



Schedule of Services

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



Neil Inall, retired ABC presenter, spoke to us on an area he is studying – population growth and what that means for agriculture. Here we are at morning tea discussion after his talk, Neil speaking to Eric in foreground. (Photo Caz Donnelly)

Don't forget to give us articles, poems, talks, whatever for our blog <http://www.sydneyunitarians.org/news-and-services/blog/>

5 October

Colin Whatmough

“The Politics of Wealth”

Readings from Al Gore's book The Assault on Reason relating to the Unitarian Principle: The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large; leading to comments and discussion.

12 October

Morandir Armson

“Who were the Gnostics and did they leave a legacy?”

Gnostics, agnostics - there's one or two stories there.

19 October

Rev. Geoff Usher

“The individual Search within Community”

Many people are looking seriously for a religious home that is right for them. One reason is that, in the middle of the most technologically advanced civilisation ever known, many people feel terribly lonely. This service will look at three principles which John H. Nichols described as “fundamental to the search for any religious understanding”.

26 October

Steve Maxwell

“The History of the Rationalist Association in NSW.”

I believe that the origin of our association lies in the mid 19th century, a time of great social upheaval in Australia: the Gold Rush, the push for democracy and so called "Golden Age of Free Thought". History winds a curious path as you will find, and the Unitarians played a role along that path.

Love after Love

The time will come
when, with elation,
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror,
and each will smile at the other's welcome,

and say, sit here. Eat.
You will love again the stranger who was your
self.

Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you

all your life, whom you ignored
for another, who knows you by heart.
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,

the photographs, the desperate notes,
peel your own image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life.

~ Derek Walcott ~

Sudden Splendours

Life sometimes seems full of sudden splendours:
The sun rising majestically out of the darkness
of a cloud
illuminates suddenly a world tinged with despair;
A violet unfolding its fragrance in the fresh
green of a mossy bed
pierces unheralded the heart of a winter with
dreams of coming loveliness;
The carolling bird stirring the silence of a grey
morning hung with misty sadness
ushers in a strange wonder and recalls a
memory of beauty's first pangs;

So sometimes in the sanctuary apart,
When silence heals the lacerated nerve,
From the heart's depths there comes unheralded
A rising peace beyond the power of words;
And free from fettered thoughts, all vain regrets,
The tyranny of fear that binds the will,
There comes within the stillness, certitude
Of peace within the quiet heart of things;

Here is silence
Silence that can lend

A healing balm
When words are at an end

~ Muriel Hilton ~

Contributed by Rev. Geoff Usher

Sources of Our Living Tradition

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz said, "Throughout history, we have moved to the rhythms of mystery and wonder, prophecy, wisdom, teachings from ancient and modern sources, and nature herself." Worshipping in our congregations you may hear a reading or perspective shared from any one of these sources from which our living tradition is drawn:

Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;

Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;

Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;

Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

<http://www.uua.org/beliefs/principles/>

And a Personal Note:

We offer our congratulations & best wishes to Luke Parr & Melanie Speet, who were married by Geoff Usher on 6 September. Melanie is the daughter of Philip & Kee Speet whose wedding Geoff conducted 33 years ago.

A 'path to water'

Associate Professor at the Griffith University School of Humanities Mohamad Abdalla said sharia simply meant "the road to the watering place" in Arabic, and referred to the revealed guidance and directives given by Allah. Sharia is formed from the writings of the holy book of Islam, the Koran, as well as the Sunna - the teachings, deeds, and sayings of the Prophet Mohammed.

Jamila Hussain, an Islamic law expert from Sydney's University of Technology, said sharia was "a way of life for most Muslims". "It's first of all religious duties - things like prayer and fasting, and also, importantly, paying money to charity and supporting the poor and looking after the weak and the vulnerable," she said.

"It's also everyday transactions. It guides Muslims in their way of life, teaches them to dress modestly, treat other people decently, be ethical in their business dealings. "It also includes all those things we would normally call law - things like contract law, commercial law, family law, finance and banking law.

"And of course there is the criminal law element, though in most countries Islamic criminal law is not in practice. It is in places like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan where it's very conservative, but not in most countries." Islamic scholars use fiqh - jurisprudence - in order to apply the directives of sharia, which are hundreds of years old, to modern-day situations.

While sharia is considered the eternal, fixed word of Allah, "fiqh is flexible and changes according to the circumstances under which it is applied", allowing the Islamic law to "cover specific situations not directly addressed in the revealed sources", according to Professor Abdalla.

"Furthermore, in developing its legal system, scholars take into account the higher objectives of sharia, known as maqasid al-Shari'a, which include the preservation of religion, human life, progeny, material wealth and hu-

man reason," he said.

"For believers, therefore, sharia is always relevant and important wherever they reside because it is the core of their religion, guiding every aspect of their social, economic, political and private lives."

Crime and punishment

Sharia usually makes headlines in the West for its harsh penalties - for instance, in Indonesia's Aceh province, a draft law has been proposed that would punish gay sex or adultery with 100 lashes of the cane.

However, Professor Abdalla said of the 6,236 verses in the Koran, 228 covered legal principles, and only 30 covered penal law.

From those 30 verses, sharia classifies criminal punishments into three categories: hadud, qisas, and ta'zir offences.

Hadud crimes are the worst a Muslim can commit, because they are deemed a direct offence against Allah. They include the crimes of adultery, apostasy and theft, and the punishment is set.

However when someone is charged with one of these offences, strict rules of evidence must be adhered to, due to the severity of the punishments. If there is the slightest of doubts pertaining to guilt, then a punishment should not be imposed.

Qisas crimes are those that inflict harm on the human body - including murder and manslaughter. If a qisas crime is committed unintentionally, the evidence requirements are not met, or the victim's family chooses compensation, a financial compensation can replace corporal punishment.

The last category, ta'zir crimes, include those not classified under hadud or qisas. No particular punishment is set for these crimes, rather it is the discretion of the judge to choose the punishment - but it cannot exceed or match the penalty for a hadud crime in severity.

The main purpose of the Koranic verses relating to penal law, and the subsequent rulings in sharia, is not to punish. Instead, the goal is to dissuade would-be criminals, and

to encourage repentance - and if a punishment is issued, it is only when the judge is completely sure of the defendant's guilt.

'It is not oppressive of women'

Ms Hussain said the notion that Islam oppressed women was misguided.

"It's often forgotten, or not understood, that Islam gave women rights in the seventh century which European and British Australian women didn't receive until about the middle of the 19th century," she said.

"I'm talking about things like being treated as individuals in their own right, keeping their own name after marriage, having the right to divorce, having the right to own their own property, and to work and keep their earnings as they wished.

"So it is not oppressive of women. Unfortunately in some cultures there have been very patriarchal customs which have oppressed women.

"But these are not dictated by Islam at all, they are cultural practices.

"It's very easy to confuse the two; some Muslims confuse the two. It is very much misunderstood."

The rest of this ABC article may be read at: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-09-22/explainer3a-sharia-law/5759774>

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## **Background Information on the Responsibility to Protect**

### **The Outreach Programme on the Rwanda Genocide and the United Nations**

Who is responsible for protecting people from gross violations of human rights?

### **Debating the right to "humanitarian intervention" (1990s)**

Following the tragedies in Rwanda and the Balkans in the 1990s, the international community began to seriously debate how to react effectively when citizens' human rights are grossly and systematically violated. The question at the heart of the matter was whether States have unconditional sovereignty over their affairs or whether the international community has the right to intervene

in a country for humanitarian purposes. In his Millennium Report of 2000, then Secretary-General Kofi Annan, recalling the failures of the Security Council to act in a decisive manner in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, put forward a challenge to Member States: "If humanitarian intervention is, indeed, an unacceptable assault on sovereignty, how should we respond to a Rwanda, to a Srebrenica, to gross and systematic violation of human rights that offend every precept of our common humanity?"

### **From humanitarian intervention to the responsibility to protect (2001)**

The expression "responsibility to protect" was first presented in the report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), set up by the Canadian Government in December 2001. The Commission had been formed in response to Kofi Annan's question of when the international community must intervene for humanitarian purposes. Its report, "The Responsibility to Protect," found that sovereignty not only gave a State the right to "control" its affairs, it also conferred on the State primary "responsibility" for protecting the people within its borders. It proposed that when a State fails to protect its people — either through lack of ability or a lack of willingness — the responsibility shifts to the broader international community.

### **Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (2004)**

In 2004, the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, set up by Secretary-General Kofi Annan, endorsed the emerging norm of a responsibility to protect — often called "R2P" — stating **that there is a collective international responsibility, "exercisable by the Security Council authorizing military intervention as a last resort, in the event of genocide and other large-scale killing, ethnic cleansing and serious violations of humanitarian law which sovereign governments have proved powerless or unwilling to prevent."** The panel proposed **basic criteria that would legitimize the authorization of the use of force by the UN Security Council, including the seriousness of the threat, the fact that it must be**

a last resort, and the proportionality of the response.

### **Report of the Secretary-General: In larger freedom (2005)**

In his report "In larger freedom," Secretary-General Kofi Annan "strongly agreed" with the approach outlined by the High-level Panel and suggested that a list of proposed criteria — including seriousness of the threat, proportionality and chance of success — be applied for the authorization of the use of force in general. United Nations World Summit (2005)

In September 2005, at the United Nations World Summit, all Member States formally accepted the responsibility of each State to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. At the Summit, world leaders also agreed that when any State fails to meet that responsibility, all States (the "international community") are responsible for helping to protect people threatened with such crimes. Should peaceful means — including diplomatic, humanitarian and others — be inadequate and national authorities "manifestly fail" to protect their populations, the international community should act collectively in a "timely and decisive manner" — through the UN Security Council and in accordance with the UN Charter — on a case-by-case basis and in cooperation with regional organizations as appropriate.

### **In Practice**

The first time the Security Council made official reference to the responsibility to protect was in April 2006, in resolution 1674 on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The Security Council referred to that resolution in August 2006, when passing resolution 1706 authorizing the deployment of UN peacekeeping troops to Darfur, Sudan. Recently, the responsibility to protect featured prominently in a number of resolutions adopted by the Security Council.

### **Libya (2011)**

Following widespread and systematic attacks against the civilian population by the regime in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (short: Libya), the UN Security Council, on 26 February 2011, unanimously adopted resolution 1970, making explicit reference to the responsibility to pro-

tect. Deploring what it called "the gross and systematic violation of human rights" in strife-torn Libya, the Security Council demanded an end to the violence, "recalling the Libyan authorities' responsibility to protect its population," and imposed a series of international sanctions. The Council also decided to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court.

In resolution 1973, adopted on 17 March 2011, the Security Council demanded an immediate ceasefire in Libya, including an end to ongoing attacks against civilians, which it said might constitute "crimes against humanity." The Council authorized Member States to take "all necessary measures" to protect civilians under threat of attack in the country, while excluding a foreign occupation force of any form on any part of Libyan territory. A few days later, acting on the resolution, NATO planes started striking at Qadhafi's forces.

### **Côte d'Ivoire (2011)**

In response to the escalating, post-election violence against the population of Côte d'Ivoire in late 2010 and early 2011, the UN Security Council, on 30 March 2011, unanimously adopted resolution 1975 condemning the gross human rights violations committed by supporters of both ex-President Laurent Gbagbo and President Ouattara. The resolution cited "the primary responsibility of each State to protect civilians," called for the immediate transfer of power to President Ouattara, the victor in the elections, and reaffirmed that the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) could use "all necessary means to protect life and property." In an effort to protect the people of Côte d'Ivoire from further atrocities, UNOCI on 4 April 2011 began a military operation, and President Gbagbo's hold on power ended on 11 April when he was arrested by President Ouattara's forces. In November 2011, President Gbagbo was transferred to the International Criminal Court to face charges of crimes against humanity as an "indirect co-perpetrator" of murder, rape, persecution and other inhumane acts. On 26 July 2012, the Council adopted resolution 2062 renewing the mandate of UNOCI until 31 July 2013.

**More examples are given in the rest of this article:**

<http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/about/bgresponsibility.shtml>

**A statement of what is understood by this Responsibility is given at**

<http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/responsibility.shtml>

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Some Comments on the Responsibility to Protect.

Jan Tendys

The UN intervention in Cote d'Ivoire might be counted a success but the Libyan intervention raises many questions. Libya today is convulsed in civil war, with Human Rights violations on all sides. Can we say Libyans are any worse off than under the dictatorship of Qadhafi? But perhaps air-strikes were not enough. Would "boots on the ground" have improved the possibility of a stable government, or just proved to be a quagmire for any country that tried to intervene?

Iraq's Saddam Hussein was the typical strongman who holds the various factions of his country together by ruthless methods. The use of torture in his regime was well known to Amnesty International as was his use of chemical weaponry against the northern Kurds. Bernard Kouchner, co-founder of Doctors without Borders, invoked the cry of "never again" with respect to the world turning a blind eye to what went on in Iraq. According to Wikipedia: "In early 2003, he pronounced himself in favour of removing Saddam Hussein as President of Iraq, arguing that interference against dictatorship should be a global priority, and continued to say that now, the focus should be on the actual people themselves, and that they are the only ones who could answer yes or no to war."

The difficulty with this position was that the Iraqi people had no chance at all of making their wishes felt - a massive uprising just couldn't be organised. Kouchner later declared himself against the particular war carried out by what Bush called "the Coalition of the Willing" because it was not a UN operation. He felt

diplomatic efforts to remove Hussein might have worked - wishful thinking I believe.

Surely no-one takes seriously that Bush, Blair and Howard were motivated by the plight of the Iraqi people and the Responsibility to Protect. Even the question of weapons of mass destruction turned out to be a furore. Influence over Iraq's oil and a wish to prevent Hussein from meddling in Israel's affairs (which he had been doing by compensating the families of Palestinian suicide bombers) were the most likely motivation.

The outcome in Iraq should have prepared us for what happened in Libya. The "Arab Spring" has been a terrible disappointment for those who supported it. Egypt now has a strongman, virtual dictator, again. Iraq has the most fragile of democracies and one possible eventual result would be a break-up into a Kurdish state, a predominantly Sunni state and a predominantly Shia state.

What action under the banner of a Responsibility to Protect seems to need, is a concept of feasibility. Intervention in Cote d'Ivoire was feasible, not so in Libya. I believe the present intervention by the US and Arab states in Syria for limited, feasible operations like the air-strikes near Kobani and other cities under siege, is justified under Responsibility to Protect, even if the ostensible government of Syria has not invited these countries into Syria. Air-strikes should be "feasible" only where there is minimal likelihood of civilian casualties

President Obama should not commit "boots on the ground". That would surely get into the not feasible territory of fighting other people's wars for them - real wars, not the relatively small correction in Cote d'Ivoire. Australia has been invited to help in the present emergency by the Iraqi government, but our help should also be limited to air-strikes. There is no world policeman who can correct everything. The West can do more to arm the Kurds, who are defending their own territory and have shown themselves to be high morale fighters. We owe them since our 2003 destabilising blunder into Iraq.

The truth about constructive criticism

“You must have the brain of a fruit fly to think you could get away with producing such rubbish. My two-year old could have done a better job than you.”

That’s a fail when it comes to winning friends and influencing people in a work setting. Being at the receiving end of such feedback makes you feel bad. If you don’t want to demotivate, humiliate, shame or anger others then it’s a good idea to learn more about giving criticism.

Criticism isn’t nice, but it has to be given at work and the sooner you learn to give and receive constructive criticism the easier your career will be.

Here are some quick tips on how to give criticism:

Have good intentions and don’t base feedback on emotion. You want to give feedback to make improvements in the work situation, not because you don’t like someone or are doing it “for their own good”.

Criticise actions, not people. An example of this could be: “It would be good for the project if you could liaise with John”, not “you haven’t liaised with John even after I told you to.”

Focus on a goal. Write down a couple of bullet points on what the outcome of the feedback should be and keep as a reference. Remember the goal is the completion of the task not simply an excuse to criticise someone you don’t like.

Sandwich criticism between two commendations.

Put the other person in the driving seat by asking if he or she could come up with a better way for the situation to be handled.

Be prepared to take criticism, it will help you grow in your role whether you’re a manager or employee.
The truth about constructive criticism is that it

won’t always immediately result in a positive outcome. But when delivered or received with consistency and consideration it will help you develop into a stronger more productive person.

See more at: <http://theseeker.seek.com.au/the-truth-about-constructive-criticism#sthash.h1rnPsvZ.dpuf>

***...and by the way, don’t sound as though you’re being manipulative ! ;-)* JT**

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## ***Money, Money, Money***

In How to Worry Less about Money, another great instalment in The School of Life’s heartening series reclaiming the traditional self-help genre as intelligent, non-self-helpy, yet immensely helpful guides to modern living, which previously gave us Philippa Perry’s How to Stay Sane, Alain de Botton’s How to Think More About Sex, and Roman Krznaric’s How to Find Fulfilling Work — Melbourne Business School philosopher-in-residence, John Armstrong, guides us to arriving at our own “big views about money and its role in life,” transcending the narrow and often oppressive conceptions of our monoculture.....Armstrong writes:

*“This book is about worries. It’s not about money troubles. There’s a crucial difference. Troubles are urgent. They ask for direct action. ... By contrast, worries often say more about the worrier than about the world”*

While modern money-advice tends to fall into two main categories — how to get more money and how to get by on less — Armstrong points out that this bespeaks our culture’s fixation on troubles rather than worries. He writes:

*“This is a problem because the theme of money is so deep and pervasive in our lives. **One’s relationship with money is lifelong, it colors one’s sense of identity, it shapes one’s attitude to other people, it connects and splits generations; money is the arena in which greed and generosity are played out, in which wisdom is exercised and folly committed. Freedom, desire, power, status, work, possession: these***

***huge ideas that rule life are enacted, almost always, in and around money.***

***So, addressing money worries should be quite different from dealing with money troubles. To address our worries we have to give attention to the pattern of thinking (ideology) and to the scheme of values (culture) as these are played out in our won individual, private existences”***

And:

*“There is a very imperfect relationship between desire and flourishing. Desire aims at pleasure. Whereas the achievement of a good life depends upon the good we create. And the opportunity to follow whatever desire one might happen to have is the enemy of the effort, concentration, devotion, patience and self-sacrifice that are necessary if we are to achieve worthwhile ends”.*

Armstrong goes on to outline a number of practical strategies for improving our relationship with money and thus mastering our worries, concluding with a wonderful anecdote of a man who epitomized that relationship at its healthiest: Goethe..

*“From his many writings about his own experiences, we know that he was determined to get well paid for his work. He came from a well-off background but sought independence. He switched careers, from law to government adviser so as to be able to earn more (which made sense then; today the trajectory might be in the opposite direction. He coped with serious setbacks. His first novel was extremely popular but he made no money from it because of inadequate copyright laws. Later, he negotiated better contracts. He was very competent in financial matters and kept meticulous records of his income and expenditure. He liked what money could buy — including ... a stylish house-coat (his study has no heating). But for all this, money and money worries did not dominate his inner life. He wrote with astonishing sensitivity about love and beauty. He was completely realistic and pragmatic when it came to money but this did not lead him to neglect the worth of exploring bigger, more important concepts in life”*

by **Maria Popova** “Brain Pickings” an online journal.

### **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**