



Schedule of Services

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

3 April. Martin Horlacher "The Good Life"

Australian author and philosopher Hugh Mackay has spent his entire working life asking others about their values, motivations, ambitions, hopes and fears. In his new book, "The Good Life", he examines what he feels makes a life worth living - and this talk will examine the conclusions he draws.

10 April. Carolyn Donnelly. "What's the use of Dr Seuss?"

Turning the pages and focusing on the concepts, principles and purposes of his children's books, and his association with Unitarian Universalists, during Theodur (Ted) Suess Geisel's lifetime.

17 April. Lyn Macpherson - guest speaker

24 April. Anzac weekend. No service.

~~~~~

### **A letter to Mr Baird re the teaching of Ethics in schools.**

18-02-16

Dear Mr Baird,

I write to you advocating two important issues -

1. that parents be given a straight choice on the application form re their children taking religious instruction or instruction in ethics in public schools on an equal basis.
2. that a compulsory ethics curriculum be developed for all schools both public and private.

I write this letter as a practising Christian throughout my life; yet I am disgusted with church opposition to ethics instruction in schools. I have to accept as a reality that Christian

**Continued p. 8**

**Book Review:  
"FREDA - A biography of Freda Whitlam"  
by Noelene Martin, 2008**

**Barbara O'Brien**

I have to confess that I am and always have been an avid admirer of Gough Whitlam. To be able to read a book about his sister was something I looked forward to.

It was an average read. While it was tempting to compare Freda Whitlam's achievements with those of her brother, it soon became apparent that Freda was her own woman.

It is the story of a normal, happy, privileged, middle class girl. Taking into consideration the attitudes of the day towards gender difference, I thought Freda received much the same opportunities as Gough who was to become the Prime Minister of Australia. She chose a different path. Nevertheless she reached the top of her chosen field in several different areas. These included teaching, in which she became Principal of a prestige private school, and religion, in which she was elected Moderator of the NSW Synod of the Uniting Church. In each of these areas she left her mark.

Freda was not a planner. Her philosophy was that God would let her know if He wanted her to do something. She drifted into teaching after gaining her degree. It was three years before she decided to study for her Dip. Ed. which she passed with honours. Her father was not happy with her choice of teaching and suggested she enrol at Yale University and study Educational Practice there. This she did and graduated from Yale in 1955.

She joined an evangelistic camp in the Pyrenees and on the suggestion of a friend took off to France where she would act as a missionary to the largely Catholic villages. Back in Australia she pursued her teaching career in several private schools and upon retirement accepted nomination for the position of church moderator.

**Noelene Martin is to be commended for what I consider is a faithful portrayal of a successful Australian woman.**

Footnote:

Since writing the above review I have met a very close friend of Freda. I was able to get an update on her present circumstances. She is now in her late 90's in a Nursing Home at Penrith. Freda had not read her biography until about two years ago at which time she retired to bed and proceeded to read it and correct any "mistakes" she found !! Her friends who visit her often realise that she has not much longer to live - maybe only weeks or days. I was sorry to learn that the author Noeline, who was also a close friend died tragically and prematurely while touring in Europe.

Barbara

~~~~~

The Seniors—bless 'em.

**Pamper the body. Prod the soul.
Accept limitations, but play the role.
Withdraw from the front
But stay in the fight.
Avoid isolation, stay in sight.
Beware of reminiscing, except to a child.
To forget proper names be reconciled.
Refrain from loquacity,
be crisp & concise
And regard self-pity as a cardinal vice.**

(Written by a 90 year old for her 70 year old friend who worried about growing old)

Contributed by Geoff Usher.

~~~~~

**No comment.**

**"Do you HAVE to walk around in just underwear, dad?"**

**I will if I want. Now get me a beer, son.**

**"What aisle?"**

**Do I LOOK like I work here?**

## Human Rights covenants should cover all people.

*(Part of an article in the “The Conversation” series)*

When Austrian singer Conchita Wurst headlined the Mardi Gras afterparty on Saturday night it seemed as though all of Sydney was celebrating. Yet Wurst’s message of “respect and tolerance” continues to be controversial.

Wurst won the 2014 Eurovision Song Contest in the wake of Russia’s annexation of Crimea. Her victory became a cultural flashpoint. While Russians booed her performance, crowds in Copenhagen jeered the Russian contestants. Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin tweeted that Eurovision:

... showed supporters of European integration their European future: a bearded girl.

Under President Vladimir Putin, Russia has sought to establish leadership of the non-Western world by defending “universal traditional values” against permissiveness and immorality. Putin has criminalised LGBT propaganda, turned a blind eye to vigilante attacks and supported international campaigns against sexual rights.

Advocates of “traditional values” are also mobilising in Australia. Former prime minister Tony Abbott recently called for the Safe Schools Coalition, an anti-bullying initiative focused on LGBTI youth, to be defunded.

Meanwhile, the Australian Christian Lobby has requested an “override” of anti-discrimination laws ahead of a coming plebiscite on whether Australia should legalise same-sex marriage. Although public support for same-sex marriage is stronger than ever, the plebiscite debate promises to be ugly.

Across the Timor Sea, another homophobic campaign is brewing. Indonesia has never criminalised homosexuality – excepting Aceh – and sexuality has rarely been prominent in public debate. However, public opinion is very negative. And there is a history of anti-

queer violence by radical Islamic youth groups.

Recent political interventions have targeted university counselling services and even banned same-sex emoticons. At least in the short term, this debate risks creating new dangers.

As more countries embrace formal equality, there is a countervailing trend. A slew of countries – such as Malawi, Nigeria and Brunei – have either extended legal penalties on homosexual acts or passed laws prohibiting the promotion of homosexuality.

Why the growing controversy?

In our new book, Queer Wars, we ask why – as sexual and gender diversity has become more visible globally – have reactions become polarised?

Polity

In the 1960s and 1970s the gay liberation movement challenged the dominant homophobic culture. The feminist movement began to connect women’s sexual freedom to human rights. In many countries the AIDS epidemic opened up possibilities for queer activism. International human rights law began to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Each of these developments faced fierce resistance.

US President Barack Obama’s inauguration in 2009 gave conflict over sexuality a new global dimension. During the Bush administration, South American and European countries were the most prominent advocates of sexual freedom. But America’s advocacy of “LGBTI rights” under Obama allowed opposition to be portrayed as resistance to Western neocolonialism and immorality.

Internationally, Russia and the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (made up of 57 countries) have led this resistance. However, political homophobia is an increasingly common strategy for authoritarian leaders everywhere.

The irony is most homophobic laws are a legacy of colonial legal systems. And defenders

of “traditional values” typically deny the various forms of sexual and gender diversity in their own cultures.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights never mentions sexual orientation. However, evolving interpretations mean human rights covenants now cover all people, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

A narrow majority of countries (including Australia) now support this view. However, opponents maintain that human rights must reflect traditional values – and that they have never consented to sexuality rights.....

.....

Western leaders and activists should show humility and allow local organisations to guide them if they wish to be effective. Human rights agreements can help protect people from prosecution and victimisation. However, utilising the standard mechanisms of international human rights practice is likely to be more productive than Western leaders’ public moralising.

Offering refuge to those fleeing persecution is perhaps the most obvious way to help. During the Cold War the West offered refuge to Soviet dissidents. Today, guarantees of refuge might give confidence to queer dissidents in Putin’s Russia and other authoritarian countries.

Instead, Australia holds refugees in indefinite detention on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea – a country where homosexuality is criminalised. Recent reports detail the harassment and violent attacks gay refugees face on Nauru. For Australians seeking ways to intervene in the global debate on sexual rights, there may be no better place to start.

#### Authors

Jonathan Symons

Senior Lecturer in International Relations, Macquarie University

Dennis Altman

Professorial Fellow in Human Security, La Trobe University

Read the whole article

**“Queer wars: the best place to start promoting gay rights is at home”:**

<https://theconversation.com/queer-wars-the-best-place-to-start-promoting-gay-rights-is-at-home-55747>

**More about the Symons and Altman book.**



The claim that LGBT rights are human rights encounters fierce opposition in many parts of the world, as governments and religious leaders have used resistance to LGBT rights to cast themselves as defenders of traditional values against neo-colonial interference and western decadence.

Queer Wars explores the growing international polarization over sexual rights, and the creative responses from social movements and activists, some of whom face murder, imprisonment or rape because of their perceived sexuality or gender expression.

This book asks why sexuality and gender identity have become so vexed an issue between and within nations, and how we can best advocate for change.

~~~~~

Fascism is about the most powerful epithet one can use

(Part of an article in the magazine Slate)

In an interview with Slate, the historian of fascism Robert Paxton warns against describing Donald Trump as fascist because “it’s almost the most powerful epithet you can use.” But in this case, the shoe fits. And here is why.

Like Mussolini, Trump rails against intruders (Mexicans) and enemies (Muslims), mocks those perceived as weak, encourages a violent reckoning with those his followers perceive as the enemy within (the roughing up of protesters at his rallies), flouts the rules of civil political discourse (the Megyn Kelly menstruation spat), and promises to restore the nation to its greatness not by a series of policies, but by the force of his own personality (“I will be great for” fill in the blank).

To quote Paxton again, this time from his seminal “The Anatomy of Fascism”: “Fascist leaders made no secret of having no program.” This explains why Trump supporters are not bothered by his ideological malleability and policy contradictions: He was pro-choice before he was pro-life; donated to politicians while now he rails against that practice; married three times and now embraces evangelical Christianity; is the embodiment of capitalism and yet promises to crack down on free trade. In the words of the Italian writer Umberto Eco, fascism was “a beehive of contradictions.” It bears noting that Mussolini was a socialist unionizer before becoming a fascist union buster, a journalist before cracking down on free press, a republican before becoming a monarchist.

Like Mussolini, Trump is dismissive of democratic institutions. He selfishly guards his image of a self-made outsider who will “dismantle the establishment” in the words of one of his supporters. That this includes cracking down on a free press by toughening libel laws, engaging in the ethnic cleansing of 11 million people (“illegals”), stripping away citizenship of those seen as illegitimate members of the nation (children of the “illegals”), and committing war

crimes in the protection of the nation (killing the families of suspected terrorists) only enhances his stature among his supporters. The discrepancy between their love of America and these brutal and undemocratic methods does not bother them one iota. To borrow from Paxton again: “Fascism was an affair of the gut more than of the brain.” For Trump and his supporters, the struggle against “political correctness” in all its forms is more important than the fine print of the Constitution.

To be fair, there are many differences between Italian Fascism of interwar Europe and Trumpism of (soon to be) post-Obama America. For one, Mussolini was better read and more articulate than Trump. Starting out as a schoolteacher, the Italian Fascist read voraciously and was heavily influenced by the German and French philosophers Friedrich Nietzsche and Jean-Marie Guyau, respectively. I doubt Trump would know who either of these two people were. According to the Boston Globe, Trump speaks at the level of a fourth grader.

There are other more consequential differences, of course: the interwar Italy was a much bigger mess than the USA is today; the democratic institutions of this country are certainly more resilient and durable than those of the young unstable post-World War I Italy; the economy, both U.S. and worldwide, is not in the apocalyptic state it was in the interwar period; and the demographics of the USA mitigate against the election of a racist demagogue. So, Trump’s blackshirts are not marching on Washington, yet.

Also, as a historian I have learned to beware of historical analogies and generally eschew them whenever I can, particularly when it comes to an ideology that during World War II caused the deaths of 60 million human beings. The oversaturation of our discourse with Hitler comparisons is not only exasperating for any historian, but is offensive to the memory of Hitler’s many victims most notably the six million Jews his regime murdered in cold blood.

Finally, rather than explaining it, historical analogies often distort the present, some-

times with devastating consequences. The example that comes to mind is the Saddam-is-like-Hitler analogy many in the George W. Bush administration used to justify the U.S. invasion of Iraq, which was an unmitigated disaster. The overuse, or misuse, of a historical analogy can also make policy makers more hesitant to act with equally disastrous consequences: the prime examples are Bosnia and Rwanda in the 1990s when the West attributed their inaction to stop the slaughter in each country by arguing that these massacres were “not like the Holocaust.”

Thus, for a historical analogy to be useful to us, it has to advance our understanding of the present. And the Trumpism-Fascism axis (pun intended) does this in three ways: it explains the origins of Trump the demagogue; it enables us to read the Trump rally as a phenomenon in its own right; and it allows those of us who are unequivocally opposed to hate, bigotry, and intolerance, to rally around an alternative, equally historical, program: anti-fascism.

Author: **Fedja Buric**, historian

Read the whole article: **Trump’s not Hitler, he’s Mussolini: How GOP anti-intellectualism created a modern fascist movement in America**

http://www.salon.com/2016/03/11/trumps_not_hitler_hes_mussolini_how_gop_anti_intellectualism_created_a_modern_fascist_movement_in_america/

See also <http://godwinslawyer.com/>

So too the American illiberal coalition is not just the racist bigot who hates Muslims. It’s the salesman who does not understand the first thing about the constitution, does not value it, and thinks a more business-like approach would be better; it’s the blue collar worker who thinks there are too many east coast elites in DC and doesn’t trust government. Maybe, too, it’s the computer engineer that thinks we would be better managed by algorithms and regressions.

My point in all of this is that illiberal coalitions are made up of both those who hate democracy and those who have ceased to value it. The catastrophic stereotype sees only the former and ignores the easy-to-miss rise of the latter.

When people compare Trump to Hitler, I think they instinctively understand that he won’t start a holocaust. They mean that democracy is weak and that Trump is a sign of the sort of illiberalism that made Hitler possible.

(From the site **Godwin’s Lawyer**. No author given)

More on this topic at a later date.

~~~~~  
**The Animals**

**I think I could turn and live with animals,  
they are so placid and  
self-contain'd,**

**I stand and look at them long and long.**

**They do not sweat and whine about their  
condition,**

**They do not lie awake in the dark and  
weep for their sins,**

**They do not make me sick discussing  
their duty to God,**

**Not one is dissatisfied, not one is de-  
mented with the mania of owning things,**

**Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind  
that lived thousands of years ago,**

**Not one is respectable or unhappy\* over  
the whole earth.**

**~ Walt Whitman ~**

**(Song of Myself, #32)**

(\* not exactly accurate eg caged bears kept for harvesting their bile for “medicines” are hardly happy, but we know what the poet means. JT)

## **We and They**

**FATHER, Mother, and Me  
Sister and Auntie say  
All the people like us are We,  
And every one else is They.  
And They live over the sea,  
While We live over the way,  
But - would you believe it? - They look  
upon We  
As only a sort of They !**

**We eat pork and beef  
With cow-horn-handled knives.  
They who gobble  
Their rice off a leaf,  
Are horrified out of Their lives;  
And They who live up a tree,  
And feast on grubs and clay,  
(Isn't it scandalous?) look upon We  
As a simply disgusting They!**

**We shoot birds with a gun.  
They stick lions with spears.  
Their full-dress is un-.  
We dress up to Our ears.  
They like Their friends for tea.  
We like Our friends to stay;  
And, after all that, They look upon We  
As an utterly ignorant They!**

**We eat kitcheny food.  
We have doors that latch.  
They drink milk or blood,  
Under an open thatch.  
We have Doctors to fee.  
They have Wizards to pay.  
And (impudent heathen!) They look upon  
We  
As a quite impossible They!**

**All good people agree,  
And all good people say,  
All nice people, like Us, are We  
And every one else is They:  
But if you cross over the sea,  
Instead of over the way,  
You may end by (think of it!)  
looking on We  
As only a sort of They !**

*Rudyard Kipling.*

*Contributed by Ginna Hastings*



**Lt. Richard Alexander "Dick" Henderson  
using a donkey to carry a wounded  
soldier at the [Battle of Gallipoli](#).  
(Wikipedia)**

**Love does that.**

**All day long a little burro labours, some-  
times  
with heavy loads on her back and some-  
times just with worries  
about things that bother only  
burros.**

**And worries, as we know, can be more  
exhausting  
than physical labour.**

**Once in a while a kind monk comes  
to her stable and brings  
a pear, but more  
than that,**

**he looks into the burro's eyes and  
touches her ears**

**and for a few seconds the burro is free  
and even seems to laugh,**

**because love does  
that.**

**Love Frees.**

**~ Meister Eckhart ~**

## **A Letter...Continued from p.1**

attendance at churches is now only less than 10% of the Australian population and this is based on attendance of only monthly. So sadly, the majority of Australian children are missing out on good Judeo-Christian ethical teachings.

As a result our Australian society is left with somewhat of a void re structured ethical teachings for our children and youth apart from that taught or not taught in the home.

So there exists a great and vital need for the teachings of ethics in order for children, youth and eventually adults to understand and positively interact with our complex, perplexing and insecure world.

For example, we live in a world where only the top 1% of the population in 2016 now own 50% of the world's wealth and this is increasing—re Oxfam research! Closer to home—the OECD ranked Australia in the bottom 25% for assaults—making Australia a violent country! Our media informs us each day of the continued drug and alcohol problems experienced especially by our youth and the continued scourge of domestic violence in our society.

The solution to such problems as the above can only come from within each individual. We can only achieve a peaceful society, committed to the Common Good, through creating a just society—and a just society only through sound ethical teachings—based on good religious teachings and /or structured, developmental ethics teachings.

The importance of ethics is highlighted by the compulsory ethics intervention given to our armed forces as an important and necessary prerequisite before going into combat zones.

This to me highlights the importance of courses in ethics in all our schools as a necessary prerequisite for a satisfying and meaningful life and a just society.

Yours sincerely,  
**Colin Whatmore**

### **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.sydneynunitarians.org](http://www.sydneynunitarians.org) . Please note that all membership applications are subject to approval at a meeting of the Committee. Ask Rev. Geoff Usher or Ginna Hastings for an application form at the Sunday service.

***If you have a news item or written article you believe would be of interest to the congregation, we invite you to submit it for Esprit.***

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

***Do you have a topic of a spiritual / ethical nature that you would like to share with the congregation?*** As Unitarians, we support an "Open Pulpit" and invite members of the congregation to lead the service if they so wish. *Please see Caz Donnelly at the Sunday service*

**Fellowship contact 0466 940 461**