



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society October 2016

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Jumping Head First Into A Lake of Fire

By Rev Todd Beiswenger

Regular readers of my articles will know that in general I think the world is a pretty good, albeit imperfect place, that is filled with good people. There are, however, some who are not so good. I came across this headline in the Sydney Morning Herald a couple of weeks ago: “Lauren Darlington rebuilt life after mother forced her to work as prostitute.” Wow. My immediate reaction was shock and disgust. I can't fathom a mother forcing her child to work as a prostitute. Now, New Church teachings on who goes to heaven and who goes to hell are incredibly merciful. It's one of the main attractions for most people who come to the Church later in life. However, when I read this headline one particular passage came to mind, and it was very clear what would happen to that mother. Here it is, straight from *Secrets of Heaven* 1113:

“There are girls who have been misled into prostitution, and so have been persuaded that there is nothing evil about it, but who are of a decent disposition in every other respect. Because they have not yet reached the age when they are able to recognize and judge that way of life for themselves, they have an instructor with them, extremely strict, who punishes them as often as their thoughts turn to such loose behaviour. This man they fear exceedingly, and in this way they are vastated. But grown women who have been prostitutes, *and have enticed others to be so*, do not undergo vastation but are in hell.” [Emphasis added.]

To me this is quite powerful. Let me try to give you some context to this quote. Swedenborg had been writing about how some people go straight to heaven. They wake up in the next life, but they've done such a good job here that they're raised up into heaven within an hour of their death. Then he tells us of the opposite scenario, of somebody who goes straight to hell. That is an adult woman who lives a life as a prostitute and has enticed others to do so. That's your one-way ticket to the lake of fire. Sounds just like Lauren Darlington's mother who groomed her daughter to be a prostitute at the age of 16, even going so far as to forge her birth certificate so she'd appear to be legal.

That this woman is in a dire spiritual situation should be no surprise considering what Jesus says about those who lead children astray: “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in Me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” (Matthew 18:6) So while we're told not to judge whether or not people are bound for heaven or hell, it does seem that there are some whom we can be more certain of than others.

I think for most Christians the idea that a life of prostitution leads to hell isn't a particularly hard thing to believe. Yet in today's culture where we keep normalizing a whole variety of sexual behaviours, I can hear people saying, “What's so bad about it? They're not hurting anybody.” Isn't that the standard line? The prostitute is merely performing a service, and if done in secret isn't hurting anyone. Well, actually, no.

So what is so bad about it? Why does such behaviour actually lead to hell?

Here's how I understand it: God Himself, at a soul level, is a marriage of love and wisdom. The analogy we are given is that He is like the sun, where His love is the heat and His wisdom is the light. The whole operation of the natural world depends on the reception of the sun's light and heat. We can observe in the world what a difference it makes if there is just heat or just light. It can be really light outside while still being really cold, but there's no life when it gets too cold. On the other hand, if it is really warm but without light you get mould, fungus and such. That's not good either. You've got to have both otherwise you end up with either no life or nasty life.

In heaven God isn't just like the sun, He *actually is* the sun of that world, and if we are to live in heaven we have to be able to bask in His warmth and His light, i.e. live in the sphere of His marriage of His Love and Wisdom. The whole fabric of heaven is a love of marriage. Everywhere you see the light and feel the warmth there is the love of marriage. Imagine walking outside and you are engulfed with a love of marriage! This is why we have the teaching that the love of marriage is an essential and fundamental love in heaven. Like the heat and warmth from the sun, it is there, everywhere.

Well, what if you don't actually love marriage? You are not going to like basking in the sun of heaven. Instead of feeling engulfed and lifted up by the good feeling, you will feel assaulted by the love of marriage. Adultery in general is all the thoughts and actions that destroy the love of marriage. This brings us back to the ladies of the night ... what does their work do? When these women are working with married clients, and it is safe to assume that in many cases they are, they are participating in the destruction of marriage. They are creating, or at least enflaming, a hatred of marriage. This is not going to lead to heavenly happiness!

Hatred for marriage also is developed by sleeping around. There is some teaching in the Writings that says if we are not married it is possible to sleep with others and not destroy the love of marriage. More generally though we are taught that engaging in "the delight of variety," that is, enjoying sleeping with many different partners, destroys the delight of marriage. In the end we read that, "In a word, all action that destroys marriage and extinguishes its love is adultery or pertains to adultery." (Apocalypse Explained 1010) People who are in the love of adultery, aka the hatred of marriage, cannot tolerate living in a sphere where love of marriage is the very fabric of society. This is why hell is often described as being dark, with the only light being like that of burning coals. Certainly not sunlight. There is a heat there, but it is the heat of lust and desire that consumes all things ... including our very soul.

With all this we start to see that prostitutes, and anybody, really, who hates marriage, ends up in a place with others who hate it, and that place isn't heaven. So is Lauren Darlington's mother going to hell? Well, we are warned against this kind of thinking, as Jesus says, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Matthew 7:1, 2) But I'll put it this way: I don't think I'd want to be her when I wake up in the next life.

Stanwell Tops Camp Update

Our 2017 camp is approaching – thank you to everybody who has signed up to this point. Our minimum numbers have been met, so the camp is officially 'on'. However, we do still have room for more people to sign up, and we'd love to have you join us. Please note space is limited so anyone booking from now on should contact either Chris Kendrick or Carolyn Heldon to confirm availability prior to making a booking. Contact details are:

Chris Kendrick
PO Box 3074
Alice Springs NT 0871
Email: kendrickau@hotmail.com
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Here is what we've got going: there are 5 ministers on-hand: **Julian Duckworth, David Millar, David Moffat, Bishop Brian Keith** and **myself**. Each minister will do a worship, plenary, adult and teen session. There will only be one adult session per day this year, so you do not have to make a choice as to which session to attend!

But we know camp is not just about the sessions. There's time to relax, time to do what you want because you're not cooking and doing dishes. This means that there's time for games. One new game that we'll be running this year is “Lamentations or Taylor Swift Lyrics?” Lamentations is the most depressing book in the Bible. Taylor Swift is depressing because all her songs are about break-ups. So ... will you be able to tell the difference?

Also, from our success with the game at Wanawong, there's likely to be a repeat of Russian Roulette where we smash eggs on our foreheads hoping that we get a hard boiled one and not a big mess of raw egg all over us. If that doesn't entice you to sign up for camp, well, I don't know what will!

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Working Bee

Have you noticed how nice the grounds look lately? We had a working bee about 10 weeks ago, and a lot of weeding was done out front. One particular place of note is the garden that runs along the Baringa driveway which was weeded and mulched on the working day, then finished off with some new plants by **Lori** and **Kerry**. It looks nice and tidy, now! However, you may have noticed that the church does indeed have a large property and therefore requires regular maintenance, especially now that our long-time gardener, **Norm Heldon**, is no longer capable of daily weeding. All of this is a round-about way of saying we're having another working day, and will try to get into the routine of having more each year to keep on top of things. It does make the place look nice, and I hope that you find that it can be a good way to have some social time as well. We hope you'll join us on **October 9th** for the next working bee. Thanks!

There will be a lunch ordered in so your efforts in the garden will not go unrewarded.

Church Van Replaced!

Way back in 1998, the Hurstville Society was expecting a visiting minister who had 6 children. To accommodate them and their transportation needs, the church bought a one-year old Toyota Tarago. Now, 18 years and many pastors later, the old Tarago is being replaced. While it still runs quite well, the van is starting to show its age. In its place is a 2009 Honda Odyssey. Believe it or not, there's a part of me that is sad to see the Tarago go. We've driven it up to Surfer's Paradise, Melbourne, Canberra and the Blue Mountains ... goodness only knows how many times it has been to the Blue Mountains in its life! But time marches on, and the Odyssey is really nice! It is so nice to have a car with cruise control! The only down-side is that this was not in the budget, so if you feel like making a budget repair contribution, it will be greatly appreciated and graciously accepted.

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Spotlight on: Potluck & Parlour Games

Our Sept 17th Potluck & Parlour Games evening was a success! While the turnout was not staggering, the enthusiasm was. (–The boys' was, at least!) Thirteen individuals from 6 to 66 enjoyed a shared smorgasbord meal and a variety of small-group games including Battleship, Chinese Checkers, Flux, Insanity, Mind Magic, Monopoly Jr, Othello and Skip-Bo. Pictures can be found on the church's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/HurstvilleNewChurch). We'll have to do it again, sometime! - If you missed it this time, hopefully you'll be able to join us the next.

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Next up: Hallowe'en Party

Our next social event will take place at the end of October: a fun Hallowe'en party, **Saturday Oct 29th at 7pm**, complete with costumes, decorations, food and party games! There will be something for everyone. Come one, come all. Costumes {nothing too scary or gory, please} are encouraged! Admission to this party is **1 non-perishable food item per child, 2 per adult** [or more, if you are so moved!], to go to someone less fortunate c/o Kogarah Storehouse. *Anyone interested in helping with food, games and decorations, please contact Jenn (jenn@beiswenger.net, 0411 719 754).* Hope to see you there!

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Kogarah Storehouse Collection

With spring and new life comes the opportunity to help others in need. We will be holding a **food & toiletries drive** at the end of October – you are invited to participate! You're welcome to bring non-perishable food and men's, women's and children's toiletry items in to the Oct 29th Hallowe'en party or to church anytime **before October 31st**, to be taken to and distributed by the kind folks at Kogarah Storehouse. Last March, we collected more than 27kg (!) of stuff – let's all pitch in and beat that total!

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NCIA General Meeting

There will be a General Meeting of the New Church in Australia on **Saturday November 19th** at the Roseville church starting at 9 a.m. and continuing until around 12.30 p.m. This meeting is to consider and ratify items that came out of the Assembly discussions in April. Everyone is welcome to come and take part but voting can only be in the hands of the Members of The New Church in Australia. Some items for the meeting will include further consideration about the ordination of women, proposed changes to the Constitution and By-Laws regarding individual membership and future directions for the welfare of the church. Please let Kevin Attwater and Rev Julian Duckworth know if you are coming.

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New Baby!

On August 29th 2016 the world welcomed **Lily Anne Heldon** into our midst. She's the firstborn child to **Jeffrey Heldon** and **Jessica Bennett**. Miss Lily didn't seem like she was in any hurry to come out and meet all of us, as she was about a week over the due date, so perhaps we can watch and see if being late is going to be a pattern in this girl's life! She weighed in at 4.5kg (10.3lbs) and was 53cm long. Everyone is thrilled, and adjusting to life with less sleep!

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Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **Stuart Heldon** (10th), **Zach Beiswenger** (10th), **Murray Heldon** (13th), **Darren Kermond** (20th), **Cameron Walsh** (20th), **Sonja Hicks** (22nd), **Jenn Beiswenger** (27th)

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