

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.

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 August 2010



“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain for the former things have passed away.”

Revelation 21:4

A person is said to die, but still he does not die; he is only separated from the material body which had served him for use in the world, but which can no longer be of any use to him; for the person himself lives. He is said to live because a person is not a human being from the body but from the spirit; for it is the spirit that thinks in the person; and the thought with affection, which makes the spirit, also makes the person. Hence it is that when someone dies, he only passes from one world to another.



Robert Andrew Cooper
28th August 1958 – 7th July 2010

By now most of our readers will know of the passing into the spiritual world of Rev Robert Cooper on 7th July as a result of a massive heart attack. Incredibly Robert, with his wife Huiling and son Gengi had, only a couple of weeks before, fulfilled their dream of returning to Australia with Robert the newly appointed pastor of the Hurstville Society.

Tributes, flowers, cards, messages and eulogies have flowed in from around Australia and the world. In this issue we will attempt to present as much of these thoughts and feelings as we can. It is an emotional time for all, especially for Huiling and Gengi to whom we all extend our heartfelt sympathy.

Over 100 people, many from interstate, crowded into the Hurstville New Church on Friday 16th July for the Resurrection Service conducted by **Rev Julian Duckworth**, President of the New Church in Australia and **Rev Garry Walsh** who had flown in from the USA a couple of days earlier as the Bishop's representative for the General Church. This was a lovely gesture of the church to send Garry, an Australian, former pastor of the Hurstville Society and special friend of Robert, to be here at this time.

Family Camp 2011 at Greenhills, Canberra

The **August 15 deadline** for bookings will happen **this month**. The camp organisers need your deposit in order to finalise arrangements with the centre. Brochures are available which describe the facilities, provide a schedule of costs, and offer subsidies upon application.

News Notes

It has been enjoyable meeting Lori and Murray Heldon's 16 year old niece **Kate** from Brooklyn, New York. She has been holidaying with them for 6 weeks of her Summer school break, and has been seeing as much of Sydney and surrounds as possible, as well as enjoying quality time with family.

Stuart Heldon has been holidaying in the Maldives with a dozen friends on a boat, while surfing and fishing for a week. Unfortunately the boat was damaged in an accident resulting in the loss of some personal belongings. Stuart and friends are unharmed.

Angela Heldon and **Callista Barritt** from Canberra have now spent 3 weeks in Kenya where they are helping in the Loving Arms Orphanage. There is minimal communications to the location which is in a rural part of Kenya in the highlands. We do know from **Bishop** and **Gretchen Keith** and others who arrived at the same time 3 weeks ago and have now returned home that Angela and Callista are relating very well to the orphans. They also spent a few days at the **Masai Mara National Reserve**, Kenya's finest wildlife park.

Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **Norm Heldon** (1st), **Grace Horner** (7th), **Emily Kermond** (7th), **Rhonda Hall** (12th), **Rebekah Horner** (17th), **Larah Walsh** (21st), **Graeme McLeay** (22nd), **Ralph Horner** (30th).

Visit of Rev Brian O'Neill

It was most timely to have Brian O'Neill address our group on Monday evening 19th July. Brian is a counsellor with decades of experience including dealing with grief, an emotion very much to the forefront at the present time. Helping us to come to grips with the recent events Brian spoke of the common feeling of "not being in control" at times of grief and our need to acknowledge "we can't control the uncontrollable" before we can get back some control in our lives. Another helpful thought direct from the Writings was the concept that "nothing happens that is unconnected".

Many thanks to Brian for leading the discussion. A number of people were able to share their thoughts and experiences and I'm sure everyone went away feeling it had been a most useful evening.

Society Meeting and Future Plans

A Society meeting had been set down for Sunday 22nd August "to discuss the vision of how Hurstville should collectively move ahead" as advertised in our last newsletter.

This meeting will now be postponed and combined with our regular bi-annual meeting to be held most likely in September. There is certainly a need to review the uses of the Society and how we can pursue them in the short term.

In the longer term Bishop Brian Keith has indicated that there is some possibility of a replacement pastor in mid 2011 but it is too early to know whether this will eventuate and will depend on Advisory Council meetings in the next month or two.

The bishop himself is still hoping to visit Australia in the first six months of next year. He is also looking for some guidance on timing so please consider if there are dates that should/should not be considered.

On 22nd July a Memorial Service was held in the Bryn Athyn Cathedral with Bishop Kline reading the lessons and Rev Dr Andy Dibb, Dean of the Theological School giving the address. Words written by Rev Garry Walsh were also read. A special music interlude was played by Maret Taylor Genzlinger on the piano with her husband Keith on the French horn. The service can be listened to by accessing the New Church Audio website at <http://www.newchurchaudio.org> and doing a search for "Cooper".

Resurrection Service at Hurstville 16th July 2010

Many people contributed to make this a beautiful moving service and a wonderful tribute to Robert; the flowers on the chancel (see front of Newsletter), the music, the combination of ministers, the eulogies. Also the luncheon afterwards was a credit to those who organised and provided it.

Julian led the service beginning with the comforting text (Deuteronomy 33:27):

The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.

He talked about life here, in eternity, and Divine Providence, ending by saying, "Don't measure Rob by his age or by the brevity he was back here for two weeks or by the suddenness of his leaving. Measure him by his passion and spirit, these enduring things, and when you eventually can, let him get on with the work he loves doing. And I think you know what that is."

Readings and Julian's Address follow.

⁵ *So I said:*

"Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." ⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged." ⁸ Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me." Isaiah 6:5-8

The nearer a person is joined to the Lord, the more distinctly he appears to himself to be master of himself, and yet the more evidently he recognizes that he is the Lord's. The truth of this comes from the wisdom that a person comes into when he is joined to the Lord and realizes that the more joined he is, the more he feels to be his own person. Divine Providence 42, 44

“Here am I! Send me.”

I used to take primary school assemblies and sometimes I'd ask for a volunteer to come out and do something. A hundred hands would shoot up, straining to be picked. Me, me, me! I now ask adults and it's strange, by and large they don't.

Isaiah's vision of God's glory which ends with 'Here am I, send me' came to me in a flash in connection with Rob, as if nothing else would possibly do. And I realise how perfect it is to honour him with. Rob got a call to ministry and knew exactly what the intention was – to come back here. Rob saw some vision of God's glory in his being and knew this was worth giving your whole life for. Rob surely sensed his own unworthiness at times – a man of unclean lips – and went through having his iniquity – he might have said inadequacy – taken away. Rob heard the voice of the Lord asking, Who will go for us? And Rob said from the bottom of his heart, 'Here am I. Send me.'

And everyone I've spoken to since he died has been saying the same thing. The Lord has sent him, but not exactly where he or we ever expected. And yes, we're devastated because he was poised ready at the starting block. Two weeks ago he told us he had to disturb us, shake things up, and maybe he already has, for our betterment, so in that way, it's for us now to seize the day.

I'm fascinated with the words, 'Here am I, send me.' I never get the feeling these words are tentative or whispered. They're full of conviction. Not arrogance, just assurance. And notice that they come at the end, after the string of developments – vision, awe, honesty, burning coal, healed lips, transformation, and now acclaim.

had for serving Australia.

Mostly I wanted to express our love for each of the members of Hurstville society and especially for Huiling and Matthew. I trust that the Lord is holding you.

Brian (and Janine and Kai) **(Rev Brian Smith)**

From Rev Doug and Christine Taylor

Like everyone else, we were profoundly shocked by Rob Cooper's sudden passing over into the spiritual world. At first our minds were filled with many bewildered thoughts, none of which brought any comfort.

But fortunately, my thoughts were turned to Isaiah 55:8,9:

“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

I have often found those inspired words helpful – even in that well known translation. But about five years ago Donald Rose gave a talk that included those verses. Donald in his usual linguistic thoroughness found another translation for “thoughts’,” that is, that in the Hebrew the word really means “Plans.” Please read the text again using “plans” and see what a difference it makes.

Surely, the Lord must have in mind something else for the Hurstville Society that we cannot see at the moment. Let us cling to the teaching that nothing is allowed to happen unless some spiritual good may come out of it.

Our prayers are with you all, especially Huiling.

Closing Prayer by Rev Garry Walsh

Dear Lord, most merciful Jesus Christ, in whose presence all are living, and with whom there is never death; may we see in Robert's passing the presence of Your love and the operation of Your Providence. May small glimpses of the eternal good that You bring come to us in our time of sorrow, knowing that in the end You alone can wipe away every tear from our eyes. Amen

that, maybe He wanted him to come and build the Church from the Spiritual World. Robert Cooper was a good man. He was passionate. He loves his family. May the Lord give him perfect and everlasting Peace.

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning" Psalm 30:5

Love

Rev Ayi Segno-Kodjo

Dear Huiling, Ghengi and the Hurstville Society,
We are writing to express our love for you during this sad time.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time with Robert in theological school. His to-the-point candor and sense of humor always brightened our classes. Also his unique approach to pulling together connections in the doctrines and also his ability to contextualize the discussion drawing on his Christian background helped inform and add perspective to our thinking.

I was well aware of Rob's commitment to serving the church in Australia. He seemed very happy to study and pursue a knowledge of the doctrines while in Bryn Athyn, but he regularly brought up both the history and current needs of the Australian church. Schooling and on site training for him always seemed, to me, like steps toward his goal of pastoring in Australia.

It seemed equally clear to me, in visiting Australia, how eager the church groups were to find a full-time pastor. Hurstville does surprisingly well at maintaining lay services and finding interim ministers, but clearly the goal is to find someone who can settle and serve in Australia.

Given Hurstville's desire for a pastor and Robert's enthusiasm and ability it is very difficult to make any kind of sense of his early passing.

I really appreciated one comment I heard. It was pointed out that Robert's sense of calling will still be satisfied and he will have opportunities to pursue his teaching and preaching work. This is helpful for me as I think about the loss of his direct work in Australia. Even still, I can still imagine Rob having a couple of frustrated things to say as he let's go of the goal he

Ministers are peculiar people. Something has happened to them. Rob was and is a minister, although I think he'd say, come on, we're ALL ministers. But something had grabbed him at some point. And that is where the other reading helps us – that paradox that seems to read like a law of thermodynamics, that the more a person feels joined with the Divine, with God, the more he feels to be master of himself and yet the more he feels he is the Lord's. That's big!

So what is it, to be master of yourself? It's knowing who you are, why you are, what's real and important, and where you are in everything. Here am I, send me. But it's not just that, it's also knowing that everything is from God not from you. And the more 'you' you feel, the more you feel it's actually God. And if you didn't have God, you'd be a total wreck. And at that point, like Rob, you want to do something. If this is what it is, I wanna go out and give it to everyone else so they can have it too. Here am I, send me. Hand up, count me in.

We're struggling with the timing of everything because if that's what Rob had going for him, he'd be perfect for here, we say. And Rob is probably struggling with that one more than any of us. Hey, this wasn't the plan. And we take comfort in the thought that it must have been God's plan, God's plan all along. It helps our pain. But I don't think it was ever God's actual plan to whisk Rob out of things, physically away from Huiling, from Matthew, from Hurstville, from family, from his ministry. Not God's plan. If anything, it was Rob's heart. But yes, it is still His providence because God provides for every eventuality, even this one, and down the track, we may well see more of it than we can right now. And we could well discover that Rob has continued his ministry here in deeper ways still, bringing out things in us that we might have simply left for him to do as our Minister. And that is up to us and God, not Rob. Rob's the signpost. Here am I, send me. Here you are, go for it and just do your best. I want to go out and give it to everyone else so they can have it too. That would be a great promise to give Rob, but you have to promise it most of all to God because the rule says, The more someone is joined with God the more he or she feels master of himself/herself, and yet the more he feels he is God's. We're here, send us. Amen.

Eulogies

Robert's eldest brother, **Jim Cooper**, presented a touching eulogy and it is included below. Also much appreciated by the congregation were the words of **Brad Rowe**, Robert's lifelong friend, who recounted some memorable anecdotes of the times they shared and **Rev Garry Walsh** who spoke of working with Robert as his mentor, as a minister and a friend.

Eulogy For Robert Cooper by Jim Cooper

On behalf of the Cooper family may I thank you for your sympathy and support at this very sad time.

We are all shocked and saddened by the untimely death of Robert, our brother, the youngest son of Harry and Marie Cooper; husband of Hui Lin and father of "Gengi", his beloved son; and newly appointed pastor at this church.

Robert was the youngest of five children, born and raised at Como, just a few miles across the Georges River from here.

He was the proud son of Marie and Harry. They were especially proud of his academic achievements and his acute intelligence. My early fond (or not so fond!) memories are of hours of battling Robert at Chess, usually to end in the checkmate of my king! Robert was a deep thinker with a dry sense of humour and he always gave us a laugh with his keen observations.

Robert was a brilliant student – he topped the state in mathematics in the HSC (Higher School Certificate) and obtained degrees in actuarial studies from Macquarie University and an MBA from UNSW.

I especially want to pay tribute to Robert's love and caring for our mother Marie. They had a special bond and a close, loving relationship. Robert became my mother's carer as she grew more fragile in her old age. His presence in her life filled her with joy and enabled her to live out her days in the family home she loved and cherished. I can still see the two of them laughing over a game of scrabble or trying to solve the cryptic crossword.

Robert's life has been enriched by his relationship with Hui Lin and with the

birth of his dear son Gengi.

Finally, Robert was a searcher for enlightenment and inner knowledge and he dedicated his life to an exploration of his spirituality and purpose. His studies in divinity and the spiritual teachings of Swedenborg have undoubtedly provided him with peace of mind and a roadmap for his next journey. As Swedenborg preached, death is not an extinction of life but rather a transition to another. Robert is on that journey, and I'm sure he is carrying a chess set!

Kathryn, Greg, John and I are feeling at a loss at Robert's unexpected death and we would thank you all for being here today with us.

Messages from Around the World

We wish to thank everyone for their words of comfort and kind thoughts of sympathy. To hear from so many caring people has touched us deeply. We would like to share three letters, one from Togo, Africa; one from Canada and one from Bryn Athyn.

Dear friends of the Hurstville Society,

It was with great shock to hear the passing away of your new Pastor Rev Robert Cooper. We, the members of the New Church in Togo, extend our condolences to you all, especially to the wife Huiling and their son. The Lord alone knows WHY this has happened.

I am very much aware how much the Hurstville Society has been expecting Robert to come and lead the church. That is why my legs trembled and I nearly fell down when the news was broken to me. I share with you the pain that you all are going through at this moment. You all are in my thoughts and prayers.

I know Robert Cooper personally; we've had a lot of conversations in the past. His most cherished dream was, "to see the Day he would move back to Australia to pastor the Hurstville New Church". His dream came through; then he was called by the Lord. The Lord alone knows why He did