



Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship
PO Box 1356, Lane Cove NSW 1595
Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre
16-18 Fitzroy Street, Kirribilli
(near Milsons Point Station)
Tel: (02) 9428 2244

Website: www.sydneyunitarians.org
Editor: Jan Tendys

Volume 6, Issue 11

November, 2010

Schedule of Services

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

7 November, Jan Tendys "Hunting for Hope"

We share with writer Scott Russell Sanders his journey from despair to healing.

14 November, Sandra Mottram. "A presentation on the global organisation of the Soroptimist Society."

Sandra, the Sydney President, will provide some background to the group, what they do internationally, successful projects they have been involved in and current exciting projects they are engaged in.

21 November, Candace Parks "Loving Your Political Opponent"

Partisanship is an uncompromising, unreasoned attitude which is inherently unethical and theologically unsound. Unsound, because partisanship presumes dichotomy - and our complex lives transcend the simple dualism of right/wrong, either/or, us/them. And unethical because Unitarian values require that we work for the common good. Often easier said than done!

28 November Colin Whatmough "A discussion on the topic 'The Three Ages of Christianity' arising from Colin's talk in May 2010."

This will lead towards how modern man is engaging in spiritual realms in the 21st C.

5 December Morandir Armson Dualism in the 21st Century - The Zoroastrian Diaspora in Australia

12 December Ginna Hastings "Freedom to Choose in Marriage"

This talk will be touching on the importance of marriage and why our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters should have the freedom to choose whom they marry as well as heterosexuals.

19 December Christmas lunch (Ginna will be coordinating this)

NOTE There will be no service on December 26 or January 2nd.

The Unitarian Missionaries From Garrison Keillor's "Lake Wobegon Days"

The first white folk known to have spent time in the Wobegon area were Unitarian missionaries from Boston, led by Prudence Alcott, a distant and wealthy relative of the famous Alcotts of Concord, a woman who sent a stereopticon and a crate of boysenberry jam to Henry Thoreau at his cabin by the pond, although he never mentioned her in his book.

On June 14, 1850, at two-forty P.M., according to her meticulous journal, while crossing Boylston Street on her way to reflect in the pond of Boston's Public Garden, she had a vision of a man in hairy clothing who told her to go west and convert the Indians to Christianity by the means of interpretive dance.

"Having witnessed an Algonquin Rain Dance at the Lyceum [the] previous night, the Expressive Beauty of their Spirits convinced me that the worship of the Supreme Being in our English Language is dry, tasteless, & insufficient to the present Need, & then amid a scene of such confusion & Commerce & bustling Traffic, it was shown to me that All is One under Heaven, All are Children of God & I must preach to our savage Brethren, using the language of Dance. I proceeded to my beloved Pond filled with Certainty and Rejoicing."

Selecting three of her friends to be her followers, Prudence made plans to entrain immediately for the territories, taking only enough cash to see them to the Mississippi whence they would cast themselves upon Providence, but their departure was delayed by the enthusiasm of local savants who subjected them to an exhausting round of parties, lectures, and receptions, so they did not leave Boston until September 21 and arrived in Minnesota just as the weather was turning ugly. Staying only one night at Fort Snelling, the Unitarians pushed north, traveling upriver with a band of Ojibway merchants for ten days until, rounding a bend in the river and seeing a pine in the shape of a V, Prudence shouted "Here!" and there they were dropped: Prudence, her cousin Elizabeth

Sewell, a seminary student named George Moore, and a poet, Henry Francis Watt, who was interested in native speech rhythms.

A hike of three days brought them to the site of the present Lake Wobegon, where they built a lean-to of alder branches and settled in to await the leading of the Spirit, and where two days later they looked out in the morning to see a foot of new-fallen snow. Prudence's certainty and rejoicing were just about all used up.

"Lay awake all night hearing cries of wild beasts, hoots, screams &c. Elizabeth sleeps easily but our diet of nuts & berries does not sit well & makes me restless & agitated & also Henry & George snort & grunt in their sleep & throw their arms & legs about & disgust me [with] their gross sensuality & brute appetites. This is a desolate & God-forsaken land & I do not see that any civilized society could find comfort and nurture here. Would that I had brought warm clothing!!"

By Thanksgiving Day, Prudence had said her prayers, laid down, crossed her arms, and hoped to die, when crashing was heard in the underbrush and into the clearing rode an immense swarthy man wrapped in bearskins who dismounted from his spotted pony, threw back his huge hairy head, and laughed out loud: "Haw! Haw! Haw!"

"He was covered with sweat & filth & phlegm ran down his face unchecked & he gave off the aroma of one for whom bathing is as unwelcome a prospect as a broken leg," wrote Prudence, but he was also, she learned, Basile Fonteneau, a French trapper, who knew his way around those parts, and when he offered to lead them to his hut at the other end of the lake and put them up for the winter, she did not say no. She was cold and hungry and wasn't sure that Providence would make a better offer.

In a few weeks, her spirits lifted somewhat. "M. Fonteneau delights in half-cooked bear meat which he eats sans utensil & sleeps in a heap with his four brutish dogs & sings bawdy ballads in a coarse voice & relieves himself in the open & engages in other lewd practices, but I am satisfied that Providence has led us here in order to test us with fire & I am happy to be proved & ...

strengthened in my Faith," she wrote.

By the spring thaw, she had found in her heart some fondness for Basile and written two sonnets on the letters of his name. One of them began:

"Base metals may to pure gold changed be,
As, too, base mortals angelic may become,
Silver-winged, gold-tongued, by fiery
alchemy,
Ill-bred their parts but O the glorious sum..."

By May her thoughts were centered on him. She gazed on him as he slept, and his face seemed to possess nobility of purpose and a spiritual demeanor she had not noticed during the cold months. "Compared to Basile — his strength, his native cunning, his constant good humor — Henry & George seem pale & slender stems of some weaker strain of plant. They while away the hours perched on rocks above the Lake & dispute theology & amuse themselves with their own wit & in their placid ignorance never take note that there is wood to be got. Each day I invent new reasons why we cannot press on with our Mission and must remain here a little longer, but there is no need to convince them — they would be content to sit until fall."

One evening as the sun set and a warm breeze carried the thought of spring flowers, Basile asked Prudence to walk with him to a peninsula to pick lady-slippers. As they walked, she found herself talking about her Mission to the Indians and her feeling that dance, not oratory, is the basis of true religion. As she talked, she began to dance for him. He ran after her as she danced on and on until, exhausted, she fell in a heap and he picked her up and carried her to the water's edge and threw her in. He stripped off his clothing and jumped in after her.

"I was astonished to see that he is actually quite a young man," she wrote in her journal that night. "It was only his husk that was old & smelly & degraded & corpulent & when he shed it he appeared quite slender & muscular & all in all a very comely individual. We swam & sported in the cool waters & my petticoats were so cumbersome I dispensed with them &c. `You must not look upon me!' I cried &c. He spoke to me in French, which I took to mean that he felt it was his Duty to look on me or else I might drown & he then

took my hand & guided me to deeper water for modesty's sake & showed me to swim &c. We returned to camp very damp & much refreshed & when I saw the others, reclining where I had left them & murmuring about the Spirit of Truth, I determined to send them back East & remain with Basile."

There her journal ended. She and Basile were married in St. Anthony in July by a Fr. Sevier, who also had come west to convert the Indians, and settled in St. Paul, where Basile built a hotel called "The World", and they prospered and had seven children.

The first account of Lake Wobegon to reach the East was Henry's, in his poem "Phileopolis: A Western Rhapsody," which begins:

I lie upon the vacant shore,
Fleecy banners flying o'er,
And look beyond this desolate place,
To yon bright city turn my face:
Phileopolis.

Turn from this weedy tepid slough
To yonder vision fair and true,
From land of toil, care and grief
To richer soil of my belief:
Phileopolis.

The poem, all 648 lines of it, was never published in the East, where Henry hoped it would make his reputation and lead to something, perhaps an introduction to Longfellow. The short and insistent meter, the sheer length (which, by line 182, is already leading to such rhymes as "sibylline/porcupine" and "cereal/immaterial"), and the burden of the poem—the emptiness and spiritual languor of the frontier and the comfort of civilization as found in dreams of Greece—left even Henry's friends a little sleepy after a few pages, and the poem was eventually returned by James Russell Lowell at The Atlantic with a note: "We are grateful for having had the chance to see this and trust you will understand that, whatever the qualities of the poem, it does not meet our particular requirements at this time. (In the future, please enclose postage with your submissions.)"

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( For what happens next, you'll just have to get hold of the book!.)

## Free Talk by Frans de Waal

**Is Man a Wolf to Man?** Morality and the Social Behaviour of our Fellow Primates

**15 December 2010**

Homo homini lupus - "man is wolf to man" - is an old Roman proverb popularized by Thomas Hobbes. Even though it permeates large parts of law, economics, and political science, the proverb fails to do justice to our species' thoroughly social nature as well as to canids, which are among the most gregarious and cooperative animals. For the past quarter century, this cynical view has also been promoted by an influential school of biology, followers of Thomas Henry Huxley, which holds that we are born nasty as a result of "selfish" genes. Accordingly, it is only with the greatest possible effort that we can hope to become moral beings.

Charles Darwin, however, saw things differently: he believed in continuity between animal social instincts and human morality. He wrote an entire book about *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. Modern psychology and neuroscience support Darwin's view about the moral emotions. Human moral decisions often stem from "gut" reactions, some of which we share with other animals.

I will elaborate on the connection between morality and primate behaviour. Other primates show signs of empathy, prosocial tendencies, reciprocity, and a sense of fairness that promote a mutually satisfactory *modus vivendi*. I will review evidence for continuity to support the view that the building blocks of morality are older than humanity.

Frans B. M. de Waal is the C. H. Candler Professor at the Psychology Department, Emory University and Director of the Living Links Center, Yerkes National Primate Research Center, Atlanta, USA

### Recent books

- de Waal, Frans (2009). 'The Age of Empathy' (Harmony Books).
- de Waal, F. B. M. (2006). "Primates and Philosophers: How Morality Evolved" (Princeton University Press).

Time: 6.30 pm

Location: Eastern Avenue Auditorium,

**The University of Sydney**

Cost: FREE

Contact: Valerie Morris

Phone: (02) 9351 5080

Email: val.morris@sydney.edu.au

[http://www.emory.edu/LIVING\\_LINKS/empathy](http://www.emory.edu/LIVING_LINKS/empathy)

## What Can I Say

What can I say that I have not said before?  
So I'll say it again.  
The leaf has a song in it.  
Stone is the face of patience.  
Inside the river there is an unfinishable story  
and you are somewhere in it  
and it will never end until all ends.

Take your busy heart  
to the art museum and the  
chamber of commerce  
but take it also to the forest.  
The song you heard singing  
in the leaf when you  
were a child  
is singing still.  
I am of years lived, so far, seventy-four,  
and the leaf is singing still.

~ Mary Oliver ~



# Population and Climate Change

**Scientific American** (via Twitter)  
By David Biello Oct 11, 201

An additional 150 people join the ranks of humanity every minute, a pace that could lead our numbers to reach 9 billion by 2050. Changing that peak population number alone could save at least 1.4 billion metric tons of carbon from entering the atmosphere each year by 2050, according to a new analysis, the equivalent of cutting more than 10 percent of fossil fuel burning per year.

"Demography will matter to greenhouse gas emissions over the next 40 years," said earth systems scientist Brian O'Neill of the U.S. National Center for Atmospheric Research, lead author of the analysis, in a statement **"If global population growth slows down, it is not going to solve the climate problem, but it can make a contribution."**

O'Neill and his colleagues paired data from national household surveys in 34 countries with a new economic model the Population Environment and Technology (PET) model to estimate the impact of various population growth scenarios on greenhouse gas emissions. The model also took into account changes in the makeup of that overall population, based on United Nations data, such as the aging population of Europe as well as the rapidly urbanizing one of India.

**That urban growth (roughly half of humanity already lives in cities for the first time in recorded history) may lead to a big increase in greenhouse gas emissions.** As urban residents enter the middle class, particularly in China and India, they increase their consumption of energy and transportation. "Urban living can be more energy efficient," the authors write in the analysis published online in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* on October 11, but increased income results in "increased emissions."

**At the same time, the mellowing that comes with age in industrialized countries could cut emissions from countries such as those in the E.U. by as much as 20 percent.** At least that's true if present retirement

ages and the like remain the same; "if retirement is postponed," the scientists note, "the emissions-reducing effect of aging that we find here will be lessened."

Overall, curbing population growth could reduce greenhouse gas emissions; reducing peak population to roughly 8 billion, for example, could save 29 percent of expected greenhouse gas emissions. Economic growth seems like one way to accomplish that, considering that rising wealth has historically slowed birth rates. But O'Neill and his colleagues warn that, if fewer but richer people consume more as current consumption patterns in places like the U.S. suggest, those greenhouse gas savings become increased emissions.

Ultimately, family planning alone such as the use of condoms and other reproductive health services in parts of the world with growing populations, including the U.S., could restrain population growth significantly, this analysis finds. It would appear that we're trying, thanks primarily to ongoing efforts to enable [women to take control of their own lives](#) through education and other methods. **Already, birth rates the world over have halved from an average of five children per women to just 2.6 today, a baby bust replacing the baby boom.**

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From Wikipedia

The most significant modern population control system is china's one-child policy, in which, with various exceptions, having more than one child is discouraged. Unauthorized births are punished by fines, although there have also been allegations of illegal forced abortions and forced sterilizations.



Magic

We were talking about magic
as we drove along a crowded
Sunday highway

when the whirl of wings
made me turn
and a flock of geese
flew over our car
so low I could see
their feet tucked under them.

For a moment the rustle
of their presence over our heads
obscured everything

and as they disappeared
you said,
"I see what you mean."

~ Jenifer Nostrand ~

(Bless the Day, edited by June Cotner)

~~~~~ Your Next Pet?

New research has found breeding threatened native animals like quolls as pets could become a lucrative industry that would help prevent their extinction.

A team of biodiversity researchers has released the study examining the feasibility of a breeding industry for native mammals, focusing on the eastern quoll and Mitchell's hopping mouse.

Like the northern quoll, which is threatened by the spread of cane toads, the eastern quoll has been all but eradicated on the mainland by predators such as foxes.

The study found that breeding native mammals as pets could lead to them replacing domestic cats, which threaten small native animals.

A pet breeding program could also help build a greater understanding of the animals' needs. The study recognises that a breeding industry would have to be regulated but as long as keepers are well trained, there should not be any major welfare issues.

Quolls and other small native mammals could make great domestic pets - every bit as enjoyable as cats, dogs and rabbits - with revenue from sales helping conserve their endangered counterparts in the wild, according to a Sydney vet. Dr Paul Hopwood, from the University of Sydney, says his research has turned up a number of Australian mammal species that could make good companion animals.

While current laws vary from state to state, in general, they prevent most native animals being kept as pets or bred for sale.

Once his work is published in a scientific journal some time in the next few months Dr Hopper intends to seek approval from authorities for a pilot study in the Sydney area - with the quoll likely to be the first species targeted. Source: **ABC** "News in Science"



Eastern Quoll

~~~~~ Experiential Religion

For Christianity, in particular, to single it out among the various world religions, there's a movement away from a more belief-and-doctrinal formulation of religion into a more experiential, practical, you might even say pragmatic understanding: How do I get through the day? How do I get through my life? What resources do I have—spiritual resources? There's a very distinct move in that direction away, from hierarchical kinds of structures in religion toward a more egalitarian form of religious organization. I think the major evidence for that is the enormously new and important role that women are playing which they didn't play 50 years ago, and there are other evidences for this egalitarian tendency. **Harvey Cox**

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/september-25-2009/harvey-cox-extended-interview/4342/>

The International Council of Unitarians and Universalists

<http://www.icuu.net/>

The International Council of Unitarians and Universalists is a network of Unitarian, Universalist and Unitarian Universalist organizations. 22 national full member groups comprise the voting members of the Council. Provisional and emerging groups represent Unitarians from more than a dozen more countries.

ICUU Blog

Care to read more ICUU news and views? Go to the website to find how to receive personal accounts of ICUU events, news from around the world and occasional opinion articles and worshipful reflections.

Facebook

Are you on Facebook?

There is now an ICUU Group on this fast growing social networking site. Facebook is free to join. Simply go to facebook.com and sign up. Once there, visit 'groups' and search for International Council of Unitarians and Universalists. The group has over 70 members already. You can find out who else is interested, get news of upcoming events and carry on chats and post messages.

Friends of ICUU - Get involved!

ICUU is a council of organizations, not individual members. Individual friends of ICUU help with the work of the Council and are very important. You can be a friend and there are many projects and events like Study Tours and the Symposiums, which welcome your participation.

Chalice lighting

Everything that has begun will end.

Like the day changes into night,
Like the night changes into day,
In the same way,
One stage changes into another.

Your life began
And so did mine;
One day your life will end
And so will mine.

Everything will end,
Everything changes,
Everything transforms
From one shape into another.

In the course of changes so characteristic of life in this world,
There is, however, Something constant: Something which remains untouched
By all the changes and twists.

We may call it Being, Existence;
It is the untouched Source of all that is.

In the midst of changes,
When we feel insecure,
Threatened or isolated,
Let us calm our minds and
Move deep into our hearts
Into the Source of all that is,
Where the Being rises.

Let us stay in that place
For a moment.
It is our foundation,
It is our stable point.

The flame of the chalice we light now
Reflects this process of centring,
As well as the shared sacred space of
Our community.

Look into the flame and
Feel this quiet joy in your heart.

Rev. Dr. Petr Samojky
Religious Society of Czech Unitarians

From the ICUU website

Jottings

Everyone was glad to see Peter Berry looking fit again and likewise Margaret Hoffmann—still concern for Margaret Armstrong. Martin is back from Japan having had a great trip. Sunday 17th November saw a group of us at the local pub for lunch—good conversation and good food.

DON'T FORGET EVERY THIRD SUNDAY OF THE MONTH IS OUR LUNCH TOGETHER DAY.

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#### **HIGHER POWER**

A Sunday school teacher said to her children, 'We have been learning how powerful kings and queens were in Bible times. But, there is a Higher Power. Can anybody tell me what it is?' One child blurted out, 'Aces!'

**Contributed by Candace Parks**

*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.