



Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship
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Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre
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Schedule of Services

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

28 November **Colin Whatmough** **"A discussion on the topic 'The Three Ages of Christianity' arising from Colin's talk in May 2010."**

This will lead towards how modern man is engaging in spiritual realms in the 21st C.

5 December **Morandir Armson** **"Dualism in the 21st Century, The Zoroastrian Diaspora in Australia."**

Members of the Zoroastrian faith in Iran have faced a great deal of religious discrimination and harassment, including forced conversions, violence and facing the ordeal of being legally identified as ritually unclean. As is the case with many persecuted peoples, small numbers of Zoroastrians have made their way to Australia, seeking refuge from this religious persecution. Unfortunately, these Zoroastrians have faced more religious discrimination in Australia and this discrimination has underscored the ignorance which the average Australian holds about Zoroastrianism and indeed, religions in general.

12 December **Ginna Hastings** **"Freedom to Choose in Marriage."**

This talk will be touching on the importance of marriage and why our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters should have the freedom to choose whom they marry as well as heterosexuals.

19 December **Christmas lunch (May not be in Gallery)**

NOTE There will be no service on December 26 or January 2nd.

A great start to 2011

9 January **Candace Parks** **"Seven Ways of Seeing."**

16 January **Peter Berry** **"Religion and the Environment."**

23 January **Anthony Venn Brown** **" My Spiritual Journey."**

30 January **Martin Horlacher** **"Philosophy with Calvin and Hobbes"**

“Jesus Rediscovered?” by
Lloyd Geering, St AndrewsTrust, 2010

A Review by Eric Stevenson

The visit to Sydney next year of a grand old pioneer and brilliant scholar of progressive religion has prompted me to study this booklet which he has written as a summary of his three lectures on the above subject. In fifty pages Professor Lloyd Geering presents a succinct statement of all the wisdom I need to support my decision to relinquish the antiquated Christology still being promulgated to-day by most institutional churches. It has also provided me with a summary of all the material I need to reconstruct my portrait of a more credible Jesus of Nazareth. With characteristic forthrightness, Professor Geering has presented a Jesus we have hardly ever known; he has documented the waning of orthodox Christian belief; and in its place he has described the emergence of a Christless Christianity.

Surprisingly he reveals that this apparently new approach to a Christianity without Christ finds its origins among the followers of Jesus of Nazareth, but only in the few decades immediately following his death. (This was at a time before the church had the chance to make claims about a virgin birth and a physical resurrection, or elevate him to God’s right hand, or bestow upon him divine status, or credit him with miraculous feats in defiance of natural laws, or endow him with salvic powers.) In doing so Lloyd has used the latest method of searching for the most reliable evidence about the historical figure on whom Christianity was founded. Approximately two hundred independent world renowned scholars from differing disciplines, including Lloyd himself, came together in continuing convocation to form the Westar Institute which adopted this research methodology.

In the Institute’s Jesus Seminar, the scholars found that the truly human Jesus had been hidden under layer after layer of Christian fictions. The trip of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, the shepherds in the fields and the three wise men were all stories that were created around the latter half of the first century in order “to satisfy growing theo-

logical interests”. Probably only an estimated 19% of sayings attributed to Jesus by the Gospel writers were thought to be authentic. The real Jesus was neither intentionally the founder of an institution nor was he divine. He was a Jewish sage whose one liners and stories about how to live were addressed to his fellow Jews, but which once memorialised, spoke universally to the human condition.

The church itself largely created the portrait of the divine Christ which became frozen after the first two or three centuries of the Christian era. Nobody has yet found how the church began. The studies lean towards the idea that it was the work of grieving followers of “the Way” who were endeavouring to find meaning in the tragic death of their charismatic friend by looking for predictions of his sacrificial life in their Jewish Bible, the Torah. Despite the fact that the Gospel record does not provide a substantially reliable account of who Jesus was and what he said and did, it has been possible to use it in conjunction with other ancient documents like the Didache and the Gospel of Thomas to describe what Lloyd calls “the footprints” and “voice prints” of the historical Jesus. And although this has meant the discrediting of much of traditional Christian doctrine and the “decline of CHRISTianity” (note Lloyd’s capitals) **it has provided a new foundation for Christian practice.**

Far from being a relentlessly deconstructionist approach to traditional religion, these studies acknowledge the fact that the passing away institutions of Christianity have shaped a whole civilization, given the world a Divinity which was and still is “an ultimate point of reference in terms of which all else is grasped” and helped people “practise their highest values” as Jesus must have done.. Lying deeply buried in cold orthodoxy however, the real essence of what inspired the first disciples has been sensitively unearthed. This way of loving and being has been minimised by a misrepresentation of the life of Jesus whose words and actions have been masked by an ecclesiastical system. This system was in many respects inconsistent with what Jesus said. But underneath the mythical framework, the essence has remained. It is ready to be revived and reclaimed by those who are willing to attempt

to do what Jesus taught without relying on divine help from an imaginatively created Christ figure to do it. In conclusion, Lloyd Geering throws down the gauntlet to modern day followers of the Way whose task is to keep the mission of Jesus alive and to witness to unconditional love in human relationships which is what Jesus called the reign of God.

*Eric is an Eremos member and Co-ordinator of the
Centre for Progressive Religious Thought
which is hosting*

**Professor Sir Lloyd Geering
and Rev. Dr. Greg Jenks**

members of the Jesus Seminar

at its next Regional Conference in Sydney.

Topic:

Jesus – Better Known
and
Bible—Better Read

JESUS AS A SAGE

*THE BIBLE TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY
BUT NOT LITERALLY.*

**At Beecroft Community Centre,
Corner Beecroft and Copeland
Roads, Beecroft.**

Saturday, March 19, 2011 (9 am—4-30 pm)

Lunch, morning and afternoon tea provided.

.\$60.00

Enquiries 040575811

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## **Technology can help us take care of the natural world**

Jim Thomson's **Outback Power Pack** has been voted 1 by viewers of ABC1 program *The New Inventors* for 2010. The Outback Power Pack is a solar and wind power system that can be delivered to a site ready to go, making it suitable for remote areas with ample wind and sunshine but no energy infrastructure.

The power pack is the size of a shipping container and can be delivered by truck. The solar panels and wind turbine then fold out. The container hold the conversion technology and Mr Thomson says it can produce enough power for one house.

Mr Thomson said he was inspired to create the power pack because he wanted to make it cheaper and easier for people to choose renewable energy.

***Part of ABC report by Emma Wynne***

We already have plastics made from corn and sugar. Now, scientists have created a Styrofoam-like material using mostly milk proteins and clay.

Ultra-light and largely biodegradable, the plastic might someday become a green alternative to petroleum-derived foam packaging blocks, among other applications.

"The idea that we could go from milk and dirt to plastic foam seems attractive," says Professor David Schiraldi, a polymer scientist at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. "Clay is pretty close to inexhaustible. Our only effluent is water vapour. It seems pretty green to me." **Emily Sohn**

***Discovery News***

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Green Islam

While Muslims usually pray in their homes or in congregational mosques, they do not hesitate to pray outdoors and in public spaces. Muhammad confirmed the permissibility of doing so by confirming that while Muslims are required to pray in pure places, the earth is inherently such a place.

***Bhawana Kamil
ABC Environment***



Treehugger

Guerrilla Gardening: Ethical?

Armed with gardening equipment, white traffic paint, or even a few benches, young (and not so young) activists around the world are taking back the streets to turn our cities into greener, more liveable and simply more fun spaces. Probably the queen of green guerrillas and the most [widely covered on TreeHugger](#), [guerrilla gardening](#) is about growing food, flowers or any plant, within urban unused areas.

Guerrilla gardeners believe in reclaiming idle spaces and taking action, assigning a new use or purpose for a public area, usually neglected or abandoned. The movement is also about learning how to grow your own food, making your area a nicer place to live and meeting new people.

Although the trend began with gardeners sneaking out in the night to perform the plantings, some projects are now community based and even backed by local authorities. By Paula Alvarado,

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***Everything I did in my life that was worthwhile I caught hell for.***

**-- Earl Warren**

### Ancient Wisdom

(A) notable pagan thinker of late antiquity was Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, who pleaded for religious tolerance for pagans in the face of Christian intolerance:

“Everything is full of gods. Whatever men worship, it may fairly be called one and

the same. We all look up to the same stars; the same heaven is above us all; the same universe surrounds every one of us. What does it matter by what system of knowledge each one of us seeks the truth? It is not by one single path that we attain to so great a secret”. [Quintus Aurelius Symmachus](#)

From a Pagan Unitarianism UK site <http://pagantheologies.pbworks.com/w/page/13622172/Pagan-tendencies-in-Unitarianism>

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Kindness for the planet.

His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama, made a visit to Toronto, Canada to address a crowd of over 30,000 in what could be summarized as a lesson of kindness.

..... He affirmed his thoughts that humans make contributions to global warming, and dug a little deeper than most have:

“These tragedies are not natural disasters, they are human disasters. They are man-made tragedies,” he said when explaining the impacts of climate change. “It is our own carelessness,” he concluded.

His observation of progress of the United Nations climate talks was clear: “The United Nations is [telling us that] national interest is of greater importance than the global interest,” as he described the inability to come to a global consensus in Copenhagen. “This is too narrow-minded. We must broaden our perspective.”

Zoe "It's Getting Hot in Here" website

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### **CSIRO: Best climate change explanation**

<http://www.csiro.au/resources/Climate-Questions-Science-Facts.html>

## Rights and Responsibilities

Part of an article in the UK *Guardian*

A Unicef UK project running in more than 1,000 schools across Britain teaches pupils about their **rights and responsibilities**, and encourages them to draw up charters for classroom behaviour.

The first evaluation of the project since its launch in 2004 has found that its introduction was accompanied by a fall in truancy and an improvement in results at schools with a high proportion of children on free school meals.

The evidence is highlighted in a three-year study of the **Rights Respecting School Award** (RRSA), undertaken by researchers at the universities of Sussex and Brighton.

In a study of 31 schools, researchers found that there was "little or no shouting" and that conflicts between pupils escalated far less frequently than they had done before the schools adopted the new approach. Fixed-term exclusions decreased in 13 schools, stabilised in three, and five reported no exclusions, the study says.

Pupils increasingly took part in making decisions, ranging from debates about the state of the playground to discussions on staff appointments. In some schools, pupils showed candidates for teaching jobs around the school and identified questions they wanted to ask.

**Pupils also gave feedback after candidates for teaching jobs gave sample lessons.**

Anita Tiessen, deputy executive director of Unicef UK, said: "It is wrong that all children in the UK don't learn about their rights. Today's evaluation report shows what a profound effect it can have not only on children, but teachers, school leaders, governors and parents."

Meanwhile, research published today by the educational charity the Sutton Trust finds that poor children are twice as likely to start school with behaviour problems, compared with their more privileged peers. More than a third (35%) of the poorest three-year-old boys displayed behaviour problems, compared with one in six (15%) of those living in richer households, the study says.

The research, by Elizabeth Washbrook of Bristol University, asked parents to rate

their child's behaviour in terms of hyperactivity and inattention, problems with conduct, emotional symptoms, and peer-related problems.

By the age of seven, 22% of the poorest boys still suffered from behaviour problems, compared to 10% of those from richer homes. Amongst girls, the rates were lower, but nearly a third of the poorest girls exhibited symptoms of behaviour problems at the age of three, which dropped to a fifth at age seven.

The research suggests that the gap in behaviour between poorer and wealthier children has widened over the last 10 years. Girls from low-income families who were born in the early 1990s were twice as likely to display behavioural problems than their peers at age seven. Those born around the millennium were three-and-a-half times as likely to show such symptoms.

Behaviour problems are more common among children from disadvantaged backgrounds, the study says, and the differences between rich and poor are starkest at the age of three, before children begin school.

Sir Peter Lampl, chairman of the education charity Sutton Trust, said: "This study builds on earlier evidence from the trust showing that children from poorer homes are already one year behind their middle-income peers on cognitive tests when they start school.

"We now know that disadvantaged children are also much more likely to have difficult and challenging behaviour. It is no wonder that the gaps in achievement grow during primary school.

"More than anything, the research shows once again why it is so important to intervene pre-school to stem problems before they develop."

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A grandfather was delivering his grandchildren to their home one day when a fire truck zoomed past. Sitting in the front seat of the fire truck was a Dalmatian dog. The children started discussing the dog's duties.

"They use him to keep crowds back," said one child. "No," said another. "He's just for good luck." A third child brought the argument to a close. "They use the dogs," she said firmly, "to find the fire hydrants."

Contributed by Candace Parks

US elections : repercussions for Canada

Canadians are set to build huge fence to keep Liberals out----

The flood of American liberals sneaking across the border into Canada has intensified in the past week, sparking calls for increased patrols to stop the illegal immigration. The recent actions of the Tea Party are prompting an exodus among left-leaning citizens who fear they'll soon be required to hunt, pray, and to agree with Bill O'Reilly and Glenn Beck. Canadian border farmers say it's not uncommon to see dozens of sociology professors, animal-rights activists and *Unitarians* crossing their fields at night.

"I went out to milk the cows the other day, and there was a Hollywood producer huddled in the barn," said Manitoba farmer Red Greenfield, whose acreage borders North Dakota. The producer was cold, exhausted and hungry. He asked me if I could spare a latte and some free-range chicken. When I said I didn't have any, he left before I even got a chance to show him my screenplay, eh?"

In an effort to stop the illegal aliens, Greenfield erected higher fences, but the liberals scaled them. He then installed loudspeakers that blared Rush Limbaugh across the fields. "Not real effective," he said. "The liberals still got through and Rush annoyed the cows so much that they wouldn't give any milk."

Officials are particularly concerned about smugglers who meet liberals near the Canadian border, pack them into Volvo station wagons and drive them across the border where they are simply left to fend for themselves.

"A lot of these people are not prepared for our rugged conditions," an Ontario border patrolman said. "I found one carload without a single bottle of imported drinking water. They did have a nice little Napa Valley Cabernet, though."

When liberals are caught, they're sent back across the border, often wailing loudly that they fear retribution from conservatives.

Rumours have been circulating about plans being made to build re-education

camps where liberals will be forced to drink domestic beer and watch NASCAR races.

In recent days, liberals have turned to ingenious ways of crossing the border. Some have been disguised as senior citizens taking a bus trip to buy cheap Canadian prescription drugs. After catching a half-dozen young vegans in powdered wig disguises, Canadian immigration authorities began stopping buses and quizzing the supposed senior citizens about Perry Como and Rosemary Clooney to prove that they were alive in the '50s. "If they can't identify the accordion player on The Lawrence Welk Show, we become very suspicious about their age," an official said.

Canadian citizens have complained that the illegal immigrants are creating an organic-broccoli shortage and are renting all the Michael Moore movies.

"I really feel sorry for American liberals, but the Canadian economy just can't support them," an Ottawa resident said. "How many art-history majors does one country need?"

Contributed by Candace Parks

Internet kiosk for African village, solar powered and satellite connected.



Here is how the Unitarians in Britain describe themselves on their website

Our Unitarian community consists of about 200 congregations that meet in Chapels, Churches and Meeting Houses right across Britain.

We gather for worship and fellowship, to create a caring community where all feel supported in our search for meaning and value. Unitarians are an open faith community celebrating diverse beliefs. We originate from the liberal Christian tradition, but now include people of other faiths as well as spiritual seekers.

Unitarians do not discriminate on grounds of gender (we have had women ministers for more than 100 years), age, race, religion or sexual orientation.

Unitarianism differs from many other religions in that we believe in helping people find their own spiritual path rather than defining it for them.

We welcome all those with open minds who share our views on **tolerance** toward others, who embrace the **freedom** to be in a faith community that does not impose creeds or specific beliefs, and where the approach is based on **reason** not dogma.

See:

<http://www.unitarian.org.uk/index.shtml>

Elizabeth Gaskell Bicentenary Celebrations

Elizabeth Gaskell 2010 marks the bicentenary of the birth of Elizabeth Gaskell, the accomplished writer of novels and short stories. She also wrote the remarkable biography of her friend Charlotte Bronte and has become familiar to many through BBC adaptations of her works: *Wives and Daughters*, *North* and most recently *Cranford*. She was raised as a Unitarian and was married to Revd William Gaskell, Minister of the historic Cross Street Chapel in Manchester.

Unitarians are pleased to be associated with the extensive bicentennial celebrations, both in the Cheshire market town of Knutsford (the real Cranford) and also Manchester. Elizabeth Gaskell, her ancestors and family

rest in the graveyard.

There is a memorial plaque to Elizabeth in the recently rebuilt Cross Street Chapel www.cross-street-chapel.org.uk

I love the dark hours

I love the dark hours of my being.
My mind deepens into them.
There I can find, as in old letters,
the days of my life, already lived,
and held like a legend, and understood.

Then the knowing comes: I can open
to another life that's wide and timeless.

So I am sometimes like a tree
rustling over a gravesite
and making real the dream
of the one its living roots
embrace:

a dream once lost
among sorrows and songs.

~ Ranier Maria Rilke ~

(Rilke's Book of Hours: Love Poems to God,
trans. by Anita Barrows and Joanna Macy)

Now I become myself

Now I become myself. It's taken
Time, many years and places,
I have been dissolved and shaken,
Worn other people's faces,
Run madly, as if Time were there,
Terribly old, crying a warning,
"hurry, you will be dead before -----"
(What? Before you reach the morning?
or the end of the poem is clear?
Or love safe in the walled city?)
Now to stand still, to be here,
Feel my own weight and density!.....
Now there is time and Time is young.
O, in this single hour I live
All of myself and do not move
I, the pursued, who madly ran,
Stand still, stand still, and stop the Sun!

~ May Sarton ~



Jessie, the gorgeous grandchild of Carolyn and Peter Donnelly, has been visiting “down under”.

A suitably Aussie “Merry Christmas and Happy New Year” photo.

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**Would you like to write for Esprit?**

Articles, poetry, travel diaries, letter to the editor.....whatever.

**Please note that Esprit is assembled usually in the last week of the month so longer items should be handed in or sent by the second last Sunday of the month. Items for the Schedule of Services (talk titles etc) should be in by the Friday of the last week. Variations to this timetable may be necessitated by circumstances.**

Preferred method is as an email to [jtendys@bigpond.com](mailto:jtendys@bigpond.com)

**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 Candace 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 [www.sydneyunitarians.com](http://www.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.