



Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship
PO Box 1356, Lane Cove NSW 1595
Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre
16-18 Fitzroy Street, Kirribilli
(near Milsons Point Station)
Tel: (02) 9428 2244

Website: www.sydneynunitarians.org
Editor: Jan Tendys

Volume 7, Issue 11

November, 2011

Schedule of Services

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

6 November Dr Andrew Usher

“Spoons”

A spoon communion inspired by the work of Christine Miserandino.

13 November Janine Matthews

“The Power of Hope”

In extreme conditions such as in the concentration camps of Poland, 'Hope' was the only thread to survival. In fact when hope was subtracted from the equation of daily life, death surely followed. Hope is so powerful it can prolong life in impossible circumstances but when hope is gone, life is gone.

20 November Eric Stevenson

“Hoping My Way to Meaning”

In order to be a realistic ideal to live by can our hope be anything less than rational, practical, flexible, attainable and achievable? Or can it be only some of these things, or none of them? What is it about life that it is supposed to sustain, and what has faith got to do with it?

27 November Colin Whatmough

“We live in the Shadow of the Past”

Further understandings in our respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part (UU Principle 7).

4 December Rev. Dr Ian Ellis-Jones

“The Psychology of Buddhism”

Buddhism is neither a religion nor a philosophy in the sense in which those terms are ordinarily understood in the West. Buddhism is the oldest and most perfectly integrated system of what we now call 'psychology'. Ian Ellis-Jones will discuss the underlying principles of Buddhist psychology and explain how those principles can be applied in one's daily life ... irrespective of whether or not one is a Buddhist.

11 December Laurence Gormley

To be announced

18 December *Party.* Poetry, readings, musical interludes, etc. Please bring a plate of “finger-food” if you can.

O Strong of Heart

O strong of heart, go where the road
Of ancient honour climbs.
Bow not your craven shoulders.
Earth conquered gives the stars.

Boethius

(Trans. From the Latin by Helen Waddell)

This Discord

This discord in the pact of things,
This endless war twixt truth and truth,
That singly hold, yet give the lie
To him who seeks to yoke them both -
Do the gods know the reason why?

Or is truth one without a flaw,
And all things to each other turn,
But the soul, sunken in desire,
No longer can the links discern,
In glimmering of her smothered fire?

Then why with travail does she yearn
To find the hidden mysteries?
Knows she the thing for which she burns?
Yet who will seek what he hath got?
Yet who will seek he knows not what?

How shall he follow the unknown?
How shall he find it, and when found
How shall he know it? Did the soul
Once see the universal mind,
And know the part, and know the whole?

Now sunken in the mirk of sense,
Not wholly doth the soul forget,
Still grasps the whole, lets go the part.
And therefore whoso seeks the truth
Shall find in no wise peace of heart.

For neither doth he wholly know,
And neither doth he all forget.
But that thing which once he saw,
And still remembers, that he holds,
And seeks to bring the truth forgot
Again to that which he hath yet.

Boethius

(Trans. From the Latin by Helen Waddell)
Contributed by Margaret Armstrong.

Anicius Manlius Severinus Boëthius, [commonly called Boethius (ca. 480–524 or 525 AD) was a philosopher of the early 6th century. He was born in Rome to an ancient and important family. His father, Flavius Manlius Boethius, was consul in 487 after Odoacer deposed the last Western Roman Emperor. Boethius himself was consul in 510 in the kingdom of the Ostrogoths. In 522 he saw his two sons become consuls.

Boethius was imprisoned and eventually executed by King Theodoric the Great*, who suspected him of conspiring with the Eastern Empire. While jailed, Boethius composed his Consolation of Philosophy, a philosophical treatise on fortune, death, and other issues. The Consolation became one of the most popular and influential works of the Middle Ages. ...

This work is cast as a dialogue between Boethius himself, at first bitter and despairing over his imprisonment, and the spirit of philosophy, depicted as a woman of wisdom and compassion. Alternately composed in prose and verse, the Consolation teaches acceptance of hardship in a spirit of philosophical detachment from misfortune. Parts of the work are reminiscent of the Socratic method of Plato's dialogues, as the spirit of philosophy questions Boethius and challenges his emotional reactions to adversity. The work was translated into Old English by King Alfred, and into later English by Chaucer and Queen Elizabeth1.... "The Boethian Wheel" is a model for Boethius' belief that history is a wheel, that Boethius uses frequently in the Consolation; it remained very popular throughout the Middle Ages, and is still often seen today. As the wheel turns those that have power and wealth will turn to dust; men may rise from poverty and hunger to greatness, while those who are great may fall with the turn of the wheel.(Wikipedia)

Although Boethius was a Christian, the Consolation was written from a classical Roman point of view (with appeals to the gods etc). His writings was the main way in which knowledge of Plato and Aristotle were preserved in the Middle Ages.

*Theodoric was of the Arian persuasion of Christianity (sometimes seen as proto-Unitarian) He was tolerant in religious questions but not political ones. (JT).

More: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/>

Carl Orff's "Carmina Burana"

Boethius' wheel is a recurring symbol in Latin secular poetry of the 12th-Century goliardic repertory. The goliards were students and minor clerics known for their drinking and poetry. Some of this Latin poetry was set to music by 20th century German composer, Carl Orff.



The best known part of Carmina Burana is the opening section, titled "O Fortuna".

O Fortuna
velut luna
statu variabilis,
semper crescis
aut decrescis;
vita detestabilis
nunc obdurat
et tunc curat
ludo mentis aciem,
egestatem,
potestatem
dissolvit ut glaciem.

O Fortune,
like the moon
you are changeable,
ever waxing
and waning;
hateful life
first oppresses
and then soothes
as fancy takes it;
poverty
and power
it melts them like ice

There is more of this, but a happier and more seasonable one for Australia is called in English "The Merry Face of Spring".

Here's the Latin first:

Veris leta facies
mundo propinatur,
hiemalis acies
victa iam fugatur,
in vestitu vario

Flora principatur,
nemorum dulcisono
que cantu celebratur.

Flore fusus gremio
Phebus novo more
risum dat, hac vario
iam stipate flore.

Zephyrus nectareo
spirans in odore.

Certatim pro bravo
curramus in amore.

Cytharizat cantico
Dulcis Philomena,
flore rident vario

prata iam serena,
salit cetus avium

silve per amena,
chorus promit virgin
iam gaudia millena.

The merry face of spring
turns to the world;
sharp winter
now flees, vanquished.
Bedecked in various colours
Flora reigns.

The harmony of the woods
praises her in song. Ah!

Lying in Flora's lap
Phoebus once more
smiles, now covered
in many-coloured flowers.

Zephyr breathes nectar-
scented breezes.

Let us rush to compete
for love's prize. Ah!

In harp-like tones sings
the sweet nightingale,
with many flowers

the joyous meadows are laughing,
a flock of birds rises up.

through the pleasant forests,
the chorus of maidens

already promises a thousand joys. Ah!

~~~~~

Hear the music for "Carmina Burana":

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEILCo4OM>

UC Davis University Chorus, Alumni Chorus, Symphony Orchestra, and the Pacific Boychoir perform Carl Orff's "Carmina Burana," at the Mondavi Center on the campus of UC Davis.

## Astray In A Manger

*Ramona Koval*

Thank God Christmas is over. It's not even my holiday, but Christmas always makes me feel uneasy. Because of what happened in December 1961. The Christmas Fiasco.

I was in Grade 2, and had come home one day and asked if I could take a tea towel to school. "Are you going to cook something, darling?" my Mama asked sweetly. "No," I answered, "it's for a play". "What kind of play?" "It's just about a lady who has a baby and wears a tea towel on her head. It's nothing really."

I had neglected to tell my mother that for a whole year I had been going to Christian religious instruction classes. This was because I had heard my parents' stories of what had been done to them in Europe by people who didn't like Jews, and I had made the decision to act undercover. It seemed the most sensible thing to do.

I felt a pang of regret as the other Jewish kids filed out of the class each week for a session with the rabbi, but I liked the stories about Jesus, especially the miracles. They were somehow more spectacular than Moses. Making the loaves and fishes go around all those people was better than just hitting a rock with a stick to get water. And the rabbi was strange and foreign, like my parents. He spoke with an accent.

So I learned The Lord's Prayer, and my hand went up first every time when the nice, neat lady from the local church asked for answers to theological questions about the Good Samaritan or those nasty money-changers in the temple. No wonder that when it came to choosing a responsible Mary for the Christmas play, they looked no further than me.

"So, what does this lady with the baby and the tea towel on her head actually do?" asked Mama.

"She just sits around, in a kind of zoo."

"You mean there are animals with this baby?" She was becoming persistent.

"A couple. A cow. Some chickens. A dog."

"A donkey?" Mama asked. By now she had put down her sewing and was looking right into my eyes. "Would this be, by any

chance, a Christmas play?"

She had finally broken my cool nonchalance. Since when did she know about Christmas? "Do they know you are Jewish, Ramona?"

So I had to explain about the dangers of going to Jewish religious instruction classes, and the utter niceness of the lady from the church, and the relief of being out of the woggy kids' group for once.

She took me to school the next morning and blew my cover. The headmaster was aghast. Where would they find another Mary at this late stage? They didn't have an understudy. But Mama calmed him "Don't forget, sir, that Mary was one of us!" And as I sat near the manger with the doll in my arms and the tea towel on my head, I had mixed feelings about this first venture into multiculturalism at my school.

Twenty years on, at the local kindergarten. I sat with the other mothers as we heard our little angels sing, "Little baby Jesus, cradle in the hay, Softly stank his mother, lula lula lay."

"It's sang, not stank," I explained during the intermission, with as much subtlety as I could muster.

"It's stank," said the Wise Child. "Because of all the animals in the bedroom".

I should have been paying more attention but Christmas makes me nervous. While the consultation was going on, the younger child had toddled away from our seats and made her way to the front of the hall. and up the side steps. I looked up to see her making a beeline for the manger, and stopping at the cradle. My mouth dropped open as she pulled baby Jesus right out, the hay flying out over her head and making poor allergic Joseph sneeze.

One of the wise men moved forward in a thrice to wrest the Saviour from the Infidel's clutches, but the Infidel was nothing if not determined and hung on, punctuating "Silent night, holy night" with blood-curdling screams. Baby Jesus lost a leg.

The Wise Child said it was just like that story about the baby and King Solomon, and I hissed at her for bring up the Old Testament at a time like this. So it's been years since I had a starring role at Christmas. Those positions aren't exactly a dime a dozen. As my gym instructor complained this week, her son

had been a dog one year and a sheep the next: "For the whole of his time at kinder, he never got off all fours!"

Despite the painful memories, nothing will ever come close to my time as a Virgin with a tea towel on my head. Amen. AMEN.

**Ramona Korval gave permission to Margaret Armstrong for the reprinting of this story. Margaret notes that the original episode took place 50 years ago - would such a thing still happen?**

~~~~~

Three's a crowd: Is it unethical to have more than two kids?

Lisa Hymas

Grist, 27 Oct 2011

In the U.S., many population groups try to smooth over controversy, preferring to highlight areas of broad agreement, such as making birth control universally accessible, educating girls, and empowering women.

By contrast, the British group Population Matters (formerly Optimum Population Trust) tries to stir up controversy. It recently chided David and Victoria Beckham for adding a fourth child to their jet-setting brood, and the group has rankled some in the population movement by promoting PopOffsets, a program that lets you "offset" your family's carbon footprint by funding family planning elsewhere.

I talked to Roger Martin, chair of **Population Matters**, about the group's approach and the impending milestone of 7 billion. He shared some T-shirt-worthy slogans -- "It's no use reducing your carbon footprint if you keep increasing the number of feet," and "Any resource shortage is in part a population longage" -- and some harsh words for environmental groups that ignore population growth.

Q. Population Matters criticized Posh and Becks for having four kids. Do you think you risk turning people off by being so combative?

A. For those who are aware of the implications of having three or more children, and who have the option not to, it is irresponsible, or it at least raises moral questions they should think about. Frankly, we just try to get

people to focus on the fact that there are ethical implications in choosing to have a third and subsequent children.

Q. Do you think population is getting more attention these days?

A. I'm confident that the mad taboo on discussing it is crumbling. It was bound to crumble because it was so bloody stupid, so contrary to self-evident fact. It's crumbling rather slowly and some of it's still there. I'd love it to crumble completely so that everybody was able, free from hysteria and finger-pointing and all that rubbish, to discuss the more interesting question: not, "Is population growth a problem?" but, "What are the best programs for stabilizing numbers as quickly as possible in an acceptable way that does not infringe on civil liberties?" I'm always being put on the BBC to argue against some idiot who says, "No, it's not a problem at all."

Q. Why do so many environmental groups avoid talking about population?

A. It's monstrous. The NGOs in my view are telling a silent lie every time they put out a statement on some environmental problem where they know that every additional person makes it harder and ultimately impossible to solve.

I suspect, having been through the process myself as head of an environmental NGO, that it's to do with professionalization. When I started with a staff of three, I was a hard-hitting campaigner with a lot of volunteers. By the time I finished 10 years later with a staff of 35, my priority concern, if I'm honest, had switched from preserving the wildlife of Somerset to keeping my staff and myself in work. So not upsetting funders became more and more important, and it made us ever more toothless watchdogs. And I think that's happened at the Sierra Club and many others. They've become part of the establishment, they don't rock boats.

Q. Does Population Matters want governments to enact policies to promote smaller families, or are you just trying to convince individuals to act on their own to have fewer kids?

A. **We don't want policies in the form of legislation; we're against coercive population policy, and indeed it would never work in a democracy. We want governments to state the problem up front, recognize that all our environmental prob-**

lems get harder and ultimately impossible to solve with ever more people, and that it's in the national interest therefore to stabilize our numbers and then reduce them by voluntary means to a sustainable level as soon as possible. And [we want governments] to invest money in culture-shifting public education programs of the kind that they've run successfully in recent decades for drunk driving, smoking, sex without condoms, and so on.

Q. Does Population Matters take a stance on immigration policy?

A. Yes. Half our population growth [in the U.K.] is due to migration, so [we advocate] balanced migration to stabilize that -- no more in than out. We find this position uncomfortable because it puts us in unpleasant company, but we are forced into it by intellectual honesty. (And we ignore, by the way, intra-European Union flows for that purpose because we're already legally obligated to permit free movement around the E.U.)

There is no possibility of getting a global [population] policy adopted. It's hard enough to get global carbon policies adopted. So insofar as there will be successful population policies -- non-coercive, good family planning, all the rest of it -- they have to be conducted at the national level.

Q. Do you mostly concentrate on British people or Europeans rather than people in developing countries?

A. It's 50-50. In developing countries, there are 215 million women with an unmet need for contraception. We should fund the programs to provide [family-planning] services and female education and empowerment.

It's just as important that us rich people, who emit 22 times more carbon per head than a Malawian, should take responsibility and stabilize our numbers.

Q. Are there countries that have done a particularly good job of dealing with population pressures?

A. The two best are Thailand and Iran, which have both achieved very similar reductions in fertility through entirely voluntary means: you provide the services, you make them affordable, preferably free, good range of options so women can use the contraception of their choice, you get the NGOs on board, you have consistent

messaging, and you invest in programs to liberate women and empower women.*

Q. What is the significance of 7 billion?



A. Objectively, that 7 billionth kid is no more significant than the one before and the one after, but it does rub in the fact that the U.N. projects the population in 2050 will be somewhere in the range of 8.1 to 10.6 billion. If you ask yourself which is easier to feed, 8.1 billion or 10.6 billion, which is easier to supply with water, which will emit less carbon, which will have less impact, which will deplete oil reserves and other mineral reserves faster, the answer doesn't require any research at all, it's straight from the university of the bleeding obvious. For everyone's sake, the sooner we can stabilize to as near as possible to 8.1, our kids will have a vastly greater chance of a halfway decent life.

On a finite planet, we know for a fact that indefinite growth in anything physical is physically impossible. So physical consumption of resources per person and the number of consumers will quite definitely stop at some point. It will either be sooner, the nice way, through fewer births, or later, the nasty way, through more deaths. But there is no third alternative.

Lisa Hymas is senior editor at Grist, which she cofounded. You can follow her on Twitter and Google+. She writes on politics, population, and other green issues.

For a different slant see the review by Alok Jha of [Peoplequake: Mass Migration, Ageing Nations and the Coming Population Crash](#) by Fred Pearce. Read comments too.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2010/mar/27/peoplequake-population-fred-pearce-review>

*Iran's program contained sticks as well as carrots. Are Iranian women "liberated"? JT

Police make a special case of Occupy Sydney

(Part of a young Sydneysider's diary of events in Martin Place)

I got there about 4pm and at about 9pm I decided to go home, and I think most did too. There were about 12 of us then. I saw no intention to make a 'camp' by anyone (except two people who are living homeless) and no-one had any camping gear. As I was saying goodbye, a few people in the group said they had made a soup and we talked about quickly eating before heading off.

At this point, there were about 12 cops. About one for each of us. Keep in mind all we had done for 5 hours was be in groups and chat logistics, jokes, ideas and just catch up.

The police informed us that we were not able to eat our food in a group as that would be considered 'camping' and we would be given infringement notices and moved on.

Just think about that for a second. 10-12 people, quickly eating soup, before heading separate ways home as decided, had suddenly been told we could not do that. We were no longer welcome in a public place. Suddenly the number of cops made dawning sense.

We had a debate together for a while about what to do. As many people had been at work all day and it had been a nice day, the last thing we wanted was a petty confrontation with police over arbitrarily applied 'by-laws' (FYI the Lord Mayor of Sydney has said these by-laws, as signposted near the space, are essentially surpassed by the Local Government Act in NSW).

A this point I was feeling very upset. Inside I was livid.

Essentially, my decision, as a free citizen of Australia, to go home of my own free will had been taken away from me. The police had now given us a directive. It was no longer my decision to go home as my cat is sick and I feel tired. I now had to go home because if I didn't, I would be fined and will have to have a police confrontation I neither invited nor deserved.

I and another woman, decided to go and chat to the policeman in charge. We asked him, 'if we were a group of ladies coming back from a performance at the Opera House and had stopped to get Maccas on the way and were eating it in a group here,

would that be okay?' He said, 'yes'. This directive, only applies to 'us'.

He admitted that the order was 'silly' but that it came from top down and it is their job to do what they are told. We didn't argue that point, but I know he saw the frustration and sadness on my face.

He said, we were welcome to stay, 'but not in a group'. We had 'to disperse'. I asked 'how far away from each other do we need to be?'. He laughed, but then had to take a phone call. But I wasn't laughing. This wasn't funny. It was oppressive and horrible.

A this point I actually started to shake and tear up. I was so embarrassed that my body was reacting to the presence of these police in a line in this way. To this sense of arbitrary 'justice'. I was frustrated for my friends who had made food for all of us and their effort was suddenly against the law.

During this time, a group of roller derby peeps skated by and around the place. Did you know skating is also against a by-law on the same sign as erected in Martin Place? The police did nothing. The issue really isn't 'enforcing' any law or by-law (much like a parking ticket!!). The issue is stifling peaceful assembly.

In my job in the public service I talk to police occasionally, if they need CCTV access for a court case, to help out if someone is being assaulted etc on our property. In my lifetime they have helped when I had my bike stolen, when my mother was being assaulted by someone who had broken into our house. I had a vision of the police as those who assist when things are wrong. Who help. That is slowly being eroded. That good experience. That respect. By how myself and others are being treated. Because we are being denied the right to peacefully assemble in public and talk about current 'cancerous' political and economic structures in this country. Or being able to talk at all. Or eat our dinner.

Last night I was denied being able to make a choice about my own personal movements and body in a public place. How could anyone seriously think this is okay? People are being told they cannot come together to talk in a public place and police are being sent out to get rid of lawful citizens. How scared are the banks and our government that this this response has been 'ordered'?

~~~~~

## Bertie's Bon Mots

Taken from Unpopular Essays which appeared in 1950 and became one of Bertrand Russell's most popular books.

From the Preface: I will therefore confess that there are several sentences in the present volume which some unusually stupid children of ten might find a little puzzling.

# That Plato's Republic should have been admired, on its political side, by decent people, is perhaps the most astonishing example of literary snobbery in all history.

# Man is a restless animal, not content, like the boa constrictor, to have a good meal once a month and sleep the rest of the time.

# After ages during which the earth produced harmless trilobites and butterflies, evolution progressed to the point at which it generated Neros, Genghis Khans, and Hitlers. This, however is a passing nightmare; in time the earth will become again incapable of supporting life, and peace will return.

**Contributed by Arthur Munitiz (more to come)**

*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.