



Schedule of Services

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

1 April, No meeting.

8 April, No meeting.

15 April, Rev. Daniel Jantos: "Rebirths, Renewals and Renaissance - but what to keep and what to discard?"

We find ourselves in a period of intense technological innovation and change. Some like to think that technology is values neutral. And yet technology is profoundly shaping the way we relate to one another and dictating constructs of personhood and community that must cause us to ask some questions about benefit and harm. Rather than technophobia, this talk invites a chance to review our presumptions about progress and innovation.

22 April, Morandir Armson: "Christus Resurrexit: The Strange Case of Easter."

Easter is the most holy and important festival of the Christian calendar. Yet the festival itself is a very strange mixture of biblical references, Mediaeval Catholic traditions, and near-Eastern Paganism. This presentation will focus on the origins of Easter, one of the stranger festivals in the Christian liturgical calendar.

29 April, Colin Whatmough: "Interpretation & Orthodox Corruption of Scripture – from an Historical Perspective"

The New Testament developed as a set of books that Proto-orthodox Christians could use to provide them with Apostolic Authorities for their views against those of other Christian groups designated as Heretics.

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## **LIFE AND LAUGHTER INVITE US TO BE STARTLED BY EASTER...**

“The universes underpins and permits life, of  
which we are a local manifestation” (*Paul R.  
Fleischman*)

‘A pinch and a punch for the first of the month’.  
‘Rabbits. Rabbits. Rabbits’.  
Or if you are Irish: ‘White Rabbits’.

Today is a ‘first of the month’ day.  
It is 1st April—April Fool’s Day—sometimes called All Fool’s Day.  
One of the most light-hearted days of the year.  
oo0oo

Though many holidays have cloudy origins,  
the history of April Fools’ Day is particularly blurry,  
as there are several competing claims for the invention.

Some see it as a celebration related to the turn of the seasons, while  
others believe it stems from the adoption of a new calendar.

Ancient cultures, including those of the Romans and Hindus,  
celebrated New Year's Day on or around April 1.  
It closely follows the vernal equinox (March 20/March 21) or  
first day of spring in the Northern Hemisphere,  
when Mother Nature fooled people with changing, unpredictable weather.

In medieval times, much of Europe celebrated March 25  
—the Feast of Annunciation—as the beginning of the new year.  
Then it appears a couple of changes took place...

One such change was...  
In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII ordered a new calendar,  
the Gregorian Calendar—named after himself—to replace the old Julian Calendar.  
The new calendar called for New Year's Day to be celebrated on January 1.

The other related change...  
In France, in 1564 Charles IX—that’s Charles IX of the St Bartholomew’s Day massacre—  
Charles IX decreed that the new year would no longer begin on Easter,  
as had been common throughout Christendom,  
but rather on January 1.

Why? Because Easter was a lunar and therefore moveable date.  
Things needed to be fixed. Made more stable!  
Back to Charles IX... What was the St Bartholomew’s Day massacre?  
The systematic slaughter of 10,000 Huguenots.

I guess that can make things stable!  
Mmm.

According to a popular explanation,  
many people either refused to accept the new date,  
or did not learn about it, and continued to celebrate New Year's Day on April 1.

Other people began to make fun of these so-called 'traditionalists',  
sending them on 'fool's errands' or trying to trick them into believing something false.  
Eventually, the practice spread throughout Europe.

Whatever its origins, April Fool's Day appears it received its name  
from the custom of playing practical jokes on this day.

One such practical joke occurred in 1957.  
The **BBC** current affairs programme *Panorama* hoaxed the nation with  
a report about the annual spaghetti harvest.

The report showed Swiss farmers were experiencing a record spaghetti crop and  
showed footage of people harvesting noodles from trees  
and laying the strands out to dry.

Numerous viewers were fooled.  
Among those hoaxed included the then-BBC Director General, Sir Ian Jacob.  
Newspapers were split over whether this was a great joke  
or a terrible hoax on the public.

Closer to home...

Last year, 2017, **Ikea** unveiled plans to launch the world's first non-stop flight  
from Australia to Sweden, as part of its plans to launch a low-cost airline,  
aptly named Flikea. "Using a fleet of five custom-fit aircraft," the media release said,  
"the single-class airline will launch in 2019 and will use the five dimensions of  
Democratic Design unique to IKEA to reduce aircraft weight and fuel requirements,  
resulting in a dramatically reduced transit time, lower ticket price, and cutting out the need  
for any stopovers."

Not to be outdone, **Virgin Australia** announced it was introducing a  
world-first Canine Crew service.

"Hundreds of dogs have been specially trained at a new purpose built canine crew training  
facility over the past few months in preparation for their introduction to service on all  
Boeing 737, Airbus A330 and Boeing 777 aircraft in the Virgin Australia fleet."

Virgin even posted a video on social media showing the said Canine Crew in training.

And... **Gelatissimo** posted online they were launching the world's first artisan gelato  
"that treats sensitive teeth. The company has worked with leading Australian dentists to cre-  
ate a flavour that is clinically proven to relieve the symptoms caused by tooth sensitivity."  
oo0oo

April Fool's Day is not a religious festival.  
However, some traditions have tried to link the celebrations to  
medieval Christianity's *Feast of Fools*,  
which took place each January, particularly in France.

Popular belief holds that the *Feast of Fools* was

“a disorderly, even transgressive Christian festival, in which revelling clergy elected a burlesque Lord of Misrule, who presided over the divine office wearing animal masks or women’s clothes, sang obscene songs, swung censers that gave off foul-smelling smoke, played dice at the altar, and otherwise parodied the liturgy of the church.”

Such belief—even fostered by *Encyclopaedia Britannica*— is highly exaggerate if not deliberately misreported.

According to more recent scholarly accounts,

“The Feast of Fools developed in the late 12th and early 13th centuries as an elaborate and orderly liturgy for the day of the Circumcision (1 January). Celebrating the biblical principle that ‘God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise’ (1 Cor. 1:27), the feast allowed low-ranking subdeacons to assume leadership roles in worship, usually reserved for the bishop or the cantor.” (*Max Harris*)

Yes, there were aspects of merriment, humour, and festivity ‘inside’ the church, even if the clergy weren’t getting dressed up and rampaging through the ‘outside’ streets. Although it is easy to imagine that some did occasionally get caught up in the madness going on in the streets.

After all, if some strange behaviour is banned, it’s usually because someone tried it!

More importantly the reversal of power that they did indulge in

“was enough to make their leaders [at the Council of Basel in 1435] crack down on the tradition. People in power don’t always have a sense of humor about their power being questioned...” (*Sarah Laskow*)

Which in itself shows just how important festivity is.

To celebrate is to live out “the universal assent to the world as a whole.” (*Josef Pieper*) A special time when we affirm *all* of life by saying a joyous yes to *part* of life.

“...real celebration, rather than a retreat from the reality of injustice and evil, occurs most authentically where these negative realities are recognised and tackled, not where they are avoided. An antiseptic religion shies away from guilt and terror as well as eros and mirth. Its world becomes flat and anemic.” (*Harvey Cox*)

oo0oo

An article which I still go to often,

and has in it echoes to both April Fool’s Day and Easter,

is former Harvard Divinity School theologian Harvey Cox’s ‘*God’s Last Laugh*’.

Published more that 30 years ago, one paragraph stands out:

“On the Christian calendar Easter is a feast of gladness. Grief turns into jubilation. Bitter defeat becomes exuberant hope. Even those who walk in the valley of the shadow of death know they need fear no evil. But, without a trace of irreverence, can we not also say there is something genuinely comic about Easter? Could it be God’s hilarious answer to those who sported and derided God’s prophet, who blindfolded and buffeted him, and who continue to hound and deprive God’s children today?” (*Harvey Cox*)

And again, near the end of the article, Cox suggests;

“Rightly rendered, the comic spirit transcends tragedy. It steps outside the probability tables and enables us to catch a fleeting glimpse of what might be, even of what—

ultimately—already is.”

Whether any of this aligns with your personal theology or not,  
I want to suggest both Easter and April Fool’s humour are about affirming life. To  
be embraced by life, not scared of it.  
In all its particularity.  
Because life must be concretely practised.  
It must be 'a way of life'.

Perhaps that ‘way of life’ could be practised, shaped by these thoughts:

- How do we care for each other interpersonally in ways which do not suffocate and oppress?
- How is the well-being of our neighbour pursued in the complex problem of global hunger and threats of international war?
- How are communities developed positively around respect and care for each person rather than around a common enemy?
- How are the systemic causes of non-love eliminated?

To live with these particularities coursing in our veins, is to  
live in the spirit of the sage called Yeshu’a/Jesus.

Because Easter in particular is not just a collection of religious stories  
about a so-called once-only event in the past.

Easter can and does happen every day when we are

“moved by sacred hope and convinced of the profound significance of each person as an  
infinitely precious being... [when] we dream and plan and implement positive change  
to enhance the well being of self, others, and the whole of creation... while also  
embracing and dealing with the reality of our imperfections and their impact on our-  
selves, others, and creation.” (*Gretta Vosper*)

oo0oo

Much ink and blood, sweat, and tears, have been spilt over 'what is'  
and 'what is not' considered to be the real Easter story.

And of course, what is meant by ‘resurrection’ - aka Jesus’ resurrection.

As an aside... the trouble with resurrection is that  
conservative forces within church orthodoxy have literalised it, narrowed and constricted it,  
“turned it into a creedal belief,” to quote Brandon Scott,  
“and in the process have forfeited its great claim and hope.” (*Brandon Scott*)

So... on this April Fool’s Day ‘cum Easter Day,

I invite you to consider, either for the first time, or yet again:

· Easter reminds us we are called into deeper community. ·

Life invites us to be startled by Easter, not scared by it.

· Resurrection is not an escape from death, but an invitation to live life with zeal. · We  
are not alone in this life of faith.

Life is renewable.

The human spirit is indomitable.

A loving, caring existence is stronger than death itself.

Easter is that ‘standing up’ moment when marigolds and  
the laughter of the universe break through.

Notes:

Cox, H. “*God’s Last Laugh*” in **Christianity and Crisis**, 6 April 1987. Reproduced on Religion Online. — — — — —, **The Feast of Fools: A Theological Essay on Festivity and Fantasy**.

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Johnson, D. & S. Ross. “*The Uncertain Origins of a Foolish Day.*” <<https://www.infoplease.com/calendar-holidays/major-holidays/april-fools-day-origin-and-history>> Accessed 13 January 2018.

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<<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/feast-of-fools-medieval-tradition>> Accessed 14 January 2018.

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Real Life. “*The Best April Fool’s Day jokes around Australia*”. 2017. <[news.com.au](http://news.com.au)>

Scott, B. B. **The Trouble with Resurrection. From Paul to the Fourth Gospel**. Salem. Polebridge Press, 2010.

Vosper, G. “*Easter Day Liturgy*”. Direct from the author, 2004.



*A special thanks to Rev Rex Hunt for use of this address. Rex’s original layout preserved the rhythms of speech and I have tried to follow suit as far as Publisher would allow. Any oddities are down to me rather than Rex. JT)*



Bilbies, or rabbit-bandicoots, are desert-dwelling marsupial omnivores; they are members of the order Peramelemorphia. At the time of European colonisation of Australia, there were two species. The lesser bilby became extinct in the 1950s; the greater bilby survives but remains endangered. It is currently listed as a vulnerable species. It is on average 55 cm (22 in) long, excluding the tail, which is usually around 29 cm (11 in) long. Wikipedia:

**Cadbury’s have discontinued their chocolate bilbies owing to low sales but you can still purchase Easter bilbies from other Australian chocolate manufacturers including Haigh’s and Pink Lady.**



Photos: Wikipedia:

Wildlife World and David Fleay Wildlife park.

## How do we treat the Homeless? Here's the Finnish way.

MARCH 21, 2018 HELSINKI, FINLAND—As anyone who has visited Europe recently can attest, the scourge of homelessness has reached epidemic proportions.

The only exception to the trend is Finland, according to FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organizations Working with the Homeless. There, homelessness is, remarkably, on the decline.

Per the latest statistics, the number of homeless people in Finland has declined from a high of 18,000 30 years ago, to approximately 7,000: the latter figure includes some 5,000 persons who are temporarily lodging with friends or relatives. In short, the problem has basically been solved.

At the core of this was a move away from the so-called “staircase model,” whereby a homeless person moved from one social rehabilitation level to another, with an apartment waiting for him or her at the highest step. Instead, Finland opted to give housing to the homeless from the start, nationwide, so as to allow them a stable environment to stabilize their lives.

“Basically, we decided that we wanted to end homelessness, rather than manage it,” says Juha Kaakinen, CEO of the Y-Foundation, which helps provide 16,500 low-cost apartments for the homeless.

To be sure, one of the reasons why Finland has made such strides in resolving its homelessness problem is because successive Finnish governments have made it a national priority. The elimination of homelessness first appeared in the Helsinki government’s program in 1987. Since then virtually every government has devoted significant resources toward this end.

Around 10 years ago, however, observers noticed that although homelessness in general was declining, long-term homelessness was not. A new approach to the problem was called for, along with a new philosophy.

The optimal solution, a group of four experts appointed by the Ministry of the Environment found, was Housing First. “Solving social and health problems is not a prerequisite for arranging housing,” they observed. “Instead, housing is a prerequisite that will also enable solving a homeless person’s other problems.”

The concept behind the new approach was not original; it was already in selective use in the US as part of the Pathways Model pioneered by Dr. Sam Tsemberis in the 1990s to help former psychiatric patients. What was different, and historic, about the Finnish Housing First model was a willingness to enact the model on a nationwide basis.

**“We understood, firstly, that if we wanted to eradicate homelessness we had to work in a completely different way,” says Mr. Kaakinen, who acted as secretary for the Finnish experts. “At the same time right from the beginning there was a national consensus that the problem had reached a crisis point. ... We decided as a nation to do something about this.”**

***Above is part of an article by Gordon F. Sander. Read more:***

”[https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2018/0321/Finland-s-homeless-crisis-nearly-solved.-How-By-giving-homes-to-all-who-need?utm\\_campaign=Echobox&utm\\_medium=Social&cmpid=TW&utm\\_source=Twitter](https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2018/0321/Finland-s-homeless-crisis-nearly-solved.-How-By-giving-homes-to-all-who-need?utm_campaign=Echobox&utm_medium=Social&cmpid=TW&utm_source=Twitter)

Dear Editor,

Firstly, I would like to say how much I enjoy reading "Esprit" each month, particularly as I no longer live close enough to attend regular services in Kirribilli. So thanks Jan for all the effort you put in. I always find it interesting with an array of different articles and commentary.

Particularly I wanted to say I very much appreciated reading Eric Stevenson's article "Eric's Spiritual Journey". To me, Eric's journey crystallizes where many of us finally end up after a lifetime of searching for meaning in life. So. thanks Eric, and congratulations on entering your ninety years.

Laurence Gormley

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SIGN OVER A GYNECOLOGIST'S OFFICE: "Dr. Jones, at your cervix."

IN A PODIATRIST'S OFFICE: "Time wounds all heels."

ON A SEPTIC TANK TRUCK: Yesterday's Meals on Wheels."

ON A PLUMBER'S TRUCK: "We repair what your husband fixed."

ON ANOTHER PLUMBER'S TRUCK: "Don't sleep with a drip. Call your plumber."

IN A NON-SMOKING AREA: "If we see smoke, we will assume you are on fire and will take appropriate action."

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 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