



Revs David Moffat, Brian Keith, Todd Beiswenger, Julian Duckworth, David Millar
Gretchen Keith, Jenn Beiswenger, Ruth Duckworth

The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society February 2017

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by Rev Todd Beiswenger

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Stanwell Tops Camp Review

By Rev Todd Beiswenger

I'm finding that the yearly family camp has really become one of the highlights of the year for me. I enjoy the feeling of community, mixing around with different people at meals, along with the teaching and adventure activities that enrich the experience as well. It's a busy week, at least for me, but all that calorie burning just gives me the green light to eat whatever I want at every meal, tea, and dessert opportunity that I get! I didn't check the scales, but despite all the eating I don't think I'm any more round after camp than when it started. This despite a recurring use of M&M's in presentations!

Looking back at it, here are some of the highlights...

On Monday David Moffat led us in a "Pokemon Go!" inspired session titled "Family Camp Go!" The idea was to figure out various puzzles that all used correspondences in the answers that would lead you to the next puzzle. Knowing Bible verses was helpful, but if not Google was always available to help out. It kept the kids active, moving and therefore engaged... and there were some M&M's named "Tommy" that certainly upped the sugar (i.e. fun!) factor as well.

That afternoon we had the opportunity to tackle the "high ropes" challenge. It was mostly a test of courage as you were harnessed into a safety wire, but you still had to navigate around an obstacle course that was a solid 5 metres off the ground. While it is a bit of a challenge for the adults, it is a much greater challenge for the kids as their legs aren't long enough to reach past certain obstacles, and their shorter legs also leave many obstacles at face level for them instead of waist level for the adults. Nevertheless, two of our smallest campers faced their fears, overcame their short legs, and managed to defeat the course! Skye overcame a lot to complete it, and equally impressive was Liam, who we were told was the youngest person to ever complete the course. Well done to both of them!

Later that evening we played a new game called, "Taylor Swift Lyric or Lamentations?" It was a simple game. On the screen was a phrase, and your team had to guess whether or not it was a Taylor Swift lyric or a quote from Lamentations. Our group of teenage boys took home the victory in this game. I suppose that shouldn't be surprising, they all must have been studying the book of Lamentations in their spare time ... either that or they know the music of a good looking blonde woman really well. Hmm, which could it be? They denied being Taylor Swift fans, but logic and the evidence provide a different conclusion.

The next day Julian Duckworth was the lead presenter, and he worked with a theme of "On Your Knees." He talked and demonstrated the usefulness of knees, noting how much we need that bend in our legs to do so many things. The Word teaches us about the need to kneel, and how kneeling before the Lord is for our humility... and yet my good friend Julian also took the opportunity to teach about humiliation. In a bit of fun, he decided to take the opportunity to ask your humble author to "volunteer" for a demonstration. However, it was no simple doctrinal point that was made! Rather I was ordered to kneel

before the great Julian and show what submission and humiliation look like. He says it was just to demonstrate a point... wink, wink... I think we all had a good laugh, and I'm sure there were of number of pictures of me kneeling before him that will haunt me for years to come.

The next day was the outing day that divided us off into various groups. Just over a quarter of the camp drove down to Jamberoo, which is a waterslide/adventure park. Talk about a day of burning calories! Walk to one slide, swim, then on to the next, which we did all day long. Those of us who went certainly slept well that night. Others went to a local wildlife park, some to the beach at Wollongong, others just took an easy day of it and worked on puzzles at the site. Once everybody had returned, dinner was had and Holy Supper was offered by David Moffat and Brian Keith.



Pictures L to R
Zach – Abseiling
Liam – High Ropes
Todd – Giant Swing
Skye – Talent Night
Klaire – Talent Night
Ingrid - Archery

By now we're at Thursday and camp is already half over. But there's still more fun to be had! Part of Bishop Keith's job is to go around the world to visit and assist New Church congregations. His wife, Gretchen, loves to take pictures, so as a result his travels are very well documented. On Thursday morning he took us on a virtual tour of Africa, showing us the pictures and sharing with us the stories of travelling around that continent. It was hard not to come away from the presentation and feel like we really have a lot of blessings in our life in Australia, yet at the same time the smiles and joy on the faces of these poverty stricken places were nonetheless quite real and authentic. It is a true testimony to the spirit of these people that they can achieve so much with so little.

That night was our trivia night that was hosted by Chris and Carolyn. It was very Bible oriented this year, so the organizers made sure to prevent an all powerful team of ministers and disbursed them each to a different table. It worked as planned as the teams were pretty competitive throughout the rounds until Julian's team came from behind to steal the win at the very end.

David Millar led us on the next morning and wowed us with his demonstration of a rod turning to a serpent and making the water turn to blood. It was a demonstration designed to impress the kids, but a number of adults came away rather impressed as well. Much in the same way that Moses took these real demonstrations to Pharaoh, we were reminded that we have to confront the Pharaoh in our own life, who wants to enslave us, and will not let us go until we put in the effort to see what spiritual work needs to be done.

On the final day I ran the family session, "That's Not Fair!" It's a phrase we've all said at one time or another, and a few children – Zach in particular – were tormented as they unfairly did not receive M&M's for their participation. However, the point of it all was that the Lord doesn't give to us each equally, and that we have to raise our thinking up higher than a basic, animalistic type of fairness. To do that, some part of us must die. Now in fairness, most of the kids did really well and weren't concerned about how much others got, just so long as they got some M&M's too. In fact, they overall did better than expected, and it took me a lot longer to break Liam than I had figured. But I think by the time the morning was over all the kids got M&M's so all was right with their world.

Then we all ate some more, said our farewells and began the trip back home. We'll do it all again next year up in Queensland. Hope you can join us for more fun, learning and friendship!

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Abridged Arcana Caelestia/Secrets of Heaven

How many of you have read the entire 12 volumes of Arcana Caelestia? My guess would be "not many." I tend to think that one of the major obstacles is just the sheer enormity of it, that people get intimidated at the prospect of 12 volumes of anything. Well, if that's you, you certainly aren't alone. And now there's some help.

Willard Mansfield of South Africa undertook and completed a project to produce an abridged Arcana. His goal was make it a simpler reading work, but one that reflected just the continuous internal sense, without all the other information that relates to other Biblical stories and things that were heard and seen in the afterlife. I've made my way through the first volume of this work, and it really is quite a nice read. I'd encourage you to stop by the church sometime and borrow a volume and enjoy the work for yourself.

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Mindful Communication Challenge

I advertised this program last month as well, but we're going to bump the start of this program back a week, so we are actually going to start on **12 February**. If you are interested in joining in the program, please let me know as soon as possible. The main reason is that part of the program is a **workbook**, and I need to make sure you have one. We will offer two versions of the workbook: one that is printed and professionally bound by Officeworks for a cost of \$15-18, or one that I print off the church printer for \$10-12.

There will be **two discussion groups** running this program, one that meets after church on Sunday, and one that meets at 7:30 on Monday evenings. We've just acquired a conference phone, so if you're out of the area we can bring you in on the phone or Skype if that's of interest. This is a shorter program than normal, only 5 weeks, so hopefully if you've never participated on one of these before, you'll consider giving this one a chance.

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Society Meeting

We've got a society meeting scheduled for **5 February** that will occur after church. As usual we will take a look back at recent activities – Christmas, camp, movie night, Kogarah Store House donations – and take stock of any feedback, as well as look and see what activities we want to pursue going forward.

What is it that you'd like to see the church do or do more of in 2017? More movies nights? Another games night? How about another weekend camp? Or perhaps a group day outing somewhere? We also need to consider what we can do in the local community outreach-wise. So put your thinking caps on and bring a thought, idea or suggestion to the meeting or even just email it. Thanks!

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Swedenborg & the Arts International Conference

June 6-9, 2017

Bryn Athyn College is hosting the first-ever international conference dedicated to examining the impact of Emanuel Swedenborg's theology and ideas on the arts. Thirty scholars from ten different countries will be coming to the college to present on a variety of topics related to Swedenborg's influence on the arts.

The conference offers a unique opportunity to learn about two hundred years' worth of painters, poets, architects, and novelists, who all used Swedenborgian concepts in their art. Can you paint love? Is it possible to design a city with heaven (or the Grand Human) in mind? Daniel Burnham, a Swedenborgian, did in Chicago and in many other places as well. When we read Swedenborg, why did Ralph Waldo Emerson write that "we come into a world which is a living poem"?

Artists inspired by ideas revealed by Swedenborg are still painting, still writing, and still designing today. Some of them will also be at the conference to discuss what they are currently working on and what they hope to do in the future.

Please keep the dates available and when registration is open, sign up and join us for this exciting event at Bryn Athyn College.

Suzy Laidlaw, Event Coordinator - suzy@dwave.com

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Movie Night

We're going to try to get back into the routine of offering more social events this year. In that spirit, this month we'll have a family pizza and movie night. The movie will be the Disney classic, Pinocchio. I want to show it because it offers some really good messages. It tries to move us to be brave, truthful, and unselfish, for its insistence on the idea that if we are good and work hard we will be rewarded with real change. These are all good and important themes for the kids.

We'll start it off at **6pm on 24 February** with some eating, then start the movie around 6:30. Cost will be \$5 per person. The movie runs about 90 minutes, so things should wrap up around 8pm. Please let Todd or Jenn know if you intend to come, and please invite your friends to join us!

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What's That Smell?

It's the smell of freshly cleaned carpets! I hired a carpet cleaning machine from Bunnings to freshen up the carpets at the manse. It went faster than I had expected, and I had plenty of carpet cleaner soap left over so I shampooed the carpets in the church and Baringa too! They really don't get much traffic, so it was rather surprising to me to see just how much dirt came out of them. They're nice and fresh smelling now.

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Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **John Hicks** (9th) and **Mike Lockhart** (11th)

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