



## **The New Church Newsletter**

**Hurstville Society September 2021**

### **Contents**

[Trust the Experts?](#)

by Rev Todd Beiswenger

[Road Rally -](#)

Unsave the Date Part 1

[Centenary Celebrations Postponed](#)

Unsave the Date Part 2

[Flash Food Collection](#)

[Personal Reflections on Lockddown Silver Linings](#)

by Margaret Heldon

[Spring 2021 Women's Weekend](#)

[Birthdays](#)

## **The New Church Newsletter**

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### **Trust the Experts?**

by Rev Todd Beiswenger

I had grown up rather sceptical of car dealerships. My friends and I called them “stealerships” because it always felt like they were stealing money from us. Their reputation was that they would overcharge for work done, and shorten maintenance intervals to get you in the door more frequently. Eventually though I got a job working for the enemy in the parts department at a local Toyota dealership.

The mechanics there were very aware of the reputation dealership service centres had, and I heard them grumble about it many times. A broken car would come in after it had been to some independent mechanic who was unable to solve the problem, and our guys would say, “If they had come here first we would have saved them a lot of money by getting the job done right the first time!”

It was true. They really were the experts on Toyotas. They’d seen a lot of them, and some of these mechanics had been working on Toyotas for years, so they had built up a high level of expertise. It created an internal conflict in my mind because I had always “known” that you don’t trust dealership mechanics. Yet, I could see quite clearly that these guys really knew what they were doing. Before long, I was converted.

So when my Mustang GT started making this weird noise after some highway driving, I thought I would do the smart thing and take it to the Ford experts at a nearby Ford dealership. Later that day I got a call from them telling me that I needed to replace both the rear axles, along with some associated parts. All up it was going to cost me around \$600, which was a lot of money in 1996! The thing is, their diagnosis didn’t make sense to me. I had been around cars and worked in the parts world long enough to know that replacing an axle on a Mustang was just never done unless you were racing it.

Adding to the strangeness was the dealership was telling me they had all the parts in stock, and could finish it that day if I gave them permission. I had a contact at another Ford parts department, so I called him to ask if these axles were known to go bad, and if they showed any sort of sales history on them. The answer was “no.” Their dealership didn’t have them in stock. In fact, their dealership had never sold one. Ever.

It was clear to me now that the first Ford dealership was putting the “steal” back in “stealership.” I wandered over to one of the Toyota mechanics I knew, one who I knew was one of our top guys. I explained my Mustang’s malady, and he said that on many higher performance cars there’s an oil additive that needs to be put in with the gear oil. He asked if I’d changed the gear oil in it without putting in the additive? The irony is that actually I had a local independent mechanic change the gear oil a few months ago! Apparently that guy wasn’t an expert! Per the Toyota tech’s advice I bought the additive for \$8, put it in myself and the mysterious noise was gone. \$592 saved!

This isn’t the only time I’ve been let down by an “expert.” Only a few years ago I went to a doctor that specializes in knees and elbows to look at some elbow trouble I was having. He told me it would likely never heal. He was right. It never healed properly. However, a couple years later I got tired of dealing with the pain and found some other experts on the Internet, and wouldn’t you know it, within a week it was all healed.

These are just a couple of stories, and I've got plenty more that have taught me to be wary of the "experts." I'm writing about this because these days it seems no matter the subject we hear an awful lot of "trust the experts," yet life experience and the Word teach me otherwise. I mean, it was the "experts in the law" that enslaved the Jews through religion, and not only failed to see the Messiah that was standing in front of them but had Him killed too. So much for their expertise!

The Writings also give us plenty of reason to not trust experts. In particular they slam various religious councils several times in *True Christian Religion*. Here are a couple of examples:

The debating at those councils was like the walking of a blind person by day or a sighted person by night, each of whom fails to see a great pit before falling into it. For example, how much trust should we put in councils when they have established the notions of viewing the Pope as Christ's representative, deifying dead people, calling on them as supernatural powers, venerating their images, authorizing indulgences, splitting the Eucharist, and more? How much trust should we put in the council that established the horrendous idea of predestination and erected it as a religious icon in front of all church buildings? (TCR 177)

If anyone says that this was decreed by the unanimous vote of the Council, in which so many bishops and distinguished scholars took part, how can one trust Councils, when Roman-Catholic Councils also unanimously arrived at the conclusions that the Pope is the vicar of Christ, that saints are to be invoked, images and bones venerated, the Holy Eucharist divided, that purgatory and indulgences and more besides exist? How can one trust councils, when that of Dort, also unanimously, voted in favour of predestination, a detestable heresy, and exalted it as the supreme object of religious veneration? Do not, reader, put your trust in Councils, but in the Holy Word. Approach the Lord and you will be enlightened. (TCR 634)

I love the line where Swedenborg drives home the point by saying "bishops and distinguished scholars took part," thus pointing out that these councils weren't full of morons. These were supposed to be the smart people! But the Writings tell us elsewhere that part of the problem is that what we count for wisdom in this world is the ability to argue. Basically, if we can "prove" a dove is black through convoluted arguments, then we're considered wise by the world, when in fact that isn't wisdom at all. But that's what councils do, and they can seem really wise when they come to conclusions that really just don't pass the common sense test. Just like these old religious councils, modern experts in any field can be corrupted by their desire for money, reputation or power... or some combination of them.

The hard part is what to do with this distrust of experts. The fact is that I do rely on experts all the time. I don't know it all, I'm not a super genius and I don't have time to figure out everything for myself even if I was. In fact, I've got a mechanic these days who I do trust who isn't running a "stealership." Someday I'm sure he'll make a mistake, but I'm comfortable it won't be intentional. The stakes of an expert giving me advice on my car is one thing, but there are other things where the stakes are a lot higher... like, for example, salvation. Yet if you trust the "experts" on this most important thing of all you'd not give the Writings a second glance, leaving us to see that the incompetence of experts is not limited in scope. They can be wrong about everything!

As for me, there's a certain irony in all of this. I've come full circle, back to distrusting experts, yet in every case it is a different expert that has provided the needed solution. I think the lesson is that there are some real experts out there, but they certainly aren't always part of the majority opinion and as a result they're not always where you would expect or hope to find them... so make sure you choose carefully who you allow to be an expert in your life.

## Road Rally - Unsave the Date Part 1

I'm sure you've all got October 17<sup>th</sup> circled on your calendar for our planned Road Rally... but you're also likely aware of how much life in Sydney has changed in the last few months. The "Save the Date" was published in our June newsletter, which would have been written at the end of May. That was way back when there was no lock-down! Delta? Bah, that's not here. Anyway, the point is that at this time it seems prudent to postpone it. We have managed to secure a booking for **Sunday January 23<sup>rd</sup> 2022**. Stay tuned for details. Hopefully it can be something fun and/or exciting to look forward to.

[top](#)

## Centenary Celebrations Postponed – Unsave the Date Part 2

We had a nice line up of events for the end of the year, a Road Rally in October, then a month later a celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the building of the church. While there is still a chance that we could be out of lock down by mid-November and open our doors to everybody, the real problem is that in advance of these celebrations we had intended some renovation work to the church and Baringa so things would look their best. However, the Sydney lock down started about 2 weeks before the first round of tradies were to arrive, so they never got started. Plus, the lock down prevented any of our locals from coming over and offering their time to help out as well.

Suffice it to say, even if the government opens things up, the fact is we're not going to be ready in time. At this point we'll probably do like the Olympics where we reschedule this for next year, but still call it the Centenary Celebrations 2021.

[top](#)

## Flash Food Collection

This pandemic is no fun! Many people are suffering as a result of being locked down. Let's all pitch in and lend a helping hand!

We're collecting non-perishable food & toiletry items for neighbours in need via Kogarah Storehouse. You're invited to fill a box or grocery bag and more, if you are so moved! and drop it on Baringa's verandah **by 10AM on Sunday, September 5th**,

OR

you can make a financial donation *by Wed, Sep 1st* via the church website (scroll all the way down.... to the 'donate' button in the bottom right-hand corner; please note 'FLASH' in the description) and we'll shop on your behalf. **Every little bit helps**. Thanks in advance for your generosity!

[top](#)



"[The Lord] gives those who are performing useful functions a love for being useful, and also a reward for being useful, which is inner bliss; and this inner bliss is eternal happiness." (TCR 736:3)

# Personal Reflections on Lockdown Silver Linings

by Margaret Heldon

*(This was originally written for publication in the Theta Alpha Journal)*



At the time of writing we here in Sydney Australia are well into our second Covid-19 Lockdown with no end in sight because this time it's the Delta strain and it is proving much harder to contain. Our little household consists of myself and my husband who are both seniors, and one of our grown up daughters who is studying a University degree online. We are fortunate to live in one of Sydney's most southern suburbs and are a five minute walk from some delightful bush areas. Most days I can go there and enjoy the beauty and serenity. We aren't too badly affected by the COVID restrictions unlike others whose life has been turned upside down. When asked to contribute some thoughts on 'Silver Linings' the following three blessings come to mind.

## **1. Live streaming of online church services.**

Our church has been live streaming our church services for many years so the transition for all of us in the congregation to experience these because of lockdowns happened very smoothly. For myself who plays the music practically every Sunday, this was a totally different involvement. Yes, I get a break from doing this but that isn't the silver lining I'm thinking of for me. It is the intimacy I have felt with the Lord. Whether it is at our worship cupboard set up with the Word and candles or at the kitchen table with the winter sun streaming through the window, I can sit with my husband and I can sing the songs! It is indeed a blessing.

## **2. More time.**

Because the normal routine of life is interrupted, each day I have the freedom to choose and think about what I should do. This has caused me to consider what is more useful, meaningful and purposeful. Initially I was enthusiastic to get to all the things that have been neglected over the years but soon discovered I was following my heart, my loves and doing new projects. One of the hardest things in lockdowns is not being able to see family and friends. We've all had to become creative in how we connect with each other. Video calls and messages are great but for the little grandchildren – my seven range from 1 to 5 years – it is fleeting. A daughter who lives down the south coast from us mentioned on the phone one day that her two little girls were obsessed at looking at a photo of grandma and grandpa in a book we had given them for Christmas. It gave me the idea to make a Little Lockdown Book for each of them. I went out to my local bush and took many photos of things I thought would interest tiny children. Sometimes it was native flowers (there is always something blossoming even if it is winter) or a colourful gum (Eucalyptus) leaf or tiny steps in a rock [see photos top of page]. I had a lot of fun! Back home I hunted through my photos to find pictures of the girls with us from when they were newborn babies to the current time. I alternated pages of these with the bush



discoveries and sewed them together on my sewing machine. It gave me great pleasure and the little ones loved them. A silver lining all round.

### **3. The big picture.**

Why is Covid-19 in the world? If you believe that good comes out of all situations then what is happening here? Arcana Coelestia 6303 says: “When the Lord is with anyone, He leads them, and provides that all things which happen, whether sad or joyful, befall them for good: this is the Divine providence.” Is this a wake up call for humanity? Is there an imbalance in nature? Are we abusing God’s creation by taking and not giving back? The planet is warming at an alarming rate since preindustrial times. It is becoming more and more polluted; animal habitatare being destroyed pushing many into extinction and now a virus is affecting every human being on the planet in one way or another. It makes sense to me that we all need to reflect on the way we live. The natural and the spiritual worlds are connected. Delta hasn’t finished with us yet. The silver lining here is more a hope and a wish that change will come to bring more clarity to how the Lord’s kingdom will be “as it is in heaven, so upon the Earth”.

[top](#)

## **Spring 2021 Women's Weekend**

Ladies, mark your calendars: we're targeting the weekend of Nov 26-28 for our next women's weekend! Due to the ongoing and ever-fluctuating situation with the COVID pandemic, this weekend will be strictly *virtual* – delivered via Zoom – unless local ladies are permitted to gather at the time, which they can figure out closer to the date. Meanwhile, put it in your diaries and let Jenn know if you'd like to be added to the emailing list, if you aren't already! ([jenn@beiswenger.net](mailto:jenn@beiswenger.net))

[top](#)

## **Birthdays**

Happy Birthday to **Owen Heldon** (6<sup>th</sup>), **Carolyn Heldon** (8<sup>th</sup>), **Klaire Horner** (9<sup>th</sup>), **Liam Johnson** (10<sup>th</sup>), **Sylvia Hicks** (13<sup>th</sup>), **Karen Evans** (13<sup>th</sup>), **Jeffrey Heldon** (15<sup>th</sup>), **Phillipa Horner** (15<sup>th</sup>), **Azalea Robson** (19<sup>th</sup>), **Phillip Walsh** (29<sup>th</sup>), **Lily Heldon** (29<sup>th</sup> August)

[top](#)