



**Spirit of Life** Unitarian Fellowship  
PO Box 1356, Lane Cove NSW 1595  
Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre  
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## Schedule of Services

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

**6 December** Candace Parks **“Church Shopping, a consumer’s guide”**

For many, the faith they grew up with has lost its meaning. That doesn't mean they have necessarily lost their spirituality. When they are shopping for something to fill the void, why might they consider Unitarianism?

**13 December** Geoff Matthews **“Should Drugs be Legalised Globally?”**

Come and have your say.

**20 December** **Christmas Party.**

Members will present items to interest, delight and amuse. To share yours, please write to Janet to be added to the schedule [janet@handspring.com.au](mailto:janet@handspring.com.au) Lunch will be extra special.

**We break until Jan. 10.** In the new year we will be hearing from **Laurence Gormley, Virginia (Ginna) Hastings, Colin Whatmough, and Jim Scarfe.**

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**Committee News** A Special General Meeting was held on 15 November. Janet Horton was elected as Secretary. Margaret Hoffman was elected to the Committee. Ginna Hastings has also volunteered to participate on the Committee as a non-voting observer

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See pages 2 & 4 of this newsletter for information on

***The 2009 Parliament of the World's Religions***

December 3-9, 2009 Melbourne **You'll have to hurry!**

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***The Common Dreams 2 Conference***  
Melbourne 15-18 April 2010

## **The 2009 Parliament of the World's Religions**

**December 3-9, 2009 Melbourne, Australia**  
The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions invites all people of faith, spirit and goodwill to encounter the vast and rich diversity of the world's religious and spiritual traditions, and to take part in over 500 events including keynote addresses, seminars, conferences, dialogues, performances, concerts and exhibitions. The 2009 Parliament will bring together more than 8,000 people from across the world, including renowned spiritual, religious and political leaders.

**Hans Kung will speak on "Global Economic Ethic" He presented this at the united nations several weeks ago. Melbourne business people have been invited.**

[www.parliamentofreligions.org](http://www.parliamentofreligions.org).(website)

Enquiries

Phone: 1300 799 691 (within Australia)

or +61 2 9265 0890 (International)

Fax: +61 2 9265 0880

[parliament@meetingplanners.com.au](mailto:parliament@meetingplanners.com.au)

### **October Tour - WA**

**Margaret Hoffmann**

What a great two week coach trip, from clean and uncluttered Perth, west to the open cut gold mines of Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie - and to see their great museums of old times. But how interesting to see how fertile the country with green fields, wheat and canola stretching as far as the horizon - I had thought the deserts of our dry centre had started not so far from Perth.

How beautiful the flowers everywhere in the bush and beside the road - there had been rain and the state of WA looked wonderful.

One third of the size of Australia, WA with a population of barely two and a half million \* is enjoying its money and I would say it's the state of the future.

We travelled the southern coast from Esperance to Cape Leeuwin where French

and English navigators, botanists etc vied for exploration and ownership - the tall timbers, wild coast and flowers so beautiful to see and then up to hotter climes of the west coast to Shark Bay.

Here we watched the sea life - dolphins of course in particular - wondered at the stromatolites\*\* and the wonders of flowers, animals and the Pinnacles.

So home, tired out, but wondering at the remarkable things over 7,000 odd klms we had "navigated".

\* Australian Bureau of Statistics : as of 31 March, 2009, resident population of WA was 2,224,000 and of Australia as a whole it was 21,779,000 persons. This was an increase of 439,100 persons (2.1%) since 31 March 2008. Natural increase and net overseas migration contributed 37% and 63% respectively to this total population growth.

\* All states and territories experienced positive population growth. Over the 12 months Western Australia recorded the largest percentage gain (3.1%) and Tasmania the smallest (1.0%).

\*\* Shark Bay has the world's most diverse and abundant examples of living marine stromatolites. These 'living fossils' have helped scientists unravel the history of life on Earth. The stromatolites were a major factor in Shark Bay being declared a World Heritage Area. Stromatolites are rock-like structures built by microbes (single-celled blue-green bacteria). Shark Bay's stromatolites are only 2,000 to 3,000 years old, but they are similar to life forms found on Earth up to 3.5 billion years ago!

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Happy thought

The world is so full of a number of things,  
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.

by Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) ,  
from A Child's Garden of Verses,  
published 1885

## Western Australia Revisted

Jim Scarfe

My objectives in this modest odyssey were rather different:

-to revive memories of the 1947 train journey to Kalgoorlie by experiencing the 2009 Indian-Pacific

-to have some Kalgoorlie nostalgia after 60 years

-to visit an old friend and his wife in Bunbury

-to try to locate a god-daughter after many years (do Unitarians have god-daughters?)

-to spend some time in Cottesloe, a Perth seaside suburb

The Indian-Pacific departed Sydney at 3.p.m. on 10/10/09. It was all it said it would be. A good hotel experience on the Nullarbor Plain! Fine lounge and dining, the latter in The Queen Adelaide Restaurant. Single berths are a little cramped and the track Sydney to Broken Hill a bit bumpy. Thereafter good.

Nevertheless much of it was as I remembered from 1947 but there was no observation window at the end of the train which gave a plus 180 degree. This was because of the carriage of cars, blocking out such views.

The journey to Kalgoorlie, with stops at Broken Hill, Adelaide and Cook took 55 hours (two days and nights) arriving at 7 p.m. local time. This year no daylight saving in WA so a time difference with the east of three hours.

Much nostalgia in Kalgoorlie where I worked 1948-50. Now a prosperous looking city of 30,000 approx. I believe and the largest inland town in the country. Gold, of course, with a price of US\$1100 per oz. at the time of writing (11/11).

Did much walking and an excellent coach tour of Kalgoorlie and Boulder, went underground at the (now) Hannan's North tourist mine—only 120 ft. down so we were probably in original workings as the mine dates

from 1893, the year Paddy Hannan made his momentous discovery. Saw a gold pour there, 1300 degrees resulting in a beautiful gold "brick". No other metal like it.

Visited the Super Pit (3.2 km by 1.4 km, 330 m .deep—85 million tpa, 800,000 oz. of gold). It is planned to continue to 2017, I think , excavating by open cut methods gold bearing material previously mined by underground methods by such famous companies as Lake View & Star, Boulder Perseverance and Great Boulder.

Departed Kalgoorlie by air after three days. Thence to Bunbury (new impressive housing and public buildings). Also visited Busselton which is likewise. Stayed with an old friend, Harry, (who also used to live in that Kalgoorlie boarding house which was "home" 1948-50) and his wife. He showed me his fine garden and workshop where, amongst other productions, he has made much of their furniture. And very good it is too. Harry described his life over 60 years. We had a good deal in common workwise and the many people involved so this was very interesting.

His charming wife, Margaret, is a life-long Catholic, and had never heard of Unitarians. She made my visit most comfortable and enjoyable. This stay had the only Sunday when I wasn't travelling but no Unitarian meeting in sight. Later, when in Adelaide, I had a good chat to Jane Brooks, a senior member of the Adelaide Church, which has the only minister of the meetings in Australia and N.Z too, I think.

Tracing my god-daughter was a lengthy process, starting with Harry, Googling, a chat with her step-mother and a daughter and eventually a phone call from her (Kate) . She lives in the W.A. wheat belt and it was too remote for a visit. However, we had a great chat, once she'd worked out who I was. I had only met her once since the christening in Bullfinch (near Southern Cross) in 1955. That was in 1976. Kate is now 55 and has three daughters (most married) and a son.

The trip ended with a stay in Cottesloe, a couple of trips to Perth (now a very busy city with an impressive skyline-result of all the

activity in the north-west-iron ore, oil and gas). Visited King's Park where the beauty of the wild flowers is not exaggerated.

At Cottesloe I walked but felt a bit old for the surf, really pounding in. So took a 35 minute ferry trip to Rottnest island. Had a swim in very clean and clear water but also very chilly. Very few others of the big ferry crowd tried it. Imagine Manly on a hot Sunday and you get an idea of Rottnest crowds.

Cuisines and accomodaton were top-class all the way and, in spite of the walking, I need to lose at least 10 kg!

And so home on 2 November. Enough travel for a long time but it was good to be back. Nevertheless, I was tremendously impressed with WA -and some advice, therefore, to the young, especially--"Go West, Boys and Girls".

"And not through Eastern windows only when daylight comes, comes in the light in front the sun climbs slowly, how slowly  
But Westward look, the land is bright."

**Arthur Hugh Clough (1819-1861)**

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### **I Live my life in Widening Circles**

I live my life in widening circles  
that reach out across the world.  
I may not complete this last one  
but I give myself to it.

I circle around God, around the primordial  
tower.

I've been circling for thousands of years  
and I still don't know: am I a falcon,  
a storm, or a great song?

**~ Ranier Maria Rilke ~**

(Rilke's Book of Hours: Love Poems to God,  
translated by Anita Barrows and Joanna  
Macy)

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Make the best use of what is in your power,  
and take the rest as it happens.  
Epictetus

## **The Real Work**

It may be that when we no longer know what  
to do  
we have come to our real work,

and that when we no longer know which way  
to go  
we have come to our real journey.

The mind that is not baffled is not employed.

The impeded stream is the one that sings.

**~ Wendell Berry ~**

(Collected Poems)

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## **The Common Dreams 2 Conference**

will draw together people from Australia, New Zealand and other parts of the world to explore ways that progressive religion, including progressive expressions of other religious traditions besides Christianity, can contribute positively to the common good, so that religion enhances human life rather than diminishes it. **One of the special speakers at the conference is our Rev. Jo Lane from Adelaide.**

**Melbourne 15-18 April 2010**

To be held at St Kilda Town Hall, speakers include  
Rev Gretta Vosper (Canada),  
Hugh Mackay, Fr Peter Kennedy, Dr Val Webb, Rev Dr Francis Macnab, Hon Michael Kirby AC, Rabbi Aviva Kipen & much more, including workshops & seminars.

To register online & for more information, including other guest speakers and key event times, visit the website at  
[www.commondreams.org.au](http://www.commondreams.org.au).

For enquiries call (03) 9571 0106 or email  
[info@commondreams.org.au](mailto:info@commondreams.org.au)

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Do not fear to be eccentric in opinion,  
for every opinion now accepted was once  
eccentric.  
Bertrand Russell

**The Funeral,**  
**As practised and explained here**  
**by Rev. Eric Stevenson**

I am currently reading Geraldines-Brooks' book, "March". It is about a Unitarian chaplain to the armed forces in the American civil war. In the bloody conflict of the battle for Virginia, Brooks relates how Chaplain March is reprimanded and demoted by his Colonel. Among other misdemeanours March had been "upsetting" the wounded and dying men with his unorthodox theology. One wounded recruit had been petrified of going to Hell. He was told there was nothing to fear because there was no such thing! But on another occasion, March pretended to be a Catholic priest in order to placate a dying soldier, and administered "absolution"! He lived perpetually with this tension. It is exactly the same tension which every funeral celebrant feels who tries to balance words of consolation with a realistic world view.

While grieving hearts are raw, it is hardly the time to be philosophising about the after life. Nevertheless it is the very time when the bereaved and dying are wanting honest answers, sincerely looking for life's meaning and hoping for something better. The popular way of addressing the problem is to push the traditional line:

- we consciously continue to live on forever in another place;
- there will definitely be a recognisable bodily resurrection ;
- upon departing this life, we all have the prospect of meeting up with a personal God;
- we therefore had better be prepared to be judged by Him
- a perfect existence in Heaven awaits those who have pleased Him on earth or at least have repented on their death bed.

Popular celebrants avoid references to the alternative!!

The alternative is to tell it like it is with compassion. When I am approached to conduct a funeral, I make it clear that I am unable honestly to consign the departed one from here to somewhere else. My second stipulation is that I am bound to do the ser-

vice in as much conformity as possible with the lifestyle of the deceased. I avoid such doubtful reassurances as those listed in the last paragraph, and as soon as this is done the planning for the service takes on a liberated celebration of what is left, viz. the memory of a precious human life and its continuing influence throughout the world. There is also the earthy tabernacle in which that life dwelt. It consists of atoms and molecules which came into existence over five billion years ago. Miraculously this star dust transformed itself into the beautiful life form resting in the funeral casket about to be buried or cremated. It is ready to be transformed yet again into new life in the ongoing cycle of evolution.

What traditionally concludes the service is the "committal". The temptation for the celebrant is once again to gild the lily, to up stage this sad farewell into a "till we meet again" scenario and leave the hard work of grieving the loss of their loved one to the mourners at a later date. But by refraining from the guarantee of an apocalyptic rising from the dead, and by offering no "sure and certain hope" of an "eternal life", the grieving can begin immediately. This dispenses with the denial that characterises most closing statements. It helps us begin to surrender to the inevitability of death while we are surrounded by our loved ones and friends. If necessary it unlocks our rage at life's apparent injustices and cruelties in an accepting environment. It articulates our broken heartedness at losing sensual and person-to-person contact with somebody whom we have loved so dearly.

It is better to crown the ceremony with a declaration of our lost love while we live on in hope. For as Dorothy McMahan has said, not to have loved is never to have lived. Far better to use this sacred moment to express our deep gratitude for a life which has ended and unashamedly to shed our tears which is the honouring of that love. Owing our vulnerability and finitude thus, instead of laying claim to immortality and "victory" over the grave, closes the curtain on a life that is truly human and all the more sacred for having been so.

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(Note: There is no one way among Unitarians of conducting a funeral . Editor )

## The polite and the Caring!

Working as a paediatric nurse, I had the difficult assignment of giving immunization shots to children. One day I entered the examining room to give four-year-old Lizzie her needle. 'No, no, no!' she screamed. 'Lizzie,' scolded her mother, 'that's not polite behaviour.' With that, the girl yelled even louder, 'No, thank you! No, thank you!'

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While I sat in the reception area of my doctor's office, a woman rolled an elderly man in a wheelchair into the room. As she went to the receptionist's desk, the man sat there, alone and silent. Just as I was thinking I should make small talk with him, a little boy slipped off his mother's lap and walked over to the wheelchair. Placing his hand on the man's, he said, 'I know how you feel. My mum makes me ride in the stroller too.'

*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.*

**DEADLINE** for copy for the next issue of Esprit is

**Dec 20, PARTY SUNDAY**

Please be sure Jan has your WRITTEN items by this date. Preferred method is as an MS-WORD or email to [jtendys@optusnet.com.au](mailto:jtendys@optusnet.com.au)

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.sydneynunitarians.com](http://www.sydneynunitarians.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.