

The School of Theology

cordially invites you to

“Health, Wealth or Wisdom? Religion and the Paradox of Prosperity”

Professor Elaine Graham

VENUE: ClockT018, Clock Tower
22 Princes Street

The University of Auckland.

DATE/TIME: Wednesday 13th August, 6.00 p.m.

COST: Koha (donation).

Growing prosperity since 1945 in developed economies is now being shared increasingly by developing economies. Yet experience and research widely recognise that above certain income levels, greater prosperity is not matched by greater happiness, but is accompanied by greater social and individual distress, manifested for example in increasing crime and ill-health (particularly mental). Much evidence now also connects these trends with levels of inequality in society.



Alongside these developments has been the re-emergence of religion globally, including into public life, and more recently matched by the growing interest, especially in the West, in the religious contribution to ‘social capital’, or the capacity to build social networks within and across various parts of civil society. It is the potential link between this latter development and the growing concern over the paradox of prosperity for human wellbeing which forms the basis of this lecture, which will focus on interacting this so-called ‘happiness hypothesis’ with a consideration of the potential role and contribution of religious values and organisations.

Following a brief introduction to the literature on happiness and well-being, spearheaded by scholars such as Richard Layard, Professor Graham will examine the possible contribution of religion, and Christian theology in particular, to the debate. She wishes to ask

what Christianity has to contribute to the current debate about well-being, and in particular to focus on specific aspects of religious social capital and virtue ethics in terms of what they might have to say. Yet, the associated question must also be whether such demonstrations and accounts of human flourishing and the good life still have any bearing in the wider public domain; and what ‘rules of engagement’ might need to be articulated in any dialogue between religious visions of happiness, health and well-being and a pluralist society.

For further information please contact Anna Ma

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1883-2008: Celebrating 125 Year

Workshop
August 2nd 10.00am till 3.00pm
St David's Presbyterian Church
Khyber Pass Rd Grafton

"What makes a good city? Lessons from the Commission on Urban Life & Faith."

The aim of this workshop is for Professor Graham to facilitate dialogue in the hope that this will enable those present to consider issues such as social capital, religion & civil society, plus questions of happiness and well-being which is one way into the issue of urban planning. The report, "Faithful Cities" and other material will be available for participants to read in advance.

The 2008 Ferguson Lecture
August 8th 7.00pm
St David's Presbyterian Church
Khyber Pass Rd Grafton

"Doing God? Public Faith and Secular Reason".

In the lecture, Professor Graham will look at the relationship between religion and politics in the West, through the example of the public stances of a number of prominent politicians around issues of personal faith and public values. She will focus initially on Tony Blair, former Prime Minister of the UK, but also consider current or aspirant world leaders: Kevin Rudd, Barack Obama and Helen Clark. Blair, Rudd and Obama all profess a personal Christian faith but Clark describes herself as agnostic. In the process Professor Graham will explore what we can learn from the way they negotiate issues of personal faith, religious diversity and secularism, and what it tells us about the way faith-based organizations might relate to public issues and contribute to civil society in a post-Christian era.

School Of Theology Lecture
August 13th 6.00pm
Room 018 Clock Tower
22 Prince Street
University of Auckland

"Health, Wealth or Wisdom? Religion and the Paradox of Prosperity"

Following a brief introduction to the literature on happiness and well-being, Professor Graham will examine the possible contribution of religion, and Christian theology in particular, to the debate surrounding the so-called 'happiness hypothesis' with a consideration of the potential role and contribution of religious values and organizations. What has Christianity to say in any dialogue between religious visions of happiness, health and well-being and a pluralist society.