



**Spirit of Life** Unitarian Fellowship

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

Tel: **0466 940 461**

Website: [www.sydneyunitarians.org](http://www.sydneyunitarians.org)

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## Schedule of Services

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

### **2 November Martin Horlacher "Neoplatonism, Then and Now"**

Neoplatonism was one of the leading Greek philosophies of the ancient world. But, just how much did it affect the course of history? And, does it still resonate today?

### **9 November Morandir Armson "The Esoteric World of Walter Burley Griffin".**

Walter Burley Griffin, was an important American architect and landscape designer, who invented several important architectural innovations, including the L-shaped house and the carport. Burley Griffin won the Federal Capital Design Competition in 1912 and was thereby given the task of producing the first town design for Canberra. Griffin was strongly associated with an esoteric movement, Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy Society, which influenced his architectural and town plan concepts and designs throughout his later life, which included the time he spent in designing the new city of Canberra.

### **16 November Colin Whatmough "Outgrowth: The rapid growth of human civilisation "**

- in the number of people, the power of technology and the size of the global economy, is colliding with approaching limits to the supply of key natural resources on which billions of lives depend eg topsoil and fresh water.

### **23 November Helen Whatmough "Worry, Fear, Terror"**

- Understanding and coping with Terror, or thoughts of terror, in the past and in our world.

### **30 November Martin Horlacher " Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind"**

In one of the greatest graphic novels ever written, Hayao Miyazaki explored not only environmental concerns, but also the notion of free will and the very meaning of life. What can we, in our own technologically advanced yet morally troubled modern age, learn from this brilliant piece of literature?



Newington Green Unitarian Church. Built by Dissenters in 1708.

## What does “Agnosticism” mean?

Thomas Huxley (1825 – 1895) known as Darwin’s bulldog, coined the term. He wrote:

"... most of my colleagues were --ists of one sort or another; and however kind and friendly they might be, i the man without a rag or a label to cover himself with could not fail to have some of the uneasy feeling which must have beset the historical fox when, after leaving the trap in which his tail remained, he represented himself to his normally elongated companions. So I took thought, and invented what I conceived to be the appropriate title of 'agnostic'. It came into my head as suggestively antithesis to the 'gnostic' of church history, who professed to know so much about the very things of which I was ignorant; and I took the earliest opportunity of parading it at our Society and to show that I, too, had a tail like other foxes."

He went on to say that, contrary to what his critics asserted, he was not proposing a new creed:

"Agnosticism, in fact, is not a creed, but a rigorous application of a single principle. That principle is of great antiquity; as old as Socrates who said, 'Try all things once, hold fast by that which is good;' it is the foundation of the Reformation, which simply illustrated the axiom that every man should be given a reason for the faith that is within him; it is the great principle of Descartes; it is the fundamental axiom of modern science. Positively the principle may be expressed: in matters of the intellect, follow your reason as far as it will take you, without regard to any other consideration. And negatively: in matters of the intellect, do not pretend that conclusions are certain which are not demonstrated or demonstrable. That I take to be the agnostic faith, which if a man keeps whole, and undefiled, he shall not be ashamed to look the universe in the face, whatever the future may have in store for him."

Huxley advocated that the Bible was to be read in schools for its good English, its poetry, historical value, selected ethics.

"The Huxley Heritage" by Jim Herrick, New Humanist 1997

**Note Huxley's use of the phrase "in matters of the intellect". Many people would say that belief in God(s) is not a matter of the intellect, but of "spiritual experience". Could such experience be "evidence"? JT**

The Macquarie Dictionary gives: **Agnostic** - One who holds that the ultimate cause (God) and the essential nature of things are unknown or unknowable, or that human knowledge is limited to experience.

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### **The Gordon Stein version:**

"Obviously, if theism is a belief in a God and atheism is a lack of a belief in a God, no third position or middle ground is possible. A person can either believe or not believe in a God. Therefore, our previous definition of atheism has made an impossibility out of the common usage of agnosticism to mean 'neither affirming nor denying a belief in God.' Actually, this is no great loss, because the dictionary definition of agnostic is still again different from Huxley's definition.

The literal meaning of agnostic is one who holds that some aspect of reality is unknowable. Therefore, an agnostic is not simply someone who suspends judgement on an issue, but rather one who suspends judgement because he feels that the subject is unknowable and therefore no judgement can be made.

It is possible, therefore, for someone not to believe in a God (as Huxley did not) and yet still suspend judgement (i.e. be an agnostic) about whether it is possible to obtain knowledge of a God.

Such a person would be an atheistic agnostic.

It is also possible to believe in the existence of a force behind the universe, but to hold (as did Herbert Spencer) that any knowledge of that force was unobtainable.

Such a person would be a theistic agnostic."

**Gordon Stein (1941–1996) was an American author, physiologist, and activist for atheism and religious scepticism.**

***Contributed by Morandir Armson***

## Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth? (Job 35:11)

"We need another and a wiser and perhaps a more mystical concept of animals. In a world older and more complete than ours they move finished and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear. They are not brethren, they are not underlings; they are other nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendour and travail of the earth." **Henry Beston (1888 – 1968) an American writer and naturalist, best known as the author of The Outermost House, written in 1928.**

*Contributed by Morandir Armson*

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### *The Opening of Eyes*

*That day I saw beneath dark clouds  
The passing light over the water  
And I heard the voice of the world speak  
out*

*I knew then as I have before  
Life is no passing memory of what has  
been*

*Nor the remaining pages of a great book  
Waiting to be read*

*It is the opening of eyes long closed  
It is the vision of far off things  
Seen for the silence they hold  
It is the heart after years of secret con-  
versing  
Speaking out loud in the clear air*

*It is Moses in the desert fallen to his  
knees  
Before the lit bush  
It is the man throwing away his shoes  
As if to enter heaven and finding himself  
astonished  
Opened at last*

*Fallen in love  
With Solid Ground*

*~ David Whyte ~*

## Hello from Michael

Hi Jan,

I don't know if this is divine providence. But I was going through old photos of my mum's today, and there is a postcard sent to her in Feb 1955.(60 yrs ago!)

The address states:  
20 Fitsroy St, Milson's Point.

This was the first place she lived in upon arriving in Australia in 1953. I thought it sounded familiar, so I looked it up. Do you know where it's situated?  
It's now Kirribilli, and sits next door to the UU (Neighbourhood) centre.

When I saw it on Google maps, I was very surprised. Then a memory came back to me, of being either 3 or 4yo, and falling down the steps of an old terrace.  
That terrace belonged to my mother's uncle since before WW2 (and possibly post WW1??). I think that's when he immigrated to Australia. It's right next door to the UU at Kirrabilli.

I hope to come in soon,  
See you when I do, please say hi to Martin & Eric from me.

Michael Bucciarelli



**Thanks, Michael. As Eric said, "Hope you are keeping as well as can be expected."**  
**JT**

***I had asked Michael, "What is your impression of Unitarianism as you have experienced it?" JT***

Hi Jan,

In short, the UU movement gives me an outlet to be spiritual but leave behind the magical part of the Catholic religion that I grew up with.

I can see that all religions create an air of mysticism and magical thinking that doesn't agree with me. It also seems that religions in general create exclusiveness, excluding ethnic groups, sexual orientation, or simply people outside their religion .... determining gender roles that aren't relevant today or state that one gender is inferior to another. Should one punish a woman for being smart, homosexual or unlucky enough to be born within the wrong body (as a male)? The emphasis should be on the individual as a person, not gender, class or IQ. All people need to feel part of society, not just the one's that are smarter, more assertive, richer, more educated, more physically able or emotionally fitter. If some people are lucky enough to be well, they should realise that they have been blessed by nature, but who we are is sometimes determined by pure luck, and we shouldn't exclude those who aren't as lucky as we are. Although, in our global village we often think only of ourselves and our rights. Many people in society lack compassion when things are good for them or their family, and aren't interested in a fairer society unless it impacts on them. The irony is many minority groups want to be listened to, but aren't interested in other people's rights. (eg: I have heard gay people (friends) talk about their rights, but are indifferent to Aboriginals' rights or the rights of the intellectually impaired, or the not so beautiful. I ask myself, how can people expect others to listen to them, when they won't listen to other people's views? The UU's again for me, are an inclusive organisation, that respect everyone's rights. That's the type of group I hope grows into an organisation that can absorb the many people from many religions that feel..... (like myself)... that religion is no longer relevant for them, but spirituality and logical & compassionate thinking is what they

may still want.

**All Religions seems to be causing war all around the world. It's not bringing people together, it's tearing them apart. I find the UU's inclusive and open-minded.**

Also, I'm not really religious but rather spiritual. I feel simple respect for all people (and things), no-one should be excluded. Rather than religion based on a god, I rather people come together and discuss what we can do to make society better. To have a set time to meditate and share ideas. To accept NO one philosophy, but acknowledge and discuss the pro's and con's of everything, based on logical thinking. People should have free thoughts and question, and determine what's right for them, as long as their life doesn't harm another's intentionally. Believing in a collection of books that were written so long ago, that have lots of contradictory ideas that don't seem to make sense to people in the modern world...(& to me). Science, logical thought & discussion is what's needed, ... not dictatorial and magical thinking from any organisation that state they have some magical link to god.

Also, some may think of me as anti-Australian. I don't think "Team Australia" is an inclusive idea. It creates exclusivity & separates us..... Although, I am pro-humanity. The UU's provide for me, spirituality not religion, inclusiveness not exclusivity. If I lived a little closer and was more of a morning person, I would be there at the UU's in Kirribilli more often, but at least I'm there in spirit & my thoughts. I am thankful to have found & know of a group like the UU's, and know that it's there.

I hope this gives you some idea of how I see Unitarianism, and what it means to me. Looking forward to catching up one Sunday,

Michael Bucciarelli

***Thanks for your thoughts, Michael. "Spot on" for our group . Many of us believe in some kind of God, but not the traditional omnipotent person; others do without the concept altogether. We do uphold the ideals of openness and inclusiveness. JT***

## Theophilus Lindsey, English Unitarian

He was born in Middlewich, Cheshire, on 20 June 1723 and his father was Robert Lindsey, a mercer and part-owner of a salt-works. He was named after his godfather, Theophilus, Earl of Huntingdon, who was the husband of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon (the well-known patroness of Whitefield and the Calvinistic Methodists). Lindsey's mother Jane, before her marriage, had been a member of the Huntingdon household. After initial schooling in Middlewich, where he showed early promise, it was arranged that he would enter the free grammar school, Leeds. Under the influence of the master there, Thomas Barnard, he began to prepare for a university education and a clerical career. His connections with Yorkshire were to prove important for him. Two of his later parishes in the Church of England were situated there, and among his closest friends were Francis Blackburne, archdeacon of Cleveland, the dissenting minister William Turner of Wakefield and the lawyer and politician (and later Attorney-General) John Lee, who was a native of Leeds.

Lindsey was admitted to St John's College Cambridge in 1741, receiving financial support from several quarters. He graduated BA in 1744, MA in 1748, and was a fellow of the college from 1747 to 1755. Destined for a career in the church, he was ordained deacon in 1746. In 1747 he became morning preacher at the Wheler Chapel, Spitalfields, London, and was ordained priest later that year. He also served as domestic chaplain to the Duke of Somerset, and accompanied the future Duke of Northumberland on a trip to France as tutor. He became rector at Kirby Wiske in North Yorkshire in 1752, and vicar of Piddletown in Dorset in 1755. In 1760 Lindsey married Hannah Elsworth (1740-1812), the step-daughter of Francis Blackburne, archdeacon of Cleveland, in Richmond parish church (Yorkshire).

She was to prove his lifelong companion and supporter in all he did, including his move to a unitarian position. As early as 1755 Lindsey had experienced his first crisis of conscience with regard to subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles, and whether he could remain within

the church. By his marriage to Hannah he acquired as father-in-law one of the leading latitudinarian clergymen in the country, whose writings and views were to exert a major influence over his career. Nevertheless Blackburne generally advised him to remain within the church, reminding him that "you must have bread".

### Catterick and the Feathers Tavern Petition

Despite dedicated service in Piddletown, Lindsey was anxious to be nearer his wife's family and his friends in Yorkshire, and in November 1763 became vicar of Catterick, where he was to remain for ten years. During his time there he was highly conscientious in his work as a clergyman, and became one of the first exponents of Sunday school teaching, assisted by his wife. In 1769 Lindsey met Joseph Priestley, then minister at Mill Hill Chapel in Leeds, and this marked the beginning of their long theological cooperation. He had also met William Turner, minister of the Westgate Chapel in Wakefield, who was to become one of his most valued correspondents over many years. These contacts could not fail to reawaken his doctrinal scruples. During his time at Catterick, Lindsey had decided that, like Blackburne, he would accept no further preferment within the church. However he decided not to resign his living immediately, but to launch a campaign for ecclesiastical reform.

The Feathers Tavern petition of 1772 sought the abolition of subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles for clergymen and for those graduating from Oxford and Cambridge universities. Some 250 clergy signed the petition, but the House of Commons rejected it by a large majority. Shortly afterwards Lindsey began to prepare for resignation from the Church of England. Writing to the Bishop of Chester in 1773, he said: "I am so persuaded of the strict unity of God, taught by Moses and the prophets, and last of all by our Saviour Christ, that I should hold it impiety in me to continue to worship Christ, or any other being or person."

He resigned as vicar of Catterick in November 1773. Turning down an offer from the Earl of Huntingdon to become his librarian,

Lindsey and his wife arrived in London in January 1774, taking modest lodgings in Holborn.

## **London and the Opening of Essex Street Chapel**

Supported by his friends, Lindsey determined to open a chapel, and a room was leased in Essex House, near The Strand, from Samuel Paterson, an auctioneer. The publisher Joseph Johnson was instrumental in securing this room, though the registration of the chapel was to prove more complicated. The opening of the chapel on Sunday 17 April 1774 was reported widely in the London and provincial press. The tone of these reports was generally sympathetic, with emphasis on the scruples of conscience that led him to resign from the church, on the respectability of his audience and the decorum of the service. Those attending included Benjamin Franklin, Joseph Priestley, Sir George Savile MP, the attorney John Lee (later Solicitor-General) and Lord Le Despencer (the former Sir Francis Dashwood).

Lindsey's ministry quickly established itself, and it was resolved to erect a permanent chapel. Other suitable premises not being found, the freehold of Essex House was purchased in May 1777, thanks to generous financial contributions from supporters. After extensive re-building work, the new chapel was formally opened on 29 March 1778. Lindsey remained minister until his resignation in 1793, being succeeded by the Rev Dr John Disney, who had been his assistant minister since 1783, and who had himself left the Church of England. In 1783 he published [An Historical View of the State of Unitarian Doctrine and Worship from the Reformation to our Times](#)

He continued to live at Essex House with his wife Hannah until his death on 3 November 1808, and was buried in the Bunhill Fields Dissenters' Cemetery, where his tomb can be seen today. Hannah died in 1812, and was buried in the same tomb.

## **An Analysis of Lindsey's Life and Work**

Lindsey was always disappointed at the small number of other Anglican clergy who left the

church, following his example. His purposes remained the same: to encourage liturgical reform within the church, and to establish unitarianism within the mainstream of protestant Christianity. He succeeded in making his views accessible to sections of the reading public through his theological works, and his reformed prayer book was an important contribution to Unitarian liturgical practice. The book [Memorable Unitarians](#) (1906) calls Lindsey, Joseph Priestley and Thomas Belsham 'the three fathers of modern Unitarianism'.

Although he avoided political content in his sermons, his private views as revealed in his letters were perhaps surprisingly radical, for example his support for the American revolution.

Professor Grayson Ditchfield sums up Lindsey's contribution as follows: "By his inspiration of the Feathers Tavern Petition against clerical subscription to the thirty-nine articles (1771-72) he provoked one of the most profound debates within the eighteenth-century Church of England. By his anti-trinitarian convictions and consequent resignation as vicar of Catterick in 1773 he helped to further the emergence of Unitarianism as a separate denomination and made his chapel at Essex Street, off the Strand in central London, a focus both for theological and political radicalism. He served as a point of contact for relations between many other significant figures, both Anglican and Dissenting, notably Francis Blackburne, William Frend, Christopher Wyvill, Joseph Priestley and Richard Price.

(unitarian with a small 'u' denotes a theological position; a capital 'U' generally refers to the denomination.)

***Written by Howard Hague, acknowledging debt to Professor Ditchfield of the University of Kent.***

## Lindsey's Views on God, Christ and the Trinity

1) That there is ONE GOD, one single person, who is God, the sole creator and sovereign lord of all things;

2) That the holy JESUS was a man of the Jewish nation, the servant of this God, highly honoured and distinguished by him; and

3) That the SPIRIT, or HOLY SPIRIT was not a person, or intelligent being; but only the extraordinary power or gift of God, imparted, first (Acts i. 2) to our Lord Jesus Christ himself, in his life-time; and, afterwards, to the apostles, and many of the first Christians, to empower them to preach and propagate the gospel with success; and

4) That this was the doctrine concerning God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit, which was taught by the apostles, and preached to Jews and heathens.



From A second address to the students of Oxford and Cambridge relating to Jesus Christ and the origin of the great errors concerning him

(London, 1790), quoted from The Epic of Unitarianism by David B. Parke (Boston, Skinner House Books, 1985), p47

Tomb of Theophilus Lindsey.  
(Illustrations are from Wikipedia).



## Press Report on the Opening of Essex Street Chapel, 1774

From the Public Advertiser of 18 April 1774:

“Yesterday Morning a Chapel for Divine Worship was opened at Essex House, Essex Street, in the Strand, on the Plan of a reformed Book of Common Prayer, by the Rev. Mr. Lindsey, late Vicar of Catteric in Yorkshire, which Benefice (from conscientious Principles) he has lately resigned. The new Book of Prayer, offered in the Consideration of all well-disposed Christians, contains many pious and judicious Alterations of the Church Service, nearly on the Model recommended by the celebrated Dr Samuel Clarke, formerly Rectr of St James’s. The Congregation was respectable and numerous; the Service was performed with the greatest Solemnity, Decency and Decorum; and the Auditors seemed to be particularly pleased with the Spirit of Moderation, Candour and Christian Benevolence of the Preacher, whose Sermon was perfectly well adapted to the Occasion. The text was from Ephes. Ch. 4, v. iii ‘Endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.’”

## Lindsey's Views on the American War of Independence

From a letter to William Turner of Wakefield, 7 December 1774 “Farewell to Old England’s greatness, if the sword is drawn and blood shed in America. What will three battalions or 30 battalions do? But our infatuation is astonishing. Not the least symptom of kindness or humanity towards our brethren in America from the throne, or in the speeches of the Ministerial people, but all war and vengeance. ... Nothing but calamity seems capable to awaken us out of our unfeelingness towards justice and our true interests: And that seems to be coming.”

Quoted from The Letters of Theophilus Lindsey, Volume 1: 1747-1788, edited by G.M. Ditchfield (The Boydell Press, 2007), p. lv-lvi

***From materials made available by the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.***

## Unitarians slowly gain their rights in Britain

It must be remembered that unitarianism as a theological position was being discussed long before there was a Unitarian Church.

The **Toleration Act, (May 24, 1689)**, was an act of Parliament granting freedom of worship to Nonconformists, ie dissenting Protestants such as Baptists and Independents (Congregationalists). It was one of a series of measures that firmly established the Glorious Revolution (1688–89) in England. It allowed Nonconformists their own places of worship and their own teachers and preachers, subject to acceptance of certain oaths of allegiance. The act did not apply to Catholics, Nontrinitarians and atheists, and maintained the existing social and political restrictions (including exclusion from political office) for Dissenters (as Nonconformists became called).

Unitarianism was not fully legal in the United Kingdom until the **Doctrine of the Trinity Act 1813**, a bill largely pushed forward in Parliament by William Smith, and thus known sometimes under his name, or as the Unitarian Relief Act (Trinity Act) or The Unitarian Toleration Bill. This did not grant them full civil rights while the oppressive **Corporation Act and Test Acts** remained. These penal laws served as a religious test for public office and imposed various civil disabilities on Roman Catholics and Dissenters, (including Unitarians). The principle was that none but people taking communion in the established Anglican Church were eligible for public employment, and the severe penalties pronounced against recusants, whether Catholic or Dissenter, were affirmations of this principle. In practice Dissenters were often exempted from some of these laws through the regular passage of **Acts of Indemnity**. After 1800 they were seldom enforced, except at Oxbridge, where Dissenters and Catholics could not matriculate (Oxford) or graduate (Cambridge). The Tory government repealed them in **1828** with little controversy. Thus the rights of two very different persuasions, Catholics and Unitarians, were gained.

***From various sources including the Encyclopedia Britannica, Wikipedia and Our Unitarian Heritage by Earl Morse Wilbur. Jan Tendys***

### 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: [jtendys@bigpond.com](mailto:jtendys@bigpond.com) or hand to Jan Tendys at the Sunday service.

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

**Fellowship contact 0466 940 461**