



Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship
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Schedule of Services

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

7 August	Ross McLuckie	“It’s a Mystery”
How much of life is a mystery as opposed to planned, not to mention predetermination?		
14 August	Jan Tendys	“Following”
There are rewards and difficulties in being a follower and rewards and difficulties in having a following. This can be seen clearly on twitter.		
21 August	Candace Parks	“Less and less”
When people ask how to live a life of meaning and purpose in the modern world, they are asking a religious question—and it's one we as Unitarians are uniquely equipped to answer. But are we fulfilling our potential?		
28 August	Laurence Gormley	“The Truth about Lies”
It may well be that lying is sometimes excusable, understandable, and inevitable. But religions historically have had very little patience for lying. And in many religious traditions, truth telling is a central spiritual practice. What do we think?		
4 September	Candace Parks	Guest Speaker from Grameen Bank.
11 September	Eric Stevenson	“Hoping my way to Meaning”
18 September	Martin Horlacher	"The Beekeeper's Lament"
25 September	Rev. Geoff Usher	“Rabindranath Tagore: A vision of humanity in harmony with planet Earth.”

Christmas in July

According to Wikipedia, the New Testament provides no information regarding the date of the birth of Jesus. The traditional date is 25th of December, which is mid-winter in Judea. Because the Luke account says that shepherds were outdoors with their flocks it has sometimes been suggested that this implies a spring, summer or autumn date.

However, the climate of Palestine is quite mild and in fact sheep are allowed to forage even in December.

Thanks to the hospitality of Candace we have been celebrating Christmas in July (or Yulefest or whatever name one wishes to give it) for something like six years now. Happy occasions. A smaller gathering this year but as cheery as ever.

It was a successful fundraiser for our Emergency Fund, which allows us to send money to the victims of extreme weather events and other calamities.

Jan Tendys

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## Religions in China Today

China is undergoing a diverse spiritual renaissance – Daoism, Buddhism and Islam have all seen a significant increase in believers. But there is one religion in particular that has experienced phenomenal growth, Christian evangelism.

The number of worshippers remains unknown, as there are two types of church in China - the officially sanctioned churches and the underground churches.

But with the government concerned that a growing evangelist movement could threaten social harmony, the state is cracking down on groups that try to stay out of government control; and.... on those who try to report on it. More:

<http://aje.me/iWWpbl>

**Aljazeera**

(The most interesting thing for Unitarians in the extended story is that the underground churches seem to vary in beliefs eg one may put an emphasis on the imminent return of Jesus, another on how the central morality of Christianity and Communism have a lot in common. **Jan Tendys**)

## Millions face drought, famine and climate change on the Eastern Horn of Africa

**Heather Libby**

**(From TckTckTck—see end)**

*Right now in the Eastern Horn of Africa, more than ten million people are struggling through the worst drought in six decades. Many countries, including Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia and Djibouti stand on the brink of famine, and there is little or no likelihood of improvement until 2012. Coupled with rising food and fuel prices, thousands of people are left with no choice but to flee their homes for tent cities managed by humanitarian aid agencies.*

*We should not underestimate the urgency and scope of this crisis. In Mandera, Kenya, the price of maize has increased 60% from this time last year. Women in Moyale, Ethiopia are walking two hours each way to reach a source of water for their families. Before the drought, this trip would have taken 15 minutes. Every day more than 1,500 Somali refugees stream into the refugee settlements of Dadaab in northern Kenya, many arriving with little more than the clothes on their backs. Dadaab, a camp designed to house 90,000 refugees at maximum, is currently home to 367,000 people. It is the largest refugee camp in the world, and the third largest population centre in Kenya.*

**A cyclical problem, compounded by climate change**

*Droughts are not uncommon in Africa, but this one is particularly significant as it comes so soon after the devastatingly dry years of 2008 & 2009. According to Gary McGurk, Assistant Country Director for CARE Kenya: "There are two sides to the drought. On the surface, you have the failed rains and the increased food and fuel prices. If you look deeper, the underlying reasons become visible: the impacts of climate change, chronic vulnerability, poverty and social injustice."*

*Many of our TckTckTck partners working in the region, including CARE International are struggling to provide adequate humanitarian aid with limited resources. According to CARE Country Director Stephen Gwynne-Vaughan:*

*“The initial emergency response of providing high-energy biscuits to refugees at the Daadab settlement has proved inefficient. Recent arrivals are so malnourished that complete food aid baskets including blankets, water containers, sleeping mats, plastic sheets and kitchen sets are now required. CARE is also trucking potable water and expanding existing water supply and distribution systems to meet needs of new arrivals... Without additional funding, the food aid pipeline for refugees will run dry by September.”*

**Fighting climate injustice with aid, education and legislation**

*Right now the best way you can support relief efforts in the Horn is through a monetary donation to a registered charity like CARE International or other TckTckTck partners working in the region.*

*Longer term solutions to the drought and food crisis will require time, funding and most of all, a strong commitment from world leaders to provide support for climate adaptation. One way to do this is through initiatives like the **Financial Transaction Tax**, (see next page) a small levy on bank transactions that could provide billions in funding for alleviating world hunger and educating on climate change solutions. Another is to keep fighting for a strong global climate deal and robust green climate fund. Delegates at last December’s UN Climate Convention in Cancun voted to establish the fund, with 40 nations agreeing to support climate adaptation projects, programmes and policies in the least developed countries, allowing them to*

*build resilience and coping mechanisms.*

*Photo:  
Frantisek Staud*



**“We need to build sustainability. The goal is to avoid short term humanitarian responses which can build dependency, but rather to ensure that people are able to feed themselves and break the cycle of recurring food insecurity” – Gary McGurk, Assistant Country Director for Kenya at CARE International**

*This December, the UN climate delegates will meet in Durban, South Africa for a*

*new round of talks. Until now, the prospect of substantial progress towards a fair, ambitious and binding deal seemed unlikely. We hope that with 10 million lives hanging in the balance, their resolve to make history will be stronger now than ever.*

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The Global Campaign for Climate Action runs the **TckTckTck campaign** which strengthens global civil society action to prevent catastrophic climate change, adapt to climate impacts and make the transition to a more sustainable and just world.

The Global Campaign for Climate Action (GCCA) is an unprecedented global alliance of more than 270 non-profit organizations all over the world. “Our shared mission is to mobilize civil society and galvanize public support to ensure a safe climate future for people and nature, to promote the low-carbon transition of our economies, and to accelerate the adaptation efforts in communities already affected by climate change.

Climate change is a huge challenge for the entire planet, but the solutions to tackle it are available today. More and more people, businesses, investors and governments endorse these solutions, reaping the benefits of new lifestyles, smart investments and climate-friendly policies. Together we run the TckTckTck campaign to grow this movement for change, working towards a strong public mandate for bold political decisions that will make our vision become real.”



GCCA’s partners include, among others, WWF, Greenpeace, Oxfam, Amnesty International, the Red Cross, Christian Aid, World Council of Churches, 350.org, Avaaz, E3G, Global Call to Action against Poverty, the Boy Scouts and the YMCA.

Unitarians Support "Robin Hood" Tax

(Also known as the Financial Transaction Tax, or the Tobin tax).

British Unitarians have urged the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne to implement what is known as the "Robin Hood Tax".

In April 2010, prior to the general election, the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches at its Annual Meetings in Nottingham approved the following Resolution:

"That this General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches warmly welcomes the campaign to establish a tax levy on international bank transactions to create a fund to combat international poverty and fight climate change - the so-called 'Robin Hood Tax', based on the original idea proposed by the economist James Tobin; fully endorses the prompt action taken by Unitarian Headquarters to sign up the General Assembly as a supporting body to the campaign; instructs the Chief Officer to convey the General Assembly's support for this initiative to Her Majesty's Government; and urges all Unitarians to sign up for the campaign."



Derek McAuley, Chief Officer said "Both David Cameron and Nick Clegg replied to supporters of the Robin Hood tax on the eve of the election, saying they both would support some form of tax on banks. But so far both have fallen far short of a true Robin

Hood Tax. They both agreed the UK should press ahead with a bank tax or taxes without waiting for the rest of the world. I understand that the Liberal Democrats believe a financial transaction tax should help the poorest in the world.

With these parties in government they have the chance to act on these commitments, and indeed to go further and deliver a Robin Hood Tax.

With the negotiations to form a new Government over, the new Conservative/ Liberal Democrat coalition government will immediately be presented with its most

urgent and pressing task; finding ways to tackle the deficit while reducing poverty and protecting public services in the UK and beyond.

Unitarians would urge the new Administration to agree and implement a tax on banks and the financial sector that would raise tens of billions of pounds annually in the UK . We believe the best way to raise this money is through a tiny tax on financial transactions. The revenue from any type of tax should be used to protect the poorest at home and abroad and to fight climate change." **(From UK Unitarians website)**

From Channel 9 News (July 6, 2011)

The European Union is pushing for a tax on financial transactions in the 27-country bloc to raise up to 30 billion euros (\$A41.22 billion) a year, even though little progress has been made to introduce such a tax on a global level....

A recent Commission study shows that a financial transaction tax could raise about 30 billion euros (\$A41.22 billion) a year and the EU's executive hopes that ultra-low rates that vary over a large base of targeted instruments could mitigate the risk of banks and funds moving elsewhere.

However, getting the necessary approval for the financial transaction tax from all 27 EU states may be difficult. The tax is supported by the two largest member states, France and Germany, but the third biggest - the UK - has firmly blocked any moves in that direction. As the largest financial centre in the EU, the UK would suffer most if big institutions were to transfer their business outside the bloc.....

From Goethe's Faust Politician -

"These days, the whole world's out of step;

Give me men of the good old days!

You must admit, when we ran everything,

That was the real Golden Age."

Translated by Randall Jarrett.

Contributed by Margaret Armstrong

Mysteries

Peter Goldsworthy

I believe I will never find the answer to two fundamental mysteries.

One: why is there something rather than nothing?

Two: what is consciousness, and how could it arise in a world of unconscious matter?

These are the boundaries that surround our more concrete and everyday world—the final frontiers of human curiosity. Like the edges of our visual fields that vanish into a mysterious nothingness they are both eerie and difficult to notice. A little less mysterious, but more urgently pressing, is the question of how to live in the everyday world inside those weird boundaries.

From “I Believe This” ed. John Marsden., This book has been lent to your editor for Esprit material by Peter Berry.

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### Quotes for the Day

Eternity's a terrible thought. I mean, where's it all going to end? (Tom Stoppard).

What some people mistake for the high cost of living is really the cost of high living (Doug Larson).

(From a Uniting Church newsletter).

***Contributed by Geoff Usher***

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Some Differences Between Us and Them

We speak languages; they have dialects.
We have religions; they have superstitions.
We create art; they have handicrafts.
We have culture; they have folklore
(or a variation—We have law; they have lore).

Contributed by Margaret Armstrong

Review by David Goldblatt: "Live Working or Die Fighting - How the Working Class Went Global" By Paul Mason

Just when one thought the end of history had arrived and the working classes of the planet's North had been de-industrialised out of existence, another proletariat pops up.

Across the South, the whirlwind of hyper-industrialisation has thrown up a working-class whose demography and miseries dwarf their predecessors. Assembled in a few turbulent decades, around a billion men, women and children toil in the factories and workshops of the South; another billion are warehoused in the burgeoning slums of new mega-cities. Our futures are linked to their fate by complex chains of economic and ecological interdependency.

While the working-class organisations of the first industrial revolution had to contend with nationalist states and police forces, the new working classes must tackle global capital, transnational corporations, international organisations, and all in the face of a consumer culture whose invidious individualism is a solvent of new bonds of solidarity.

Paul Mason argues that the left in the North has little to offer them. Communism is over, the social-democratic parties have sold their soul to neo-liberalism and the rump of the union movement is managing decline. But it wasn't always so. What the labour movements of the North do have is a long history of extraordinary struggles, inventiveness, courage and honour. Mason, a Newsnight correspondent, offers a lively and impassioned retelling of these stories. It is an illuminating pleasure to be reacquainted with them.

Mason proceeds by juxtaposition. The cruel intensity of today's Shenzhen in China precedes an account of the struggle for rights in the Manchester cotton mills of Georgian England. The plight of Indian textile workers is set against the tale of the Lyon silk weavers and their struggle for control of their livelihoods in the early 1830s. The rise and fall of the first major American union movement, the Knights of Labour, and the great wave of unskilled union organisation before the First World War are recounted with some panache, and paralleled by the plight of Iraqi

unionists and the migratory flotsam that clean Canary Wharf.

Mason recoils from drawing lessons from his parallels, but the same power logic of numbers is still in force. *Don't get mad, get organised.* Perhaps the best parts of this book cover the alternative social worlds created by the Bund, the mass party of Jewish Poland, and the wave of factory sit-ins and experiments in workers' control that rocked Italy, France and the US in the interwar era. But the social movements of the South, as Mason makes clear, are already there in the parallel urban universe of Bolivian indigenous peoples and the co-op factories of Argentina.

It is hard to see what the political legacy of these stories could be. At their best the labour movements of the North offer a residue of ideas and ultimately a kind of success - the more equitable welfare capitalism that brought about their dissolution. I take it the absence of Scandinavian social democrats from Mason's book is on the grounds of narrative tedium rather than political efficacy. However, it is unlikely that the new workers of the South will be able to repeat the trick. Just as the pie is getting big enough for a larger slice, ecological catastrophe will lace it with toxins and disasters. Solving this conundrum will need rather more than heroic tales, but Paul Mason has given us a timely resource to sustain us on the journey.

From "The Independent", 11 May 2007
David Goldblatt's 'The Ball is Round' is published by Viking

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## **Complex Islamic response to evolution emerges from study**

The Muslim world stands at a unique moment in its relation to evolutionary theory, according to the co-author of a major survey into attitudes towards evolution among Muslims around the world.

Acceptance of evolution varies widely across the Islamic world, demonstrating that stereotypical ideas about Islam and evolution are wrong, said Salman Hameed, director of the Centre for the Study of Science in Muslim Societies (SSiMS) at Hampshire College,

United States.

But ideas are being moulded now, he said, because of new phenomena such as mass education, migration and access to the Internet.

"This is a unique moment," Hameed told the 7th World Conference of Science Journalists (27–29 June) in Qatar. He presented initial results from a survey that examines the attempts of educated Muslims to reconcile their religion with the evolutionary science.

The survey is being conducted among doctors and medical students in five Muslim countries - Egypt, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan and Turkey - and also in three countries hosting Muslim diaspora - Turkish doctors in Germany; Pakistani doctors in the United Kingdom; and Arab, Pakistani and Turkish doctors in the United States.

Hameed told SciDev.Net they picked doctors as they would be scientifically literate and share similar educational and social backgrounds. The questions included whether the respondents accepted or rejected the general theory of evolution and, more specifically, whether microbial, animal and human forms of evolution are possible.

He presented the results of just two groups - Pakistanis in the United States and Malaysians in their home country.

More than 80 per cent of Pakistani doctors in the United States accepted the theory of evolution, including microbial, animal and human evolution.

The majority also believed that one could accept the theory of evolution and hold religious beliefs at the same time.

But most Malaysian doctors (in Malaysia) rejected the theory of evolution, especially with regard to humans.

So while Hameed is optimistic that the basic principles of evolution will eventually become accepted, he said that Muslim countries are still "negotiating modernity" and many replies demonstrated the resulting confusion.

For example, a Turkish doctor said: "It is complicated ... I accept evolution scientifically, but reject it religiously". And a Pakistani medical student said: "I accept it when I am in a hospital and reject it when I go home".

Young earth creationism, which holds that Earth was created around 6,000 years

held by some, mainly US Christian groups, who reject evolution, was absent, demonstrating that media coverage of evolutionary debate needed to be more nuanced.

"Muslim contexts are different from the battles in the United States," Hameed warned. Presenting Muslim attitudes as a controversy was premature and could be damaging, as the "dominant narrative is yet to emerge in the Muslim world", where religion plays an important role in forming people's worldviews.

"If evolution gets conflated with atheism, then a vast rejection, even of the basic principles, is quite possible," he said. Human evolution, though, will likely continue to be a controversial subject - and perhaps be rejected by the majority of Muslims.

**By T. V. Padma, Science and Development Network, June 2011**

[Link to audio file of Hameed discussing his research](#)

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The Children's Bible in a Nutshell

In the beginning, which occurred near the start, there was nothing but God, darkness, and some gas. The Bible says, 'The Lord thy God is one, but I think He must be a lot older than that.

Anyway, God said, 'Give me a light!' and someone did.

Then God made the world.

He split the Adam and made Eve.

Adam and Eve were naked, but they weren't embarrassed because mirrors hadn't been invented yet.

Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating one bad apple, so they were driven from the Garden of Eden.....Not sure what they were driven in though, because they didn't have cars.

Adam and Eve had a son, Cain, who hated his brother as long as he was Abel.

Pretty soon all of the early people died off, except for Methuselah, who lived to be like a million or something.

One of the next important people was Noah, who was a good guy, but one of his kids was kind of a Ham. Noah built a large boat and put his family and some animals on

it. He asked some other people to join him, but they said they would have to take a rain check.

After Noah came Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob was more famous than his brother, Esau, because Esau sold Jacob his birthmark in exchange for some pot roast. Jacob had a son named Joseph who wore a really loud sports coat.

Another important Bible guy is Moses, whose real name was Charlton Heston. Moses led the Israel Lights out of Egypt and away from the evil Pharaoh after God sent ten plagues on Pharaoh's people. These plagues included frogs, mice, lice, bowels, and no cable.

God fed the Israel Lights every day with manicotti. Then he gave them His Top Ten Commandments. These include: don't lie, cheat, smoke, dance, or covet your neighbour's stuff.

Oh, yeah, I just thought of one more: Humour thy father and thy mother.

One of Moses' best helpers was Joshua who was the first Bible guy to use spies. Joshua fought the battle of Geritol and the fence fell over on the town.

After Joshua came David.. He got to be king by killing a giant with a slingshot. He had a son named Solomon who had about 300 wives and 500 porcupines. My teacher says he was wise, but that doesn't sound very wise to me.

After Solomon there were a bunch of major league prophets. One of these was Jonah, who was swallowed by a big whale and then barfed up on the shore.

There were also some minor league prophets, but I guess we don't have to worry about them.

After the Old Testament came the New Testament. Jesus is the star of The New. He was born in Bethlehem in a barn. (I wish I had been born in a barn too, because my mum is always saying to me, 'Close the door! Were you born in a barn?' It would be nice to say, 'As a matter of fact, I was.')

During His life, Jesus had many arguments with sinners like the Pharisees and the Democrats.

Jesus also had twelve opossums.

The worst one was Judas Asparagus. Judas was so evil that they named a terrible vegetable after him.

Jesus was a great man. He healed many leopards and even preached to some Germans on the Mount.

But the Democrats and all those guys put Jesus on trial before Pontius the Pilot. Pilot didn't stick up for Jesus. He just washed his hands instead.

Anyways, Jesus died for our sins, then came back to life again. He went up to Heaven but will be back at the end of the Aluminum. His return is foretold in the book of Revolution.

Contributed by Candace Parks.

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One Lazy Saturday morning the wife and I were quiet and thoughtful, sitting around the breakfast table when I said to her unexpectedly, "When I die, I want you to sell all my stuff immediately."

"Now why would you want me to do something like that?" she asked.

"I figure a woman as fine as you would eventually remarry and I don't want some other jerk using my stuff."

She looked at me intently and said:"What makes you think I'd marry another jerk?"

(From a Uniting Church newsletter). **Contributed by Geoff Usher.**

*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 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.