

Sea of Faith Network New Zealand 2015 AGM

Report of the 'Local Groups' convenor

There are seventeen Local Groups listed on the NZ Sea of Faith web site; two are in conjunction with Ephesus and one with a local Unitarian Fellowship. There are quite a few groups of a size to meet in a member's home, ranging up to the Auckland group which will have 25-45 at a meeting. The Northland group takes the prize for distance to travel to a meeting, with members from Rawene to Russell.

No group is like any other. Groups manage their memberships, meetings, and discussion topics to suit their needs. Home-based groups have found videos to be good discussion-starters – DVDs from the Sea of Faith Resource Centre or elsewhere, or one of the increasing number of excellent TED talks. Larger groups use their own members for a specialist or current topic, or to discuss a book of interest, and also use people from their local community to speak on a wide range of topics of interest to SoFers. The 'Living the Questions' series, available from the SoF Resource Centre, has proved very popular with one group – they are working through it a second time.

People can be members of/interact with Sea of Faith in one or a number of ways:

- Pay an annual subscription to the SoF National Steering Committee (national membership)
- Attend the annual National Conference (note, this doesn't require either national or local membership)
- Pay a membership fee to a local group (3 groups have memberships paying fees)
- Attend local meetings
- Be on the local group emailing list

The National Steering Committee sees this flexibility of access as mostly good. However, I suggest the very modest \$20 membership fee to the national body, accessing the SoF national newsletter, is money well-spent. It commits you to nothing but six very good reads each year. All interested folk could be encouraged to subscribe.

The work of the 'Local Groups' convenor is to keep in touch with, and support, the convenors of local SoF groups. These folk do an important job, and excellently. We are looking to meet during the annual conference in Auckland this year. Meeting one another can enhance interactions up and down the country over the rest of the year. We might make this a feature of future conferences, too.

Gretchen Kivell
'Local Groups' convenor
September 2015