

The National Religious Discussion Network

Sea of Faith

Exploring Spirituality, Religion and Ethics

PROGRAMME FOR

THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 6-8,

2017

REFORMATION 2.0

LUTHER LIT A FUSE, WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?



It is 500 years since Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg. This provides a starting point for a consideration of how events unfolded since then, and more especially, how religion and spirituality are evolving in our time. What are the reforming initiatives today? What new spiritual/religious developments are needed in our time as we face a cultural situation and ethical issues that were simply not there in previous centuries?

What needs to be discarded, challenged, or radically renewed?

This year our topic is more related to the development of Christianity than our usual generic approach to religion, largely because western society's history, development and ethics have evolved largely from that wellspring, as has our own, since the arrival of the pakeha. It is not to exclude other influences, but simply to acknowledge the Christian heritage as the mainstream of our cultural development.

THE PROGRAMME

Monday November 6

12:30 – 2:00	Steering and Conference Committees meet over lunch	Pillars
1:00 – 2:45	Registration Desk in operation	Pillars
3:00 – 3:30	Conference Opening	Pillars
3:30 – 4:30	Keynote, Lloyd Geering	Pillars
4:30 – 5:30	Core Groups Meet	See Handout List
5:30 – 6:00	Happy (half) Hour in Pillars Bookstall set up.	Pillars
6:00 – 7:00	Dinner	Dining Room
7:30 – 8:30	AGM	Pillars

Tuesday November 7

7:00 – 8:00	Breakfast	Pillars
8:30 – 9:30	Keynote Rachael Kohn	Pillars
9:30 – 10:30	Core Groups meet	See Handout List
10:30 – 11:00	Morning tea	Pillars
11:00 – 12:00	Keynote, Sue Bradford	Pillars
12:00 – 1:00	Core Groups meet	See Handout List
1:00 – 1:45	Lunch + Bookstall	Pillars
1:45 – 5:30	Electives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Clay Nelson 2:00pm-3:00pm,</i> • <i>Tom Hall 3:30pm-4:30pm,</i> • <i>Doug Sellman 4:30pm-5:30pm.</i> 	Pillars
6:30 – 7:30	Dinner	Pillars
8:00 – 9:15	Entertainment: Wellington City Chorus, Regional Champions in the Sweet Adeline contest	Pillars

Wednesday November 8

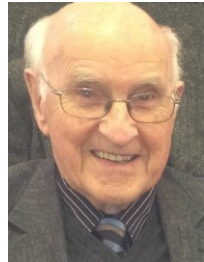
7:00 – 8:00	Breakfast	Dining Room
8:30 – 9:30	Keynote: Hal Taussig	Pillars
9:30 – 10:30	Core Groups meet	See Handout List
10:30 – 11:00	Morning Tea	Pillars
11:00 – 12:30	Panel Discussion	Pillars
12:30 – 1:00	Windup and Intro to 2018	Pillars
1:00 –	Lunch and Departure	Pillars
1:30 –	New Steering Committee meets	Pillars

THE PAPERS AND THE GUEST PRESENTERS

THE KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

Keynote address by Sir Lloyd Geering:

"500 years: From The Reformation of the Church to the Reformulation of (Christian) Faith"



Primitive Christianity quickly became institutionalized in the church, which in turn became increasingly authoritative. By the high middle ages a Papal-ruled bureaucracy, by wielding the power of excommunication, held in its hands the eternal destiny of every Christian. It was this power which Luther challenged by shifting the focal point of Christian allegiance from being in communion within the church to the personal faith of each individual.

The 'one Holy Catholic church' of the West, began to disintegrate as attention shifted from church structures to what constituted genuine Christian belief. A period of intense and often hostile competition led to the 18th century Enlightenment, during which people claimed the right to be free to think for themselves. Orthodox Christian doctrine then became challenged by the accelerating body of knowledge coming to light through both history and science.

By the late 19th century the focus of Christian attention was shifting from church structures to the verbal expression of Christian faith itself. Church organizations are now rapidly declining and face their eventual demise. The vanishing of the supposed supernatural or spiritual world has forced orthodox Christian doctrine to be superseded by a more humanistic form of faith. Christendom is being replaced by the modern secular world, which nevertheless largely honours the human values inherited from its Christian past. Strangely enough, the motto of the Reformation - *sola fide* - (by faith alone) - has taken on a new significance.

Professor Sir Lloyd Geering was born in Canterbury in 1918 and educated in Otago. He holds Honours degrees in Mathematics and Old Testament Language and Literature. Ordained as a Presbyterian minister, he served in Kurow, Dunedin and Wellington. He held Chairs of Old Testament Studies at theological colleges in Brisbane and Dunedin before being appointed as the foundation Professor of Religious Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. From this he retired in 1984. The University of Otago awarded him an Honorary D.D. in 1976 and he received a C.B.E. in the 1987 New Year Honours, PCNZM in 2001 and ONZ in 2007. His major publications include "God in the New World" (1968), "Resurrection - a Symbol of Hope" (1971), "Faith's New Age" (1980), "In the World Today" (1988), "Tomorrow's God" (1994), "The World to Come" (1999), 'Christianity without God' (2002), 'Wrestling with God' (2006), 'Coming back to Earth' (2009), 'Such is Life!' (2010), 'From the Big Bang to God' (2013), 'Reimagining God: The Faith Journey of a Modern Heretic', (2014), 'On Me Bike: Cycling round New Zealand 80 years ago (2015), 'Portholes to the Past: Reflections on the early 20th century (2016).

Lloyd celebrates his 100th birthday on February 26 next year. And so do we!

Keynote address by Rachel Kohn

"The Call to Reform in the World's Religions"

"World religions are known for their resilience and longevity, which is how they can claim the title 'world religion'. Living among different cultures, locations, and times, religions are forced to adapt in order to survive. There is not a single world religion which could be said to be uniform across its extended territories of influence.



When we look around the world today, many religions are forced to respond quickly to their changed circumstances. I will examine some of the ways in which this is happening, and how the adaptations are causing even further changes.

Change is either too fast or too slow depending on where you sit, but I aim to present the versatility as well as the value of religion today."

Dr Rachael Kohn has produced and presented many award winning radio and TV programs on religion, and is the originator of "The Spirit of Things", which is about to complete its 20th year on ABC Radio National. She is a former academic of Religious Studies in Canada, Britain and Australia, and in addition to her Ph.D. (McMaster University 1985, Hamilton, Canada) was also conferred an Honorary Doctor of Letters by the University of New South Wales (2005) for services to the community in aiding understanding of Australia's religiously diverse society. She has published two books (*The New Believers*, *Re-imagining God*; and *Curious Obsessions in the History of Science and Spirituality*) and has published numerous book chapters and articles on religion.

Rachael addressed our Conference in 2013.

Keynote address by Sue Bradford:

"Making it Real; Beyond Reformation to Transformation in Aotearoa 2017".

Over the last three decades New Zealand has evolved into a country where gross inequality, the pursuit of individualism and studied heartlessness on the part of successive governments are accepted as societal norms. Cold charity is preferred to redistributive compassion. Sue Bradford has fought for radical change all her life as a street protestor, community organiser - and parliamentarian. In her talk to our 2017 conference she will share some of her story and reflections on a life of fuse-lighting, before posing a series of challenges about where we might go from here if we would like to conceive not just a reformed but a transformed Aotearoa.



Sue Bradford (born 1 July 1952 in Auckland) is a New Zealand activist, academic, and former New Zealand politician who served as a list Member of Parliament representing the Green Party from 1999 to 2009. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s Bradford had a high profile as an activist against various social and economic reforms pursued by the governments of the day. Accordingly, she became something of a *bête noire* amongst supporters of the right in New Zealand.

Keynote address by Hal Taussig:

“Beautiful, Less Arrogant, and De-Centered Christianities”

Although I personally have not found much inspiration in the historical or religious remnants of the protestant Reformation, I am happy to take the image of “reformation” as a metaphor for the deep intellectual stirrings and creative spiritual power in our present time. I assume that both Christianity and Protestantism are failing throughout much of the world (with perhaps the exceptions of Africa, Korea, and some parts of Latin America). At the same time strikingly creative spiritual, communitarian, social, and intellectual Christian movements have re-emerged over the past 30+ years. I have participated in ways that allow for the overall and drastic decline of conventional Christianity to be celebrated and bade a hearty good-bye.



This—to my mind—does not promise a restoration of Christian privilege or empire. Rather these re-emergent swirls are probably best compared to the minority spiritual and intellectual fervor of medieval monastic movements. Not so much in character or content as in the ways that the social marginalization of monastics often have allowed them to birth beautifully deep spiritualities and incisive intellectual clarity. I look forward to talking descriptively about the wide range of these smart post-modern intellectual clarities and multiple, queer, and subtle spiritual depths; while we think together about bright, less arrogant, and de-centered Christianities.

Prof. Hal Taussig is a post-modern theologian and pastor. He celebrates the vitality of pluralistic Catholic and Protestant communities in North America, and works energetically to expand their spiritual and intellectual reaches. His professorial career has featured experimental and humor-filled masters and Ph.D. level instruction in New Testament and early Christianity for 17 years at the Union Theological Seminary in New York City and more than a decade in Roman Catholic colleges and universities as Professor of Bible.

Of his 14 books, the most recent are *A New New Testament: A 21st Century Bible Combining Traditional and Newly Discovered Texts*; *Re-Reading the Gospel of Mark Amidst Loss and Trauma*; *A New Spiritual Home: Progressive Christianity at the Grass Roots*; and *In the Beginning Was the Meal: Social Experimentation and Early Christian Identity*. While a professor, he co-pastored two long-term churches that rose from the ashes and displayed young congregation members full of social moxy, multi-cultural hilarity, and art-filled innovative worship. He is currently the co-chair of Westar Institute’s Christianity Seminar that is re-writing history of early Christianity, a member of Westar’s Board of Directors, Board Chair of the Tanho Center (on the study of extra-canonical texts), and on the steering committee of the national Society of Biblical Literature’s Seminar on Meals in the Greco-Roman World. Ordained a United Methodist, he currently has an episcopal appointment as a consultant for churches in decline.



ELECTIVE SPEAKERS

These presentations are 'optional extras' – its your choice whether or not you attend.

Elective Lecture by Tom Hall

"The Didache: On to the Past, Back to the Future"



Progressive Christians will no doubt find in the Didache a source of considerable inspiration and optimism. Though probably an early second-century document – and thus later than Paul's authentic letters as well as Q, the Gospel of Thomas, and the four canonical gospels – it reflects a primitive form of Christianity focused on the ethical teachings of Jesus and largely free of the narrative fictions and speculative doctrines that all too soon transformed the Galilean prophet and sage into the mythic hero of a new salvation cult. This long-neglected document will provide food for thought to those who seek to breathe new life into a tradition that very early began to disavow and even impugn its Jewish roots by turning "the religion of Jesus into a religion about Jesus." Last but not least, Didache responds to this Conference's theme, "What needs to be discarded, challenged, or radically renewed?" by implying a goodly number of pertinent suggestions.

Tom Hall is a former English teacher and lay pastor from the small, rural town of Foster, Rhode Island. Active since 1996 in the Westar Institute, home of the Jesus Seminar, he was recently made a life member. He has edited more than sixty-seven books for Polebridge Press and various Westar authors -- including ten for his most admired author, Lloyd Geering -- and is proud to be a member of the New Zealand Sea of Faith Network.

Tom has suggested that attendees might like to have downloaded a useful summary of the Didache which can be found at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0714.htm>

Elective Lecture by Clay Nelson

"Would Jesus want another reformation or a fresh start?"



"The Reformation was not fundamentally about faith but power. The struggle to break the state sanctioned power of the Catholic Church resulted in the fragmentation of Christianity into tribes that justified wars, inquisitions, burning heretics, pogroms and excommunications against other Christians and Jews. All of this was done not for Christ but those in power, be they Protestant or Catholic.

The focus of this session will be to consider and explore a road map to reformation that the historical Jesus might choose to walk in a second, less bloody reformation.

Would Jesus walk a road that requires focussing on who he is versus what he did?

Would Jesus think creating a religion around him was the way to the kingdom of God?

Would Jesus support an institution that has treated the people he cared about abominably for two thousand years?

Would Jesus care about the theological significance of his last meal with his disciples or whether not everyone was invited to the table?

What might he like Reformation 2.0 to look like?"

Clay Nelson, like many clergy of his generation, has struggled with what the church is and what it could be. His formation for ministry was at Virginia Theological Seminary. He served parishes in Western New York, Michigan, Newark and San Diego. In San Diego he served as Canon to the Ordinary. Frustrated with the Episcopal Church's inability to include the LGBTQ community was a major factor in resigning. He jumped ship to work for two Unitarian churches over eight years before immigrating to New Zealand. To his surprise he found himself back under the umbrella of Anglicanism accepting a position at St Matthew-in-the-city where he strongly promoted progressive Christian ideas for nine years. For the past three years he has ministered to the Auckland Unitarian Church.

Chat Group run by Doug Sellman

"Do Fundamentalists Recover?"

Doug Sellman invites you to a discussion session during the "Electives" session on Tuesday afternoon. He describes his offering in these terms:



This meeting will consist of sharing religious experiences.

For the first 20 years of my life I was immersed in a staunchly fundamentalist, yet loving, Christian family in which I absorbed and then committed myself to a set of conservative religious ideas on offer that became deeply embedded in my teenage psyche and which subsequently became very difficult to change my mind on.

When I finally did take the plunge I found myself bereft of the wonderfully secure and motivating world view I had previously relied on for meaning and purpose. The subsequent struggle to make sense of my formative years and ensuing turmoil, and then the gradual calming over more recent years have been significant features of my adult life.

Reading Lloyd Geering's books and then finally meeting the man (virtually considered the Antichrist by my family of origin, all of whom, incidentally, remain fundamentalist Christians), were both of great assistance in my recovery from fundamentalism. I suspect my experience is not dissimilar to that of other comrades' in the Sea of Faith, which got me thinking it might be interesting and perhaps even helpful to have this meeting at our Conference.

I'm not sure whether fundamentalists do fully recover or not, (or whether they even want to!) but that probably depends on what we mean by "fundamentalist" and "recovery" -- terms that we should attempt to clarify on the day

Doug Sellman, MBChB, PhD, FRANZCP, FACHAM, is a psychiatrist and addiction medicine specialist. He has been Director of the National Addiction Centre (NAC), University of Otago, Christchurch, since its inception in 1996, and was promoted within the University to a Personal Chair in 2005. His main work focus in recent years has focussed on alcohol and food, both from an addiction and a public health advocacy perspective but has also published in the area of psychiatry and spirituality. Doug has been a member of the Sea of Faith NZ since 2003, and has a personal interest in Christian fundamentalism.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Well known to all Sea of Faith members as the Newsletter Editor and to Conference participants as the Panel Chairperson, Noel has chaired the now traditional and celebrated Conference Panel discussions since 1997.

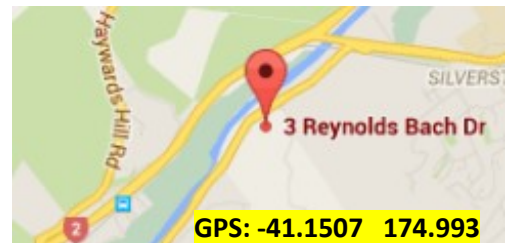
Early in his career Noel took an interest in public speaking which paved the way for his involvement in the spoken media. Since his retirement in 1997, Noel has hosted or chaired current affairs and political discussions on regional television in both Wellington and Auckland. Until late 2013 he hosted "In Conversation" on Auckland's Triangle Television where he recorded 289 episodes over 7 years. Noel has a wide general knowledge and an ongoing interest in the changes that take place in the expression of religion. His debating and television interviewing experience ensures that this panel will be both informative and highly entertaining.



DIRECTIONS TO THE VENUE

Shuttle

There is provision on the Registration Form for you to tell us the times that you plan to fly into or out of Wellington so that we can arrange for the shuttle to be there. We plan to make three trips (probably 10:30am, 12 noon and 1:30pm) from the airport on Monday at a cost of \$20 per person (please pay the driver). A Sea of Faith member will be there with a sign so everyone can stay together. Return timing details will be given at the Conference.



By Car – 4 options

1. If coming from the North over the Rimutakas from the Wairarapa on SH2, follow the motorway until you see a sign to turn left to Silverstream. Go to "Over The River".
2. If coming from the North from the Manawatu, take the Hutt turnoff (left) at the bottom of the Ngauranga Gorge (SH2) and follow it to the Silverstream turn off. Go to "Over the River"
3. If you choose to turn off to the left at Paremata (before Porirua) and go over Haywards Hill Road (SH58) then you will meet a large roundabout at Pauatahanui, eventually meeting the Hutt Road near the Silverstream turnoff. Go to "Over the River".
4. If coming from Wellington city, get on the Motorway (SH2) going North and keep an eye out for Hutt Valley signs and eventually the Silverstream sign. Go to "Over the River".

Over the River

Cross the Hutt river. About 1km on you will meet a roundabout taking you southward, on the left bank of the river and southward away from Silverstream. Go to "Venue: The Retreat" below.

Quit the roundabout at the second exit. This has you heading to Stokes Valley. Follow road signs. Welcome to the Conference!