

*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.

Temporary editors – Owen & Margaret Heldon  
22-24 Dudley St., off Hillcrest Ave. in Penshurst  
Tel (02) 9580-1589. Fax (02) 9570-8447  
Email: [newchurch@optusnet.com.au](mailto:newchurch@optusnet.com.au)

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

Call or come at anytime.



---

## The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society November 2009

---

### Special African Edition

This month our newsletter features two articles about the church in Africa. One deals with the Centenary Celebrations in South Africa attended by **Rev Ian Arnold** and **Rev Trevor Moffat** and the other is written by **Rev Ayi** from the West African nation of Togo who is currently serving the Hurstville Society.

However each of these accounts doesn't just "give a report on the church in Africa" but rather a special awareness into the unique psyche of the African people. They make compelling reading when we realise these people have something remarkable, particularly how religion and life are one and the same thing. Rev Ayi takes us right back to the roots of the traditional African religion and Rev Ian Arnold gives us an insight into what 100 years of the church means to the people of South Africa. Taken together, reading these articles makes for quite a humbling experience.

## The New Church in Africa

by Rev. Ayi, Segno-Kodjo

African people have always believed in the existence of God long before the European missionaries arrived on our shores with Christianity. Traditional African religious beliefs are found in everyday life and no distinction is made between the sacred and the secular. What the Traditional religion forbids or condemns society also forbids and condemns, and similarly society approves those things which religion approves or sanctions. Africans strongly believe that God created all human beings, hence an offence against God is an offence against man, and in like manner an offence against man is an offence against God.

Traditional African religion has no written documents showing what is legal or illegal, but traditional Africans have a code of conduct which they all know. This code of conduct constrains individuals to live in conformity with the well-being of society. The Traditional African religion has no founders, reformers, or prophets, and the components of its code have been transmitted conventionally from one generation to the next.

African traditional religion gives great value or hallows marriage. Marriage is a sacred institution. Rituals and ceremonies accompany the occasion of wedding. At these rituals, God and the living-deeds (the ancestors) of the family may be called upon to witness the occasion and to give their blessings to the new wife and husband. In traditional Africa, adultery is not condoned; it is a breach of societal and religious norms and it breeds an unhealthy and unwholesome relationship in society, a relationship that can ruin the total well-being of the people.

Indigenous Africans lived in vibrant societies, religion was the way of everyday life, and it was expressed in culture, social values, speech, given names, customs and rituals. The belief in the existence of one Supreme High God was the centre of the religion. In this premise we conclude, God therefore did not come to the African continent with the European missionaries. The Europeans only came with their own version of God, and

November newsletters. We are very glad to have him here and experience his refreshing approach to the teachings of the church.

But time flies! All too soon we will be saying goodbye to Ayi. On **Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> November** we will have a **Farewell Luncheon**. This will be a Pot Luck Lunch so *please bring something savoury and a sweet to share*. Drinks will be provided.

**Cathy Kermond** competed in the World Masters Games at Olympic Park recently and won the bronze medal in the 400m athletics final for her age group. She also received a gold medal in the 4 x 400m relay. Congratulations Cathy. Following on from other reports in last month's newsletter we can certainly say that athletic ability runs in the Walsh family.

**Sonja Hicks** and **Jason Miles** are proud parents to a healthy baby girl **Jolie Mae** on 28<sup>th</sup> October. This is Sonja's first baby and the fifth grandchild for Sylvia and John.

**Jan Lindsay** has recently spent a week in Sutherland hospital. We wish Jan a speedy recovery and hope to see her soon.

## Christmas

At the recent Society meeting Christmas plans were sorted out. It was decided to have an **evening service** on **Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> December** with refreshments at the Lockhart's afterwards. **Christmas Day** service on Friday would be at the usual 10 am. After this, due to holiday time and the Summer Camp there would be no services until the last weekend in January though people might wish to attend the final service at Elanora Heights camp on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> January.

## Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **Cliff Adamou** (2<sup>nd</sup>), **Jesse Horner** (3<sup>rd</sup>), **Brian Heldon** (8<sup>th</sup>), **Cathy Kermond** (11<sup>th</sup>), **Skye Horner** (11<sup>th</sup>), **Lori Heldon** (30<sup>th</sup>),

kilometres if need be to attend its major events, Conferences, Conventions and Services, knowing that in all likelihood they will sleep on the hard floor of a school classroom when they get there and that they need to bring their own plate, eating utensils and sleeping mat. In saying this, South Africa itself is a country where religion is still central in people's lives and where there is widespread respect for the work of the Church and its clergy."



Wives of ministers who were unable to be at the Centenary Celebrations (holding donated copies of True Christian Religion)

## News Notes

No sooner had we posted out our October newsletters in which we lamented the extended delay being experienced in obtaining a visa for **Rev Ayi** and saying we had "no news" than the news come through that it was approved! Ayi did in fact arrive a week later to some unseasonably cold October weather. Quite a shock when you come from Togo.

If you live near the Hurstville Society you have probably already met Ayi and if you live in **Brisbane** or **Canberra** you are probably looking forward to attending a church service by him soon (Brisbane on Nov 1<sup>st</sup> and Canberra on Nov 8<sup>th</sup>). And if you don't live anywhere near those three locations then at least you can read Ayi's articles in the October and

the African Traditional religion supports this fact even indisputably. God may have **brought** the Europeans to Africa for them to have the experience of what the life of religion is all about and to learn how to show love to all God's creation.



Rev Ayi

The early missionaries did not take patience to learn and comprehend the spirituality of the African people, they failed to acquire wisdom for themselves from the African religion; instead they harshly demonized it, stigmatized it and condemned it. After that they used science, technology and *power* to spread their message across the continent.

Christianity is the dominant faith in Africa today, beside Islam. Christian churches can be found almost every place people have settled. They are in urban areas, remote villages. They are in the media, public busses and trains. Everywhere. A vast majority of the indigenous African have abandoned their traditional religions to embrace Christianity or Islam. The statistics shows that Togo (my native country) like many other African countries, half of the population has converted to Christianity. This is the nature of Africa of today.

## Africa, the hope of the New Church . . .

I just mentioned above some of the original principal beliefs of the African people; that is, God is one, existence of life after death, sacredness of marriage and the role religion played in the well-being of society. These beliefs are the core teachings found in the doctrines for the New Church. The European's version is that God is in three Persons, their teaching about the afterlife is that a person's spirit is hidden somewhere till the judgment day where it would be joined to his body. Eternity of marriage is underemphasized. These Christian beliefs among many others stand in sharp contrast to the religious beliefs of the African Traditional religion.

But the question is, how did Christianity spread so fast in Africa? Why are many abandoning the Traditional religion to convert to Christianity?

Many African traditional rulers and scholars have presented various opinions to these questions. I do not intend to bring other people's opinion into this article except my own. The African people, by nature or character, are very welcoming and humble in heart; they are open to and receptive of truth concerning the Lord. Since Christianity has a sacred Word in which the name of God is mentioned, the Gospel was easily accepted. The Christian missionaries not only preached the gospel, but also built schools, hospitals and church edifices to win the hearts of the people.

This is Africa today. And this is the continent where we are told by the Lord in His Second Coming that the New Church will dig its foot hold. It is going to be the hope of the world, the heart and lungs from which future humanity would survive spiritually. Will the New Church grow from the millions of converts across the continent? Or among those who still hold dear their indigenous beliefs? Or is it going to be among those who are still searching for a true Christianity?

### **What is happening . . .**

The Church of the New Jerusalem is slowly and progressively gaining ground in many countries in Africa. There are many ordained ministers spread across many countries, and are working assiduously to grow the New Church. People who join the New Church are very happy to have found a church which really speaks to their innate beliefs and agrees with their conception about the Divine. The New Church and its Heavenly Doctrine holds tremendous prospects of reaching thousands of souls in a decade. THIS I BELIEVE. It is just the beginning.

### ***South Africa***

A New Church organization just celebrated its 100 years anniversary (Read more about that in Rev Ian Arnolds report).

### ***Kenya***

There are two ordained New Church minister and a Candidate who is being

of them, working away, some grating and mixing in enamel bowls as much as a metre wide or cooking in massive pots on the stoves. . . . And what is so remarkable and beautiful is the way they weave together business and singing, rhythm and dancing, so spontaneous, so joyful, so warm and enthusiastic, so moving to listen to."

On the Saturday the women wore traditional African clothing, a pageant of the most amazing colours and fabulous costumes and head dresses. Saturday was also the day for the "turning of the first sod" ceremony for the new College and Church Administration block about to be built and the dedication of the new extension to the Orlando Church. The Rev. Henry Kalo appropriately preached on the subject of the Cornerstone, Psalm 118, verse 22.

The Centenary Service the following morning was the culmination of the celebrations. It was attended by an overflowing congregation of 550 to 600 people and all of the adults came forward for the Holy Supper which was held near the end. The Service was 5 hours in all! There were items from the Choir, greetings received for the Centenary, a review of the Women's League Convention and the sermon delivered by Rev Ian Arnold based on Genesis 28, verses 16 & 17. The text appropriately reads "Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.' And he was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!'" This was followed by the presentation to all of the ministers present and to wives of ministers not able to attend, of a copy of *True Christian Religion* in which appropriate labels had been placed along with a photocopy of David William Mooki's handwritten notation on the frontispiece of his own 1909 discovered copy. A total of 70 copies were donated by the Basil Lazer Trust in Australia.

To conclude I once again quote from Rev Ian Arnold. "What is fascinating and struck me forcibly for the first time is that the New Church in Southern Africa is part of the culture of its members, young and old. They live it and breathe it. They sing about it and advertise it and are so proud to be part of it. They sacrifice for it (*really* sacrifice for it). They will travel hundreds of

## The Centenary Celebrations Of The New Church Of Southern Africa

In our July newsletter we reported that The New Church in South Africa, which now has 70 ministers and 35,000 members were planning Centenary celebrations which coincided with a world wide appeal for 500,000 RAND (\$AUS76,000) to fund the completion of the second phase of the Mooki Memorial College where their ministers are trained. The New Church in Australia set a target of \$10,000 which we are happy to report was raised through donations from individuals and societies around the country. In addition the Basil Lazer Fund provided a copy of *True Christian Religion* to each of the ministers to commemorate the finding of a second hand copy of *TCR* by Rev. David William Mooki in December 1909, a life changing event, indeed more than that because from this seed grew the thriving church we see today.

The history of the New Church in South Africa now spans 100 years and these huge celebrations were held from Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> October to Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2009. Australia was represented by **Rev Ian Arnold** and **Rev Trevor** and **Joy Moffat**. Most of the information in the following article is drawn from a much longer report by Rev Ian Arnold which captured the spirit of the occasion and with it an insight into a church that lives and breathes its religion in such an inspiring way. (Many thanks, Ian.)

Eighteen months ago the present President, the Rev. Henry Kalo, and his governing Council announced plans to celebrate the Centenary of the founding of The New Church of Southern Africa, a weekend of special events to be held at Orlando (Soweto) in conjunction with the 2009 Women's League Convention.

It should be mentioned just how important the Women's League is. Apparently there were 257 delegates, *plus visitors*, to the Women's League Convention, all of whom were found lodgings in Soweto. These were joined by another 300 or more people for the weekend and for the Centenary celebrations. As Ian says "Mountains of food were prepared and we were in awe of hard working volunteer women from the Orlando Society, 20 to 30

prepared to be ordained next summer. Presently these ministers run a school and an orphanage. Bishop Brian Keith just arrived from that country and was very fascinated of what is happening in that country.

### ***Ghana***

Ghana is the first country in West Africa where a New Church congregation was set up 25 years ago. Currently there are 11 ordained ministers on the ground working hard to reach out with the Heavenly Doctrine. In addition, there are two New Church schools which enrol over 600 children yearly. These children are being taught the teaching of the New Church. We can imagine how many newchurchmen and newchurchwomen the schools can produce in a few years to come.

### ***Ivory Coast***

This country has 2 ordained ministers serving quite a significant number of new adherents in their congregations. There is also a gentleman from this country currently being trained in the Bryn Athyn Theological School. The fascinating thing about Ivory Coast is that there is a Theological school which is taking students of French speaking background who may not be able to attend the Theological school in the US. Currently the school has finished training 5 students who are ready to be ordained in June 2010 by Bishop Brian Keith. The five students are planning to start their own congregations soon after they are ordained. Last June Bishop Keith visited the country and the senior minister there took him to a new land they have acquired, and which is going to serve as the future New Church educational complex. This senior minister told Brian that his goal is to have a 1000 member congregation in five years.

### ***Benin***

This country does not have a minister yet, but there is a group of people in that country waiting for their minister, who is currently being trained in the Theological school in Bryn Athyn (USA). This gentleman would finish his course and be ordained in May 2010.

### ***Togo***

This is my native country. I found the New Church in Accra (capital of

Ghana) in the mid 90s. After I was baptized, I decided to take these beautiful doctrines to my people in Togo. I started it as a reading group for 2 years after which I left to the USA to attend the Theological school where I became ordained in 2001. Currently there are two congregations; one in the capital Lome, and the other in Vogan 45 minutes drive east.

Great things are happening in Togo with the New Church. Our mission statement reads: *‘To create awareness of the New Jerusalem and spread the Heavenly Doctrine across the land and beyond our borders in whatever way the Lord leads us.’*

To achieve this goal the New Church in Lome has developed a strategic plan that we work on. These plans include:

- Street Evangelization – mounting platforms on street corners to evangelize with megaphones and speakers.
- Planting churches among the receivers of the Heavenly Doctrine.
- Creation of New Church Education School.
- Creation of Swedenborg Centre – a place for people across the region and beyond our borders to come, cultivate and enrich their knowledge with the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

Togo has two ordained ministers and a Candidate; the clergy is not doing this alone. We have a good number of dedicated lay members working hard so the New Church (which they have found in adulthood) can grow and affect more and more people’s lives as it does for them. We are confident people, we are organized people. We believe that, if God wills, we will achieve these goals in course of time.

The prospects of achieving our goals are high, but at the same time we have tremendous challenges that face the church in Lome. We are currently worshipping in a fourth location since the church began in Togo. Moving from one location to another is a major factor that militates against rapid growth and development. When we move, we lose almost all the members we had gained, and have to start all afresh at the new location. We moved because we never owned the property and the owners either sold the property or rented the place to other people.

We are currently running a fund-raising drive to be able to purchase a permanent land for the New Church in Lome. If we own a property, we will have the confidence to fire up our activities to reach out to more people without the fear of losing again.

If you read this article and you want to donate money to this worthy cause, please do so by sending funds to Togo through the General Church Outreach in Bryn Athyn USA. No contribution would be considered too small or too big, we would show our warmest gratitude to every donation received. May the Lord bless you.

### Conclusion

Everyone can see that the Church in the Western world is diminishing, whilst in Africa more New Church groups are being set up. This confirms the fact that Africa is going to be the pillars and foundation of the New Church in the world. Even though we, New Church members in Africa, are very dedicated to playing our part for the establishment of the Church, we do acknowledge the job is for every New Church person in the diaspora. We all form the heart and lungs of the Lord’s New Church, so let us keep that in mind always.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is significant that **Bishop Brian Keith** has recently made a visit to several of the West African nations further underlining the importance of the church in the region. Reports on this visit along with extensive photos can be read in the *Around the New Church* publication which can also be viewed online at:

<http://www.newchurch.org/materials/publications/around/index.html>

The September issue of *New Church Life* features an extended report on this visit by Bishop Brian Keith. This can also be viewed online at:

<http://www.newchurch.org/materials/publications/nc-life/index.html>

Read how people in these countries are industriously building churches, schools and congregations.