

## **Media Release**

# **“Drugs and the Meaning of Life” Prof. Doug Sellman**

**Can God be found through drugs?  
Can life be enjoyed without alcohol?**

**These heretical possibilities will be explored in the 7<sup>th</sup> annual All Heretics Day Lecture**

**Prof. Doug Sellman**, MBChB, PhD, FRANZCP, FChAM, is a psychiatrist and addiction medicine specialist. He has been Director of the National Addiction Centre (NAC), University of Otago, Christchurch, a centre which has developed into the lead research and training unit within the national addiction treatment field, dedicated to improving treatment for people with addiction-related problems in Aotearoa New Zealand. He was promoted to a Personal Chair in Psychiatry and Addiction Medicine in 2005. Included amongst his more recent academic interests are exploring the place of hallucinogenic drugs in assisting people with compulsive behavioral problems find new meaning in their lives and highlighting the downside of using alcohol.

## **All Heretics Day**

The word heresy comes from the Greek word “hairesis” meaning “to choose” and is at the heart of Unitarian- Universalist philosophy. We believe that all ideas and beliefs should be subject to the test of reason. Throughout history, from Galileo, through women’s emancipation and civil rights, most significant developments in human endeavour have occurred when a more enlightened worldview was chosen over the prevailing orthodoxy of the day. Over the years many brave and courageous people have lost their lives for promoting ideas that we now accept as true.

Unitarian Universalists believe that the right to choose is important and worth celebrating, hence the establishment of All Heretics Day. It is now in its 7<sup>th</sup> year.

## **Previous All Heretics Day speakers**

**2003 Rev. Dick Weston Jones** talked about Sir Robert Stout. Besides being New Zealand's Premier, Chief Justice and establishing New Zealand University, he was an early New Zealand Unitarian who is also known for promoting the heresy that women should be allowed to vote. He introduced the bill calling for women's suffrage in 1878, 15 years before it became law.

**2004 Professor Lloyd Geering** spoke on his famous heresy trial. Although admitting that he questioned the basic tenets of Christian faith, such as the virgin birth and the resurrection, he confessed to being a failed heretic, as he was acquitted.

**2005 Drs Deborah and Roger Fouts** suggested that the very basis of western civilization is based on the Cartesian delusion that we are inherently superior to all the animals because we have language. After 38 years working with chimpanzees, who communicate using American Sign Language, they have reached a different conclusion.

**2006 Professor Bill Willmott**, a Quaker sociologist, looked at what philosophical basis atheists could claim for altruism and whether atheists could speak of the spirit guiding their actions

**2007 Juliet Batten** presented a case for realigning our calendar of religious celebrations to fit with the southern hemisphere seasons, so that they resonated with the natural world.

**2009 Dr Ghazala Anwar** looked at the Quranic injunction that there be no compulsion in religion, and the effect that that could have on Quranic studies.

**The 7<sup>th</sup> All Heretics Day Lecture  
“Drugs and the Meaning of life”  
7pm Sunday April 5  
Rolleston Theatre,  
University of Otago, Christchurch  
(Christchurch Hospital)**

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