



## **The New Church Newsletter**

**Hurstville Society September 2016**

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## Are the Olympics Spiritually Pointless?

By Rev Todd Beiswenger

One of the problems of being a minister is that every now and again, I find myself in a mindset that is not unlike that of a sad and depressed teenager, looking around at life thinking everything is pointless. It goes like this: You got some new clothes? Nice, but really not important. New phone? Cool, I want one too, but doesn't *really* matter. When life is judged by what I think the Lord and the angels will think is something to be proud of, well, suddenly a lot of life becomes pointless.

Which brings me to the Olympics. Talk about pointless, right? I mean, really, so you can throw a discus really far, big deal. How does that help? You can run or swim really fast... ok, so what? What are you going to actually accomplish with that skill? Seems like it is all about personal vanity. Sometimes my mind will imagine what their life review might look like, the athlete standing there talking to the angels, and the angel asking, "What did you do with your life?"

"Well, I trained really hard, jumped over a bunch of hurdles, and came in first place by 0.4 seconds!" The angels then shake their heads, and say, "No, that was to glorify you. What did you do to glorify God?" Essentially, how did you treat people? How did your life help those around you? Hmmm...

It is at that point in the conversation where we realize that much of life can be pointless, or even worse: a pursuit of vanity. Now, this isn't exactly a new vice for humanity. Swedenborg writes, "Since earliest childhood the natural has been acquiring no other ambitions than those that spring from selfish and worldly desires, thus ones that are the opposite of charity. (Secrets of Heaven 5651)" That's pretty harsh! Especially when you focus on the phrase, "no other ambitions." It doesn't leave much room for discussion!

Usually when I think of worldly, pointless and vain ambitions, I think of body-building. Of all the vain and pointless things to pursue, it seems to me that body-building would be the most vain and pointless of them all. Looking good solely for the sake of looking good. I'm not just talking about taking care of your body and staying fit, but obsessing over it and devoting all your time to it in the same way the Olympic athlete makes their sport their driving force in life. Body-building is done just so a person can strut about and people can marvel and how muscular and fat-free they are in the expectation that others will think they're great.

Yet I find myself in admiration of these body-builders, runners, and athletes of all sorts. Sure, I'd love to have their physical talents, but what I actually admire is their self discipline. The discipline to eat in a way that they deny themselves the donuts, the cakes, and various other things that will put fat on your body. It's impressive. Not only that, but they also have the focus to chase their goal with a single-minded determination. They fail, fail, and fail again, but they keep getting back up and working harder and rededicating themselves to that goal. I keep thinking that there has to be something good in that, right?

I imagine the body builder who reaches the other world and finally learns that they have to give up something that they love to enter into heaven. Maybe body-building! Probably more likely they've got to give up their love of vanity. But since they've cultivated an iron will in this life, I wonder if that self discipline will allow them to carry the day. I think it is a nice way of thinking in one respect, yet in my research I have failed to find anything that actually suggests that it is actually true. Self-discipline is not an end in and of itself. The discipline the Lord is trying to teach us is the skill of letting our internal, higher self, have control over our external, lower self. Let the mind have control over the desires of the body. Let the love of the neighbour have priority over our love of self. Let our ego take a back seat to the needs of others. This is what needs to be cultivated.

But when all we focus on is a physical pursuit or talent, when the good desire comes along, it is quickly killed off. Jesus teaches just this in the parable of the sower, specifically when seed is placed on thorny ground. We spend our mental energy justifying our worldly pursuits and actions, creating thoughts and a line of thinking that tells us what we're doing is good, and as a result this mental state “also close[s] the internal man, leaving the person wholly devoid of wisdom so far as salvation of the soul and eternal life are concerned. (Secrets of Heaven 9144)”

Essentially as you stop thinking about your soul and higher matters, you close off access to those higher parts of your mind. Use it or lose it.

In the end though, it all comes down to motive. Are these people competing for personal glory, or for some higher reason? Now I know that there are athletes who do give their glory to God, some publicly, and some privately. But even the Lord doesn't really want praise. He wants to see us providing useful service to our neighbour. Are Olympians, body-builders, and athletes providing useful service? They do give the rest of us a lot of entertainment, and that's no small thing. The world does need entertainment. Perhaps that's where the Olympics and other events can be seen as something truly useful: as a needed distraction from our necessary worldly pursuits that allow us to replenish our spirit so that we can have the energy to do the work that the Lord asks.

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## **The Blessing of Living for the Sake of Others**

by Bill Hall

“We are honouring those men and women who carried this spirit in fullness all the way to the point of physical death. Remembering them is reminding ourselves to live for the sake of others in everything that we do.” Rev Thomas Rose

What a wonderful blessing it is to live for the sake of others, for when we are living for the sake of others, we are no longer living dominantly for the sake of ourselves. When we are living for the sake of others, we are living the life of angels whose fundamental aim is to wish better for others than for themselves. So we are no longer dominated by the cares of the world such as our possessions and daily responsibilities. These cares are important and must be taken care of but they are not meant to be the dominant feature of our lives.

As Bishop Brian Keith says in his enlightening sermon titled “To Be Of Service”, “To be of service brings joy for we have the freedom of forgetting about ourselves and focusing upon the good being done for others.” This truth is very apparent when we are living for the sake of others. So often people can be caught up in the constant demands of daily living such as taking care of our bodies, our homes, our employments and our families. These are all important demands which we are required to perform. However, when we are living for the sake of others, we are not dwelling endlessly upon ourselves. Instead, we are thinking of others and of everything that is beneficial for their happiness and joy. Truly, we become like the angels of heaven who wish better for others than for themselves and who love to perform useful services for others.

What can we do each day of our lives but to rejoice that the New Church provides truths for us to live by all the days of our lives and to make a daily prolonged effort to live according to the truths of the New Church. These truths provide enlightenment and direction for us to follow throughout our daily lives. When we live by these liberating truths we become free to follow the Lord's way, and to live a daily life of rejoicing that makes us forever free from doubts, despair and fear.

May we ever follow the Lord's path and forever know the joy of living as the Lord intends us to live, always looking to the welfare and happiness of others, always with hope and joy in our hearts.

“Living as the Lord intends and according to His will is the source of our happiness.” Rev. David Roth.

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## Two 93 Year Olds Move On To The Spiritual World

This month we are publishing eulogies for two people who have been associated with the Hurstville Society for many years, **Shirley Taylor** and **Vera Buck**.

The eulogy for Shirley was delivered by Rev Todd Beiswenger who conducted the funeral service at Woronora Crematorium on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> August. It was a memorable occasion with the delicious scones, jam and cream at Celeste Cottage afterwards mandated by Shirley bringing back fond memories of her own entertaining skills with **Tom** following Sons of the Academy meetings at their home.

**Vera Buck** with her late husband **Dave** first became acquainted with the New Church in the late 1960's by listening to the radio talks on 2KY by Rev Douglas Taylor. Years later they began to attend church at Hurstville, impressed by a religion that made sense and eventually became members in 1992. Following Dave's passing in 2004 Vera relocated to hostel accommodation in the Newcastle area close to her son Mick and his wife Lynne. The eulogy was written and delivered by Mick for the funeral at a local chapel on 17<sup>th</sup> August.

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## In Memory of Shirley Taylor



On the 8<sup>th</sup> of August, Shirley Taylor, a long-time member of the Hurstville congregation graduated from this life and moved on to the next. In many ways it was a day of celebration because she was ready to go and be with her dearly departed husband, Tom. She had lived a full life, and seen a lot. She was born in 1922 in Richmond Victoria, so had seen this world for the past 93+ years. Shirley had a good life, and she made it no secret.

I would come to visit, and I would ask her about her life, and without fail she'd take a breath, put on a big smile and say, "I was SO happy." I think it was really one of the qualities that enabled her to have so many good friends. She was nice to be around. She had a sphere of happiness that the rest of us could just bask in. The rest of life could just be put aside for a while, and we could just hang out with happy Shirley. She was happy, and she had everything she ever wanted.

She wasn't a career woman, she just wanted simple, good things... like being married and raising children. She married Tom in April of 1945, and had three children. Three children that she loves oh so very much, and one of the things that made her life so happy was that she knew that her boys loved her back. I know to some people it can sound unimpressive to hear that she loved her boys and her boys loved her, but really that's the kind of thing that actually matters in life. She loved the fact that her boys would tell her, "I love you" and give her a kiss. She told me how much she enjoyed having tea with her boys after school and they'd tell her how their day was. She loved that she could have a real conversation, a real connection with her children.

She was known for being very punctual, always arriving early so as not be late, and as such expecting the same out of others. If she invited you to dinner at 6:00, dinner was going to be served at 6:00 whether you were there or not!

The punctuality was really a manifestation of her deep desire for order in life. She wasn't a complicated person, but she liked a plan. No, she loved a plan! Her diaries were legendary, with daily notes so detailed that they were used as an encyclopaedia of family history. She had plans for the lives of her boys too, who annoyed her when they didn't heed her advice! In fact, she had a plan for everything, including death. She had even left behind a written out eulogy for her boys to read at the memorial service, outlining the story of her life! Whenever I would visit she would tell me as much, and that she looked forward to playing a card game with Tom upon her arrival.

Ultimately it was her love of order that kept her living a Christian life. Following the rules the Lord laid out made sense to her. She wasn't a theologian, but she understood that

if she lived a good, honest life, doing the things the Lord had said and not doing those which she was warned against, everything would be fine. Just love the Lord, love your neighbour, follow the 10 Commandments, and you're set. Sounds like a great plan to me. While her three sons are surely going to miss their mother, now she'll finally get that card game with her dear Tom that she's been waiting the last eight years for and reap the rewards and happiness of a life well led.

“But it has been provided by the Lord, who is the Creator of the universe, that the condition of a person who conjoins themselves with Him by living according to His commandments be more blessed and happy after death than their condition before it in the world, and that it be more blessed and happy for the reason that the person is then spiritual, and a spiritual person feels and experiences spiritual delight, which is superior to natural delight, because it exceeds it a thousand times.” (Married Love 29)

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### **Vera Burns Buck**



Vera was born in 1922 in London, an only child into a world vastly different to today. Her mum was a Scot from a large rural family and her father, also from a large family was a returned serviceman from the First World War. He was a trained commercial artist and ran a successful business from a studio in their Kensington home.

She attended the one school from primary through to leaving and it was obviously a happy time in her life as even in recent years she could name teachers and describe the headmistress and her dog. Vera made lifelong friends from her school days, even getting visits much later on in life in Sydney. She went on excursions to France and loved tennis and ice-skating but her favourite was holidays in the north of Scotland where her grandfather was the Gamekeeper on a large estate

During the early years of the Second World War Vera commenced a nursing career at the Westminster Hospital, eventually becoming a State Registered Nurse. This would have been an exciting and dangerous time for anyone living in London with the commencement of the London bombing which Vera could describe quite vividly. She recalled the mid day raids which were aimed at terrorising Londoners and inflicting maximum casualties. During these bombing raids Vera, along with others from the neighbourhood would gather at an open corner where there was minimal chance of being injured by collapsing buildings. Vera's family home was damaged during the bombing but they were able to continue living there. Vera was eventually evacuated from London along with all of the younger generation and made lifelong friends from fellow evacuees. During this time she had little or no contact with her family in London. Later on in the war London was



attacked by the V1 flying bombs which Vera knew as “doodle bugs”! These were bombs that were attached to rockets and Vera recalled as being particularly terrifying. She would later say that one of her main achievement of the war was surviving the London bombings!

After the war Vera met her husband to be Dave in hospital where he was recovering from war injuries and illness. Dave was a keen motorcyclist and when he recovered he would pick mum up from her home and take her out as pillion passenger. They married and shared a small flat in London with another couple because of the shortage of accommodation.

In 1949 the next chapter in Vera’s life was about to start when Dave accepted a promotion and position to Maryport in the north west of England, assisting in the start up of a new factory for the company he worked for. No doubt the offer of a new house that went with the job was an inducement! So, quietly spoken Londoners Vera and Dave arrived in Maryport to commence a new life. It would almost have been like moving to a different country such was the suspicion of the locals to outsiders in what was then considered to be a remote part of England. Michael and Robert grew up with broad north of England accents, much to the amusement (and sometimes dismay) of Vera’s friends and relatives in the south.

And then another chapter in Vera’s life was about to start. Vera and Dave started to think about emigration to either South Africa or Australia where Dave’s company had branches, eventually accepting an offer of a position at the Sydney branch, arriving by plane in April 1964. Bit of an adventure for Michael 15, and Robert 7 but a huge move for Vera and Dave, as it was for thousands of other migrants at that time. Vera left her elderly father behind and never saw him again but was always consoled by the memory of his advice, telling them the offer in Sydney was too good to refuse. The Buck family was supplied with a house until they found a place of their own, thus being spared the more difficult introduction into Australia via the migrant camps. Vera resumed her nursing career for a few years to help the family get ahead.

Vera had always been an irregular churchgoer and at the age of 55 was Confirmed in the Anglican Church. At the same time she passed her driving test, no mean feat for anyone in Sydney let alone a 55 year old but she made good use of it, driving to local schools where she was a part time scripture teacher. She would recall the antics of the naughty kids (as they always were in school scripture lessons) with as much enjoyment as she did the actual scripture teaching.

Vera and Dave had a long holiday to the old country in the mid 80’s but returned to their growing family of grandchildren and their family home at Panania where they settled into retirement. Dave passed in 2004 and it was at this time that Vera was diagnosed with vascular dementia and so Vera decided she should move into hostel accommodation. After a long search in the Newcastle area Vera eventually secured a place at Warabrook moving into semi-independent living in the hostel. She made many new friends, was popular with the staff and enjoyed many outings, especially with her grandchildren.

Following a short illness about five years ago Vera became bed ridden and was moved into the Nursing Home section of Warabrook. Eventually her short term memory started to fail but her long term memory remained strong for a long time and thankfully she almost never lost her memory of Michael and Lynne - in fact some of her last words were complimenting Lynne on her curly hair! Mum eventually passed very peacefully and the family feels that is due to the wonderful care she received towards the end of her life.

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### **Norm's 99th!**

I came here four and a half years ago, and from nearly the moment I met Norm Heldon I learned that he had a goal of living to 100 years and receiving a letter from the Queen. Well, another August 1 has gone by and he is 99 years down and 1 to go! Despite this birthday being merely a prelude to the real party that is happening next year, there was a strong turnout of people from all around Australia who came to visit with the man who has touched their lives.

For a look back at Norm's life the family brought in old photos, as well as showed some videos from his 80<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> birthday parties. My personal favourite was his wedding picture. Nothing like seeing a young couple in their prime with a full life ahead of them... and yes, they had a full life! While his wife Ruth has already passed on a number of years ago, and is surely looking forward to being reunited with him, I can't help but think that she's rooting him on, hoping for his old body to hold out for another year so he can get that letter from the Queen! God bless you Norm!

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### **Potluck & Parlour Games**

Mark your calendars, gather your games, tell all your friends! Saturday night **Sept 17th** will be our next society social event: a night of parlour games and joviality. We'll have a variety of card and board games available, and you're welcome to bring your favourites, too. As a bonus, anyone interested may come for a potluck dinner beforehand! Swing by around **6pm** for a shared dinner; we'll put away the food and start the fun around **7pm**. Hope to see you there!

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### **Looking ahead: Hallowe'en**

Since you have your calendars out, earmark the evening of Saturday Oct 29 for our Hallowe'en party! Now you've got plenty of time to come up with an amazing costume.....

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### **Suggestion Box**

Have a topic you'd like addressed in a church message/sermon or class? Got an idea for a social event? Thoughts about how we could be doing things a little differently? Please let us know! A suggestion box has been placed in the foyer of the church; you're also welcome to email Todd ([todd@hurstvillenewchurch.com](mailto:todd@hurstvillenewchurch.com)) or Jenn ([jenn@beiswenger.net](mailto:jenn@beiswenger.net)) with any ideas.

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## Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **Owen Heldon** (6<sup>th</sup>), **Carolyn Heldon** (8<sup>th</sup>), **Klaire Horner** (9<sup>th</sup>), **Liam Johnson** (10<sup>th</sup>), **Sylvia Hicks** (13<sup>th</sup>), **Karen Evans** (13<sup>th</sup>), **Jeffrey Heldon** (15<sup>th</sup>), **Phillipa Horner** (15<sup>th</sup>), **Phillip Walsh** (29<sup>th</sup>).

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