

DON'T DO THE HOKEY-POKEY

Testimony – Ian Childs – September, 2025

HOKIE POCKIE

You put your left leg in you put your left leg out
You put your left leg in and you shake it all about
You do the hokie pokie and you turn around and
That's what it's all about
You put your right leg in you put your right leg out
You put your right leg in and you shake it all about
You do the hokie pokie and you turn around and
That's what it's all about.

I was introduced to my Saviour at an early age with a Mum who was regarded as a "Religious nutcase" by the rest of her family (and many of those remaining still think that way). My Dad held out until just prior to the Billy Graham Crusade in 1959 where both Dad and I, formally committed our lives to Jesus Christ. Since then, I have always been conscious that I am Christ's and when I stray (Oh yes - I've tried doing the hokie pokie), I have been lovingly bought back to our covenant.

As a youngster my family were very involved in Church activities and when Dad came with me to help out with running the local Church of England Boy's Society (CEBS) he ended up being area commissioner for St. George & Southerland Shire, and Mum was manager at Dalrymples Christian Books (*later to change to Scripture Book Centres when Scripture Union took over the business*).

Dad, my sister and I all got involved with the church choir, '59 & '61 Crusade Choirs and "boy soprano me" thought I was "pretty special" when I went to St. Andrews Sydney Cathedral and other Churches as guest soloist – that only lasted until my voice broke when I was 14.

Going to high school I would go home via the Christian bookshop and whilst there got to do my school homework or reading books from the bookshelves while waiting for Mum to finish for the day. This was a great feeding of God's word and I was encouraged to look at what happened with the rituals and beliefs of Pagan religions (Mithra, an ancient Roman form of Paganism, was particularly pertinent and I found how many of our religious traditions came from this Pagan source after Emperor Constantine deemed Christianity as the religion for the empire, Many priests of these pagan religions simply changed hats and put a cross up, while merging some Hebrew & Christian rituals in with those of their existing pagan festivities and liturgies where they could fit).

This developed into a bit of a passion, and I started to trace the pagan roots of such Christian religious practices and traditions.

Once I had independent transport, I left my local Church (Oatley Anglican) and wandered around trying to find a Church group with what I thought was the perfect doctrine matching mine (My Mum used to describe this as firing the arrow and then painting the target). Since then I've come to realise that no Church is Perfect, especially once they have me in it.

After a stint at Caringbah Open Brethren (I played in the band there), I went to Blakehurst Baptist where my best friend happened to be the minister's son.

At around that same time I had joined the Volunteer Coastal Patrol as a volunteer for about 5-years and at the same time with the SES and volunteered there for over 37 years.

Then at 21, my 21 year old best buddy with whom I had been co-running the Friday night Youth Ministry at Blakehurst Baptist Church, was killed by a drunk driver whilst coming home from his fiancé's place at Taren Point, I was both devastated and angry at God. His Dad took the funeral service and many from the youth group saw how an extended life had little guarantee, with quite a few pledging themselves to be followers of Christ.

For myself, I wanted to distance myself from this God who took my friend..

Whilst I never once felt abandoned by God but realise that at the time I did relegate Him to the role of back-up for when I felt deficient (A bit like the uncle who you know you can trust). In 1978 I found my life-partner and we married. For convenience we returned to the original Church at Oatley where I had grown up.

In my career, which was progressing in building services engineering and facility management I became well regarded, going on to hold some senior executive engineering positions with some renowned Australian property portfolio owners and their managing agents, I started my own company in 1998 which initially focussing on assisting building owners & managing agents with resolving their building services and compliance issues.

When each of our sons were born, I committed them to my Saviour (the Lord only let me have boys - But I've now got some daughters in law and they've given me grandsons in whom I delight).

Anyway in 1985 some guys at Church convinced me to go on a house-party and on that Saturday night a question was asked "How do you feel about your wife" - I replied that "She was the most important thing in my Life"....., immediately I was overcome with the knowledge that I had indeed wrongly placed her on a pedestal over my God – That night I told my Saviour how sorry I was and spent the rest of that weekend in continual prayer and consuming God's word.

I acknowledged that my anger at God had made me God's Judge, and this was a position that none have a right to hold, nor do any in Creation.

That year our 2 youngest sons were diagnosed with mild autism; It has been difficult sometimes caring for these blessings that God has entrusted us with, however, I know the joy and delight they are to us and to God. I imagine his pleasure each time He takes a hand in their lives.

We were blessed by the support of my Mum & Dad infused into them with so much scripture. They're adults now and very independent. They attend and contribute to their Growth Group and are now cemented within the Church family at Foundary.

Our middle son was very much like I was - lacked direction and was without close Christian friends although attending at Oatley Anglican Youth – Then when youth ministry effectively folded at that Church, he migrated to the Church we were then attending and found a great circle of mates upon whom he could rely. He became involved in a Growth group, the Church Band and was part of their youth fellowship leadership team. He then married and they now have given me two fantastic grandsons (Elijah & Nikoah). They moved with us to Lake Macquarie area, but are hopping from church to church without yet settling.

Our oldest son completed a Dip. Theology at Tabor College. and on finishing University BSc & MSc, went to Kazakhstan on short term mission where he worked in the school for missionary's children. On his return he completed the PhD in Photonics and then married a girl from Oatley who claimed to share his yearning for overseas mission, he was invited to China to setup the Photonics Department and teaching + research at the Beijing University. he'd already hooked up through Interserv to link with locals and using their newborn baby's name "Jowan" (meaning God's Grace) found this a way to introduce Christ into conversations. *This offset the Chinese edict against pastoralising as it was the locals who were then deemed to have made the first move.* Some 20 growth groups were established under that make friend methodology during their time there. After establishing the University department, they had to return to Australia and worshiped at Newtown Mission and along came another son, Aydin. He was then offered a research contracted position in Crete and it was there that the marriage appeared to falter. His wife returned to Sydney with the children but without him. He returned to Australia as soon as the contract term ended and after some months she simply left with the boys passports leaving the infant boys in his care. She then moved to the Central Coast where her parents had relocated.

She applied for full custody and the boys with the court granting shared custody. Their property at Lakemba was sold and she filed for divorce.

After his divorce, he got a job in Newcastle to be closer to his boys, and then after a time re-married, and they had a son together (Elikai, who is much loved by his older brothers) and they worship locally with New Heights Church at Barnsley.

As for my attempts at finding the perfect doctrinal truth there will always be something in every mainstream doctrinal group calling themselves Christian that will not wholly fit with what I believe in my heart - I've found that for me, the evangelical Anglicans such as the Sydney Diocese came closest. - Given that - the fundamentals of Salvation and True Hope through faith as outlined in the Gospels and the New Testament are valid and should be applied by all. Personally, whilst retaining awareness, I try not to dwell too much on the introduced pagan practices with their procedures, traditions and justifications which are infused into our liturgy. I accept that the spirit of what communion (in spite of its pagan foundation) represents and partake of it with a right heart and yearning for the salvation of all by their choice.

I have been blessed with the mentoring and friendship of many who have blessed my life and moulded me in my walk with God: Reg & Shirley Hanlon, Gordon Bowles, John Chapman (Chappo), Royle & Frank Hawkes, Anne Wooton, Ivan & Virginia Lee, Ray Evans, Peter Leithhead, Richard Hurford, Lance Lloyd, Roy Ashton, Laurence & Mary Lovell, John & Margaret Farr, Mat & Sarah Yeo, Phil & Tini Sochon, Richard & Sue Bolton, Paul Barnet, Arthur Stace, Ken & Margaret Churchward to name but a few.

Thankfully I have had so many of these saints who have come into my life and refreshed the purpose for my living and for whom I MUST live.

I continue to worship in our Church at ANeW which is a Newcastle Anglican Church devoted to Expository Bible teaching and the practical outpouring of Christ's Love to mankind, and for their fellowship and friendship I am forever grateful.

The Bible is the Living Word of God, and it is up to us to give it some Life through the example of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit within us – remembering always that through our acceptance of what Christ did was the only way to obtain a clean slate when we attend our Day of Reconciliation.

For those of you too young to know what the hokie-pokie is - go ask your Mum, Dad, Grandmother, Grandfather.

Prior to moving from Oatley and then in Queensland my Dad & Mum were fully involved in outreach to seniors, nursing home mission, outreach to Vision Impaired (Mum's had <10% vision from macular degeneration) and they were running some local Alpha courses. They were an example of - If you're breathing – you've got a purpose – find it and do it.

We had Mum leave us for Glory in 2015 and Dad relocated near to us, coming to Church with us until his 99th birthday excepting COVID lockdowns and going to Glory in Sept 2020.

My sister, who God blessed with so much talent and abilities, sadly made her choice to reject Christ as Lord and this appeared unchanged by the time she left this life in 2016, despite constant prayers for God's intervention. She stated a "hate that Mum loved God and doing for others more than her". I fear for her place in eternity and the legacy that she left in her children and to my God-Children.

So don't do the hokie-pokie till your life ends as you might be "out" instead of "in" when it comes time for you to go. If you acknowledge Jesus Christ as being Saviour and redeemer, get it out of just being in your head and have it infuse your whole being right now!

If you are reading this:- I pray that you will open your heart and have, or that you soon do form a personal relationship with your God, Messiah and our true King.