



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society July 2020

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New Church Day Celebrations

We didn't have our Palm Sunday, Good Friday or Easter celebrations this year, but we did manage to get back to mostly normal for New Church Day. During the night the rain was pretty strong at times, and since we had some outdoor activities planned, I was a bit concerned as to how this was going to go down. But the Lord provided clear skies by the time the church service ended and we were able to proceed as planned.

As you may be aware, this year marked the 250th anniversary of the Lord sending out His disciples in the spiritual world. "The next day he sent all of them out to the entire spiritual world to preach the gospel that the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns and that his kingdom will last for ages of ages. This took place on the nineteenth day of June 1770." (TCR 791)



As part of this anniversary celebration Jenn and Lori did some digging through the church archives and found several large murals of scenes from Revelation which were a Sunday School project created in years past by Gretchen Schnarr and Margaret Heldon, along with some other banners done in Sunday School in decades gone by. These were placed around the Richard Morse Room in Baringa, and certainly gave the space a different look, and I think the kids who were able

to attend this year got to see something special.

This year's Sunday School kids had their own task to complete. Jenn made a red piñata, and we've learned from previous years that the little kids enjoy drawing the faces on it, so that was their job this year as well. They glued on some eyes and crowns as well, and then once it was all complete they got to go outside and take turns slaying the dragon.

The kids went in order from youngest to oldest, and in order to give the dragon a chance we blindfolded the older ones. The dragon fought well, flying up and down, and dodging the blows as best he could, but ultimately our army of angels overcame him and to the victors went the spoils.





The kids got more than just treats from the dragon. The church also gave all the kids under age 13 an age appropriate New Church Day gift. While I'm sure that the older ones would have preferred getting some sort of electronics over spirituality minded gifts, the hope is that these gifts will be carried on through life and serve as a reminder to what is really important.

Overall it was a good event, and good to see some faces that we haven't seen in a while. Plus we got to welcome some new people to their first New Church Day service as they have joined in with our church through the live-stream. That part of our congregation has grown a lot in the last year, and while our in person numbers may be small, our digital reach went well beyond 22-24 Dudley Street.

Special thanks to Jenn, Lori, and Margaret for all the work they put in organizing this event, and doing all the work of making food, setting up Baringa, making the piñata, acquiring the gifts, wrapping them, bringing flowers... and I'm sure other stuff that I'm not aware of!

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Phillip Island Family Camp July 2-8 2021

Lately I've been thinking about an episode of "The Twilight Zone" titled "A Stop at Willoughby." It's the story of a businessman named Gart Williams. He's tired of his miserable job and wife, and unable to sleep properly at home, he starts sleeping on the train each night after work. He wakes to find the train stopped and that he is now in a 19th-century railway car, deserted except for himself. The sun is bright outside, and as he looks out the window, he discovers that the train is in a town called Willoughby. He eventually learns that it is July 1888. He learns that this is a "peaceful, restful place, where a man can slow down to a walk and live his life full measure".

Are you feeling a bit like Gart Williams? Maybe, hopefully, you don't have his marital troubles, but I think a lot of people are getting frustrated with life. Coronavirus lockdowns, travel restrictions, civil unrest around the world... maybe you need to find your own Willoughby? An idyllic place, where things are simpler... if that's you, let me encourage you to seriously consider joining us at Phillip Island in July 2021.

This has long been a favourite venue for our camps, and we're heading back there because quite honestly this is a favourite venue for the kids. There's just more for them to do than anywhere else that we've experienced. Here's a list of activities:

Solar heated swimming pools (2)	Raft Making
Indoor heated pool, spa & sauna	Archery (3)
6 acre lakes (2)	Team Rescue (2)
Giant swings (3)	Tennis/Basketball courts (3)
High ropes courses (2)	Sand Volley Ball (3)
Low ropes courses (3)	Campfire pits (2)
Initiative courses (4)	Bouldering walls (2)
Flying Foxes (6)	Indoor Rock climbing wall
Canoeing (2)	Sports ovals (3) Cricket/ Aussie Rules/Soccer

Yes, it will be cold in July, but take special note of the heated pools, spa and sauna AND the reverse cycle air-conditioning to all rooms. As usual we'll have information up on www.newchurch.net.au to make expressions of interest and bookings. We have a minimum number for 55 people to make this camp a "go," and we have to let them know by February 1 that we're going to proceed. So think it over, and feel free to send questions to me at todd@hurstvillenewchurch.com and I hope to see you in Willoughby, I mean, Phillip Island.

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Hivites and Aboriginals: A Shared Fate?

Lately there has been a great deal of talk on racial equality, but with a special focus on the injustices of the past. I think, and admittedly this may just be my perception, is that what people want to see is that 1) bad people were punished and 2) good people were lifted up or at least made whole. This is basic justice, and civilization rather depends on it. However, when I think of New Church Day, and the New Jerusalem creating heaven on Earth, I think about what a limited perspective most people have regarding justice. For example, where is the justice for the thousands of Aboriginals who were killed/murdered/slaughtered at the hands of early European settlers? Well, here is one way I have been looking at it...

Let's start with the story about Dinah and the Shechemites, more famously but perhaps less accurately known as the "Rape of Dinah." My experience with people and this story is that they find it repulsive. It's not hard to understand why. Shechem, son of Hamor the Hivite, falls in love with Dinah, and sleeps with her before betrothal. Jacob, and his sons are infuriated that their sister has been defiled. But the two families come to an agreement as to a price that will be paid for Dinah's hand in marriage to make things right. Except Simeon and Levi acted "deceitfully" and went to the city of the Hivites and killed every male, including Shechem and his father Hamor, then reclaimed Dinah.

It's very clear in the literal sense that Simeon and Levi are the bad guys here. The Hivities were dealt with unjustly, and people today can't reconcile the fact that God's chosen people are so blatantly evil. How does this make any sense?

The Writings give us an unusual answer which we'll get to later, and it makes me wonder about the interaction between the Europeans and Aboriginals over the last few hundred years. Experts estimate the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islanders at more than 770,000 at the time of Governor Phillip's arrival in 1788. It fell to its low of around 117,000 people in 1900, a decrease of 84%.

Much like how the "chosen people" of the Old Testament wiped out the natives of Canaan (remember Abram came from Chaldea originally), the Christians from Europe came to Australia and nearly wiped out the natives. The similarities don't end there. The Writings say that the Children of Israel were a very externally minded people who wanted to be revered and seen as great all over the world. Likewise the Christians of the 1700s are said to be some of the worst people and it is they that brought about the Last Judgement because of their desire for power, control and greed.

So are there similarities between the Aboriginals and Hivities? More than I would have originally thought. The Writings say that Hamor the Hivite and his family in the land of Canaan were part of the remnants of the Most Ancient Church (MAC) (AC 4454). Well, what do we know about the people of the Most Ancient Church? Well, among other things, the land was sacred to them. They had a perception regarding the spiritual reality that underpinned everything they saw. They didn't just see birds, trees, and gardens. What they saw were representations of our higher thoughts, perceptions and intelligence.

Likewise it is said that the Aboriginal people also have a profound spiritual connection to the land:

Aboriginal law and spirituality are intertwined with the land, the people and creation, and this forms their culture and sovereignty. The health of land and water is central to their culture. Land is their mother, is steeped in their culture, but also gives them the responsibility to care for it. They "feel the pain of the shapes of life in country as pain to the self". Aboriginal languages described intimately the land and the culture of the people who spoke them^[1].

Another commonality is how MAC and Aboriginal culture was organized. We're taught that:

In the most ancient time mankind were distinguished into houses, families, and nations; a house consisting of the husband and wife with their children, together with some of their family who served; a family, of a greater or lesser number of houses, that lived not far apart and yet not together; and a nation, of a larger or smaller number of families. (AC 470)

While, according to Wikipedia, "there are 900 distinct Aboriginal groups across Australia, each with their own mythology, they all have a distinct focus on the land." So both cultures operate in smaller, family based groups and understand the connection between themselves and the land. The land, the Writings teach, corresponds to the church. Which means that both cultures understood how important the church, i.e. our spiritual connection to God and our dependence on Him actually is.

So why is it that these good cultures were wiped out by evil ones? In the case of the Hivites, the issue was that they were willing to be joined with Jacob's family. This was a problem because the Hivites as MAC remnants were interested in internal things, but by being willing to marry into the Jacob's family it meant they would accept a life based on external considerations. The result is that the internals of the Hivites would be closed and "if these had been closed they would have perished forever. This is the hidden reason why Hamor and Shechem with their families were slain, a deed that would not otherwise have been allowed." (AC 4493).

Did you catch that? They were slain in order to save their souls. So it leaves me to wonder, is that the reason the Aboriginal population was allowed to be (nearly) wiped out? To save them from becoming like Europeans and losing their soul? The Writings wrap up by saying, "Not that this absolves the sons of Jacob from blame for having committed that hideous crime. They had no knowledge of that hidden reason, nor did they have that as their end in view," (AC 4493) so the Israelites aren't off the hook in God's eyes, even if it worked out well in an eternal perspective for the Hivites.

Which leads me to this: did history repeat itself when the Europeans killed off the Aboriginals? Did hundreds of thousands of Aboriginals go to heaven because they weren't given the opportunity to adopt the corrupt, external ways of the Christians? I don't really know of course, but personally I like this idea and perspective because there's justice in it. The bad guys aren't absolved of their sin and the good guys get an eternal paradise.

Perhaps with this perspective we can hang on to our peace because no matter what the evil hearts of men intend, we can believe and see that the Lord Jesus Christ does indeed reign.

¹www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/land/meaning-of-land-to-aboriginal-people

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Women's Weekend - Spring 2020

You may recall reading previously in this space about what a great time was had at our women's weekend in March? - And that we were already looking ahead to another wonderful women's weekend in September, possibly in the Southern Highlands? Hoping that the virus is subdued enough by then that we can get together in the spring, plans still are slowly coming together for such a weekend, although we're now looking at **mid-October**, and hopefully at a lovely monastery north of Sydney. Does this appeal to you? If so, send Jenn an email to get on the email list. (jenn@beiswenger.net)

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Working Bee

Please join us for a working bee in the church gardens after church on Sunday, July 26th. (RSVP for pizza purposes; thanks!)

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Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **James Kermond** (10th), **Babbette Horner** (14th) and **Danita Horner** (15th)
Anna and **Erik Heldon** (23rd June)

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