



Schedule of Services

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

1 June **Martin Holacher** **Sebastian Castello: Apostle of Conscience**
Sebastian Castello was one of the greatest thinkers of his age - a proponent of freedom of thought...and conscience. What can we learn from him today?

8 June **Morandir Armson** **Magickal Philosophy.**
Various philosophers have sought to nail down the exact definition of 'magick' and to elaborate its various functions. Writers such as Eliphas Levi, Helena Blavatsky, Aleister Crowley, and Austin Osman Spare have all contributed to this field. So what is 'magick' and why, in this scientific age, do people still practice magick? This presentation will examine magickal philosophy and seek to explain this complex social phenomenon.

15 June **Matthew Dane** **To be announced**

22 June **Rev. Geoff Usher** **"Little Women, Large Legacy"**
In all ages, and in all places, those who have dared to be different, those who have dared to go against the expectations of society, have felt alone. And yet, these are often the people who have moved society forward. The story of Louisa May Alcott's life can mean much for us today.

29 June **Dr Max Lawson** **Herman Melville's Quarrel with God**

Herman Melville (a wayward Unitarian) was obsessed with religious and metaphysical problems: How could a benevolent God be reconciled with the forces of evil in the world? Why do the demands of Law often clash with the claims of justice? These "quarrels with God" are respectively the driving power behind Melville's novels, *Moby Dick* and *Billy Budd*.

~~~~~

### **Foreign Aid cuts make up one fifth of budget savings.**

Sydney-based **Women's Plans Foundation** (see p.2) raises money to supplement family planning projects of various NGOs. We can imagine their disappointment seeing their hard work lessened in effectiveness by the foreign aid budget cuts. According to the ABC Fact checker, the single biggest saving made in the 2014 federal budget was a reduction in foreign aid spending. (See p.5)

## Women's Plans Foundation

*Alice Oppen*

As the world's population zooms past 7 billion and the climate warms, we can put two and two together, so relationships benefit from family planning. It's our human family, and if we can't plan beyond multiplication, then famine, plagues and wars will continue to decide our numbers.

Since my parents were born, the human population has more than quadrupled and each new generation is the largest ever.

**Women's Plans Foundation** started at a frontier eleven years ago, because the importance of family planning was controversial and there was limited appreciation of its power to benefit women, society and everyone's impact on the environment.

### UK Summit on Family Planning

Two years ago Melinda Gates and the UK Government held a Family Planning Summit, after which 4.6 billion US dollars was pledged.

The Australian Government followed suit, pledging, in the next four years, to double spending on family planning to over \$50 million Australian dollars. **AusAID**, after all our requests in previous years, was going to quantify and track the funding going to family planning, not subsume it under other budget items.

All these promises will need to be honoured, by future governments and donors, transformed into active delivery of contraceptive services to people most in need -- for a start, for the 222 million couples worldwide who know they want access but don't have it. The number of people with access to contraception has gone up, but not as fast as the world population.

This year funding for overseas aid has been successively cut. We presented to Joe Hockey before the election the significance and quality of the work NGOs are doing in this area and the strategic benefits of child spacing and women's health. His next statement recognised the Government's ability to leverage its investment through NGOs' contribution in donor support and in-country partnerships.

But will this real overseas aid continue? [Following delivering the budget, on Q & A he expressed the view that foreign aid should not be funded out of debt, meaning presumably that world nations should wait until their finances are in surplus before aiding third world countries suffering poverty, disease, overpopulation and social unrest.] Or will overseas aid disintegrate into paying for asylum seekers kept on hold on Manus Island? Or paying Cambodia to add to its woes?

Our funding in the past was matched for the NGOs by AusAID. Will this continue now that AusAID has been put into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade? Flow-on benefits of contraception prove it one of the most cost-effective investments in socio-economic development.

**Family Planning 2020** is a new organization formed after the London Summit in order to track delivery of its promises.

We and people everywhere need to give governments courage and insight. Family planning is mainstream planning for health, education, for equity in relationships and for population sustainability.

**Everything is connected:** women's ability to space births reduces mortality rates, enables education and development, improves communities and societies with health, sustainable impact on resources, and women's input in decision-making.

Where there are women who need to be freed from more pregnancies than they can bear, in a world of crises and borders, how can we not link understanding with action?

Women's Plans Foundation has grown, now provides \$60 k a year to four excellent NGOs. At about a dollar a day added to existing services, around 60 thousand women a year have access to family planning as a result of our focused funding.

In Papua New Guinea the death rate for women in childbirth is 115 times higher than in Australia. Teenage pregnancy rates are also very high, and forty per cent of the popu-

ation is under the age of 15. 86 % of women with three or more children want no more. Most women have an average of four children in their lifetime, more in rural areas. Currently only 20 per cent of women use any form of modern contraception.

Dr Edith Digwaleu-Kariko:

"I want to shine a light on what these issues mean for women by telling you a story about Verave, 26 years old and already a mother of five, her youngest child 18 months and her oldest being 10 years old. She lives in a remote village that is almost a day's walk to the nearest health centre. For her normal daily activity she has to rise as early as 4am, cook a meal over open fire, feed her family, send her two eldest kids to school, collect the other three kids and walk almost 2 miles to her vegetable garden to work on the garden, then return before sunset to cook the only other meal for her family, on open fire, before being the last to retire. She does this every day! Would spacing the birth of her children reduce the burden of the every day struggles, giving her more energy and time to provide better for herself and her family?"

How about Agime, a young Highlands region lass, who is coerced into marrying early and falls pregnant. She has a healthy baby but dies at delivery from heavy bleeding and injury to her hip region as her body is too young to withstand the pressures of labour. Would family planning have delayed pregnancy until her body was able to cater for a pregnancy?"

**Marie Stopes** specialises in sexual and reproductive healthcare. Local nurses and midwives deliver services both in urban clinics and in remote areas by mobile outreach -- midwives on mopeds and tent clinics by four wheel drive vehicles. In the rains this year, a mudslide blocked roads, and women walked for two days to reach a blocked vehicle to get contraceptive services. Often the women choose injectables and implants, so they have control.

**Marie Stopes International** now refers on its website to the importance of family planning in helping communities concerned about rapid population growth adapt to climate

change. **Save the Children** has issued a booklet on the importance of family planning in programs, and **CARE** is now the Secretariat serving the Parliamentary Group on Population and Development in Canberra. Understanding is now out in the open.

**Marie Stopes International Australia** has a network of clinics and rural outreach services in PNG, with **AusAID** grants and support of the PNG Government. Our money goes to the outreach mobile units to provide contraceptive services to women who often have no other access to health services. When a road is washed out, the women walk for a day or more to reach the truck for long-acting contraceptive methods. MS internationally has pledged to reach more than 20 million women in the poorest countries by 2020.

**ChildFund Australia** has added family planning education and capacity to its community clinics in Vietnam. It produced training videos, had train the trainer sessions reaching out into rural areas, and is adapting this for Lao languages in new project areas there.

**Save the Children Australia** also has evolved from a child-sponsorship agency to being part of an international group with integrated programs. We support the family planning component in Laos, where successful programs are being duplicated in more remote areas. I visited a project area in Laos where many people wished Family Planning had come sooner, as they would have had 2 fewer children. Men said family planning was the most important part of the integrated program because their wives became receptive and stayed healthy. The women liked it because the men didn't go down to the young girls in the village.

**CARE Australia** is our latest connection. CARE provides the Secretariat in Canberra for the Parliamentary Group on Population and Development. MPs and Senators from all parties combine and work together to educate their peers in Parliament about the importance of family planning for women's health and opportunities. CEO of CARE, Julia Newton-Howes says, "Investing in women and girls is one of the most effective ways to help communities overcome poverty."

Our research has shown that if we help one woman out of poverty, she'll bring four others with her. Empowering women has been found to do more to reduce poverty than the distribution of food."

Tim Costello, CEO **World Vision Australia**, "In the Pacific region, four million people – or roughly half the population – live in poverty, and improvements in health are in danger of going backwards. By diverting \$375 million of overseas aid to helping refugees in Australia, we became the third biggest recipient of our own foreign aid program." [The Australia Institute, Vol 72 March 2013]

Why wouldn't we support overseas aid in our region? In all the world, we are the developed nation most in proximity with developing nations -- with all their 'development' problems of subordination of women, overpopulation, disease and environmental damage.

I heard it suggested that perhaps the miracle of loaves and fishes was a wave started by a boy's sharing his food basket, so that many other people untucked their hidden reserves of food, so that thousands could share – no small miracle.

**The above address was given to the Fellowship April 27, 2014.**

~~~~~

Fossil fuel divestment: does it work?

Selling shares in fossil fuel investments is supposed to bring pressure on fossil fuel companies—but if it just means shares pass from "socially responsible" to more uncaring investors, how does that work?

Alex White, writing in "The Guardian" argues that the pressure is moral rather than financial.

Below is part of his recent article:

Journalist and climate activist Bill McKibben is in Australia in June on his epic Do The

Math tour, which aims to highlight the danger of fossil fuel company oil and coal reserves and encourage divestment.

The tour was kick started by McKibben's Rolling Stone article, Global Warming's Terrifying New Math, which argued that in order to stay below the 2C warming limit, the global economy has a budget of less than 565 gigatons of carbon dioxide. Unfortunately, fossil fuel companies have reserves of carbon from oil, coal and gas of almost 3000 gigatons - far exceeding the climate's safe limit if it were to all be burned.

.....

Tied to the tour is the 350.org sponsored carbon divestment campaign, targeting mainly students on campuses around the USA (and now Australia) to pressure their university administrations to dump investments in fossil fuel companies. The message of the campaign is that these students can no longer tolerate "business as usual".

The campaign has started to spread to churches, local councils, and in Australia, work is under way for activists to start campaigning to superannuation funds.

And in the USA it has been remarkably successful. More than 300 American colleges have active Go Fossil Free campaigns.

Universities like Harvard or MIT have multi-billion dollar endowment funds. While individual college funds may represent just a small drop in the ocean of international financial markets, the Go Fossil Free campaigns are trying to tap into something deeper with their divestment campaigns.

Divestment campaigns historically have never been about economic pressure. The effectiveness of the South African apartheid divestment campaigns were due to the moral pressure they placed on governments and businesses. They made toleration of apartheid in the USA, Britain and other countries (including Australia) impossible. University campuses were the hubs of much of the campaign activities, engaging not just students but academics and the trustees of university administered funds.

The divestment by the University of California Berkeley's divestment of \$3 billion in 1986 was later credited by Nelson Mandela as a catalyst for the collapse of the apartheid government.

Unfortunately, there's every indication that the big fossil fuel companies targeted by McKibben - like Exxon, BP, Chevron and BHP Billiton - are less concerned than Apartheid South Africa was in global public opinion. For example, BP has managed to bounce back from the Gulf of Mexico oil spill.



It's likely they also have more economic and political clout. The big fossil fuel companies are some of the most profitable companies in history. BHP Billiton for example made a modest \$10 billion profit in 2012, and Exxon made over \$42 billion.

Given these numbers, it is unlikely that even the \$32 billion Harvard endowment would make much of an impact, even if the entire fund was invested in fossil fuel companies. In Australia, only the University of Melbourne has over a billion dollars in their endowment, and even if all the Australian universities combined divested, the business practices of BHP and Chevron are unlikely to change.

I think the real impact of the divestment campaigns must come from their moral authority. Universities (and hopefully superannuation funds) that do divest are taking a moral stand. That stand must be accompanied by efforts throughout the university to highlight the risks posed by dangerous climate change.

Universities train the business leaders of the future. In fact, the graduate schools are often training the business leaders of today! Most business schools include compulsory courses in ethics, but the carbon budget math needs to be embedded into accounting, finance and economics classes from the undergraduate to graduate level.

Lecturers teaching actuaries about risk should be explaining the effects of runaway global warming and the ecological crisis that will occur if we cross over 2 degrees in warming. Engineering and project management students should look at sustainable energy and ecologically sound product supply chains.

And commerce students need to come to grips with the fact that as we get closer to reaching or exceeding our carbon budget, those fossil fuel reserves may become unburnable, leaving investors stranded.

.....

From ***Fossil fuel divestment campaign's victory in Australia will be a moral one***

May 21, 2013

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/southern-crossroads/2013/may/21/fossil-fuel-divestment-campaign-australia>

Photo of anthracite coal from Wikipedia.

See also: ***Does divestment work?***

<http://www.iop.harvard.edu/does-divestment-work>

The Melbourne Unitarian Church has taken on a rigorous divestment of fossil fuel shares—not easy because some fossil fuel shares may be embedded in share funds. However, the Church was able to get good publicity for the campaign and for the reality of climate change.

~~~~~

**Budget cuts foreign aid** (from p. 1)

On Twitter, World Vision Australia chief executive Reverend Tim Costello said the cut made up about one fifth of overall budget savings. He accused the Government of balancing the books on the backs of the poor.

"Of the \$36 billion Government budget savings - aid cuts contribute 20 per cent when aid is only 1.3 per cent of total budget," he said. He was upheld by the ABC's investigation:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-05-20/tim-costello-correct-on-budget-foreign-aid-cuts/5452698>

## Belfast City Council to include three openly gay politicians

Three openly gay politicians will take seats on the new Belfast City Council, including the man who brought a case to decriminalise homosexuality in Northern Ireland in the 1980s.

A celebratory tweet sent by Sinn Fein Councillor Mary Ellen Campbell following her election to the new super council.

She said: "Aren't the electorate amazing... Imagine no longer [being] the only gay in the village."

She will be joined by Julie Anne Corr of the Progressive Unionist Party and Jeff Dudgeon of the Ulster Unionists.

Dudgeon, who led efforts to decriminalise homosexuality in Northern Ireland, is a well known gay activist.

Jeff Dudgeon, a shipping clerk and gay rights activist in Belfast, successfully challenged the criminalisation of sexual relations between men at the European Court of Human Rights, having first complained to the European Commission of Human Rights in 1975.

He forced the UK government to make Northern Ireland bring its laws into line with the rest of England, Wales and Scotland in 1982.

Dudgeon was honoured with an MBE in 2012 for services to the LGBT community in Northern Ireland.

Corr said: "Whilst I am open about my sexuality, I will not let it define me or allow anyone to fit me into a neat category," she said.

Both the Progressive Unionist Party and Sinn Fein support same-sex marriage, while the Ulster Unionists allow a free vote on the issue.

From PinkNews

<http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2014/05/26/belfast-city-council-to-include-three-openly-gay-members/>

## Funny

What's it like to be a human

the bird asked

I myself don't know

it's being held prisoner by your skin

while reaching infinity

being a captive of your scrap of time

while touching eternity

being hopelessly uncertain

and helplessly hopeful

being a needle of frost

and a handful of heat

breathing in the air

and choking wordlessly

it's being on fire

with a nest made of ashes

eating bread

while filling up on hunger

it's dying without love

it's loving through death

That's funny said the bird

and flew effortlessly up into the air

~ Anna Kamienska ~

(Astonishments: Selected Poems of Anna Kamienska,

ed. and trans. by D. Curzon and G. Drabik)

## **A Brave and Startling Truth** *Maya Angelou (1928-2014)*

We, this people, on a small and lonely planet  
Traveling through casual space  
Past aloof stars, across the way of indifferent  
suns  
To a destination where all signs tell us  
It is possible and imperative that we learn  
A brave and startling truth

And when we come to it  
To the day of peacemaking  
When we release our fingers  
From fists of hostility  
And allow the pure air to cool our palms

When we come to it  
When the curtain falls on the minstrel show  
of hate  
And faces sooted with scorn are scrubbed  
clean  
When battlefields and coliseum  
No longer rake our unique and particular  
sons and daughters  
Up with the bruised and bloody grass  
To lie in identical plots in foreign soil

When the rapacious storming of the churches  
The screaming racket in the temples have  
ceased  
When the pennants are waving gaily  
When the banners of the world tremble  
Stoutly in the good, clean breeze

When we come to it  
When we let the rifles fall from our shoulders  
And children dress their dolls in flags of truce  
When land mines of death have been re-  
moved  
And the aged can walk into evenings of  
peace  
When religious ritual is not perfumed  
By the incense of burning flesh  
And childhood dreams are not kicked awake  
By nightmares of abuse.

When we come to it  
Then we will confess that not the Pyramids  
With their stones set in mysterious perfection  
Nor the Gardens of Babylon  
Hanging as eternal beauty  
In our collective memory  
Not the Grand Canyon

Kindled into delicious color  
By Western sunsets

Nor the Danube, flowing its blue soul into  
Europe  
Not the sacred peak of Mount Fuji  
Stretching to the Rising Sun  
Neither Father Amazon nor Mother Missis-  
sippi who, without favor,  
Nurture all creatures in the depths and on the  
shores  
These are not the only wonders of the world

When we come to it  
We, this people, on this minuscule and kith-  
less globe  
Who reach daily for the bomb, the blade and  
the dagger  
Yet who petition in the dark for tokens of  
peace  
We, this people on this mote of matter  
In whose mouths abide cankerous words  
Which challenge our very existence  
Yet out of those same mouths  
Come songs of such exquisite sweetness  
That the heart falters in its labor  
And the body is quieted into awe

We, this people, on this small and drifting  
planet  
Whose hands can strike with such abandon  
That in a twinkling, life is sapped from the liv-  
ing  
Yet those same hands can touch with such  
healing, irresistible tenderness  
That the haughty neck is happy to bow  
And the proud back is glad to bend  
Out of such chaos, of such contradiction  
We learn that we are neither devils nor di-  
vines.

When we come to it  
We, this people, on this wayward, floating  
body  
Created on this earth, of this earth  
Have the power to fashion for this earth  
A climate where every man and every  
woman  
Can live freely without sanctimonious piety  
Without crippling fear

When we come to it  
We must confess that we are the possible  
We are the miraculous, the true wonder of

this world  
That is when, and only when  
We come to it.

**Maya Angelou , US writer and civil rights activist died May 28, 2014**

## Let Go

**Jack Davis (1917– 2000)**

Let go of my hand  
Let me be what I want to be  
Let go of my hand  
The sands of time Are trickling before me  
I have not yet Achieved  
what I want to be  
Let go of my hand  
I want to stand alone  
In a sea of words  
Pluck out the phrases  
Soar like a bird  
I want to stand on a mountain  
Wait for the dawn  
Yet be aware of  
The approaching storm  
I want to fashion a rainbow  
That arcs through the sky  
And iron out the dilemmas  
Between you & I

**Jack Davis was an Aboriginal activist, playwright, actor and poet and patron of the Deaths in Custody Watch Committee. "He gained national and international recognition for his work and made an enormous contribution in helping to bridge the gap between cultures and communities." greenleft weekly, March 2000**

### Would you care to join Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship?

**Membership is open to all adults and includes this newsletter.** Full membership \$50 concession \$20 . If you would like to join us as an active member of Spirit of Life, please ring **0466 940 461** or consult our website [www.sydneyunitarians.org](http://www.sydneyunitarians.org) . Please note that all membership applications are subject to approval at a meeting of the Committee. Ask Rev. Geoff Usher or Ginna Hastings for an application form at the Sunday service.

***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 Esprit.***

It would be helpful if items for publication, including articles and talk topics with themes could reach Esprit editor by the 15th of each month: [jtendys@bigpond.com](mailto:jtendys@bigpond.com) or hand to Jan Tendys at the Sunday service.

***Do you have a topic of a spiritual / ethical 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. *Please see Caz Donnelly at the Sunday service*

**Fellowship contact 0466 940 461**