

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.

Temporarily the Hurstville Society is without a **Pastor**. During this period the Society will be served by lay leaders and visiting preachers.

Worship Services are held each Sunday at 10:00 AM. **Sunday School** is held concurrently with the worship service (prior notice required).

Young People's Group is held once a month in conjunction with the Young People's Group at the New Church at 2 Shirley St, Roseville.

A tea and social in conjunction with **discussion** meets on the 1st Friday of each month (January excepted) beginning at 7 00 pm. This will be conducted by visiting ministers when available or lay led as appropriate.

Bible Study and **Discussion Classes** previously held midweek have been suspended until further notice.

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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Call or come at anytime.



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society April 2007

Which Came First?

By Rev Douglas Taylor

Which came first – the sense of the letter of the Word or its spiritual sense?

The question arises only in the New Church because only there is it taught and demonstrated that there is an internal, spiritual sense or meaning within the familiar stories of the sense of the letter. Without that knowledge people must judge the Word solely on its literal meaning only, as if there was nothing more to it. They are not to be blamed for that lack of knowledge because it is not their fault. But it does make a huge difference to their understanding of the Sacred Scriptures. Just imagine how puzzled we too would be if we had not been blessed with the knowledge that there is more to the Bible than meets the eye.

When we tell people that there is a deeper level of meaning within the Bible stories, we are often asked to provide an example. Whatever example we choose – whether the seven days of creation, the wandering in the wilderness, or the Lord’s miracles in the New Testament, a frequent response is, “Well, I suppose you *could* read that into it,” the implication being that there is no certainty except in the sense of the letter, all else being mere conjecture, which we can take or leave – at our pleasure.

That reply is quite to be expected – all things considered. They can only conclude that we are offering them our personal interpretation of the Scriptures, based on the same understanding that they have; that is, that we are reading something into the Bible that may or may not be there. To them it all seems to depend on personal opinion, and that the sense of the letter came first, while the spiritual sense must be something inserted by human beings afterwards.

In the New Revelation for the New Church, however, the existence of a deeper purely spiritual level of meaning in the Word of God can be not only declared but also demonstrated; and this “can convince even a natural man, if he is willing to be convinced” (SS 4). What is more, “the Word is in all the heavens, and is the source of angelic wisdom” (SS 70). “From this we may conclude what wisdom lies concealed in the Word that is in the world” (SS75).

That last general statement is elaborated in this passage about the levels of Truth Divine, that is, Truth going forth from God:

“Truth Divine is not of one degree, but of many. Truth Divine in the first degree, and also in the second, is that which proceeds directly from the Lord; this is above the angelic understanding. But truth Divine in the third degree is such as is in the inmost or third heaven; this is such that it cannot in the least be grasped by man. Truth Divine in the fourth degree is such as is in the middle or second heaven; neither is this intelligible to man. But truth Divine in the fifth degree is such as is in the lowest or first heaven; this can be perceived in some small measure by man

Poems of Swedenborg

Our Bookroom has a limited number of “Poems of Swedenborg” by Leon C Le Van which presents selected prose from the Writings in free verse. In his introduction the author quotes Arcana 1648 “angelic speech sometimes flows forth in a sort of ‘rhythmical cadence.’” Structured in poetic style passages may reach the reader with fresh impact and meaning. An example:

Tares

He that puts away
The evils of his will
By repentance
Is like one
Who in due time
Plucks up the tares
Sown in the field
By the devil
So that the seed
Implanted by the Lord God
Finds a clear soil
And grows up
To a harvest.

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Church Services for April

- 1st Palm Sunday Service (Rev Douglas Taylor)
- 6th Good Friday Service (Holy Supper) (Rev Douglas Taylor)
- 8th Easter Sunday Service (Rev Douglas Taylor)
- 15th Accommodation (by Rev Jong-Ui Lee) (Lay service)
- 22nd Gibeonites (by Rev Jeremy Simons) (Lay service)
- 27th Dinner and Class (Bishop Tom Kline)
- 29th Service led by Bishop Tom Kline

Birthdays

Happy Birthday: **Donna Heldon** (5th), **Gaye Heldon** (15th), **Merv Kennedy** (17th), **Huiling Sun** (20th) **Kerry Horner** (22nd), **David Horner** (25th)

Visit by Bishop Tom Kline

We are pleased to announce that Bishop Tom Kline will be visiting Australia across two weekends in April. Firstly he will visit the **Perth Circle** on the weekend of **22nd April** and then the **Hurstville Society** on the weekend of **27th to 29th April**. He also hopes to visit either Brisbane/Gold Coast or New Zealand.

During his visit in Hurstville the following is scheduled:

- a **dinner and class** on Friday 27th April. The format will be similar to our usual once a month dinner and class.
- Sunday 29th. Bishop Kline will lead the worship service following which there will be a **Pot Luck lunch** to give people maximum opportunity to meet the bishop. *Please bring a savoury and sweet to share. Drinks will be provided.*

Future Pastoral Visits

More good news. We have also learnt in the last few days that **Rev George McCurdy** and his wife **Lois** will be coming to Australia in late June and staying till the end of August. George is a retired minister who currently teaches in the Bryn Athyn school and serves as visiting pastor to several New Church groups. He has come to the General Church from the Convention Church. George is also a retired military chaplain with the US National Guard. Our initial contact with him via email gave us some good vibes and we are certainly looking forward to having the McCurdys here.

Looking forward we understand that there is also a possibility that **Bishop Alfred Acton** and his wife **Henrietta** may be able to serve the Hurstville Society in the January to March 2008 timeframe.

April Society Meeting

Please note there will be a Society Meeting on Sunday 22nd after church.

provided he is enlightened; but still it is such that a great part of it cannot be expressed by human words; and when it falls into the ideas, it produces the faculty of perceiving and also of believing that the case is so. But truth Divine in the sixth degree is such as is with man, accommodated to his perception; thus it is the sense of the letter of the Word “(AC 8443).

Truth Divine is *from* the Lord; but Divine truth is *in* the Lord. That is why it is said in the first chapter of the Gospel of John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. It was in the beginning with God. All things were made by it, and without it nothing was made that was made” (John 1:1-3). The “Word “ means the Divine truth or wisdom as it is in itself, by which the whole creation was made. As we learned from AC 8443, that truth comes down though each level of heaven and is adapted to the apprehension of the inhabitants there until it reaches people on earth.

The answer to the question, Which Came First? is therefore that the internal sense came first; in fact, the inmost of it is the eternal Divine truth. As for the sense of the letter, it was selected from various sources - parts of Jewish history, the Gospel story, visions of the spiritual world, etc. but only those parts of these sources that could be used to embody the internal sense. (See Psalm 78)

The Parable of the Sower (an earthly story with a heavenly meaning) amply illustrates what has been said in this article. After recounting the earthly story, the Lord was asked by the disciples to explain what it meant (Matthew 13, Mark 4). It is obvious that He did not hurriedly think up the explanation on the spur of the moment. He knew it from eternity! The earthly story was a perfect correspondential embodiment for the heavenly meaning.

The message of the New Revelation is that the whole of the inspired Word was written in this way.

To Love the Lord – Why and How

By Norman Heldon

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind.” (Luke 10:27)

We can love Him for the gift of life. What a great thing it is to be alive, to join happily in the varied activities of the world. Also we can love and thank Him for this wonderful world, the glories of which have inspired writers, painters, photographers and other artists, also those scientists who marvel at the Lord’s handiwork.

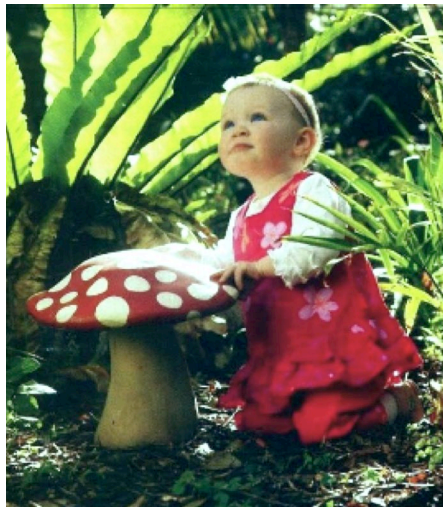
A song we used to sing in Sunday School and always before lunch at Sunday School picnics began this way:

For the beauty of the earth, for the glory of the skies,
For the love that from our birth over and around us lies,
Lord of all to Thee we raise this, our grateful psalm of praise.

I like the following verse too, by Sara Teasdale, from my collection of favourite poems:

Life has loveliness to sell,
All beautiful and splendid things,
Blue waves whitened on a cliff
Soaring fire that sways and sings
And children’s faces looking up
Holding wonder like a cup.

We can love the Lord for His promise of eternal life, and His providential care for each one of us, teaching, guiding every moment of life, wanting to give us all the happiness of life in



Hurstville Society has a limited number of free samples. If you would like more information or to contribute an article email outreach@newchurch.org.

Goodbye, Welcome and Goodbye to the Taylors

No sooner had we had a send-off to **Rev Doug** and **Christine Taylor** on Sunday 25th February than we were pleased to learn that their departure date for USA had changed to 11th April. They would be returning to celebrate Easter with us after having an enjoyable break during March visiting family and friends in Victoria and South Australia. Doug will lead the service on **Palm Sunday** 1st April, conduct a **Holy Supper** service on **Good Friday** 6th April and also conduct our **Easter Sunday** service on 8th April. Many thanks to the Taylors for giving us a bonus.

The Farewell to the Taylors on Sunday 25th February took the form of a Pot-Luck luncheon. On this occasion our friends were presented with two books by Steve Parish with beautiful photos of some of the wonderful colours of Australia. Doug and Christine thoughtfully presented the society with some wine glasses as they had noticed that we were in need of replacements.



Owen Heldon presents Rev Doug and Christine Taylor with their Steve Parish books.

“I find this class to be very informative, and also gives me more insight about myself.”

“When I first came to this course it was because I thought I would get a lot from the instructor. I was taken aback by how much I learned from other spiritual seekers in this class, who were also looking and had direct experiences of a spiritual nature that were of direct benefit to me in my search. I found it a very worthwhile class.”

Cost to Run the Program

The cost to run the program is just the cost of the workbook. This program is made possible by a special donation by a General Church member.

If you are interested in running a ‘New Church Foundations’ class in your area please contact us at General Church Outreach outreach@newchurch.org

New Church Connection – Easter Issue



Check out the newest issue of New Church Connection focused on Easter online today at www.newchurchconnection.org.

New Church connection is a magazine designed to introduce New Church teachings in an accessible and life-oriented manner.

This next issue includes articles on the following (and more!):

- Finding the Lord's Healing: *A personal story*
- A Message of Love: *Jesus' words on the cross*
- When God seems Absent
- Why did Jesus die? What is Easter about?

You can download the latest issue online, subscribe yourself or a friend, or request a free sample issue online at www.newchurchconnection.org. The

heaven forever. We thank Him for the great variety of interesting and useful employments, a taste of heaven, for each person is created for a specific use there for which they are uniquely fitted. Also, there are many uses in heaven that we know nothing about.

We in the New Church have a special reason to love the Lord, for as Bishop Kline said in his recent Newsletter, “The New Church is the greatest cause in the history of the human race.” We can serve the Lord and help people by working to strengthen the church and make it better known. We do that by going to His Word and like Swedenborg “diligently read and meditate” on the truths there.

Rev Michael Gladish, one of our former pastors is now at Dawson Creek in Canada. In their current booklet he writes on Energy:

“There is, after all, a steady stream of infinite love pouring into us at all times, we just need to capture it and process it with an understanding from careful reading and reflection.”

Remember our recent doctrinal class on Reflections and its importance.

Finally, How do we love the Lord? He wants to be loved, but it is for our ourselves that He wishes it. We read in the Gospel of John chapter 14 “If you love Me, keep My commandments” and further “If anyone love Me, he will keep My Word.” And also in chapter 15: “Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.”

He wants us to show our love to Him by obeying His Commandments so that He can share with us the happiness of heaven.

Photo by Trent Wilson per kind permission of *Burke's Backyard* magazine. The picture was part of the article about our church garden entitled “Sacred Ground” October 2006.



Young Adult Connection



The General Church is pleased to announce the hiring of Rachel Deckert as the new Coordinator of the Young Adult Connection.

Rachel will be an active team member of General Church Outreach, serving from Boulder, Colorado. Her main duties will include the organization and running of Young Adult Retreats, building supportive relationships with New Church young adults, and working to integrate them into General Church life.

As a member of the General Church Outreach team, Rachel will also assist in the uses that relate to welcoming and integrating newcomers into the life of the church.

Rachel has been working for the Young Adult Connection since 2003 and we are enthusiastic about her continuing to work in this new capacity from Colorado. The official contact information for the Young Adult Connection has changed to:

Young Adult Connection
Attn: Rachel Deckert, Coordinator
P.O. Box 4156
Boulder, CO 80306 USA

youngadults@newchurch.org
www.newchurchoyoungadults.org

Please make note in your databases. Effective February 2007.

Sincerely,
Rev. David Lindrooth
Director of General Church Outreach

New Church Foundations

A New Program Supporting the Growth and Development of Your Congregation

General Church Outreach is proud to announce a new program to support congregations in their growth and development efforts. Together with Frank Rose, General Church Outreach has packaged a new membership class, 'New Church Foundations'.

How to Run the Program

Whether you are in a large congregation, a small church group, or working on your own, this seven session program will enrich your life and help you to understand the most core teachings that the New Church has to offer. The program includes a workbook for participants as well as a leader's guide. It can be run by clergy or lay leaders.

Featured Topics

The Purpose of Life
The Lord
Seeking Guidance from the Word
Growing Spiritually
Spiritual Community
Serving Others
Church Background

Stories of Lives Changed

People who have participated in this program say:

"I like the positive discussions that happen, the personal journey that people share, learning to listen to and appreciate other peoples' views."

"I enjoyed this class as it brings together people of all different stages of faith and ideas about religion today. Everyone comes from different backgrounds and through communication we realize that we are all very much the same in how we search for meaning in our lives and find God!"