



Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship
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 Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre
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Volume 5 Issue 4

April, 2009

See last page – Blue Mountains House Party

Date	Speaker	Topic
5 April	Rev. Steve Wilson	The New Cosmology-Ritualized. (An Intergenerational Service): The New Cosmology -Ritualized is an intergenerational service dedicated to bringing us not only intellectually, but -with some luck-ritualistically in touch with the universe we are coming to know. Come step inside for some fresh spiritual and cosmological perspectives about whom and where we are in the world.
12 April	Rev. Steve Wilson	Oscar Night: Jesus Lifetime Achievement Award. This sermon was born as a response, maybe even a rebuttal to the hoopla over Mel Gibson's film "The Passion". Tired of the seemingly near exclusive popular understanding of Jesus as ransomed son, Jesus here is credited for his character and heroism. In the context of a speech at the Oscars, this sermon is for me a long overdue eulogy to my first and favorite mentor.
19 April	Rev. Steve Wilson	Learning The New Maths: An Earth Day Train Ride. *And Animal Blessing. Bring your Pets. It's earth day and it's not exactly working. We obviously need more metaphors to push us to change. This earth day we explore old maths problems, and take a train ride that might help us see our unique ecological situation with the poignancy it deserves.
26 April	Candace Parks, standing in for Rev. Steve Wilson	Standing Guard: Anzac Day. Working off the image of the Soldiers who guard the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, this sermon plumbs the challenge Anzac Day always brings to a person of peace. How do we honour those who fight for us, and not turn a blind eye to the horror of war? Really, how do you do that?
3 May	Jan Tendys	Mystic-Humanism. Are you one of those who dislike the idea of hyphenated Humanisms? Maybe you are even sceptical of the label "Religious Humanism," let alone "Mystic-Humanism" and (God spare us!) Pagan-Humanism. If so, this talk is for you. Others of a more tolerant (less rational?) nature may also be entertained.

Opinions expressed in "Esprit" are not necessarily those of the Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship.

10 May	Rev. Steve Wilson	<p>Note: Talks may be changed occasionally despite all planning efforts, especially the second month listed..</p> <p>Mother's Day Bargains and Boundary Disputes. This sermon pushes past the Hallmark sweetness of the holiday to look at all that mothering really requires. In this service the natural tensions between being a parent and person are acknowledged. In this service the goalposts for what it is to be a good parent are set high but realistic. Today we are going to work towards the end that perfect parenting does not become an enemy of good parenting.</p>
17 May	Rev. Steve Wilson	<p>Free Seminar the Group Home: "Free seminar at the Group Home" is a reflection on my twenty years of working in the homes of people who live with a mental illness and/or a developmental disability. In it I profile some old friends and share the lessons learned.</p>
24 May	Rev. Steve Wilson	<p>Shams and Rumi- Friends in Love: Rumi Persia's most famous poet did not become the Rumi we know until he took a chance on an unlikely friend. Come greet the esteemed Rumi and the homeless and questionable Shams. Their friendship is a soap-opera of intrigue that costs both a lot, and oddly enough saves them both.</p>
7 June	Rev. Steve Wilson	<p>The Goddess VS the Alphabet</p> <p>Come join to revisit the time when the Alphabet was being constructed, and in so perhaps the Goddess being undermined? The switch from a female to a male divine underway. Come watch this mediocre minister stretch his feeble mind back in time to imagine how it was when words were a new religious tool..</p> <p><i>Services are held every Sunday at 10:30 at Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre</i></p>

Bon Mots by Anon

In democracy it's your vote that counts. In feudalism it's your count that votes.

"Atheism is a non-prophet organization."

Contributed by Margaret Armstrong

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It's Not Time to Renew!

Despite misleading information last month, for which yours truly was responsible, most of you remembered that the Committee had decided to accept the \$50 or concession dues paid last year as covering this year.

This decision makes us seem flush with money, and those who attended the AGM may well have received that impression.

In fact, the money that our glamorous total indicated has partly been penciled in for spending on our vigorous outreach efforts. If any attendee at services, or any of our friends out there, can see their way to digging a little deeper into their pockets for us, the extra would be welcome.

Jan Tendys

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I just wanted to tell you that the website is great. And things seem to be going well at Kirribilli, though I know that week by week it all hinges on very few of you and it's hard work! I enjoy Esprit, your emails and the exchanges flowing from all that.

You probably saw this, but I was excited to see a reference to Unitarianism in the Books section of "Sydney Morning Herald," 7-8 March 2009, Spectrum, last Saturday (p 37). Alison Bashford reviewed a great slew of books on Darwin and wrote about one in relation to both Darwin's grandfathers:

"For these men, as for so many others, the aversion to slavery was political, visceral and spiritual. For Darwin, the authors argue, it was also intellectual. The inherited nonconformist Quaker and Unitarian message of human 'brotherhood', of universality, of links - not divisions - between white and black people, predisposed Darwin to see connections and to think quite literally about ancestors in common. Darwin eventually extended a version of this fundamental idea to all life in his theory of evolution."

How about that?! Quakerism is little enough referred to in Australian public life, but Unitarianism even less so. Of course, I personally would love to see both Quakerism and Unitarianism be compassionate, radical and farsighted enough to actively embrace the next, some say final, abolitionist social justice movement - animal rights (as distinct from 'welfare'). Because they are the only Western religions which have the heart, imagination and intellectual tradition and equipment to do so. But I don't hold my breath. Buddhists fall short too, but the Jains rock!

Christina Hart

Why should we deplore the piranhas eating the missionary? It shows they've got a taste for religion.

Jan's version of a joke not ideologically sound enough for Unitarians. (Thank goodness!)

Introduction to Eric Stevenson's "Power of Now"

As a member of Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship, I can say that I personally warm to the expression "the Mystery of the Sacred" as used by Eric Stevenson. I wouldn't be surprised if another member preferred "the Spiritual" to "the Sacred", while yet another member spoke of "the Divine". Another of Eric's expressions, "Being", will find favour with some, while others will prefer "Reality". Of course, someone in the Fellowship might be looking askance at all these capitalised words. Yet others will be heard using the word "God" quite comfortably - as do many of our hymns.

Perhaps the Unitarians are the ultimate outcome of the process Martin Luther put in train when he said, "Here I stand". There is no substitute for conscience in the matter of one's deepest beliefs. Many Unitarians today would not call themselves Christians (although some do), even when they greatly honour the personality of Jesus as he can be discerned through the mists of history. For those for whom Unitarianism is an adopted religion, there is a tendency to retain what is most important to them from the religion of their birth, for example, there are Unitarians to whom the Jewish calendar of holy days still resonates strongly. Ideas from other religions, most notably Buddhism, have drifted into Unitarianism. Most difficult for outsiders to understand, we have Unitarian Humanists and Unitarian Pagans. Strangely enough, there is very little friction between these different outlooks as long as everyone really believes that there is no substitute for conscience and that, in the face of Mystery, we can agree to disagree as to our intuitions. What holds us together in Spirit of Life are our seven principles (adopted from the Unitarian Universalist Association). We are people who are united in our respect for reason, freedom and tolerance

We are inclined to precede our theological statements with "I think", "It seems to me", "in my opinion" etc. so as not to unduly exclude other people in our congregation.

Eric rightly takes this approach in his long, difficult but rewarding paper "The Power of Now" which is in the Fellowship folder (Church-in-a-Suitcase).

Written by Jan Tendys, 28 Aug. 2007

A Caution to Everybody

Consider the auk:

Becoming extinct because he forgot to fly,
and could only walk.

Consider man, who may well become extinct

Because he forgot how to walk,
And learned to fly before he thought.

Ogden Nash

Contributed by Margaret Armstrong

COMMITTEE NEWS: Pondering a Steve suggestion: Create Roles / Job Descriptions

Set up

Greeter

Newsletter sections (possible movie reviews?)

Clean up

Music- (training past Candace)

Speaker

Proposal to do a bi-annual letter drop to Kirribilli and Fellowship neighbourhood.

I said to the almond tree

“Sister, speak to me of God”
and the almond tree
blossomed.

Nikos Kazantzakis

Contributed by Margaret Armstrong

**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 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.

Notice

DEADLINE for copy for the next issue of Esprit is
LAST SUNDAY IN APRIL

Please be sure Jan has your WRITTEN items by this date.
Preferred method is as an MS-WORD or email to jtendys@optusnet.com.au
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.

Blue Mountains House Party for Progressives

Theme: “Whereto from Here for the Tolerant and Open-Minded Person?” Plus some discussion about Building our own Theology

Leadership: Rev. Steve Wilson

Venue: The Holiday Ranch in the Blue Mountains (contact Steve or Eric, see below, for actual location).

Time: Friday Evening June 5 till Sunday afternoon June 7.

Cost: Accommodation Free, Meals by Arrangement

Programme: Bush Walk? Nature Movie? Rest? Discussion? Relaxation?

The Saturday from 11 am till 8.30 pm will be reserved for the main study thus enabling day visitors to share the discussion segment of the weekend with us.

The synergy that resides with the Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship and the Centre for Progressive Religious Thought (Sydney) has enabled us from time to time to meet together in worship and study. Members from both groups are invited to extend their association with each other at this our first jointly arranged House Party. We are fortunate indeed to have Steve as our leader on this occasion. As most of us already know, he is a Unitarian minister on vacation from the States who has joined the congregation of Spirit of Life while on holidays. He has also attended the CPRT Discussion Group.

The Holiday Ranch in North Katoomba is within walking distance of the railway station. It constitutes a convenient base for numerous tourist excursions in and around the Katoomba CBD. There are four separate sleeping quarters in the house. One bedroom is triple share, and there are some double beds if required. Extra mattresses can be set down in the lounge room. Members may opt to reside in the Motel which is adjacent or seek other alternative accommodation. Unless otherwise arranged by agreement among the members, all meals can be bought and catered for at the Ranch.

Members living out of Sydney are welcome to stay overnight on the Sunday at Eric’s place in Ryde. Private transport between Sydney and Katoomba can easily be arranged with Sydney residents.

For further details please contact Eric (0414-406-426) or Steve stevewilson22@yahoo.com. Applications close Sunday May 24.