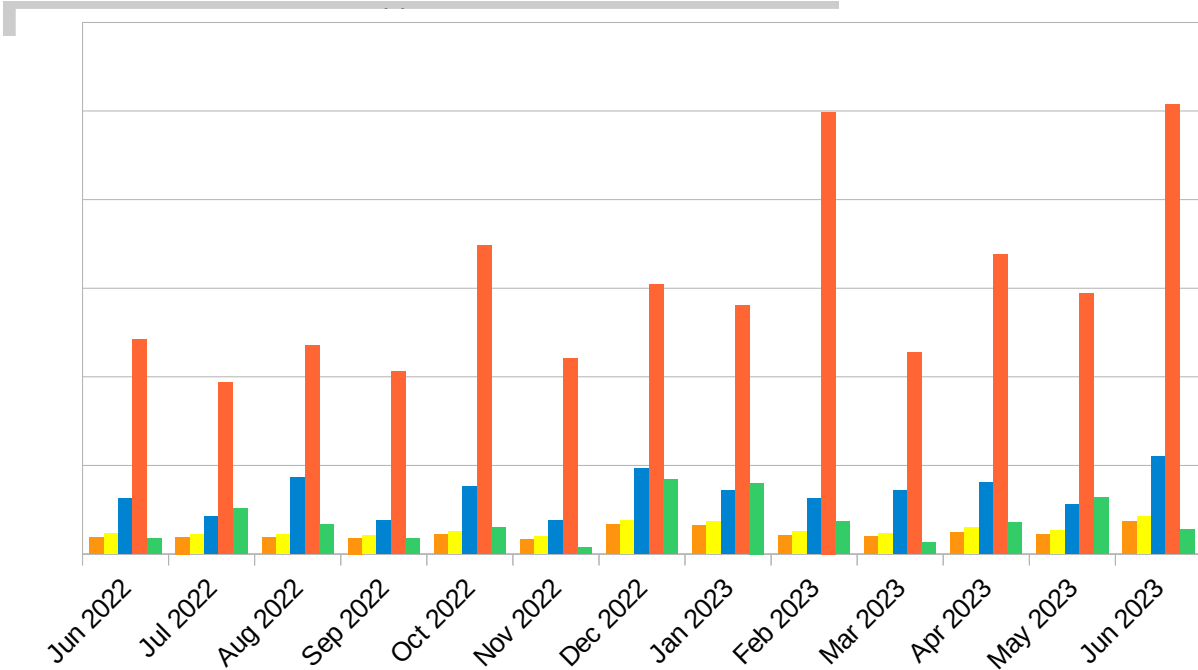
Year	Members	Lapsed Prev year	
2017/18	303	17	
2018/19	267	36	June 19
2019/20	223	44	June 20
2020/21	202	21	June 21
2021/22	184	18	June 22
2022/23	169	15	June 23
2023/24			June 24
2024/25			June 25
2025/26			June 26
2026/27			June 27
2027/28			June 28



SOFiA – website statistics to 30 June 2023

Summary

	Unique Visitors	Number Of visits	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth (MB)
Jun 2023	725	842	2,196	10,146	552.21



MONTH	Unique Visitors	Number Of visits	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth (MB)
Jun 2022	371	472	1,256	4,851	355.97
Jul 2022	385	450	837	3,863	1,025.68
Aug 2022	381	442	1,726	4,705	669.50
Sep 2022	362	426	764	4,112	344.17
Oct 2022	433	507	1,527	6,964	601.91
Nov 2022	328	399	751	4,418	140.14
Dec 2022	672	761	1,932	6,084	1,685.63
Jan 2023	648	729	1,439	5,602	1,602.99
Feb 2023	423	501	1,252	9,978	730.45
Mar 2023	400	456	1,431	4,548	256.93
Apr 2023	487	597	1,624	6,762	704.05
May 2023	438	523	1,120	5,878	1,276.34
Jun 2023	725	842	2,196	10,146	552.21
Total	6,053	7,105	17,855	77,911	9,946

Newsletter Report – SOFiA AGM 2023

We have seen a general increase in email subscriptions to the newsletter and a corresponding decrease in print subscriptions. This year, we bit the bullet and decided to go primarily with an email newsletter. This worked out OK but wasn't as simple as we first thought. We still need a print version, even though that didn't need the careful formatting previously required. It also now involved coordination with the web master. The newsletter editor now provides a plain Word file for the web master to put on the website and a PDF file (easily converted from the Word file) for the print version. In addition, we provide an email newsletter with a brief introduction to each article and a link to the full article on the website.

Recent issues have seen a gratifying increase in the number of articles provided. Long may it continue, but it would be good if the article is created specifically for this newsletter rather than a reprint of something published elsewhere, even though the quality of the reprinted articles is often very high.

The team of proof-readers (Maria Cash, Shirley Dixon, Jocelyn Kirkwood and Yvonne Curtis) have provided an excellent service ever since I became Editor, clarifying unclear content, correcting errors (occasionally major ones). They are entitled to a break and they are invited to resign if they feel like they have had enough. It's not good if volunteering becomes a life sentence! In any case, their continued work will be much appreciated.

Laurie Chisholm 12 August 2023

Local Groups summary 22-23

Local Group activity has been meager last year.

The Auckland group is to be thanked for their use of zoom online meetings. They have now closed with their account, with money going to the Lloyd Geering Trust. Christchurch Group is in recess.

Gisborne/Tairāwhiti under the leadership of Pete Cowley continue to meet regularly.

Other groups such as Napier, Central Otago and Palmerston North meet as individuals or are on the lookout for “progressive Sundays”.

In email responses from local groups’ representatives the importance of the newsletter was most frequently mentioned. Thanks to Laurie and his editorial team.

Mary Ellen Warren