



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society August 2018

Contents

[Lazy Kangaroos](#)

by Rev Todd Beiswenger

[Clergy Meetings & Bishop Selection Process](#)

[Spread of Logopraxis](#)

[Whale Watching Expedition](#)

[New Church Vineyard 2.0](#)

[Commentary on Conjugal Love](#)

[Pancake Breakfast](#)

[Birthdays](#)

Lazy Kangaroos

By Rev Todd Beiswenger

All of our international visitors want to see kangaroos, and one of the places we go to see them is out in the Blue Mountains, where we'll head down Megalong Valley Road. We will always find some there. But they're really not doing anything. They're laying in the field, maybe eating some grass, and if you get too close they'll hop away. Where are they hopping to? Probably not off to the office or their place of business. They really don't do anything. When we visited Alice Springs we saw some big red kangaroos at the desert park, and it was more of the same: lazy kangaroos laying around in the pen doing nothing. Sure, it was warm, but it wasn't like it was hot, and yet all they were doing was sitting under the shade just watching the tourists. Perhaps you think that this behaviour is a result of their captivity, but I'm not buying it. We drove all around and didn't see any kangaroos in the wild, which only means that they weren't doing anything.

Now I'm sure some of you reading this are thinking that I'm crazy and that kangaroos are in fact valuable members of the Australian eco-system. I was wondering this same thing. God created them, therefore they *must* have a use. The Writings teach that in the Lord's kingdom even evil spirits and demons have a use, so if they do, so must these lazy kangaroos.

So I decided to look it up. What do kangaroos *do*? It turns out others have some ideas. Here are a few that I came across:

- Eat dry grass, lessening the possibility and/or severity of bush fires.
- Kangaroos' soft padded feet and long tail are integral to the ecological health of the land, as regenerators of native grasses. Any seedling that falls into the long-tapering footprint of the kangaroo is buried into the hole left by the toenail. Covered and with moisture concentrated at one point, the germinating seedling has a chance of survival. Their tail drags along behind them while they are grazing, pressing the ground, rolling seeds into the earth.
- Kangaroo urine and faeces is a natural fertilizer essential to the health of the soil. Many species depend on the kangaroo for this reason.
- Once kangaroos die, like all other organisms, they are consumed by scavenging and decomposing organisms.

How does the above list sit with you? I don't see consumption of the dead carcass as providing an impressive use. If somebody said to me that one of my top uses in life was to be food for earthworms I would know that I have failed spectacularly in life. As for the other uses mentioned, while I'm no ecologist, I'm willing to believe that even if these uses aren't spot on, that kangaroos have some benefit to the eco-system. They must!

But this brings me to my real point: I wonder if we over-emphasize the doctrine of use. Do we abuse use? I can't tell you how many times I've heard people say, "I just don't feel like I'm being useful." It's not just retired people either. It is from people who have busy lives, who have jobs, and who are engaged in doing whatever they can to help out in the

world. Yet the common thread among these people is that there is a feeling that they aren't doing *enough*. I've found that one a more difficult one to answer. What really is enough? How many hours a week do we have to work? I had an epiphany while observing what I now call "lazy" kangaroos, and that is that we are in fact useful just by going through life.

During the course of your life, you will touch, inspire, comfort, help and love a lot of different people. People who needed what it is that you had to give. The Writings teach that animals are in their use instinctively because they are within the order of their life, and we too can be in our use if we choose to stay within the Lord's order by stopping doing evil actions and by loving Him and our neighbour. You are more useful than kangaroos, and yet they are useful, which says to me that perhaps we don't have to be quite so obsessed with the whole "Am I doing *enough*?" question. If you are living the right way then yes, yes you are doing enough.

So what does the Lord actually reveal to us about use?

I think a lot of New Church people have a passage like this in mind when they think of use:

As regards use, the situation is this: People who are governed by charity, that is, who dwell in love towards the neighbour... have no regard for the enjoyment of pleasures except on account of the use that is served; for charity does not exist if there are no works of charity. It is in the exercise of it, that is, in use, that charity consists. Someone who loves the neighbour as himself never experiences the delight of charity except in the exercise of it, or in use. Consequently the life of charity is a life of uses. Such life pervades the whole of heaven, for the Lord's kingdom, being a kingdom of mutual love, is a kingdom of uses. Every pleasure therefore that springs from charity finds its delight in use, and the more pre-eminent the use the greater the delight. For this reason it is the very being and nature of a use which determines the happiness that angels have from the Lord. (AC 997)

It's a strong passage. It can be taken almost like we have to deprive ourselves of enjoyment because we should "have no regard for the enjoyment of pleasures," but the reality is that there is tremendous pleasure in use. The Lord's kingdom is a kingdom of uses, and so some will take it that if they are not being useful they're outside the kingdom. Sure, there is truth in that, but at the same time I want to direct your thoughts back to those lazy kangaroos. Nature provides us with some idea of what usefulness looks like. Kangaroos don't wake up in the morning wondering how they can be more useful. Their use comes naturally to them. They don't obsess over it. They're useful just by living their life, eating the grass, hopping around and doing their thing. The Lord does teach us that we are to be humble and content in our lives, and so therefore just because we have what the world deems a more prestigious job or title doesn't mean we are actually more useful. More busy? Yes. More useful? Maybe, maybe not.

What we should be doing is taking the knowledge that we have, both the factual knowledge of the world and the spiritual knowledge from the Lord and put it into action. The decision is who or what are we trying to serve with the knowledge that we have.

That's what really determines the use. Are we trying to serve the Lord? The neighbour? Greed? Ego? If you are trying to serve the Lord and/or neighbour with your actions you are by definition useful. Yes, there are higher and lower uses, but since we're trying to be angelic here, we would then have no ego and pride to be hit when we perceive somebody else serving a higher use than us. We're happy performing the use the Lord has called us to, and when another use comes along that we're called to then we'll deal with that then. "The very use that a man loves determines his life and distinguishes it from others; an evil use makes the man infernal, and a good use makes him heavenly - not indeed the use itself, but the love of the use, for everyone's life is in his love" (AC 4459).

That last line is the key. It's about the love of the use. Do you love serving the Lord's kingdom? Do you love serving your neighbour? If you do, then you're in the kingdom. Is it *enough*? Well, I guess I don't really think that is the question we need to be asking. Are you doing the use that the Lord is calling you to? Because if you're in the kingdom, you're in the kingdom, and if those lazy kangaroos are part of the kingdom, then the bar is probably not set as high as you think.

[top](#)

Clergy Meetings & Bishop Selection Process

The big agenda item on the clergy meetings schedule this year was the nomination of a new Executive Bishop who would take office July 1st 2019 with Bishop Brian Keith's retirement. As you may know by now, **Rev Pete Buss Jr.** was nominated by the clergy, and the board unanimously affirmed the nomination. Personally I like Pete and think he'll do a good job, but my concern is that people might be inclined to think that he was just handed the job by virtue of him being Brian's assistant. My observation is that just simply was not the case. A lot of time and effort went into the process, as evidenced by the fact that we had to clear out an extra afternoon to continue to work on the process.

We were presented with six candidates, which was whittled down to three relatively easily. This was done through a preferential voting system, so we could analyze who had greater and lesser support. After we were down to three the discussion continued as to what the three would and could bring to the office in the coming years. Each candidate had their own base of support, but the voting patterns showed that Pete had the largest base of support along with a strong number who saw him as their second choice if their first choice was not chosen. In the end he received essential unanimity from the clergy to be the next Executive Bishop.

As for the rest of the schedule, there were some good papers presented, some of which I'll use here in the coming months as a sermon series or doctrinal classes.

[top](#)

Spread of Logopraxis

Earlier this year I joined a Logopraxis group in an effort to better understand this program, and add some structure to my reading of the Writings. So far I'm finding that I'm enjoying my experience with it, and that the time commitment isn't so great that I can't get it done. We're reading the Writings for application to life, not for complete understanding. So if there's something you don't understand, you just keep on moving. The result though is

that this is like a book club in the sense that we read a common text, offer to the group what we got out of it and how we've gone with applying it to our life during the past week or two.

Armed with this new experience, I did offer a presentation about Logopraxis to the GC clergy at the meetings. It was an elective session, and since the schedule was disrupted by the extended bishop selection process I didn't get as many involved as I would have liked, but it does seem like some of those who did attend are now going to get involved. If you too would like to get involved, please contact Rev David Millar at dwmilla@gmail.com, and additionally if you are interested in participating in a Logopraxis group in the local area, please let me know and we'll see if we have enough interest for that to happen.

[top](#)

[Whale Watching Expedition](#)

We headed out to Cape Solander at Kurnell on July 8th in the hopes of having a nice walk along the coast and spotting some migrating whales. It's fair to say that we accomplished half of our goals. We did have a nice walk, but we didn't spot a single whale. When we arrived the board showed that 24 whales had been spotted that morning, and when we returned that number moved up to 34, but none in our group spotted one. Oh well, that's nature for you.

The day was a fine one for a winter walk. The boys seemed determined to be bored and miserable at the outset, but by the time the walk turned back to the start they had found that the rocks there could be easily smashed into bits and that amused them the rest of the time. In fact, instead of racing ahead to get the walk finished, they were now the ones lagging behind as they kept smashing rock after rock. Good times.

[top](#)

[New Church Vineyard 2.0](#)

The good people at the GC Office of Education have put a lot of work into a massive rework of the Vineyard site that is designed to make it easier on you to teach your children and grandchildren the teachings of the New Church. With the launch of the site there is now a "Subscribe" feature with about 100 people enrolled to date. It is helpful to have you and anyone else you care to invite, to subscribe, providing you with a bi-monthly reminder of some of the great content available for families. If you're willing and interested check it out at www.newchurchvineyard.org.

[top](#)

Commentary on Conjugal Love

Rev. Julie Conaron and **Ros Taylor** wish to collaboratively write a Women's Companion to Swedenborg's book "Conjugal Love". They are inviting Swedenborgian/New Church women from around the world to contribute their responses as they read through the book over the next 2 years. They would like any woman who wants to be part of this project to contact Julie (julieconaron@hotmail.com) or Ros (hrtaylor@temple.edu) with their email addresses so we can share the Google doc with them.

[top](#)

Pancake Breakfast

We didn't have anything on our social calendar for August, so we thought we'd try something new and do a pre-church pancake breakfast. While your pastor is better known for his interest in smoking meat, you may not know that he's been experimenting with pancake recipes for the better part of 6 years now. They're fluffy buttermilk goodness. Now, some people might feel that they would be overwhelmed by the wonderfulness of white flour, and that they would prefer to start their day with something else in their belly. That's fine, because this is a BYOB (Bring Your Own Breakfast) event if you are interested in having breakfast with us, but want to pass on the pancakes.

We're going to have this event on the morning of **Sunday August 19th**, at **8:30am**. If you want pancakes though, it's really important that you RSVP! Yes, definitely **RSVP**. And if you're really keen, we'd happily accept somebody to volunteer to be a bacon chef. Just stand there and flip bacon, because the only way to make these pancakes better is to have them with bacon. Just think about it: pancakes, bacon, some social time before church and then the rest of the day is yours. But what a way to start the day. It'll be magical.

[top](#)

Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **Emily Kermond** (7th), **Rhonda Hall** (12th), **Rebekah Horner** (17th), **Larah Walsh** (21st), **Ralph Horner** (30th)

[top](#)