



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society October 2017

Contents

[The Confederate Flag & Me](#) [by Rev Todd Beiswenger](#)

[Loving Our Enemies](#)

[Spring Food Drive](#)

[Mango Fundraiser](#)

[Hallowe'en Party](#)

[Working Bee](#)

[Society Meeting](#)

[A new NEW CHURCH VINEYARD](#)

[Birthdays](#)

The Confederate Flag & Me

By Rev Todd Beiswenger

I was probably 17 years old at the time, and had got a job at the local auto parts store. I worked probably 15-20 hours a week, and managed to do my job and get along well with the other employees there. Except one. There was this one guy named Ed Carter, and I couldn't figure out why he just didn't like me. He wouldn't talk to me, wouldn't look me in the eye... he just gave me the icy cold shoulder.

Eventually, I think this was a matter of weeks later, not months, the store manager and I were chatting and he asked me, "Hey Todd, what's the deal with the Confederate flag on the front of your car?" You see, since front plates were not required in Pennsylvania, you could put whatever you wanted up front. So I bought a plate that was the Confederate flag, aka, the Rebel flag and bolted it to the front of my car. I told my manager the truth when I said that I had put it there as an homage to General Lee, the famous 1969 Dodge Charger that was featured in one of my favourite childhood TV shows, "The Dukes of Hazzard." That car was the coolest!

Well, the next time I saw Ed, I noticed that suddenly the freeze had thawed. It didn't take my naïve self too long to connect the dots: Ed thought my flag was an indication of white supremacist beliefs, or at least the hatred of black people. As you might have guessed, Ed was black, so he wanted nothing to do with me. But now that he understood that the flag was none of that to me, we could now be friends.

Now here we are, 25 years after my own Confederate flag incident, and the association between racist beliefs and the Confederacy is still strong. People seem to have heard about the white supremacist march that happened in Charlottesville Virginia last month, but I think many have missed that what was at the centre of it was a statue of the Confederate General Robert E Lee. The town had decided to remove the statue that had been there since 1924. It was started by a New York sculptor, and finished after his death by an Italian, neither of whom are known to be white supremacists. Lee was a war hero who, while a slave owner, wrote that slavery was a "moral and political evil." Nevertheless, the white supremacists came out to protest the removal of the monument, and others came out to protest their protest, which is when things went bad.

Then the monument madness spread, and before you knew it people were defacing the Captain Cook monument here because some dimly regard his place in history. My first reaction was that people need to stop finding things to be offended over. But I also wondered if these monuments should be removed. Perhaps they were right to remove them, even if their tactics leave a lot to be desired.

I was thinking that, for example, we're taught that angels don't think about the past, so perhaps we need to be rid of monuments to our past. "I have spoken to angels about the memory of things of the past and about consequent anxiety concerning things of the future, and I have been informed that the more interior and perfect angels are the less do

they care about things of the past or think about those of the future, and that this is also the origin of their happiness.” (Secrets of Heaven 2493)

Let that one sink in: the origin of the happiness of angels is not caring about the past or future. So to those who would argue that we would lose our history with the removal of these monuments, perhaps you could take the above quote and say, “Yes, that's exactly the idea. Forget about the past. Clean the slate.” I think both sides would benefit from that kind of thinking. What England and Captain Cook did does not look good from the lens of history, but nevertheless that kind of imperialism isn't happening in our government today, so leave it in the past. Nor is there state sponsored racism. Leave that in the past too. This lesson applies to all sorts of situations in life. How many times do we let old wounds affect us, when they are in fact not present wounds? That which wounded us in the past is no longer wounding us, yet we carry it into the present and allow it to steal our peace.

But there are things of history that we should remember. The Lord did instruct the Israelites to create monuments so that they would remember important things that happened. Here's one example as they're about to leave the desert and cross the Jordan river:

“Go over before the ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.” (Joshua 4:5-7)

There are many other monuments or memorials that the Lord does instruct the Israelites to construct. Many of them are altars, others are feasts (passover, feast of Tabernacles), and the Sabbath itself is described as a memorial, so there are important things that we are to remember. The pattern in the Word is that the Lord instructs us to create monuments and memorials to remind us where the Lord has saved us during our life. Yes, remember that you hit rock bottom and the Lord gave you the opportunities to bring yourself out of that. Make a monument to the Lord's presence in your life. When you leave the old habits, addictions and destructive tendencies behind because you've found the Lord's path, make a monument to that.

Yet, aside from remembering the Lord's power showing up in our life the Lord does teach us that we really are supposed to forget the past. As I reflect back at my own encounter with Ed Carter, the outcome is all the more remarkable. He was able to see that I did not see that flag as a symbol of hate, even if in his past he was taught that it was. He left those ideas about white people with Confederate flags in the past, and instead chose to gain a friend. He even would ride around with me in that very car with the flag still on the front. He chose to forget so much of what he had been taught about white people and that flag. I think we are to do likewise. So maybe if we no longer can see the good in the people and events we've memorialized, the memorials can go. Personally I'd hate to see

that happen, but yet the teachings are clear: focus on the present. Forget the past. It's what the angels do.

[top](#)

Loving Our Enemies

Out of all the conversation around the Charlottesville incident, there was one very inspiring post I came across on Facebook. It was about a man named **Daryl Davis**, who is a musician, author and lecturer in the US... and he's got a strange hobby: befriending white supremacists. Daryl is a black man, and he's converted over 200 people out of the KKK. He says, "I never set out to convert anyone in the Klan. I just set out to get an answer to my question: 'How can you hate me when you don't even know me?' But in my quest many would end up converting themselves."

Daryl Davis believes in giving people a platform to speak because if you give them that, they will reciprocate. I really love what he is saying and doing. He is truly going out there and loving his enemies. He's not trying to silence them, persecute them, or deride them. He's just out there loving them, and he's getting amazing results.

The Lord told us thousands of years ago that we are to love our enemies, but it doesn't seem that the Western world is particularly good at it. For example, many people are afraid to speak out on a "No" position for same-sex marriage for fear of being socially bullied. This is far from the only issue where that happens, and in fact social bullying has become a popular method of dealing with people who disagree with us. But that's not what we're supposed to do. The goal is not to silence, ridicule or oppress those who disagree with us. The goal is to help them amend their lives. I've found Daryl's example very inspiring as I deal with people who I disagree with. If he can love KKK members, and give them a space to speak, we have no excuse for not doing likewise.

[top](#)

Spring food drive

It's that time of year, again, when we invite you to contribute to our spring food drive. Donations will be delivered to our local food pantry, the Kogarah Storehouse, which is run by the Brighton-Kogarah congregation of the Uniting Church at the corner of Gray and Kensington Streets in Kogarah. Every year, the Kogarah Storehouse assists well over 1,000 families who are in need of food, financial support and other needs. One way they assist community members is through providing food parcels. Their food parcels average out at a cost of \$46 per parcel. Your contribution to this program will go a long way in making sure they can continue to provide this service to our community. Here are their suggested items:

- Long life milk
- Canned tuna
- Breakfast Cereal
- Toothpaste
- Tooth brushes
- Soap
- Rice

- Pasta sauce
- Canned vegetables

This food drive will run through **Sunday, October 29th**. Thanks very much, in anticipation of your generosity! *Every bit helps.*

[top](#)

The Mango Fundraiser



Fresh North Queensland Mangoes direct from the farm to you! Support Our Mango Fundraiser

If you *love mangoes*, here's your chance to indulge in fresh, juicy Kensington Pride mangoes and support our fundraising drive. All funds raised will be split evenly between Hurricane Irma (www.globalgiving.org/projects/hurricane-irma-relief-fund) and Mexico earthquake (www.savethechildren.org - search: Mexico) relief projects. Buy some mangoes for yourself, sell them to friends, family & neighbours!

This is a *prepaid* fundraiser: we sell trays and collect payment by October 29th, then the mangoes will be delivered in late November.

Cost per Tray is: \$26 - for about 7kg of juicy mangoes! Trays range from 12 large to 23 small mangoes.

Place/collect orders by: Sunday 29th October
Order forms are available from the church and upon request. Return your completed order form + all money to Todd or Jenn by Oct 29th. Mangoes will be delivered to the church in late November; we will let you know more details closer to the date.

For Further information contact:
Jenn Beiswenger 0411 719 754
jenn@beiswenger.net

Hallowe'en party

Join us on **Saturday, October 28th** for a night of old-fashioned **Hallowe'en** fun, food & games! This will be a family-friendly event, and a unique opportunity for you to think creatively, support your local op shop and come up with a fun *<neither gory nor scary, please>* costume. As this will coincide with our spring food drive, **admission will consist of a non-perishable food donation**. We look forward to a fun evening with you! *Festivities begin at 7pm at Baringa. Costumes are not required, but warmly encouraged!*

[top](#)

Working Bee

With the end of another term of school comes another working bee for the church. The last few have yielded some really good results as we've beaten back the bush that was overtaking the property in front of the church and Baringa. As usual we will start after church, and then order in some **pizzas** to feed those who are willing to work. So mark your calendar for Sunday October 15, and bring some clothes that you can do some weeding in.

Society Meeting

We have a society meeting scheduled for **October 22nd**, and as always your input to these is appreciated. Perhaps the main item on the agenda is planning out the next 4 months or so, particularly looking at how Christmas, Camp and school holidays are going to play out. If you have anything that you'd like to see us do as a group over the next few months, this is where to bring it up.

[top](#)

A new NEW CHURCH VINEYARD!

After a year and a half effort, General Church Education is pleased to announce the launch of a new New Church Vineyard website. More than 5000 resources for religious education and inspiration are now searchable by topic, Biblical reference, age level, activity type and several other filters. Look for stories from the Word, videos, Sunday school lessons and more. Visit www.newchurchvineyard.org to see what's available!

[top](#)

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)

[top](#)