

The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society December 2008

The Shepherd In Us

by Rev. Karl R. Alden

The marvel of the Word, as it is revealed in the Heavenly Doctrines for the New Church is that it never grows old because in its internal sense it always tells a story that deals with us living in the present. The Lord did, indeed, come into the world of people and nature nearly two thousand years ago. He came, as the story tells us, when Herod was king of Judea. He was born, as the Gospel announces, of Mary, His virgin mother. Yet, this outward birth - when He bowed the heavens to sojourn for a few short years among the creatures that He had made - this outward birth, majestic as it was, serves clearly to prepare our minds to see another birth - the birth of the Lord into our own hearts today! It is this birth that is vital to us. This is the fact that gives us hope and courage, the event that fills our minds with radiant light and our hearts with warm love. For, as the Lord was born into the world in bygone years, so, in like manner today, He may be spiritually born with each one of us.

From the Heavenly Doctrines we learn that the Lord came into the world when people needed Him for their salvation. Evil forces in the spiritual world had beclouded people's minds, had risen up to such an extent that people on earth were being cut off from the influx of heaven. And, unless this influx could be restored by the Lord's personal advent on earth, the human race would have perished.

In like manner, with each one of us, temptations come; darkness sets in and our natural selfishness seeks to destroy us. When such states arise, let us remember the words of the Christmas story: "Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night" (Luke 2:8). There is a shepherd in each one of us, a shepherd that leads and guides: the spiritual principles that form the conviction of our religion. Our religious principles, the truths which we believe, must keep watch over our states of innocence, the tender and beautiful goods implanted in each one of us as children. These holy states are represented by sheep in the Word. It is because sheep have this representation that the Lord is called the Good Shepherd.

The truths of religion are our shepherd, and they lead us through the darkness of night, the night of ignorance and despair. Remember, the Lord came to the world in the days of Herod the king. It was during his reign that the shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks by night. Herod's reign signifies the rule of falsity and the slavery induced by evil. We, too, live in a spiritual reign of Herod when more and more people doubt the rule of a supreme God, and the belief in a life after death has become faint. It is through this night of distress, which comes to each of us during temptation, that we must guard and protect every spiritual truth that has been implanted in us as the shepherds watched over their flocks.

If we are faithful to our task, the time will come when we will be prepared to receive a wonderful confirmation of the truths that we have followed. These truths will lead, inevitably, to an understanding of where the Lord may be found. When the angel appeared to the shepherds, he said to them:

"This will be the sign to you: you will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12).

"And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger" (Luke 2:16).

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Inn and Manger

Now there is such an Inn
And we all have one,
That's vibrant with life, and fun,
Loud voices within
And feasting, and drinking, for many things care-
No room for Him there.

Down a side street though
Where we sometimes go;
And not hard to find
(for it's all in the mind)
We have a manger there
Where truest things are stored,

That we learn from our Lord
And others share.

When to this peaceful place He comes to dwell with us
Greet Him with joy, it will be well with us.

Norman Heldon

Bad News - Good News

by Norman Heldon

First the Bad News, and it must be admitted that it heavily outweighs the news that is good, in fact the Good News is rather hard to find.

Top of the list no doubt would be the financial turmoil that began in the USA and is now worldwide. There have been failures of large financial companies, government bail-outs of seemingly secure banks, international trade is being disrupted. The nasty word Recession is commonly heard. Cost of living is rising, workers are laid off. The parlous state of Zimbabwe is made worse, where it seems millions are dependent on food aid.

In the Congo, government forces are battling rebels and thousands have been forced to flee from their homes. Earthquakes in China have caused the collapse of badly built schools, killing and injuring many children. A similar disaster has occurred in Haiti.

On top of all this are the worrying effects of climate change, caused by the increasing discharge of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Destruction of forests has caused great floods, wiping out whole villages. And there's more; it hurts to recount the current problems.

So what of the Good News? There's not much I admit; some accounts of brave actions by some people, kindness of strangers that are unselfish acts often featured by the Reader's Digest. However I read a most interesting article in a magazine section of the Australian newspaper. It concerns the work of a lady named Lyn Williams, who is described as a harpist, conductor, composer and a former member of the Australian and world youth orchestras. She leads the Sydney Children's Choir and its national counterpart Gondwana Voices.

To quote: "No TIE ME KANGAROO DOWN or happy-clappy rubbish here. No cheap trendy pop here. This is the real deal, tapping into deep and universal human endeavour."

In September on Thursday Island just north of Cape York, Lyn Williams gathered together singers from the Sydney Children's Choir and young choristers from islands across Torres Strait. Those children sang a number of songs, some by contemporary Australian composers alongside "ALL THINGS BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL" (We sang that in our church on a recent Sunday)

"The possibilities are endless" Williams says, "That's why we can go as far as we do. Because they'll go as far down the musical path as you're prepared to take them." Williams and others involved in the performance are thinking big, trying to reach out to all corners of Australia.

Muktar was a 16 year old Pakistani girl, illiterate but a very devout Muslim, praying five times a day. She was cruelly abused by men, then told she should take her own life. Instead, though tormented by her experience she chose to fight, to seek justice. And she succeeded. Her case achieved international publicity and her attackers were convicted. Then she set up schools for girls, something so far unknown. Also, she had a refuge for women who had suffered violence.

A Queensland farmer, soon to lose his drought ravaged farm and suffering depression sought but found no help from doctors. However, a psychologist said, "Find those who are suffering more than you and help them." He did, knowing there were many others on the land who were in deep trouble.

He and his wife set up a charity and acquired a van. Donations began pouring in. They travelled around leaving food and other necessities with troubled families.

Can you see the hand of Providence in these things? Although strong religious belief is shown only in the Pakistani girl, the motives of the others seem good. Also we know that the Lord's Providence is with everyone. "The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works." (Psalm 145:9)

Leader's Report Presented to AGM 23rd November 2008

(Edited version)

Challenging Year

This past year has been a challenging one for the continued operation of the Society. When we were first left without a minister following the departure of Rev Terry Schnarr in 1997 there was a regular program of mostly retired ministers who visited Hurstville on 3 month stints until the arrival of Rev David Ayers in 1999 and a similar situation existed initially after the departure of Rev Garry Walsh our last permanent pastor in 2005. The supply of these ministers has to a large extent dried up and at this stage the only possibility looking forward to the foreseeable time frame is for Rev George and Lois McCurdy to return next June-August. Of course just having these ministers and their wives here doesn't solve everything and in some ways it adds work. However the benefits far outweigh any downsides and just having two enthusiastic extra people as part of our group gives the society a lift. A similar benefit is also felt with the interns but again having interns does require a fair amount of work to supervise and co-ordinate their very willing help.

Main Society Functions Continue

The society has continued to provide the main functions it has always done despite the absence of a regular pastor. This year we did have the services of Rev Alain Nicolier before, during and after Christmas and at the Summer Camp,

Bishop Brian Keith at Easter, and theological candidate Coleman Glenn for 6-7 weeks in June-August as well as a one week visit from Rev Doug Taylor in October.

Until recently (see below) we have continued to hold weekly services of worship, doctrinal classes at least once a month, Friday dinners once a month and Young People's meetings approximately once a month, generally with the Roseville group at Roseville though we did host an evening at Hurstville with Coleman Glenn. It should also be mentioned that every regular member and attendee of the church has played their part in various ways in keeping the society going. To all of you many thanks.

Changes to Help Us Cope

For the past several months we have cancelled church on the first Sunday of each month with people encouraged to attend Roseville on that day. The idea is to give everyone a break (and it is still a break even if you attend Roseville) especially those most closely involved in service preparation so that we can come back refreshed. Church shouldn't be a burden.

Next week we will use a service on a DVD provided by Rev Julian Duckworth in a live worship situation and assess if this is an option on occasions when the people who normally provide orders of service and music are not available. Looking further ahead the General Church initiative of providing a downloadable service via the internet for playback later to assist small societies and isolated groups will be further investigated as the project comes closer to fruition.

Newsletter

We have continued to produce the newsletter each month on the basis that it does have a readership of about 120 and I have had enough feedback to know that quite a few people do read the newsletter. Additionally some people make generous donations toward the cost of producing the newsletter. We are making contact with many people outside our small group in Hurstville. However it is a task to produce the newsletter and it may be necessary to either reduce the size on occasions or to consider issues that cover two months.

Coleman Glenn

Coleman deserves his own paragraph. Suffice to say that his ability to relate to people of all ages and his absolutely outstanding sermons impressed everyone. If we were choosing a new pastor the qualities displayed by Coleman would put him at the top of the list.

Rev Alain and Jeanne Nicolier

It seems like an eternity since they were here but it was only February. I think it is fair to say that their visit caused a lot of excitement and interest about serving the community in an entirely new way. The mini retreat near Canberra attended by people from both Sydney and Canberra including some of the young people and a friend who was completely new to the church was a major success and gave some idea of what could be done. I know that there continues to be interest and enthusiasm amongst a number of people right across Australia.

So why hasn't anything happened? It would seem that for a project like this to get off the ground would require someone with entrepreneurial and organisational skills and there aren't many people in this category. One thing is clear however that Alain and Jeanne do not want to come and live in the manse and be a traditional General Church minister. But who knows what will happen in the future? We have to trust in Divine Providence.

Episcopal Visit

Our Easter celebrations were given a major boost by the visit of Bishop Brian and Gretchen Keith. As Brian officially looks after our part of the globe it was great to get to know him and Gretchen first hand.

Acknowledgment of Assistance from Rev Julian Duckworth

It would be remiss of me not to mention the assistance Julian has been on occasions. He has done a baptism, a couple of funerals and even the one I took (for Audrey Favell in April 2008) benefited considerably from his advice. There have been a number of occasions where Julian has provided material or advice from which we have benefited. Both my brother Murray (joint lay leader) and myself have been strong supporters of fostering co-operation with the New Church in Australia and have encouraged other General Church groups in Australia to endeavour to do so as well.

"Love All"

Last November the society provided the facilities in Baringa and the church grounds to host aboriginal children from Ngalangangpum School and this was reported in last year's report. This year we have recently had The Sydney Film School hire our tennis court and make extensive use of the grounds to make a film called "Love All" which as you might guess has a tennis theme and a love theme. We have been promised a copy and an invite to the official opening.

Owen Heldon

Theta Alpha Guild Report to the Hurstville Society AGM

The ladies of the Theta Alpha Guild were busy throughout the year, helping with the visit of the aboriginal school children from Western Australia, organising luncheons - a farewell for the society interns Sarah Elder and Carling Wyncoll last November, welcomes and farewells to the Nicoliers (Dec/Feb) and Coleman Glenn (New Church Day/Aug) - making June 19th gifts and generally keeping things running smoothly.

This is just a brief summary but it should be added that for the last few years the Hurstville Chapter of Theta Alpha Guild has been valiantly trying to maintain all its uses in spite of the fact that the executive - Margaret Heldon, President; Lori Heldon, Secretary and Patricia Walsh, Treasurer - are the only active members and the only ones who attend meetings. Contact with the international body, Theta Alpha International, continues. Greeting Cards are faithfully sent out by our secretary to friends and members of the Hurstville Society if there are births, deaths, weddings or illness. Theta Alpha Guild are the housekeepers of Baringa, the Manse and the church building. However, our main use has been making and providing June 19th Gifts to children throughout Australia who have been baptised into the General Church.

Unfortunately, because of personal matters the President is now absent from the Hurstville Society for an indefinite time, and so it has become impossible for our Chapter to fulfil all their previous commitments. Therefore, no meetings will be held in the foreseeable future and its activities will have to be severely curtailed. At our most recent meeting which was held on Sunday 14th September this year it was decided to dramatically reduce the amount of June 19th gifts we produce to just the local church children. Perth, Western Australia and the Gold Coast, Queensland have kindly offered to do their own gifts. Regretfully all other families will be notified of the suspension of this use.

Any ladies who are interested in joining our ranks please contact the Secretary, Lori Heldon.

Margaret Heldon, President

Calendar Notes for December

Sunday Dec 7th Being the first Sunday of the month there will be **no church at Hurstville** but there is a **special service at Roseville**. At this service the children will be doing a Nativity Play. After the service, there will be a shared lunch (people should bring a salad or dessert not a main dish as Roseville will provide cooked chicken) and a Church party, with gifts for the children. In addition, people who are coming to the Nativity Service are asked to bring an unwrapped present (new or pre-loved) for the Salvation Army Christmas Appeal. If you are thinking about joining our friends at Roseville for the service and lunch, please let Lori Heldon (9579 5248) or Ruth Duckworth know (9416 7032) so that Ruth can help decide what kind of lunch provision is required (numbers and kind of dish).

Sunday Dec 14th Worship Service at Hurstville in the morning. In the evening you may wish to attend the Carols by Candlelight at Roseville.

Sunday Dec 21st Worship service in the **evening at 7 pm** at Hurstville (with something for children) followed by refreshments at the Lockharts.

Thursday Dec 25th Christmas Day service at 10 a.m. Carols and shared readings along with a Christmas sermon.

Sunday Dec 28th Worship

Services suspended in **January** until at least after the Summer Camp. Further details to be provided with the News Notes accompanying the calendar next month.

News Notes

Rebekah Horner, Koburn, Claire and **Skye** have moved to Tamworth. Their new address is 119 Denison St, Tamworth 2340

Mike and **Kerry Lockhart** are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter **Karen Forbes** to **Michael David Evans**. The wedding date will probably be late next year. Congratulations Karen and Mike. Another piece of news is that Karen and Mike have also bought their first investment property in Cremorne!

Many people will know **Robert Ridgway** from Canberra and will be happy to learn that he was married to **Kate Haeney** in a delightful wedding ceremony at Poachers' Pantry a winery on the outskirts of Canberra on Saturday 29th November. A number of friends from Hurstville travelled to Canberra to attend the ceremony.

Norman Heldon age 91 and **Kyan Heldon** age 1 are both getting used to their new cochlear implants. Both have challenges in learning to recognise new sounds or sounds they haven't heard for a long time. We wish them well. Norman Heldon is also planning cataract operation in December to help with his eyesight.

As we go to press **Angela** and **Michelle Heldon** along with two friends are close to completing a five week holiday in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Angela also visited Thailand, fortunately before the present unrest erupted. They have had lots of adventures and not being on an organised tour have met many of the wonderful local people. Their travel has at times been unconventional e.g. white water rafting over the border from Laos into Cambodia.

Exodus Foundation food collection. A reminder to make a special effort for Christmas and donate some food items to our Exodus Foundation food basket. Patricia Walsh is very much hoping to have a box ready for pickup before

Christmas. It has been requested by Exodus that we don't give 'Christmas goodies', just normal non perishables.

Birthdays

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

December 2008 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) 95... for more information or email us at newchurch@optusnet.com.au
All are welcome and refreshments are served after church each Sunday.

Sunday	7th December	<i>NO CHURCH AT HURSTVILLE</i> Special Nativity Play Service at Roseville
Friday	12th December	7 00 p.m. Tea and Class
Sunday	14th December	10. 00 a.m. Worship 7.30 p.m. Carols by Candlelight (at Roseville)
Sunday	21st December	7 00 p.m. Worship (NB evening service) followed by refreshments at the Lockharts
Sunday	25th December	10. 00 a.m. Christmas Day Service
Sunday	28th December	10. 00 a.m. Worship