



**Spirit of Life** Unitarian Fellowship  
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Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre  
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Volume 7 Issue 1

January, 2011

## Schedule of Services

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

**9 January**                      **Candace Parks**                      **“Seven Ways of Seeing.”**

To see the world in a grain of sand; And a heaven in a wild flower; Hold infinity in the palm of your hand And eternity in an hour. Such is one way of seeing, according to the mystic poet William Blake, just one of 7 ways. This talk will explore the other six.

**16 January**                      **Peter Berry**                      **“Religion and the Environment.”**

**23 January**                      **Anthony Venn Brown**  
**Guest speaker**                      **" A Spiritual Journey to Authenticity."**

- What happens when the Christian belief system you have built your entire life on causes you to live in denial, reject and even destroy your true self?
- How does one reconcile a belief system that says your homosexuality is an abomination and makes you unacceptable to God and those close to you?
- What price would you pay to be true to yourself?

Anthony's award winning autobiography 'A Life of Unlearning - A Journey to Find the Truth' is in its second print and has assisted people around the world to reconcile the perceived conflict between their faith and sexuality. He is also the co-founder and president of Freedom 2 b[e] ; Australia's leading network for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) people from Christian backgrounds.

**30 January**                      **Martin Horlacher**                      **“Philosophy with Calvin and Hobbes”**

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### Some Dates to Notice 2011

Darwin Day is usually on the 12th of February. Sunday March 20th will be the Pagan holy day of Easter. The Jewish holy time of Pesach (Passover) comes up at the 19 -26 April. Christian Easter comes on 22-25 April this year. Ramadhan is the 9th Islamic month.

**Note from Candace re northern floods: the committee will be discussing what we think would be the most appropriate response.**

## Glimpses of Euro-religion with Closing Words from Singapore

*Jim Scarfe*

This is an account of meeting with a variety of religious expression during travel to Germany, Denmark, Ireland, England and Singapore in July (30 days). A companion important reason was to visit a number of friends, most of whom, because of my age and future travel limitation, I won't see again.

The variety was such that I could not help thinking of the title of a famous work by the Bostonian psychologist / philosopher, William James, first presented as the Gifford Lectures at Edinburgh University in 1901/02 and later published with the title "The Varieties of Religious Experience", subtitled "A study in human nature".

In what follows I have only had the title "Varieties" in mind and this is really only a report on observations and discussions experienced. I have an abiding interest in different religious views (probably not common) and Unitarianism is a good position from which to practice this interest and concern. We are tolerant!

### Germany

As I have done before, the trip commenced at Tübingen, a small southern city reached from Stuttgart by an hour's pleasant bus ride. It is a medieval city, dating back a thousand years at least; with now an attractive modern overlay. Tübingen is famous for its University, founded in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century and now includes in its property the massive 16<sup>th</sup> Century castle, Schloss Hohen Tübingen, built on the ruins of an 11<sup>th</sup> Century castle.

My particular interest is that Tübingen is the home and workplace of Professor Hans Küng, the theologian / philosopher who at 82 years of age now heads the Global Ethic Foundation which I have supported since 2000. Professor Küng, Emeritus Professor of Ecumenical Theology at the university, is a Catholic priest (ordained in 1954) a liberal whose lifetime work has included never ceasing efforts for renewal of the Church. The latest attempt was in April in an Open letter to the Catholic Bishops of the

World which, after an in-depth analysis of the Church's problems concluded as follows:

"With the Church in deep crisis, this is my appeal to you venerable bishops: Put to use the Episcopal authority that was reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council. In this urgent situation, the eyes of the world turn to you. Innumerable people have lost their trust in the Catholic Church. Only by openly and honestly reckoning with these problems and resolutely carrying out needed reforms can their trust be regained. With all due respect, I beg you to do your part – together with your fellow bishops as far as possible, but alone if necessary – in apostolic 'fearlessness' (Acts 4:29, 31). Give your faithful signs of hope and encouragement and give our church a perspective for the future."

My visit commenced on the Sunday with attendance at the large Lutheran Church, die Stiftskirche, (the size of a cathedral) for the morning service. Of course, with almost no German it was a matter of experiencing the atmosphere and seeing how the pastor presented his message. This took a long time to tell and, my being critical, he seemed to address it (from a very high pulpit) over the heads of more than a dozen young people sitting much closer to the front than the main congregation.

In former attendances I have been able to follow the hymn music and even attempt the German words. But not this time.

No one spoke to me so my language ignorance was undetected. At the conclusion everyone adjourned to the rear of the Church for Communion, I think, and hopefully for coffee! I missed out!

At his three level house, which is also the headquarters of the Global Ethic Foundation, Prof. Küng was almost totally engaged on a second book dealing with the application of Global Ethic to economics and business. He attended the Parliament of World Religions in December last year, to deliver this message in several appearances. A book has already been published (with other authors contributing) entitled: "Manifesto: Global Economic Ethic – Consequences and Challenges for Global Business".

The new book's German title has been kindly translated for me by an Adelaide Uni-

tarian friend as :

“Decent Economy – why our economy needs morals”

I think it will be well into the next year before we see the official translation. The publishing date in German was September, 2010.

Prof Küng was so busy that, although he was very apologetic, he only had time to say “Welcome” and what sounded like “Good-bye – see you next year”. Maybe!

I talked at some length with Dr Günther Gebhardt one of the senior staff, who does occasional personal assistant work with Kung. I mentioned difficulties with Muslims in trying to do detailed comparative studies on the Koran and Bible, for example. This did not seem to bother Günther who commented cheerfully: “Perhaps God is pluralist!” to account for differences, e.g. the Koran’s version of Jesus versus the New Testament’s.

Günther emphasized that the Foundation’s current work is on Business Ethics. He said that the Letter to the bishops had produced no reaction from them but had got through to the clergy. My Irish friend said it was published in the “Irish Times”, for example. I passed some Unitarian material and Muslim correspondence to Günther. Hopefully, he looked at it subsequently.

*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.

**Newsletter continues...**

One of the few events of the Tübingen stay, apart from pleasant strolls locally, was a day's outing to the Black Forest (der Schwarzwald). This picturesque and impressive region is reached from Freudenstadt, about one and a half hours west of Tübingen by train. In July (high summer) this journey passed through some of the most beautiful, rural country I've ever seen.

I did a three kilometre walk through the Forest and then four or five more via Freudenstadt to the rail station, the Hauptbahnhof, from which the view of the Forest made it look like a great black wall, something never to be forgotten.

A rather special occurrence at the Hauptbahnhof was meeting a group of quite elderly people who, by their dress and particularly shoes, had been walking in the Forest. I needed advice on train departures and platform. It is normally the younger people who speak English easily but most of this party were only too happy to oblige and, when learning I was Australian, really "adopted" me in the most friendly way, making sure, for example, that I changed at the right station on the return journey. It's not easy to find conversation partners if you can't speak the language. I think they were surprised to meet an Australian in their region.

### **Denmark**

Next was Northern Jutland where my Danish friend of sixty years, in the 1950's a Novocastrian on business, was celebrating his 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday with a daughter and son-in-law who live near Aalborg. It was great to see him in such good form and health. He's a likely centenarian.

Religion there was not apparent. They are those to whom it is non-existent. As secularists, the word itself is never thought of, it seems. They don't need it. I recall once that Spong was critical of the Danish Church because it was very conservative and unsympathetic to enquiry, I think. Perhaps this hasn't helped their interest and concern.

But they cared for me in a wonderful way, looking after a very early start for my return travel, which was not easy as it required late night communication with Scandinavian Airlines to correct travel time and a long drive to the airport at 5 a.m.

During my brief stay we managed a trip to the west coast to see the amazing fortifications the Germans prepared to repel invasion. It was part of the "Atlantic Wall" but never used. On one site the Danes have created an impressive, very large museum which mentions Nazism. They say German visitors remark they had little or no knowledge of the fortifications or, in fact, the Nazi era generally

### **Ireland**

Next was a location near Kells in the Republic, some forty miles from Dublin, in County Meath. Here I attended my host Lingard Goulding's seventieth birthday party along with about 140 other guests! A wonderful experience as it was held in the Great Hall of a private, co-ed, semi-boarding school, where Lingard lives in an apartment attached to the school.

Until retirement he was the Headmaster of the School which is called Headfort, originally the House of the Marquis of Headfort.

Lingard Goulding sometimes refers himself as a sceptical agnostic. He also believes in Formula One racing and cricket, as do I (at least in cricket). At 70 he coaches, plays, administers and curates cricket pitches. Every summer he comes to Adelaide for cricket, thus avoiding the Irish winter.

During the day I had some conversation with his brother, Tim, whose deep religious convictions involve, I think, what is called non-dual spirituality which requires much meditation and just "being". Tim gave me a book entitled "Only THAT" and some of his poetry. Good.

During the stay in the Republic, I was taken to visit Carlingford which is on the border with Northern Ireland, indeed half of it is in N.I.

Following this, at lunch in Ardee, Co. Louth) I met the family's priest, a retired gentleman who is a reader of Küng. After some discussion on whether Küng would stay in the Church and my saying I was sure he would remain a Catholic, Father McNally commented : "Whatever that means nowadays". He seemed surprisingly liberal for an Irish provincial priest, as well as being well informed.

# The Divan of Abandon

*Tim Goulding*



Come sit without expectation  
without effort  
without agenda  
without judgement  
without prescription  
without method  
without goal

Outside the walls of your citadel  
In the domain of utter emptiness  
Lies Presence

Come bask  
where being, having no choice,  
talks the language of being.

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## **England**

I stayed in London's Bayswater and visited Leicester, a train journey about the equivalent of Newcastle-Sydney. My host was a gentleman I had only met once, Dr Alan Race. I was fortunate enough to become acquainted with him by picking up a magazine at the 2004 Parliament of World Religions in Barcelona with the title "Interreligious Insight", of which he is editor-in-chief. When in London in 2006, I contacted him and became a subscriber to the magazine. On this occasion, in addition to an Indian lunch (Leicester is notable for its Indian and other Eastern populations), he took me to a Hindu fire ceremony (in what had been a major Baptist Church) and then to a Jain Temple, formerly a Congregational Chapel!

On the present occasion we only had time for another beautiful Indian lunch as he had to attend a family concerning a funeral arrangement in one of his several roles in Leicester as a Canon of the Church of England. Dr Race is also Dean of Post Graduates at St Philip's Centre in Leicester. He said he continues to spend half his time on clerical and pastoral work, in addition to the magazine. Indeed a most full time job – or jobs.

He is also active in the UK-based Globalisation for the Common Good Initiative (GCG). The GCG was founded by Dr Kamyam Mofid who is Iranian born and holds dual citizenship of Canada and Britain.

Dr Race gave me some good advice about being Muslim-tolerant. "We have quite in-depth discussions with them locally (something else he does) and sometimes these end with 'Well, we don't agree entirely on important items but let's continue talking.'" His final word to me, as he put me on the train, was, "I live in a neighbourhood which is 85 per cent Muslim and we get on well."

## **London**

In London my first day (prior to Leicester visit) was a Sunday. The morning was spent ini-

tially in establishing the location of the British Unitarianism headquarters, Essex Hall.

I thought there might be a service there too. Not so. Essex Hall claims to be the site of the first openly Unitarian worship service ever held in England, April 17, 1774. This claim is interesting because Dr Race took me to see the Unitarian Church in Leicester which had a date of the building of 1708, not claiming to be the original building, but saying that this was the original site of the first Leicester Unitarian Meeting Place. Interesting? More research needed?

Without a service in Essex Hall I paused at Clement Dane's and had a quiet stop in that pleasant Church before the service. This is the Royal Air Force Church in London and marked by statues of the two great R.A.F. commanders in World War 11, Dowling (Fighter Command) and Harris (Bomber Command). The former is especially praised for his foresight and early preparations (in 1936) for war, including recognition of the outstanding worth of single wing fighter aircraft, typified in the 1940 Battle of Britain by the Spitfire and the Hurricane. I think Harris is criticized to some extent for the number of R.A.F. aircrew personnel lost (greater than 20,000?) and for the extreme damage done to German cities like Dresden.

It is believed that the site of Clement Dane's does indeed date back to Danish occupation of Britain (8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> centuries?)

St. Paul's Cathedral. Not to be denied as I had time, I did a fairly long walk to St. Paul's. (Never understand London buses and where they are going!) Had breakfast on the way; got there in time for the 11 o'clock service. Might have been up to a thousand congregation, many visitors no doubt. Great difficulty in hearing the clerics speaking (hearing aids!) but it didn't matter greatly as a very good reason for going to St. Paul's is the uplifting atmosphere and the enjoyment of the superb architecture in that beautiful place.

Astonishing number lined up for the Communion. I wondered afterwards if I should have joined them!

Weekdays in London I got tired. Did the Big Bus Tour (not great value except for a very good view of the Tower of London), Leicester visit, Kew Gardens and a train journey and lunch in Weymouth, Dorset. I thought I was going to have a swim at Weymouth and went prepared, but the water 50 metres from shore was not up to "swimmer's" knees! However, the fish and chips was the best I had during the month.

**Attended the Unitarian Church, on my last day in London, in Notting Hill, walking distance from Bayswater. It was called the Essex Church and the congregation called themselves "the Kensington Unitarians". Attendance might have been about forty.**

**A young man spoke on "New Atheism and the Case for God". Dawkins and Co. got a special mention but I gathered that God won. It was rather good to hear the G word in a Unitarian meeting. The congregation wasn't particularly friendly although I didn't give them much chance as I had little time before departure. The Lady Minister (Rev. Sarah Tinker) seemed a cheerful soul.**

**The congregation has a busy programme of activities, eg Reading Group, Walkers, Songs and Silence, Reading Sacred Texts and what is called Nia Technique – holistic movement in body and soul. The Reading Group was examining Karen Armstrong's "Case for God".**

### **Singapore**

Was glad to get to Singapore as I always feel I'm on the way home there. Know it fairly well from the past. Have a Chinese friend there whom I got to know when I used to work in the region 25 years ago. She introduced me to the Singapore Flyer, a new big wheel similar to but higher than the London Eye, and took me to what she said was an authentic Chinese dinner. I thought all Chinese meals in Singapore were "authentic" but I gathered that authenticity is judged by the number of patrons. We had to drive to the airport to have it. The dinner was delicious but I had difficulty eating the chilli crab – by hand.

I visited a large mosque in Chinatown established by an Indian at the time of Raffles. A great effort is made there to present Islam in a most favourable and informative light. One is greeted by three large placards dealing with Women, Violence and Mary and Jesus (Koran Sura 19). Inside there are comprehensive accounts of the Five Pillars of Islam, the words of the prayers and a good deal more including half a dozen testimonies to the greatness of Muhammad

from scholars etc. e.g. Gandhi and George Bernard Shaw. I resolved to be more tolerant! Some Unitarians emphasize our Freedom Reason and Tolerance. Are these our Three Pillars?

I compared all the above with the Greek Cathedral and the large St Matthew's Church of England in Bayswater, both within walking distance of my hotel in London. Both remained firmly closed except that St Matthew's was open on Sunday. Didn't see any congregation. Looked in but saw I was in an ante-room leading into the Church, so desisted. "Promotion" couldn't match Singaporean Islam.

Our UUA Principles present well in such comparisons, I think. Do we promote them enough? E.g. Neighbourhood Centre notice-boards?

Overall it was difficult to look for similarities in what I met. E.g. the plain, perhaps featureless interior of mosques and Unitarian meeting places, compared with Cathedrals and big Churches like St. Paul's. but I suppose they all provide their particular atmospheres for worship meetings and those taking part.

Obviously I was not able or qualified to judge the spiritual experience of congregations or individuals but, hopefully, they were OK. Perhaps a little regrettable that there seemed little evidence of seeking to know what other religions, besides their own, experienced. That is probably me with my peculiar predilection for variety! And the short time I had at each location.

It was rather curious that I witnessed discussion of the God question only amongst Unitarians in Notting Hill, but you have to spend time on this. Karen Armstrong: "The Case for God", Hans Küng: "Does God Exist?")

I looked for indications of some active contributors to the building of a just and peaceful world (my peculiar interest again!) and found this in the current activity of Küng and the Global Ethic publications and Dr Race with interreligious activity and the Globalisation for the Common Good Initiative. No doubt there are many such ventures in One-World-building going on in all continents. May they make good progress, especially at the grass-roots.

**Postscript:** After finishing the above on a Sunday evening, I heard Rachael Kohn, on her ABC "Spirit of Things" radio program, interview Andrew Hardy a passionate mystic (describing himself as a "Sacred Activist") who claimed that his mysticism was the way to go in building a peaceful, caring and just world. One more initiative to be aware of.

He quoted at length Bede Griffiths, the Catholic monk (died in 1993) who lived in India for 38 years and established an ashram as a prayer centre where people of different religions meet each other. Bede Griffiths principal works include "The Cosmic Revolution – the Hindu Way to God".

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## The High Way

*Tim Goulding*

Signposts pointing to the ineffable  
Are springing up like mushrooms.  
Even the sages of the Road Department  
Have stopped beating about the bush:  
    'End of hard shoulder'  
    'Slow down'  
    'Slower still'  
    'Stop'  
    'Prepare to merge'  
    'Now'  
In the midst of the world's traffic  
A vast stillness operates.  
No wonder they call it the highway.

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## The Kitchen Porter

*Tim Goulding*

They passed me a plate of fresh resentment  
Still simmering, I tasted its acrid bite  
And passed it on.  
They passed me a plate of anxiety and scrambled thoughts  
I stood puzzled  
And passed it on  
They passed me a plate of pure bliss  
Sweeter than the finest honey  
I wavered, but passed it on.  
They passed me a bowl of self-conscious feelings  
I stared them in the face  
And passed them over.  
They passed me a plate of worry and despair-  
I dipped my finger in their hopelessness  
And passed it on  
They passed me a salver heaped with enlightenment  
For a moment I thought it might be mine  
But passed it on.  
From morning till night the offerings came  
And went  
It's surely been a day of a thousand dishes.

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## Who Plays?

*Tim Goulding*

Even when you stopped singing  
The song continued.  
Your part was engineered by the sun,  
Like a shadow dancing beside you  
In and out of sunlight.

See how inextricably mixed  
these parts are,  
All moves and stops,  
According to the conductor's baton.

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## Jottings

**Jan Tendys**

*Good cheer wasn't missing at the Christmas party. It was great to see Sherman and Evan for the first time in a while and it was a pity some regulars weren't able to make it. The verbal and musical offerings rose to the occasion as usual. I particularly liked Eric's parable and Ross's Leunig contribution .*

*The tucker was very enjoyable Not only was it graced by Laurence's offerings which included a cake, but there was another cake brought by our newlyweds, Ginna and Max, especially to celebrate with us – off to a fine start! :-)* Also all sorts of goodies brought by Caz and others.