

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.

Our Address is 22-24 Dudley St., off Hillcrest Ave. in Penshurst
Tel (02) 9580-1589. Fax (02) 9570-8447
Email: newchurch@optusnet.com.au

<http://www.newchurch.org.au/hurstville>

Call or come at anytime.



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society November 2003

A Call To Camp

We open this edition of the Hurstville Newsletter with a call encouraging all those who can to sign up to attend January's **Camp 2004**. It will be held from the 5th to the 11th of January and will again take place at "Kiah Ridge" near Tahmoor NSW. As some have said, our last camp at Kiah Ridge was "so good we're going again".

If you have been to an annual camp before you will know how enjoyable it is to be able to join together with New Church people from across the country. It is a unique opportunity to make new friends, reacquaint with existing ones, and share in the beauty and vision of the New Church as it touches people's lives. As an added bonus, this coming camp we will be joined by a sizable contingent from New Zealand. The accommodation and other facilities at Kiah Ridge are so comfortable that we could hardly call it "camping".

The management at Kiah Ridge have kindly allowed us to book without requiring a guarantee of minimum numbers. However, it is important that as many of us as possible announce our commitment to attend before the 31st of October. This will let the people at Kiah Ridge know whether we need to use the entire facility. So if you haven't booked ***pick up the phone now***.

Camp brochures are available at Baringa. Otherwise, please contact Garry Walsh for information. We look forward to seeing you there.

New Church Universalism

By Rev Garry Walsh

There are many people in our world who cling to the idea that God is Love. I count myself as one of these. Indeed, the theology of the New Church is founded on this idea. I do not believe that I could count myself as a New Church person if I were to believe anything else.

Such a commitment to the idea that God is Love does not come without its challenges. When we look at the world around us, turning on our TV's perhaps and seeing pain, suffering and inhumanity throughout the world, we tend to wonder how our God of love could let this happen. We know that evil is part of the human reality and we understand the essential nature of free will, yet surely the Lord must still be willing and able to do something to stop human suffering?

While it is difficult to understand the ongoing human torment that takes place in this world, it can be even more difficult to imagine that the Lord would allow people to suffer in hell for all eternity. Surely eternal damnation was not part of the Lord's plan when He provided for the condemned person's conception and subsequent life? In the book *Heaven and Hell* we read that, "anyone who thinks from any enlightened reason at all can see that no one is born for hell" (no. 318).

If it stands as a given that no one is ever predestined for hell, does this mean that at some stage everyone will be brought by the Lord into heaven? The

News Notes

Murray Heldon is enjoying a respite from his busy business travel schedule that continues to take him to various parts of South East Asia. We hope that he will be able to spend a bit more time with us in the weeks to come.

Laurel Walsh and infant daughter **Heather** are currently on a three and a half week trip to the US visiting family and friends from Florida to Pennsylvania.

Best wishes to **Angela** and **Michelle Heldon** who are doing their HSC exams as this issue goes to print. Next year Angela plans to study at the Australasian College of Natural Therapy and Michelle will pursue a career in Visual Art.

Huiling Sun continues to grow closer to completing her Masters in International Business degree. She looks forward to entering into the import/export field.

Robert Cooper is still working through a Diploma of Mortgage Lending. He expects to be finished within six months.

We look forward to seeing **Naomi Heldon** back with us once again on November 28th. In recent times she has been working in Bryn Athyn including a job as an RA (Resident Assistant) in the Girls' School. It wasn't so long ago she was studying in the same school.

We look forward to visitors in December and January. Firstly arriving on December 5th will be **Scott Maddock** and **Jeff Smith** from Bryn Athyn who are on a round the world trip visiting and helping in as many New Church societies as they can.

Also visiting both before and after Christmas will be **Rev Doug Taylor** and his wife **Christine** who are always welcome.

Arriving a week or so before Christmas will be **Stuart Heldon** and **Wendy Cole** who are completing their world travels in Central and South America.

says. Three weeks after the ship berthed in London they married, the start of a long happy union.

P.S. Copies of the *Complete Works of Shakespeare* are available in all major bookstores, though in case you are wondering, I'm not getting a commission on the many volumes that may be sold because of this article.

The Passing of Patricia Fallon

It is with sadness that we announce the passing of Patricia Fallon. She died at Gosford hospital on Friday, 10th of October, following a severe stroke suffered five weeks earlier. We were alerted to her passing by our friend Bill Hall who now resides in Rockhampton, Queensland. A legal firm working with her estate found his contact details among her records.

Patricia had been a long-term reader of the Writings. Bill Hall indicated that the two had been good friends for over twenty years even though they did not live nearby. Patricia was a staunch reader of the Writings and they often discussed various aspects of the Writings.

Bill feels sure that Patricia will be missed by her friends and contacts. He gratefully acknowledges his debt to Patricia for her friendship and for her sustained interest in the Writings of the New Church which she was always willing to share.

Patricia had a doctorate in philosophy. She attended services and classes in Hurstville when she lived in the area and became an associate member of Theta Alpha. The Theta Alpha journal has published articles by her. In 1991 she joined the General Church but by then had moved to the Central Coast. She is fondly remembered.

Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **Cliff Adamou** (50 on 2nd!), **Jesse Horner** (3rd), **Brian Heldon** (8th), **Cathy Kermond** (11th), **Ashley Walsh** (27th) and **Lori Heldon** (30th).

idea of eventual salvation for all is commonly referred to as "universalism". It is a concept that has permeated aspects of Christian thinking from, it seems, as early as the religion has existed.

Universalism, as it is commonly defined by Christians, is the belief that God, through the atonement of Jesus, will ultimately bring reconciliation between God and all people throughout history. This reconciliation will occur regardless of whether they have trusted in or rejected Jesus as Saviour during their lifetime. This universal redemption will be realized in the future where God will bring all people to repentance. This repentance can happen while a person lives or after he has died and lived again in the millennium or some future state. Additionally, a few universalists even maintain that Satan and all demons will likewise be reconciled to God.

It is widely conceded that universalist-type beliefs exist privately with many people within the bounds of traditional Christianity. This remains the case despite the fact that orthodox Christianity strongly declares the teaching that some people are saved through the mercy and grace of God and that others are not.

New Church teachings lead us away from any notion of predestination. They also preclude us from thinking that salvation is ultimately limited to a select few whom God has, arbitrarily it seems, selected for salvation. In contrast, we generally embrace the idea that a person need not be New Church, or Christian for that matter, in order to receive the gift of eternal life. Does this then mean that the New Church teaches universalism?

To some extent the answer must be, yes. The Lord, being Love Itself, seeks to draw all people to Himself, regardless of the cultural, historical, or religious context of their belief and life. But, having said this, the New Church also teaches the reality of hell. With hell there is punishment. And, most importantly, hell is eternal.

So why must hell exist? Why is it that if salvation and the life of heaven are offered to everyone, some people choose not to accept it? Perhaps part of the answer stems from the fact there is something attractive in the life of

evil that leads to hell. In the work *Divine Providence* we read that,

“It has been provided that everyone, no matter in what heresy he may be with respect to his understanding, may still be reformed and saved, if only he shuns evils as sins and does not confirm heretical falsities in himself” (no. 259: 3).

Reformation, salvation and consequently heaven are therefore provided to those who choose to not follow the attraction of evil. This is a choice that the Lord has provided to “everyone”.

The rejection of evil and the false ideas that seem to justify evil are not the only qualifications for heaven. We are taught elsewhere that people must, “believe in one God and live in accordance with the commandments of their own religion” (*True Christian Religion* 107). We are taught that people’s lives must have been “influenced by some kind of charity towards the neighbour as a result of their religion” (*Arcana Coelestia* 10112). So it is that the Lord provides that “everyone shall have some religion” (*Heaven and Hell* 318), in order that they may be influenced by the message of that religion and choose to live in accordance with it.

When we look at the supposedly Christian world in which most of us live, we may wonder where the religion is that the Lord says He provides for everyone. Organized religion is often ridiculed. Churches only seem to get media attention when there is something scandalous to report. Many people may state that they have a religion but few have a church of their own. It would seem that religion with a great many people is weak at best. Yet, despite this, the Lord must be providing opportunities for people to find the basic religious and moral concepts that they need. There is an old saying that, “everything I ever needed to know I learned in kindergarten.” Perhaps for many people the simple moral lessons of early childhood are enough.

False doctrines adopted through a life without much religion, or from a faith system that has flaws are not immovable barriers to the life of heaven. This is a concept to which the New Church does not have exclusive rights. One Christian commentator stated,

“And this our life, exempt from public haunt finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in the stones and good in everything.”

I can imagine a New Church minister seeing an opportunity for a sermon or talk on the correspondences of things of nature, that provide spiritual lessons for us to reflect upon.

In another play we read,

“What is a man,
If his chief good and market of his time,
Be but to sleep and feed, a beast no more,
Sure He that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
that capacity and godlike reason
to fust in us unused.”

(*Hamlet* Act 4, scene 4)

As we read in the Writings we are created with the faculties of rationality and freedom; in other words we can think and we can love. Our rationality enables us to learn what is good and true and what is evil and false. By rejecting the evil and false we can then love what is good and true from the Lord (*see Divine Providence* 85). Thus, as Shakespeare says, our God-given reason will not “fust in us unused.”

In *Hamlet* a character remarks:

“There is a Divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew then as we will.”

That is to say, we are not completely in control, as we often think we are. Suddenly, as if by accident, something happens that changes our lives. I thought of this recently when reading about the Australian writer Jon Cleary. Many years ago, travelling by ship to London, he spoke to a girl who was keeping to herself a lot. There was instant mutual attraction, he

It seems certain that an important part of Shakespeare's education, both at home and school, was Bible study, and certainly he had an astonishing memory.

To cite one of many Biblical allusions, a character in *Hamlet* remarks, "There's a special Providence in the fall of a sparrow." In the Gospel of Luke we read, "*Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?*" In another play a character, speaking of heaven says, "There sits a judge no money can corrupt."

What is not usually conceded is that Shakespeare was also a deep thinker, a philosopher. Often things he wrote agree with the truth of Revelation. In Henry IV for instance we read, "If all the year were playing holidays, to sport would be as tedious as work." Swedenborg tells of people who went into the spiritual world believing that in heaven they would enjoy endless pleasures. Allowed to experience that round of never-ending pleasures, very soon they found it unbearable. Sated with pleasure they sought vainly for a way out until an angel explained to them that heaven was doing useful things for others.

"Good name in man and woman, dear my Lord,
Is the immediate jewel of their souls,
Who steals my purse steals trash; it is something, nothing,
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands,
But he that filches from me my good name,
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed."

(*Othello* Act 1, scene 3)

Doesn't that remind us of the Commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," or even, "Thou shalt not kill?"

Consider a delightful passage in *As You Like It*. The banished Duke, supplanted by his brother, is in the Forest of Arden with a few followers. In these delightful surroundings, away from court duties and intrigues, he philosophises,

"I will admit that God casts his net further than we do and I do not believe that God will condemn all people for their lack of the proper understanding of the Trinity doctrine. On the other hand, I believe that those who openly reject it are not of God" (*Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry*).

This is a sentiment that is worth applauding. It sits well with the teaching that:

"The Lord's mercy is universal, that is, extended to all individuals. Non-Christians are born just as human as people within the church, who are in fact few by comparison" (*Heaven and Hell* 318).

There is no doubt that the New Church teaches universalism. However, it is universalism that comes with qualifications. The Lord wills that all people will be drawn by Him into heaven. But, human free will and choice leaves the way open for some to reject His invitation. The New Church may be the only place where we are taught that hell is actually a gift of mercy from the Lord. As C.S. Lewis once stated, "Hell is [God's] last service to those who will allow him to do nothing better for them."

The following thoughts are taken from "A Calendar of Themes and Daily Readings from Emanuel Swedenborg" compiled by Rev Julian Duckworth and available from the Bookroom.

God never curses anyone: such things cannot come from the Fountain of Goodness.

Many things are gently introduced to keep a person away from evil and towards good.

The Lord is as if he did not even see peoples' evils, but leads people by bending and not breaking them.

Meet The Congregation



Few couples have brought the depth of warmth to the Hurstville congregation that **Tom and Shirley Taylor** have. Tom's story traces back to the very origins of the Society. He was born in Hurstville in 1919 and grew up with the fledgling church when it settled on Dudley Street. The Taylor family soon moved two doors from the church. Tom recalls spending time in the new home of Richard Morse. Particularly memorable was the constant smell of Rev. Morse's hot coffee as it brewed on a wood stove.

The war saw Tom join the Air Force where he initially served at the Hurstville Barracks alongside Norman Heldon. Unlike Norm, Tom's military career remained within Australia, taking him to all corners of the country as need arose. One of these postings was in Victoria. His sister was also there, engaged for a short time to a man whose sister caught Tom's eye. Tom and Shirley were married on the 10th of October, 1945. Interestingly, Shirley's family name is also Taylor. No change of signature required for her.

A few months later, with Tom's term of service over, the new couple moved

to Sydney. After many years of thinking they would not be able to have children, they were blessed with twins in June of 1953. The 27th of October, 1957 is a date that will always remain fixed in the Taylor family's memory. This was, and still is, Shirley's birthday. It was also the day that Shirley and youngest son Ross were baptised into the church. On top of all that, it was sadly the day that Tom's father died.

Tom and Shirley fondly remember the happiness and friendship of the people in Hurstville. They have been at the heart of church life at times when it has been blessed with talented young people. Tom has long enjoyed his involvement with the Hurstville chapter of the "Sons of the Academy." Shirley has been equally as involved in the Woman's Guild.

The passing of the years has meant that they can no longer attend church every week as they once did. A circulation problem has recently seen Tom lose a leg. His slow road to recovery continues and both of their spirits remain high. Tom and Shirley have been blessed by wonderful friends and neighbours. They never seem to be short of transport or of helping hands to tackle tasks like mowing the lawn. Their three sons never seem to be far away. The walls of their home continue to be brightened by the colours of many years of Tom's cross-stiches and tapestries.

Events beyond their control have taken Tom and Shirley away from the weekly gatherings of the Hurstville Society. They are, however, never far away from our thoughts.

More on Shakespeare

By Norman Heldon

Reading Shakespeare's plays is deeply rewarding. They will ever be read, studied and performed. Unlike most contemporary playwrights, Shakespeare has something worthwhile to say, and the writing is magnificent. The work of most of our contemporaries, though cleverly plotted perhaps, will soon be forgotten.