



**Spirit of Life** Unitarian Fellowship

Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre  
16-18 Fitzroy Street, Kirribilli  
(near Milsons Point Station)

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## Schedule of Services

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

**2 February**                      **Jan Tendys**                      **“How I became a Patriot.”**

For my generation of lefties “patriotism” was a suspect word. Over my lifetime, I have become a rather fierce patriot—but still able to see the difference between Australia’s cultural ideals and our actual performance. **(Originally intended for Australia Day, some of my personal thoughts are included in this issue of Esprit, so this will be mainly a discussion of extra materials).**

**9 Feb.**                              **Morandir Armson**                      **“A Mere Bagatelle”**

On the 12th of February 1692, a massacre took place took place in Glen Coe, in the Highlands of Scotland. This incident, referred to in Gaelic as the 'Mort Ghlinne', was efficiently planned, and carried out with cold and mechanical skill. What allows human beings to carry out such fearful acts? How is planned mass-murder even possible? What does this say about the human moral framework? This talk will examine this subject and seek to find answers to this most horrible question.

**16 Feb.**                              **Rev. Geoff Usher**                      **“Memorial Service for Arthur de Munitiz”**

Arthur was a Unitarian in the tradition of valuing Reason, Freedom and Tolerance in religion and in life. Like Thomas Paine, his religion was in doing good.

**23 Feb.**    **Rev. Dr Ian Ellis-Jones**    **‘Fairy Tales and their Inner Meanings’ [Part 2]**

Most fairy tales are not about 'fairies' at all, but are mythological in nature. Their 'inner' meaning is cloaked in allegory, parable and symbolism. In this talk Ian will discuss the fairy tales known as 'Jack and the Beanstalk', 'Hansel and Gretel', 'The Sleeping Beauty', and 'Little Red Riding Hood', drawing out some of the 'lessons' we can learn from them and apply in our daily lives. (This is Part 2 of a two-part series.)

**2 March**                      **Dr Max Lawson**                      **“Elizabeth Gaskell and Unitarianism.”**

Prolific Victorian author Elizabeth Gaskell (today best known for her novels Cranford (1853) and North and South (1855) was the wife of a prominent Unitarian minister who encouraged the writing of his wife’s “social protest” novels. This legacy and the continuing implications for Unitarian Universalism are explored.

# Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)

Peter Berry

Thoreau was a leading 19th century American Unitarian. Author, poet, philosopher, naturalist, surveyor and transcendentalist.

He is remembered for his *attacks* on social institutions which he regarded as immoral, especially slavery in America, as well as for his *faith* in the religious significance of nature. His essay "Civil disobedience" is his most famous social protest. From it came his well-known lines, "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, it is perhaps because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music he hears, however measured or far away." Thoreau raised issues of personal conscience, peace and war, justice and injustice. Which of us has at times heard a different drummer?

Henry Thoreau was an abolitionist, strongly opposed to negro slavery. He was active in support of John Brown, another vigorous abolitionist, who was martyred for his beliefs. Thoreau called for an end to slavery in his essay Slavery in Massachusetts (1854).

His strongly expressed social conscience influenced Leo Tolstoy of Russia, Mahatma Gandhi of India and Martin Luther King Jr. in his civil rights campaigns. And *all three men* openly acknowledged their debt to Thoreau.

He has been accused by some of being an anarchist, but his essay "Civil Disobedience" appeals to call for *improving government* rather than *abolishing it*. "I ask for, not at once *no* government, but at once *better* government." (From Civil Disobedience.)

His books, essays, articles, journals and poetry total over 20 volumes. Only two of his *books* were published *in his lifetime*: Walden (1854) and A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers (1849)

His writing on natural history, especially in "Walden" (Life in the woods) anticipated the findings of ecology and environmentalism. He was interested in survival in the face of hostile elements. He advocated abandoning waste and illusion, in order to discover life's true essential needs.

**Early Life and Education (1817– 1837):** He was born in Concord, Massachusetts (N\_E coast of USA). He studied at Harvard college between 1835 and 1837, where he took courses in rhetoric, classics, philosophy, mathematics and science.

On graduation, he returned home to Concord, where he met Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson took a paternal interest in Thoreau, introducing him to a circle of writers and friends, including Bronson Alcott, Ellery Channing and Margaret Fuller, all Unitarians. Emerson encouraged him to contribute to a quarterly periodical, The Dial, which included some of Thoreau's passages from his own journal, which he had begun at Erasmus's suggestion, in 1837.

In 1845 Thoreau moved to the shore of Walden Pond, near Concord, and then lived there for over two years. Walden (1854) records Thoreau's observations, telling how he built his own house, how he lived, paid his bills and welcomed some of his friends as visitors, while living a largely vegetarian existence.

Thoreau insisted that his trip to Walden Pond was an experiment in simple living, not an idle withdrawal from society. He wrote "the mass of men live lives of quiet desperation." And he appealed to all men to economise, to simplify their lives and thus to save the time and energy that would allow them "live deep and suck out all the marrow of life" (John Glendenning).

I have touched on **Transcendentalism** a little earlier. It was a philosophy that became influential during the late 1700s and 1800s. It was based on the belief that knowledge *is not solely derived from* experience and observation. But Transcendentalism also stated that the solution to human problems lies in the *free development of human emotions*. It was Ralph Waldo Emerson who primarily influenced Thoreau and the Unitarian leader Theodore Parker towards Transcendentalism.

**My own interest in Thoreau** began in the 1990s, in the Chester Street Uniting Church, Epping. During this time I met Maynard Davies and his wife, Ruth, who had long been Congregationalists in Victorian churches. Maynard was not an ordained minister, but his father, Ernest, was, along with being a long-time reader and admirer of Thoreau.

I became good friends with Maynard and Ruth at the Epping church, and through some visits to their home in Beecroft, which was highlighted by a beautiful garden, and named “Walden” after Thoreau’s famous book (1854).

**Other background:** I have been privileged to read Maynard’s autobiography, [Beyond My Grasp](#) (1978) In it he paints a colourful picture of the churches in Victoria and to some extent in NSW but not without some searching criticism of them, and of church schools, including Wesley College, Melbourne. But my lasting memory of his book is the deep sadness of Maynard and Ruth in the loss to illness of all three of their children.

In NSW, Maynard and Ruth were active in churches at Homebush, Cheltenham and Epping.

He was President of the Congregational Union of Australia, 1962—1964; foundation editor of the [Australian Congregationalist](#) in 1968, continuing in that position until 1973. From 1958 to 1972 he served on the joint Commission of Church Union which drew up the Basis of union to establish the uniting Church of Australia. He was able to combine these functions with a business career. He lived in retirement with his wife, Ruth, in Beecroft, NSW, until his death

## **Bibliography**

World Book Encyclopedia vol. T and volume M (Massachusetts):**THOREAU**

[Wikipedia: THOREAU](#)

[Beyond My Grasp](#), Maynard Davies, 1987 :**MAYNARD DAVIES.**



(From <http://thelastcongregationalists.blogspot.com.au/2010/05/women-in-congregationalism.html> [The Last Congregationalists](#). “Maynard Davies in [Beyond My Grasp](#) noted that when a discussion was held about women attending Assemblies as delegates, Rev W. F. Cox stated that he “had no objection to women attending the meetings of the delegates as he did not think the sisters would ever attend in such numbers as to interfere with the business.” But this was in 1893, and things for women have improved since then... “(Dr Gwynith Young)

For US connections between Unitarianism and Congregationalism see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congregational\\_church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congregational_church) (**Added by Jan Tendys**)

## Latest Kiva loan in which our Fellowship is participating

Our loan to Shagufta's Group from Pakistan is repaid in full. Here are details about our new Kiva loan:

Rda is a hardworking Iraqi client who is 42 years old, married and has 4 children. He and his eldest child provide the family income together, while the rest continue their studies.

Rda owns a workplace where he sterilizes and distributes fresh water in his neighbourhood. He established his business in 2007 and has gained his experience in this field from his brother, who runs a similar business in another city. Rda is well-known in the neighbourhood with an excellent reputation.

He is requesting a loan of 3,000 USD in order to pay the annual rent on his shop and to buy a big water tank to increase his production. Rda is aiming to grow his business and increase his profits so he can provide a better income for his family and take care of their needs.

In July 2003 Kiva partner CHF piloted the first microfinance program in Iraq, Access to Credit Services Initiative (ACSI) to address the demand for credit from micro and small businesses and home owners. Since that time it has grown into the largest Micro-Finance Institution in the country, covering over more than 65% of Iraq's geographical area (as of December 2011).

ACSI's mission is to contribute to the overall economic revitalization of Iraq by helping male and female business owners and home owners to strengthen and expand their businesses, stabilize their income, and improve their habitat & quality of life; which is consistent with CHF International's mission to improve the housing and economic circumstances, and environments of low and moderate income communities around the world.

Kiva's partners sometimes have to charge high rates of interest due to lack of infrastructure in some countries, but Kiva itself does not add to that.

## Some thoughts on patriotism

Jan Tendys

Before living overseas I was only a lukewarm Australian patriot. Generally speaking, I regarded patriotism as **the last refuge of the scoundrel** because I did not clearly distinguish between nationalism and patriotism.

In two of the classes I taught in my first three years of high school teaching, I used the poetry of Rupert Brooke and Wilfred Owen, with their contrasting attitudes towards World War 1, as a lead in to a debate on the value of patriotism. In the classroom discussions which followed I noticed that the girls were inclined to be influenced by Owen - who felt that whatever the Great War accomplished, it did not justify the deaths (usually horrible) of so many - whereas the boys were inclined to stick to the more traditional ideas of Brooke. *Hopefully, I convinced all of them that conscientious objectors were not to be despised*, whether they were objecting to all wars or a particular war. Those boys were part of the generation that were subject to conscription for the Vietnam War.

I was inclined to be a universalist in my loyalties, that is, I felt we should think in terms of *what was needful for humanity as a whole*, not just what suited our own position or our country's position. An elderly relative told me severely one day that everyone should take care of their own backyard (I think she thought I did too much taking part in causes and not enough housework). Tartyly I replied that most people in the world didn't have backyards so there was no point in telling them to take care of their own backyards. A flummoxing answer, but not one that convinced her.

Living in the US for two years and then living in the UK for two years made me discover my latent patriotism. Somewhere along the line I came across George Orwell's distinction between **patriotism and nationalism**:

"Nationalism is not to be confused with patriotism. Both words are normally used in so vague a way that any definition is liable to be challenged, but one must draw a distinction between them, since two different and even opposing

ideas are involved. By 'patriotism' I mean devotion to a particular place and a particular way of life, which one believes to be the best in the world but has no wish to force on other people. Patriotism is of its nature defensive, both militarily and culturally. Nationalism, on the other hand, is inseparable from the desire for power. The abiding purpose of every nationalist is to secure more power and more prestige, not for himself but for the nation or other unit in which he has chosen to sink his own individuality."

The sentiment of patriotism can be deepened if you actually approve - at least in general - of the values that underlie the laws and institutions of your country. Something more profound than Don Bradman's batting average is involved I need to add.

**The war in Afghanistan** has been a real test of my patriotic feelings. Initially, I certainly didn't think any Australian ideals required us to go into that country which had defied the British and Russian attempts to subdue it. Al Qaeda would have to be defeated some other way. But we went in, along with the US and other countries, and many Afghan people placed their trust in our continuing commitment. We learned more about just how bad the situation of women had been under the Taliban. Unless my country's ideal of *the equality of women* was just so much talk, didn't we have to put our armed force where our mouth was? Or should we just have been looking after our own backyard?

I assume the young men and women of our armed services share that ideal of female equality (although it seems to be a struggle to realise it within their own ranks). *Democracy* is another ideal we have "sold" to the Afghan people. Hopefully these western concerns actually resonate with the bulk of the Afghans and will inspire them to continue the fight against the Taliban as we westerners withdraw. Hopefully we haven't just set Afghanistan up for the worst civil war of their history.

The question of patriotism and the question of war seem to go hand in hand unless you relegate patriotism to just a sentiment about countryside & folkways. Whether life was meant to be easy or not, it certainly isn't.

Absorbing the old wisdom of **not biting the hand that feeds you** was part of my journey towards a greater willingness to call myself a patriot. Over the years I've been expensive for Australia's Medicare since I've had lots of nuisance illnesses (not life threatening ones on the whole). It is after all the Australian taxpayer to whom I owe such care.

Of course one could also argue that we all owe a debt of gratitude to the United Nations - just think of the work of the World Health Organisation alone. That's true. It is also a reminder of our Fellowship's aspiration as expressed in our 6th Principle: **The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.**

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Of what use the friendliest disposition even, if there are no hours given to Friendship, if it is forever postponed to unimportant duties and relations? Friendship first, Friendship last.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU, Friendship  
[http://www.notable-quotes.com/t/thoreau\\_henry\\_david.html](http://www.notable-quotes.com/t/thoreau_henry_david.html)



Arthur de Munitiz and his perennial hat. We shall see them no more. I'm not sure Arthur had the friendliest disposition - he was a bit of a loner & given to saying his mind forthrightly. But I will miss him, and in particular the feedback he gave me for this journal and for my various enthusiasms. Vale Arthur.

**Jan Tendys**

## **For a New Beginning**

In out-of-the-way places of the heart,  
Where your thoughts never think to wander,  
This beginning has been quietly forming,  
Waiting until you were ready to emerge.

For a long time it has watched your desire,  
Feeling the emptiness growing inside you,  
Noticing how you willed yourself on,  
Still unable to leave what you had outgrown.

It watched you play with the seduction of  
safety  
And the grey promises that sameness whis-  
pered,  
Heard the waves of turmoil rise and relent,  
Wondered would you always live like this.

Then the delight, when your courage kindled,  
And out you stepped onto new ground,  
Your eyes young again with energy and  
dream,  
A path of plenitude opening before you.

Though your destination is not yet clear  
You can trust the promise of this opening;  
Unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning  
That is at one with your life's desire.

Awaken your spirit to adventure;  
Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;  
Soon you will be home in a new rhythm,  
For your soul senses the world that awaits  
you.

~ John O'Donohue ~

## **Gallipoli**

Those heroes that shed their blood  
And lost their lives...  
You are now lying in the soil of a friendly  
country.  
Therefore, rest in peace.  
There is no difference between the Johnnies  
And the Mehmetts to us where they lie  
side by side,  
Here in this country of ours.  
You, the mothers,  
Who sent their sons from far away countries...  
Wipe away your tears.  
Your sons are now lying in our bosom  
And are in peace.

After having lost their lives on this land, they  
have  
Become our sons as well.

~ Kemal Ataturk ~

## **The Soldier**

If I should die, think only this of me;  
That there's some corner of a foreign field  
That is for ever England. There shall be  
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;  
A dust whom England bore, shaped,  
made aware,  
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways  
to roam,  
A body of England's, breathing English  
air,  
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of  
home.  
And think, this heart, all evil shed away,  
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less  
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by  
England given;  
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as  
her day;  
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gen-  
tleness,  
In hearts at peace, under an English  
heaven.

~ Rupert Brooke ~

## **Futility**

Move him into the sun-  
Gently its touch awoke him once,  
At home, whispering of fields half-sown.  
Always it woke him, even in France,  
Until this morning and this snow.  
If anything might rouse him now  
The kind old sun will know.

Think how it wakes the seeds,-  
Woke, once, the clays of a cold star.  
Are limbs, so dear-achieved, are sides,  
Full-nerved, still-warm, too hard to stir?  
Was it for this the clay grew tall?  
-O what made fatuous sunbeams toil  
To break earth's sleep at all?

~ Wilfred Owen ~



## New Reality

*Written after the Christchurch earthquake  
on 22 February 2011*

*Derek McCullough*

When life presents adversity  
And walls come tumbling down,  
Our saving grace: community:  
The strength within it found.

It's often seen externally,  
When nature has its way;  
It's harder seen internally,  
Our fault lines having sway.

We live therefore in gratitude  
Of good things in each day,  
We must not fail to honour them  
When things don't go our way.

The Darwin wisdom says :Adapt;  
Accept reality;  
Behold the beauty of our place,  
And our community.

*Tune: Amazing Grace*

## Look at Our Great Trees

*Anne Johnson*

Look at our great trees,  
Look at our bush trees,  
Look at their colours,  
Tan, green and gold.  
Look at our wattles,  
Look at our mulgas,  
Look at our gum trees,  
Look and behold!

Think of the autumn,  
Think of the winter,  
Think of the springtime;  
Now Summer's here,  
Our lovely summer,  
Beautiful summer,  
Best of the year.

Each tree is special,  
Each leaf is lovely,

Each season needed,  
Each has a goal.  
So are you special,  
So are you lovely,  
So are you needed,  
Part of the whole.

*Tune: Bunessan ("Morning has Broken")*

## When Death Comes

*Mary Oliver*

When death comes  
like the hungry bear in autumn  
when death comes and takes all the bright  
coins from his purse

to buy me, and snaps his purse shut;  
when death comes  
like the measles-pox;

when death comes  
like an iceberg between the shoulder blades,

I want to step through the door full of curios-  
ity, wondering;  
what is it going to be like, that cottage of  
darkness?

And therefore I look upon everything  
as a brotherhood and a sisterhood,  
and I look upon time as no more than an  
idea,  
and I consider eternity as another possibility,  
and I think of each life as a flower, as com-  
mon  
as a field daisy, and as singular,  
and each name a comfortable music in the  
mouth  
tending as all music does, toward silence,  
and each body a lion of courage, and some-  
thing  
precious to the earth.

When it's over, I want to say: all my life  
I was a bride married to amazement.  
I was a bridegroom, taking the world into my  
arms.

When it's over, I don't want to wonder

if I have made of my life something particular, and real.  
I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened  
or full of argument.

I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.

*(New and Selected Poems, Volume I)*

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## **At the Death of Nelson Mandela**

This day we have witnessed a man for all nations,  
A man who was human, held fast what is right,  
for this he would live with profound resignation,  
He shone in the world, don't extinguish that light.

And we who are human stand now in remembrance,  
Frail shadows of all he has shown we can be.  
Standfast in this moment and cherish the values  
For which he once suffered that we might be free.

The man we remember has died, will be buried  
Yet while we seek justice his theme will not fall,  
His spirit is living, will not be extinguished,  
The love he embodied is always for all

**Andrew Pratt 5/12/ 2013**

**Contributed by Eric Stevenson**

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

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

**Fellowship contact 0466 940 461**