

The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society June 2003

Australia On The Boil?

by Rev. Garry B. Walsh

With the 19th of June, New Church Birthday celebrations soon upon us, it is interesting to question the place of the New Church in our modern world. What type of impact, if any, do New Church teachings have within our culture? Where do we, as individuals and as an organization stand relative to the greater Christian community? Are we, as New Church people, doing all we can?

With these questions in mind and not much of an idea about how to address them, a flier arrived in the mail (or at least was put in my mailbox), from a Christian group calling itself "The International Community Fellowship". Perhaps you know of them. I must admit that I do not. I should probably follow up on them some day and see what they are all about.

This flier or newsletter, called "Better Life" was entirely different in format to anything the New Church, General Church anyway, in my knowledge has ever produced. They have taken the "non-threatening" approach. The result is something that could just as easily be representing the local football team or weight loss centre. These are not meant as criticisms of the publication. They are just observations of a difference in style that obviously has a particular type of reader in mind.

This publication, the "Better Life", struck me, not just because of its format, but also because of the style of the lead article. I will reproduce the article here, without permission I must admit. I will be interested to hear what others make of it.

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Australia is on the boil...

Softening our brains...losing our heart and soul.

The Fate of Freddo Frog

When Freddo was thrown into a pan of ice water, the instant shock made him react violently, he jumped out to safety!

But next, they put little Freddo into a pan of warm water. He felt warm and fuzzy all over. He felt so good that he kept on swimming in circles.

When they gradually increased the heat, Freddo did not even notice the change. He did not understand what was being done to his mind, body and soul. He just kept doing what all decent, tolerant, tax paying, law abiding frogs did - he worked harder. Wouldn't you do the same?

Little did he know that he had been tricked into believing that they all loved him and cared for him and his family. It was now getting hotter. His brain was softening. His heart slowed down. Freddo died a slow death and no one really cared. The water keeps boiling!

Up the heat and lower the standards

This is exactly what's happening to Australian society - where the heat is being applied in subtle and devious ways that undermine the quality of our lives.

We live in a wonderful country that has so much to offer. God has blessed us with great resources, employment, fun and beauty. God has given us the gifts of love, friends, family, sex, marriage, imagination and laughter to share with each other.

Why do you think we are always lowering our standards? Society deteriorates as people with evil and unhelpful agendas constantly undermine what is good, true and beautiful.

They are looking for another frog

Look around, we see people abused, violated, and cheated as marriages go bust and families become dysfunctional. As the heat is turned up we too, like Freddo frog, will have our mind, body and soul destroyed! Freddo died a slow death. Who's next?

Who is responsible?

For example, when you turn up the heat by puffing cigarette smoke in your neighbour's face, you can be up for damages. This never used to be so, until we woke up to the fact that this "innocent past time" of smoking is a serious health hazard!

It is the slow, frequent exposure to unwholesome influences that takes its toll. That's what happened to Freddo.

God warns us about the detrimental influences that affect our minds, *our values and morals*. These lay the foundation for good government, business practices, healthy families and happy relationships!

For example, slowly but surely, a child who is exposed to constant arguments, abuse and indiscipline will get twisted up, unless God's protective love takes over.

Does our government do enough to protect us from pornography? We foolishly think that we adults are unharmed by classifying this evil into soft- and hard-core. But it is a fact that pornography taken in small whiffs, finally screws up one's mind, body and soul.

Look what harm it has done to marriage relationships and to our children. If we don't believe what God says about sin and evil we will keep paying a heavy price.

These days...a spade is not a spade!

Each day, sin and evil creates problems for all of us. Let's not kid ourselves. It's as dumb as saying SARS might hurt kids, but not adults. God is not bound by definitions that social engineers, sex therapists or politicians use. God set his own standard!

We use nice sounding titles, euphemisms, to get around things which God calls sin: Adultery is now called "a one night stand" or "living together." Fornication (sexual relations outside of marriage) is "doing it."

Our social conscience is outraged by paedophilia, and yet we have our "educated" leaders entertaining legislation to further lower the age of consent. Why do we sacrifice our children? We must be crazy! Like Freddo, they will die a slow death!

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This article brings to mind the passage from the Word that says, "*...they have healed the hurt of my people slightly, saying 'Peace, peace!' When there is no peace*" (Jeremiah 6: 14 & 8: 11).

The idea that, at least on a spiritual level, we are not in peace but at war, is reinforced by the Lord's words when He said, "*Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword*" (Matthew 10: 34).

There is no doubt that we live in a complex world where evil tends to disguise itself as good. Political correctness tends to excuse almost any attitude or behaviour. Are we personally being lured into accepting the world as it is? Do we tend to ignore abhorrent behaviours because we are now so used to them? Is this world as good as it gets, at least within our lifetime?

The people of the organized New Church have tended, at least in the recent past, to take a fairly pacifist stance when it comes to social issues. But, is the Lord looking for more from us? Is He asking us to take and use His "sword" when it comes to the moral state of our world? These are tough questions that require personal answers. But, it seems clear that they are questions that we cannot ignore.

"When I Was A Boy..."

by Norman Heldon

When I was a boy ...H'mm, that was way back in the 1920's; it makes me feel a little bit old. Nevertheless, it occurs to me that when you grow old you can start thinking about

growing young again in the next world; that is of course if all is well with you spiritually. So, watching a long distance running race on TV I thought, "Sure, I'll be able to do that again." (Never was a sprinter). Therefore, growing old doesn't matter much, does it? Old age, like death, you've lost your sting. Ouch! There's that nagging pain again.

But this is not about growing old. When I was a boy times were pretty tough financially. To help out we grew most of the vegetables we needed. We kept fowls also (chooks) and didn't have to buy eggs. Sometimes we set brood hens with eggs so that there were chicks hatching out now and then, pretty fluffy-feathered things flitting here and there under the watchful eye of the hen. Few kids in the city see that these days, and at poultry farms eggs are hatched in incubators, while hens are busy laying eggs in cages. A pity, but there's a hopeful sign as organic farmers discard the cages, and we can buy free range eggs again.

Something I remember with pleasure was hearing the mother hen calling her chicks to her at any sign of danger. A clucking sound she made and they would obediently scurry back and get under her wings, there to be safe, warm and secure. It's common to see young children too hurry to Mother when hurt or needing comfort.

We are reminded of the sad cry of our Lord that we read in Matthew 23 verse 37.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that killed the prophets and stoned those who were sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathering her chicks under her wings, and you would not."

There are people who scoff at the style of the Word, picking on passages like that. They say, "Is this supposed to be Divine Revelation? Men can write more eloquently than that."

But we read, "The style of the Word is the Divine style itself, with which no other style, however sublime and excellent it may seem, can be compared, for it is as thick darkness compared with light". (Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture 3).

There is always a wonderful spiritual meaning in what the Lord spoke.

"The words that I speak to you," He said, "are spirit and they are life"
(John 6: 63)

In Sunday services we say, *"O Lord, you are my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living. I will abide in Your tabernacle forever. I will trust in the shelter of Your wings."*
(Psalm 61: 4)

And in Psalm 63:



"Because you have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice"
(verse 7).

There are other similar passages in the Word, and they speak to us of the protection that truths from the Lord offer to us when we have confidence, trust and faith in Him.

"The wings of Jehovah are spiritual truths"
(Apocalypse Explained 799).

We know that at times evil spirits attack us, cunningly trying to make us believe that evil delights are good. They want to destroy our faith, make us like themselves. But we don't have to give in. And, we can be like the little chicks, but hastening to the sure protection of the Lord's wings, the truths of His Word.

Meet The Congregation

This month we introduce you to **Sam** and **Kristen Johnson**. Sam is new to the church. Kristen on the other hand, has been a part of the Hurstville congregation all her life. That is, of course, except for those occasions when the family lived beyond Sydney because of work.

Sam and Kristen met through mutual friends in Canberra and a long distance romance commenced. In November of last year they were married. Much could be said about the wonderful qualities of both of them. But, perhaps it is better that we let Kristen tell their story in her own words.

"I am 23 now and have been working as a programmer for a software company for the last 5 and a half years, since finishing high school. The last 2 and a half years of that time has been spent at a client site in the heart of Sydney city, which has been enjoyable and has been keeping me quite busy. I am also that extra bit closer to all the shopping I could possibly want! It was about 5 years ago that I met Sam on a visit to Canberra. We spent 2 years doing the long distance thing, and then Sam made the move to Sydney, being able to relocate positions within his work.

Sam has been working as a store manager at the Games Wizards (computer games store) for about 4 years now. Last year he also started a 3D Graphic Animation course part time, which he will finish around March 2004. He is interested in getting into designing computer games. We've been married for 7 months now and are enjoying the life. It's been fun settling into our own place. The apartment we bought is only about 15 mins away from mom and dad's house so I still make regular stops in to visit each week. Our

spare time seems to mostly be spent on our computers, watching movies, eating out and seeing friends and family."

By the way, the "mom and dad" mentioned above are Murray and Lori Heldon. Notice the spelling of "mom". This note about Sam and herself was written for the upcoming Gladish family reunion in the US that Sam and Kristen will be attending. Kristen's mum Lori is a Gladish.

Visit of Rev Garry Walsh To The General Church Circle In Perth

It is with great affection that we look back on Garry's visit. He brought with him a fresh spirit of charity and love that emanates through all his dealings. Whether it be a class, worship, open discussion or one to one consultations, he is approachable, warm, caring and helpful. The visit was interspersed with four shared meals, held at various homes where we enjoyed the opportunity of hearing his choice of readings to help us in our paths of life as individuals and as a community striving after unity, spiritual strength and group growth.

Our first class, at the Frosts was based on Genesis 13, the story of Lot and Abram and AC 1601, 1602. The comparison was drawn between our future in the New Church and the future of Abraham. The Lord's church will grow. We need faith to know that He is in charge and that it is not our burden to worry about. However we can all do our part in helping the Lord to grow the church.

We enjoyed a shared meal at the Harts the next evening, followed by a discussion class on Samuel 2 Ch 7. David wanted to build a house of Cedar to the Lord, (celestial love) ...which represented building the house on affections and what was needed was a solid foundation of faith. So the Lord told him to build a house of stone symbolizing spiritual reflective thought based on doctrines and applications of doctrines. Doctrine leads to life, and we need to read the Scriptures and the Writings together, and talk about them; refer to NewSearch, and learn how to reach out to others. We need to be able to give personal testimony to people about how our faith helps us, and not necessarily answer doctrinal questions at the first enquiry.

The young people met Garry at the Smuts home the next evening and learnt about King David and his story and how it affects us in our lives. A group of 10 of us met at Moore River on Friday after lunch for a wonderful retreat at the beautiful town of Guilderton. We began the retreat by focusing on Psalm 1 and a reading from Jeremiah about hoping and trusting in the Lord. The idea of a tree surviving a drought because it has its roots in the river conveys the wonderful imagery of the continual presence of the Lord with us, in peaceful states when we connect with Him, so that the continual flow of the river reminds

us of his continual presence being gifted to us. We enjoyed a singsong of all our favourite songs, accompanied by Val on the keyboard.

On Saturday we went for an early walk along the river, being reminded as we walked of the wonderful readings. During the morning we studied the letters to the churches in Revelation. Garry drew out of the readings the types of evils and falsities etc to avoid in ourselves and to recognize in enquirers for the purposes of helping them to find the new teachings. After a BBQ we all swam, or rowed on the river or the sea. We revelled in the beauty of the unspoiled coastline, the river, the lagoon and the wide open skies and sunsets.

The retreat ended with the worship, filled with the most wonderful descriptive readings from Judges 9: 1-15, Ezekiel 47: 1-12, Rev:22 1-7, DP: 332: 3, reinforcing the whole theme of the retreat set in the treed and wooded river setting by the sea. We all left to prepare for the Holy Supper service that evening which was a feast to us isolated folks. Garry talked to us about the need to feel that the Lord is ready to be there for us, especially when we may be feeling unworthy. Our last class held at Verity's, was a practical applied psychology and religion class! We learnt about triangulation in human relationships. There was much discussion. Garry's visit came to an end, and we look forward to much email contact in the interim before we see him again.

Mary Smuts.

As a by-note to the recent events with the Perth GC Circle, we have just been informed that the group has finished negotiating the use of the upper hall of the Broome St. building that they have been using for their worship services. This space was used during our recent Holy Supper service and provides a wonderful, welcoming venue for future church activities.

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19th of June (New Church Day) Plans

At the Society Meeting held on the 13th of April this year, it was agreed that the following events will be offered to celebrate the 19th of June.

Friday, 20th of June will be coffee and dessert followed by a special class focusing on the historical events of 19th of June, 1770. **Patricia Walsh** has agreed to co-ordinate the event, (at least as far as the coffee and dessert are concerned), so please speak to her about the details.

Sunday, 22nd of June will be a "New Church Day" Family Service at 10:00am, followed by a Pot Luck Luncheon. *Please bring something savoury to share*. Drinks and soup and dessert will be provided. Please direct any questions to **Lori Heldon** who is

coordinating the lunch. The Luncheon will include a children's presentation. Laurel Walsh has agreed to co-ordinate the children's portion of the program.

We hope to see as many of you as possible for both events during this annual celebration.

News Notes

After an extended stay during which she lived primarily in Baringa, **Brenda Klein** has left us to return to the US. On the way, Brenda will stop through Singapore to visit her sister and brother-in-law, Kim and Pam Odhner, who are resident there. The couple have a new baby, who Brenda is understandably keen to spend time with. Brenda has promised to return to Australia on a more permanent basis if her work and visa situation allows. Until then, her smiling presence in the congregation will be missed.

Stuart, together with sister **Naomi Heldon** continues to tour the globe. At last report, Stuart was in Portugal and Naomi was in Bryn Athyn. Both had spent time in Spain and then Naomi visited the Greek Isles. Naomi has now found work. Stuart continues to travel and enjoy life. Good luck to him!

Both Stuart and Naomi will soon team up with the rest of the family, **Murray, Lori** and **Jeffrey Heldon**, together with **Sam** and **Kristen Johnson** as they meet in the USA for the Gladish family reunion in June. They plan to be gone three weeks. We wish them happy holidaying.

Owen and **Margaret Heldon** have just returned from a short break in the Blue Mountains staying at an historic Guest House at Mount Victoria. They spent two days enjoying the spectacular scenery and retracing the steps of the pioneer explorers around Mount York and the Hartley Valley.

The planned **Summer Camp** in Queensland in 2004 has had to be postponed till 2005. Other venues, possibly in the Greater Sydney area, are being investigated. Further information should be available next month.

Birthdays

Birthday Greetings to **Angela** and **Michelle Heldon** (8th), **June Kirsten** (9th), and **Isaak Horner** (17th),

June 2003 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 pastor **Rev Garry Walsh** on (02) 9580 1589 for more information or email Garry at newchurch@optusnet.com.au

All are welcome and refreshments are served after church each Sunday.

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| Sunday | June 1st | 10.00 a.m. Worship and Sunday School followed by Property Trust Meeting |
| Wednesday | June 4th | 10.00 a.m. Discussion Group |
| Friday | June 6th | 7.00 p.m. Dinner and Class |
| Sunday | June 8th | 10.00 a.m. Worship and Sunday School |
| Wednesday | June 11th | 10.00 a.m. Discussion Group |
| Friday | June 13th | 7.00 p.m. Young Peole (meeting at Roseville) |
| Sunday | June 15th | p 10.00 a.m. Worship and Sunday School |
| Wednesday | June 18th | 10.00 a.m. Discussion Group |
| Friday | June 20th | 7.30 p.m. Dessert and Class (see above) |
| Sunday | June 22nd | 10.00 a.m. NEW CHURCH DAY FAMILY SERVICE followed by Luncheon (see above) |
| Wednesday | June 25th | 10.00 a.m. Discussion Group |
| Friday | June 27th | 7 00 p.m. Young People |
| Sunday | June 29th | 10.00 a.m. Holy Supper Service and Sunday School |