



## Schedule of Services

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

**4 June, Ruby Willis, "Colouring Outside the Lines."**

A look at why we tend to stick to the path of least resistance in our behaviours both large and small, with an emphasis on the work of Michel Foucault.

**11 June, No meeting.**

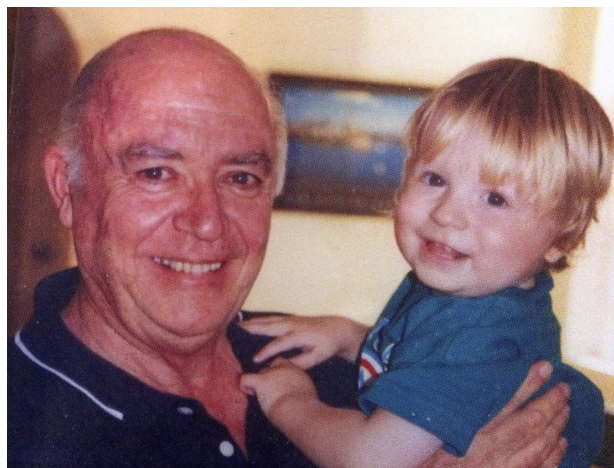
**18 June, Colin Whatmough, "How the West is Losing."**

And how will the West, especially the US, respond?

**25 June, Dr. Max Lawson, "The Spiritual Quest of D.H.Lawrence."**

Christianity had a great influence upon D.H.Lawrence but he did not consider himself a Christian. Max will explain this complexity.

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In this issue of Esprit, we celebrate the life of our late companion, Peter Berry. This photo is taken, with permission, from the lovely booklet given out by his family at his memorial service. It shows Peter with his first-born grandchild.

## Vale Peter Berry

*Jan Tendys*

**Peter Berry, a founding member of Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship, passed away in hospital on 2 May, having suffered an aneurism. He had been ailing for some time but it was still a shock and loss for us and, of course, for his much loved family.**

**Several of us attended his funeral at the Uniting Church which he and his family had attended when the children were young. Carolyn Donnelly had reminded Peter's sons of his love for the "Desiderata" and we were pleased to hear that read on the day.**

**Here are some additional points from Caz:**

"He was influenced and impressed by the teachings of Ghandi, philosophers Emerson and Thoreau, to name a few, and latterly theologian John Spong and researcher Hugh MacKay. His knowledge and thinking was amazing.

He loved to sing. His tenor voice was a treat to hear, often in harmony, at our services, and he spoke of the past happy days of the choirs he performed with. His sense of humour and quick repartee was appreciated, with lots of laughter. He particularly enjoyed English comedy, the Goons etc.

He was a loyal old Wests Rugby League supporter and also loved to follow test cricket, and it was great to hear his opinions of his past sporting achievements, particularly his athletic running prowess.

Peter was a kind, thoughtful, peace-loving, loyal friend, especially proud of his family."

**The following comes from the contribution of David Berry, one of Peter's sons, to the memorial service:**

"My earliest memories of dad were growing up in the family home here in South Turramurra. Dad playing with my brothers Phil and Rod and me in the backyard, kicking a ball or playing cricket.

And being with us as we grew beyond the backyard, into the big, wide world. In our earliest years of competitive sports dad managed soccer and cricket teams for the local

Kissing Point sports club. Dad was a dad who was always there.

Perhaps my happiest memories of childhood were regular weekend outings to Lidcombe Oval with Phil and Rod to see our beloved Western Suburbs Magpies, rugby league team. This is a great Berry family tradition. We shared the highs and lows of our team, that evoked great passion and high emotion. I remember dad's regular refrain, as a spectator from the hill, "WHAT ABOUT IT REF?" when some refereeing decision went against us – often it was the controversial referee Greg Hartley, earning dad's ire for some perceived injustice.

We all inherited dad's love of distance running. Dad, in his heyday, was cross-country champion of Parramatta High School. In his final year 1950 he also won the coveted mile event.

He then took a few decades off before being reborn in his fifties as a City to Surf runner with his teenage sons. To this day dad's legacy lives on, most notably with Phil, who regularly runs marathons!

As a teenager, my great ambition was to be a gold medal winner at an Olympic Games. I kept a scrapbook of articles, featuring English middle distance runner Steve Ovett. Another of my happiest memories with dad, was being at the Sydney Olympic Games to see the men's 1500m final. Dad reminisced about his sporting hero, the great Australian distance runner Herb Elliott, who exactly 40 years earlier won the gold medal in that same event at the Rome Olympics in world record time. He told me about an article in the Sun newspaper, proclaiming Elliot's victory with the headline: "Caesar for a Day". Recently, I dug out the article, from the archives of the State Library, and with dad relived those memories

Dad for a time was President of the Parents & Citizen's Association, here at South Turramurra Primary, and in that capacity chaired speech night 1978, which was a source of great pride for our family. In this, dad once again demonstrated his love for us, with his commitment to our education."

**Education was of course a major part of Peter's life as he was Languages Master and Deputy Principal at a number of Sydney high schools.**

**Here are some of Geoff Usher’s memories of Peter:**

“Peter Berry was an active member of the congregation of Sydney Unitarian Church when I took up my initial appointment as Lay Pastor in June 1976. With his Methodist lay-preaching background, he became my Assistant Lay Pastor, and although we never became intimate friends I was glad to have him as a colleague.

I appreciated his theological grounding and historical understanding, and enjoyed his sometimes quirky sense of humour. We shared a commitment to education. Peter gave valuable service as a committee member and pastoral assistant, and was always supportive of my ministry.

I remember my admiration of his participation in the City to Surf Run – something which I never even contemplated attempting.

I left Sydney in 1991 and moved to England as Minister of Upper Chapel, Sheffield. A few years later, when I was attending a ministerial gathering at Manchester College, Oxford, I bumped into Peter in the foyer of the College. He had not contacted me to say that he would be there, but had called in on his way through. We did not have a long time because he needed to be on his way, but it was a good and unexpected opportunity to catch up.

After my retirement in 2010 and my return to Australia, Peter and I renewed contact at the Spirit of Life Fellowship. He was an attentive listener, usually able to respond to my sermon with an anecdote, an historical reference (he was proud of his Huguenot heritage), or a quip.”

**Again, from David Berry’s memorial service speech :**

“Dad discussed his beliefs with us all .....not so long ago dad wrote a detailed letter, in which he shared that journey. And I’ll share with you now, just a few of these reflections...

*--Dad talked of his upbringing in Protestant Churches which gave him a spiritual compass and strong moral sense, and a desire to be a Methodist Minister.*

*—He tells how at age 20, he went before a magistrate to claim exemption from national service in the army – he had become a Christian pacifist at university, believing the*

*Jesus’ teaching about loving our enemies left him with no choice. The judge rejected dad’s claims, because he said ‘Methodists are not known as pacifists. Were you a Quaker, I would have exempted you!’ “*

**Most of us at Spirit of Life give “talks” to the group. Peter was one of those who gave “sermons”, quite traditional in form if not in content. His opening words were never just an indication of his topic, but something designed to uplift us and to remind us of the joy of fellowship. His interest in justice and environmental concerns were evident in his sermons.**

**Peter was acutely aware of the sorrows of this world and sometimes this tendency overwhelmed him. However, he had great resilience.**

**Christina Hart who attended the Sydney Church before going north with her family to live, writes:**

“I met Peter at the Sydney Unitarian Church and we soon became friends. We shared many interests including history, politics, philosophy and social justice issues. And languages - Peter taught French and Latin in high schools and my main foreign languages are French and Russian.

But above all Peter was an impressive and delightful person, highly intelligent, compassionate, empathetic and with a great sense of humour. He was also a good listener and enjoyed new topics and ideas. And I admired the way he had faced difficulties in his life. He was a dear friend to me and others and was devoted to his sons and grandchildren. I shall always remember him with deep respect and fondness.”

**Peter was a deeply spiritual man. I’m not sure how much the word “Spirit” appealed to him — probably “Presence” or “God” would have suited him better—but recently when we sung the words:**

**“With the spirit giving power  
I will find true harmony”**

**I found myself thinking of Peter Berry.**

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## What Other Church?

*Geoffrey R Usher*

Sermon given to Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship on Sunday 2 April 2017

A church is a place of sanctuary. It can be — should be — a place where people can escape from telephone bells, front door bells, arguments, noise. It can be — should be — a sanctuary from the noise and pressures of modern life.

A church is place of peace. It can — should — provide the kind of peace which is at the heart of the old blessing: "May the peace of God, the peace which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God". In this kind of peace, one can ask oneself questions like: What is life all about? Why are we here on earth?

A church is a place of worship. It can be — should be — a place where we can make contact with the higher powers for which we have little time during the week. Our ancestors knew that, while God may be contacted elsewhere — in our homes and other places — the church is the place where like-minded people can meet each other, form relationships with each other, support each other in their religious quest.

**This is more important than many people think. What other means is available to bring together people who desire and seek the higher things of life?**

Our kind of Unitarian church is important for another reason: we are among the few who do not claim that we alone possess the truth about God. This is a vital part of our Unitarian work and witness, because most of the world's religions are intent on keeping their faith the same and establishing their universal supremacy.

Religious groups need to learn that the peace of the world will depend largely on the different religions finding ways in which all men and women can live in peace together, regardless of differences.

A church is a place of prayer. We can pray for all sorts of things, and in doing so we are brought up against the question of whether or not our prayers are answered.

Living in this physical world imposes certain limitations on us. One of those limitations is that it is simply not reasonable or appropriate for us to ask that the laws of which govern nature can be set aside for our benefit. The film "Matilda" is based on Roald Dahl's story. The young heroine develops — or discovers — her power to move things through the air, and uses this power to deal with the tyrannical headmistress of Crunchem Hall, Miss Trunchbull. It's fun, but it's a fairy story.

Scientifically, can we believe that Jesus had the power to calm a storm at sea? Scientifically, can we believe that fine weather for the harvest can be obtained through prayer? Scientifically, can we believe that natural disasters — cyclones, earthquakes, tornadoes, floods, droughts — can be prevented by prayer? **It does harm to the cause of true religion to ask for the laws of nature to be suspended. It may have been natural for our ancestors to do so, but we know more than they did about the laws of nature.**

About thirty years ago, in the Newsletter of the National Unitarian Fellowship, Colin Dence wrote:

"I have come to believe that the divine plan is one in which life has been introduced into the material worlds, and allowed to develop free of any direct connection from outside. How this was done we do not know, but the theory of evolution is now sufficiently acceptable to science, and we must fit our theories of religion into the basic choice that is offered to us — to advance in our stature or to recede. I believe that the divine awaits our personal calls for our spiritual needs to be supplied. I doubt whether we have yet appreciated the full grandeur of the plan for life on earth. Certainly freedom of choice seems to be the basis of the plan, and this freedom seems to extend to doing good or to doing evil, to being just or to being unjust.

I feel that not enough account has been taken of the fundamental effect of the good existing close alongside the evil. I like to think

of the great stream of good people who have lived, and who, in their battle with evil and ignorance, have learned the moral lessons that the physical world can teach, and, as I believe, have taken their knowledge with them to a much wider mental world, a world which gave us birth.

All these deep matters can find their focus in the church, and if we can recognise this, perhaps we should frequent it more than we do, and help to make it more truly the counterpart of the divine."

If you moved to an area of the country where there was no Unitarian Church, although almost every other denomination in the Christian tradition was represented, which one would you attend? Why? If you would not attend any other church there, why not?

British Unitarian minister Kenneth Ridgway reported some years ago on a letter he received from a member of the National Unitarian Fellowship who wrote to him after visiting one of our churches while away from home on business. That NUF member remarked: "If that church represents Unitarianism, then I am not a Unitarian!" He attended the neighbouring church of another denomination later the same day, and remarked that, with a few reservations, he felt far more at home there.

What sorts of people attend a Unitarian church and make up its congregation? Some — though often only a small minority — attend because of their family's Unitarian affiliation. Others began their religious pilgrimage in another, perhaps orthodox, religious tradition. Still others have come from homes and backgrounds that gave little attention to religion.

**What unites them is the value they set on the freedom to explore religious issues, the freedom to follow the dictates of reason and conscience, the freedom from the real or perceived constraints of creeds and dogmatic formulas. At the same time, they generally have strongly held common values and principles, revealed in the statements that individuals and congregations use to express their faith.**

Those values and principles and statements typically focus on things like:

Freedom of belief

The worth and dignity of every person  
Justice, equity and compassion in human relations

A free and responsible search for truth and meaning

Democratic principles

The right of conscience

The goal of world community

Respect for the interdependent web of all existence.

The Unitarian movement has always attracted — and perhaps thrived on — controversy. When the Unitarian Church in Auckland, New Zealand, was opened over a century ago, someone painted on the outside of the building: "This is the house of the Devil." Dorothy Scott's excellent history of the Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church is called "The Halfway House to Infidelity".

Some of the sharpest internal debate has been generated by issues of war and peace. Some ministers have been conscientious objectors. Others have been anxious to show their patriotism by not using the exemption from conscription that was available to them as ministers. One early minister in Auckland was at once a vigorous opponent of conscription and a strong advocate of Irish Home Rule — views that led to stormy relations with the church management committee.

I remember my brother David telling of his experience some years ago attending the meeting of a District Association in the UK. The programme included a worship service, for which the preacher was one of the local Unitarian ministers. David had to keep reminding himself that he was in a Unitarian church, because the preacher hardly referred to or used the word "Unitarian", but kept talking about "the Christian message".

We may think that Unitarianism is the best religion for us, and that therefore it is the best religion — for everyone. But we need to realise that we can lose some people for reasons other than death/infirmity. Some people find the very freedom of Unitarianism difficult. They want to be given stronger, more dogmatic, more definitive religious answers, perhaps because there are too many other uncertainties in their lives.

In the Adelaide Unitarian Church when I was growing up, there was a family of three sisters. I went through Sunday School with them, and with them was involved in the Young People's League. All three of those sisters, as adults, moved away from Unitarianism – not to nothingness, but two to Roman Catholicism, and one to Methodism. Unlike the secure home and family which was part of my background, there was great insecurity and personal trauma in their family life.

June Bell, who was President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches in 1980-81, and who was made an Honorary Member of the General Assembly, once wrote:

“I've been arrested in astonishment ... by comments I've heard from points of view exactly opposite to my own. For example: Goodness knows who on Radio 4: ‘Unless everyone obeys the law, the cement that binds society together would go.’

June commented:

“Is law the real cement that binds society together? I protested in dismay and horror to friends that it isn't LAW, it's human valuing of, fellow-feeling for, other human beings. I admit I was a little mollified (but not much) by the response of one [who] said that the law embodies the best judgements about how human beings feel they should relate.”

The distinguished Unitarian Universalist minister David O Rankin, in an article entitled "An Unlikely Friend", told of an occasion when he had preached a strong sermon against the war in Vietnam. For five years he had opposed the conflict; he had spoken at demonstrations; he had organised a draft counselling service; he had helped to found an underground railway for deserters. His feelings ran deep.

Suddenly a voice in the church asked to respond to his remarks. It was Carlton Burr: Harvard graduate, US Navy officer during World War II, distinguished businessman, a conservative member of the Republican Party. David Rankin invited him to speak from the pulpit.

“We were two different people - he wrote.

We were two different people - in our birth, our education, our politics - in almost all our life experiences. Yet we had been friends from the very beginning of my ministry in New Bedford. He was warm and generous. He was open and direct. He was honest and dedicated. ... He was a Unitarian Universalist in the finest tradition.

So he appeared in the pulpit with a short rebuttal. He defended the policy in Viet Nam. He exonerated the President and the military. He claimed that his minister was mistaken.

I was very proud of Carlton – even as I thought of the misery and destruction of the war. Was that so wrong?”

Unitarians are sometimes frustrated and even annoyed by unwelcome confusion with other groups of much more recent origin that use words in their names such as "United", "Uniting", "Unity", "Unification". It seems to be a confusion with which we are stuck and with which we need to come to terms.

**Increasingly, though recognising that their own origins are within the free Christian tradition, Unitarians often find common ground with liberally minded people from a wide range of religious traditions. Insights from philosophy and science, as well as from new approaches to biblical study and from other — non-Christian — religions, are sought and welcomed, and sometimes integrated.**

I finish with a famous sentence by William Ellery Channing:

**“I call that mind free which jealously guards its intellectual rights and powers, which calls no man master, which does not content itself with a passive or hereditary faith, which opens itself to new light whencesoever it may come, which receives new truth as an angel from heaven.”**

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***Emphases by the present editor. JT***

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## **Our Reef: the Inevitable, the Preventable**

The central aim of the government's plan to protect the Great Barrier Reef is no longer achievable due to the dramatic impacts of climate change, experts have told the government's advisory committees for the plan.

Environmental lawyers said the revelation could mean the Great Barrier Reef might finally be listed as a "world heritage site in danger", a move the federal and Queensland governments have strenuously fought.

The federal and Queensland government's Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan was released in 2015, with its central vision to "ensure the Great Barrier Reef continues to improve on its outstanding universal values". The plan was created to satisfy the Unesco World Heritage Centre, which was considering adding the Great Barrier Reef to its list of world heritage sites in danger, that its condition could be improved.

But in a meeting of the Reef 2050 advisory committee, whose role is to provide advice to state and federal environment ministers on implementing the plan, two experts from government science agencies said improving the natural heritage values of the reef was no longer possible.

With climate change causing unprecedented back-to-back mass bleaching events in 2016 and 2017, killing almost half of the coral, and with the risk of those events set to increase in the coming years, loss of coral cover and biodiversity was virtually assured.

The experts told the meeting the plan should be revised to aim for something more achievable, suggesting it could aim to "maintain the ecological function" of the reef, while accepting that its overall health would inevitably decline.

The Great Barrier Reef serves many "ecological functions". For example, the coral provides shelter and food for fish, it provides fish for humans, the various ecosystems provide experiences for tourists, and the reef structure itself provides protection to the coast from waves.

A spokeswoman for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, where one of the presenters was based, said: "The concept of 'maintaining ecological function' refers to the balance of ecological processes necessary for the reef ecosystem as a whole to persist, but perhaps in a different form, noting the composition and structure may differ from what is currently seen today."

***This is part of a Guardian article by Michael Slezak, MAY, 2017.***

***Read more: [https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/may/25/great-barrier-reef-2050-plan-no-longer-achievable-due-to-climate-change-experts-say?CMP=share\\_btn\\_tw](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/may/25/great-barrier-reef-2050-plan-no-longer-achievable-due-to-climate-change-experts-say?CMP=share_btn_tw)***

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On the same day the latest reef report card was released, Australian prime minister Malcolm Turnbull was in India finalising a deal with multinational conglomerate Adani to build the biggest coal mine in Australia – just 300 kilometres from the Great Barrier Reef. Will this seal the reef's fate for good?

The emissions certainly won't help. Coal from the A\$22 billion (US\$16.5 billion) Carmichael megamine will be transported by rail to the Abbot Point coal port in the central section of the reef and shipped to power stations in India. When burned, it will pump out 128 million tonnes of carbon dioxide per year – more than the annual output of New Zealand.

Even though the coal will be burned in India, the emissions will contribute to overall global warming and further damage the reef.

The coal will also have a more direct effect: coal dust blowing from shipments at Abbot Point is likely to poison nearby coral. Coal dust exposure can kill coral in as little as two weeks. And only last month, the terminal was blamed for leaking coal dust, contaminating the surrounding wetlands.

And on 12 April, drone footage released by the Australian Conservation Foundation and Australian Marine Conservation Foundation showed the surrounding wetlands filled with coal sludge, the contamination leaking into nearby beaches where turtles nest.

But the worst damage is likely to be from the linked expansion of the Abbot Point port, which will involve dredging 1.1 million cubic metres of seabed, which will choke nearby reefs as plumes of sediment prevent light from getting to the coral. It could also get into the gills of reef fish that are emerging as crucial to coral restoration.....

.....The majority of Australians are opposed to the Carmichael mine on environmental grounds, even though it will create 1400 jobs and give a A\$4 billion boost to the economy. There is a growing awareness that what coal would give, a dying tourism industry would swiftly take away.

Still, there is a ray of hope. Conservation organisations and Indigenous groups have launched at least 10 legal challenges against the mine. Although these have mostly failed, they have managed to continuously delay its construction since it was first proposed in 2010. Although the Turnbull government is about to introduce legislation to overturn the latest obstruction, it's possible that these delays will stall the plant for long enough to see India's coal appetite wane.

Despite the Australian government's insistence that India needs coal to power the lives of 100 million impoverished people, the Indian government has indicated that it will move away from fossil fuels. Last year, India announced a plan to harvest 60 per cent of its electricity from renewables by 2027. The rapidly falling price of solar energy is making it an increasingly attractive prospect.

It may be too late to bring the Great Barrier Reef back to its former glory – but action on emissions could certainly save at least parts of this natural wonder. If, that is, we can find wily ways to thwart politicians' short-term priorities.

***The above is part of an article from New Scientist by Alice Klein, APRIL, 2017. More: <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2127598-its-not-too-late-to-save-great-barrier-reef-from-politicians/#.WSiWfWgUS0o.twitter>***

India will also build 10 heavy water reactors to boost its nuclear power capacity, the government has announced. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-39958299>

### **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*. Please note that all membership applications are subject to approval at a meeting of the Committee. Ask Rev. Geoff Usher 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: [jantendys@yahoo.com.au](mailto:jantendys@yahoo.com.au) 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**

**Website [www.sydneyunitarians.org](http://www.sydneyunitarians.org)**