



## Schedule of Services

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

**4 March, Martin Horlacher: "Tradition: Faith, Power, and the Ties That Bind"**

Tradition still has an undeniable hold over much of Western society. But is it for the better...or is a good deal of radical re-thinking required?

**18 March, Rev. Geoff Usher: "The God of the Gaps?"**

Modern cosmology—the study of the world around us — has forced many people to consider religious questions in relation to science itself. It seems that the more we discover, the more religious questions we face—particularly questions about the emergence of spirituality in modern cosmologies.

**25 March, Rev. John Clifford: "450 year's since Torda: memory of a dead horse or reminder for today?"**

We're proud of our history but is it worth more than warm feelings? What can a closer look at Torda show us about tolerance? **See p.8**

### **Dating: meaningful connection or....**

**One thing we know: marriage isn't necessarily the end goal of dating anymore.**

If taken seriously, few activities may fill your life with such highs, and such lows, as dating.

Now that it's possible to frenetically juggle prospects on multiple sites and apps and then bounce from bar to bed with them, the roller coaster can get very extreme indeed. It's an astounding shift from a century ago, when an unchaperoned "date" was avant-garde, even suspicious to the authorities, writes Moira Weigel in [Labor of Love: The Invention of Dating](#), an extraordinary book published in 2016. ....Women invited by men to drink in bars were seen as loose and uncouth.

And yet dating is still treacherous: We may find a partner, but we may be "ghosted" (or exploited, or worse) or become too jaded to keep searching for meaningful connection.

**See p. 3**

## Eric's Spiritual Journey

*Eric Stevenson*

I define one's spiritual journey as a life-long search for and attempt to reach an understanding of the meaning of human existence. In this my ninetieth year let me begin at the current milestone of my journey.

I have reached a place of peaceful acceptance of not having finally arrived at an understanding, and of my inability to know eventually what it will be. I am convinced that I will never be able to claim that I have arrived at a satisfactory conclusion or a discernible destination. This is because of the vast range of unexplored pathways that keep opening up to me and because of the severely limited range of perceptual abilities which I possess in discerning the characteristics of the real world. However, having settled for living with doubt, I have not relinquished my search nor has my enthusiasm lessened for exploring existence in all its forms.

The previous milestones which have charted my journey have largely marked the end of periods in my personal growth and development which have had a use-by date and which I no longer need. Although some of them are embarrassing in comparison with my present world view, I regard them as having been necessary at the time for my establishing a personal identity.

Before I go to sleep each night, I no longer need a childhood gentle Jesus who listens to my unquestioning avowal of loyalty. I no longer need the emotional support of a group of evangelical devotees and religious authority figures within which to affirm my teen age spiritual status. I no longer need an omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent king God ruler of a three tiered universe to intervene in my activities within this vast cosmos. Nor do I need spiritual instruction from the supposedly divinely inspired ancient texts of sacred scripture to regulate my behaviour. etc., etc. What I do need is the freedom and the sense of personal integrity to which my current milestone has brought me.

The consequences of my present situation are

many. With it has come a respect for a valuing of, and an identification with all of the natural world, and those processes which are still creating it.

In particular, my sense of wonderment about the human condition has fostered the worth which I attribute to human reasoning, and human sensitivity, and hence to human responsibility for one's behaviour. Under the influence of certain aspects of my western Christian culture I have grasped the opportunity to adopt and observe a personal moral code which is closely aligned with the Golden Rule.

I do not include concepts of an after-life in that moral code. I thus have no reason to believe that I have an eternal soul which goes from here to somewhere else when I die. My "soul" will simply live on in a multiplicity of mental constructs within the brains of my friends (and enemies) and associates for as long as they can remember me. Naturally I have no optimism about the resurrection of the body including the body of Jesus of Nazareth. The sacred aspect about the committal of my physical remains at my funeral will be that as they decompose, their chemical constituents will contribute to new and even more wondrous evolutionary processes in the millennial future.

~~~~~

***A female Pope  
would have  
acted long ago  
to stop the  
abuse of kids.***

***@Peter\_Fox59***

**Dating**, continued.

(Ghosting, for those of you who haven't yet experienced it, is having someone that you believe cares about you, whether it be a friend or someone you are dating, disappear from contact without any explanation at all. No phone call or email, not even a text.

Ghosting isn't new—people have long done disappearing acts—but years ago this kind of behaviour was considered limited to a certain type of scoundrel. In today's dating culture being ghosted is a phenomenon that approximately 50 percent of men and women have experienced—and an almost equal number have done the ghosting. Despite ghosting's commonality, the emotional effects can be devastating, and particularly damaging to those who already have fragile self-esteem.

Why do people ghost?

People who ghost are primarily focused on avoiding their own emotional discomfort and they aren't thinking about how it makes the other person feel. The lack of social connections to people who are met online also means there are less social consequences to dropping out of someone's life. The more it happens, either to themselves or their friends, the more people become desensitized to it and the more likely they are to do it to someone else.)

Our habits are also a lot less novel than we like to think.

**Companies like IAC — which owns Match, OKCupid, and Tinder, along with 42 other "dating products" — have perfected the art of profiting off our hunger for love, sex, and companionship. But dating has always been a lucrative market for the cosmetics, fashion, and entertainment industries, among others.**

Perhaps what we least appreciate is that dating has always been hard work, akin to "an unpaid internship for love," writes Weigel. When we date, we toil as actors in a drama written by society and the lovers who came before us, she observes. And part of what makes it so bewildering is that the script and

the roles we play are constantly changing.

In 2016, I called up Weigel, who got a PhD from Yale and is now a fellow at Harvard, to discuss her masterful tapestry of feminism, pop culture, sociology, history, and economics. Our conversation has been edited for brevity and clarity.

***Eliza Barclay***

What you point out is how, even from the early days of dating in the early 20th century, we've talked about it as a form of shopping -- and as a game. You note that we've become more "educated consumers" in terms of how taste informs whom we choose to date and what kind of sex we seek. We've also become more agile athletes in the game.

But of course it's so much more emotionally complex than that. Does treating a romantic prospect like a transaction or a game take a psychological toll?

***Moira Weigel***

I think so. I think for one, it's exhausting. For two, if you're playing [author] Neil Strauss's version of The Game, which is mostly about fulfilling the male fantasy of easily getting women into bed, you're encouraged to "think of tonight as a video game." But with that, there's a loss of connection with your own emotions, which is sad. Because emotional connection is supposed to be the point of dating.

***Eliza Barclay***

A related point you make is how participating in digital dating culture today is dependent upon having money. The people who are seemingly just browsing — the people I think of as recreational daters — are the unattached urban elite. (Of course, not all of them are just playing. We now have virtual dating assistants: experts for people who see dating as a part-time job they're too busy to do themselves.)

So modern people who have significant financial burdens are probably not dating and may also not be able to plan for partnership.

***Moira Weigel***

My book is mostly about college-educated

people in cities. But when you think about why other people don't date, it's also because they don't have time and they have children. It's material resources and time. It's part of why it's aspirational. We have these shows like "Sex and the City" — it's aspirational dating.

### ***Eliza Barclay***

The history of dating in America, as you tell it, starts when the first generation of women leave the confines of the home to work in cities at the beginning of the 20th century. Suddenly men and women have this opportunity to meet and mingle unsupervised by their families. You call that the shopgirl era — because many of the first women daters were salesgirls in department stores.

And you describe all these other generations of daters that follow them: the college men and coeds (an early generation of lustful frat boys and sorority girls in the 1920s and 1930s), the Steadies (1950s daters who started "going steady" and invented the breakup), the Yuppies (1980s daters who helped create dating niches).

Which of these generations was the most fun for you to research?

### ***Moira Weigel***

The 1920s flapper and shopgirl era was a lot of fun. On a very personal note, my grandfather was really sick and in hospice while I was finishing the book. But he'd had this terrific 20th-century romance with my grandmother where they fell in love before World War II and he'd gone off and come back. And he was reminiscing about all the big dances and their ebullient energy and joyriding in the 1930s. I feel like that era was fun — with the serious proviso that if you were queer, not white, not middle class, it was not fun.

The above is an extract from:  
[The history of dating reveals how consumerism has hijacked courtship](#)

By ***Eliza Barclay*** Feb 13, 2018, @vox.com  
[https://www.vox.com/2016/6/20/11949988/america-dating-consumerism?utm\\_campaign=vox.social&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=sprout&utm\\_content=1518547893](https://www.vox.com/2016/6/20/11949988/america-dating-consumerism?utm_campaign=vox.social&utm_medium=social&utm_source=sprout&utm_content=1518547893)

## **Rise up**

**When loneliness comes stalking, go  
into the fields, consider  
the orderliness of the world. Notice  
something you have never noticed  
before,**

**like the tambourine sound of the  
snow-cricket  
whose pale green body is no longer  
than your thumb.**

**Stare hard at the hummingbird, in  
the summer rain,  
shaking the water-sparks from its  
wings.**

**Let grief be your sister, she will  
wither or not.  
Rise up from the stump of sorrow,  
and be green also,  
like the diligent leaves.**

**A lifetime isn't long enough for the  
beauty of this world  
and the responsibilities of your life.**

**Scatter your flowers over the  
graves, and walk away.  
Be good-natured and untidy in your  
exuberance.**

**In the glare of your mind, be  
modest.  
And beholden to what is tactile, and  
thrilling.**

**Live with the beetle, and the wind.**

**~ Mary Oliver ~**

Excerpt from *The Leaf and the Cloud: A Poem*

## Nuts!

Former Labor leader Kim Beazley has lashed US President Donald Trump's suggestion of arming teachers in response to the Florida school mass shooting as "nuts".

Sitting among survivors and parents who made emotional appeals for change, Mr Trump promised stronger background checks on people wishing to buy a gun and a "strong emphasis on the mental health", but said teachers could help end attacks quickly.

"If you had a teacher ... who was adept at firearms, it could very well end the attack very quickly," Mr Trump, who acknowledged the idea would be controversial, said.

"They'd go for special training and they would be there and you would no longer have a gun-free zone."

But the suggestion was savaged by Mr Beazley, a former ambassador to the United States.

"I certainly don't see that happening — that's nuts," Mr Beazley told the ABC.

"I mean, the simple fact of the matter is you cannot have teachers wandering around as gunmen.

"You know teachers. We all know teachers. We've been taught by teachers. We know what sort of people they are. They're not gun-fighters.

"This ain't the O.K. Corral in every high school."

Mr Beazley said he had a huge amount of admiration for the schoolchildren leading the charge for changes to American gun laws.

"Now what has to happen is the Americans have to get a grip on themselves on the subject of guns, and a proper understanding of their history, which is not the understanding that is taught by the National Rifle Association," Mr Beazley said.

"[I have] immense admiration for those kids.

"The NRA and the political class have suddenly run into something that they never expected — and that is a suffering group of youngsters who are world-class debaters — and they're getting a world-class backside kicking, and richly they deserve it."

'Part of the culture there', Hockey says  
Speaking to 7.30 on Wednesday night, former federal treasurer Joe Hockey, who replaced Mr Beazley as ambassador to the US, said he was left numb by America's firearms culture.

"There's a certain numbness now — a horrible numbness — that is associated with mass killings in the United States," Mr Hockey said.

"I find that pretty confronting that people say prayers, lower the flag, and then tend to move on.

"But, you know, it's such a part of the culture here [in the US].

"I've been dumbfounded how ... ingrained gun ownership is in the culture of everyday Americans."

**Above is part of an ABC News article:**

**<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-02-22/trump-suggestion-of-arming-teachers-nuts-kim-beazley-says/9475910>**

**As editor of our Fellowship's journal I have always taken it for granted that no Unitarian would object to me including poetry and prose written by people of other faiths or none, as long as the thoughts were of interest to our group and did not violate our ideals.**

**From where did we start out on this tolerant journey?**

**The Edict of Torda.**

**Jan Tendys**

**That single word.**

**A single word can brighten the face  
of one who knows the value of  
words.**

**Ripened in silence, a single word  
acquires a great energy for work.**

**War is cut short by a word,  
and a word heals the wounds,  
and there's a word that changes  
poison into butter and honey.**

**Let a word mature inside yourself.  
Withhold the unripened thought.  
Come and understand the kind of  
word  
that reduces money and riches to  
dust.**

**Know when to speak a word  
and when not to speak at all.  
A single word turns the universe of  
hell  
into eight paradises.**

**Follow the Way. Don't be fooled  
by what you already know. Be watch-  
ful.**

**Reflect before you speak.  
A foolish mouth can brand your soul.**

**Yunus, say one last thing  
about the power of words —  
Only the word "I"  
divides me from God.**

**- Yunus Emre -**

English version by Kabir Helminski &  
Refik Algan

H/T to Poetry Chaikhana

**I live with my prince**

**No one knows my invisible life.**

**Pain**

**and madness for Rama.  
Our wedding bed is high up  
in the gallows.**

**Meet him?**

**If the dark healer comes,  
we'll negotiate the hurt.  
I love the man who takes care  
of cows. The cowherd.**

**Cowherd and dancer.**

**My eyes are drunk,  
worn out from making love  
with him. We are one.**

**I am now his dark color.**

**People notice me, point fingers at  
me.**

**They see my desire,  
since I'm walking about like a  
lunatic.**

**I'm wiped out, gone.**

**Yet no one knows I live with my  
prince,  
the cowherd.**

**The palace can't contain me.  
I leave it behind.**

**I couldn't care less about gossip  
or my royal name.**

**I'll be with him  
in all his gardens.**

**by Mirabai**

English version by Willis Barnstone

H/T to Poetry Chaikhana

## **Above Everything**

**I wished for death often  
but now that I am at its door  
I have changed my mind about  
the world.**

**It should go on; it is beautiful,  
even as a dream, filled with wa-  
ter and seed,  
plants and animals, others like  
myself,  
ships and buildings and mes-  
sages**

**filling the air -- a beauty,  
if ever I have seen one.  
In the next world, should I re-  
member**

**this one, I will praise it  
above everything.**

**~ David Ignatow ~**

(Whisper to the Earth: New Poems)

**What is the key**

**To untie the knot of your mind's  
suffering?**

**What  
Is the esoteric secret  
To slay the crazed one whom each  
of us  
Did wed**

**And who can ruin  
Our heart's and eye's exquisite ten-  
der  
Landscape?**

**Hafiz has found**

**Two emerald words that  
Restored  
Me**

**That I now cling to as I would sa-  
cred  
Tresses of my Beloved's  
Hair:**

**Act great.  
My dear, always act great.**

**What is the key  
To untie the knot of the mind's suf-  
fering?**

**Benevolent thought, sound  
And movement.**

**~ Hafiz ~**

(The Gift – versions of Hafiz by  
Daniel Ladinsky)

**Lessen the doldrums  
of fellow bipeds  
Coax their spirits  
to busk and bounce  
Squeeze their chakras  
Ungum their works  
Use any trick you know  
to redeem humanity  
from impotent glum  
Inject with joy  
inseminate with light  
the wombs of mankind**

**~ James Broughton ~**

(Little Sermons of the Big Joy)

## 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. Please note that all membership applications are subject to approval at a meeting of the Committee. Ask Rev. Geoff Usher 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.***

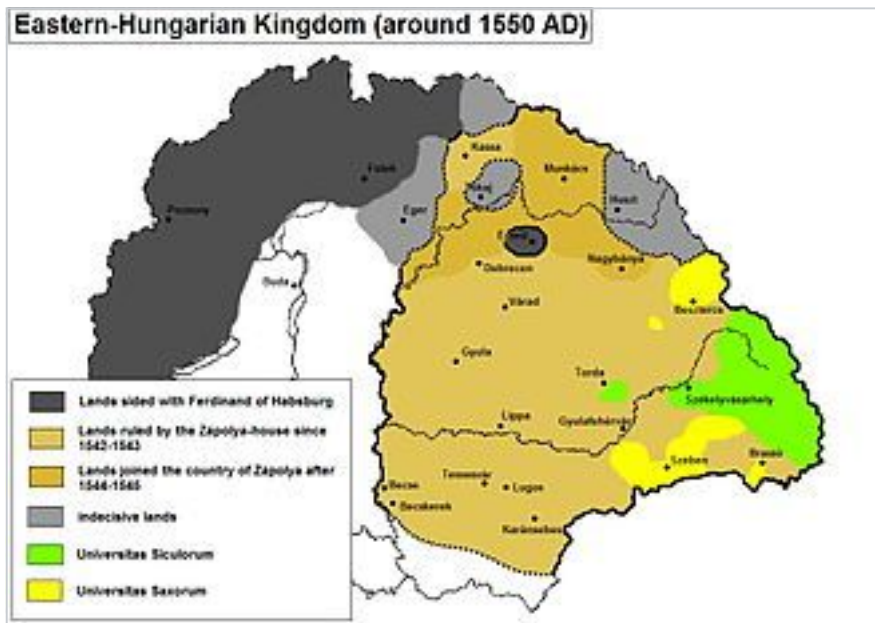
It would be helpful if items for publication, including articles and talk topics with themes could reach Esprit editor by the 15th of each month: [jantendys@yahoo.com.au](mailto:jantendys@yahoo.com.au) or hand to Jan Tendys at the Sunday service.

***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

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

### Prince John Sigismund's realm.



Modern Romania



**Some maps that relate to the talk to be given by Rev. John Clifford on 25 March.**