



## Schedule of Services

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

**1 November, Rev. Geoff Usher, "The Church and Social Justice:  
ANZUUA Conference Report"**

This service will be an opportunity for a report on the Conference of the Australian and New Zealand Unitarian Universalist Association which took place at the Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church over the weekend 16-18 October. The Conference Theme was "The Church and Social Justice".

**8 November, Martin Horlacher, "Reason"**

The capacity to consciously make sense of this thing we call real life is perhaps the single most important thing that makes us all human. But reason constantly finds itself under attack from those who argue that only religion can offer us a better way forward. Which is right...and who, ultimately, will win?

**15 November, Ginna Hastings, "The festival of 'American Thanksgiving',  
Insights and background"**

Thanksgiving is an American Holiday which most Americans acknowledge as their favourite. Ginna will discuss the history of this holiday, why it is important and what can we as Unitarians and Australians learn from it.

**22 November, Steve Maxwell, "Living a Rational Life."**

This will be the second talk given to our Fellowship by Steve, who is the Secretary of the Rationalist Society.

**29 November, Rev. Geoff Usher, "Love and Death—the Immortal Struggle"**

We are aware not only of our own death, but of the possible end of human life on this planet. In the face of the inevitability of death, we look for ways to love, to say "Yes" to life. The desire to find ways to love is part of our human nature, even in the face of death and disaster.

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***Is "Seize the day!" good advice? Poets seem to think so. See p. 7.***

## To: The Editor, Esprit

*From Eric Stevenson*

Dear Jan,

It is very gratifying for me to realise how my talk about the endurance of Suffering was of help to somebody. Having prepared the address nearly ten years ago which you published in the last issue of Esprit, and having travelled a bit further on my spiritual journey, I feel compelled to give our readers an update on my rationale for saying what I wrote. Firstly, I want to be far more strictly personal about defining our religious attitudes while we are actually in the midst of suffering. i.e. I want to yield to each and every human being their sacred right to find their own rationales and not depend on mine! I said that it was inappropriate to try and form a constructive attitude to Suffering while we are bearing the pain. So secondly I want to underscore that statement: If readers are currently being assailed by pain, they should ignore my attempts at theology in the article. What I have to say about it now is for those who are not presently being traumatised, but are willing to better prepare themselves for such an event.

I no longer want to involve a God-presence in my suffering. I am learning to reverence human endurance (my own as well as that of others) for itself. My capacity to accept the inevitable downside of life depends largely upon my willingness to practise it continually. This is strongly linked, as I said, with my wholehearted attempt to value life despite its contingency, its unpredictability, and its apparent injustices. And although I have journeyed away from God-talk I am still committed to the beautiful principles which I have enunciated in my closing words. (Regarding my footnote from the perspective of a post-Christian progressive believer, I would simply add that my imagined portrait of the life of the "historical" Jesus of Nazareth is due more to my evolving philosophy about Suffering rather than vice versa. I simply proffer it as a description of the kind of suffering heroes and heroines I need to help me on my journey.)

Eric



***A personal "to do" from the recent ANZUUA Conference in Melbourne was to investigate & publicise the state of imprisonment in Australia, particularly in connection with rehabilitation and indigenous people (thank you, Peter Ferguson). Thinking to start with our own state, NSW, I found problems here are insignificant compared to those in NT. Here is the relevant article from the Conversation series which generously allows for republication. JT***

### **State of imprisonment: if locking 'em up is the goal, NT's a success**

***Pippa Rudd***  
*PhD Researcher,*  
*Menzies School of Health Research*  
***April 20, 2015***

This article is part of The Conversation's series, State of Imprisonment, which provides snapshots of imprisonment trends in each state and territory. The intention is to provide a basis for informed public discussion of imprisonment policies and of the costs and consequences for Australia of rising rates of incarceration.

If I were asked to outline a plan to ensure increasing incarceration, both generally and of vulnerable groups, I would just point to the Northern Territory of Australia. No need to look to the United States; their adult imprisonment rate is only 623 per 100,000. The NT imprisonment rate sits at 847 per 100,000 adults, nearly four times that of its nearest Australian rival, Western Australia.

Only 36% of the US prison population is African American and 22% Hispanic. Last year in the Territory, 86% of those in prison and 96% of those in juvenile detention were Indigenous.

The daily average number of prisoners has more than doubled in the last 20 years. By 2010 the growth in the NT prison population necessitated the construction of a 1,000-bed,

\$500 million jail.



In 2014, 86% of adult prisoners and 97% of those in juvenile detention were Indigenous.

With its opening, there is one prison bed for every 103 adults. Despite a recent report of lower-than-anticipated increases in prisoner numbers, based on growth over the last five years the new jail will reach capacity by 2018.

### **Adopt punitive policing and sentencing policies**

As with many jurisdictions, “tough on crime” rhetoric dominates in the Territory. The mandatory sentencing regime introduced by the Country Liberal Party in the 1990s kick-started significant growth in prisoner numbers. Daily averages grew by 31% over just two years.

Despite early promise, including removing much of the mandatory sentencing regime, the decade-long Labor government also contributed significantly to these trends. Restrictive bail laws have increased numbers in custody, with 38% of those entering an adult prison and 60% of those entering youth detention unsentenced on reception.

The remaining mandatory sentencing provisions, for serious violence and aggravated property offences, mean that prison is the only option available in many cases.

And while undoubtedly more people are in prison, our community is certainly not safer. Recorded assaults increased by 24% between 2010 and 2014.

The ineffectiveness of jail in addressing violent crime (indeed most crime) is also glaringly apparent when 71% of adult prisoners have served a previous prison term.

### **Deny Indigenous people access to appropriate services**

Despite attempts to Close the Gap, Indigenous people living in remote areas of the Territory do not enjoy access to the same services as non-Indigenous people living in similarly sized communities.

Growing up in a town of 60 in rural Queensland, my family had access to a range of government services. These included a post office, a permanently staffed police station, a local primary school and a high school a short bus ride away. I cannot think of a similarly sized Indigenous community enjoying such facilities.

This lack of services has direct and indirect effects on rates of Indigenous incarceration. Without identification requirements for a driver’s licence, with no licensing or vehicle registration services and no public transport, Indigenous people, far more so than non-Indigenous people, are jailed for minor driving offences. While recent reforms have reduced these numbers, a not insignificant number of Aboriginal people have a criminal record for such offences.

*Community-based orders are often unavailable in remote areas as there are no programs or Correctional Services staff to supervise them. Due to overcrowding and poor housing, Aboriginal offenders are also unlikely to meet the suitability requirements of a Home Detention Order (HDO). Only six Indigenous people received a HDO in 2013-14.*

While access to in-prison programs is low overall, access to culturally appropriate programs is even lower. With a few notable exceptions, programs are developed using Western psychological models and evidence about non-Indigenous offenders. Their suitability and success for Indigenous offenders are rarely evaluated.

Yet it's ironically true, as one senior Corrections official once remarked, that it's hard to see why we have special programs for Indigenous prisoners. Indeed, Indigenous-specific programming is all that's needed.

### **Embrace alcohol consumption as a core social value**

If largely unfettered access to alcohol is to be a part of the great Territory lifestyle, then Territorians must accept that high levels of violence are here to stay. The association between excessive alcohol consumption and violence is long established, At least 60% of all violent assaults in the Territory are alcohol-related.

Public health education and evidence-based programs can play important roles in reducing alcohol-related harm. While such programs should be funded appropriately, supply restrictions must also form part of our response.

The 2007 NT National Emergency Response introduced identification requirements for alcohol purchases above \$100 but coupled this with criminalising those who consumed alcohol on Aboriginal land. The Banned Drinker Register showed early promise through a system that prevented alcohol purchases by those on certain court orders, but partisan politics brought it to an end in 2012.

### **Ignore evidence of what works in child protection and youth justice**

Based on the growing body of evidence that child protection involvement, even notification to a child welfare system, is linked to involvement in the criminal justice system, there are increasingly troubled times ahead.

In the last year, child protection notifications increased by 30% and the number of Indigenous children in out-of-home care by 26%. At the same time, the rate of completed child protection investigations decreased.

Youth justice fares equally badly. Diversionary programs \* are under-funded and exclude young people without a responsible adult. There are few programs for young peo-

ple in detention or in the community, particularly in areas such as violent and sexual offending.

The failure of governments to meet the need for a suitable youth facility means young people are now locked up in a jail deemed unfit for adults; Correctional Services described the facility as "fit only for a bulldozer".

Both systems are effectively driving young people's further and deeper involvement in the criminal justice system. Young people are remanded in custody, sometimes for weeks, because no parent or family member comes to court, yet child protection maintains the young person is not in need of care.

Criminal charges are routinely brought against young people in residential facilities, rather than working through behavioural issues as we might in our own homes. Children in care have unpaid fines incurring interest and attracting further penalty, with no way of paying off these debts.

I offer no solutions here. When we decide we want different outcomes – a safer community, fewer people in jail – those solutions can be found in the thousands of words spoken and written by dozens of Aboriginal people and organisations, lawyers, academics and others, over many, many years.

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*\*Note by JT: A diversionary program in other jurisdictions provides mainly first time offenders with the opportunity to avoid a criminal record by undertaking conditions that benefit the offender, victim and the community as a whole.*

**Wikipedia** These may include:

1. Education aimed at preventing future offences by the offender
2. [Restitution](#) to victims of the offence
3. Completion of [community service hours](#)
4. Avoiding situations for a specified period in the future that may lead to committing another such offence (such as contact with certain people).

## An approach that appeared to be working

At a remote prison work camp in East Arnhem land, it is the vastness of the wilderness that locks people in.

All prisoners work, but 16 of the camp's inmates now have fully paid jobs within the community. Finding real employment, combined with the isolation of a prison without walls, appears to be working.

Having a job makes me feel a lot better. It makes me feel manly, says inmate Gerald.

By day, Gerald is employed in a bakery in Nhulunbuy, near the camp.

"I get up at 3:30am, have brekky, a cup of coffee and get ready for work. And then I am out of here at four o'clock," Gerald said.

He has now earned more money than he has ever had and says having a job makes him feel good.

"Most of the time I'd have to steal it. But that was just to support my habits. And besides that, it makes me feel a lot better. It makes me feel manly," Gerald said.

Jail without walls key to reform, says corrections officer Ray Petrie.

At Datjala camp, which has the support of the local Aboriginal community, there is also something unexpected - praise for jailers.

Dion is another inmate who has found work in Nhulunbuy. He works full-time in pest control.

He could apply for parole now, but he says he is holding off until he has saved enough money to pay outstanding fines. He wants to leave a free man.

He has high praise for his jailers - in particular, corrections veteran Ray Petrie.

"I respect him. And he puts respect to us," Dion said.

"It's important to us, because we love him you see. He's a good officer, he's organised everything - jobs - and for people coming from Nhulunbuy prison, from Darwin prison, he organised jobs for them too."

Mr Petrie believes the combination of work and a jail without walls is the key to real and permanent reform.

"I've seen results here, yes," Mr Petrie said. "Makes me proud."

"I get a sense of wellbeing of what I am achieving and what I see. But it costs time, effort and it's a lot of wear and tear on officers and prisoners to get to the standards that we are doing it."

Despite strong community support and the inroads made at this camp, the Territory government has just announced it will close.

Prisoners will soon be moving into Nhulunbuy to a centre capable of housing more inmates.

It may not be called a jail, but for inmates who have thrived in the wilderness, there will be walls once more.

*(Note by JT: The Nhulunbuy facility can accommodate up to 50 sentenced and remand, low and open-security male prisoners, according to the NT Government, Department of Correctional services.)*

***The above is part of "New Darwin super prison hopes to rehabilitate prisoners by putting them to work" ABC, [Lateline](#), by Ginny Stein, updated 20 May 2014. The article deals mainly with the huge new prison mentioned previously.***

***The new Darwin Correctional Precinct is the size of a city suburb and can house more than 1,000 prisoners. Again, the emphasis will be on learning a variety of work skills. It aims to provide the best chance of rehabilitation and reintegration through the provision of practical education and employment programs, with some prisoners working externally. Watch this space.***

## What Exactly Is 'Happiness'? from The Happiness Trap by Dr Russ Harris, MD

We all want it. We all crave it. We all strive for it. Even the Dalai Lama has said: 'The very purpose of life is to seek happiness.' But what exactly is this elusive thing we are looking for? The word 'happiness' has two very different meanings. Usually it refers to a feeling: a sense of pleasure, gladness or gratification. We all enjoy happy feelings, so it's no surprise that we chase them. However, like all our other feelings, feelings of happiness don't last. No matter how hard we try to hold on to them, they slip away every time. And as we shall see, a life spent in pursuit of those feelings is, in the main, unsatisfying. In fact, the harder we pursue pleasurable feelings, the more we are likely to suffer from anxiety and depression. The other meaning of happiness is 'a rich, full and meaningful life'. When we take action on the things that truly matter deep in our hearts, when we move in directions that we consider valuable and worthy, when we clarify what we stand for in life and act accordingly, then our lives become rich and full and meaningful, and we experience a powerful sense of vitality. This is not some fleeting feeling — it is a profound sense of a life well lived. And although such a life will undoubtedly give us many pleasurable feelings, it will also give us uncomfortable ones, such as sadness, fear and anger. This is only to be expected. If we live a full life, we will feel the full range of human emotions.

In this book, as you've probably guessed by now, we are far more interested in the second meaning of happiness than in the first. Of course, happy feelings are quite pleasant, and we should certainly make the most of them when they present themselves. But if we try to have them all the time, we are doomed to failure.

The reality is, life involves pain. There's no getting away from it. As human beings we are all faced with the fact that sooner or later we will grow infirm, get sick and die. Sooner or later we all will lose valued relationships through rejection, separation or death. Sooner or later we will all come face-to-face with a crisis, disappointment and failure. This means

that in one form or another, we are all going to experience painful thoughts and feelings.

The good news is that, although we can't avoid such pain we can learn to handle it much better—to make room for it, rise above it and create a life worth living.

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***This book and its related cds can be used as a self-help for improving one's life but is also used by professional psychologists who can help clients use its techniques. These techniques are collectively known as ACT (pronounced as the word "act"), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. The practice of mindfulness is an important part of the whole, as is being prepared to act in this world. A copy of The Happiness Trap is available for borrowing by members. JT***

### ~~~~~ Advice for writing and life:

Be a good steward of your gifts. Protect your time. Feed your inner life. Avoid too much noise. Read good books, have good sentences in your ears. Be by yourself as often as you can. Walk. Take the phone off the hook. Work regular hours.

***Jane Kenyan, poet.***

It is no good crying over spilt evils. It is better to mop them up laughing.

***Eleanor Farjeon, author.***

"It takes years to marry completely two hearts, even of the most loving and well-assorted. A happy wedlock is a long falling in love. Men and women\* marry fractionally, now a small and then a larger fraction... Such a long and sweet fruit needs a long summer to ripen in and a long winter to season in. But real and happy marriage is one of those things so handsome that if the sun were, as the Greek poets fabled it, a god, he might stop the world and hold it still now and then to feast his eyes on such a spectacle."

***Theodore Parker, Unitarian minister.***

*\*You can bring this up to date yourself, I'm sure JT.*

## Public Readings of “A Christmas Carol”

Geoff Usher will give two public readings of A CHRISTMAS CAROL

at Pitt Street Uniting Church, 264 Pitt Street,  
Sydney on 4 December 2015 at 12 noon

and at

Cronulla Library, Cronulla Central, 38 –60  
Croydon Street, Cronulla on Tuesday 8 December 2015 at 6.00 pm.

Admission to both readings is free. There will  
collections for charity.

### *O, Gather Me the Rose*

O, gather me the rose, the rose,  
While yet in flower we find it,  
For summer smiles, but summer goes,  
And winter waits behind it!

For with the dream foregone, foregone,  
The deed forborne for ever,  
The worm, regret, will canker on,  
And time will turn him never.

So well it were to love, my love,  
And cheat of any laughter  
The death beneath us and above,  
The dark before and after.

The myrtle and the rose, the rose,  
The sunshine and the swallow,  
The dream that comes, the wish that goes,  
The memories that follow!



**William Ernest Henley,  
1849 - 1903**

### *O Me! O Life!*

O Me! O life!... of the questions of these re-  
curring;  
Of the endless trains of the faithless—  
of cities fill'd with the foolish;  
Of myself forever reproaching myself, (for  
who more foolish than I, and who more  
faithless?)  
Of eyes that vainly crave the light—of the

objects mean—of the struggle ever renew'd;  
Of the poor results of all—of the plodding and  
sordid crowds I see around me;  
Of the empty and useless years of the rest—  
with the rest me intertwined;  
The question, O me! so sad, recurring—What  
good amid these, O me, O life?

Answer

That you are here—that life exists, and  
identity;  
That the powerful play goes on, and you will  
contribute a verse.

**Walt Whitman, 1819 - 1892**

### *First Fig*

My candle burns at both ends;  
It will not last the night;  
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends—  
It gives a lovely light!

**Edna St. Vincent Millay, 1892 - 1950**

### *Be Drunk*

You have to be always drunk. That's all there  
is to it—it's the only way. So as not to feel the  
horrible burden of time that breaks your back  
and bends you to the earth, you have to be  
continually drunk.

But on what? Wine, poetry or virtue, as you  
wish. But be drunk.

And if sometimes, on the steps of a palace or  
the green grass of a ditch, in the mournful  
solitude of your room, you wake again,  
drunkenness already diminishing or gone,  
ask the wind, the wave, the star, the bird, the  
clock, everything that is flying, everything that  
is groaning, everything that is rolling, every-  
thing that is singing, everything that is speak-  
ing. . .ask what time it is and wind, wave,  
star, bird, clock will answer you: "It is time to  
be drunk! So as not to be the martyred  
slaves of time, be drunk, be continually  
drunk! On wine, on poetry or on virtue as you  
wish."

**Charles Baudelaire, 1821 - 1867**

**A paraprosdokian is a figure of speech in which the latter part of a sentence or phrase is surprising or unexpected in a way that causes the reader or listener to reframe or reinterpret the first part.**

***The last thing I want to do is hurt you, but it's still on the list.***

***We never really grow up, we only learn how to act in public.***

***War does not determine who is right - only who is left.***

***Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit; Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.***

***Evening news is where they begin with 'Good evening', and then proceed to tell you why it isn't.***

***To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism; To steal from many is research.***

***Dolphins are so smart that within a few weeks of captivity, they can train people to stand on the very edge of the pool and throw them fish.***

***A bank is a place that will lend you money, if you can prove that you don't need it.***

***Why does someone believe you when you say there are four billion stars, but check when you say the paint is wet?***

***A clear conscience is usually the sign of a bad memory.***

***The voices in my head may not be real, but they have some good ideas!***

***Always borrow money from a pessimist. He won't expect it back.***

***A diplomat is someone who can tell you to go to hell in such a way that you will look forward to the trip.***

### **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 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@yahoo.com.au](mailto:jtendys@yahoo.com.au) or hand to Jan Tendys at the Sunday service.

Although we have an Associate Minister, Rev. Geoff Usher, we are primarily a lay-led congregation. **Perhaps you have a topic to share?** We welcome any topic ideas, offers to speak or names of suitable speakers for our meetings whom we could approach. *Please see Caz Donnelly at the Sunday service.*

**Fellowship contact** [www.sydneyunitarians.org](http://www.sydneyunitarians.org) or ring 02 9599 11 80