



Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship
PO Box 1356, Lane Cove NSW 1595
Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre
16-18 Fitzroy Street, Kirribilli
(near Milsons Point Station)
Tel: (02) 9428 2244

Website: www.sydneynunitarians.org
Editor: Jan Tendys

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Schedule of Services

Services are held every Sunday at 10:30 at Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre

6 May Colin Whatmough The Unitarian Principle – the goal of world community with peace, liberty and Justice.

Colin will be looking at US foreign policy, survival and stark realities.

13 May Jan Tendys Climate Change—Is there any basis for Optimism?

Technological innovation has been very impressive but there is more to be tackled.

20 May Dr Andrew Usher Sorrow passes and we remain.

A response by Henry James to the difficulties of life.

27 May Warren Simmons (debut talk) The Farther Reaches of Human Nature?

I have stolen the title from a book, but the question mark is all my own work!

This is a very personal account of a visitor to my home, unsolicited and unexpected, invisible, yet more real than anyone I have ever met. I will tell you the “what”, although much of this is ineffable and I must resort to metaphor to communicate it. The “who” and the “why” are much harder to account for, and you will be left to your own judgements, as indeed I have been.

An intensive period of research followed this experience and time allowing, I will share as much as I can. Plotinus is helpful (3rd Cent. AD); the desert fathers (6th Cent. AD) likewise; Rudolph Otto is right on the money; Krishnamurti, Henry Geiger, Abraham Maslow all have contributions to make. It is a very old story really but one observed in a modern context.

3 June Candace Parks The floating life.

Going with the flow sounds nice, until the river tries to kill you.

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“Mother Teresa’s Poem ‘Anyway’”

It was reportedly inscribed on the wall of Mother Teresa's children's home in Calcutta, and attributed to her. However, an article in the New York Times has since reported (March 8, 2002) that the original version of this poem was written by Kent M. Keith in 1968.

“Anyway” fitted in well with Andrew Usher’s last talk and I received a request to put it into *Esprit* so you’ll find one version of it on p.2 (there’s more than one attributed to the saint). The original Keith version is on <http://www.paradoxicalcommandments.com/> JT

Jottings

Jan Tendys

I received a letter from Jim Scarfe who was more or less resigned to not coming to our services anymore because his difficulty hearing makes the talk a write-off for him & interaction with other people a hit-or-miss affair.

However, his interest in Islam led him to let me know he would be coming in for Morandir Armson's talk on that subject. Candace has been trying to get speakers to bring along an extra copy of their talk for Jim. This is a bit onerous for those speakers who talk with no or very few notes, or those whose poor eyesight makes computer/printer use difficult. However, that doesn't apply to most of us.

Morandir was able to provide Jim with a copy of his talk, which did give him a sense of participating in the service - not quite as good as listening because Morandir does a fair bit of adlibbing as do some other speakers - but useful none the less..

Jim, we know you come a considerable distance and you're no Spring chicken anymore, so with your hearing loss it is very understandable if you do not make it often to the Fellowship. Perhaps you could send an email to me when you are coming and I will try to tee up a print-out of the talk for the day if that's possible.

We have been doing particularly well with guest speakers this year and Rev. Rex Hunt was no exception. We learnt that "Eearth" was a suggested new name for our planet, which has already changed from the Earth as seen by early astronauts and immortalised in the famous "Earth Rising" and "Blue Marble" photos. Yet sharing as we do in the creativity of the universe, we should maintain our hope for the future and determination to do better.

"Who is that distinguished-looking elderly man?" Rev. Douglas Webster was able to visit us and rather wowed one of our newer members. We hope some day Vina will be able to come with him.

Arthur de Munitiz came for the Islam talk and wondered if Morandir was a Muslim. Actually he is a Pagan who has designed his own religion, as many of the young are doing these days. Of course, you're allowed to do

just that in Unitarianism but the young are not flocking to us! Anybody into hip-hop? Or is that passé?

GINNA was able to visit her very ill father and now her daughter, who has been working in Afghanistan, has been able to visit him too. Ill health has been following our little group for a while. I am always amazed by our valiant seniors.

Sherman, I'm told you are very happy in your new job. Congratulations.

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Anyway

People are often unreasonable, illogical and self centred;

Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives;

Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies;

Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you;

Be honest and frank anyway.

What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight;

Build anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous;

Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow;

Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough;

Give the world the best you've got anyway.

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and your God;

It was never between you and them anyway.

Seeing ourselves as another saw us.

The following is written by E.E. Kellett. Jim Scarfe thinks Kellett may have been a Church of England Minister. He was certainly a well known literary figure in the first half of the twentieth century. This extract is taken from a section of his A Short History of Religions, first published in 1933. Emphases by present editor:JT.

It is not easy to define UNITARIANISM, for the best theologians of that denomination are unwilling to be bound, or to bind others, by any creed, and leave room for the development of ideas not merely in the society itself but in the individual member. We thus find among Unitarians opinions ranging from an Arianism closely approaching orthodoxy to beliefs in which Christ is reduced to the status of a great and holy man, purer and higher than Socrates or Zoroaster, but of essentially the same kind. Every Unitarian, then, has the right, and exercises the right, of tracing his beliefs to any master or to none. Some may incline to the view of the third-century presbyter SABELLIUS, to whom the three Persons of the Trinity were but aspects of the one Monad, and whose favourite image for the mystery was the sun as the Father, the light as the Son, and the heat as the Holy Ghost. (1) Others may recognise their views as much the same with those ascribed to Arian or semi-Arian heretics of the fourth and fifth centuries. Yet others, like the well-known Andrews Norton, may derive their opinions from a study of the Scriptures, and may own no other teacher.(2)

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(1) Sabellius was excommunicated in A.D. 261; but his opinions have never died out. They resemble those of Schleiermacher and Herder; and I have myself heard a Church of England clergyman preach them (using the very illustration mentioned above) from the pulpit of a consecrated church.

(2) Norton's "Reasons for not believing the Doctrines of Trinitarians" is almost entirely based on the Bible: he was a thorough believer in inspiration and in the supernatural, but could find no evidence for the Trinity in the sacred books.

Thought, among Unitarians, is perhaps freer than in any Church that has ever existed, and the thinkers more independent. Everyone is nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri (*I am not bound to swear in the words of any master. Horace, Epistle 1/1:14 (to Maecenas) JT*), and thus it is quite impossible to mention any name as that of the father of the church: nor is "church" perhaps the best word to describe a society which is deliberately compacted very loosely. But, though Unitarians do not swear to the tenets of any men, they are willing to learn from them, and it may be legitimate to mention names they hold in honour, if none can be mentioned which they idolise. Strangely enough, Servetus is rarely referred to by modern Unitarians. The Reformer whom it is less dangerous to call their master than any other is Faustus Socinus—a name at one time the very type of heresy. Socinus is an example of the freedom of speculation which, as I said above, the Reformers detested but of which they were themselves the originators. Born in 1539 at Siena, he was compelled by family circumstances to migrate to Zurich. Here, while working through the papers of his uncle Laelius, a man no less hardy in his heresies than Faustus, he found statements and arguments which set him thinking, and suggested to him theories which he afterwards drew out in full. At a very early age—in revolutionary times men are often extraordinarily precocious—he published some of these views, but anonymously. As the authorship and the heresy became known, he thought it advisable to leave Western Europe and betake himself to the more congenial atmosphere of Poland, where there was already a society of Anabaptist Unitarians, and where a strange chaos of beliefs was to be found. He was unable to join the Anabaptists, who insisted on his re-baptism; and—despite serious persecution—busied himself with the propagation of his peculiar views. Such was his success that they were accepted in 1603 by the synod of Rakow, and he was engaged after the fashion of the time, in formulating them in a catechism when, in the next year, he died. The catechism was finished and published soon afterwards by some of his friends.

Socinus based his system, boldly and uncompromisingly, upon reason,

which, to him, is man's supreme gift. By reason, we decide that the Scriptures are inspired, and that miracles are credible. We therefore accept what the Scriptures tell us, but not on the authority of Pope, or Church, or the witness of any other Christian; where the Scriptures tell us things above reason; we admit them, but on rational grounds, for they can never contradict reason. But the doctrine of the Trinity, and that of the union of the divine nature with the human in Christ, are contrary to reason, and are therefore false. We are not, however, in this respect put to the task of reconciling reason with revelation, for the doctrine of the Trinity is not to be found in the Bible, which distinctly asserts that God is one. Those proof texts so often adduced by Trinitarians are all misinterpreted: the three "Holies" in the sixth chapter of Isaiah are merely emphatic; of the three men who visited Abraham before the destruction of Sodom only one is called Lord; and the Three Witnesses text in the Epistle of John is spurious. Christ is more than man, but he is not divine; when he said "I and my Father are one," he simply meant that they were one in will and intent, as we say two people are of one mind. In a work on St. John's Gospel, the stronghold of the Trinitarians, Socinus subjects every supposed proof of Christ's divinity to searching analysis, and reaches the conclusion that there is not one word which, properly understood, or rationally interpreted, asserts the doctrine. **Everywhere, in fact, Socinus shows himself the father of modern Rationalism, maintaining the right and duty of testing everything by the touch-stone of reason: and readers of the eighteenth-century Deists will notice many points, apart from his strict acceptance of Scripture, in which he anticipates their ideas.**

Unitarianism has never been popular, and many men who have held Unitarian views have never called themselves by the name. When the Toleration Act was passed, a declaration of belief in the Trinity was exacted. But, by a gradual and insensible process, the Presbyterian Dissenters who received the benefit of that Act became infected with Socinian ideas, and the descendants of men who would have burnt Socinians at the stake preached Socinian doctrines. Priestley and Price, for instance, who

occupied Presbyterian pulpits, were Unitarians, and Priestley was attacked as such by Bishop Horsley. Later, such was the unpopularity of the sect, that a determined effort was made to deprive them of their chapels and endowments on the ground that the preachers did not hold the views of the original founders. This attempt was foiled by the Dissenters' Chapels Bill of 1844, passed by Sir Robert Peel with the weighty support of Macaulay and other enlightened Whigs.

Since then, they have been unmo-
 lested, but the strange unpopularity continues, nor, though one of the most intellectual of Churches, do they largely increase their numbers. Many of their ministers maintain themselves by lecturing and writing, their congregations being too small to provide adequate salaries. The power of the creed or no-creed which they profess, however, is not to be reckoned by the number of open adherents. **There have been, and are, thousands of Unitarians who are nominally members of other Churches, and thousands besides who belong to no Church at all.** There have been men like Milton, Arian in opinion, but not attending public worship; laymen of the Church of England like Isaac Newton, who privately incline to Unitarian views; clergymen like Samuel Clarke, who are "unsound" on the Trinity, or like Conyers Middleton, who believe in "Free Inquiry" while still holding preferments: and there still are such men. Neither Jowett nor Dean Stanley would have been out of place in a Unitarian pulpit. Liddon's Bampton Lectures on the Divinity of Christ were answered by a Church of England clergyman who went further in denial than Socinus, and was less of a Trinitarian than Martineau. Dr. Edwin Abbott, the author of the Kernel and the Husk, in which the husk was the miraculous, was a Church of England minister, and stated that he knew personally four hundred of his brethren who substantially agreed with him. It is hard to distinguish the views of many Modernist churchmen from those of certain Unitarians. In the orthodox Nonconformist churches there are Unitarian laymen, who, being "sensible men" keep their ideas to themselves.

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Contributed by Jim Scarfe. Next month: Kellett looks at the US scene.

What Love means to 4 - 8 year olds...

A group of professional people posed this question to a group of 4 to 8 year-olds ,
'What does love mean?'

'When my grandmother got arthritis , she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore.. So my grandfather does it for her all the time , even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love.'

Rebecca- age 8

'When someone loves you , the way they say your name is different.
You just know that your name is safe in their mouth.'

Billy - age 4

'Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other.'

Karl - age 5

'Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your French fries without making them give you any of theirs.'

Chrissy - age 6

'Love is what makes you smile when you're tired.'

Terri - age 4

'Love is when my mommy makes coffee for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him , to make sure the taste is OK.'

Danny - age 7

'Love is when you kiss all the time. Then when you get tired of kissing , you still want to be together and you talk more. My Mommy and Daddy are like that.

They look gross when they kiss'

Emily - age 8

'Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen.'

Bobby - age 7

(Wow!)

'If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you hate , '

Nikka - age 6

(we need a few million more Nikka's on this planet)

'Love is when you tell a guy you like his shirt , then he wears it everyday.'

Noelle - age 7

'Love is like a little old woman and a little old man who are still friends even after they know each other so well.'

Tommy - age 6

'During my piano recital , I was on a stage and I was scared. I looked at all the people watching me and saw my daddy waving and smiling.

He was the only one doing that. I wasn't scared anymore.'

Cindy - age 8

'My mommy loves me more than anybody
You don't see anyone else kissing me to sleep at night.'

Clare - age 6

'Love is when Mommy gives Daddy the best piece of chicken.'

Elaine-age 5

'Love is when Mommy sees Daddy smelly and sweaty and still says he is handsomer than Robert Redford .'

Chris - age 7

'Love is when your puppy licks your face even after you left him alone all day.'

Mary Ann - age 4

'I know my older sister loves me because she gives me all her old clothes and has to go out and buy new ones.'

Lauren - age 4

'When you love somebody , your eyelashes go up and down and little stars come out of you.'

Karen - age 7

(what an image)

'Love is when Mommy sees Daddy on the toilet and she doesn't think it's gross.'

Mark - age 6

'You really shouldn't say 'I love you' unless you mean it. But if you mean it , you should say it a lot. People forget.'

Jessica - age 8

And the final one was a four year old child whose next door neighbor was an elderly gentleman who had recently lost his wife.

Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old gentleman's yard, climbed onto his lap, and just sat there.

When his Mother asked what he had said to the neighbor, the little boy said ,

'Nothing, I just helped him cry.'

Contributed by Candace Parks

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Future changes

(An extract from a discussion by Rob Vertessy, Aust Bureau of Meteorology and Megan Clark, Chief Exec Officer CSIRO, of the paper: State of the Climate 2012, released 14 March, 2012).

Australian average temperatures are projected to rise by 0.6 to 1.5 °C by 2030 when compared with the climate of 1980 to 1999. The warming is projected to be in the range of 1.0 to 5.0 °C by 2070 if global greenhouse gas emissions are within the range of projected future emission scenarios considered by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. These changes will be felt through an increase in the number of hot days and warm nights, and a decline in cool days and cold nights.

Climate models suggest long-term drying over southern areas during winter and over southern and eastern areas during spring. This will be superimposed on large natural variability, so wet years are likely to become less frequent and dry years more frequent. Droughts are expected to become more frequent in southern Australia; however, periods of heavy rainfall are still likely to occur.

Models generally indicate an increase in

rainfall near the equator globally, but the direction of projected changes to average rainfall over northern Australia is unclear as there is a lack of consensus among the models.

For Australia as a whole, an increase in the number of dry days is expected, but it is also likely that rainfall will be heavier during wet periods.

It is likely (with more than 66% probability) that there will be fewer tropical cyclones in the Australian region, on average, but the proportion of intense cyclones is expected to increase.

CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology will continue to provide observations, projections, research, and analysis so that Australia's responses are underpinned by science of the highest quality.

A list of peer-reviewed references underpinning State of the Climate 2012 can be found on the CSIRO website.

Read whole article:

<http://theconversation.edu.au/state-of-the-climate-2012-5831>

Taken from **The Conversation** blog.

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One of NASA's "Blue Marble" series of our planet as seen from space.



Where angels might well fear to tread.

Jan Tendys

Still on my "to do" list is reading Bigger or Better? Australia's population debate, by Professor Ian Lowe. Nevertheless, I thought I'd put down some ideas on this very complex subject that might stimulate further debate.

Many Australians are aware of factors such as how Australia's topsoils are so much thinner on the average than soils elsewhere and how our rainfall patterns are already capricious and likely to become more so. With climate change, the overall Australian climate seems likely to be even warmer and drier with occasional even heavier flooding.

At present, refugees are a small part of our large immigration intake. By far the highest increase has been in the skilled migration category. However, it may be that climate change will bring lots and lots of climate refugees. What do we do? Send out the navy to sink them?

I would accept the ALP's Malaysian solution if it could be shown that it would improve Human Rights in Malaysia generally and the situation of refugees already there, by establishing a co-operative understanding between our two countries. Unfortunately events are not shaping up along those lines. Only recently Malaysia sent back to Saudi Arabia a young man who merely aired his theological doubts on Twitter. Saudi Arabia is quite likely to charge him with blasphemy, which can carry the death penalty.

Perhaps the Malaysian solution could become the first step to a wider regional solution. However, it would have to square with our Human Rights ideals.

If you fly along Australia's coasts it seems like miles of untouched bush in places, although I am told every skerrick has been logged of old growth timber. Sustainable population advocates often exaggerate, in my opinion, but then so do our multicultural affairs people who want to tag as racist everyone who doubts that our high immigration is a long term benefit. (It does raise the question - of benefit to whom?)

In the long run, we may have little choice. The ideal of a small Australia where

Australia's flora and fauna can be preserved much as they are now, may be unachievable if we are to retain our compassion for human beings in the realities of the times ahead. It does look as though some species will have to be preserved in zoos so as to allow the human species to expand.

Or perhaps technology will come to our rescue, for example by providing new ways of generating power, making very large cities more liveable, improving farming etc.

At the present time we must distinguish carefully between refugees, overseas workers in Australia and ordinary immigrants. I suspect the former are copping the brunt of dissatisfaction with the high immigration intake and the many and varied ways we allow for non-migrant, overseas workers to work here legally. Refugees are not to blame for the dislocations of our whole growth mentality. That's not to suggest Australians should switch to taking their dissatisfactions out on migrants or overseas workers! It is to suggest that asylum seekers, whether they come by plane or by boat, should be offered a fair go, and that we have to work out more satisfactory overall population policies. We need to limit numbers where we can so as to have some places in reserve for the future. Avoiding juggernaut growth is also necessary to lower carbon emissions. .

There is also no shame in being concerned for the welfare of those who already call Australia home. The impact of globalisation on Australian manufacturing and issues around who gets what jobs complicates matters, as does an aging population.

An earlier discussion of these questions led by Geoff Matthews concluded that if we could decentralise our economy more it would at least ease the growing pains of cities. You may wish to reread his website contribution and even leave a comment. :

<http://sydneyunitarians.com/news-services/blog/page/3/>

Unitarians are concerned, I believe, about how we retain our compassion faced with the quite real questions - maintaining sustainability going into the future and border security.

Now, I wonder who among my family would like Lowe's book for Christmas, so I can read it first?

“Chant for the Seasons”

Summer-time has turned the star-wheel,
autumn is upon us. (Repeat)
Sweet the angling sun,
sweet upon the air
the smell of blue mist rising.
Summer-time has turned the star-wheel,
autumn is upon us.
Glorious the trees,
glorious the sight
of rust leaves, falling.
Summer-time has turned the star-wheel,
autumn is upon us.

This is part of a hymn to be found in our “Singing the Living Tradition” but I came across it on the website of Rex Hunt www.rexaehuntptogressive.com where all manner of interesting things are to be found - not to mention a treasure trove of sermons which Rex has invited Spirit of Life members to use. Thank you, Rex! *JT*

Do you have a topic of a spiritual nature that you would like to share with the congregation?

As Unitarians, we support an “Open Pulpit” and invite members of the congregation to lead the service if they so wish.

Just let Ginna or Janine know what you would like to speak about and when you are available and we will fit you into the schedule.

Also, please feel free to give us your feedback on any of the services. This is the best way to ensure the services address the needs of the congregation.

Would you care to join us? Membership is open to all adults and includes this newsletter.

If you would like to join us as an active member of Spirit of Life, please ring 9428-2244, consult our website sydneyunitarians.com or speak to one of our members before or after the Sunday service. Please note that all membership applications are subject to approval at a meeting of the Committee.

If you have a news item or written article you believe would be of interest to the congregation, we invite you to submit it for publication.

It would be helpful if items for publication, including articles and talk topics with themes could reach Jan by the 15th of each month.

Variations to this timetable may be necessitated by circumstances.

Preferred method is as an MS-WORD attached to email to jtendys@bigpond.com

Hardcopy submissions can be hand-delivered to Jan or posted to:

Spirit of Life
PO Box 1356
LANE COVE NSW 1595