



## Schedule of Services

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

**4 August Helen Whatmough "Misogyny"**

**11 August Morandir Armson "The Cult of the Saints?"**

Popular culture has had a tendency to idolise certain people and elevate them among other mortals. These saints and sages are then used as a source of wisdom, a model for correct behaviour, or merely as a source of quotes for inspirational coffee mugs and desk-calendars. But is this healthy? Does it help us to idolise fellow human beings, to elevate them in our minds above the common herd?

This talk will take a hard look at some of these 'saints' and examine this phenomenon more closely.

**18 August Muslim guest "Everything you wanted to know and ask about Islam."**

Today's speaker will be a visitor from the Turkish Mosque in Auburn, who will talk about the beliefs of Islam as he sees it, and answer any questions you may have. The service will be given over to more of a talk and Q & A time than a service.

**If you have anyone who wants to know more, please bring them along!**

**25 August Rev. Dr. Ian Ellis-Jones "The Psychologist and the Magician."**

Ian will discuss a not-so-well-known little story titled The Psychologist and the Magician. The story shows how we are so easily 'hypnotised' by things that have no power in themselves except the power we give them through our attention, and teaches that every problem is an initiation which, when understood as such, has a spiritual solution.

**1 September Martin Horlacher "Memory and Dream."**

It has now been fifty years since Martin Luther King, Jr., gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. Half a century on, much has changed both in America and around the rest of the world - and yet, in many ways, we've still got a long way to go. What will the next fifty years bring, and are we prepared for them?

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**Sobriety:** (reference p.6) Less well known than Alcoholics Anonymous is **SOS, Save Ourselves, a Secular Organisation for Sobriety**. They say : Although sobriety is an individual responsibility, life does not have to be faced alone. The support of other alcoholics and addicts is a vital adjunct to recovery. In SOS, members share experiences, insights, information, strength, and encouragement in friendly, honest, anonymous, and supportive group meetings. Sobriety is the number one priority in a recovering person's life. As such, he or she must abstain from all drugs or alcohol.

**See** <http://www.sossobriety.org/>

**and** <http://www.sossobriety.org/meetings/countrys.htm#Australia>

# Intimacy

From the Point of View of a Geriatric Male

*Rev. Eric Stevenson*

**Charles Birch has pointed out that the so called sex drive is in many if not most cases a pursuit of human closeness and not so much a desire for sexual release.**

From this point on, I can only speak as a geriatric male.

It is common knowledge that as the natural build up of semen increases in the male genitals, the need for ejaculation increases. Ejaculation is accompanied by orgasmic pleasure and that event is usually preferably induced by having sexual intercourse. But the same event is also accompanied by extreme closeness. Such closeness is not necessarily sought out of love and respect for the other. e.g. prostitution. Nor in extreme cases such as rape could I imagine the rapist being aware of or seeking to fulfil his need for intimacy.

**Let us try then to isolate and examine the pursuit for closeness in legitimate relationships. Suppose the build up of semen is absent or minimised, as in a pre-adolescent child or an a-sexual person, or in my case an almost senile geriatric.**

**What is left *physically* is another kind of drive.** Its fulfilment is qualitatively very different from when it is complicated by a desire for sexual orgasm. And for those who are not highly driven by the latter, it is likely to be a welcome relief that sexual intercourse is not a predominant reason for sleeping with someone. I suspect that some people yearn for such a non-instrumental response from their sexual partners, and almost resent having to pay for intimacy with sexual favours.

**The ultimate in a singularly close relationship is similar to the clasping by a birthing mother of her naked new born baby to her breast. That must be one of the most sacred of non-orgasmic intimacies.**

But being anywhere near as close to another adult in a highly valued non-orgasmic relationship is something else! The big difference is that, as much as the male seeker after inti-

macy might want to, he can never recover his innocence. Like departing from all other kinds of life style, he can leave behind his sexual history and cease his original sexual performance, either by choice or out of necessity. But he is never without the memory of having formerly practised full on sexual activity in a former heterosexual or homosexual relationship. This means that the ability to appreciate the sexual attractiveness of the female or male form remains, and the opportunity for sexual fantasy lingers on. By the set of his mind, if he chose to think that way, his intimate platonic friend could become his virtual Valentine. And if he were foolish enough, he could choose, without proper negotiation, to stay in that fantasy world and fall in love with him or her as a sexual lover.

**But let us bring our candidate for non-orgasmic intimacy back into the real world. If Charles Birch is correct, what he used to experience as a sexual allurements now holds the potential to normalise his desire to be close.** This deeper understanding can exonerate him from the charge of being a dirty old man, and from a positive point of view, if properly communicated, could also be very affirming in such a relationship for his companion to know that she or he is appreciated as a fully sexual person.

**The sharing of this kind of intimacy between two consenting adults, whether gay or straight, is therefore in my view a fairly universal phenomenon.** In making that statement I am putting myself within the normal range of people who are committed to intimacy as a major way of living life to the full. For me intimacy enhances my feeling of kinship with all of life, including animal life but especially with humans. It is what helps to nurture and enrich my relationships, particularly with those whom I love and who love me. Out of respect sometimes that intimacy between us is restricted to an occasional hand shake or a peck on the cheek or patting their dog. At other times the psychological distance between others of us can be reduced to zero, and the time lapse between making physical contact with each other reduced to a minimum. In my impotent senile condition, experiences like this are almost the perfect fulfilment of my dreams if not of

my ambitions.

In my third paragraph, however, I have italicised the word "physically". So far I have omitted to pursue the meaning of intimacy beyond the physical. I have just said "almost the perfect fulfilment of my dreams". That is because, while I am a self confessed kisser and hugger, such intimacy loses its extreme worth for me if it is not something more. The something more has to do with a mutual openness and disclosure of thought and emotion. Such transparency may reveal attitudes, values, beliefs, interests, gifts and abilities, and expressions of feeling which are as much as, in fact, more a part of each others' being than our bodies. **When those characteristics are able to be shared without fear and when they are highly valued mutually, then they can touch each other in an intimate relationship just like skin to skin. The physical touching experience is the unspoken symbol of the intercourse which takes place between like minds and hearts.**

**But how close can you get? The answer to the question seems to be fundamentally a matter of trust. Obviously the ideal is that each feels at liberty to share their private lives and enhance their physical contact with each other without being censured or judged. When that fullness of acceptance has been tested and proven trustworthy, a wonderful new day of intimacy begins to dawn on the relationship.** Boundaries are freely discussed and agreed upon and the degree of comfortable, respectful, healthy distancing established. What naturally follows is a growing understanding of each other's thought processes and actions - a discovery of two intimately shared worlds. Those two worlds, hitherto undisclosed and therefore previously not fully known or appreciated, now become a universe which is both revelatory and inclusive. It is then that unconditional love begins to mean a lot more to me. For then we know as we are known, and embraced in our completeness. How can we say, "I love you fully" if we don't know or feel fully who we are? And how can we fully begin to know who we are if we are not intimate?



## GOSFORD ANGLICAN CHURCH



**DEAR CHRISTIANS**

**SOME PEOPLE ARE GAY**

**GET OVER IT**

**LOVE GOD.**



### "OF LIFE AND THE EAGLE'S NEST"

*Rev. Geoffrey R. Usher*

*As an eagle stirreth up her nest,  
Fluttereth over her young,  
Spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them,  
Beareth them on her wings:  
So the Lord alone did lead him,  
And there was no strange god with him.*

*Deuteronomy 32: 11*

The eagle's nesting habits have not changed in the centuries that have passed since those words from the Book of Deuteronomy were written. They are part of the instinctive nature of the eagle, and they are interesting.

The eagle chooses a ledge of rock on which to build its nest: high, exposed, even dangerous. Having built its nest, it lays its eggs -- usually two eggs. When the young birds are old enough to learn to fly -- when the adult birds know, however it is that they do know, that their young are old enough to learn to fly -- what happens?

The adult birds give them the shove! They literally stir up the nest, pushing the young ones off the rocky ledge; As an eagle stirreth up her nest."

And then the adult birds encourage the young ones over the edge of the rocky ledge:

*Fluttereth over her young,  
Spreadeth abroad her wings."*

The young eagles are enticed to jump from the ledge and to try to fly. They learn to fly by having to fly!

It's not quite as callous and brutal as it may sound.

If the young eagle is in danger of falling onto the rocks below, its parent will sweep beneath it, and catch it on its wings.

*Taketh them,  
Beareth them on her wings.*

It's not normally recommended that young children should learn to swim by being thrown in at the deep end, but the tactic seems to work for teaching young eagles to fly.

However, note the caveat: Taketh them, Beareth them on her wings.

The parent eagle, having encouraged the young one over the edge, is there, watchful and wary, ready to swoop to the rescue.

Why does the writer of the Book of Deuteronomy -- supposedly Moses looking back over his long life -- use this analogy, likening God to an eagle?

Often in the Bible -- in both the Jewish and the Christian scriptures -- God is represented as a place of security, as a protector, as a place for hiding in the day of trouble. God is a shield, a fortress, a rock of salvation, a shelter. And it's true that many people would be lost without a sheltering God.

But that's not the whole story. God is also a stirrer.

The eagle stirs up its nest, and its young, for a reason -- a reason based on love, although the eagle wouldn't know that word. And if God is love, then God is a stirrer for reasons of love.

The first prayer in Service Number Seven in the

Unitarian Orders of Worship, of Upper Chapel, Sheffield, speaks of "quiet moments when the tumult and the noise of life are hushed."

The main prayer speaks of "the divine whisper", of "the truth teaching inwardly", of "inward things and ... heavenly secrets", of instructing and enlightening the heart.

But that's not the whole story. God is also a stirrer.

There are times when God plays the opposite role, and is not simply the shield and fortress. There are times when God pushes us out of our nests of security, throws us into the unknown, challenges us, disturbs us with new truth. Security itself is a temporary thing, an illusion.

Helen Keller wrote:

*Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it. Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. Life is either a daring adventure, or nothing. Serious harm, I am afraid, has been wrought to our generation by fostering the idea that they would live secure in a permanent order of things. They have expected stability and find none within themselves or in their universe. Before it is too late they must learn and teach others that only by brave acceptance of change and all-time crisis-ethics can they rise to the height of superlative responsibility.*

O world -- wrote George Santayana -

*O world, thou chooseth not the better part!  
It is not wisdom to be only wise,  
And on the inward vision close the eyes,  
But it is wisdom to believe the heart.  
Columbus found a world and had no chart,  
Save one that faith deciphered in the skies;  
To trust the soul's invincible surmise  
Was all his science and his only art.  
Our knowledge is a torch of smoky pine  
That lights the pathway but one step ahead  
Across a void of mystery and dread.  
Bid, then, the tender light of faith to shine  
By which alone the immortal heart is led  
Unto the thinking of the thought divine.*

The thing to admire about Columbus is not his having discovered a world, but his having gone to search for it on the faith of an opinion.

**I like George Santayana's image of our knowledge as a torch of smoky pine That lights the pathway but one step ahead Across a void of mystery and dread.**

The void of mystery and dread suggests what Judith Walker-Riggs wrote in "The Abyss":

*The abyss is all around us. It may look different to each person, but it is usually there -- face front in the foreground, or edgily. lurking behind us.*

*For one, it is a feeling of meaninglessness in the vast, cold emptiness of interstellar nothingness, for another the fear of being unlovable.*

*For one, nuclear war, for another the fear of being unloved.*

*Some feel they cross the abyss in the arms of God. Others say no, it is our job: roll up your sleeves and we'll build bridges. Some say the abyss is not empty anyway, and float on its fulness. Others say it is empty but say the emptiness is beautiful. If it has no bottom at all, why fear falling? It is only if there is a bottom to hit that an abyss is dangerous.*

*Each faces the abyss in his or her own way.*

*What a funny sight we must be, lined up along the edge, bickering about which way is right.*

*Can we not meet there, and cheer each other on instead?*

Ralph Waldo Emerson declared that all he had seen taught him to trust the Creator for all he had not seen.

When God stirs his people, and disturbs his world, people are challenged to take a plunge in faith.

Look again at the eagles.

The nest is broken and scattered.

As an eagle stirreth up her nest.

The young eagles are peering fearfully over the ledge as their parents entice them to fly. Fluttereth over her young, Spreadeth abroad her wings.

There is no other way. Only by a plunge into

the air will the young birds -- not only eagles, but any birds -- learn to fly.

Rabindranath Tagore wrote: *"Plunge into the deep without fear, with the gladness of April in your heart."*

My Philosophy courses at Adelaide University -- many years ago now -- included the various arguments attempting to prove the existence of God: ontological, teleological, phenomenological, cosmological... **But we will never find God at the end of a logical argument.** Reason may carry us far, but in the end the presence of God can only be found by an act of faith. "I believe, help thou my unbelief."

Alan Walker said that *"God becomes real as we plunge toward him in faith."*

That word "plunge" again.

*"Plunge into the deep without fear, with the gladness of April in your heart."*

That word "plunge" takes us back to the eagle's nest on the rocky ledge.

Twelve months after the stirring up of the nest, behold! the two young eagles, now fully grown, sweeping into the valleys and up to the heights, masters of the air.

The stirring of the nest and their plunge into the unknown have enabled them to fulfil their destiny.

Fulfilment. Destiny. Purpose of God?

*As an eagle stirreth up her nest, ... So the Lord alone did lead him,  
And there was no strange god with him.*

The tragedy of so many human lives is that they have become satisfied and stationary -- and unfulfilled. They have stayed in the nest; they have not taken the plunge off the rocky ledge; they have not heeded Rabindranath Tagore's warning: *"You can't cross the sea merely by standing and staring at the water. Don't let yourself indulge in vain wishes."*

Their lives have stagnated; there is no growth because they have attempted no new ventures.

They have not been stirred, and have not taken the plunge in faith: the faith that Lena Sadler called the only known cure for fear.

## LIFE

*Life is an opportunity, grasp it.*

*Life is beauty, admire it.*

*Life is a dream, make it a reality.*

*Life is a game, play it.*

*Life is precious, take care of it.*

*Life is love, joy in it.*

*Life is a mystery, fathom it.*

*Life is promise, fulfil it.*

*Life is sadness, overcome it.*

*Life is a struggle, accept it.*

*Life is an adventure, dare to go on it.*

*Life is life, defend it.*

Mother Theresa

The above is a sermon given by Rev. Geoffrey R. Usher; based on "God the Stirrer" by Alan Walker [The Ministers Manual for 1983](#), page 191.

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## Strange Gods

It is 10 years since I used drugs or drank alcohol and my life has improved immeasurably. I have a job, a house, a cat, good friendships and generally a bright outlook.

The price of this is constant vigilance because the disease of addiction is not rational. Recently for the purposes of a documentary on this subject I reviewed some footage of myself smoking heroin that my friend had shot as part of a typically exhibitionist attempt of mine to get clean.

I sit wasted and slumped with an unacceptable haircut against a wall in another Hackney flat (Hackney is starting to seem like part of the problem) inhaling fizzy, black snakes of smack off a scrap of crumpled foil. When I saw the tape a month or so ago, what is surprising is that my reaction is not one of gratitude for the positive changes I've experienced but envy at witnessing an earlier version of myself unencumbered by the burden of abstinence. I sat in a suite at the Savoy hotel, in privilege, resent-

ing the woeful ratbag I once was, who, for all his problems, had drugs. That is obviously irrational.

The mentality and behaviour of drug addicts and alcoholics is wholly irrational until you understand that they are completely powerless over their addiction and unless they have structured help they have no hope.

This is the reason I have started a fund within Comic Relief, Give It Up. I want to raise awareness of, and money for, abstinence-based recovery. It was Kevin Cahill's idea, he is the bloke who runs Comic Relief. He called me when he read an article I wrote after Amy



(Photo Mark Nolan / WireImage)

Winehouse died. Her death had a powerful impact on me I suppose because it was such an obvious shock, like watching someone for hours through a telescope, seeing them advance towards you, fist extended with the intention of punching you in the face. Even though I saw it coming, it still hurt when it eventually hit me.

What was so painful about Amy's death is that I know that there is something I could have done. I could have passed on to her the solution that was freely given to me. Don't pick up a drink or drug, one day at a time. It sounds so simple. It actually is simple but it isn't easy: it requires incredible support and fastidious structuring. Not to mention that the whole infrastructure of abstinence based recovery is shrouded in necessary secrecy. There are support fellowships that are easy to find and open to anyone who needs them

but they eschew promotion of any kind in order to preserve the purity of their purpose, which is for people with alcoholism and addiction to help one another stay clean and sober. **Without these fellowships I would take drugs. Because, even now, the condition persists. Drugs and alcohol are not my problem, reality is my problem, drugs and alcohol are my solution.**

If this seems odd to you it is because you are not an alcoholic or a drug addict. You are likely one of the 90% of people who can drink and use drugs safely. I have friends who can smoke weed, swill gin, even do crack and then merrily get on with their lives. For me, this is not an option. I will relinquish all else to ride that buzz to oblivion. Even if it began as a timid glass of chardonnay on a ponce's yacht, it would end with me necking the bottle, swimming to shore and sprinting to Bethnal Green in search of a crack house. I look to drugs and booze to fill up a hole in me; unchecked, the call of the wild is too strong. I still survey streets for signs of the subterranean escapes that used to provide my sanctuary. I still eye the shuffling subclass of junkies and dealers, invisibly gliding between doorways through the gutters. I see that dereliction can survive in opulence; the abundantly wealthy with destitution in their stare. **Spurred by Amy's death, I've tried to salvage unwilling victims from the mayhem of the internal storm and I am always, always, just pulled inside myself. I have a friend so beautiful, so haunted by talent that you can barely look away from her, whose smile is such a treasure that I have often squandered my sanity for a moment in its glow. Her story is so galling that no one would condemn her for her dependency on illegal anesthesia, but now, even though her life is trying to turn around despite her, even though she has genuine opportunities for a new start, the gutter will not release its prey. The gutter is within. It is frustrating to watch. It is frustrating to love someone with this disease.**

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 The above is an extract from "Russell Brand :My Life Without Drugs" The Guardian, Saturday 9 March 2013  
<http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2013/mar/09/russell-brand-life-without-drugs>

**In honour of our earlier Springs, Esprit presents these contributions of Dr. Andrew Usher:**

## La Guerre

O sweet spontaneous  
 earth how often have  
 the doting  
                                 fingers of  
 prurient philosophers pinched  
 and  
 poked  
 thee  
 ,has the naughty thumb  
 of science prodded  
 thy  
                                 beauty       ,how  
 often have religious taken  
 thee upon their scraggy knees  
 squeezing and  
 buffeting thee that thou mightest conceive  
 gods  
                                 (but  
 true  
 to the incomparable  
 couch of death thy  
 rhythmic  
 lover  
                                 thou answerest  
 them only with  
   spring)

E. E. Cummings

Tulips and Chimneys (1922 manuscript)

## Benediction

The breath of all life will bless,  
 The body will exclaim:  
 Were our mouths filled with song as the sea  
 And our tongues lapping joy like the waves  
 And our lips singing praises broad as the sky  
 And our eyes like the sun and moon  
 And our arms wide as the eagle's wings  
 And our feet leaping light as the deer's  
 It would not be enough to tell the wonder  
 Of our Spiritual Spring.  
 Let us keep this truth within us.  
 Amen.

**Rev. Penny Thoms** used this benediction in a service at Princess St Unitarian Church, Cork, Ireland.

***A rainbow Queen for the queens. Posted on facebook: an array of photos of Queen Elizabeth 11 in her many coloured outfits arranged across a rainbow to celebrate her signing of the legalisation of gay marriage, UK.***

From the website of TPM: Associated Press July 17, 2013— Britain has legalized gay marriage after Queen Elizabeth II gave her royal stamp of approval.

House of Commons Speaker John Bercow told lawmakers that the royal assent had been given Wednesday — the day after the bill to legalize same-sex marriage in England and Wales cleared Parliament.

The queen’s approval was a formality. It clears the way for the first gay marriages next summer. The bill enables gay couples to get married in both civil and religious ceremonies in England and Wales. It also will allow couples who had previously entered into a civil partnership to convert their relationship to a marriage.

Photo : Rex Features via AP images



Gianna Hastings 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 congregation, we invite you to submit it for Esprit.***

It would be helpful if items for publication, including articles and talk topics with themes could reach Esprit editor by the 15th of each month: [jtendys@bigpond.com](mailto:jtendys@bigpond.com) or hand to Jan Tendys at the Sunday service.

***Do you have a topic of a spiritual / ethical 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. *Please see Caz Donnelly at the Sunday service*

**Fellowship contact 0466 940 461**