

## ***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 except the first Sunday of each month. But please check the calendar for each month in case of changes.

A **tea and social** in conjunction with **discussion** meets on one Monday of each month (January excepted) beginning at 7 00 pm. This will be conducted by visiting ministers when available or lay led as appropriate. Please check the calendar for the month for the exact date. (At present additional classes/ discussion groups are being held under the leadership of visiting pastor Rev Glenn Alden.)

**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.



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### **The New Church Newsletter**

**Hurstville Society December 2011**

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#### **Christ the Lord – Divine Essence in Human Form**

A Christmas Article by Rev Glenn Alden

The Birth of Jesus was an act of love. The Lord was born like all other infants, wrinkled, wet, and totally helpless. He was entirely dependent on the loving care and protection of others. He chose that for our sakes. People who were given the gift to be there with him, like Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, and others named and unnamed in the Bible, felt the presence and love of God in that infant. That act of love continues to work in the world today.

In Swedenborg *True Christianity* 838 we read: “God in His essence was Divine love, and that Divine love is like the purest fire. Love regarded in itself has no other aim than to enter into union with the beloved, and Divine love aims to unite itself with humankind and humankind with it, even to the

point of God being in a person and a person being in God .... God by His essence was consumed with a passionate love of uniting Himself with humankind, it was necessary for Him to veil Himself in a body suitable to permit reception and linking. He therefore came down and took upon Himself a human form in accordance with the order established by Him from the creation of the world.”

The Christmas Season is a wonderful opportunity to grow in our relationship to the Lord. It is a time when people speak openly about the story of the Lord's birth. Many people, Christians and non Christians alike, talk about discovering the “real meaning of Christmas”. They use phrases like “Christmas Spirit” and “Peace on Earth”. The spirit of giving, the irrepressible urge to decorate and light lights all bring out the best in people. Of course when the New Year rolls around and the decorations are put away for another year, we might wish that it could be Christmas all year long. But I am really grateful that for whatever reason the Divine essence, the Love that is the heart of the real meaning of Christmas, is able for a season to touch so many hearts.

One of the things that seems to happen at Christmas is that people become willing to suspend their disbelief, to open their minds, together with their wallets, and allow something warm and good to touch the lives of others through them. It is as if at Christmas we are for a brief moment in our worldly lives, able to act as if we believe things that for the rest of the year we dismiss. It reminds me that we make a choice when we open or close our minds to ways of thinking. “Yes Virginia, there is a Santa Claus” and it is more than the spirit of giving. It is a manifestation of the power of Divine Love in our lives and God operating through us if we will only be open to become more loving.

A professor of Psychology friend of mine was once speaking about how reason by itself cannot prove or disprove the existence of God. He added that though he had often tried to reason himself into a belief in God he had never been successful. But he said he had discovered that if he *acts as if* God is working in his life, and tries to live his life according to what he believes is God's will for him, his life goes better. Even though we may

**Michelle Heldon** is at present doing an art residency at a little town called Kemijarvi in Finland. Michelle writes that “if you Google Kemijarvi this is what you find.... ‘Here, it feels as though time slows down, nature strips people of any inhibitions, the ancient fells touch the heart and forgotten tales are brought back to life. This is where Lapland begins – the small human meets the great nature’”. Michelle continues “that pretty much sums it up! It is on the edge of the Arctic Circle and the most northern town in Finland. Kemijärvi has 396 lakes and ponds! So as you can imagine it is a beautiful place! It is very quiet and peaceful. There are about 8000 inhabitants and Upi the gentleman who runs the Art Residency says there are more reindeer per square km than humans.”

The townsfolk apparently take an active interest in their resident artists. Michelle continues “Already I am scheduled into talking to two High School classes next week, meeting up and being involved in some youth activities, speaking to an English speaking class, interviewed by the newspaper and talking at the town Christmas party about Christmas in Australia!”

A brief extract from Michelle’s proposal reads “My vision is to create a memory book and installation over a three week period: one memory from each day I am in Kemijärvi. My project will be a reflection on an unfamiliar landscape creating a body of work capturing a feeling of the unique location of Kemijärvi and the connection a stranger can make with a place.” Michelle will hold s public exhibition in early December.

No doubt you are all most interested to know how the immigration approval for our new pastor **Rev Todd Beiswenger** is going. The good news is that the first stage of the approval process, the Vetassess was successful. The government agrees Todd is suitably qualified. Unfortunately the visa application approval is bogged down in red tape but hopefully next month we will have better news.

## Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **Sam Johnson** (1<sup>st</sup>), **Gai Kennedy** (2<sup>nd</sup>), **Beryl Laidley** (14<sup>th</sup>), **Ken Horner** (16<sup>th</sup>), **Patricia Walsh** (19<sup>th</sup>) & **Kristen Johnson** (29<sup>th</sup>)

## Lecture in Canberra

by Rev Glenn Alden

The Church group in Canberra hosts public lectures at Beyond Q, a local bookstore. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of November I was invited to speak, and I chose to talk about Swedenborg's doctrine of Correspondence and the cause and effect relationship between the mind and body as well as between all things spiritual and all things natural. The meeting was well attended, there were about seven people from the church and ten or more who are inquirers or interested in the topic.

I began my talk quoting from Swedenborg *Secrets of Heaven* 5115: "Such is the representative likeness between the fruit-bearing tree and the man who is being regenerated, inasmuch that if anything is known about spiritual good and truth, the nature of regeneration may be learned from a tree."

The talk was well received, with a lively discussion afterward. I spoke with a number of individuals who said they really enjoy these lectures and find much useful, agreeable, and stimulating. Quite a few books of the Writings and collateral works, provided through the Basil Lazer Fund, are sold as a result of interest stimulated through the talks.

### News Notes

We are sorry to report that **Mary Alden** has been unwell since returning from New Zealand. We are all thinking of you Mary. Get well soon.

Two of our young people are having major exhibitions of artwork this month and next. **Jesse Horner** has completed his major work for an Honours Degree in Digital Media. Churchgoers have been noticing for some time the construction below Baringa of a replica of a Mongolian Yurt which houses the artwork that features an interactive sound installation. A mixture of different media: water, electricity and sound are featured in the work. If you get a chance it is on public display at the University of New South Wales Roundhouse at Kensington from 26<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> November from 10 am to 4 pm.

have doubts, Christmas is a time when we are allowed to ease up a bit and *act as if* there really was a baby born to a virgin in Bethlehem, and the angels really did tell Joseph: "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." And when we act as if we believe this, our lives go better.

When you are able to open your heart and mind just that little crack, amazing things can happen. Your innocence, your open mindedness, is actually represented by Mary in the Bible story. She who said to the angel: "be it unto me according to your words" has come into you and taken temporary control of your heart! You become open to believe because in that moment you become a "virgin" who is not wed to materialism or dogma. You can "hear the angel choirs".

God in his Divine Love is burning to enter you with a refining fire. Maybe this will be the year that something miraculous happens. Just open your heart and mind and act as if you believe.

### December Calendar Notes

Please note *the changes* to our usual schedule highlighted in **Bold**.

- Sun 4 Dec **NO CHURCH** (opportunity for people to attend Roseville New Church if desired)
- Mon 5 Dec 8 pm Ten Commandments class
- Sun 11 Dec 10 am service at Hurstville
- Sun 11 Dec **7 30 pm** Invitation to attend **Carols by Candlelight** at **Roseville** in the evening
- Mon 12 Dec **7 00 pm Dinner** followed by final Ten Commandments class
- Sun 18 Dec **Evening service** at **7 pm** with refreshments afterwards
- Sun 25 Dec **Christmas Day Family Service** at 10 am

## Making Sense of Christmas

The Christmas story has levels of meaning. **Rev Jeremy Simons** takes a closer look.

*The imagery of Christmas is likely to captivate you, whether Christmas itself makes logical sense to you or not. You don't need to understand all the doctrine to want to be home for the holidays, but the holidays may be more satisfying if you see the reason for the season.*

**A Message of Hope** Christmas is about peace on earth, about freedom from captivity, about healing the broken-hearted. The confidence that this will really happen is what Christian faith is all about. Christmas is not just for children. It is a time for people to appreciate the wisdom and the grace of God.

**Levels of Meaning** The New Church teaches the Christmas story as written in the Gospels. According to New Church teaching, every detail of the story is true, and every word is full of meaning.

The bright star shone in the darkness to represent the truth that had come to a dark world. He was laid in a manger because He would spiritually feed the human race. There was no room in the inn because there was no room for God in people's hearts. He was born to a virgin because He was the Son of God, and also because a virgin stands for the pure love that accepts God into every person's heart.

He was born among the poor, because He was to "put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalt the lowly" (Luke 1). This is also why the angels did not appear to rulers but to simple shepherds. A spiritual star appeared to the wise men, not because they were astronomers but because of the ancient wisdom they possessed.

**Light in Darkness** Christmas is the celebration of the coming of the Lord Himself into the world, born as a tiny infant, to save the human race. "It is a universal principle of faith that no mortal could have been saved unless the Lord had come into the world. It is a universal principle of faith that He came to remove hell from mankind" (*True Christian Religion 2*).

The Lord's birth brought light into the darkness of that time, a spiritual darkness that had been building since the time of the Garden of Eden. He came to dispel that darkness by teaching the truth and by overcoming the forces of evil in spiritual battle. "For at that time the power of hell prevailed over the power of heaven, and the power of evil prevailed over the power of good on earth. Consequently, a total damnation stood threatening at the door" (*True Christian Religion 3*).

The Christmas season is a celebration of ancient wisdom and the promise of peace on earth. May your holiday be filled with God's blessings, and especially that blessing of a light shining in the darkness, amidst the songs of angels.

## Visit of Ngalangangpum School

As we did in November 2007 the Hurstville Society has again assisted in the visit of **Ngalangangpum School** to Sydney by making available Baringa to help accommodate the large group of 30 people (21 students, 9 adults) who arrived in Penshurst on Tuesday 22nd November. The principal **Leanne Hodge**, who is the daughter of neighbours Trevor and Maureen Mahy and grew up in Dudley St a few doors down the hill from the church, says "this is a testament to the great high school teachers we have who have driven the push for positive behaviour and attendance".

The trip is designed to provide a city experience for the aboriginal students who live in one of the remotest parts of north west Australia. Quite an education for these boys and girls. There are visits planned to the zoo, the Harbour Bridge, Mary McKillop Place, the Opera House and Botanical Gardens, ice skating, ten pin bowling, St Mary's Cathedral and an historical cruise of Sydney Harbour.

It is timely to refresh our memories of the 2007 visit. Go to:  
[http://www.newchurch.org.au/hurstville/Dec\\_2007\\_NL\\_frames.htm](http://www.newchurch.org.au/hurstville/Dec_2007_NL_frames.htm)

Regular church attendees will be familiar with the original ochre painting by famous Warmun Community spiritual leader and artist **Patrick Mung Mung** that hangs on the wall of our church presented during the 2007 visit.