



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

7 May, Max Lawson, "Charles Dickens: Liberal Christianity and Unitarianism."

14 May, No service.

21 May, Rev. Geoff Usher, "Alone Together."

We talk about ourselves, as Unitarians, being an assortment of worshippers, with different backgrounds, different religious backgrounds, different personal theologies. A statement like "All are welcome here" implies this sort of variety. Given such variety, what binds us together as members of our congregation, and within the Unitarian movement?

28 May, Martin Horlacher "Holy Days and Holidays."

With the recent March for Science in the United States and elsewhere, it's worth asking why we as a nation have to have holidays thrust upon us that are religious in nature. Why aren't we celebrating Moon-Landing Day by giving each other chocolate moons, or venerating Jonas Salk's birthday as Polio Vaccine Day?



NGC2426 and NGC5427
on a collision course.

Darebin's Pensioners sign up to Solar

In Darebin in Melbourne's northern suburbs, solar installations have spread rapidly through the area's low-income households.

"We call it the 'nonna effect'," says Trent McCarthy, a Greens councillor in Darebin. "The nonna in the street has her solar on her roof. She's very proud, she tells all of her friends. It's social marketing 101."

It has spread throughout that area because the council has rolled out a program that allows local pensioners to install solar at no upfront cost and immediately start saving money, while the council recovers the full amount without interest over 10 years. While electricity bills can be a serious cause of stress for low-income households, and solar can help to reduce electricity bills, it is those very low income households that often struggle the most to find the initial outlay to cover the cost of a solar installation. As a result, those that can benefit most are often excluded.

That observation was backed up by a survey run by the Darebin city council, says Gavin Mountjoy, the council's environmental strategy coordinator.

"We surveyed a lot of pensioners – about 4,000 pensioners – to see what were their main concerns," Mountjoy says.

Among the results, rising electricity prices jumped out as a major concern. But the survey also revealed pensioners didn't know who to trust to get solar panels installed and they didn't have the money to pay for the installation. So the council introduced the Solar Saver program.

"The Solar Saver program started as a result of a council initiative to try to explore ways to help pensioners and low-income households deal with rising electricity prices," Mountjoy says.

The basic idea of the program is simple: the council would pay for the panels to be installed and get the money back over 10 years through

a small additional charge to the home owner's land rates.

The first round of the program was open to low-income households who were receiving government income support. Colin Sutton lives in a quiet street in Preston, part of the Darebin local government area. He lives at home and cares for his adult son who has autistic spectrum disorder. He was one of the first locals to take part in the program.

"I sell about \$100 worth of power back to my power company every year, perhaps a little bit more," he says. "And I estimate that I'm saving about \$400 in actual power."

He pays \$300 a year back to the council through his rates and estimates he is about \$200 ahead already. After 10 years, the panels will be paid off and, assuming they're still working, he will then be \$500 ahead each year.

The second round of the Solar Savers program sought to address another barrier to solar ownership: renting. For most landlords, it doesn't make sense to install solar on a house you own – the tenants pay for electricity so the landlord takes the cost while the tenants make all the savings. So Darebin city council partnered with low-income housing cooperatives and organised a similar deal.

Jen Jewel Brown lives in the Northcote Rental Housing Cooperative, which works with low-income renters. The homes are principally state government owned, but are managed and maintained by the co-op and are self-funded. That meant the Solar Savers scheme could recoup the cost of the solar panels through the co-op, which then recouped the cost by adding a small rise to the rent of the residents that received solar. Brown says the savings in the electricity bills immediately make up for the rent increase.

The above comes from a Guardian article by Michael Slezak, 22/3/2017. Contributed by Cassie Thornley.

Read more: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/mar/22/renewables-roadshow-how-the-nonna-effect-changed-darebins-approach-to-solar?>

Nostalgia

Geoffrey R Usher

(Delivered to Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship, on 22 January 2017)

Ten years ago my son Andrew and his then girlfriend Stephanie returned to England after a holiday of nearly three months in Australia, which included Christmas in Sydney with my wife Ann. As the weather in Sheffield got colder and darker, and I thought of them enjoying the late spring and then early summer in Australia's warmth – meals outside, long days of sunlight, swimming at the beach – I tried to persuade myself that I was not jealous. I have to confess: I was not very successful in that attempt to persuade myself that I was not jealous, and I kept finding myself remembering, remembering.. .

In Australia, the long summer holiday — the "Christmas vacation" — begins in mid-December and lasts about six or seven weeks.

When I was a boy in Adelaide, Christmas presents tended to include things like: swimsuits, beach bats and balls, beach towels, colourful summer shirts, perhaps cricket gear; perhaps – very dashing and debonair – sun-glasses.

My uncle and aunt had a large home, and they regularly hosted the family celebrations of Christmas Day, providing for up to forty people. Having recovered from what must have been an exhausting day, they then spent January in the caravan park at Port Eliot, eighty kilometres south of Adelaide.

My uncle had made his own caravan, into which they loaded everything, including all the canvas, poles, ropes and pegs to erect a large tented area extending from the caravan, and lots of beds and bedding and other furniture, including the kitchen sink!

The loaded caravan would be hitched to the car — mainly I remember the Whippet Tourer — which my aunt would drive, crawling up the notorious long, steep, winding Willunga Hill – while my uncle drove his company util-

ity, also loaded with gear.

Then they would establish their camp – always the same site near the Caretaker's permanent site and the main ablutions block -- and settle in for about a month. My uncle was usually away at work for some of the time, coming back for weekends and the final packing up to return home.

Part of the regular ritual was that my sister, brothers and I would spend some of our January holidays at Port Eliot. Not all of us together — there were five of us — but one or two or three at a time.

For the rest of my life I will carry memories of childhood days at Port Eliot: up to six hours a day in the surf; exploring the beaches and sandhills either side of Horseshoe Bay; day trips to the other little coastal towns; the local picture theatre; the sunburn, and sore, red, sand-filled eyes; and the sandhills at the far end of the caravan park.

They were magnificent, towering sandhills, with broad sweeping sides up which to struggle — two steps up and one step back — as the sand gave way beneath your feet, and down which to run and slide and roll.

They were isolated, desolate, magnificent. Lawrence of Arabia would have loved them!

Then, somewhere along the line – as happens to all of us – things changed bit by bit. My uncle and aunt moved to a different house, and my sister and two of my brothers got married, and the traditional Christmas Day gathering of the entire family gradually seemed to lose its participants and become fragmented, and I got married, and so on. And although my uncle and aunt continued to go to Port Eliot, we went less and less often to join them.

Ah, but the memories! Wonderful material for family get-togethers and "Do you remember the time when ...?" and "What happened to the people who...?"

Then I moved to Sydney, and even the family get-togethers became rare, and usually with only a few at a time — all of us married, with our own homes and families and extended

families and so on.

My uncle and aunt eventually stopped going to the caravan park at Port Eliot. They bought a holiday home at Goolwa, another seaside town just a few kilometres away. Andrew, Elizabeth and I stayed there during the two January vacation pulp exchanges which I spent in Adelaide at the end of the 1980s. And I took Andrew and Elizabeth to Port Eliot to show them the scenes of my childhood.

Alas, how different! How changed! The little, modest, rather down-at-heel caravan park had been up-graded, improved, modernised; and extended. It had been extended all the way to those magnificent sandhills, which had been levelled. Instead of those wonderful towering peaks and broad sweeping sides, there were level, surfaced roads, concrete slabs for caravan sites, modern toilet and shower blocks, with roofs! And poles to carry the electric wires to all the sites. All changed. Changed utterly. It was hard even to explain to Andrew and Elizabeth what it had been like — what had provided my memories.

And I was sad. It is sad. But, it is the way life is, and it is the way it must be.

"Life goes not backward," wrote Kahlil Gibran. He was right. "Life goes not backward, nor tarries with yesterday."

We may hold and cherish our memories. We may even view the past through the rose-tinted spectacles of nostalgia. But we cannot return to the past. We cannot re-create the past.

There is a danger in trying to wish that everything could be "just like it was in the good old days" — which of course weren't always really so good, in spite of the nostalgia industry and the Letters to the Editor bemoaning the decline of civilisation since the days when the writers were young.

Bertrand Russell was a seeker after truth in several areas: philosophy, psychology, biology, history. As a seeker after truth, he said that he could do no other than cultivate the scientific temper.

Scientific knowledge in itself is morally neither "good" nor "bad". Scientific knowledge simply exists in its own right. Moral judgements about it depend on the use which people make of it, so the moral judgements are essentially about the people.

In his book Why I Am Not a Christian, Russell explained his rejection of the Christian faith, his rejection of a belief in any "power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness", his inability to believe in an Almighty God as the source of moral goodness and judgement.

He could not accept the Christian religion, but he believed in an order of "values". He believed in truth rather than falsehood. He believed in beauty rather than ugliness. He believed in moral goodness rather than badness.

He believed that these values were not created — and not destroyed — by people. People can exalt these values, and be loyal to them, and live according to them; or people can reject these values and betray them, and live without any regard to them: to the ultimate good or evil of the community.

Many people do not find Russell's views to be a satisfying or even a rational faith or philosophy of life. And yet it is evidently acceptable to many noble-minded people, who continue to toil for the betterment of the lot of their fellow human beings, while remaining bewildered and baffled by the mysteries of life.

And it is interesting to note that towards the end of the book, a "nostalgia" creeps into Russell's reflections. There is a pensive memory of joys once experienced and never to be forgotten. He wrote:

"What is dangerous is power wielded for the sake of power, not power wielded for the sake of good. The leaders of the modern world are drunk with power . . . power is not one of the ends of life, but merely a means to other ends, and until (people) remember the ends that power should subserve, science will not do what it might to minister to the good life . . . The lover, the poet, and the mystic find a fuller satisfaction than the seeker

after power can ever know, since they **rest** in the object of their love.”

“I think, therefore, that the satisfactions of the lover, using that word in its broadest sense, exceed the satisfactions of the tyrant, and deserve a higher place among the ends of life. When I come to die I shall not feel that I have lived in vain... .”

“I have seen the earth turn red at evening, the dew sparkling in the morning, and the snow shining under a frosty sun; I have smelt rain after drought and I have heard the stormy Atlantic beating upon the granite shores of Cornwall. . . . The sphere of science lies outside (these) values.”

Nostalgia! Pensive, appealing memories of happy days, of joys unforgotten and unforgettable.

Last year, like so many years before it, saw terrible dramas of the scientific and aggressive use of unconsecrated power, the tragedies of antagonistic and destructive power. It also, at local and personal levels, brought its share of pain, of sorrow, of disappointment and sadness.

But it also brought its times of happiness of satisfaction, of joy. As we look back on it, and begin this new year, we can also look further back.

Our memories can go back to the days of those holiday seasons when, like Bertrand Russell, we may have seen the stormy Atlantic beating upon the granite shores of Cornwall, or seen the sun setting behind the mountains of Scotland, or seen the reflection of a slivery moon on the calm surface of a lake, encircled by shadowy pine trees and low-lying hills.

Or, for me, those holiday seasons among the sandhills of Port Eliot, the six hours each day in the rolling surf, the walks along the water's edge, and the games of beach tennis or cricket on the hard, wet sand.

It is such memories which add beauty to our life, and help to keep us sane.

It is such memories, together with the memories of joyous comradeships, memories of the kindly, trustworthy people we have numbered among our friends, memories of the laughter of childhood and the promise of youth. . . .

It is such memories which help to reassure us that life is worth living: that the values of truth, beauty, goodness and love are what make it worth living; and that those values will continue to make life worth living through the days and the years that are to come.



Excerpts

The bowl of sand and water is a kind of memory theatre now: when I was a boy in the country I liked to swim, poke at an octopus with a stick and chase poisonous puffer fish through the rippling shallows, then I would wander up the five-mile beach, no one there, squinting against the light reflected from the white sand, a sack over my shoulder, collecting bleached cuttlefish bones to sell to the store for bird feed. One time, walking along a ridge of grassy sand where the hollows are full of heat and stillness, I trod on a snake with my bare feet and got such a fright I didn't think to snap shut the shotgun and shoot. Now the beach seems a tedious gritty way to get skin cancer – just as when I was a kid in a country town I longed to live in Australia's busiest metropolis, Sydney,

From John Tranter: [The Beach](#) (a Superhypermetrical Sestina)

Read more: <http://johntranter.net/poetry/the-beach-a-superhypermetrical-sestina/>

"That day I went back across to the bombora and rode two waves. Together those rides wouldn't add up to more than half a minute of experience, of which I can only recall a fraction: flickering moments, odd details. Like the staccato chat of water against the board. A momentary illusion of being at the same level as the distant cliffs. The angelic relief of gliding out onto the shoulder of the wave in a mist of spray and adrenaline. Surviving is the strongest memory I have; the sense of having walked on water."

From Tim Winton [Breath](#)

"blokes dancing themselves across the bay with smiles on their faces and sun in their hair ... How strange it was to see men do something beautiful. Something pointless and elegant, as though nobody saw or cared."

From Tim Winton [Breath](#)

Carbon Fee and Dividend

Originally proposed by Dr. James Hansen, Head of Goddard Institute for Space Studies, NASA (U.S.), this economic strategy offers a global solution for effectively shifting to green energy and green technology.

What is a Carbon Fee and Dividend?

(excerpted from Citizens Climate Lobby FAQ and adapted for all countries)

A carbon fee is a fee based on the tons of carbon that fossil fuels such as oil, gas and coal generate. The fee would be collected at the point of entry – well, mine or port. The fee would start out low and gradually increase annually in a predictable manner until green energy is competitive with fossil fuel.

A dividend is defined as a quantity of revenue to be divided. In this case, 100 percent of the total carbon fees collected are divided up and given back to all citizens equally. This dividend helps citizens pay the increased costs associated with the carbon fee while a nation transitions to a clean energy economy.

This helps to reduce emissions, because the fee (and the price of fossil fuel) rise predictably over time, which sends a clear price signal to begin using fossil fuels more efficiently and/or replace them with green energy. Investment flows to green technologies and the rising cost of fossil fuels increases the demand for these products, making them even less expensive as they reach mass production. This clear, easy to understand price signal – increasing fossil fuel costs and decreasing green technology costs – drives the transition to a green economy.

From a business standpoint, by giving the entire carbon fee back to the citizens – the end users – consumers will be able to pay the higher prices of goods and services caused by the higher price of fossil fuels. This allows businesses to pass along the increased cost and keep market share. Each year the carbon fee goes up, the dividend goes up as well. Everyone is on a level playing field for the first few years. But if businesses do not become

more energy efficient and start converting to green energy they will become less competitive and lose market share. These market forces will drive innovations in green technology, creating new business opportunities to develop, produce, install and service these products. This will create new jobs and make companies more energy efficient, making them more competitive worldwide.

From a citizen standpoint, with Carbon Fee and Dividend (CFD) legislation, it is clear to citizens that fossil fuels will go up every year. They will be motivated to save as much of their dividend check as possible rather than spending it on more expensive fossil fuels. They can do this by changing over to energy efficient lighting and appliances, upgrading their insulation or windows, replacing energy inefficient furnaces, switching to green energy sources, buying plug-in hybrid or all-electric vehicles, etc.

To protect local manufacturers, CFD legislation places a border adjustment levy on all imports from countries that do not price carbon similarly, levelling the playing field for local companies.

To protect local exporters, CFD legislation rebates the border adjustment fee to local companies exporting to countries without similar carbon pricing, levelling the playing field for local companies.

This legislation forces exporting countries to either adopt similar carbon pricing or pay to export to countries with these programs. All countries that adopt similar fees on carbon are on the same level playing field and can make border adjustments with countries that do not adopt such fees. This encourages all countries to place similar fees on carbon. As more nations adopt carbon fees, worldwide demand brings the best green technologies to mass market faster, driving down costs and making the transition to a green economy less expensive for everyone.

Carbon Fee and Dividend legislation is very transparent, easy to understand and fair to all parties making it more likely to achieve the intended goals of lowering total CO2 levels while transitioning to a green economy.

What are the benefits of addressing climate change through Carbon Fee and Dividend legislation?

Reduces CO2 levels in the atmosphere back down to 350 ppm or less, stabilizing our climate and oceans and slowing down the mass extinction of species.

Encourages all countries to adopt the same carbon fees through border adjustment levies.

Encourages companies and individuals to become more energy efficient.

Drives green technology innovations. Increases locally-sourced green energy which reduces international conflicts.

Creates jobs researching, manufacturing, exporting, installing and servicing green technologies.

Reduces air pollution (i.e., smog, ozone, fine particulate matter and other pollutants caused by burning fossil fuel).

Reduces water pollution (i.e., mercury poisoning caused by burning coal, toxins leaking from tailings ponds from coal/tar sands mining and salt brines from drilling).

The above is taken from the website of Global Stewards.

Read more: <http://www.globalstewards.org/carbon-fee-dividend.htm>

Comment by Jan Tendys: This strategy is better than the usual carbon tax where the money is used by the government, because the dividend motivates the citizens to accept it and to accept the rising nature of the fee. It should be much better than Labor's emissions trading system or cap and trade, which has been trialled with limited success (but which is still better than nothing).

To: letters@smh.com.au

As a retired person I have got in a daily habit of reading the Herald. Today I would like to invite our politicians to read it too - and they'll see why the rich are getting richer and poor getting poorer, our biggest national problem. They only need to read the headlines: Income tax big load on families, Australia dodges crackdown on trusts, Billion a year needed to bridge gap in affordable homes, Roads chief rejects need for oversight of motorway tolls, Targeted solutions needed for affordable housing, Policy vacuum is clearer by day, Abbott is wrong about immigration and house prices, and throw in this: tax relief for big companies (who already hide their profits overseas).

Sadly I don't think our leaders DO read the Herald. The lower and middle classes, even upper middle classes spend all they earn (they need to!) - so any tax relief they get is turned over into the economy. Of course our politicians cannot see this. They seem to think tax reform for wealthy companies and individuals only is the way to improve the economy. So wealthy investors, many from Asia and overseas, continue to compete with our children over home purchases, and our children lose out.

Sadly my worrying about the stupidity of our leaders isn't changing a thing, so in order to seek a crumb of peace in my old age, I've had to cancel my subscription to the Herald. Thank you for many years of good reading, Herald, but it's my time to hide my head in the sand for awhile- I might see a few politicians' heads in the same sand while I'm there!

Virginia Hastings

This letter was unpublished by the Sydney Morning Herald but thanks to Gna for sending it to us.

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### 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 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@yahoo.com.au](mailto:jtendys@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**