



**Spirit of Life** Unitarian Fellowship  
PO Box 1356, Lane Cove NSW 1595  
Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre  
16-18 Fitzroy Street, Kirribilli  
(near Milsons Point Station)  
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Editor: Jan Tendys

Volume 8, Issue 7

July 2012

## Schedule of Services

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

**1 July                      Helen Whatmough                      “Another Weapon of Destruction?”**

The increasing use of drones as a surreptitious weapon of destruction crossing borders at will.

**8 July                      Ginna Hastings                      “Work”**

What is it about work? It makes us and breaks us. It inspires and defeats us. It challenges our moral sense. It makes us who we are. This talk will be about how to handle work in our lives.

**15 July                      Dr Andrew Usher                      “Community”**

**22 July                      Rev. Dr Ian Ellis-Jones                      "The Wizard of Oz:  
Going Beyond Humbug."**

L Frank Baum, author of the much-loved The Wizard of Oz and several other 'Oz' books, was a Theosophist and freethinker. He was a deeply spiritual man, and a fearless and tireless fighter against religious orthodoxy and dogmatism (that is, 'humbug'---his word). Although not a Unitarian as such, Baum's 'message' is very Unitarian. Come and find out why ... and what we can learn from the 'Wizard'.

**29 July                      Colin Whatmough                      “Reviewing Iraq”**

Unitarians are challenged to engage in a free and responsible search for truth and meaning, but with Iraq we find deception and lies which lead to tragedy.

**5 August                      Candace Parks                      The Ghost in the Machine**

Some people think they know a god when they see one. But how do we (or would we) recognize God if we saw her? Or saw him? What does God look like? Would we know it if God were sitting beside us in the next pew, or if the Creator panhandled us on the street?

## **My journey into the interfaith movement.**

***Rev. Dr. Susan Emeleus, March, 2012  
"Women in Faith Forum" Loreto School.***

I did not grow up in a religious family. But my brother and I went to Sunday School with a number of other children in our block and that gave my parents some space on a Sunday morning. Mine was a fairly dysfunctional family and one night, when I was 10, after I had gone to bed, I heard a fight occurring in the kitchen. When it became physical, I got scared and began to pray. I prayed something like :God, they tell us at Sunday School that we should pray, so if you are there, could you please stop that fight.

I don't remember what happened in the kitchen, but I do remember sensing a very near presence in the room, and I became hooked on God from that moment on.

Those experiences happened in Kensington. I had lots of school friends there and in the OC class at Woollahra where I went in 5th class. Interestingly, my closest friend at Woollahra was Jewish and in 2006 I met up with her in Tel Aviv and we shared our stories for an afternoon.

I was not happy when my family moved to Blacktown where my parents bought a small family business. In those days Blacktown had dirt roads and steam trains (you need to know I am 70!) As my bike was unloaded from the delivery van in Blacktown, I got on it and rode around the block. Nobody worried if 10 year old girls did that then!

I found the Anglican Church and began going there. My parents were not interested, perhaps even a little hostile, but they didn't stop me from going. That church became my spiritual home for the next 15 years. When I was in 6th class in Blacktown, the Anglican priest and his wife had a small group of children who read the Bible together each morning before school and they took it in turns of taking us through the set passage and explaining it to us. It took me 15 years to begin asking questions about the violent passages that were never selected for us to read, or the discrepancies that were not pointed out between the passages.

I went on the steam train, and later the

electric train to Parramatta High School where I gained a wonderful group of friends, many of whom I am still in touch with. Many of us joined a group called the Inter School Christian Fellowship, ISCF, and we met once a week at lunchtime, again to listen to someone talking about the Bible. During my last year at school, I heard an African Bishop from Kenya addressing a meeting in the Sydney Town Hall, pleading for people to come and work in East Africa. At the grand age of 17 I went into the offices of the Church Missionary Society near Town Hall Station and told someone that I thought God might be calling me to Africa. The person didn't laugh at me or tell me not to be ridiculous, but he did say that I should go away and get a degree and some professional experience and then come and see them.

At the University of NSW where I did science, majoring in physics and psychology, I was active in the Evangelical Union. I guess if you always seek out likeminded people who believe what you believe you get entrenched in those beliefs, unable, really, to see anything outside of them. Later, at Sydney University studying education to become a teacher, I found a similar group.

I loved being a physics teacher and I was involved in all the extra curricular activities at the school. I had several intense relationships but when the subject of marriage came up I couldn't go ahead. Finally at the ripe old age of 24, when I had taught for three years I again approached the Church missionary Society and asked what training I should think about if, indeed, I did go overseas. This time they took me seriously and said that although I had a 5 year bond with NSW Dept of Education, years taught in a developing country could be counted off your bond, and I could ask the Dept to suspend my bond while I did the necessary 'missionary' training. You see, to be a teacher in Africa I had to do a year of theology and then another year of more practical things like driving landrovers through swamps and cutting people's hair and baking bread in the bush.

(I did subsequently do the training and never used any of it unless it was being able to cut my children's hair when they were little and before they became fashion conscious.)

During the year of theology training in Sydney's Anglican Theological College, lecturers would go through the possible reference books for the course and tell you which ones were 'sound'. That is, they didn't want us reading things that might give us a different Biblical understanding than the one they promoted. Well, that was the beginning of my journey of theological discovery. Not only did I read some of the bad books, I became so interested in them that I continued to study theology right until today.

When, last year, I graduated with a doctorate in ministry it was for a study of the resources which are given to people who are accompanying someone with a terminal illness. As the Anglican Chaplain at the Children's Hospital I found that suitable materials to give to people to read were very hard to find. What do I mean by 'suitable'? What do you say to a mother whose little baby daughter has cancer in one eye? No longer could I talk about an almighty, interventionist, sovereign God who would fix things if you just prayed, and if you were good enough, or if you believed in Jesus.

I've missed out a few steps between going to Africa and becoming Anglican chaplain at the Children's hospital. (And the thirty years between those two things) Addressing tonight's topic, 'how have my spiritual beliefs influenced my life's journey', I'd have to say that for me they have been largely responsible for most of my life's choices.

I taught in a Government secondary girls' boarding school in Tanzania. Most schools had been begun by missionaries but had by then been handed over to the Tanzanian Government. But still unable to completely staff their schools with their own graduates, they relied on overseas groups such as the one who sponsored my going to Tanzania. While there, I met a man from Northern Ireland who was lecturing in physics in the university. He also felt he had gone to East Africa with some nudging from God and he came to Sydney when I returned at the end of my three year contract and we were married here.

We returned for a time, to both work in the University of Dar-es-Salaam and that was followed by ten years at UPNG, in Port Moresby. Our four children were born while we were there. As well as a bit of part time

teaching in UPNG I also worked with a PNG man on writing simple Bible study notes which were translated into Pidgin English for those who were most at home in Pidgin.

We came to Sydney, with our four children in 1982. I began to teach at Tara School, branching out into Christian Studies as well. (I suspect it was my Tara principal's connections with Loreto that caused me to be invited tonight!) I left teaching to take up a position as Anglican Chaplain at the Children's Hospital, less because I thought, as I might have when I went to Africa, that my particular Christian message had to be preached to people because it was the only way to God, but more because I saw a ministry to sick children and their families as a way of living out my faith in a compassionate and caring God.

I think I should say here that the journey of each of my children, not just their faith journey but their life journey (they range in age now from 40 to 33, and we have 9 grandchildren) has had a huge influence on my own thinking, my big decisions.

In Sydney, Anglican women can't be priests, as they can in many parts of Australia and the world, but they can be ordained as deacons. That happened to me in 1996. I thought that I might be of more support to people if they saw me as an official representative of the church that many of them felt abandoned by. After I left the Children's Hospital I worked part time in two churches in Sydney, largely with elderly people who have as many needs as those with sick children.

About ten years ago, I took a Sunday off and went to a Quaker meeting in Wahroonga. Over morning tea, a woman told me that she had joined the Women's Interfaith Network and that they were looking for an Anglican member. This is my ninth year in WIN (the Women's Interfaith Network, 4 as convenor and now as secretary to our monthly meeting in parliament House) and I have found that journey of in-depth dialogue to be as enriching as all the other study, pilgrimages and theology journals I have been influenced by over the years.

Recently, I withdrew from leading services where the liturgy speaks of a God of power and might, and uses exclusive language that suggests there is only one son of God, (and very few daughters of God) and

and only one way to believe. What if the greatest energy of the cosmos is the energy of love? What if all the different energies that hold us together atomically and biologically are somehow related to the energy of love into which we can tune? What if our spiritual beliefs come down to a willingness to tune into, to resonate with, the energy of love which has empowered all our religious leaders in some way? What if Mohammed and Buddha and Jesus and the Sufis were all tuning in to that same empowering love in some way, and what if we could, in our school days have some understanding of what it would be like to be brought up in some of those different traditions?

I can't answer the "what ifs", but I can say that schools like this that have forums such as this one tonight are going a long way towards helping us to see the importance of our spiritual beliefs in influencing our life journeys.

***Sue has been a visitor to "Spirit of life" and we hope to see more of her in the future.***

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**WEA courses**

**'What You Think You Become'**

IAN ELLIS-JONES BA, LLB, LLM, PhD, Dip Relig Stud.

Look at the New Thought 'mental science' movement, developed towards the end of the 19th century. William James called it 'the Religion of Healthy-Mindedness', and it's given rise to modern day self-help and popular psychology industries as well as much of the so-called 'New Age' movement. Trace the roots of metaphysical healing, 'science of mind' and 'mind cure', and critically evaluate the movement's key ideas. A special focus on New Thought in Australia.

4 meetings 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm Tue from Jul 31

\$114      Conc. \$103

Course No: 23HM060

**"Food Spirituality: the rites, rituals and religion of Food"**

MORANDIR ARMSON BA (Hons)

Food plays an enormous part in culture and ethnic identity. However, food is also of the greatest importance in religion and spirituality. All over the world, humans celebrate their religious faith with feasting, communion meals and sacrifice of food, as well as maintain various food prohibitions. Examine the role of food in religion and religious culture. Taste foods which pay a part in religious rites and see photographs of religious feasts and festivals. Discuss some unusual manifestations of food spirituality: edible saints, skull-shaped cakes and even cannibalism.

4 meetings 1pm– 3pm Mon from Jul 30

\$114      Conc. \$103

Course no. 23HM058

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**Jottings**

It was good to see Ross back at SOL recently. We wish Ross and Margaret H good healing and extend warm thoughts to Margaret A and our other SOL friends who are unable to attend due to sickness, frailty and other reasons.

Welcome also to Martin after his marathon effort at the Sydney Film Festival seeing 14 films!

Don't forget our third Sunday of the month lunch at Kirribilli Hotel after the service. We had nine people last time on a very welcome bright sunny day!

**Just a Reminder**

As editor I'd like to extend an invitation to members to write a contribution to Esprit. Do not fear that what you want to write about may not directly relate to Unitarianism. Book & film reviews and social commentary which have an ethical dimension to it are welcome.

If you can suggest a speaker of interest, do let Caz or Ginna know. Talks should be 20-25 minutes in length depending on length of readings. **JT**

## Interview with Richard Ford

(Ford is best known for his novel "Independence Day" which was made into a successful film. His latest novel is entitled "Canada". JT)

**Q. Do you believe art is an escape from the boredom of life?**

I would never say boredom. You can make yourself bored sometimes, but I don't think life itself is boring. For me, it's a slightly more complex idea. Life is an onslaught. It's imagination, or art itself, which makes life interesting. Henry James says "art makes life, art makes importance" and that's kind of what I think life is: this onslaught that you deal with it through your imagination.

**Q. Would you say you are a positive writer who explores existential failures in your books?**

I feel that's exactly what I am – an optimist, who believes with Sartre, that to write about the darker possible things is an act of optimism. But what I'm looking for is drama, which occurs when people are at a loss, and not succeeding. I try to find a vocabulary which makes those things expressible. In the process of making those expressible to a readership, it becomes an act of optimism, because it imagines a future in which these things will be understood, and be mediated in some way. Writing for me is always an act of optimism. I probably wouldn't do it otherwise, no matter how dark things are.

**Q. You quote Emerson in "Canada" and "Independence Day." How has he influenced you as a writer?**

What Emerson tries to do in his essays, is what I try to do in writing novels and stories, which is, to take the most complex things I know, and the most important things I think I understand, give accessible language to them, and attempt to say something important that has not been said before. What I'm talking about are typical Emersonian kind of subjects: character, self-reliance, poetry, and art. I use Emerson as a model, because he works so hard at trying to give a voice that is accessible to things in life that can seem so difficult, important, and inaccessible to us. Particularly things which provoke and confound us by their inconsistency, by the appearance of one thing (this is why "Canada" is about Canada) which might seem to be

quite similar, but which in fact – like Canada and America – are very distinct. It's a telling sign of our genius as human beings that we can see, among things that are alike, significant and insignificant distinctions.

**Q. Why do the characters in your novels travel so much?**

I'm interested in how people exhibit who they are, and exhibit their success as human beings, by how they affiliate and accommodate new moral and spatial settings. That is where I have been able to detect where drama lies. I'm interested – just talking intellectually here – in borders, between someone who is considered marginal, and someone who is considered mainstream. I am the child of parents who lived through the Depression, and I was made to learn very early in life that you can easily slide out of the picture, and no longer be a successful citizen, by forces acting on you that you cannot control.

**Q. Is this why so many marginal characters turn up in your books?**

Well I have sympathy and empathy for them, because I know they are just a blink away from a wholly different and successful life. There is a passage in "Canada" in which Dell talks from his adult perspective, about seeing men sitting out in the cold in front of rescue missions, and when he sees men in that situation, he says "they're my father, they're my father."

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**Q. How do you know when the language is working for you when you are writing?**

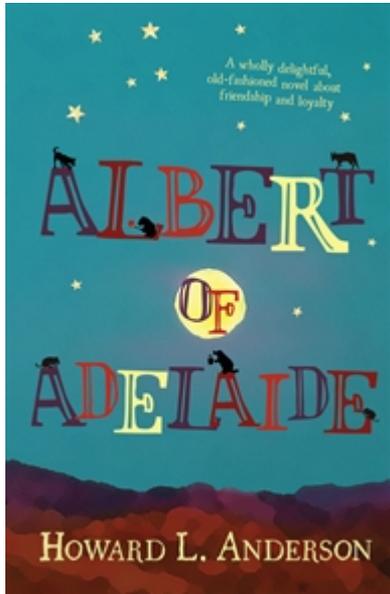
The degree to which I can hear the language, read it out loud, see it on the page, and know that it has a kind of felicity. I estimate my success by how the words sing to me. Then I have a certain confidence that it's getting me where I should be going.

**The above is part of an article by J P O'Malley "Richard Ford: Why writing is an act of optimism" published in The Christian Science Monitor, June 14, 2012**

<http://www.csmonitor.com/Books/chapter-and-verse/2012/0614/Richard-Ford-Why-writing-is-an-act-of-optimism?cmpid=ema:nws:Books%20Weekly%206-19-12%20%281%29&cmpid=ema:nws:NzQ4MDU1MTMxNAS2>

## Albert of Adelaide

(Having only read a the first chapter of this book, I'm nevertheless recommending it as something members can read to their children or grandchildren and thoroughly enjoy themselves. *JT*)



Publisher's description: On a journey through the outback to discover "old" Australia - a land of liberty, promise, and peace - the irrepressible Albert (a duck-billed platypus as it happens), learns about mateship, courage and the kindness of strangers. A funny, charming and delightfully old-fashioned novel about friendship and loyalty, by Howard L. Anderson. [Read an extract \(PDF\)](#)

Publishers Allen & Unwin, available July 2012

### Mystery and Creativity

*(In his address "Eearth and G-o-d! Beyond 'Belief' to 'Mystery' and 'Creativity'," Rev. Rex A. E. Hunt introduced us to the thinking of Gordon D. Kaufman. The following is an extract from that address.)*

It is not sufficient, of course, to uncover the demons in our past. For 250+ years now a new religion story has been evolving. The 'naturalistic' strand of religion shaped by former Harvard University theologian, Gordon Kaufman, for instance, presents G-o-d as a non-personal 'serendipitous creativity'

"manifest throughout the cosmos" instead of as a kind of cosmic person. We humans are deeply embedded in, and basically sustained by, this creative activity in and through the web of life on planet Earth. (Kaufman 2004:58).

I reckon Kaufman clearly names the problem with traditional religious language and thinking. His alternative thinking and language embraces both our scientific knowledge and the reality beyond the symbols of biblical faith. And... the notion of creativity carries with it a strong note of mystery. "Creativity happens: this is an absolutely amazing mystery – even though we may in certain cases, for example with the evolution of life, be able to specify some of the conditions without which it could not happen." (Kaufman 2004:56).

Likewise, this close connection with the idea of 'mystery', makes 'creativity' a good metaphor for thinking about God because it preserves the ultimacy of the mystery of God, while connecting God with the coming into being – in time – of the new and the novel and the selection of some of these possibilities to continue.

Thus, liberal or progressive religious thought calls each and every one of us to 'dance with', to live in harmony with, our world.

**Kaufman, G. D. In the Beginning... Creativity. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004.**

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**Note: The form "G-o-d" is used by progressive theologians to emphasise that they are not talking about the personal, omnipotent "God" of theism.**

**Gordon Dester Kaufman died on July 22, 2011 at age 86. A member of the Faculty of Divinity (Harvard divinity School) since 1963, Kaufman was a renowned liberal theologian whose research, writing, and teachings had a profound influence on constructive and systematic theology.**

**Read more: <http://www.hds.harvard.edu/news-events/articles/2011/07/28/gordon-kaufman-leading-theologian-dies>**

## Save biodiversity to save ourselves

*Jeremy Hance*

World leaders need to do much more to protect the Earth's millions of species for the services they provide, according to a new scientific consensus statement in Nature based on over 1,000 research papers. Written by 17 top ecologists, the statement points out that despite growing knowledge of the importance of biodiversity for human well-being and survival, species continue to vanish at alarming rates. The statement comes just weeks before the UN'S Rio+20 Summit on Sustainable Development, which is supposed to chart a path for a less impoverished and more equitable world including an emphasis on greater environmental protections, but which has been marred by a lack of ambition.

"We need to take biodiversity loss far more seriously - from individuals to international governing bodies - and take greater action to prevent further losses of species," said lead author Bradley Cardinale, with the University of Michigan, in a press release. "This is a consensus statement by experts who agree that loss of Earth's wild species will be harmful to the world's ecosystems and may harm society by reducing ecosystem services that are essential to human health and prosperity."

**Cardinale and colleagues found that research over the past two decades has proven again and again that biodiversity is key for functioning and abundant ecosystems, which supply humanity with food and commodities. For example, the scientists write that the evidence shows that genetic diversity boosts crop yields, fisheries' catches, wood production, and fodder in grasslands. They also point out that plant diversity increases carbon sequestration and improves soil health, while decreasing plant disease and mitigating the damage done by invasive species.**

"We've reached a point where efforts to preserve species and biological diversity might no longer be an act of altruism," explains co-author, Diane Srivastava, with the University of British Columbia. "This research review dramatically underscores the impor-

ance of strengthening - not weakening or curtailing - environmental assessment processes in order to stem the tide of the loss of species and diversity that so many humans benefit from and depend on."

Scientists have been warning for decades that if business-as-usual continues the Earth may well undergo a mass extinction with large-scale impacts on human society. Last year, 99.5 percent of 583 conservation scientists agreed in a survey in *Conservation Biology* that a serious loss in biodiversity was 'likely', 'very likely', or 'virtually certain'.

According to the IUCN Red List, over 19,000 species are currently classified as Vulnerable, Endangered, or Critically Endangered. The IUCN has also recorded 875 extinctions in the last 500 years. However the Red List has only had the capacity to date to analyse around 3 percent of the world's known species - mostly mammals, birds, and amphibians - which number about 2 million in total. The vast majority of extinctions have likely gone undocumented, with lesser-known species simply vanishing beyond human record.

"No one can agree on what exactly will happen when an ecosystem loses a species, but most of us agree that it's not going to be good. And we agree that if ecosystems lose most of their species, it will be a disaster," said co-author Shahid Naeem of Columbia University.

The scientists say that many questions regarding the importance of biodiversity to the world's ecosystems remain unanswered, but emphasize that researchers know enough now to make the point that biodiversity is inherently connected to human well-being.

**(The above is part of an article from the environmentalist group *Mongabay*. June 06, 2012)**

**Read more:**

<http://news.mongabay.com/2012/0606-hance-rio-biodiversity-services.html#ixzz1xkVC1Ztu>

**Sadly, the Rio+20 Summit proved a disappointment on the above concerns and on the whole need to protect the planet. However, while governments are failing in their responsibilities, more and more businesses internationally are taking environmental concerns seriously. JT**

## How children perceive their Grandparents.....

1. She was in the bathroom, putting on her makeup, under the watchful eyes of her young granddaughter, as she'd done many times before.

After she applied her lipstick and started to leave, the little one said, "But Grandma, you forgot to kiss the toilet paper good-bye!" I will probably never put lipstick on again without thinking about kissing the toilet paper good-bye....

2. My young grandson called the other day to wish me Happy Birthday. He asked me how old I was, and I told him, 80. My grandson was quiet for a moment, and then he asked, "Did you start at 1?"

3. After putting her grandchildren to bed, a grandmother changed into old slacks and a droopy blouse and proceeded to wash her hair. As she heard the children getting more and more rambunctious, her patience grew thin. Finally, she threw a towel around her head and stormed into their room, putting them back to bed with stern warnings. As she left the room, she heard the three-year-old say with a trembling voice:

"Who was THAT?"

Contributed by Caz Donnelly

### **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 Caz 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 [sydneyunitarians.org](http://sydneyunitarians.org) 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.

*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.*

**It would be helpful if items for publication, including articles and talk topics with themes could reach Jan by the 15th of each month.**

**Variations to this timetable may be necessitated by circumstances.**

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

Hardcopy submissions can be hand-delivered to Jan or posted to:

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LANE COVE NSW 1595