



Schedule of Services

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

5th April, Morandir Armson, "The Greatest Story Ever Told?"

The story of the passion, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the central narrative of Christianity. But to what extent is this narrative based on a historic reality? This talk will focus on the Biblical narrative of Easter, the historical situation of 1st Century Palestine, and the many Pagan traditions which echo the story of Easter.

12th April, Martin Horlacher, "Sins of the Fathers."

The Christian doctrine of original sin has had a lasting and profound impact upon humanity, and not always for the better. But does this need to continue to be the case?

19th April, Susan Patterson and Robert Woog, "A Coherent Conversation on War."

Framed by the Celebrations of the 100th Anniversary of the ANZAC Landing on Gallipoli, Susan Patterson and Robert Woog will lead the congregation in a Coherent Conversation about war. Is war avoidable? Is it unavoidable? Is it part of our human nature? Our DNA? We will establish the foundation of the conversation by examining four necessities of human life: Resources, Identity, Power, and Hope. Then we will include our audience in this self-referential, permissive conversation, discovering and exploring and seeking an emergent understanding of our theme. Given whatever end point we arrive at, we will conclude with possible warnings and personal commitments toward our topic.

26th April John Cusack, To be announced.

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**Re story pp. 6-7 What is fossil fuels divestment? It is the selling of shares in any company that produces fossil fuels, chiefly coal, oil and gas. The Melbourne Unitarian Church has done this. The principal idea is to signify disapproval of the continued use of these fuels which are the main producers of greenhouse gases which is causing climate change. An alternative is to turn up at shareholders meeting and argue for research and development into carbon-capture-and-storage (CCS), a technology that would allow the deposition of carbon dioxide and other gases into underground spaces. There is some doubt as to whether CCS is attainable.**

## A natural nuclear reactor

This comes from the site:

<http://nuclearinfo.net/Nuclearpower>

which has sections on nuclear waste & other challenges.

### About this site

This website was developed by a group of Physicists from the School of Physics at the University of Melbourne in Australia. The aim is to provide authoritative information about Nuclear Power. The group has no particular vested interest in Nuclear Power other than to ensure that people fully understand the risks and benefits of both employing or not employing Nuclear Power for energy generation. The information has been obtained with quantitative analysis and has been subject to peer-review following the Scientific Method. To this end Scientists and Professionals from different fields were invited to review the site. We have strived to make our conclusions as transparent as possible and have made sure that readers can obtain the source materials and can repeat the calculations that underlie our text. This site is under continuous revision and is updated as more information becomes available.)

Eventual final disposal of nuclear waste means that the radioactive isotopes will be buried (with appropriate barriers - see "Final disposal" above\*) in an appropriate disposal site for a very long time. One of the serious questions we should consider is: are there going to be any problems far in the future associated with the burial of the waste. The system for final waste disposal is usually based on naturally occurring phenomena. One such natural analogue is naturally occurring nuclear reactors in Gabon, West Africa in the Oklo mine called the Oklo nuclear reactors.

About 1.7 billion years ago, deep underground in Africa, favorable natural conditions prompted nuclear reactions to take place. These natural conditions were sufficient amounts of Uranium-235 and the evolution of plants which subsequently caused rainwater to filter down through cracks in rocks. The water was necessary to slow down the neutrons emitted via uranium decay so that they could

interact with other particles and produce nuclear chain reactions. The reactors operated for about 1 million years. The reactions stopped because the uranium depleted to amounts that were too small to keep the reactions going.

It has been shown that the Oklo reactors fissioned Uranium-238, Uranium-235 and Plutonium-239. This is exactly the elements that are fissioned in today's man-made nuclear reactors. Note also that there was no Plutonium-239 on earth when the Oklo reactors formed. This means that the reactors themselves must have produced this isotope. This is also the case for man-made nuclear reactors.

Once the natural reactors burned out they left radioactive nuclear waste. This waste is very similar to the waste generated by nuclear power stations. The nuclear waste was held in place deep underground by granite, sandstone and clays surrounding the reactors' site. The important point is that the waste has not moved much over approximately 2 billion years (see the fact sheet from Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management, USA and the article by Walton and Cowan from the "Proceedings of a Symposium on the Oklo Phenomenon", 1975 listed in the bibliography at the end of this section).

The Oklo reactors give us an opportunity to observe the effects of storing waste deep underground for billions of years. By analyzing the remains of these ancient natural nuclear reactors and gaining an understanding of the conditions needed to secure and contain the nuclear waste, we can apply the same techniques to the final disposal of man-made nuclear reactor high level waste. The study of the Oklo nuclear reactors means that we can have reasonable confidence in final disposal.

\*ie in the main body of the site's information.

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The contributors to the site are named & bibliography given. However, the site has not been updated since 2010 *JT*

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**This will be a year when we will be doing some sober thinking on the subject of war** (do come along to our 19 April "A Coherent Discussion on War").

It may be time to review the life of a wartime UK Prime Minister whom we are not usually keen to claim as a Unitarian. *JT*

## Neville Chamberlain

(Arthur) Neville Chamberlain (March 18, 1869-November 9, 1940), Prime Minister of Great Britain, was chiefly associated with the European policy of appeasement towards the expansionism of Adolf Hitler in the 1930s. His father Joseph Chamberlain was the most influential figure in British political life in the 1890s and his elder brother Austen was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1925 for his work in the creation of the Locarno Pact. Joseph, Austen, and Neville are unique in the political life of Western democracies; there are no other examples of where a father and his two sons have held such high office in a major state with each exerting a strong influence on the international stage.

Neville was born in Birmingham, the son of Joseph Chamberlain and his second wife Florence Kenrick. The deaths of both wives in childbirth produced such a gloom and bleakness in Joseph that in 1875, when his son Neville was six, he lost his personal faith. Joseph did not, however, relinquish his long held public Unitarian affiliation and principles. This duality in his father's attitude no doubt greatly influenced his sons. **Neville, equally attached to and apprehensive of his father, was brought up as a Unitarian at the Church of the Messiah, Birmingham. Joseph never required religious adherence of his children. Rejecting creeds and possessing a cold rationality, he encouraged strong personal independence and an anti-authoritarian approach to practical issues. He advised his children to tell the truth, to do what they are told, to question afterwards if necessary, and, whatever they did, to do it well. You bore your own problems: this was a belief that Neville took to extreme lengths. Unitarians were encouraged to not show emotion or affec-**

**tion in public. This was a mark of the Chamberlains.**

While attending Rugby School chapel, Neville refused to face the altar during the reading of the creed. Upon his return home from Rugby he may have briefly taught Unitarian Sunday school. There is no evidence that Neville attended Unitarian services, apart from funerals, during his adult life. Nor did he subscribe to the Church of the Messiah, though until the 1930s he gave small sums in support of the Sunday school and benevolent work. He did not take up membership in any other church or chapel, nor did he ever claim to be Christian or religious. He disliked attending worship services of any kind and showed no interest in organized religion.

Chamberlain took the Unitarian principles taught by his family in a social and political direction. His concern for the condition of humanity arose from his belief in a good and kind God, that man was not of essence evil and bound for eternal damnation, but could progress. This affirmation had social implications for commercially successful Unitarians, for, as one of Neville's cousins pointed out, 'We always understood as children that as our lives had fallen in pleasant places it behoved us the more to do what we could to improve the lot of those less happily placed.'

Following Rugby, Neville went to Mason College (later the basis for the University of Birmingham, which his father did so much to found). Here he studied the sciences, which neither interested nor motivated him. On entering an accountancy firm he was far more successful. In 1890 Joseph sent his sons to the Bahamas to assess a project to grow sisal. In 1891 Neville returned to superintend the operation. In 1896, after it had failed, Neville returned to England.

From 1897 to 1916 Chamberlain devoted himself to business, directing or owning several manufacturing firms in Birmingham, making metal, small arms, and ships' berths. **In all his activities he was an innovator in welfare provision and in pensions, expressing a social conscience and commitment.**

In 1911, Chamberlain married Anne Vere Cole, to whom he was devoted for the rest of his life. They had two children.

Chamberlain was elected to Birmingham City Council in 1911 and in 1915 became Lord Mayor. Quickly making an impact, he played a signal part in the foundation of the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and the Birmingham Municipal Bank. In 1916 the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, appointed him Director General of National Service, a new post whose purpose was to recruit volunteers for war work. This proved to be a poisoned chalice, a job in which he was set up for failure, in part because he lacked a seat in Parliament and experience in national government. Moreover, Lloyd George disliked Chamberlain, and the feeling was reciprocated. In the following year Chamberlain resigned.

In 1918 Chamberlain was elected to the House of Commons as a Conservative member for Birmingham, Ladywood, though he still held radical social opinions. He asked himself, 'How can a man of nearly 50, enter the House with this stigma upon him, hope to achieve anything?' Nevertheless, his rise in government was swift. In 1922 he was appointed Postmaster General, and a few months later, Minister of Health, with a seat in the Cabinet. He quickly revolutionised the control of rents and housing provision for the poor. The next year, under Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, he became Chancellor of the Exchequer. In just six years from first election to Parliament he had become one of the key figures in the government. In late 1923 the Conservative government fell, but a year later, with Baldwin back as Prime Minister, both Neville and his brother Austen were in the Cabinet. Neville again became Minister of Health, which he preferred to the Exchequer. **During the next five years he carried out a remarkable programme of social reform, placing twenty-one acts into the Statute Book.**

While the Conservatives were out of office, 1929-31, in 1930 Chamberlain became Chairman of the Party. In 1931 a National Government under Labour leader, Ramsay MacDonald, was formed to deal with the economic

crisis. Chamberlain became Chancellor of the Exchequer, a post he held for nearly six years until he became Prime Minister in 1937. During this period his political reputation stood very high. In 1936 he played a significant 'behind the scenes' role in securing the abdication of Edward VIII. As Prime Minister he was noted for his lucidity and hard work, but did not like criticism, wanted to control most things, and he made it clear how much he detested members of the opposition Labour Party.

As Prime Minister, Chamberlain's religion was the subject of comment, and became an issue. He was sometimes called a Unitarian in the press and in correspondence. While most British Prime Ministers claimed a Christian affiliation there is no evidence that Chamberlain himself claimed to be a Unitarian. The Bishop of Durham, who knew Chamberlain fairly well, said that 'he was a devout Unitarian'. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Gordon Lang, who grew to like Chamberlain, was grieved that he was a Unitarian with no stated faith. **He was not encouraged when Chamberlain called himself a 'reverent agnostic' (a phrase coined by his father, Joseph Chamberlain). Most commentators labeled Chamberlain a lapsed Unitarian.**

'I (still) think it unseemly that a Unitarian should have the predominant voice in the appointment of Bishops,' wrote Lord Hugh Cecil, the leading Anglican, then Provost of Eton, in the Times in February 1938. Chamberlain was then appointing bishops of the Church of England. The controversy had arisen over a new rule being discussed by the Church Assembly requiring Deans and Chapters to elect the person nominated by the Prime Minister as bishop. In the debate Cecil stated, 'If we lived in the reign of Henry VIII a Unitarian would not be in Downing Street. He would be burned at Smithfield.'

**What is known as the appeasement policy had been long in gestation. Chamberlain aimed at an abiding European settlement, through a series of pacts removing the grievances arising from the harsh treatment of Germany at the Treaty of Versailles.**

**Some have claimed his appeasement policy grew, at least in part, out of his expressed horror at the thought that the poorer areas of London would be bombed. In dealing with Hitler he may have been hampered by an underdeveloped sense of evil, a Unitarian tendency. The Anglo-German agreement brokered by Chamberlain in 1938 was highly popular in Britain. He was lionised.**

Chamberlain nevertheless distrusted and disliked the German dictator and, aware of the growing German military threat, pushed forward the process of rearmament. In 1939, when Hitler advanced into Poland, Chamberlain issued an ultimatum: if Germany continued its attack on Poland, Britain and Germany would be at war.

The rejection of this ultimatum signalled the start of World War II. Deeply disappointed, he lamented on national radio, 'Everything I have worked for, everything I have hoped for, everything that I have believed in my public life, has crashed into ruins.' From then on, however, he pursued the war effort as best he could. Although he disliked being a war leader and was not especially good at it, the return to a position of power of Winston Churchill—with whom he generally got on well—enabled him to enlarge the war effort.



In April 1940 at the prompting of Lord Chancellor Lord Caldecote, an evangelical Christian, Chamberlain addressed the annual assembly of the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches. His closing words encapsulate the nineteenth-century liberal religious ethos—progress, enlightenment and belief in the good in humanity—which he learned from his family and church upbringing and which influenced him to the end: 'Every day that passes gives us some new demonstration of Germany's utter disregard of religion, of mercy, of truth and of justice. If they were to

triumph in what they are doing, why then every fortress which has been built by civilisation upon the principles of Christianity would go down and the world would relapse into that barbarism which, until a little while ago, we thought we had buried under centuries of progress . . . **This war will be won by the spiritual forces of the world as much as by the material power of their brave defenders. These spiritual forces have been affronted by what Germany has done and is doing, and to you, whose mission it is to uphold and exalt the spiritual life of this country, I appeal with confidence, to give us your aid to crush the powers of tyranny and wickedness for ever.'**

Chamberlain attempted to widen his wartime government but neither the Labour nor the Liberal Party leaders would serve under him. After the loss of Norway to the Germans—for which he was blamed and vilified—he realised that a national government of all parties was mandatory. Accordingly, he resigned on 10 May 1940. He remained in the Cabinet (as lord president of the council) under Churchill, supporting the new prime minister during his crucial first month, as the new government decided to reject the peace terms offered by Germany and Italy.

**So much emphasis has been placed on Chamberlain's time as Prime Minister and his role in international affairs, that it is often forgotten that his main contribution was to home affairs and social reform. As to his foreign policy, historian Robert Self makes a succinct evaluation: 'Neville Chamberlain was neither the inspired hero so extravagantly lauded in the immediate aftermath of Munich nor the foolishly misguided amateur so viciously denigrated after his fall.'**

Following his death from bowel cancer, Chamberlain's funeral and interment of ashes took place in Westminster Abbey with no Unitarian reference or involvement. There were no obituaries in the Unitarian press.

The correspondence of the Chamberlain family is the centrepiece of the archives of the University of Birmingham. Neville Chamberlain's papers are published by Thomson Gale, edited by Peter Marsh, in microform on 117 reels (1996-2000). He wrote each week

to his sisters Ida and Hilda over decades—in effect a diary of all he was doing politically. These have been published in four volumes: *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters*, edited by Robert Self (4 vols. 2002-05). Numerous other archives hold original material concerning Neville Chamberlain; a good guide to this material is at the conclusion of the entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004). The literature and sources on Neville Chamberlain are extensive. Andrew Crozier has written a superb article on him in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Other biographies include Keith Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain* (1946); David Dilks, *Neville Chamberlain*, vol 1 (1993); and David Dutton, *Neville Chamberlain* (2001).

: From the biography of Neville Chamberlain written by Alan Ruston in the *Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography*, an on-line resource of the Unitarian Universalist History & Heritage Society.

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US Bishop on Climate Change

Katharine Jefferts Schori, presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church and one of the most powerful women in Christianity, said that climate change was a moral imperative akin to that of the civil rights movement. She said it was already a threat to the livelihoods and survival of people in the developing world.

“It is, in that sense, much like the civil rights movement in this country where we are attending to the rights of all people and the rights of the earth to continue to be a flourishing place,” Bishop Jefferts Schori said in an interview with the *Guardian*. “It is certainly a moral issue in terms of the impacts on the poorest and most vulnerable around the world already.”

In the same context, Jefferts Schori attached moral implications to climate denial, suggesting that those who reject the underlying science of climate change are turning their backs on God’s gift of knowledge.

“Episcopalians understand the life of the mind is a gift of God, and to deny the best of current knowledge is not using the gifts God has given you,” she said. “In that sense, yes, it could be understood as a moral issue.”

She went on: “I think it is a very blind position.

I think it is a refusal to use the best of human knowledge, which is ultimately a gift of God.”

The sense of urgency around the issue has been deepened by Pope Francis’ forceful statements on global warming, which he is expected to amplify in a papal encyclical in June and during an address to the U.S. Congress in September.

The Episcopal Church hosted a webcast on March 24 to kick off a month-long action campaign designed to encourage church members to reduce their own carbon footprints and lobby government and international corporations to fight climate change.

An oceanographer before she was ordained at the age of 40, Bishop Jefferts Schori said she hoped to use her visibility as a church leader to help drive action on climate change.

As presiding bishop, she oversees 2.5 million members of the Episcopal Church in 17 countries, and is arguably one of the most prominent women in Christianity. The two largest denominations in the U.S., Roman Catholics and Southern Baptists, do not ordain women.....

Evangelical churches — once seen as a conservative force — were now taking up the climate cause, largely because of growing awareness of its threat to the poor.

“One of the significant changes in particular has been the growing awareness and activism among the evangelical community who at least somewhat in the more distant past refused to encounter this issue, refused to deal with it,” Jefferts Schori said. “The major evangelical groups in this country have been much more forward in addressing this issue because they understand that it impacts the poor.”

A number of denominations have also joined the growing fossil fuel divestment movement which is encouraging organizations to move their investments out of coal, oil, and gas companies. The United Methodist Church, the third largest denomination, dumped coal companies from its pension fund.

The Unitarian Church and the United Church of Christ have also voted to divest, according to Rev. Fletcher Harper of Green Faith. And the World Council of Churches has pledged not to invest in fossil fuels. A number of individual congregations have also divested from fossil fuels.....

Jefferts Schori opposes fossil fuel divestment. "If you divest you lose any direct ability to influence the course of a corporation's behavior," she said. "I think most pragmatists realize that we can't close the spigot on the oil wells and close the coal mines immediately without some other energy source to shift to."

The above is part of an article by Suzanne Goldenberg "Climate denial rejects God's gift of knowledge says church leader" which appeared in the Guardian.

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**New Kiva loan for our Fellowship**

Pascal (Lebanon) describes herself as follows:

Pascal is a 42-year-old married mother of two children who has been running her small convenience store since February 2011.

She is a hard worker who supports her beloved husband in making their precious family's living and covering their increasing needs, especially their children's education.

She is acquiring a loan from Kiva partner, Al Majmoua, to increase her business merchandise with special winter season items that will fulfill her customers' needs and requests, and at the same time, increase her family's income.

This is her second loan as an Al Majmoua

borrower where she invested her previously acquired loan to increase her business merchandise and proved to be a borrower in good standing.

She hopes that in the future, she will be capable of expanding her business to a wider supermarket that covers almost all of her customers' needs, and start selling fruits and vegetables as a good step forward.

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Splendor

One day it's the clouds,
one day the mountains.

One day the latest bloom

of roses - the pure monochromes,
the dazzling hybrids - inspiration
for the cathedral's round windows.

Every now and then

there's the splendor

of thought: the singular

idea and its brilliant retinue -

words, cadence, point of view,

little gold arrows flitting

between the lines.

And too the splendor

of no thought at all:

hands lying calmly

in the lap, or swinging

a six iron with effortless

tempo. More often than not

splendor is the star we orbit

without a second thought,

especially as it arrives....

and departs. One day
 it's the blue glassy bay,
 one day the night
 and its array of jewels,
 visible and invisible.

Sometimes it's the warm clarity
 of a face that finds your face
 and doesn't turn away.

Sometimes a kindness, unexpected,
 that will radiate farther
 than you might imagine.

One day it's the entire day
 itself, each hour foregoing
 its number and name,
 its cumbersome clothes, a day
 that says come as you are,
 large enough for fear and doubt,
 with room to spare: the most secret
 wish, the deepest, the darkest,
 turned inside out.

~ Thomas Centolella ~

Gems from A.A. Milne

"What day is it?"
 "It's today," squeaked Piglet.
 "My favourite day," said Pooh."

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"I think we dream so we don't have to be apart  
 for so long. If we're in each other's dreams, we  
 can be together all the time."

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"It's snowing still," said Eeyore gloomily.
 "So it is."
 "And freezing."
 "Is it?"
 "Yes," said Eeyore. "However," he said, bright-
 ening up a little, "we haven't had an earthquake
 lately."

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"When you wake up in the morning, Pooh,"  
 said Piglet at last, "what's the first thing you say  
 to yourself?"  
 "What's for breakfast?" said Pooh. "What do  
 you say, Piglet?"  
 "I say, I wonder what's going to happen excit-  
 ing to-day?" said Piglet.  
 Pooh nodded thoughtfully. "It's the same thing,"  
 he said."

**Contributed by Carolyn Donnelly**

### Would you care to join Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship?

**Membership is open to all adults and includes this newsletter.** *Full membership \$50; con-  
 cession \$20* . If you would like to join us as an active member of Spirit of Life, please ring **0466  
 940 461** or consult our website [www.sydneyunitarians.org](http://www.sydneyunitarians.org) . Please note that all membership  
 applications are subject to approval at a meeting of the Committee. Ask Rev. Geoff Usher for  
 an application form at the Sunday service.

***If you have a news item or written article you believe would be of interest to the congrega-  
 tion, we invite you to submit it for Esprit.*** It would be helpful if items for publication, in-  
 cluding articles and talk topics with themes could reach Esprit editor by the 15th of each month:  
 jtendys@yahoo.com.au or hand to Jan Tendys at the Sunday service.

Although we have an Associate Minister, Rev. Geoff Usher, we are primarily a lay-led congrega-  
 tion. **Perhaps you have a topic to share?** We welcome any topic ideas, offers to speak or  
 names of suitable speakers for our meetings whom we could approach. *Please see Caz Don-  
 nelly at the Sunday service.*

**Fellowship contact 0466 940 461**