



# The SUN

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Sydney Unitarian News

Editor: M.R. McPhee

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**June/July 2011**

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## **THE ICUU HALL OF FAME**

The Executive Committee of the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists has announced that it will commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the organisation by honouring “15 very special people whose vision and foresight contributed significantly to the creation of the vibrant and growing international network”. Known as the ICUU Founders Vision Award, this is to be presented to the recipients either at the national conferences of their home organisations or at the ICUU Council Meeting in the Philippines in February 2012. The recipients are as follows:

Herman Boerma, President of the Canadian Unitarian Council (1988–90) and member of the planning committee for the foundation meeting that created the ICUU.

Rev. John Buehrens, former president of the UUA (1993–2001) and author. In his first years in office, he provided UUA funding for the ICUU project and attended the foundation meeting in 1995. Later, as a member of the UUA Board of Trustees, he obtained financial support for various ICUU activities.

Ellen Campbell, current Vice-President and past Executive Director (1990–2000) of the Canadian Unitarian Council. She was the CUC representative at the founding meeting of the ICUU and served as its Secretary (2001–03).

Rev. Polly Guild (posthumous), ICUU Program Coordinator (1995–2009) and longtime international worker for the UUA. With her husband, Rev. Ted Guild, she made contact with U\*U organisations all over the world and helped to plan the foundation meeting of the ICUU. After that, they facilitated leadership training conferences (including one for ANZUA in Adelaide in 1994), developed the first ICUU website and worked with U\*U groups in the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Philippines, Pakistan and India.

Christine Hayhurst, long-time Deputy General Secretary of the UK General Assembly and ICUU Member-at-Large 2003–05). She helped to organise the ICUU Theological Symposium in Oxford (2000), the Miguel Servetus commemoration in Geneva (2003) and the Council Meetings in Spain (2005) and Germany (2007).

Gevene Hertz, ICUU Vice-President (1997–2001) and President of the European UUs for at least two terms (once as co-president with her husband, John). While they are Americans, they have lived in Denmark for about 30 years.

Wolfgang Jantz, prominent leader of the German Unitarians and ICUU Member-at-Large (1995–97 and 1999–2001). He organised the ICUU conferences and meetings that were held in Germany.

Carleywell Lyngdoh, General Secretary of the Unitarian Union of Northeast India (Khasi Hills Unitarians) and its successor, the Indian Council of Unitarian Churches for 33 years.

Rev. Kovács István of the Unitarian Church of Transylvania, ICUU Member-at-Large (2004–06). He helped organise the European Tour of 1999 and other programs in Transylvania, the USA, India and Argentina.

Rev. Jill McAllister, ICUU Treasurer (1995–99), President (1999–2003), Member-at-Large (2007–2009) and current Program Director. She has also held office in the UUA and headed last year's ICUU-ANZUUA Growth Workshop in Brisbane.

Rev. Kenneth MacLean of the UUA, appointed by Rev. John Buehrens as Special Assistant for International Affairs (1992–93) and for Interfaith matters (1994–99). He assisted the working party that formed the ICUU.

Rev. Clifford Reed, President of the UK General Assembly (1997–98), ICUU Secretary (1995–97) and chair of the first Theological Symposium at Oxford. He is also a noted hymnodist and writer of worship materials.

Rev. Rebecca Sienes, President of the UU Church of the Philippines (1988–2008 and 2009–). She was a member of the planning committee for the foundation meeting and represented the UUCP there.

Rev. Szabó Árpád (posthumous), professor of theology and Bishop of the Unitarian Church of Transylvania (1996–2008) and ICUU Vice-President (1995–97). He was instrumental in helping the ICUU understand the importance of our denomination's historical and theological roots.

Rev. David Usher, founding President of the ICUU (1995–1999) who first proposed an international U\*U body in 1987 while serving as a minister in Manchester. Originally from Adelaide, he moved from the UK to the US and was a member of the planning committee for the foundation meeting that created the ICUU.

Much more could be said of these worthy people – and it will be in later issues this year.

## SERVICE DIARY

Meetings every Sunday from 10.30 – 11.30am  
(followed by coffee, tea and food)

Date	Presenter	Topic
5 <sup>th</sup> June	Michael Spicer	A Special Place: Unitarianism and the Enchantment of Rookwood Cemetery
12 <sup>th</sup> June	Peter Crawford	William Wilberforce: Evangelism and the End of Slavery
19 <sup>th</sup> June	Prof. Patrick Bernard	A Unitarian View on the Life of Catherine the Great: Despot of the Enlightenment
26 <sup>th</sup> June	Bill Markham	The Persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire
3 <sup>rd</sup> July	Peter Crawford	Benjamin Franklin and the Age of the Enlightenment
10 <sup>th</sup> July	Music Service	
17 <sup>th</sup> July	Peter Crawford	Heaven on Earth (Part 1): The Dreams of the Utopian Socialists
24 <sup>th</sup> July	Prof. Patrick Bernard	Heaven on Earth (Part2): Karl Marx and his Mission
31 <sup>st</sup> July	Rosamund Barton	Walking Ireland's St. Declan's Way

[Please check the church website ([www.sydneyunitarianchurch.org](http://www.sydneyunitarianchurch.org)) for updates. The program for the month of August will be available from the beginning of July.]



We speak different languages. We live on different continents. And yet we share a common love, a common faith, and a common destiny. We share a commitment to create a world where compassion guides us, where all are cherished, where all are free.

We light this chalice in recognition of our enduring connections, in honor of our shared legacy, and in anticipation of the future we shall create together.

*Hablamos idiomas diferentes y vivimos en continentes distintos, pero compartimos un amor común, una fe común y un destino común. Compartimos el compromiso de crear un mundo en el que nos guíe la compasión, donde todos seamos amados, donde todos seamos libres.*

*Encendemos este cáliz en reconocimiento de nuestras relaciones duraderas, en honor de nuestro legado compartido y en la expectativa del futuro que crearemos juntos.*

Submitted by the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations; English and Spanish words written by its president, Rev. Peter Morales.

*Chaque fois que je vois une fleur, je pense à toi,  
Chaque fois que je vois une fleur, je pense à nous,  
Car nous rassemblons les fleurs, n'est-ce pas ?  
Pour qu'elles forment un éventail arc-en-ciel  
Pour qu'elles fassent bouquets  
Pour qu'elles fassent Eglise.  
On dit que, dans ta Bohème natale,  
Elles sont si nombreuses au printemps  
tant belles et mutines  
Qu'elles courent et dansent dans les prés  
Célébrant la vie en farandole de liberté.*

Each time I see a flower, I think of you.  
Each time I see a flower, I think of us.  
For we gather flowers, do we not?  
So that they may bloom into a fan-shaped rainbow  
and make up lovely bouquets,  
making up the Church.  
They say there are so many of them  
in your native Bohemia,  
so beautiful and lively,  
that they run and dance in the fields  
celebrating life in a frolic of freedom.

Submitted by the *Eglise Unitarienne Francophone* (Francophone Unitarian Church) and dedicated to the Czech Unitarian martyr, Norbert Čapek, who was born in June 1870; French and English words written by its webmaster, Jean-Claude Barbier.

[These are the Chalice Lightings from the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists for the months of May and June.]

Rev. Peter Morales is the UUAC's first Hispanic president, elected in 2009. He was born in San Antonio, Texas, and studied history at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California. After working in a number of different jobs and places, he joined the UU church in Eugene, Oregon, and studied at Starr King School of Ministry, graduating in 1999. He became minister of the Jefferson UU Church in Golden, Colorado, which grew rapidly, prompting the UUA to make him Director of District Services in 2002–04.

The Francophone Unitarian Church is the on-line arm of the Council of French Unitarians and Universalists, which sees its purview as extending to French-speaking communities elsewhere in Europe (e.g., Belgium, Switzerland, Monaco and Andorra), in North America (Québec, Acadia, Louisiana and Philadelphia) and Africa (Burundi, the two Congos and Togo). If you use a search engine to access their website (<http://eglise.unitarienne.fr>), you can obtain an English translation of it.

The last time we wrote about the CFUU, we did not have space to explain why there are French-speakers in Philadelphia. Acadia comprises the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, as well as the state of Maine – all of which once had French colonies. After the UK took control of those areas in the 1700s, the Acadians were expelled and many of them went to Louisiana, where their name was corrupted to 'Cajun'. However, some settled in Philadelphia and others did so on the way back, when Acadians were allowed to return to their former homes.

## TWELVE REASONS TO BE VERY WORRIED ABOUT OUR PLANET (Part 1)

By Peter Crawford

The destruction done to the Earth is extraordinary and irrefutable. Despite the prattling of public demagogues, whose names at this stage will not be discussed, the decay is everywhere apparent. Marsupials are plummeting in both numbers and biodiversity; feral creatures like cats, foxes and cane toads are booming across the Australian continent; fisheries are in decline. Soil is degraded and the mineral resources of the country are raped and robbed like never before to service the blast furnaces of the Chinese juggernaut. At a recent service in our church, former CSIRO soil scientist, Christopher Watson, lamented the failure of scientists to take strong stands against such monsters as human population growth. Yet, in a way, their neutrality and circumspection are understandable.

Scientists who involve themselves in prophecy and prediction, social hypotheses and speculation are often proved wrong by the course of events. Population biologist Paul Ehrlich provides a telling example – in 1970, he predicted the likely demise of Britain as an environmentally functioning society by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. That has, of course, not happened. Ehrlich argued that the fates of India and Egypt would be catastrophic if they could not restrict their population growth. Instead, both countries, are better fed today than at any time in the last fifty years. Yet, if Ehrlich had not frightened audiences with his dire forebodings, there would have been far worse political indifference than what has transpired. Among Ehrlich's grim warnings in 1970 were the emergence of out-of-control viruses (read AIDS) and the likelihood of global warming with unforeseen consequences. Governments are much more awake to the possibility of grotesque environmental happenings than ever before.

Let us return to our central contention that the scientific community is failing to address key issues of moral importance in relation to the environment. It is indeed a sad commentary upon the public life of the country that an economist (Ross Garnault), not a scientist, leads the call for action. It is as if everything has to be expressed in terms of filthy lucre or people simply will not listen. Be that as it may, there is no doubt that our Earth is becoming more impoverished as each day passes. If scientists will not campaign actively with anything like the zeal required to see some meaningful action, then it is up to each of us to do their best.

For this reason Rob Cairns, one of our supporters resident in Hong Kong and a diligent journalist in that city, has provided a compendium of notes under the title of 'twelve reasons to be very worried about our planet'. These are:

1. Melting of the polar ice caps.
2. Destruction of the world's forests.
3. Gross human overpopulation.
4. Depletion, of the world's fisheries
5. Species extinction and depletion .
6. The damage and bleaching of coral reefs.
7. The rise of sea levels faster than expected.
8. Worrying increase in levels of carbon dioxide.
9. Other greenhouse gases, being emitted at an alarming rate.
10. Serious threat to world water supplies.
11. Depletion of world mineral resources.
12. Finally, and most significantly, it may simply be too late to reverse a process of self-sustaining deterioration.

Robert could well add a couple more possibilities, such as the insidious spread of toxins and the boom in feral animals. He could add introduced species typified by the cane-toad in Australia, or the lion-fish off the east coast of North America. However, his notes provide us with a good start for consideration. Let us begin by recapitulating his first issue, that of melting ice caps and glaciers.

Researchers are now warning that the Antarctic ice-melt alone could raise sea-levels by five metres or more. The eastern Antarctic ice-sheet, once thought to be unaffected by global warming, has lost billions of tons of ice since 2006, and could seriously affect sea-levels in the future, according to a study in *Nature Geo-Science*. The same study shows that the smaller, and less stable western Antarctic ice-sheet is also shedding significant mass, *Agence France Presse* reported.

Scientists fear rising global temperatures could trigger a rapid disintegration of West Antarctica, which alone holds enough water to push up the global watermark by five metres. In 2007, the UN intergovernmental panel for climate change predicted sea levels would rise by 18 to 59 centimetres by 2100, but this research did not factor in crumbling ice-sheets in Greenland and Antarctica. Today many of the same scientists argue that even if carbon dioxide emissions are curtailed, oceans are more likely to rise by a metre. Such alteration would see the end of places like the Australian beaches, as we know them. This is enough to bring to an end the existence of a number of small island nations and, perhaps more seriously, to make unliveable delta nations like Bangladesh inhabited by hundreds of millions of people.

Professor Jianli Chen and colleagues from the University of Texas have analysed nearly seven years of satellite data on the interaction between the ocean and ice-sheets in Antarctica. They found that West Antarctica dumped, on average, about 130 billion tons of ice each year into the sea. They also found that, for the first time, East Antarctica was losing mass, mostly in coastal regions, at the rate of 57 billion tons annually. The margin of error could be almost as much as the estimate, meaning that the quantity could be as little as a few billion tons, or as much as 100 billion tons annually. Scientists had previously thought that East Antarctica was in balance; that is, it was replacing as much ice as was being lost or perhaps a bit more. Alas, it appears the reverse is the case. There is in fact acceleration of ice-loss right across the continent.

Antarctic ice-loss may soon be contributing in a most significant way to global sea-level rise. Another study in the journal, *Nature*, reported an upwardly revised figure for Antarctic temperatures during previous interglacials – warm periods such as the present one have occurred roughly every 100,000 years. During the last interglacial period, about 128,000 years ago, temperatures were roughly six degrees higher than at present and sea-levels were approximately seven metres higher than today. Meanwhile, both the Antarctic and the Arctic are heating much faster than previously believed. The greatest danger is that declining ice cover will reflect less of the Sun's heat, creating a 'positive feedback loop' that will produce yet more global warming.

[Peter has not indicated whether this series will have twelve parts, so 'watch this space'.]

## MY MUSICAL EXPERIENCES AT YALE

By Stephen Whale

During my time at Yale I have learnt and discovered many things, both within the realm of music-making and outside of it. I've found out many things about the creative process, about how to find the qualities of sound and phrasing particular to each composer, and developed the discipline of preparing for performances whilst juggling other commitments. I've also had a chance to take a semester of German, which was particularly helpful for translating and understanding *Lieder* and will prove useful if/when I travel to that part of the world. It also gives me an extra insight into the music of the German tradition that is so central to the repertoire.

Yale itself has been a truly enriching environment. I've had to get used to the weather, and to adapting to different social settings which are sometimes a little colder than in Australia but, on the other hand, studying and working near such beautiful and dignified buildings has been a pleasure. I've also developed my abilities in the academic side of music: theory (in other words, musical grammar) and history (the broader cultural context), particularly in late 18<sup>th</sup> Century and 19<sup>th</sup> Century music. I have found these skills particularly valuable in assisting a more direct approach in preparing recital programs and will continue to use them.

[Stephen was our pianist and Music Director in 2006–09, while he was completing a Bachelor of Music at the Conservatorium of Music (Sydney University). He also played concerts at our church and elsewhere, including with the Sydney University Symphony Orchestra and the Queensland Orchestra in 2007. He graduated with First Class Honours in 2008 and won three scholarships toward his objective of studying at Yale University for a Master of Music, which he has now completed.

While in the US, Stephen performed at Yale, in New York and even in Washington, DC. He recently formed the 'SF Fundament Duo' with the noted violinist, Farkhad Khudiyev, performing an acclaimed recital entitled 'Music: the Mirror of Life and the Soul' at Yale in May. He returns to Sydney in July, via the Casalmaggiore Festival in Italy, with engagements already booked – ring Suzanne Gleeson (9450 2234) for details.]

## OH, LORD, PLEASE DON'T BURN US

O Lord, please don't burn us.  
Don't grill or toast your flock.  
Don't put us on the barbecue  
Or simmer us in stock.  
Don't braise or bake or boil us  
Or stir-fry us in a wok.

Oh, please don't lightly poach us  
Or baste us with hot fat.  
Don't fricassee or roast us  
Or boil us in a vat,  
And please don't stick thy servants, Lord,  
In a Rotissomat.

Composed by Eric Idle and John Du Prez;  
authored by Graham Chapman and John Cleese



This song is attributed to the British comedy team, Monty Python (Graham Chapman, Eric Idle and Terry Gilliam in the back row; Terry Jones, John Cleese and Michael Palin in the front). While not a member of the group, John Du Prez helped to compose many of their songs.

This reminds us of an old joke about a Scottish Presbyterian preacher who addressed his flock as follows: There ye'll be, writhing in eternal hellfire and damnation. And the Good Laird, in his infinite goodness and mercy, will take time to look down upon ye. And ye will say: "Laird! Laird! We didna ken!" And the Good Laird, in his infinite goodness and mercy, will say: "Aye? Weel ye ken noo!"

## HOW MANY ( ) DOES IT TAKE TO CHANGE A LIGHT BULB?

Anglicans: Eight – one to call the electrician and seven to say how much they liked the old one better.

Charismatics: Only one – hands are already in the air.

Lutherans: Change?!

Mennonites: At least fifteen – one to change the bulb and three or four committees to approve the change. Oh, and a casserole.

Mormons: Five – one man to change the bulb and four wives to tell him how to do it.

Pentecostals: Ten – one to change the bulb and nine to pray against the spirit of darkness.

Presbyterians: None – God has predestined when the lights will go on and off.

Roman Catholics: None – they use candles.

Quakers: None – who needs a lightbulb when you have an inner light?

Unitarians: We choose not to make a statement either in favour of or against the need for a light bulb. However, if in your own journey, you have found that light bulbs work for you, that is fine. You are invited to write a poem or compose a modern dance about your personal relationship with your light bulb. Present it next month at our annual Light Bulb Sunday Service, in which we will explore a number of light bulb traditions, including incandescent, fluorescent, three-way, long-life, and tinted, all of which are equally valid paths to luminescence.

[This is yet another apocryphal Internet joke, of which many versions can be found.]

## PLANE WRECK AT LOS GATOS



The crops are all in and the peaches are rott'ning,  
The oranges piled in their creosote dumps; \*  
They're flying 'em back to the Mexican border  
To pay all their money to wade back again.

(Chorus)

Goodbye to my Juan, goodbye, Rosalita,  
*Adiós mis amigos, Jesús y María;*\*\*  
You won't have your names when you ride the big  
airplane,  
All they will call you will be 'deportees'.

My father's own father, he waded that river,  
They took all the money he made in his life;  
My brothers and sisters come working the fruit trees,  
And they rode the truck till they took down and died.

Some of us are illegal, and some are not wanted,  
Our work contract's out and we have to move on;  
Six hundred miles to that Mexican border,  
They chase us like outlaws, like rustlers, like thieves.

We died in your hills, we died in your deserts,  
We died in your valleys and died on your plains.  
We died 'neath your trees and we died in your bushes,  
Both sides of the river, we died just the same.

The skyplane caught fire over Los Gatos Canyon,  
A fireball of lightning, and shook all our hills,  
Who are all these friends, all scattered like dry leaves?  
The radio says, "They are just deportees."

Is this the best way we can grow our big orchards?  
Is this the best way we can grow our good fruit?  
To fall like dry leaves to rot on my topsoil  
And be called by no name except 'deportees'?



Woody Guthrie (1948)

\* This refers to the destruction of 'surplus' fruit to keep selling prices up.

\*\* While these are Spanish names, the expression is probably an imprecation.

Prompted by nothing in particular, this piece was written about the crash of a Douglas Skytrain in southern California in January 1948 that killed all 29 of the Mexican passengers and three crew. It was set to a haunting Hispanic-sounding melody a decade later by a schoolteacher named Martin Hoffman and first sung by Guthrie's friend, Pete Seeger. The song is better known as 'Deportee', although the passengers were actually field workers whose contractors had failed to provide return transport at the end of the season. In any case, Guthrie was struck by the absence of passengers' names in the reportage of the crash.

Woodward Wilson Guthrie (1912–1967) was born in rural Oklahoma and left for California in the 'Dust Bowl' era of the Depression. He had many experiences of the conditions of working class people on the way that formed the basis of his songs – indeed, his first album was entitled *Dust Bowl Ballads* (Victor Records, 1940). Despite his many later songs and live performances, no other albums were produced in his lifetime. Guthrie was diagnosed with Huntington's disease in 1952 and hospitalised from 1956 until his death. His legacy was part of the folk revival of the 1960s, wherein his works were performed by Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan and many others, including his son, Arlo.

## FAREWELL TO INDIA

By Patrick Bernard

The plane slowly took off, like a heavy melancholic bird, gliding over the sub-continent, leaving behind unfulfilled promises and a thousand unlived adventures. “India will change you forever” had predicted Corné on the day of my arrival. He was only right in the sense that any experience that is lived mindfully is likely to change us forever, one way or another.

On the way to Mumbai airport, Ramesh had driven unusually quietly and cautiously, as if to delay my departure a little bit longer. He had then made all sorts of flattering predictions but had added the superstitious condition that these predictions would only come true if every traffic light turned green for us all the way to the airport. Miraculously, that is exactly what happened. Ramesh could shed convincing tears with great ease and perfect timing but, regardless, I was touched that he was able to put on another one of those lachrymal performances to bid me farewell without forgetting, of course, one last time, to extract some more money out of me. Outside the Terminal, nothing had changed since the day of my arrival a few months earlier. The same actors were all in their appointed places performing their well-rehearsed routines, oblivious to the deafening cacophony or to the dust and chaos surrounding them. The same professional beggars and mustached policemen with their batons were on duty. Predatory taxi drivers were, as ever, hustling for their next victim.

Left to my own devices, inside the terminal I was fleeced twice in quick succession. A one minute phone call to Australia ended up costing me ninety dollars, as I found out a few weeks later when I received my monthly credit card statement, and - to top it all up – a pedantic Qantas employee charged me nine hundred dollars for excess luggage. Needless to say, no receipt was issued but, as Ramesh would say: “This is India!” which was his open-ended way of explaining and justifying nearly everything. Corné had previously read in the stars that nine was supposed to be my ‘lucky number’ but, on that day, it seemed that the whole of India was conspiring to prove him wrong.

I should have stayed in India much longer but we seldom depart at a time and manner of our own choosing. Unlike in the movies, in real life there always remain many unresolved issues and unanswered questions. After all this time, I still neither know nor understand much about India and even less about myself, so I left as incompetent as I arrived but I now apprehend with relief the immensity of my ignorance which is an unexpectedly comforting awareness. India acts as a mirror to the contemplative visitor but the only image I perceive now is as blurry and undefined as ever. I flew off frustrated, prodded by professional duties, personal constraints and social obligations, but practicalities and soulful yearnings do not frequently walk hand in hand. Everything conspires against our preferred destiny.

I have romantically imagined I could spend the rest of my life in two countries, India and Russia – although I do not belong to either, I felt at home in both. Elsewhere I function, often comfortably, but overall I drift between past and future, knocked about by waves of unreality. By contrast, in Russia and in India I feel truly alive, anchored to an eternal present where all is possible and the spirit thrives in its natural habitat. For this reason alone, I do not wish to go back either to India or Russia unless I can stay there forever. Short visits followed by tearful farewells are too painful as one vanishes through the clouds like a thief behind a smokescreen. Meanwhile, somewhere a few thousand feet below, India had already disappeared from view.

As an unintended consequence of religious bigotry, arcane castes divisions and arranged marriages, among so many other medieval practices, India has managed to preserve its history, traditions and cultural identity unlike Western countries that have incomprehensibly decided to forsake their collective memory. Many of the obscurantist and cruel practices of India may be the heavy price a civilisation has to pay to ensure its survival. India is still a nation profoundly divided between various cultures, religions and socio-economic groups who either loathe or barely tolerate each other at best. Socially, the situation is not much better. The rich are obscenely rich. The arrogance of the middle-class is insufferable and, despite all the claims of economic success, the vast masses of the abjectly poor are growing exponentially, thus providing willing recruits for various religious fanaticisms and even a resurgent Maoist insurgency in the North.

India, as a nation-state, is the result of a colonial folly. It is not a multicultural country in the Western sense of the word, although even there we are not too sure what that will really mean for us in the long term. In India, several culture coexist in contiguity, in a state of permanent but precarious truce until, every so often,



hostilities flare up again with a sudden and appalling brutality, but soon everyone reverts to a semblance of normality until the next outburst, each group waiting for the other to make one wrong move to justify yet another bout of tribal violence, religious intolerance and ethnic cleansing. How could such a mess also create such beauty? Despite all its divisions, contradictions and squalor, maybe even because of those, culturally and spiritually India is still India today as much as it was in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. As we know, India's and the world's only real problem remains that no serious effort is made to control its human numbers. All else is a mere footnote to that single issue and the future of the planet is bleak unless this challenge is addressed and resolved urgently. Exporting vast numbers of people to various Western countries will do nothing to solve India's problems in the long term but, instead, it will transfer those problems and create new ones in the host nations, no matter what economists and politicians promise us.

It is not squalor, injustice, misery and cruelty that are unbearable in India but our indifference to this sorrowful spectacle. In order to protect our precious selves from pain, we have slowly become Kafka's monsters. With the years, I too had become numb to the suffering of others but, in India, horrified by my own lack of genuine compassion, I rediscovered whatever humanity was left in me.

In general, happy people do not write stories. Why should they bother? They are too busy being happy. But, if one wishes to '*follow the road less travelled*', there should then be *a story*, otherwise what would have been the point of seeking distant skies? Tourists never really go anywhere, they only cannibalise cultures, take a few snapshots as proofs of their visit and buy some kitsch souvenirs as useless trophies.

By contrast, a worthy travel story should involve the heights and the abysses of human experience, a few incomparable joys and, mostly, great pains. The genuine traveller intuitively knows that and, if *The Story* doesn't unravel as expected, it has to be engineered; the arm of fate has to be twisted. First and foremost, of course, there has to be blood followed by broken dreams and inconsolable sorrows. There has to be tragedy and comedy, love and treason. There has to be enchantment, danger and fear. There cannot be any safety net. There have to be heavy prices to pay for meagre rewards. The traveller should only purchase a one-way ticket or, if he buys a return fare, he must then at least welcome the possibility that he may never come back, anyway. For this voyage to be worthy, there also has to be cruelty and kindness, splendour and horror. In his quest for sublime beauty, the traveller must welcome ugliness. With a little bit of luck, the traveller might be caught in a whirlwind of historical events – no matter what the consequences may be.

The traveller has to be alone and selfish, gregarious and generous. He has to make false promises and betray everyone, including himself. He can then try to seek redemption as his story twists and turns. He has to be available and remote at the same time. He must forget that he was taught how to read maps, because his path is uncharted and he will have to make it as he goes along, carving his way through dense forests and hostile wastelands. He will have to swim across wild rivers and stumble down treacherous mountains. He will have to walk through fire and ice. He will learn to laugh and cry as he never had before. He will have to be a despicable scoundrel and a hero, a liar, a coward and a saint.

The traveller must explore the darkest recesses of the human soul. He must seek the mirage of wisdom tirelessly while accepting that he will never reach it. With a bit of luck and a lot of hard work, he might just briefly see a ray of light – but that is no promise, for there is no certain prize at the end of this perilous odyssey. Lastly, the traveller should not seek anyone's counsel, for this could only weaken his resolve and embark him on someone else's voyage. Once all this is done, he may discover unknown treasures within himself but he will also have to accept the futility of all his endeavours. Most of this, of course, will only take place in the traveller's imagination, his real life being no less ordinary than anyone else's.

If you cannot accept these tyrannical conditions, do not travel dear reader – save your money, time, energy and maybe even your life! Play with your electronic gadgets, surf the Internet in search of virtual friends. Live by proxy, stay home and watch other people's lives unravel on television and, if you still have longings for some exoticism, the Discovery Channel will take you safely to distant places where you will never have to go.

With some surprise, I also realised in India that, with all the best of intentions and despite all my claims to the contrary I am nothing more, nor less, than a European. It is fashionable to make apologies for who we are but there is no point in this politically correct hysteria. Since all groups of human beings, without exception, have a lot to apologise for, the whole exercise is therefore futile. Where does it start and where does it end? Meanwhile, as I enter the Autumn of my existence, another simple truth is gently blowing the light breath of

Spring and it is that I must rediscover with a child's heart the ability to embrace the world as it is, open all windows and doors to let in fresh air and sunlight.

There is a price to pay for everything. Having wished to be alone, the traveller must accept the inevitable consequence of such yearnings. The traveller could not go through life without long periods of reflective and, at times, terrifying solitude. The continuous babble of others, no matter how beloved they may be, alienates us from our inner self. The traveller must therefore welcome his sorrows and his melancholia like faithful old companions returning with the grey skies of winter.

Having embraced freedom with reckless abandon and rejected filial obedience, tribal loyalties, ideological convictions, religious bigotry and other follies, I have then stumbled, like many of my contemporaries, to the edge of a vertiginous void. That debilitating feeling of emptiness that afflicts many of us is alternatively diagnosed as either a sign of depression or as a symptom of some chronic medical condition, but the truth is that for most of us it is simply a consequence of our moral relativism which, by definition, offers no neat universal answers, whether religious or political, to the human condition. Indeed, it would be so much more comforting to believe absolutely in something, anything. The true believer is saved from having to think. The best any rational person can hope for is resigned contentment. I envy and fear those who find solace in superstitions or dogmas, thus sharing the views of Voltaire, who wrote more than two hundred years ago: "Those who believe in absurdities will soon commit atrocities."

All things, we are told, must come to an end but, sitting there on this flying machine, I did not feel that my time in India had come to a satisfactory end but rather that I was sneaking out cowardly, running away with my tail between my legs. There was no apparent reason for this unpleasant sentiment, which plagued my return trip like grit between my teeth.

I came back to Sydney with no particular lesson to teach to anyone, no pearls of wisdom to share, just a few scribbles in my notebooks. After half a century of unrestrained wanderlust, I am now intermittently possessed by the ominous middle-aged desire to throw my bag down somewhere, anywhere, and to call it prosaically 'home', which is a project as thrilling as choosing one's own final resting place. Like an old rat in its treadmill, I had gone nowhere and I was back exactly where I started.

Where are you all now, dear Indian friends, as the tyranny of time erases even our sweetest memories? Will I only ever see you again in dreams of yesteryear or in the next lives that your Gods promised? Like wise shamans, you have left me alone again to pursue my long journey and the possibilities seem limitless. The nomadic mind never really adapts to the sedentary life and to this day, when I hear the wind howling outside my window on a cold and stormy night, I still feel like a beast locked up in a cage dreaming of an impossible return to the wilderness.

***Post scriptum:** This is the last of sixteen chapters, which were written over six years and drawn from entries I had made in my diaries while I was living and working in Mumbai, India, in 2005. For a variety of reasons, each instalment has been embellished or filled with exaggerations, contradictions, obfuscations and, for good measure, the occasional lies and a few convenient omissions but, in spite of it all, I attempted honestly to describe something vaguely resembling a truthful record of my inner journey while I was in India.*

[For the benefit of new readers, Patrick's writings were in two stages: his 'Deluge' series over several issues in 2006 and this 'Voyage' saga, which commenced in the December 2007/January 2008. In this instalment, he mentions a colleague at his arts college, Corné, and his driver, Ramesh – both of whom are the subjects of earlier chapters.

The 'Deluge' component is a gripping account of Patrick's experiences when he and others were trapped in the college for two days after a torrential downpour flooded downtown Mumbai. The water rose to the second storey of their building and they were without electricity, air conditioning or tap water the whole time. 'Voyage' covers his whole time there, starting with his departure from Sydney, and a number of its chapters focus on significant individuals who worked with him. Throughout both series are vivid descriptions of the street life and other aspects of urban India, together with insightful reflections on the meaning of it all, both personally and globally.

The SUC Committee is considering ways to record Patrick's lengthy and painstaking work for posterity, if he doesn't already have plans to publish it.]

## SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR SYDNEY UNITARIAN CHURCH 2010

This report will cover the everyday running of the Church and fully endorses and complements the 2010 President's report. Our Church extends much further than the Sunday services which we attend.

*The use of our facilities by a comprehensive range of worthy community organizations (not for profit) continues to be a highlight:*

- The Eastern Sydney A.A. (Alcoholics Anonymous) Group meet in our hall on Wednesday evenings.
- Each Friday evening, an alternative A.A. group conduct their meetings.
- The organizational wing of N.A (Narcotics Anonymous) conduct their meetings on Wednesday nights.
- A Tai Chi (A.A. based) group meet on Thursday afternoons.
- A local mothers and infants educational program, which has been organized by a child psychologist to cater for the needs of inner city families, meets on Monday and Wednesday mornings.
- Music sessions for local students by our esteemed musical director, Chad Vindin (at various times).
- The Australian Electoral Commission uses our premises as a polling station.
- Lumina & Parkridge Apartments hold their AGMs.

*Our Church also encourages other kindred (tolerant) religious groups to use our facilities:*

- The Sydney Sufis have met on Monday evenings for over 15 years.
- BOTA (Builders of the Atrium) hold their services on Tuesday evenings.
- The Sydney Gnostic Church meet on Sunday evenings and on some Thursday nights.

*We have given generously to a variety of charities in 2010. These include:*

- Street Mission (our main charity), who do wonderful work with homeless people in Sydney northern suburbs.
- Doctors without Borders.
- Taronga Zoo to assist with their Tasmanian devil breeding program.
- Well Wishers, a non-denominational 'hands-on' charity who provide fresh water to Third World communities.
- Land Mines Recovery group, who help victims of land mines.

*On a practical note, as you will see from the Treasurer's report, we can continue with our programs because of our prudent financial management. This has allowed us to sponsor:*

- Our outstanding musical contributions, organized by Chad Vindin, through honoraria.
- The composition of a wonderful new collection of Unitarian Hymns, again by Chad Vindin.
- The brilliant publications, *SUN* and *QUEST*, which are only possible through the outstanding efforts of our Editor, Michael McPhee.
- Our excellent catering for the sessions after the service on Sundays – Nancy and Xi Xi are exceptional with their dedication, above and beyond their duties.
- Our delegations to the Growth Workshop in Brisbane and to the ANZUUA conference later this year.
- Our fantastic website, so well set up and maintained by Curt Fraser, which continues to draw new people into our Church.

*Capital works for 2010/11 include:*

- New entry door and locks.
- New hot water heater and various plumbing work in the toilets and kitchen.
- And, of course, our new pride and joy – the new audio/visual system which you see before you.

*Wish list for 2011:*

- Increasing membership, continuing harmony, prudent management.
- Some great events to make use of our new facilities and to foster our Unitarian Spirit of Life.

[Delivered by Michael Spicer to the Annual General Meeting on 08 May 2011.]

## ANZUUA 2011

We have now received the full program of the ANZUUA Conference in Brisbane on 27–29 August, copies of which are available at the church. The theme is ‘Standing on the Side of Justice and Compassion’ and the venue will be Mercy Place in the foothills of Mt. Coot-tha. The keynote speaker will be Dan Furmansky, Campaign Manager of the UUA-sponsored public advocacy initiative, ‘Standing on the Side of Love’.

## COMMITTEE NEWS

As of the Annual General Meeting on 08 May, the Committee members are: Patrick Bernard (President), Peter Crawford (Vice-President), Michael Spicer (Secretary), Nadia Repin (Treasurer), Michael McPhee (Public Relations Officer), Chad Vindin (Music Director), Ralph Bennett, Curt Fraser, Liam Martin, Cita Tamayo, Olavan Souvalassy and Nancy Chen.

Our new audiovisual system was unveiled on that day and it will clearly be a great adjunct to our services. It was used on Saturday, 21 May, to screen a DVD of a Russian movie, *The Return*.

It was agreed that SUC should ask the UU Church of the Philippines to nominate a suitable congregation to be our ‘sister church’.

The next Committee meeting will be held on 23 June 2010. If members have any matters which they would like to be placed on the agenda for discussion, they should contact the Secretary on 0423 393 364 or email: michael\_j\_spicer@yahoo.com.au.

## CONTACT US

The deadline for copy for the August/September issue of *The SUN* is Sunday, 16 July 2011. The preferred method for sending articles is as an attached WORD document to: info\_syduni@yahoo.com.au – otherwise, simple email is suitable for short items or messages. Alternately, copy can be posted or brought to the church.

**Membership renewals for 2012 should be paid before the end of December. Those wishing to join can use this form by way of application but should not send payment until their membership is accepted.**

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## MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL FORM

I, (name) \_\_\_\_\_

of (address) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Phone(s): (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (other) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

apply to join/renew membership in (delete one) the Sydney Unitarian Church and agree to abide by the rules as set down by the Constitution and management of the church.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Fee enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ \*

Cheques should be made payable to: Treasurer, Sydney Unitarian Church. Membership will be valid for the calendar year 2011 and should be renewed by 01 January 2012.

\* Annual membership is \$20 and includes the SUN journal; subscription to the SUN only is \$15.