



Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship
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Schedule of Services

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

8 January Ginna Hastings “New year’s Resolutions—a rethink.”

Over the course of human history we seem to have settled upon Jan 1 as the start of a "new year". Of course why this spot in time is the start of the "new year" is an accident of pagan and Christian history and tradition. Nonetheless, we all like to think of having new beginnings, wiping away the old and starting afresh. Why do we? What can we do differently this year to make it really fresh?

15 January Rev. Steve Wilson “Gay Pride, Rights and Diagnoses”

Forty years ago, homosexuality was removed from being classified as a mental illness. Today, we hear the details of the story, the nuances of that moment. Walk with us as we remember the history of how riots led to rights.

22 January Rev. Steve Wilson “A Faithless Faith?”

Is Religion without a Supernatural Leap Valid?

Is there really religion beyond faith, and if so what? Is faith in God / a Goddess, Jesus or something similar, ...something bigger,... essential for an effective, practical, valuable, contemporary religious/spiritual life? Is belief in something bigger,... essential to religion? Is some leap of faith required?

29 January Martin Horlacher "Prove It."

"We all have rights, but what about responsibilities? We're all worthy, but is anyone really special? At least once, every individual must rise to the challenge posed by this life, one that can be expressed in just two words - prove it."

5 February To be announced

12th February Max Lawson The Influence of Ralph Waldo Emerson on Unitarianism

His influence was enormous, essentially changing the religion forever more.

Please note: the AGM will be on February 26th.

Happy New Year

We are now up to volume 8 of Esprit. Our Fellowship continues on—not as robustly as we'd like but quite steadily. Our weekly meetings strengthen our determination to live the Unitarian life, respecting our links with family, with each other and with ever widening circles of human life and planetary life.

For some of our members, 2011 was not a great year for health and we can only hope there will be some corners turned in 2012.

We all know how much we have to thank Candace for her years of presidency and how pleased we are that Ginna has taken on that role now that Candace is taking a well-deserved break. Let us make 2012 a good year for Spirit of Life—and don't forget to give me items for our newsletter.

Jan Tendys

Our Fellowship's Kiva Loans

The last two loans we have made through the Kiva organisation were group loans, one in Burundi, Africa (to enlarge a mixed business shop) and one in Indonesia (to purchase livestock). Both those loans have been fully repaid.



Our next two loans will be to individuals. The first is to Koli who lives in Agoe in Togo, Africa. Koli is a 37 year old woman. She is married to a driver and has two children (12yrs and 9 yrs) who attend school. Koli has been working as a seamstress since 2004. She is a trained seamstress and also sells sewing supplies to all-comers from her

home. She works alone and at this time is experiencing no difficulty. She wants to purchase more sewing supplies as she wants to reinvest in her sewing activity.

In coming years, Koli would like to open a shop. She said that with the profits she intends to take care of her family.

The loan is administered in Togo by WAGES (Women and Associations for Gain both Economic and Social). Besides microloans, WAGES offers training programs in basic literacy, healthcare (HIV Aids, malaria) and business related subjects—business management, marketing and accounting. This will be Koli's third WAGES credit loan.

The second loan is also in Africa, this time in Rwanda.



Jean Bosco is 28 years old, married with one child who is 4 years old. Jean sells clothes. This is his 10th successful year in business and the hours he works are from 7am to 6pm every day.

Jean Bosco has requested a Kiva loan via Vision Finance Company to buy more clothes to sell. With the profits he will build a secure future for his business as well as his child.

Vision Finance Company was Kiva's first partner in Rwanda. Established in 1999, VFC is an affiliate of World Vision International. Since its founding, VFC has been committed to alleviating poverty in Rwanda by ensuring that poor people have access to credit to support business initiatives that will improve their life circumstances.

VFC has a broad set of products and services, offering Community Banking services for self-selected groups of 10 - 30

borrowers; Solidarity Group Services for more experienced groups of entrepreneurs and Individual Loans for customers who already have a small established business. Vision Finance is also among the very few financial institutions targeting farmers and providing credit options in Rwanda, where access to credit is critical to the success of agricultural enterprises.

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## **The Shadow of the Past**

(as related to the 7<sup>th</sup> UU Principle: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part).

**Colin Whatmough**

1. All living things on earth, including humans, form part of a complex web of Interdependence between the different plants and animals constituting a food chain stretching from the photosynthesisers to herbivores and carnivores at the top.
2. When the direct ancestors of humans first emerged about two million years ago – humans remained as hunters and gatherers for 99% of their existence. They were limited by their way of obtaining food, their mobile way of life and their relatively small numbers.
3. Numbers did creep upwards gradually to about 4 million people by about 10,000 BC. This pressure led to the adoption of agriculture, leading to the disruption and destruction of natural ecosystems. In helping solve the problem of feeding an increasing number of people, it opened the way to a further growth in population. The growth in numbers increased the demand for resources which led to the development of more complex techniques requiring effort. Paddy fields and irrigation also require higher levels of effort. The First Great Transition set human society on its path.
4. The Second Great Transition began in the 1500's and involved the use of fossil fuel sources and the spread of colonies, trade and industrialization. This marked a massive leap in the process of using more of the earth's resources. Within two hundred years only - after 1800 the world's population increased 6 fold to seven billion people. This required a vast increase in agricultural output and the destruction of large areas of previ-

ously untouched natural ecosystems. The amount of pollution has increased greatly – the build up of CO2 is now facilitating global warming and climate change. The Second Great Transition was dominated by Europe, the US and Japan, but now other countries – China, India and Brazil – are catching up quickly

5. This industrialization, emphasizing growth and profit and called “development” and “progress” has led to devastating pollution, a new future scarcity of resources, significant climate change and the destruction of our carbon sinks: the oceans and forests. Are we moving quickly into a period of ecological and human history that might be called “the Third Great Transition” or perhaps “The Great Disruption”? Food for thought.

## **The above is a summary of the presentation to the Spirit of Life service on Sunday 27th Nov. 2011 by Colin Whatmough.**

Colin says that he views the 7th Principle as the most important, certainly at this time. As such, we urgently need to understand the workings of the interdependent web of all existence, which man is just beginning to understand.

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From Margaret's Collection

George Bernard Shaw: Democracy substitutes election by the incompetent many for appointment by the corrupt few.

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We are told that when Jehovah created the world, he saw that it was good. What would he say now?

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It is suggested that Leonardo's description of a bridge is also a good guide for a relationship: “An arch is two weaknesses that together create a strength.”

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The purpose of studying economics is not to acquire a set of ready made answers to economic questions, but to avoid being deceived by economists.

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And best wishes to Margaret (Armstrong/McCammon) who is currently recovering from a spinal operation.

Lead

Here is a story
to break your heart.
Are you willing?
This winter
the loons came to our harbor
and died, one by one,
of nothing we could see.
A friend told me
of one on the shore
that lifted its head and opened
the elegant beak and cried out
in the long, sweet savoring of its life
which, if you have heard it,
you know is a sacred thing,
and for which, if you have not heard it,
you had better hurry to where
they still sing.
And, believe me, tell no one
just where that is.
The next morning
this loon, speckled
and iridescent and with a plan
to fly home
to some hidden lake,
was dead on the shore.
I tell you this
to break your heart,
by which I mean only
that it break open and never close again
to the rest of the world.

~ Mary Oliver ~

For a New Beginning

In out-of-the-way places of the heart,
Where your thoughts never think to wander,
This beginning has been quietly forming,
Waiting until you were ready to emerge.

For a long time it has watched your desire,
Feeling the emptiness growing inside you,
Noticing how you willed yourself on,
Still unable to leave what you had outgrown.

It watched you play with the seduction of
safety
And the grey promises that sameness whis-
pered,

Heard the waves of turmoil rise and relent,
Wondered would you always live like this.

Then the delight, when your courage kindled,
And out you stepped onto new ground,
Your eyes young again with energy and
dream,
A path of plenitude opening before you.

Though your destination is not yet clear
You can trust the promise of this opening;
Unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning
That is at one with your life's desire.

Awaken your spirit to adventure;
Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;
Soon you will be home in a new rhythm,
For your soul senses the world that awaits
you.

~ John O'Donohue ~

The Apple Orchard

Come let us watch the sun go down
and walk in twilight through the orchard's
green.

Does it not seem as if we had for long
collected, saved and harbored within us
old memories? To find releases and seek
new hopes, remembering half-forgotten joys,
mingled with darkness coming from within,
as we randomly voice our thoughts aloud
wandering beneath these harvest-laden trees
reminiscent of Durer woodcuts, branches
which, bent under the fully ripened fruit,
wait patiently, trying to outlast, to
serve another season's hundred days of toil,
straining, uncomplaining, by not breaking
but succeeding, even though the burden
should at times seem almost past endurance.
Not to falter! Not to be found wanting!

Thus must it be, when willingly you strive
throughout a long and uncomplaining life,
committed to one goal: to give yourself!
And silently to grow and to bear fruit.

~ Rainer Maria Rilke ~
(trans. by Albert Ernest Flemming)

Cardinal Pell needs to practise what he preaches on climate change

John Cook ABC Religion and Ethics 16 Nov 2011

In a much publicised recent speech, Cardinal George Pell strongly endorsed the importance of evidence in public debate. He argues that "the debates about anthropogenic global warming can only be conducted by the accurate recognition and interpretation of scientific evidence."

It would be hard to find anyone who would disagree with his sentiment - a proper understanding of climate must be built on a foundation of empirical observations. There's just one problem: Cardinal Pell fails to practise what he preaches.

In order accurately to recognize and interpret scientific evidence, one must consider the full body of evidence. Pell's arguments make it painfully clear that he is unaware of the many lines of evidence that form our understanding of human-caused global warming.

Decades of scientific research have examined global warming from the front, back, sideways and every other conceivable angle. The same climate myths we hear echoing in the blogosphere, Australian parliament and even in Westminster's Cathedral Hall - thanks to Cardinal Pell - were scrutinized and discounted by climate scientists years ago, and, in some cases, decades ago.

By ignoring the long history of scientific debate in the peer-reviewed literature, climate skeptics are doomed to repeat the errors of the past.

So, for instance, Pell seems to be ignorant of the full body of evidence when he claims that global warming has stopped. Earlier this year, an international team of scientists headed by John Church from CSIRO tallied up all the energy warming the oceans, heating the land and atmosphere and melting the ice. The measurements show that our climate has continued to build up heat well into the 21st century.

This was hardly news - it confirmed similar research published in 2009. False claims that global warming stopped in 1998 or 2001 (or some other arbitrary date) ignore the empirical fact that our planet continues to accumulate heat.

So how does one make sense of the

fact that surface temperature jumps up and down from year to year? Imagine a bath steadily filling up with water. Suppose you place an energetic toddler (let's call him Enso) into the bath. As the child thrashes about, water sloshes around chaotically. Nevertheless, the average water level continues to rise as the bath fills up.

The same is happening to our planet. The Earth's heat content is steadily rising but energy is constantly sloshing around between the ocean and the atmosphere, driven by ocean cycles like the El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO). To mislead people into thinking we're experiencing global cooling, misinformers cherry-pick short periods in the temperature record when the warming trend slows temporarily. But the genuine scientific skeptic* takes in all the evidence, considers the long-term trends and never forgets the planet's steady build up in heat.

Cardinal Pell fears that "many politicians have never investigated the primary evidence." My fear is that Pell himself has failed to investigate the primary evidence that carbon dioxide is causing global warming. The increased greenhouse effect caused by carbon dioxide has been confirmed by many direct measurements made out in the real world.

*Cook is referring to the fact that science relies on scepticism but not of the ignorant kind.

Read more:

<http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2011/11/16/3367852.htm>

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An acquaintance of mine who is a doctor told this story about her then-four-year-old daughter. On the way to preschool, the doctor had left her stethoscope on the car seat, and her little girl picked it up and began playing with it. Be still, my heart, thought my friend, gee, my daughter wants to follow in my footsteps and be a doctor!

Then the child spoke into the instrument: "Welcome to McDonald's. May I take your order?"

From a Uniting church newsletter.

**Contributed by Rev. Geoff Usher**

## GOOD SAMARITAN

A Sunday school teacher was telling her class the story of the Good Samaritan. She asked the class, "If you saw a person lying on the roadside, all wounded and bleeding, what would you do?" A thoughtful little girl broke the hushed silence, "I think I'd throw up."

## UNANSWERED PRAYER

The preacher's 5 year-old daughter noticed that her father always paused and bowed his head for a moment before starting his sermon. One day, she asked him why. "Well, Honey," he began, proud that his daughter was so observant of his messages. "I'm asking the Lord to help me preach a good sermon." "How come He doesn't answer it?" she asked.

Contributed by Candace Parks

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

**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 MS-WORD or email to jtendys@bigpond.com  
Hardcopy (or electronic media) submissions can be hand-delivered to Jan or posted to:  
Spirit of Life  
PO Box 1356  
LANE COVE NSW 1595

Please note:  
If space is limited, submissions may be subject to editing.

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

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

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

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

**Would you care to join us? Membership is open to all adults and includes this newsletter** If you would like to join us as an active member of Spirit of Life, please ring 9428-2244, consult our website [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.