

Religion is of life, and the life of religion is to do what is good
(Doctrine of Life 8)

The New Church is an international organization of people striving to improve their conscious relationship with the Lord, Jesus Christ, the one God who rules heaven and earth.

We extend a warm welcome to everyone, and invite you to take what you like and return it freely. We use the Bible and the Heavenly Doctrine revealed by the Lord and published by Emanuel Swedenborg to guide us in our lives, especially in our relationships. We freely share our love and understanding with each other, and try to give one another support in our spiritual journeys.

Our pastor is **Rev. Garry Walsh**. Garry grew up in the Hurstville congregation and is pleased that together with his wife and children, he is able to serve this group as their pastor. He is available on call to help people work through any of the life issues that affect their relationship with themselves, their neighbours and their Lord.

Worship Services are held each Sunday at 10:00 AM. **Sunday School** for children ages 0-14 runs concurrently with the Sunday Worship service. In summer there is child minding during the services.

Young People's Group is held every second week.

Doctrinal Classes are held on the 1st and 3rd Fridays of each month (summer excepted) beginning at 7 30 pm. Tea and social precede the class on the first Friday each month at 7.00 pm..

Discussion classes on fundamental New Church teachings are held on Wednesdays at 9 30 am.

The Swedenborg Bookroom, at 22 Dudley Street, Penshurst, contains books by and about Emanuel Swedenborg for sale or loan. It is open by appointment.

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<http://www.newchurch.org.au/hurstville>
Call or come at anytime.



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society August 2004

Water and Truth

by Norman Heldon

Understandably, some people are very concerned about the continuing drought in the Eastern States of Australia. Rivers and dams are drying up. Many farms are hard hit. The main dam supplying Sydney's water is down to about 40% capacity and is still falling. Some people, like Senator Bill Heffernan, himself a farmer, declare that the drought crisis is largely man-made and is worsened by farming practices unsuitable for the country, like rice and cotton growing that need a lot of water. In other states there are also problems; Adelaide's water supply is precarious and there is an emerging water crisis in Perth (SMH*, 28-6-04).

Scientists at Macquarie University have said that there is strong evidence that extensive landscape alterations can trigger climate change.

Their study measured changes in southwest Western Australia where clearing of the native forests has been followed by serious declines in rainfall. This seems to be partially the reason for the threat to Perth's water supply (SMH, 5-07-04).

Destruction of forests is accelerating in other countries too. Also it is feared that changes underway in the Earth's polar regions due to global warming may cause ocean levels to rise and flood some islands.

There are hopeful signs that the problems connected with these climatic changes are being acknowledged. Australia's senior politicians have met to discuss the threat to our rivers and water supply.

What has this to do with truth? There is a drought of truth that is man-made. The problem though, is not in supply. There is no lack of genuine truth – spiritual truth. It abounds in the Old and New Testaments together with the New Revelation. But, people's minds appear not to be receptive.

There is though, an exact correspondence between water here in this world and spiritual truth as it is known in the spiritual world. The uses of each correspond to each other. All the ways we use water in this world correspond to spiritual uses (or misuses) of truth. For instance, we generally wash ourselves every day. The Lord says,

Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean;
Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes.
Cease to do evil,
Learn to do good (Isaiah 1:16, 17).

Remember Naaman the leprous Syrian captain who was told by Elisha the prophet to wash seven times in the Jordan River (2 Kings 5). At first scornful and angry, he eventually listened to the advice of his servants and obeyed Elisha's instructions. His flesh became clean. It is unlikely that we'll suffer from that skin disease, but if we believe the true ideas we learn and then live contrary to them, we profane the truth, which is spiritual leprosy (see Arcana Coelestia 6963).

had felt concern that no one would voice a question or response during this response/question time and that this concern forced them to worry about what they might then say to fill the void. This type of concern is an unnecessary distraction during our worship services. For this reason the Pastor with the support of his Council has made the decision to end the trial. Those who had chosen to remain in the church at the end of these services to contribute either silently or verbally in this trial are warmly thanked for their patience and participation. Over time we will continue to explore additional minor variants to our classes and services in order to try to meet the evolving needs of our congregation.

Family Camp 2005

By now those of you who have either been a regular camp attendee or have shown interest in attending the 2005 camp would have received a flyer from the camp organisers outlining details and costs. For those who do not yet know, next year's camp will be held in beautiful **Alexandria Headlands** on **Queensland's Sunshine Coast**. It will be take place from the 10th to the 16th of January. An open invitation is extended to all people connected with the New Church to consider taking part. The annual camp format has proven to be very successful. Many people have found it to be a "don't miss" annual experience. The quality of the facilities and the natural beauty of the region should make this year's camp especially worth not missing.

Those who are planning to attend are urged to send their reply and deposit to the camp organisers by the deadline of the 15th of August.

A huge word of thanks goes out to the Brisbane Society for taking on the planning of what we expect to a wonderful and memorable event.

Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **Norm Heldon** (1st), **Grace Horner** (7th) **Anne O'Sullivan** (7th), **Mark Brettell** (8th), **Rhonda Hall** (12th), **Rebekah Horner** (17th), **Graeme McLeay** (22nd) and **Ralph Horner** (30th)

Pastor's Travel Plans

Garry will be travelling to **Canberra** to give a class and lead a worship service on the weekend of the 21st and 22nd of August. The Hurstville Society will have a lay led worship service that weekend.

Garry has also been invited to participate in a minister's study retreat in **South Africa in October**. This is a General Church sponsored event. At this stage he anticipates being out of the country from the 23rd of October to the 4th of November. The regular Sunday worship services will be lay led during that time.

Society News

Two of our intrepid world travellers have returned home since the last edition of our Newsletter. **Karen Lockhart** and **Naomi Heldon** have both been exploring the world, Karen in Europe and Naomi in Thailand, Europe and North America. We are glad they seem to have thoroughly enjoyed themselves and it is good to have them back. Naomi though hasn't kept her bags unpacked for long. We hear that she will soon be travelling to Thailand and adjacent countries in South-East Asia.

Meanwhile, **Carolyn Heldon's** travels have taken her across much of North America. Her next stop will be Ireland followed by Scotland and England where we expect her to set up base for some time.

Our Pastor **Garry Walsh** will be the guest speaker at the **Swedenborg Association's AGM** on the evening of the 13th of August. His topic, for those who might be interested in attending is, **THE WORD EXPLAINED** and its place in Swedenborg's Theological Journey.

Question and Response Trial On the 24th of April a trial began where time was allocated at the end of the Hurstville Society's worship services so that people could choose to express their personal responses or questions inspired by the theme or topic of the service. At the Pastor's Council meeting following church on the 25th of June it was noted that a few people

We've probably all noticed how well trees grow by the sides of rivers and streams. Psalm 1 says that a person who delights in the law of the Lord and meditates in it "day and night" is like a "tree planted by the rivers of water." That person's life will flourish and bring forth fruit.

So if we watch welcome rain falling, we can think that each raindrop is representing some drop of truth that has come down to water the gardens of our mind. It comes to foster true spiritual intelligence. We might also be reminded of Johnny Appleseed's words as he described the truths of the New Revelation that he was distributing along with his apple seeds to pioneer families moving west to colonize America. "Good news right fresh from heaven" he said.

* "SMH" is the SYDNEY MORNING HERALD newspaper.

I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of rugged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains.

From "My Country" by Dorothea McKellar

"Droughts and Flooding Rains"

by Rev. Garry Walsh

Norman Heldon's article, that opens this edition of the Hurstville Newsletter, raises a number of fascinating issues that lend themselves to further investigation. Of these, the one that immediately struck me was the question of why it is that the world seems to be constantly struggling with adverse and destructive weather.

Most of us would prefer it if the weather were benign and predictable. It would be nice if rainfall and temperature followed reliable patterns season in and season out. More importantly, we would love it if the rain fell when

we needed it and stopped falling when we didn't. Farmers would produce bumper crops every year. Dams would consistently be full. Yet the rain would not be so excessive as to over soak the ground or spoil that special barbeque we have planned.

Much as we would like it to, the weather regularly fails to conform to our preferred lifestyle. As Norman Heldon's article points out, large sections of Australia are still gripped by a drought that seems like it will never end. Just across the pond though (that's the Tasman Sea for those who don't come from around here) parts of New Zealand are suffering under the effects of too much rain with floods and landslides affecting large numbers of people.

The struggles against the weather faced by Australians and New Zealanders reflect the human struggles that can be found across the globe. Planet Earth seems like it is always making life difficult for people. If it is not floods or droughts, it is tornados, earthquakes or any number of other natural phenomena.

To a certain extent we might be able to put these ongoing problems down to the fact that this is just the way the world is. From what we can tell, the sometimes violent forces of nature have been a feature of this planet since its very beginnings. Volcanic forces have either made or torn down mountains. The Earth's tectonic plates have been constantly on the move, changing the form of lands and seas. Ice Ages have come and gone. Where once there were dense forests there may now be deserts.

On the surface, the forces of nature seem to operate independently of mankind. Given this appearance, it might seem surprising that the Lord's Word indicates that people have a role to play. With the Children of Israel poised to enter the Holy Land of Canaan, the Lord sent a message through Moses. The message, in part, was as follows:

‘And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the LORD your God and serve Him with

Friday Doctrinal Class Announcement

It has been our practice to hold doctrinal classes on the 1st and 3rd Fridays each month. The class on the 1st Friday has commenced at 7:00pm with a shared meal with the class itself starting around 8:00pm. The class on the 3rd Friday has commenced at 7:30pm with no shared meal before hand.

In **August** this arrangement will be complicated by an event in Roseville that will see a number of regular class attendees elsewhere that evening. The proposal is to cancel the class on that 1st Friday (the 6th) and move the shared meal/dinner to the class on the 3rd Friday (the 20th). This will move the starting time for the class on the 3rd Friday from 7:30pm to 7:00pm.

This change appears in the August Society calendar. Please accept our apologies if you are a regular attendee of these classes and we were unable to make contact with you before the Newsletter and Calendar were printed.

Paul Eldar Speaks At The Swedenborg Association

The Swedenborg Association, based in North Ryde in Sydney are proud to announce a series of lectures by Queensland-based Swedenborg scholar Paul Eldar. His series of five different talks on the topic of **“SPIRITUALITY from the SWEDENBORGIAN PERSPECTIVE”** will be held at the Swedenborg Centre on the afternoon and evening of Tuesday, 27th of July, Friday evening the 30th, Saturday morning the 31st, and Sunday afternoon the 1st of August.

Advertising flyers for this lecture series are available from the Hurstville New Church office or by contacting the Swedenborg Association directly on (02) 9888 1066, or email: info@swedenborg.com.au. Their website is www.swedenborg.com.au.

Finally a group of children sang to us an arrangement by Tony Rose of the threefold blessing - "The Lord bless you and keep you...."

Thank you for all your kindness, and for the privilege we have had of serving you. We look forward to seeing many of you in the years to come and to serving you in different ways. May the Lord bless this Church and those who worship in it."

Lisa and Peter Buss

General Church Assembly 2005 "Renewing Our Purpose"

June 5th to 8th, 2005
Bryn Athyn, PA, USA

General Church Assembly 2005 is collecting application for workshops! If you are interested in running a 90-minute workshop at the Assembly, you must apply by September 1st to be considered. You may find the letter and application on-line at www.newchurchyoungadults.org and click on "What's New?" Or you can call on our new Assembly phone number: 267-502-2696 and ask for a copy to be sent to you in the mail.

Don't delay! The deadline for the application is September 1st and we have a limited number of spaces for workshops!

Note: A website for the 2005 Assembly has yet to be constructed. In the meantime information is being supplied via the Young Adults site. This does not mean that volunteer positions are not available to suit adults of all ages.

all your heart and with all your soul, then I will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil'
(Deuteronomy 11:13, 14).

Rather than being a random thing or something independent of mankind, it appears as if the weather in Canaan was to be influenced by the relationship between the people there and the Lord. Rainfall especially would be affected by the love of the people for their Lord and their obedience in following His commandments.

The story of the Israelitish people in Canaan shows that they tended to not love and obey the Lord as they should. The rains often failed to come when they were needed. Droughts and famine occurred regularly. These problems were symptomatic of the state of the people. Each time we read in the Bible about a drought we can know that the drought was representative of the Lord's Church when love and goodness were lacking. Floods, in contrast, represent the Church when the people's minds are inundated by evils and falsity.

The connection between the forces of nature and the state of the Lord's Church did not end with the Old Testament. At the moment when the body of the crucified Lord yielded up His Spirit we read that "the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked and the rocks were split" (Matthew 27: 50).

Another "great earthquake" occurred two days later when the "angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone from the door" (Matthew 28:2). On both these occasions we are taught that the earthquakes were a natural manifestation of how "the state of the church was altogether changed" (Apocalypse Explained 400:14).

From the "rain of brimstone and fire" that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19: 24) to the droughts in the time of the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 16-19), to earthquakes at the Lord's death and resurrection, there seems no doubt that the relationship between the Lord and mankind has had a

dramatic local affect on the forces of nature and the weather. Could this still be the case today? Could the current relationship of people with their Lord have a localised impact on their weather? Can good stable weather be attributed to the health of a particular society's spiritual life? On the other hand, could a devastating earthquake, tornado or flood be a symptom of a particular community's spiritual failings?

In reality, there is no way we can make such definitive direct connections. We can no more do this than the fault for the man being born blind could be directly traced to a particular flaw in either him or his parents (John 9:1-3 seq.). Yet, while we are unlikely to ever see the connection between particular human evils and their explicit reflection in nature, we can still be assured that a decline in the spiritual condition of humanity will see some escalation in the frequency and severity of natural disasters, just as improvements in the human spiritual condition will see some parts of the world move closer to the predictable and benign weather people so desperately desire.

Such a noticeable and sustainable change for the better does not seem to be all that near to us. Natural disasters or insufficient rainfall tend to result in poverty, malnourishment and disease. These human problems are further irritated by greed, apathy and a simple lack of love for our fellow man. These types of evils do not go away overnight. In recognition of this the Lord Himself said, "You have the poor with you always" (Matthew 26:11).

There is a human tendency to moan about the weather. This, or course, will do nothing to alleviate the problem. It is far better to accept that our weather problems may be self-made to some extent. Not only this, but with the knowledge that today's prosperity might be spoiled by the effects of tomorrow's weather, it makes sense to save some of what we have today in order to offset the challenges that may well lie ahead. And, as we encounter people whose lives are already adversely affected by the state of the weather or by other ills that permeate humanity, we should be moved with compassion to lend a hand as we can. We may ultimately find that some of the evil that resides in our own heart has contributed in part to their problems.

Letter From Bishop Peter and Lisa Buss

"To our many friends in the General Church.

"Dear friends,

"Lisa and I were moved beyond anything by the farewell event to us on June 20th, with the amazing gifts we received from all of you. There was a beautiful stained glass window hanging [*see front cover of Newsletter*] with the logo of the Church - the Open Word - with the inscription in Greek - "Well done, good and faithful servant" - written around the logo. There was a pendant of the General Church logo for Lisa. But then came the next three. First, all of our children and their spouses were present - a gift, apparently, from many generous people. We were quite blown away by their arriving, some of them quite unannounced, that weekend. (They also stayed to help us pack!). I can't tell you how much it meant to us to have them here.

Second, John and Lori Odhner presented us with a quilt, which has been some years in the making. It is so beautiful, and Lisa's mother sewed one of the squares - it was like a message from heaven to see it. In giving it John and Lori sang a special song about marriage and family.

Then there were six large albums with letters and photographs from hundreds of you, from all over the church. Words are not adequate to say what this meant to us. The thought that so very many of you - someone said over a thousand - took the time to write us personally and send us your pictures to remember you by, is indescribably precious. As we have travelled the Church (or lived in Bryn Athyn) we have found so much to be grateful for in this Church we love so much. The love so many of you have for it, the special ways you find to serve it, have enriched us. To have these memories of you is a gift we will never forget - and we can "remind ourselves" of it from time to time. The friendship we share with people from many walks of life, bound by a mutual love of the Lord in His Second Coming is truly a blessing.