



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society September 2017

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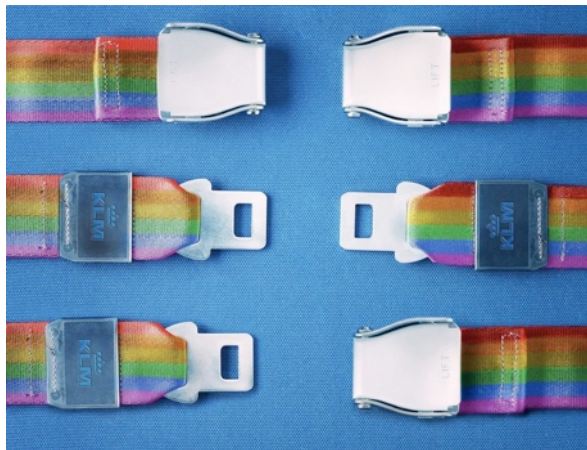
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Some Thoughts on the Postal Vote

By Rev Todd Beiswenger

No doubt same-sex marriage is in the news these days, and my observation is that most people have already made up their mind as to how they will vote. I spent a lot of time trying to find some angle where there could be seen something redeeming about same-sex relationships. But honestly, there just isn't any church teaching that even remotely suggests that there is. What I want to do here is show that there are other things to consider than whether something is "fair" or not.

First off I don't think that a person has to be a theologian to see that same sex relationships are not what God or nature intended. You won't go out into the bush somewhere, and find two same sex kangaroos having a loving relationship where they raise some joeys together. It just doesn't happen. Some people have claimed that there are same sex animals that engage in sexual behaviours, but there's a big difference between sexual release and a marriage relationship. Same sex marriage doesn't happen in nature. Same sex marriages are in fact, contrary to nature. You don't need theology in the equation to figure that out.



Along those same lines, I came across this picture that was tweeted out by Royal Dutch Airlines as a show of support for same-sex marriage, but the irony is that it actually shows why same sex marriage doesn't work. People seemed to actually notice that too, and they didn't need any theology to come to their conclusions. Here are a few of my favourite comments that got posted to the picture:

"Bizarro ad. Only one of these combinations actually constitutes a real seatbelt. The message here is opposite what airline thinks it is."

"Someone might want to explain to this airline that two of those three pairs of seat belts will never actually click," tweeted Sean Davis.

"Only one of these seat belts will perform the intended function," tweeted Jim Treacher. "I realize that noticing this means I'm bigoted against the LGBT community."

Mr. Treacher is spot on: only one of these seat belts will perform the intended function. So maybe before we go down this path of legalizing same-sex marriage we will figure out that it doesn't actually work either.

Now, those in favour of SSM will say, "But having a gay couple marry doesn't change your marriage. It doesn't affect you, so why do you care?" Believe it or not, the church is coming at this from a desire to help others. You see, the church has to consider higher priority issues than whether something is "fair" or not. The church is concerned with the eternal well-being of a person's soul. The Word teaches that homosexuality will eventually lead to a bad end for a person. If nothing else it will be a difficult and painful process to break that habit before entering heaven. At worst a person is so committed to it they end up going to the other place... and I don't know if you've heard, but that other place is none too pleasant. So you're better off not engaging in it in the first place.

The teachings of the church aren't meant to be kill-joys. Think of it like this: there's a nice road, with a sharp, blind curve ahead. We put out a warning sign to slow people down. People like me in my younger days tend to ignore such signs, and occasionally crash as a result. Eventually I learn. However, there are people who do slow down and never crash because they listen to the warning. That's what the church is going for. Trying to warn people that the behaviour they are entering into isn't going to take them to a good place. I don't want that confused teenage boy to look at another guy and think, "Oh he's good looking...oh, wait, am I gay? No, I like women too. Oh, I'm bisexual!" He'll have all of culture saying to him, "Yes you are, and you're fantastic just the way you are." Think of the life that he'll have, all messed up in the head. Statistics show that homosexuals have the highest rate of suicide, and yet if the postal vote were to pass we would ultimately be teaching our children that the choice of a same-sex partner is just as good as a real marriage. As a result there will inevitably be more same-sex relationships and there will be even more children being raised in a same-sex relationship. Don't children deserve what nature, let alone God, intended? Think of the life that those kids will have. What if you were raised in a home like that? Surely it would have been different, and different for the worse.

I tried to apply other New Church teachings to the subject to see if there is justification to permit same-sex marriage, even if it is not ideal. There is precedence on the Lord calling for an ideal, but accepting something less. Here's an example of what I'm talking about: the Lord tells us to love Him above everything else. If we do that, we'll end up in the happiest place of all: the celestial heaven, aka the 3rd heaven or inmost heaven. Not only is it super-duper awesome compared to here, but we're taught that it's even much more super-duper awesome than even the next heaven down. That's what the Lord calls us to. That's the ideal. But not everybody is up to that task. And the Lord says, "That's okay." If you love other people most, or even if you just love doing the right thing, there's a heaven for you. It's not as wonderful as the inmost heaven, but it is heaven. That's the Lord willing to accept a reality that on balance we do prefer to be good instead of evil... even if not as good as He calls us to be.

So the question I was pondering is same-sex marriage something that is not ideal, but something that the Lord would accept? In a word, "no." The Writings state that same sex practices *are* adultery. They're not just a non-ideal or substandard form of marriage, they are in fact the very opposite of marriage. Technically, there is no "marriage" in a same-sex relationship because you are combining two of the same. You're not "marrying"

anything! Same-sex relations do not find their source in heaven, but in hell, therefore, whether we like it or not, same-sex behaviours are defined as evil. The people aren't necessarily evil, but the actions are. The actions are a perversion of Divine Order. I realize that some people will think that is a harsh statement, but there's no way around the fact that it is what the Lord teaches.

Now, that said, there was one quote from Married Love that I think is somewhat supportive of same-sex marriage as opposed to a multiple partner same sex relationship. It says: "It is wisdom to restrain one's love for the opposite sex, and madness to let it loose." (ML446) This is clearly referring to heterosexual relationships, but I think the basic principle of restricting intimate love to one person is a preferable outcome than not. So it has that going for it... but that's about it.

Look at ANY spiritual tradition... there's not one that suggests homosexuality is a good behaviour. Not one. There's something to be said about a multi-faith consensus. So for me to say that I know better and that homosexuality should be approved and celebrated, I personally feel that lacks a lot of personal humility and an unwillingness to respect the teachings of some of the world's most spiritually enlightened people. So again, my stance on this issue isn't about me or my marriage, but about trying to help any person who is willing to listen to the warning signs have a good outcome. I realize that not everybody will listen to a warning, but just like a road with a dangerous curve, it is better to have the warning than not.

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Other New Church Same-Sex Marriage Resources

Recently I was forwarded a paper by **David Millar**, who runs the Australian New Church College, and his research into the topic of same sex marriage. While he takes care to not tell people how to vote on the issue, he takes a more scholarly approach than I have and he goes through the core teachings of what marriage is, and where it comes from. It's an 8 page paper, so we don't have space to publish it here, but it has been posted to our church website so that you can read it if you wish.

In addition, at the clergy meetings in June, **Rev. Jeremy Simmons** presented a paper titled, "Four Myths: How well do we understand the impact of same-sex marriage." This paper is even longer than David's, but also well worth a read as it directly takes on some of the assertions made in favour of same-sex marriage. I'd highly recommend this paper, even if you just work through it quickly to get the main points out of it. This paper is also posted on our website.

Finally, if that's not enough for you to read, you can check out the website www.newchurchthought.org where there is a collection of papers on the subject of homosexuality by several New Church ministers.

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Facebook Advertising

During April, May and early June I posted seven videos on Facebook, which were basically 4-5 minute long abridged sermons. They were getting a lot more views there than on YouTube, so we made a decision to do some advertising on Facebook once I returned from our trip. I started by taking the best performing video of that set, and had Facebook put it into the newsfeeds of people aged 21-57 in Penshurst and surrounding suburbs.

That video, on the surface, looked like it performed reasonably well. Facebook showed that there were 1400 views, and it was watched for a total of 322 minutes. However, with some more digging around through the statistics I found that on average people were viewing that 4:44 long video for a total of 7 seconds. In fact, only 3% of viewers made it to the 90 second mark! Eighty per cent were done with it after 20 seconds. Ouch. On the positive side it received 35 “reactions, comments and shares.”

Upon seeing this I cut that promotion short, and went a different route. The theme was “One God,” and how there is one God who is known by many names. I created a slideshow video lasting only 26 seconds that had a very simple written message with each slide. Therefore nobody would have to unmute the volume to get the message. This approach was more fruitful, as 10% watched the entire video, and we received 80 “reactions, comments and shares.”

I created another slideshow video to follow that one up, and it is performing even better. The theme for this was “All good people go to heaven.” While the promotion hasn't completed its seven-day cycle at this writing, it has already surpassed all the statistics for any other video done.

This effort has boosted our Facebook page “likes” from 187 to 212, which means 25 more people should be seeing our posts as part of their regular newsfeed. Hopefully that number will grow some more yet, but if nothing else we're getting our name out there. We don't need 1000 people to rock up at our door, but if we could get 10 that would be an outstanding result. We'll see.

In the meantime, if you have any bright ideas for a good New Church advertisement or slideshow, please send it over to me! I've got a couple more ideas to pursue based on a marketing report that was done by the General Church office of evangelization a few years ago, but the well of ideas may run dry fairly quick!

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Norm's 100th Birthday Party

Well, it all happened. Norm got his letter **from the Queen**, along with one from the **Prime Minister, local members, Governor General, Governor of NSW, Bishop Keith** and a few others as well! He was honoured to have over 100 people show up for his 100th birthday bash, and personally I was fascinated to note that I couldn't find one other person in the room who had ever been to another 100th birthday party. While reaching 100 is certainly a more common occurrence, it apparently is still a rare one. Rare enough that in

fact Norm got two parties out of this particular birthday. One at his aged care home on the actual birthday, and then another the following Saturday.

That Saturday we saw the **Heldon family** put on quite a party. Norm seemed to quite enjoy himself, even offering a couple of comedic quips during the program that reminded us all that he's still got it. After being presented with the various letters from dignitaries, some of the grandchildren – and their spouses – made a play out of a poem that Norm had written some years ago. It was a very odd and funny poem, and bringing it to life made it all the more odd and funny. I'd like to describe it for you, but it really is one of those things where you had to be there to appreciate it.

Overall it was a great party for a great man. The next day after church he referred to it as his “first 100” and that he was now working on the second! Somehow I won't be too surprised if he makes it.



Norman enjoying a joke with great granddaughter Lily

Birthdays

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

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