

THE PURPOSE OF THE HURSTVILLE NEW CHURCH IS TO BRING YOU CLOSE TO THE LORD, HIS WORD, AND EACH OTHER.

We extend a warm welcome to everyone, and invite you to take what you like and return it willingly. We use the Bible and the Heavenly Doctrines 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 journey.

Pastor Rev Garry Walsh became our new pastor in September when he returned to Australia after graduating from theological college in 2001 and spending 12 months as assistant pastor in the Oak Arbor Society near Detroit in USA. Garry is Australian and has a wife **Laurel** and 3 daughters.

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

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 on Friday evenings.

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 10.00 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 December 2003

Simeon - Just, Devout And Waiting

By Rev. Garry B. Walsh

Visited By The Holy Spirit

A little over two thousand years ago, although much of the world did not know it, the way was being prepared for the imminent coming of the Lord. The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, announcing to her wonderful news. The Holy Spirit would come upon her, enter her womb and bring about the conception of the Son, whose name would be called JESUS.

This visiting of the Holy Spirit was not limited to Mary. In the second chapter of Luke we read about a man named Simeon who it seems, was also among those who were deeply affected by the Holy Spirit's presence. We find the name 'Simeon' first appearing in the Old Testament. This Simeon was the son of Jacob. He was the father of the tribe of Israel that would bear his name. His name literally means 'to hear'. In the *Apocalypse Explained* we read that "Simeon in Hebrew signifies hearing, and

hearkening, and therefore obedience” (AE 443:5). The Simeon of the New Testament seems to have lived up to the meaning of his name. He was prepared to both listen to and obey the Lord. When the moment in time was right, he was open to hearing and following the voice of the Holy Spirit.

And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him (Luke 2: 25).

Guided By The Holy Spirit To Jerusalem

We hear that Simeon was in Jerusalem. We have no idea whether he was from there or had come from some other place. We do know that through the Holy Spirit, he had been led to the place where he would meet his Saviour, the Consolation of Israel. We do not know anything about his spiritual path. Some have speculated that he was a priest because the meeting with Mary, Joseph and the baby Lord occurred at the temple. There is no evidence to support this speculation, although it could be true. When he took Jesus up in his arms and blessed Him, he recited Old Testament quotes, yet there is no evidence that he had been a biblical scholar. His path towards this vital life changing moment could have been life long, or only brief.

Such lack of detail can help us to see that Simeon is a representative figure. Indeed, if it were not for the significance of the male name, ‘Simeon’, the person described in this story need not have been a man. Instead, we find him standing as a representative of certain essential human qualities. And, his place in the story, on a symbolic level, could be taken up by any one of us, woman or man, if only we are willing to also be led by the Lord and His Holy Spirit.

We are taught that there was no ‘Holy Spirit’ until the Lord came into the world. Indeed, the true Holy Spirit only became a full and eternal reality after the completion of the Lord’s life on earth and His glorification. There is no mention of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. The Spirit of Holiness is mentioned there. This, however, described a slightly different mechanism for the communication of the Divine with humankind.

Christmas Events

Sunday December 7th

Theta Alpha Luncheon hosted by Lori Heldon.

Sunday December 14th.- Lunch

Open House/Sunday School Closing: **Garry and Laurel Walsh** would like to invite the congregation to the Manse for an Open House following church on the 14th of December. This time will also include the annual Sunday School Closing. Light refreshments will be provided.

Sunday December 14th.- Evening

Carols by Candlelight at the **Roseville New Church** is on Sunday 14th December beginning at 7.30 p.m. Everybody, including children, is welcome to go along, with friends perhaps, and join in the carols outside in the back garden, and then in the house for mince pies and drinks. If it's fine, it's outside; if it's wet we will have it in the hall. Bring rugs or tarps to sit on and maybe wear some festive clothing. Come and join us - the more singing the merrier the songs. Hope to see you there.

Sunday December 21st

After church there will be a **Pot Luck Lunch**. This will be a good time to meet with some of our visitors as well as have a festive lunch. **Rev Doug and Christine Taylor** will be returning to their homeland once again and will be in Hurstville on this day. Also meet with **Jeff Smith** and **Scott Maddock** of Bryn Athyn who are touring the world and visiting and helping out in as many societies as they can visit around the world. **Naomi Heldon, Stuart Heldon** and **Wendy Cole** are all expected back in Hurstville by this time (Naomi has already arrived – welcome back!) *Please bring a savoury and a sweet dish to share.* Drinks will be provided. Any questions re the catering contact Lori Heldon on 9579 5248.

Wednesday December 24th

Christmas Eve Service at 7.30 pm

Thursday December 25th

Christmas Day Family Service

Artexpress Award – Michelle Heldon



Congratulations to **Michelle Heldon** whose 2003 HSC Visual Arts body of work has been accepted into Artexpress. It will be in the Artexpress exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Art Gallery Road, The Domain, Sydney which will open to the public on 16 January, 2004 and close 21 March, 2004. Michelle's body of work is titled: "When I Was Little They Called Me Nim" and consists of 29 pieces. Her Statement of Intent reads, "My Grandpa, Norman Heldon, is an inspiration to me. He is 87 but is still a child at heart. It is this 'youthful' quality of old age that I wanted to explore in my Body of Work.

I employed a variety of mediums and techniques as each projects a different aspect and feeling to the viewer. My work is not only a celebration of my Grandpa but of all people who go through life and come out smiling".

Visitors in Baringa

At this stage we anticipate the following visitors staying at Baringa through the Christmas season:

- Jeff Smith and Scott Maddock, 2nd of December through 3rd of January.
- Jenny Maddock, 4th of December through 17th of December.
- Doug and Christine Taylor, 17th of December through 23rd of December, and 8th of January through 21st of January.

The first mention of the Holy Spirit occurs when the angel Gabriel told Zacharias about his wife Elizabeth's miraculous pregnancy. This was one of the final steps in the preparation for the Lord. The Lord was, we must assume, beginning His descent into the natural world. It was perhaps a little more than twelve months later when Simeon stood at the temple, holding the infant Lord. It is likely that the Holy Spirit, who had brought him to that place, had been present with him for no longer than it had been with Elizabeth.

Why Simeon?

Why was it that this man was able to be so moved by the Holy Spirit when most others, it seems, were not? Why were there not crowds of people at the temple that day, all eager for a chance to see the Christ? Perhaps the answer can be seen when we look further into the name, 'Simeon'. *Arcana Cœlestia* 342 states that 'Simeon' stands for "faith in action". We see some of this living faith in the literal story where he is described as being 'just and devout'.

The word 'devout' means careful and circumspect. The devout person uses what they know to support the things they care for. Devoutness, in a theological sense, also suggests being moved by holy fear. A religiously devout person is conscious of his or her actions, seeking to do nothing that might be harmful to the will of God. This type of thoughtfulness and concern is a core component in the way we seek to treat anyone or anything we are devoted to. Those devoted to a cause will use their energy to promote and defend that cause. One person, devoted to another, will be careful to support and save from harm, that other person whom they love.

The word 'just' has to do with the heart or the will. It refers to the desire for equity and fairness. A just person will avoid prejudging people and will seek to promote positive outcomes for individuals and the community. The just person's own needs will be balanced against the needs of others. To be truly 'just' therefore does not mean that a person forgoes their own needs. It simply means that those needs are given only the weight they require. And of course, those personal needs are reflected upon to see if they are really

valid and useful.

True justice is a heavenly quality. Justice reigns universally among the angels, guiding their interactions with others. It is a quality that is from the Lord alone. He is Justice itself. So, to be 'just' requires that we have some of what is the Lord's with us. The desire for true justice, for fairness and equity, comes from the Lord. We should claim no credit for it.

Simeon is presented as a person who possesses these positive and angelic qualities. And, we are told, that he "waited for the Consolation of Israel". "Waiting" can seem like a passive thing. However, the word used here suggests something different. It indicates a looking forward to something that has been foretold. It carries a sense of movement towards that special thing that lies ahead. There is endurance along with the forward looking. There is a sense of acceptance of the reality of that thing that is to come and a readiness to stay the course in order to meet it when it happens.

What Was He Waiting For?

So what was Simeon so earnestly waiting for? What was it that was dictating the course of his life? He was waiting, we are told, for the "Consolation of Israel". The "Consolation of Israel" would be the answer to many prayers. The Consolation would bring comfort and solace. This was, in essence, the function and consequence of the Lord's life on earth. We read more about this promise of comfort and hope in the Gospel of John:

If you love Me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him or knows Him; but you know Him for He dwells with you and will be with you

(John 14: 15-17).

Essentially the same word is translated "Consolation" in Luke and "Helper" in John. This is literally the "calling to". It is the answer to the prayer. The Greek word is 'paraclete'. In biblical times a paraclete was an advocate and an aid. This applied particularly to times when a person was facing a legal trial. The paraclete would stand by the accused person, offering

News Notes

This last month has seen **Laurel Walsh** and baby **Heather** return from a three and a half week trip visiting family and friends in the US. The trip took them from Florida where her parents live, up to Bryn Athyn and Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania. It sounds like she was almost overwhelmed by visits from family and friends during this time.

We have been blessed by out of town visitors two weeks in a row. **Phillip and Eleanor Richards** from Canberra stayed overnight at Baringa and joined us for church on the 16th of November. The following weekend we were joined by **Gerald** and **Siri Hurst** from Bryn Athyn who stopped through during an extended trip in this part of the world. The main focus of their trip is to be present at the wedding of **Jonathan Longstaff** and **Leslie Keal** in Auckland on the 29th of November. Leslie is the daughter of **Hugh** and **Jenny Keal** who are fondly remembered from their time in Sydney. Leslie and Jonathan met while they were both studying at the Bryn Athyn College. The last we knew they were planning on settling in New Zealand.

Trevor Favell has recently spent a few days in hospital suffering from the recurrence of the mystery condition that has been ailing him. Tests have shown that he had suffered a stroke some time during the last few years. Ongoing tests will hopefully point the way to providing him with some improved health.

Kaye MacFarlane has been away enjoying the Gold Coast in Queensland and buying some property there. She has also changed apartments in Sydney. The best place to contact her continues to be at her Sayer's work number.

Brian and Patricia Walsh are returning from a three week holiday in New Zealand. Reports are they have had a fabulous time.

While daughters Kaye and Patricia have been away, **Dot Heldon** has been enjoying time with son Ken and his wife Jan in Canberra.

first, toward an evangelization program. (We do, however, help those who are unable to come up with funding. But they like to see some buy in from the congregation.)

We are looking toward building a relationship with a few of our smaller, struggling societies (of which unfortunately there are many), to try to help them turn around and grow. The best approach in the beginning is simply to see what you believe is viable in the first three years, and have some short term goals of attracting newcomers, reaching people, etc., but not to be too pie in the sky. This takes time, and we are all learning how to do this work. So, plan for a few good short steps, and ask for help to do so, and we will look at your proposal, comment on where we think it could be better, etc., and fund you, as well as work with you to make your projects a success. I look forward to hearing from you.

All the best,

Grant Schnarr
for the Office of Evangelization.

In Conclusion

We are blessed to be part of a much larger church with expertise and resources that well exceed our own. The church, however, can only help when that help is asked for. The process of asking begins with us.

Kind Regards,
Garry Walsh
Pastor

Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **Sam Johnson** (1st), **Gai Kennedy** (2nd), **Beryl Laidley** (14th), **Tom Taylor** (15th), **Ken Horner** (16th), **Patricia Walsh** (19th) and **Kristen Johnson** (29th).

comfort and support. The paraclete did not absolve the person of the consequences of their legal situation. The paraclete simply helped the person through it.

Although many in the Jewish world would have prayed that the Christ would come and annihilate their worldly enemies, the reality was that His purpose and function was something different. He was coming to offer support and comfort through life's battles and hardships. He was not there to take those things away. In time though, as evils are removed from humanity as a whole, battles and hardships will be reduced. However, while human evil continues to exist, there will be no human progress without battles and without victories.

Simeon stands as a symbol of the person who actively and patiently awaits the Lord's support through the inevitable battles that lead to eternal life. He represents the person who is motivated by a sense of heavenly justice and whose mind is devoted to finding those ways where equity and fairness can be best achieved. This type of person is open to the presence of the Lord and His Holy Spirit. This type of person is willing to be directed along the path that the Lord provides for him or her. And, this type of person comes over time, into the quality of life that is represented by the temple in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem

Jerusalem was situated at the geographical centre of Israel. It represents the church and its teachings which should exist at the centre of a person's life. Simeon's presence in Jerusalem shows a spirit of affirmation for the true ideas from the Lord that the church teaches. There is personal recognition of the fact that the understanding of the things of religion and the exercise of the life of religion are key elements in following of the Lord. Here is a person who through His Holy Spirit has been led into true worship and prayer. This is a person who knows that true worship encompasses every aspect of the way they live their lives and is not restricted to formal religious settings.

The Place For Meeting The Lord

With an affirmative spirit and an open mind capable of hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit, Simeon came to the place where he could at last hold the infant Lord in His arms. It is then that we hear his famous blessing:

*Lord, now You are letting
Your servant depart in peace,
According to Your Word;
For my eyes have seen
Your salvation
Which you have prepared
before the face of all peoples,
A light to bring revelation to
the Gentiles,
And the glory of Your
people Israel.*

(John 2: 29-32)

Joseph and Mary marvelled at these words. It was not as if this was the first time they had heard this message. It was just that the message was coming from someone who seems to have been a complete stranger to them. Very few would have known the Divine nature of this tiny child. Yet, here was this man, stating wonderful things.

Simeon blessed Mary, saying to her:

Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes a sword will pierce your own soul also) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed (Luke 2: 34, 35).

He called this child “Lord”. Of all the times we see the word “Lord” in the Gospels, this is the only instance where this particular Greek word is used. It means, ‘Absolute Ruler’. Simeon was led to use this word as a sign of the recognition of there being one God of whom we can never be more than merely a servant to. The Absolute Ruler was God universally. The Gentiles were under His authority in the same way as the people of Israel were.

Annual Camp

The 2003 camp took place at “Kiah Ridge” near Tahmoor, southwest of Sydney. The easy accessibility of this location meant that more Hurstville Society people were able to attend than has sometimes been the case. The location and the weather were ideal. As has been said already, “we enjoyed it so much we are going again.” The 2004 camp will take place at the same location from the 5th to the 11th of January.

Looking Ahead

As has been stated already, the Hurstville Society has been blessed with many years of financial stability. It is however, becoming clear that the financial practices of the past may not be able to fully support the congregation into the future. Assets may need to be used differently to maintain current programs and amenities and to adapt to the evolving needs of the future. Many of the resources of the General Church are available to help us meet the challenges ahead. One example of this is the Office of Evangelization. During a recent communication, Rev. Grant Schnarr, Directory of Evangelization, wrote:

Thank you for our conversation today about the possibilities of funding for evangelization opportunities in Hurstville. We are here to help you. The Office of Evangelization has a fund to help societies with their evangelization programs. We would like to develop a relationship with individual societies to help them grow over a period of time, and offer ideas, some expertise, support for programs. What I would like from you is some idea of what you would want to try to do, anything from advertising to creating introductory mailings and/or pamphlets, to having a demographic study done of your neighbourhood to see what people are looking for, etc.. The funds are limited this year, and there are others who are interested in receiving some, but I am fairly certain we can help you this year, and know that we can do even more for the next years to come. What the Evangelization Committee wants to see is that you and your congregation are willing to try some things, and also would like to see some financial commitment, even if it is small at

Sunday School

At the recent Society Meeting on the 26th of October, it was agreed that the Society should temporarily suspend advertising that we have a formal Sunday School. This decision was based upon the reality that our two older students are concluding their final year in the program, leaving the two Walsh children as the only ones currently of Sunday School age. Their needs will need to be addressed in other ways. It is nice to know that it will take less than a month to reintroduce Sunday School when needs change.

* Important note

This assessment of the status of Sunday School was already out of date by the time it was delivered. The nature of the “Jacob’s Ladder” program purchased by Laurel Walsh and paid for out of the Society’s Sunday School Budget means that religion projects will still be conducted on Sunday mornings. The materials prepared for Deanna and Ashley Walsh can be duplicated for additional children if and when the need arises. There is still a question mark over whether there will be a Sunday School teacher’s roster as before. At this stage Laurel is hoping that some members of the congregation might be willing to volunteer from time to time so that she can occasionally attend the second part of the worship service.

Newsletter/Courier

A huge ‘Thank You’ once again goes to Owen Heldon for his work with layout and printing and to Rhonda Hall for her work addressing and mailing every month. During the year the decision was made to discontinue the Courier as a separate quarterly publication. Until this point it had (apart for a few exceptions) been distributed to people and groups that also receive the monthly Newsletter. The quarterly duplication in preparing, printing and mailing these two publications seemed unnecessary. The Newsletter now expands every quarter to include the type of longer presentations that were typical of the Courier. Each quarter the Newsletter also tries to present a picture of events involving General Church people in places beyond Hurstville. The other new feature of the Newsletter is the “Meet The Congregation” section. Each month we try to highlight a different Society member or couple. Responses to the changes have so far been positive. Additional input is always welcome, as are submissions from our readers.

In the blessing we find a statement of the Lord’s Divine purpose on earth. He would be a sign or symbol of everything that constituted salvation. Salvation would only become possible once a person had allowed the Lord to pierce their soul, revealing all that lay hidden in their heart. Simeon’s words show a willingness and readiness for this to occur.

This is the intellectual and emotional place where the Holy Spirit was leading. It is a place of personal surrender. It is a place where the person is ready to allow the Lord to fully investigate who they are in order for evils to be uncovered and the Lord’s redeeming work to begin.

Not Seeing Death

The Holy Spirit had told Simeon that he “would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ”. This does not mean that when he came to Jerusalem he was necessarily either old or sick. It did not even mean that the end of his natural life would come shortly after he had held the infant Lord, although this is how he has normally been portrayed. Simeon’s experience of holding the Lord close to his heart is not an end of life type of event. There is no time too early in our adult lives for any of us to truly see the Christ. There is one thing we can hold as a certainty though, no person will ever be able to freely choose the spiritual death of hell until their eyes have been opened to see who the Lord really is. No one is ever condemned in ignorance. At the same time, no one is ever saved unwillingly.

The Lord has left this natural world, taking His body of flesh and blood Him. While doing this, His Holy Spirit has remained with us. The Holy Spirit teaches, inspires and leads. It enlightens, reforms and redeems. We should find comfort in the Lord. He promises to bring us eternal peace, we should not be anxious. With the Lord there is nothing but love and mercy.

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (John 14: 27).

“Nunc Licet”

In the book *The True Christian Religion* we find an account of a beautiful temple that Emanuel Swedenborg was granted to see.

One day a magnificent church building appeared to me; it was square in plan with a roof like a crown, with arches above and a raised parapet running around. Its walls were all windows made of crystal, its doors of a pearly substance. Inside on the south side towards the west there was a platform, on which the open Word lay at the right surrounded by a blaze of light, so bright as to spread round and light the whole platform. In the middle of the church was a shrine with a curtain in front of it; but this was now raised and there stood a golden cherub with a sword which he brandished in all directions in his hand.

When I caught sight of this, as I meditated, the meaning of each of the details came flooding into my mind. The church meant the New Church; the door of a pearly substance, entry into it; the windows of crystal the truths which enlighten it; the platform the priesthood and their preaching; the Word on it, open and lighting up the top of the platform, the revelation of its internal, or spiritual, sense; the shrine in the middle of the church the link of that church with the heaven of angels; the golden cherub there the Word in its literal sense; the sword brandished in his hand meant that this sense can be twisted in different ways, so long as it is made to refer to some truth. The lifting of the curtain in front of the cherub meant that now the Word was laid open.

Later when I got closer, I saw there was an inscription over the door: NUNC LICET. This meant that it was now permitted to enter with the understanding into the mysteries of faith (TCR 508: 1-3).

reduced numbers.

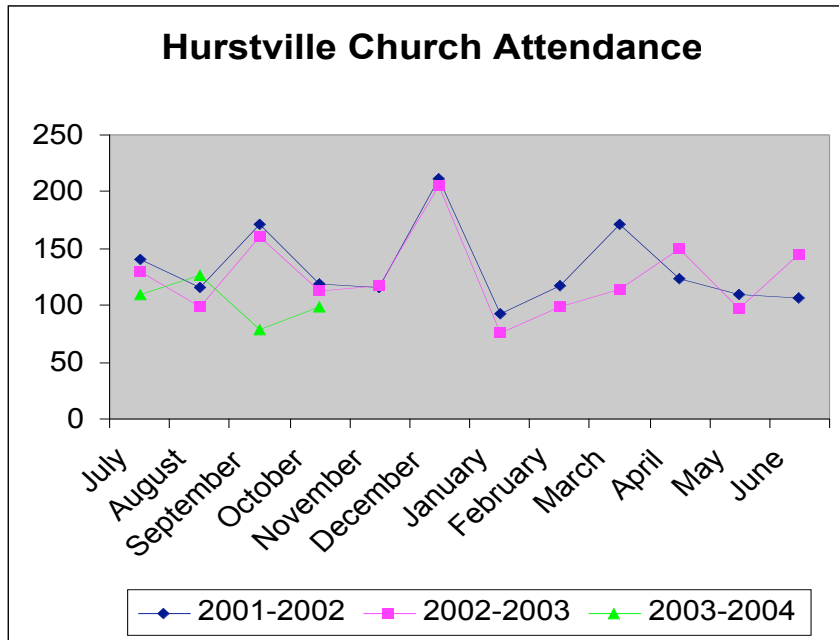
The reading/discussion group continues to work through the Arcana on Wednesday mornings. Most weeks it is just two people plus the pastor. These small numbers do nothing to diminish the value of these meetings. There is, of course, a standing invitation to any others who would like to participate, even on a one off or inconsistent basis. The range of life issues addressed in the Arcana means that each meeting contains thought provoking ideas that do not require the participant to have been at earlier meetings.

Young People's Group

The young people in the Society are continuing to search for the formula that will best suit the ever-changing and time-demanding realities of their lives. In general the group tries to meet twice a month. One of the meetings is in Hurstville. The other is with the Young People's group in Roseville. More needs to be done to ensure that the meetings remain as regular as practically possible and are as relevant to the generational needs of this group as we can manage. Stay tuned.

Visits

- Perth: Visited by the pastor for a week the 29th of April to the 6th of May. It was a very full week including a number of classes, shared meals and a three-day retreat north of Perth at Moore River. Bishop Peter Buss will be visiting Perth in November, 2003. He will likely visit again in March or April, 2004. Because of these visits, no visit from the Hurstville Pastor has been scheduled for 2004.
- Tamworth: Apologies to the wonderful people in Tamworth for whom a visit is well overdue.
- Canberra: There were no visits to Canberra during the reporting period. However, Garry preached in Canberra on Sunday, 7th of July, 2003. The visiting schedule for 2004 has yet to be finalized.



The Sabbath, as we know, is more a state of mind than a date on the calendar. Although, having said that, regularity and consistency of worship are still important.

Through this period we enjoyed 15 newcomer visits. For various reasons, perhaps beyond our control, none of these visits has translated into an ongoing involvement with the church. This may point to our need to refocus our attention on the little things that might help present the Hurstville congregation as a place where new people might become comfortable, not only visiting, but also staying for a while.

Classes

The twice-monthly Friday doctrinal class schedule has continued from previous years. The class on the first Friday has been preceded by a shared meal. Many thanks to those people who continue to volunteer to provide these meals. They are always delicious and very much appreciated. Attendance was roughly on par with previous years. As has been the case with Sunday services, the last few months have generally seen slightly

This image of the magnificent church building and the NUNC LICET sign over the door has been an inspiration to many people in the New Church.



Here in the Hurstville Society, Robert Cooper has proven to be one of those people. Thanks to Robert's efforts we now have our own NUNC LICET sign on the archway that leads to the front door of the church. In Robert's words, "Whatever happens in heaven should happen in Hurstville." Who could possibly argue with that? It is our aim to help people see that the New Church is truly a place where "it is permitted to enter with the understanding into the mysteries of faith."

Hurstville Society Pastor's Report for 2002-2003

Presented at the Annual General Meeting: 16th of November, 2003

(Amended following the meeting)

Rev. Garry B. Walsh

Overview

This report will aim to paint a picture of the Hurstville Society as it looked through the period 1st of July 2002, through 30th of June 2003. During the first two months of this reporting period, the Society was blessed by the leadership of Rev. Erik E. Sandstrom who, together with wife, Lynn-del took time away from family in North America to fill the temporary vacancy here in Hurstville. Their feedback suggests that they thoroughly enjoyed

this opportunity to return to Hurstville, to serve the congregation here, and to reacquaint with many of the old friends they had made when Erik had served as Hurstville's pastor for 8 years in the 1980's.

The 1st of September marked Rev. Garry Walsh's return to Hurstville, now in the new role of pastor after having grown up in the Society. The following weekend saw Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss conduct an ordination service, inaugurating Garry into the 2nd and pastoral degree of New Church ministry. The next twelve months presented the normal sorts of challenges that every pastor and family meet when they change societies. This was the case even though both Garry and Laurel were familiar with the Society and the local area.

Throughout these changing times, the Hurstville Society has shown tremendous stability and resilience. The programs from previous years have largely been retained, although small evolutionary changes have naturally occurred. Although restricted like many others by reduced returns on investments, the Society still stands on a very firm financial footing. It is important not to underestimate the how much of an asset the Society has in its financial and human stability.

Yet, despite the tremendous base that the Hurstville Society has to work from, it is also possible to see that there are potential opportunities that have yet to be explored. The Society is probably not serving its people as well as it could. The same can be said for its service to the greater community. The introduction of a collection centre for non-perishable food for the Exodus Foundation is an indication of the growing recognition within the Society of our responsibilities to the wider world that we live in. This, however, is just the tip of the iceberg.

Recent conversations with Executive Bishop Elect, Rev. Tom Kline; Director of Evangelization, Rev. Grant Schnarr; and Mr. Bill Buick, Chief Administrative Officer and Treasurer of the General Church, have loudly restated the significance of the Hurstville Society. All three men, together with current Executive Bishop, Rt. Rev. Peter Buss, have indicated that they are looking forward to providing whatever help they can to support and

develop the Hurstville Society into the future. (A conversation was also held with former pastor Rev. David Ayres to hear some of his thoughts about the congregation.) The ball is now in our court so to speak. It is time to engage in the type of real dialog that will shape the Society's future and that will help it build something truly substantial upon the base that already exists.

Hurstville Society Membership

It was wonderful to have Cliff Adamou and Huiling Sun join the membership role just before last year's AGM. Their signatures brought the Society membership to 31.

One of the most memorable and uplifting occasions in this reporting year was the confirmation of Rebekah Horner and the baptism of her infant daughter Klaire. Delays in paperwork have meant that Rebekah is yet to be formally introduced as a member of the General Church and consequently a member of the Hurstville Society. Hopefully this will occur in the near future. May we also hope that more of our young people will find that our church and particularly our Society is a place where they would also like to become a member.

Major Events

In addition to the confirmation of Rebekah Horner and baptism of Klaire, already mentioned, the other major event in the congregation was the wedding of Kristen Heldon and Sam Johnson. The happy couple celebrated their first anniversary on the 2nd of November.

Worship Services

The 55 services held during the year saw a slight reduction in overall attendance numbers (see the graph below.) One obvious reason is because the current pastor's family is smaller than his predecessor's. It is also a reality of modern life that business and personal factors have resulted in some members of the congregation attending less regularly than they once might have. This is a trend that has been more pronounced in recent months. It raises the question of whether Sunday morning is going to continue to be the most appropriate time for a portion of the congregation.