

The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society May 2011

What Does It Mean to 'Take Up Our Cross Daily'?

by Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rose

Many biblical passages are cited to support the common idea that the image of the cross refers solely to Jesus' death on the cross and that this event took away our sins.

In Matthew, an angel appears to Joseph and tells him he must name the baby in Mary's womb Jesus "for He will save His people from their sins" (1:21). In John 1:29, John the Baptist sees Jesus and exclaims, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." In John 3, Jesus likens Himself to the brass serpent that Moses lifted up in the wilderness which cured anyone who looked at it: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (John 3:14). He goes on to say, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (3:16). Some could interpret these and other passages to mean that Jesus took away our sins through His death on the cross.

But in actuality, Scripture speaks of more than one type of cross. In Luke 9:22, Jesus tells His disciples what's going to happen to Him at the end of His life: "The Son of Man must suffer many things,...and be killed, and be raised the third day." Note that he says "killed," not crucified. Jesus continues, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (9:23).

This interaction took place before Jesus' death and resurrection. In this conversation, Jesus never told His disciples He was going to be crucified. Crucifixion was reserved for only the worst criminals. There is not a chance the disciples would believe that Jesus was going to be crucified. So what is this cross? Jesus invites us to follow Him in bearing it. He must not be referring to a physical cross, because the disciples had never seen him carrying one. And Jesus says we are to take up our cross daily. How many times can you be crucified physically? Not more than once. So what does it mean to take up our cross daily?

We must allow for two crosses: the physical cross that Jesus died on at the end of His life and some nonphysical "cross" that Jesus was already bearing every day when He made the statement in Luke, and which He invites us to bear as well.

How are we to bear our cross? Paul says in Galatians, "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another.... Those who practice [the works of the flesh] will not inherit the kingdom of God.... [While] those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:16, 17, 21, 24).

This passage is talking about crucifixion not as a physical thing but as a spiritual thing, and not as something that Jesus alone went through, but something we have to go through if we are to follow Him.

Bearing the cross is the pain of dealing with the burden of our lower nature and warring against its passions. We need Jesus, because we have no power against hell on our own. And yet we have to repent and cooperate in bringing our lower nature into order. That we can do daily.

Jesus' death was not about redemption; rather, it was His life that redeemed us. Jesus makes this clear when He tells the Pharisees in Luke 13:32, "Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." The time when he was casting out demons (meaning conquering sin) and performing cures was "today and tomorrow," meaning during His life; His death, meant by the "third day," was not about casting out demons; that was a process through which He was perfected and became fully Divine.

In John, Jesus prays to the Father saying He has "finished the work" the Father gave Him to do (17:4). He's not dead yet, and yet He says He's finished His work. Redemption is the work that He had finished, that He accomplished during His life. His work of redemption was conquering the hells through bearing His spiritual cross. It was the inner work He did every day of His life. This work gave Jesus the power to take away the sins of the world. We draw on that power when we practice repentance. By a life of repentance we take up our cross daily and follow the Lord.

The Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rose is a minister in Bryn Athyn, PA. He is the series editor and a translator for the New Century Edition of the Theological Works of Emanuel Swedenborg. For more information: jsrose@digitalwave.com.

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Visit of Bishop Brian and Gretchen Keith

The Hurstville Society is most appreciative of the visit of Bishop Brian Keith and his charming wife Gretchen over the Easter period. It brought back happy memories of their earlier visit three years ago also at Easter time. This visit was part of a three week tour of New Zealand and Australia spending the first Sunday in Auckland, the second in Perth and the third in Sydney.

Brian and Gretchen arrived on Tuesday 19th April only to be stranded on the tarmac for an hour and a half after landing at Sydney Airport which had been evacuated due to a power failure at a security checkpoint. Sydney Airport ordered the rescreening of the entire airport including passengers who had already boarded planes ready for take off! However once this unfortunate incident was behind them the visit went very smoothly.

The following evening we had a Society dinner followed by a talk from the Bishop in which he covered a number of current topics with the worldwide church. He was quite open about the difficult financial challenges facing the church and even worse challenges for the Academy. He called it a "perfect storm" of global financial troubles coupled with expansion programs and issues regarding lack of communication. However these issues are being addressed and although difficult decisions still remain he was confident that the church was heading in the right direction again. Nevertheless all programs of the church will face scrutiny for cost savings because the budget is not yet in balance. (Even the New Connection magazine and the Journey programs will be looked at.)

The Bishop also spoke about programs in Africa and a growing interest in other parts of the world, much of it made possible due to our presence on the internet. For example interest in India has increased so much that recently **Reverends David Lindrooth** (Director of Outreach) and **Göran Appelgren** (Regional Director for India) travelled to Cochin, Kerala, India, where a 3-day international

conference was held on New Church doctrine. See the following link:
<http://www.newchurch.org/about/news/lindrooth-india-trip.html>

Turning to the Hurstville Society specifically he was able to tell us that he doesn't have any pastor lined up to visit in the next few months though he said he would put out a renewed request to see whether he can drum up some interest.

However it is more likely we may be able to obtain some help from our pastor elect **Todd Beiswenger** even though his actual arrival in Hurstville will probably be delayed till 2012. We discussed with the Bishop some possible ideas that could be explored where Todd could, for example, prepare services of worship, write for our newsletter and even possibly do a doctrinal class via Skype. Since his return Brian has discussed the matter with Todd and Tom Rose, pastor of the Ivyland church where Todd will be assisting while he waits for his immigration approval. Both are affirmative in principle so it is now up to us to sort out the details of exactly what is practical.

Another possibility is that Todd may be able to make a short visit to Australia but we need advice from our immigration agent to make sure this doesn't run foul of the Department of Immigration. However Todd is in the final month of his study at the Theological College (his graduation date is Saturday 21st May) so we need to let him concentrate on this for the next few weeks. Perhaps next issue we may have more information.

The following day on Thursday 21st April Brian and Gretchen headed north for a visit to the Gold Coast hosted by **Brian** and **Gaye Heldon**. That evening after a group dinner the Bishop gave a talk on Easter. During this visit there was a chance to catch up with **Rev Les Sheppard** and **Rev Ian Arnold**.

Returning to Sydney after lunch on Good Friday the Bishop's next engagement was a Holy Supper service in the evening. The theme of the service was "The Lord's Temptations and Apathy." The essential point was that the hells were trying to make the Lord give up, and we have to deal with the same problem of apathy. The Bishop also gave a children's talk where he explained why the Lord had to be killed so that the evil was exposed for all to see.

The theme of the Easter Sunday service was that the Lord came to lift us up, which is what He Himself did with the resurrection and does with us daily. After the service a Pot Luck lunch was held to allow people to further visit with Brian and Gretchen. A small gift of Australian seeds and spices (for cooking) along with a personalized card was presented.

Adding to the enjoyment of the week were a number of visitors from Tamworth, Maitland and Canberra.

Many thanks, Brian and Gretchen. Your visit was very special.

Japanese Relief Fund

Japan continues to struggle with the effects of the earthquake and subsequent tsunami and nuclear challenges. The Tokyo New Church and other Asian New Church communities have formed a committee to disperse the relief aid contributed by New Church communities from all over the world. Priority will be given to New Church families whose homes have been lost or damaged and any remaining funds will be given to the broader Japanese community.

As of April 19, **\$33,681.50** has been donated and is being sent to aid the many families who have lost so much. Many thanks go to individuals, elementary schools and trusts for their generous giving. If you would still like to contribute, please send your contributions to:

General Church of the New Jerusalem (in the memo line Japanese Relief Fund) Box # 708, Bryn Athyn PA 19009-0708. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact :

John Jin, Regional Pastor for Asia (267) 502-4939
pncjin@gmail.com or

Kaye Lermite, GC Donor Relations (267) 502-4931
kaye.lermitte@anc-gc.org

or donate directly

<https://newchurchgiving.org/page.aspx?pid=430>

Calendar Notes for May

Our usual **bi-annual Society meeting** normally held in April was postponed due to the bishop's visit and is now rescheduled to **15th May**. Come along and help plan the next few months.

We haven't had a **Property Trust** meeting for a while so one is scheduled for **22nd May**.

A reminder that we have re-introduced the practice of **no church on the first Sunday** of the month. However services are available at Roseville on those dates.

Sunday 8th May is Mothers' Day. We have managed to find a New Church sermon written specially for Mothers' Day.

No dinner and class is scheduled for May.

News Notes

Murray and **Lori Heldon** have taken a week's holiday after Easter to visit Western Australia. They were able to spend a few days staying at Smiths Beach Resort where **Carolyn Heldon** now works. They did some touring of the Margaret River area with her and a couple of friends.

We would like to offer our condolences to the family of **Blair Milan** who died suddenly recently from acute myeloid leukaemia at the age of 29. Blair is known to many in the Hurstville Society from New Church Summer Camps which he attended some years ago. His life and personality are an inspiration and it is well worthwhile Googling "Blair Milan" on the internet and to read about his life and tragic end. His spirit will live on in the spiritual world.

Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **John Sandow** (18th), **Naomi Smith** (20th), **Daniel Walsh** (27th) and **Brian Walsh** (31st)

May 2011 Calendar of Events

Note: All events are located at the church at 22 Dudley St, Penshurst 2222 (off Hillcrest Ave) unless otherwise stated. Contact the Hurstville New Church on (02) 9580 1589 for more information or email us at newchurch@optusnet.com.au
All are welcome and refreshments are served after church each Sunday.

Sunday	1st May	No Church in Hurstville (Service at Roseville)
Sunday	8th May	10 00 a.m. Worship MOTHERS' DAY
Sunday	15th May	10 00 a.m. Worship followed by Society Meeting
Sunday	22nd May	10 00 a.m. Worship followed by Property Trust Meeting
Sunday	29th May	10 00 a.m. Worship