



Spirit of Life Unitarian Fellowship

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

A day and a cake to be remembered!

(photo Peter Donnelly)



Thanks to Irene, Martin's mum, for hosting the above and other social afternoons. Over the years we've partied at various locations celebrating birthday events, special occasions and just for no particular reason at all. Our tradition of lunching at the local pub has fallen away but that's due for a revival on the 19th July (hoping for a special guest).

Meanwhile a tradition we certainly maintain is speaking up on issues that matter, as in this letter to the Sydney Morning Herald on marriage equality, by **GINNA HASTINGS**:

Cheers to Ireland for voting by referendum to make marriage equality lawful. Bill Shorten fails to realize that by jumping the gun and making political capital on the

issue in the Australian Parliament, he is opening the subject up to the machinations of Parliament, where Tony Abbott, obviously against marriage equality, holds far more sway than he should on the issue. If this Parliament had the guts, the issue should be thrown to the people by referendum, as it was in Ireland. When all of the people have spoken, then the matter is clear and unequivocal. So first and foremost I vote for a referendum on the matter.

(The letter wasn't published possibly because unlike Ireland, Australia's constitution does not limit the power of the Parliament to pass a law in favour of same-sex marriage so we need a plebiscite rather than referendum. But every letter on a topic reminds the editor people care about that topic. A February one on childcare, also by Ginna, was published by SMH. Of course, a newspaper has an angle of its own which influences what is published. *JT*)

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**Schedule of Services**

**5 July Laurence Gormley "Endgame"**

Life has various phases. The final one is of course old age. Are we prepared for it? Will it be rewarding? What new life experiences and opportunities does it offer? And then how do we execute our exit strategy? Some thoughts, hopefully not all serious.

**12 July Morandir Armson "The Religions of the Indian Sub-Continent."**

The Indian sub-continent is the birthplace of three of the major world religions; Buddhism, Hinduism or San tan Dharma, and Sikhism. In addition to these three, the Jain religion, an ancient faith that is probably the ancestor of Buddhism, also exists in India. These four faiths are all connected; but how, and in what manner? As Indian spiritual practices, such as yoga, meditation, Ayurvedic medicine enter the mainstream of Western culture, it behoves us to ask these questions; what are the religions of India? How do they relate to each other, and to spiritual practices such as yoga? This presentation will seek to look at these questions and possibly present some answers.

**19 July Rev. Geoff Usher "Francis David and the Edict of Torda."**

Francis David (David Ferencz) is often called "the first Unitarian". He became the leader and first bishop of what became the Unitarian Church of Transylvania. His inspiring advocacy led to the Edict of Torda by Prince John Sigismund in 1568, which confirmed earlier decrees affirming the freedom of the various religious groups in the country.

**26 July Guest "Building Community"**

Marie is a Community Practitioner with Landcare. She does socially innovative projects and affordable programs to assist communities become more sustainable. Her topic will relate to how they can become self reliant.

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Wildpeace

~ Yehuda Amichai ~

Not the peace of a cease-fire
not even the vision of the wolf and the lamb,
but rather
as in the heart when the excitement is over
and you can talk only about a great
weariness.
I know that I know how to kill, that makes me an
adult.
And my son plays with a toy gun that knows
how to open and close its eyes and say Mama.
A peace
without the big noise of beating swords into
ploughshares,
without words, without
the thud of the heavy rubber stamp: let it be
light, floating, like lazy white foam.
A little rest for the wounds - who speaks of heal-
ing?
(And the howl of the orphans is passed from one
generation
to the next, as in a relay race:
the baton never falls.)

Let it come
like wildflowers,
suddenly, because the field
must have it: wildpeace.
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## Response to Papal Encyclical

**Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) President Rev. Peter Morales and Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) President and CEO Bill Schulz have issued this joint statement in response to the Papal Encyclical on Climate Change:**

"The crisis of climate change is the gravest threat facing our world today, and as people of faith and conscience we are called to respond to the moral imperative to advance climate justice. The Unitarian Universalist Association and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee therefore applaud Pope Francis for focusing the world's attention on the threat of climate change by issuing 'Laudato Si' or 'Praise Be to You,' a papal letter addressed not just to Catholics but to 'every person living on this planet.'

We are especially gratified by the Pope's emphasis on the effects this crisis is having on the world's lowest-income and most marginalized communities. 'A true ecological approach,' writes Pope Francis, 'must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.' We hear those cries.

We wholeheartedly agree with the Pope's statement that 'We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide...' The encyclical repeatedly asserts the interconnectedness of all life and calls for 'the honesty needed to question certain models of development, production, and consumption.' We in the developed world will need to make difficult choices to effectively address this climate crisis.

Pope Francis urgently appeals 'for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing and its human roots concern and affect us all.' Unitarian Universalists have initiated just such a dialogue with Commit2Respond, an unprecedented coalition of UU groups and people of conscience devoted to shifting to a low-carbon future, advancing the human rights of communities affected by climate change, and growing the climate justice movement. As people of faith, Unitarian Universalists and their allies are called to respond to this crisis in ways that recognize our position in 'the interdependent web of all existence.'

'An interdependent world not only makes us more conscious of the negative effects of certain lifestyles and models of production and consumption which affect us all; more importantly, it motivates us to ensure that solutions are proposed from a global perspective, and not simply to defend the interests of a few countries. Interdependence obliges us to think of one world with a common plan... A global consensus is essential for confronting the deeper problems,' says Pope Francis.

The UUA and UUSC encourage everyone to commit to respond by advocating for climate justice with your elected officials and to call upon our nation's leaders to bring bold, innovative plans for addressing the climate change crisis to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris later this year.

And we encourage our Unitarian Universalist faith community to reach out to other faith communities to explore ways to work together to address the crisis of climate change. Only through such coordination and collaboration can we hope to effect change at the local, national, and global level. The time for action is now.

Many faiths, one Earth. We stand with Pope Francis on climate change."

## **A water expert looks at the Pope's message on water:**

The water sections of the Encyclical Letter focus on the disparities in access, quality, and use of water between the wealthier, industrialized parts of the world and poorer populations. It notes that in many parts of the world, exploitation of water is exceeding natural resource limits - the problem of "peak water" - while still failing to satisfy the needs of the poorest.

**"The exploitation of the planet has already exceeded acceptable limits and we still have not solved the problem of poverty." (Section 27)**

The Encyclical identifies several key water problems including the lack of access to clean drinking water "indispensable for human life and for supporting terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems" (section 28), the challenges for food production due to droughts and disparities in water availability and "water poverty" (section 28), the continued prevalence of water-related diseases afflicting the poor (section 29), contamination of groundwater (section 29), and the trend toward privatization and commodification of a resource the Vatican describes as an "basic and universal human right" (section 30).

The Letter also expresses concern for the inefficient and wasteful use of water in both rich and poor regions:

**"But water continues to be wasted, not only in the developed world but also in developing countries which possess it in abundance"**

and it decries the risk that the

**"control of water by large multinational businesses may become a major source of conflict in this century" (section 31).**

In the context of climate change, the Letter notes the clear links between a warming planet and threats to water resources and other environmental conditions:

**"It [warming] creates a vicious circle which aggravates the situation even more, affecting the availability of essential resources like drinking water, energy and agricultural production in warmer regions, and leading to the extinction of part of the planet's biodiversity." (section 24)**

Consistent with the overall theme of the Encyclical is the observation that the poorest suffer the most from water problems:

**"One particularly serious problem is the quality of water available to the poor. Every day, unsafe water results in many deaths and the spread of water-related diseases, including those caused by microorganisms and chemical substances. Dysentery and cholera, linked to inadequate hygiene and water supplies, are a significant cause of suffering and of infant mortality." (Section 29)**

The Encyclical goes further and notes:

***"Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity."* (Section 30, italics in original).**

This framing is consistent with the formal human right to water declared by the United Nations in 2010, linking the right to water with the right to life and well-being. Today, the UN estimates that around 2.5 billion people on the planet still lack access to safe sanitation and 750

million do not have safe drinking water. **Worldwide, more people die from unsafe water annually than from all forms of violence, including war..**

While progress has been made in cleaning up some water pollution, especially in richer industrialized nations, many water-quality indicators are worsening, not improving, and as populations grow, exposure to some forms of water pollution affects larger and larger numbers of people and watersheds. Even in places like California, hundreds of thousands of people - mostly in low-income communities - are at risk of exposure to water with high concentrations of nitrates because of the failure to protect and clean up groundwater systems contaminated by agricultural chemicals, animal feeding operations, and poor sewage systems.

***The above is part of an article "Laudato Si' and Water: The Vatican's Encyclical Letter and Global Water Challenges" by Peter Gleick (President, Pacific Institute) for Huff Post Green. Read more at:***

***[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-h-gleick/laudato-si-and-water-the\\_b\\_7611994.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-h-gleick/laudato-si-and-water-the_b_7611994.html)***

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Charleston Church Shooting.

The Rev. Peter Morales, president of the Unitarian Universalist Association, issued this statement following the news of the shooting in a church in Charleston, SC:

"News of last night's shootings at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Charleston, SC, fills me with a profound sadness. My heart goes out to the families and friends of the victims and to the entire Emanuel Church community.

Unitarian Universalists are sadly familiar with the tragedy of church shootings. When two congregants were killed and six wounded at our Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church in 2008, the entire community reached out and embraced our congregation with love and support. We will pass that love along to the Emanuel Church community in any way we can.

Emanuel AME Church has faced many hardships over the years, but the church has persevered and thrived. May Emanuel's faithful find the strength to make their way through the tragedy that has taken the lives of nine of their members, including their pastor. We share their grief, and we stand with them in love and solidarity."



A prayer vigil at Morris Brown African Methodist Episcopal Church (Photo: Wikipedia).

Black America and supporters are in mourning at this racist shooting. Should the US South now relinquish its Confederate flag?

<http://www.vox.com/2015/6/20/8818093/confederate-flag-south-carolina-charleston-shooting> JT

Unitarians invited to Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast



Last month's Esprit included an item on the attendance by Peter Abrehart, President of ANZUUA, at an Interfaith Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast in Canberra and the reading we presented for the prayer booklet. It was the first such occasion to be held. Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Opposition Minister Bill Shorten were present.

The Buddhist contingent's reading reflected on the nature of leadership:

The Buddha has often been described as one of the greatest leaders and human beings of all time. What characterizes a good leader, and just what are the duties and qualities of good leadership we as Australia's faith leaders can learn from our teacher, in relation to the conditions existing in today's chaotic world?

Any visionary leader, like the captain of a ship must have definite goals to be able to chart his course and steer his ship in the right direction. The Buddha was born as Prince Gautama Siddhartha in Northern India (Lumbini, Nepal) around 2,600 years ago. As a young man, he gave up his royal birth rights, wealth and family status to seek out the meaning of life. His one goal was to find the causes of humankind's suffering, and the way to relieve that suffering. Despite many setbacks and a life of personal hardship, he never altered from this course, and with perseverance eventually gained Enlightenment through meditation, sitting under a Bodhi tree in the town now known as Bodh Gaya in India.

He made it his life's mission to lead humankind out of the constant Samsaric cycle of suffering. It is this vision that defined his life's work of teaching, and shaped his role as leader of an order that today continues to grow and flourish as our world body of Ordained Nuns and

Monks known simply as “The Sangha”.

Guided by this vision, the Buddha’s mission was an all-embracing one. **It was founded on compassion and love for all sentient beings, regardless of form, race, creed or status.** Addressing his first group of disciples, the Buddha instructed them to go out into their communities and spread his teachings for the well being and happiness of every living being.

A leader as a role model must be an exemplary figure, someone we can all respect and emulate. The Buddha had purified himself through many lifetimes, embodied all the Perfections (Paramita). He was virtuous and righteous in every thought, word and deed. He demonstrated Loving Kindness (Metta) in everything he said and did. This dedication, integrity and consistency won him the trust and admiration of his disciples and followers.

The Buddha led by example. His simple and humble lifestyle is a reflection of his teachings. In his daily routine, the Buddha wasted no time on idleness and frivolity. For forty-five years, he devoted his time and effort for the good of others by starting his day before dawn and working till midnight. He was able to sustain his existence on whatever food was given to him by the communities he visited.

As a leader, the Buddha displayed wisdom and compassion as a mediator, through impartiality and good judgment. **The Buddha used these skills to resolve conflicts between opposing parties on many occasions over his life time.** One documented example of this was after a dispute broke out between the Sakyans and the Koliyan Republics in India. Unable to arrive at an agreement over the distribution of waters being taken from both sides of the Rohini River, the two parties were on the verge of war. Hearing about the dispute, the Buddha intervened and settled the impasse by asking: “What do you consider as more valuable, water or human lives?”

Submitted by the Federal of Australian Buddhist Councils Inc. Author: Mr Kim Hollow,

President, Australian Buddhist Councils Inc; Leadership Lessons from Sakyamuni Buddha for the Inaugural Federal Interfaith Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast, 2015.

Here is the Jewish contribution:

Bless, oh God, our country of Australia
And all its inhabitants.

Let us have dreams in this land of long
dreams

Let the hot winds from the desert fire our
imagination

Let the red soil of the plains keep us rooted
to the things that matter

.
Let the waters of our oceans and lakes flow
into our hearts giving us depth and understanding.

Let us remember the original inhabitants of these lingering song lines.

May we stand as strong and as mighty as our
mountains and be as gentle as our places of
quiet beauty.

May Your spirit range across our great
spaces touching the contours of our many
different souls.

May Your spirit vitalise this great land, may it
enter the hearts of our government and
leaders. Guide them with wisdom, compassion
and integrity. Protect the members of
the Australian Defence Force in all their
endeavours at home and overseas. **Implant
in our hearts a spirit of love and unity that
we may work and live together in harmony
and fellowship for the well-being of
this society that we are building together.
Let our compassion be like the embracing
coastlines of our singular continent and
may peace move slowly across the rivers
of this ancient and enduring land.**

Author: Rabbi Ralph Genende, Senior Rabbi
to the Australian Defence Force and Senior
Rabbi Caulfield Shule; Prayer for Australia,
2015

The Uniting Church had this to say:

O God, our help in ages past, in your sight, nations rise and fall, and pass through times of peril;

Give wisdom and grace to our nation.

Grant our leaders, the prime minister and premiers, ministers, parliaments, councils, for service organisations and welfare groups, your wisdom, that they may search for your will and see it clearly.

Loving God, where as a nation we have turned from your path, reverse our ways and help us to repent. And help our leaders to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with God.

Submitted by Rev Myung Hwa Park, Moderator, Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of NSW and ACT; Prayer for our nation, 2015. Source: *Uniting in Worship 2*, published by Uniting Church Press..

Present editor's emphasis in each section

The Australian Catholic University initiated the occasion and was responsible for inviting ANZUUA. There was a Welcome to Country by Aunty Agnes Shea.

Our contribution is worthwhile repeating here:

Blessed are the days when we live in balance, centred in the heart that holds and the hand that helps and the love of life that guides us.

Blessed are the days when we live in balance, tending the needful and the good, righting wrongs, restoring what has been stolen, repairing what was awfully broken.

Blessed are the days when we live in balance, letting go of expectations that hurt and that hold us back from bearing healing and hope to one another and to this earth.

Blessed are the days when we live in balance, glad to give what we can, glad to share this life, glad to do all we might to make this world more loving, more peaceful, more whole. Amen.

Submitted by Mr Peter Abrehart, President, Australian New Zealand Unitarian Universalist Association (ANZUUA). Author: Rev Naomi King, Minister, Unitarian Universalist Church of River of Grass in Plantation, Florida USA.

There were 26 religions represented in the booklet which we hope to acquire. JT

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. 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@yahoo.com.au or hand to Jan Tendys at the Sunday service.

Although we have an Associate Minister, Rev. Geoff Usher, we are primarily a lay-led congregation. **Perhaps you have a topic to share?** We welcome any topic ideas, offers to speak or names of suitable speakers for our meetings whom we could approach. *Please see Caz Donnelly at the Sunday service.*

Fellowship contact 0466 940 461