



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: **0466 940 461**

Website: www.sydneyunitarians.org

Editor: Jan Tendys

Volume **8** Issue **12**

December, 2012 — January 2013

Schedule of Services

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

2 December Martin Horlacher "Make Haste to Live"

Life can be hard, life can be trying...life is life. But, don't let it pass you by. *Live*...with great haste.

9 December Cassie Thornley "The Lady Behind the Lamp"

We know of Florence Nightingale's contribution to the establishment of modern nursing, but what else did she contribute to her society? A quick look at her busy life.

16 December Ginna Hastings & Dr Max Lawson "Some Observations on Christmas"

This talk is a Christmas service with reflections on T.S.Eliot's "*Journey of the Magi*"

This will also be our end of year party.

2013

13 January Rev. Geoffrey Usher "Ring in the New"

The tradition of New Year's resolutions is an acknowledgement that, despite all that is known and set and past in our lives, we **can** change. It's a way to tip our hats to possibilities, to the idea that we can still produce a different future.

It is possible to be mistaken, and we should be prepared to modify our beliefs in the light of new knowledge or experience.

We need to be willing to "ring in the new".

20 January Morandir Armson "Religions of Ancient Ireland"

The story of religion in Ireland is a fascinating view of religious development, and serves to illustrate the ways in which Christianity took root in Europe. This presentation will look at the shift in religion in Ireland, from the ancient Pagan Druidical religions, to the development of the Celtic Catholic Church.

27 January Colin Whatmough "Reviewing Iraq: deceptions and lies which led to tragedy"

From Our president

Hello to all my dear friends at Spirit of Life.

We are all so sad to see that Candace Parks, one of our dear "founding mothers" and former president, is moving back to her home state of Vermont to be with her aged parents. She will be missed so very much!! Candace, you will always be in our hearts! We will always be grateful to her and to the other founders of Spirit of Life who founded this congregation of fellow believers in our Unitarian values. Though we are small, it is here where we feel safe to follow our own free and responsible search for meaning free from dogma and outdated theology. I suppose if others on a similar path were aware of us, they would find this their spiritual home as well - and we hope that one day more may join us freely.

Meanwhile Candace has left us well organized. Our suitcase's order is thanks to her. Our Seven Principle Banners were made by her and Laurence. Our hymnal and our membership in ANZUUA all are a result of her leadership. ANZUUA is the parent body of Unitarians in Australia and New Zealand. We are the first church in the country who had to go through their strict rules of formation in order to become an "official" Unitarian congregations. (The others were able to join due their previous longevity.)

Our committee is also well organized and off and running. A very big thankyou must go to Geoffrey R. Usher for his incredible accounting skills (without spreadsheets no less!) in getting our banking details up to date, as well as our membership list. This has obviously taken a considerable amount of his time. We are blessed by his long experience as a treasurer in various organizations. Geoffrey is a retired Unitarian minister having served both here (at Sydney Unitarian) and in the UK. He also acts as our Associate Minister. Thank you Geoff!

Also a big thanks to Caz Donnelly who has lined up some excellent speakers for us well into 2013. Her talents in persuasion are to our benefit! Thank you Caz! I think we've all enjoyed the great variety of interesting topics Caz has found speakers to talk about. We are glad to see Ian Ellis-Jones about every two months too, gratefully on a volun-

tary basis on his behalf. Thank you also to Helen Whatmough who is working actively on local publicity for us.

One can't go without always thanking our most quiet and hard working achiever, Jan Tendys. Not only does she turn out an excellent Esprit monthly, she also takes our minutes efficiently. Her husband John's watchful eye over our website is also much appreciated. John also recently repainted our battered podium! Jan also supplies us with our regular Sunday morning "communion" after our services - morning tea, complimented by Caz's additional contributions.

Jan is now sharing with us ways we might wish to write ourselves on issues concerning us in our society today. I believe Colin Whatmough is also adding such great contributions, and is our "premier letter writer". Thank you Colin! **Unitarians are not backwards about coming forwards about their beliefs and values. For example in the USA our church was the second official religion (after Quakers) to publicly renounce the institution of slavery - one of many examples of Unitarians leading the charge in society for what is ethically right. Unitarians don't just discuss the next world, but actively try to make this world a better place.** We were given life for a purpose! So, I invite you to use the information shared with us to write your own letters. One personal letter is worth so very much on a Parliamentarian's desk!

A warm welcome must be sent to Liliun who has managed to rejoin us whenever her studies allow. Congratulations to her on her top marks on her first two classes in Law. And all in a second language to her!! Well done Liliun!

Congratulations to Warren Simmons and Cassie Thornley who have recently become official members of SOL. We are enjoying seeing more of Sue too!

As President I do need to bring up the dreaded topic of money. Though we don't work on pledges like most churches do, we do have regular expenses that we must cover ourselves if we are to continue. **Firstly I encourage everyone to pay their membership fees as soon as possible for 2013 which are due in January.** Please pay Geoffrey Usher as soon as you can to avoid

us having the embarrassment of "chasing you". \$20 for pensioners/retired/students, and \$50 for those still working.

Our weekly bill for rental of our great room with better view at Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre costs us \$80 per week. In addition we must pay ANZUUA \$10/year for every proper member of our congregation. In the coming year we must also deliver \$250 to \$300 for our new hymnals/worship books for members of ANZUUA. All the cost of the morning teas is kindly given by those who arrange and bring it. We may also have advertising costs and have occasional speaker costs. So, you see every dollar you may put in the plate is used wisely, and most essential. We have no other form of income than by the plate and membership fees. We are just covering our costs at this present moment. Perhaps in the new year we can have a get together/fund raiser for our birthday.

Also, be aware that our next AGM will be early next year. You must be a paid up member to be a voter in the AGM. Also if you wish to volunteer to join the Committee you must have been a paid up member for six months. Some people may join the Committee before this time, but are not official voters on the Committee until they have been paid up for six months. This is essential in the democratic process so that the nasty business "branch stacking tactics" too often used in Parliamentary politics won't happen. It is also essential that we work on democratic principles. Those who wish to run for the Committee will have to nominate themselves in writing with a seconder four weeks before the AGM. Nominees from the floor at the AGM are not allowed under our constitution. I have a copy of the rules of our organization should anyone wish to view it.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy Christmas Season. Whatever this season may mean to you, I do hope that it is a time of happy family get-togethers, good cheer, and a break from the rat race of our busy lives! Here's to 2013 and may we grow from strength to strength!

Sincerely,

Ginna Hastings

Adventurous Spirit, Marie Beuzeville Byles

Continuing "Some Australian Huguenots" (see November issue).

Born in 1900, Marie Byles was a child of the twentieth century, but her ideas and practices were progressive even by today's standards.

As the first woman to practice law in New South Wales, she fought to improve women's legal status in the 1920s. A keen bushwalker and climber, she was a pioneer in the Australian conservation movement in the 1930s. From the time of her first solo adventure around the world by cargo boat at the age of 27, through her later expeditions to Asia, she set the standard for intrepid, independent travel.

Her engagement with eastern spiritual



traditions was sustained and rigorous. Having committed herself to meditation, yoga and pacifism in the 1940s, she distilled the teachings of the Buddha and Gandhi in articles and books for western readers, and created a space for Buddhism in suburban Sydney in the 1950s and 60s.

At the age of 66, Marie Byles was brutally attacked in her own home and left for dead. She spent several months in hospital and never fully recovered. She retired in 1970.

Marie Byles died on 21 November 1979 at her Cheltenham home. She had left sworn testimony of her wish to be allowed to die naturally and requested the Cremation Society of Australia to collect her body. She asked that a friend, preferably a woman, read designated texts at her memorial service. Her ashes were scattered at "Ahimsa" (the home she built) which she left to the State branch of the National Trust of Australia.

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/hindsight/adventurous-spirit-marie-beuzeville-byles/3113012>

<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/byles-marie-beuzeville-9652>

Contributed by Peter Berry

~~~~~  
**"OUR DIFFERENT FAITH"**

**Geoffrey R Usher**

It can be said that we Unitarians do not regard "religion" as a collection of dogmas and creeds, but rather as "those aspirations, convictions, disciplines, beliefs and motives that give direction and character to life."

There are no creeds used in Unitarian churches. That is not because we think that all creeds are apt to be in error - although that is in fact true. It is because creeds deal with what might be called theological trivia, rather than with the essence of real religion.

Most Unitarians simply do not think that some things - some theological trivia - actually matter very much. It does not matter whether you believe that God exists in one person, as the Jews do; or in three persons, as most Christians do; or in ten thousand, as some people do in what are sometimes called primitive religions. It does not matter whether you or do not believe in the Virgin Birth, or the Resurrection, or the Second Coming. But it does matter - it matters **very much - that many Christians divide themselves off from each other, and from people of other religious traditions, on the**

***on the basis of such theological ideas.***

The principle goes further than simply a reluctance to use creeds. Unitarians will no more be governed by a pope than they will be governed by a prayer book or a creed. They will no more be bound by a bishop than they will by a parish priest or minister. Unitarians govern their churches the same way that they govern their personal lives: by the free exercise of the individual conscience.

There is a fundamental difference between these two approaches to religion in the standards that each sets for admission to membership. Mainline Protestant churches set as their basis for membership the acceptance and profession of belief in a theological formula. A Unitarian church sets as its standard of membership the right of each person to seek his or her own answers in religion.

We do not admit or exclude people by a theological test; we invite anyone who wishes, to join in our work, our worship, our service. The individual decides whether this is the kind of church that he or she wants to be part of.

George N Marshall, founder Minister of the Church of the Larger Fellowship, wrote:

The Unitarian Church makes no offer than this, - to help a person develop the faith that is in him or her.

Do not come to a Unitarian church to find a religion, to learn beliefs or to be given a faith. Come only when you reach the point where all external faiths are rejected and when you are ready to begin with the bedrock of your own being, experience and character to construct the faith that is meaningful to you.

**In the end, however, since we are dealing with religion, the fundamental difference between Unitarianism and most of the other churches is a difference of faith.** Most Christians say that their faith is in God. The principle may be stated in various ways, such as belief in Jesus Christ, or in the Christian Revelation, or in the Incarnation.

But, in every case, if you examine it, you will learn that their faith is not in God:

## New Kiva Loan

Other loans having been repaid, our Fellowship has participated in a new Kiva loan in Rwanda. The borrowing group are agricultural workers who want to buy fertiliser etc to increase their crop yields.



### “Our Different Faith” cont.

rather, it is in the truth of a proposition about God. Typically, they believe that there is a supreme being called God; that he possesses infinite power and love; that he created the world; that he redeems sinful people; and so on.

**We Unitarians, on the other hand, believe in propositions such as: that people can know the truth and can expand it; that they can know goodness and live by it; that they can know beauty and make it real in their lives.**

There is no proof that people can do these things; there is only the faith that they can. But it is a faith which is constantly supported by actions which put it to the test. This is the essence of the Unitarian position: to believe in these three propositions, and to live as if they were so.

Such a faith has certain corollaries. Whoever accepts these cardinal principles also believes that there are such things as truth, beauty and goodness; and believes that they are knowable and that they are attainable in our human life, at least in part; and believes that our understanding of all three constantly widens and deepens as we continue to pursue them.

Whoever accepts these doctrines also accepts the doctrine that people must be free to pursue these aims; and accepts the doctrine that people's dignity consists in the capacity they find within themselves to perceive these goals and to pursue them; and this in turn requires their freedom to do so.

Freedom. Unitarians do not differ from other church people in their desire for free-

dom. They do not differ from others in knowing that any true freedom requires very considerable restraint. There is a great difference between liberty and licence. But Unitarians differ from others in the kind of restraint upon freedom that they will accept, whom they will accept restraint from, and why. We do not accept the restraint of a particular book - the Bible. We do not accept the restraint of a particular theology - the Creeds. We do not accept the restraint of a particular person or persons - pope, bishops, or other ecclesiastic.

**We Unitarians do not differ from the orthodox in our love of faith or in our pursuit of it. We differ on the canons for judging the truth; we differ on the canons for choosing those who may make such judgements. For us, the only canon of truth is the ability to persuade an open and informed mind. The restraints we accept are those imposed on us by our sense of love and justice, truth and right, human hope and human need.**

It is the same with beauty. With beauty, the various churches have left the human spirit free, as Unitarians believe we should in every aspect of our religion.

No church has attempted to declare with finality what beauty is, as they have done with truth and right. All people, inside and outside the churches, may join hand and heart in the untrammelled pursuit of the beautiful. No holy book of beauty restricts or defines their judgement. No ancient council has established the rules of beauty in advance of our own experience. No hierarchy of church elders or priests speaks on God's behalf in order that men and women may know what beauty is.

With beauty there is no orthodoxy and no heresy. There is only what is beautiful and what is ugly, or not beautiful. So may it be, one day, with religion. One day, may there be no orthodoxy: only truth and goodness speaking to men and women, commanding their loyalty and leading them to such knowledge of God as it is given to people to know.

Then shall men and women join hands in creating the good and the true, as they can now join in creating the beautiful. They shall join hands across the cloistered walls of the churches, across the social walls of race and culture, across the national walls of political power and armed conflict.

This, then, is our different faith: the belief that truth and goodness, like beauty, should at last be freed of all ecclesiastical control.

I finish with words adapted from a prayer entitled "Faith" by Robert A Storer:

May we learn each day to appreciate and to be faithful to the truths that life has given to us.

May we cultivate the kind of faith that is true to our best thinking and doing:

A faith that will support ourselves and others; A faith that will challenge us to do our best;

A faith that will enable us to glorify the common occasion;

A faith that will help us in rising above whatever is mean or unworthy;

A faith that will truly bring us into the presence of the divine and keep us there throughout all the changes and chances of life."

(This sermon was delivered during the Spirit of Life service on 2 September 2012 and is printed here by request of Ginna Hastings. It is based on an article compiled from a sermon by Rev Duncan Howlett of All Souls' Unitarian Church, Washington DC. The concluding prayer is from Robert A Storer's anthology Prayer Thoughts.

Emphases added by Esprit editor.)

~~~~~

Tourists

There is nothing to look at any more; everything has been seen to death.

D. H. Lawrence

Reminder: Geoff Usher will be reading "a Christmas Carol" in St. James Church, King/ Phillip Streets. Tues. 18 December at 6.30 pm. Donations for Sister Freda Mission, (meals for homeless).

Quotes

Give a man a fish, and you'll feed him for a day. Give him religion and he'll starve to death while praying for a fish.

Timothy Jones

When the white missionaries came to Africa they had the Bible and we had the land. They said 'Let us pray.' We closed our eyes. When we opened them we had the Bible and they had the land.

Bishop Desmond Tutu

I've been married to a communist and a fascist, and neither would take out the garbage

Zsa Zsa Gabor

The best cure for sea sickness, is to sit under a tree.

Spike Milligan

We are here on earth to do good unto others. What the others are here for, I have no idea.

W.H. Auden

In hotel rooms I worry. I can't be the only guy who sits on the furniture naked.

Jonathan Katz

Contributed by Caz Donnelly

Man is a curious animal. He doesn't see the writing on the wall until his back is against it.

Adlai Stevenson

Contributed by Margaret Armstrong

J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Hobbit"

"The Hobbit, or There and Back Again", better known by its abbreviated title "The Hobbit", is a fantasy novel and children's book by J. R. R. Tolkien. It was published on 21 September 1937 to wide critical acclaim, being nominated for the Carnegie Medal and awarded a prize from the New York Herald Tribune for best juvenile fiction. The book remains popular and is recognized as a classic in children's literature.

Set in a time "Between the Dawn of Færie and the Dominion of Men", The Hobbit follows the quest of home-loving hobbit Bilbo Baggins to win a share of the treasure guarded by the dragon, Smaug. Bilbo's journey takes him from light-hearted, rural surroundings into more sinister territory. The story is told in the form of an episodic quest, and most chapters introduce a specific creature, or type of creature, of Tolkien's Wilderland. By accepting the disreputable, romantic, fey and adventurous side of his nature and applying his wits and common sense, Bilbo gains a new level of maturity, competence and wisdom. The story reaches its climax in the Battle of Five Armies, where many of the characters and creatures from earlier chapters re-emerge to engage in conflict.

Personal growth and forms of heroism are central themes of the story. Along with motifs of warfare, these themes have led critics to cite Tolkien's own experiences during World War I as instrumental in shaping the story. The author's scholarly knowledge of Anglo-Saxon literature and interest in fairy tales are also often noted as influences.

Encouraged by the book's critical and financial success, the publisher requested a sequel. As Tolkien's work on the successor The Lord of the Rings progressed, he made retrospective accommodations for it in The Hobbit. These few but significant changes were integrated into the second edition. Further editions followed with minor emendations, including those reflecting Tolkien's changing concept of the world into which Bilbo stumbled. The work has never been out of print. Its ongoing legacy encompasses many adaptations for stage, screen, radio, board games and video games. Several of these adaptations have received critical recognition on their own merits.

Read more: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hobbit

Now "The Hobbit" is an upcoming film trilogy consisting of three epic fantasy-adventure films directed, co-written and produced by Peter Jackson. The films are, by subtitle, "An Unexpected Journey", "The Desolation of Smaug" and "There and Back Again", due for theatrical release in 2012, 2013 and 2014, respectively.

Peter Jackson, Director. (Photo Wikipedia)



The series will act as a prequel trilogy to Jackson's "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy and will star Ian McKellen, reprising his role as Gandalf, Martin Freeman as Bilbo Baggins, Richard Armitage as Thorin Oakenshield, and Benedict Cumberbatch as Smaug. Several other actors will reprise their roles from The Lord of the Rings, including Andy Serkis, Hugo Weaving, Cate Blanchett, Christopher Lee, Ian Holm, Elijah Wood, and Orlando Bloom.

Read more: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hobbit_%28film_series%29

A night out for our Fellowship?

Note that whereas Tolkien's "Hobbit" could be called a children's book, "The Lord of the Rings" is commonly read by adults. The "Silmarillion" is an even more elaborate book. Tolkien was a philologist and he was very familiar with all the Norse Sagas including the Finnish as well as Anglo Saxon literature,. He invented a language for his Elven characters and some songs are given in this language, but he also provides English translations. So far, the movies have been wonderful—but not a substitute for reading the books. **JT**

Would you care to join Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship? Membership is open to all adults and includes this newsletter. Full membership \$50 concession \$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.sydneynunitarians.org . Please note that all membership applications are subject to approval at a meeting of the Committee. Ask Rev. Geoff Usher or Ginna 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 or hand to Jan Tendys at the Sunday service.

Do you have a topic of a spiritual nature that you would like to share with the congregation? Please see *Caz Donnelly* at the Sunday service. As Unitarians, we support an "Open Pulpit" and invite members of the congregation to lead the service if they so wish.
Fellowship contact 0466 940 461

~~~~~

**Our next biennial ANZUUA Conference in 2013 will be hosted by the Auckland Unitarian Church.**

**The theme of the conference is "A free and responsible search for truth and meaning".**

**The conference begins Saturday morning 26 October and goes through to Monday mid day 28 October.**

**The AGM will be held on the Monday morning.**

**Other details are being developed and will be provided as soon as they are available.**

**[http://www.anzua.org/anzua\\_alt/index.htm](http://www.anzua.org/anzua_alt/index.htm)**

**The Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church**  
invites you to its 160th anniversary service  
on Sunday 25 November at 11.00 am.

The address, ***Fighting Back, It's Our Blooming Lot***, will be given by a very special visitor, Peter Cundall, former ABC Gardening Australia presenter.

Following the service, Peter Cundall will be launching the book ***Shining a Light: Beacon 1939–2009***, which is an analysis of world affairs through 70 years of the Beacon, journal of the Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church, 110 Grey St. East Melbourne 3002