



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

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Website: www.sydneyunitarians.org
Editor: Jan Tendys

Volume 8, Issue 9

September, 2012

Schedule of Services

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

2 Sept Rev. Geoff Usher "Our Different Faith"

When the Fourth of Act of Uniformity came into effect on 24th August, 1662, almost 2000 ministers of the Church of England preached their last services and resigned, or were dismissed, from their positions. Many of these non-conformist, or dissenting, ministers founded new congregations, some of which eventually became Unitarian. This service will mark the 350th anniversary of what became known as The Great Ejection.

9 Sept. Warren Simmons "The Life & Works of Frank Lloyd Wright"

16 Sept Dr Andrew Usher "A Sing Song"

A chance to sing some of your favourite songs/hymns and ones not on the cds, with a few readings in between. Let me know if you have any special requests : aero@bluebottle.com

23 Sept. Rev. Dr. Ian Ellis-Jones "'Alice in Wonderland': The Ancient Wisdom"

Ian will speak about the spiritual wisdom contained in Lewis Carroll's book "Alice in Wonderland", especially the advice given as respects the search for one's "true" self.

30 Sept. Rev. Geoff Usher "A Matter of Perspective"

An essential part of being a Unitarian is to be genuinely receptive to new insights and realities. That does **not** mean cheerfully accepting every new idea or theory that anyone happens to put before us. But it does mean keeping our minds alert, flexible, supple enough to see beyond the old, failing paradigms to new, liberating ones.

7 Oct. Jan Tendys "Deeds not Creeds"

Unitarians and Unitarian Universalists have had a reputation throughout their history as people who **do** things. However, as human population soars to the 9 billion mark and climate change, if unchecked, makes life under the equator intolerable (with consequent millions fleeing to more liveable places) is there anything anybody **can** do?

Which NGOs are most useful at this time? What policies should we be asking our governments to pursue? As a small group, could we specialise in letter-writing to fulfil our Unitarian mission?

Ernest Callenbach contd.

This document was found on the computer of the author of Ecotopia after his death, 2012. It was originally published at TomDispatch

The U.S., which has a long history of violent plutocratic rule unknown to the textbook-fed, will stand out as the best-armed Third World country, its population ill-fed, ill-housed, ill-educated, ill-cared for in health, and increasingly poverty-stricken: even Social Security may be whittled down, impoverishing tens of millions of the elderly.

As empires decline, their leaders become increasingly incompetent -- petulant, ignorant, gifted only with PR skills of posturing and spinning, and prone to the appointment of loyal idiots to important government positions. Comedy thrives; indeed writers are hardly needed to invent outrageous events.

We live, then, in a dark time here on our tiny precious planet. Ecological devastation, political and economic collapse, irreconcilable ideological and religious conflict, poverty, famine: the end of the overshoot of cheap-oil-based consumer capitalist expansionism.

If you don't know where you've been, you have small chance of understanding where you might be headed. So let me offer a capsule history for those who, like most of us, got little help from textbook history.

At 82, my life has included a surprisingly substantial slice of American history. In the century or so up until my boyhood in Appalachian central Pennsylvania, the vast majority of Americans subsisted as farmers on the land. Most, like people elsewhere in the world, were poor, barely literate, ill-informed, short-lived. Millions had been slaves. Meanwhile in the cities, vast immigrant armies were mobilized by ruthless and often violent "robber baron" capitalists to build vast industries that made things: steel, railroads, ships, cars, skyscrapers.

Then, when I was in grade school, came World War II. America built the greatest armaments industry the world had ever seen, and when the war ended with most other industrial countries in ruins, we had a run of unprecedented productivity and pros-

perity. Thanks to strong unions and a sympathetic government, this prosperity was widely shared: a huge working middle class evolved -- tens of millions of people could afford (on one wage) a modest house, a car, perhaps sending a child to college. This era peaked around 1973, when wages stagnated, the Vietnam War took a terrible toll in blood and money, and the country began sliding rightward.

In the next epoch, which we are still in and which may be our last as a great nation, capitalists who grew rich and powerful by making things gave way to a new breed: financiers who grasped that you could make even more money by manipulating money. (And by persuading Congress to subsidize them -- the system should have been called Subsidism, not Capitalism.) They had no concern for the productivity of the nation or the welfare of its people; with religious fervor, they believed in maximizing profit as the absolute economic goal. They recognized that, by capturing the government through the election finance system and removing government regulation, they could turn the financial system into a giant casino.

Little by little, they hollowed the country out, until it was helplessly dependent on other nations for almost all its necessities. We had to import significant steel components from China or Japan. We came to pay for our oil imports by exporting food (i.e., our soil). Our media and our educational system withered. Our wars became chronic and endless and stupefyingly expensive. Our diets became suicidal, and our medical system faltered; life expectancies began to fall.

And so we have returned, in a sort of terrible circle, to something like my boyhood years, when President Roosevelt spoke in anger of "one third of a nation ill-housed, ill-fed, ill-clothed." A large and militant contingent of white, mostly elderly, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant right wingers, mortally threatened by their impending minority status and pretending to be liberty-lovers, desperately seek to return us still further back.

Americans like to think of ours as an exceptional country, immune through geographical isolation and some kind of special virtue to the tides of history. Through the distorted lens of our corporate media, we possess only a distorted view of what the country

is really like now. In the next decades, we shall see whether we indeed possess the intelligence, the strength, and the mutual courage to break through to another positive era.

No futurist can foresee the possibilities. As empires decay, their civilian leaderships become increasingly crazed, corrupt, and incompetent, and often the military (which is after all a parasite of the whole nation, and has no independent financial base like the looter class) takes over. Another possible scenario is that if the theocratic red center of the country prevails in Washington, the relatively progressive and prosperous coastal areas will secede in self-defense.

Ecotopia is a novel, and secession was its dominant metaphor: how would a relatively rational part of the country save itself ecologically if it was on its own? As Ecotopia Emerging puts it, Ecotopia aspired to be a beacon for the rest of the world. And so it may prove, in the very, very long run, because the general outlines of Ecotopia are those of any possible future sustainable society.

The "ecology in one country" argument was an echo of an actual early Soviet argument, as to whether "socialism in one country" was possible. In both cases, it now seems to me, the answer must be no. We are now fatally interconnected, in climate change, ocean impoverishment, agricultural soil loss, etc., etc., etc. International consumer capitalism is a self-destroying machine, and as long as it remains the dominant social form, we are headed for catastrophe; indeed, like rafters first entering the "tongue" of a great rapid, we are already embarked on it.

When disasters strike and institutions falter, as at the end of empires, it does not mean that the buildings all fall down and everybody dies. Life goes on, and in particular, the remaining people fashion new institutions that they hope will better ensure their survival.

So I look to a long-term process of "succession," as the biological concept has it, where "disturbances" kill off an ecosystem, but little by little new plants colonize the devastated area, prepare the soil for larger and more complex plants (and the other beings who depend on them), and finally the process achieves a flourishing, resilient, complex

state -- not necessarily what was there before, but durable and richly productive. In a similar way, experiments under way now, all over the world, are exploring how sustainability can in fact be achieved locally. Technically, socially, economically -- since it is quite true, as ecologists know, that everything is connected to everything else, and you can never just do one thing by itself.

Since I wrote Ecotopia, I have become less confident of humans' political ability to act on commonsense, shared values. Our era has become one of spectacular polarization, with folly multiplying on every hand. That is the way empires crumble: they are taken over by looter elites, who sooner or later cause collapse. But then new games become possible, and with luck Ecotopia might be among them.

Humans tend to try to manage things: land, structures, even rivers. We spend enormous amounts of time, energy, and treasure in imposing our will on nature, on preexisting or inherited structures, dreaming of permanent solutions, monuments to our ambitions and dreams. **But in periods of slack, decline, or collapse, our abilities no longer suffice for all this management. We have to let things go.**

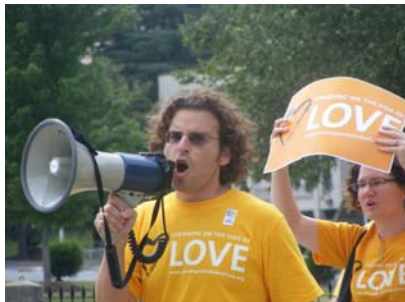
All things "go" somewhere: they evolve, with or without us, into new forms. So as the decades pass, we should try not always to futilely fight these transformations. As the Japanese know, there is much unnoticed beauty in wabi-sabi -- the old, the worn, the tumble-down, those things beginning their transformation into something else. We can embrace this process of devolution: embellish it when strength avails, learn to love it.

There is beauty in weathered and unpainted wood, in orchards overgrown, even in abandoned cars being incorporated into the earth. **Let us learn, like the Forest Service sometimes does, to put unwise or unneeded roads "to bed,"** help a little in the healing of the natural contours, the re-vegetation by native plants. Let us embrace decay, for it is the source of all new life and growth.

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Ernest Callenbach would have undoubtedly admired Jesus as understood by John Dominic Crossan and introduced to us by Eric Stevenson. **See final page re Dom's visit. JT**

## Standing on the Side of Love (UUA)

Standing on the Side of Love is a public advocacy campaign that seeks to harness love's power to stop oppression. It is sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Association and all are welcomed to join.



### Why

This is a time of great hope and possibility, yet our communities are threatened by the increased prevalence of acts motivated by fear and hate.

No one should be dehumanized through acts of exclusion, oppression, or violence because of their identities.

In public debates over immigration, LGBT rights, and more, religious people stand on the side of love and call for respect, inclusion, and compassion.

### How

The Standing on the Side of Love campaign elevates compassionate religious voices to influence public attitudes and public policy.

Through community activism, social networking, and media outreach, people across the nation are equipped to counter fear and make love real in the world

### Transitions

After two fantastic years managing the Standing on the Side of Love campaign, I have made the difficult decision to step down as Campaign Manager. Thank you so much for granting me the privilege to act as a guide on our shared journey.

I cannot convey in mere words how much this campaign has affected me personally and reshaped how I think about my professional advocacy. Every day, I remain in awe of the incredible passion for justice that each and every one of you holds as a guiding principle. I have been so fortunate to work with lovely, dedicated, talented, and fun colleagues at the Unitarian Universalist Association, and to meet equally inspiring people all across the country.

The individuals who brought this cam-

paign to fruition—Rev. Bill Sinkford, Rev. Meg Riley, Adam Gerhardstein, Fred Garcia, Susan Leslie, the Leadership Council at the UUA, and our partners at Fission Strategy infused it with so much heart. It was easy for me to pick up the baton and run with it. And it has been so heartening to see congregations and individuals across the country use this campaign as inspiration, and as a prism, for your advocacy.

New challenges await me. My plans are to return to the world of political & communications consulting and non-profit management—the work I was doing prior to joining the UUA team. I have signed on to work with two great organizations—Justice at Stake, which is committed to an independent judiciary, and Farm Forward, which seeks to reduce farm animal suffering and advance sustainable agriculture. I will also continue officiating weddings, which is one of my great joys in life. This is an ideal time for me to make a change, given my own upcoming wedding Labor Day weekend.

I will step down as campaign manager in mid-August, but will continue to assist my colleagues with the transition to a new campaign manager. Stay tuned for a job description! I'm heartened to know that the next leader of this campaign may be reading this email right now, ready to breathe new vision into this incredible movement.

Thank you for the inspiration, for the partnership...and most importantly, for the love! Peace,

*Dan Furmansky*, CamCampaign Manager  
(Photo credit: Imari Kariotis)

**Contributed by Eric Stevenson**

### **Suggested SOL members letter writing to Federal, State or Council authorities:**

Push for Federal legislation to ensure that all organisations (private, public and government) over say 100 employees, must employ a certain number of disabled persons per 100 employees.

Push for some short term government funded beds for mental health consumers – carers at home are often unable to cope, other sufferers have no one and go to horrid boarding houses.

Support and encourage community gardens – better, fresher food.

**JT**

## **We Have Two Groups in Society** *Contributed by Colin Whatmough*

(This item is mainly an excerpt from an article by Marian Harper in the Melbourne Unitarian Church's magazine, Beacon, October, 2009).

We have the vast majority who are disillusioned, dispirited, disenfranchised. They are not greedy people. They ask only for secure permanent **employment** with good conditions, with union representation on the job. They ask that they have a secure, suitable and affordable **roof** over their head. They ask that their children be **educated** in 21st century buildings, with good teachers and up-to-date facilities and that programs are provided from their **taxes**, not from the inequalities of fundraising and donations.

They ask that their entire **healthcare** needs be met from the public-purse supported by their taxation contributions. They ask that all **services** they need are government controlled and run to ensure access & equity. They ask to be **consulted** about any changes that affect them especially engaging in **war** and that their views are considered and acted upon. They want their **environment** protected and nourished so that the world is left safe for their children and other species.

Now compare their demands with those who control this society.

What do they want?

They want to continue their wasteful **control** of our resources; they want to have the right to determine conditions and wages on the job to maximise their **profits**. They want to continue **wars** because they are profitable. Capitalism is a system based on the demands of a small number compared to the needs of the majority. They want "Business as usual" in a world of increasing population and shrinking resources.

No one can deny this—it is a fact. It is our role as Unitarians to expose the **hypocrisy**, the exploitation, the lies and the undemocratic features of our current society and to suggest alternatives to genuinely meet people's needs, planned for by the people themselves rather than from the influence of rich and powerful lobbyists.

## **Koalas' Habitat Under Threat**

Earlier this year, the Australian government added the koala to the country's list of endangered species. By some counts, only about 100,000 remain in the wild in a country that once boasted a population in the millions. ....

Today .... the koala's biggest threat is urbanization and the loss of habitat along Australia's heavily populated east coast.

"The difficulty is that koalas, by and large, live where we want to live. So there's that competition for space," says Lorraine Vass of Friends of the Koala.



From an NPR article by Stuart Cohen "No space Mate: Koala's Habitat Under Threat". Photo (Wikipedia) shows female koala with baby.

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The Rockefeller Foundation's **Developing Climate Change Resilience Initiative** aims to catalyze attention, funding and action to promote resilience to climate change on several levels. We focus on three pivotal areas: Asian urban environments, African agriculture and US policy. We are creating models for action on climate change in cities—models that can be replicated and expanded in other regions. We are helping adapt African agriculture to cope with environmental changes. And we are promoting awareness and guiding funders and policymakers to support broader action on climate change resilience, nationally and internationally, to help poor and vulnerable people around the world.

Read more : <http://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/what-we-do/current-work/developing-climate-change-resilience/>

See p. 7: CSIRO- resilience, Australia

Ladder of Philosophy

Martin Horlacher

Reaching down into the past
To feel the sunlight of the present
A ladder of philosophy
To make us all wonder

Gods of passion
Gods of wonder
And yet
We are but men

We are but children
Making our way through life
To reach the future
And make it the present

One feels
That if only we could do it all again
We would do it differently
But would we?

Let us make of ourselves
The best we can be
Through a ladder of philosophy
Reaching every which way

Striving, starving, hungry for knowledge
That which boils the blood
A poem of longing and searching
We need not yield

We need not yield
To the derision of others
The contempt of those who would say
There is no point

Reaching down, and reaching up
Reaching side to side
To grasp that which makes us so
To feel, and taste, to strive to know

Such knowledge, such searching
Is what makes us free
To find our own philosophy
A journey that we undertake together

From the days of old
When the sages roar
And the poets strive to find out
What drives us all

Although we try to analyse
And try to grasp
That knowledge, just out of our reach
Tantalising, yet devoted to the search for truth

Upon what soil shall we place our foundations?
Within which loam shall we sow our seed?

The sunlight, through the trees
May feed our longing

May quench our thirst
May rejuvenate us in our hour of need
So that our search for truth
May never end

That our search for truth
Is what defines us
In logic, epistemology, faith in words
Like skin to skin, and hand in hand

Like crawling in the sand
Like trudging through the mud and dirt
Where we have laid the foundations for tomorrow
And for today

Let there be no end to the scope of knowledge
Where one man's treasure is another's trash
The questions that have plagued us all this time
The answers that define us, you and I

For we are what we choose to be
Even though so much has been chosen for us
Let us strive to find a way
To make tomorrow into today

The questions and the answers
That haunt us, now and then
Though bones may break and skin may split
Though questions may remain

Let the search for knowledge be a ladder of philosophy
And may we make it what defines us
For today, because there is only today
To make of ourselves what must and can be

Let us ponder the questions, and find the answers
Let us strive to climb that ladder
For it reaches from yesterday, into tomorrow
And makes tomorrow, today.



CSIRO: Long term prosperity needs “resilience” not just efficiency

Current approaches to sustainable natural resource management are failing us, according to “Resilience Thinking” – a new book by CSIRO scientist Dr. Brian Walker and science writer David Salt.



Dr Brian Walker (left) and co-author David Salt. (Photo CSIRO)

Dr Walker, an international leader in the field of resilience research and one of Australia’s most highly published ecologists, calls for land managers and planners to drastically change their approach to the way our landscapes and natural resources are managed.

The key to sustainability lies in enhancing the resilience of communities, not in optimising isolated parts of the system.

The book argues that local communities are better able to withstand various cycles of change if they know more about the ecological drivers of their region, embrace rather than control the processes of natural change, and are empowered to make their own decisions about appropriate local developments.

Dr Walker says land managers and planners need to look beyond control, intensification and greater efficiency for sustainability solutions.

“Increasingly, cracks are appearing in the capacity of communities, ecosystems and landscapes to provide the goods and services that sustain our planet’s wellbeing,” Dr Walker says.

“Resilience explains why greater efficiency by itself can not solve resource problems, and offers a constructive alternative that opens up options.”

“Resilience Thinking”, co-written by science writer David Salt, is an accessible introduction to the emerging paradigm of resilience – the ability of a system to absorb change and still retain its basic function and structure.

Dr Walker says that while the world’s human population doubled between 1960

and 2000, an alarming toll is being taken on the global resource base required to feed, clothe and house a growing population.

“To meet this demand, food production increased by two and a half times, water use doubled, wood harvests tripled,” Dr Walker says. “Global grain production will need to increase by 40 per cent to meet demand in 2020.”

“We live in a time of growing population coupled with declining resource bases and uncertainty about a range of environmental issues, including climate change. How can we make the systems that we depend upon resilient?”

“Resilience Thinking” looks at five case studies of changing structures or ecosystems – The Everglades in Florida, the Goulburn-Broken Catchment, the coral reefs of the Caribbean, the Northern Highland Lakes District of Wisconsin and Sweden’s Kristianstad Water Vattenrike.

CSIRO promise that the 2006 book is an accessible introduction to the emerging paradigm of resilience – the ability of a system to absorb change and still retain its basic function and structure.

<http://www.csiro.au/en/Organisation-Structure/Divisions/Ecosystem-Sciences/Long-term-prosperity-needs-resilience-not-just-efficiency.aspx>

~~~~~ Let’s have a smile

As you get older three things happen. The first is your memory goes, and I can’t remember the other two. Sir Norman Wisdom

One of the most difficult things in the world is to convince a woman that even a bargain costs money. Edgar Watson Howe

Women now have choices. They can be married, not married, have a job, not have a job, be married with children, unmarried with children. Men have the same choice we’ve always had: work or prison. Tim Allen

I’m not afraid to die. I just don’t want to be there when it happens. Woody Allen

In life, it’s not who you know that’s important, it’s how your wife found out. Joey Adams

Contributed by Arthur de Munitiz

Professor JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN's Visit to Sydney

John Dominic Crossan is a renowned international progressive biblical scholar.

Nine Lecture series delivered over three days, 4 September to 6 September 2012, 10.30am to 4.30pm. Venue: Pitt St. Uniting Church, 264 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW.

"THE POWER OF PARABLE: HOW FICTION BY JESUS BECAME FICTION ABOUT JESUS".
September 4.

Theme 1: Biblical Traditions and Jesus' Parable

Lecture 1: Riddle Parables and Mark 4.

Lecture 2: Example Parables and Luke 15.

Lecture 3: Challenge Parables and Divine Transcendence.

2. September 5.

Theme 2. Jesus' Parables and God's Kingdom

Lecture 1: The Good Samaritan as Challenge Parable

Lecture 2: Hearing Parables with Galilean Peasant Ears

Lecture 3: The Parable-Medium is the Kingdom-Message

3. September 6.

Theme 3: God's Kingdom in Gospel Mega-Parables

Lecture 1: Mark and Matthew: Challenge and Attack

Lecture 2: Luke-Acts: Rome as the New Jerusalem

Lecture 3: John: God's Dream for the World

1 Day of Lectures \$60 Evening Lecture only \$30 All Lectures \$185

(concessions for Theology students)

A major Public Address exploring a Christian theology of the Bible, 7.00pm on September 7, 2012.
Venue: Pitt St. Uniting Church, 264 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW.

"IS GOD VIOLENT? HOW TO READ THE CHRISTIAN BIBLE AND STILL BE A CHRISTIAN"

How to lodge your Registration for this 'not-to-be-missed' Event:

Via Internet: Go to www.commondreams.org.au click on the John Dominic Crossan tab and follow the links for all details about the seminar, the times, subjects covered and costs.

Via post: Complete a Registration form (Eric Stevenson) and forward to: Common Dreams Common Dreams – Crossan, Pitt St Uniting Church, 264 Pitt St, Sydney, NSW, 2000. Make cheques payable to: Common Dreams - Crossan. **You are encouraged to bring a cushion for added comfort.**

Would you care to join Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship? 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 **0466 940 461** or consult our website sydneyunitarians.org . Please note that all membership applications are subject to approval at a meeting of the Committee.

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 ***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. **SOL contact 0466 940 461**