



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society October 2022

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The Queen



A Tribute to the Queen

by Rev Todd Beiswenger

This may sound a bit odd, but I've actually come to enjoy memorial services. It's not about officiating them, but rather I enjoy hearing all the stories about the person who has passed on. These stories often show a side of person I didn't know, or perhaps a greater depth of character than I was aware. Sometimes I learn of how they overcame some difficulty that plagued them for years, if not their whole life. After the memorial service I find that I come away with a greater appreciation for the person than I had before.

I mention this because growing up in the US, the Royal family was really never of any interest or concern to me, but in the wake of the Queen's passing I've been gaining a real appreciation for her. As it turns out, lots of other people were already clued in about the good qualities of the late Queen. Much has been written about her grace, diplomacy, and an unwavering sense of duty and these are important qualities in a monarch. The Writings do teach about the relationship between a monarch and its citizens, specifically calling out the fundamental necessity of the monarch to do their duty in service to their subjects because "Whoever among them does his [or her] duty for duty's sake, and what is just for its own sake, exercises charity" (AC 8122).

While I know that teaching about the need for a monarch to fulfil their duty can seem like stating the obvious, the cold reality is that there are a lot of people who are supposed to be

public servants and fail to actually, you know, serve! It's simple, it's basic, but one of the themes I've preached on about over the years is the importance of mastering the basics, and that's what Queen Elizabeth did. This is a big deal! Maybe you haven't noticed, but benevolent monarchs are hard to come by! The world might still be run by more kings and queens if monarchs had been more like Queen Elizabeth and less like King Henry VIII.

I think it's fair to wonder how it was that she was able to keep a perspective that pointed her towards service, as opposed to allowing the title to put her on a giant ego trip. The answer as far as I can tell is that Queen Elizabeth had faith, real faith. I think this is just one reason why the Writings teach that leaders "...must be learned in the law, wise and God-fearing" (NJHD 313). When leaders aren't God-fearing there can be some pretty awful side effects that come from ego driven leadership. That Queen Elizabeth had a strong Christian faith was evident throughout her life. As well as her formal role as 'Defender of the Faith and Supreme Governor of the Church of England', which came with monarchy, she expressed her personal faith even before she was crowned.

"Pray for me ... that God may give me wisdom and strength to carry out the solemn promises I shall be making, and that I may faithfully serve Him and you, all the days of my life." That was the prayer request made in her first Christmas broadcast in 1952. Over the years she kept the tradition of a Christmas broadcast, and in fact those speeches to the Commonwealth were among the few that she actually wrote herself. To me that says that while she was willing to say what needed to be said on most topics, when it came to her faith it was something more, something personal. She was telling us what her faith meant to her. She said in one broadcast, "For me the teachings of Christ and my own personal accountability before God provide a framework in which I try to lead my life."

As I started looking through some of her other Christmas broadcasts, it was easy to spot that she certainly had a theme of service in them. For example:

"I hope that, like me, you will be comforted by the example of Jesus of Nazareth who, often in circumstances of great adversity, managed to live an outgoing, unselfish and sacrificial life ... He makes it clear that genuine human happiness and satisfaction lie more in giving than receiving; more in serving than in being served."

Another year she said, "This is the time of year when we remember that God sent his only son 'to serve, not to be served.'" I thought this was a really interesting take on the Christmas story, because I think most people think about a theme of "hope" around Christmas, not so much service. Yet when I reflect on it, perhaps that's because most people are looking to Jesus to save them, but in the role of a monarch Queen Elizabeth sees the story more from the perspective of Jesus, i.e. the person being looked at to do the saving.

I think this is why she didn't restrict herself to just reciting the Christmas story every year, but would use her platform to remind us of the parable of the good Samaritan saying it "reminds us of our duty to our neighbour. We should try to follow Christ's clear instruction at the end of that story: 'Go and do thou likewise.'"

This outlook in itself is impressive, especially when you consider that the Church of England actually holds to a doctrine of salvation through faith alone. According to them, you don't actually have to live a life of service! Yet that's not how the Queen saw it. Perhaps what impressed me the most about her is that these weren't just hollow words that she commanded others to serve but didn't actually walk the talk herself.

In fact, she started her reign even before she ascended to the throne, and she did it by leading by example. In 1942 she was named Honorary Colonel of the Grenadier Guards, and she'd started showing an interest in women's involvement in the war effort. King George would not hear of it: the very idea of sending the heir to the throne, who was just 16 at the time, to war was wrong. Princess Elizabeth remained steadfast in her decision and, on turning 18 and still very much against her father's wishes, enrolled in the Auxiliary Territorial Services. She began training at Camberley as an auto mechanic, taking classes in mechanics theory, map reading, and servicing, maintaining and driving heavy armoured vehicles. While the war ended before her training was finished, I have to say that I am very impressed by her very real sense of service. As I kept reading the various stories about her the thought kept coming to mind that "I'm starting to like her more!" As it turns out, there was still yet more to like as we had more in common than I realized. Apparently she was actually a bit of a car enthusiast. It's kind of funny in a sense because she never had a driver's license, because, in the UK, all driver's licenses are issued in her name and, as such, she could not issue herself one.

Nevertheless she continued to drive herself well into her 90s, and while she enjoyed her rugged Land Rovers, she was reported to also love an older Jaguar estate model that actually wasn't all that special of a car... but she liked it. Legend has it that she would often pop out before a planned drive to diagnose and fix issues with the engine of the cars in the garage and that she was quite fond of driving fast. My kind of Queen! But not only did she like cars, but she reportedly had an "impish" sense of humour, which I think is evidenced in the rego plate of her car: MYT 1 (pictured).



My favourite story I found though about the Queen's sense of humour is this: Former Royal Protection Officer Richard Griffin revealed an incident where Queen Elizabeth II played a prank on two American tourists who failed to recognise her. Two US hikers approached the Queen when she picnicked near the Scottish castle at Balmoral. The American gentlemen asked the queen where she'd come from and where she lived. She simply replied, 'London'. She told the hikers she visited Balmoral Castle for the past 80 years. One hiker, then asked her if she ever met Queen Elizabeth.

In jest she replied that while she hasn't, she pointed to Griffin saying that he meets her regularly. Intrigued, the American tourist instantly asked Griffin about the Queen's personality. Griffin played along and said that the queen was cantankerous at times, but she also has a lovely sense of humour. The excited American tourist immediately removed his camera. He handed it to the Queen herself and asked her to click a picture of him with the royal protection officer!

Later, the bodyguard clicked a picture of the tourists with the Queen herself. Queen Elizabeth later said to Griffin that she'd love to be a fly on the wall when the tourists show these photographs to their friends in America. She hoped in jest that someone tells them who she is!

What a great story!

And yet as much as I enjoy the humour and car connection, I really feel like I've gained a new respect for her as a God-fearing, service and duty driven person... the perfect person to serve as Queen. This is why I enjoy memorial services.

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Hurstville New Church Centenary Celebrations

Hurstville New Church is celebrating 100 years in Penshurst! In 1905 the Hurstville Society of the New Church was founded (some may remember our 100th Anniversary celebration in 2005?). In 1921 the Society went from having no permanent place of worship to purchasing a block of land and erecting a simple building on Dudley Street. The cornerstone was laid in July 1921, and on November 27, 1921 the church building was dedicated.

COVID derailed us a bit — but we'll be celebrating the momentous anniversary of the church dedication with a weekend of centenary celebrations this year. There will be an open house with afternoon tea alongside open gardens and tennis court on **Saturday, November 12th**. On **Sunday, November 13th**, there will be a special worship service followed by a celebratory luncheon by invitation. **Bishop David Lindrooth** from Bryn Athyn along with his wife **Aven** will be attending our centenary celebrations.

See <http://www.hurstvillnewchurch.com/centenary.html> for details, or contact Jenn Beiswenger: jenn@beiswenger.net. We hope to have you join us!

Class on Oct 6 – LGBT Continuation

Last month we started looking at some of the arguments people use to say that homosexuality, and same sex marriages in particular, aren't actually forbidden by the Word. This next class will continue the discussion on LGBT behaviours, but looking at arguments people use that aren't from the Word. Some examples include: They were born that way/not their fault, "Love is love," they're not hurting anybody and the most popular of all, "I know a LGBT person, and s/he is so nice..."

So what do the Writings say regarding these arguments? That's what we'll be looking at, as well as having some time to have some open discussion for any question that hasn't been addressed in these two classes. As usual I will send out a Zoom and YouTube link to the classes in advance.

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Australian Clergy Meetings

I'll start by saying that the Australian clergy meetings were very different from the General Church clergy meetings. In general, while the GC meetings were heavily focused on doctrinal debate, the Australian meetings were more focused on casting a vision for the future. There's a reality that is becoming more apparent every year, and that is our congregations are shrinking, but the Logopraxis (LP) program is growing.

As a result, one of the main questions was what do we do with this situation? Do we give up on congregations and put all NCIA resources into growing LP? Do we work to get LP running in congregations? Is there a way to revitalize congregations? While there certainly is a case to be made that LP is the way forward, the Council Of Ministers isn't ready at this time to give up on congregations, though we all are seeing that something is going to have to change in order for them to survive long term.

But what is it that we can actually do? Hurstville, Melbourne, and Roseville are all in basically the same situation with low attendance and an aging group. Brisbane is the one that stands out as a congregation that is growing and has a broader age group. So the consensus at the meetings was that congregations should send their pastor and potentially some lay people to spend some time with the Brisbane congregation and see if there are some best practices that can be learned from them.

At this point that is the suggestion from the Council Of Ministers, and Hurstville is going to have to figure out if we're going to participate in this plan. It will of course require at least one Sunday where there's a lay service, and it will likely have to happen after all of the centenary celebrations are complete. As a result it won't be happening right away, but it at least feels like a reasonable next step.

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Prayer and Providence

A Book by Rev Mike Gladish

This newly published book is a collection of sermons written over several decades on the theme of prayer and providence. There are three sections, the first, after some general teachings, including a treatment of each phrase in the Lord's Prayer; the second on how providence works, including why the Lord permits bad things to happen; and the third, which is mostly expository, showing how selected stories in the Word reflect all these teachings. It's a paperback of about 280 pages. Mike will be bringing a few copies with him for sale when he visits in October. Let us know if you'd like to reserve a copy.

Note, Mike will also bring a few copies of Brad Heinrich's new book encouraging family worship and offering guidance to parents about "parenting principles from the Word," specifically about passing our faith on to our children. It's called "As for me and My House, We Will serve the Lord." It is also a paperback, about 200 pages and is easy to read, and well illustrated with full colour drawings throughout.

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Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **Stuart Heldon** (10th), **Zach Beiswenger** (10th), **Murray Heldon** (13th), **Darren Kermond** (20th), **Cameron Walsh** (20th), **Jenn Beiswenger** (27th)

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