



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society November 2016

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Getting It Out There

By Rev Todd Beiswenger

Churches around the world have noticed that they have had declining attendance, which has resulted in calls for the creation of a “new model” for church. Something that will get the younger people involved with the teachings and life of the church. While it seems that many are scrambling to find out what this new model will be, I am in the camp of saying that it is already here, and in fact manifesting in at least a couple of different ways.

Take for example this news release from the Swedenborg Foundation in the USA:

***Swedenborg and Life* Episode Gets Viral Boost:**

One of the most popular episodes of *Swedenborg and Life*, “Why Don’t Those Who’ve Died Communicate With Us More?” went viral in mid-September, setting all-time records for offTheLeftEye. (offTheLeftEye is a Youtube channel that explores faith, spirituality and the afterlife through video hosted by Curtis Childs) That episode has had 461,255 views over the past year. On the peak day we had 29,425 views and 287,901 minutes watched, and for the next week or so the channel continued to have unusually high viewership. The overall result was that September was the channel’s best month ever with 373,461 views and 3.4 million minutes watched (for comparison, this was a 42% increase in both views and minutes watched over August).

The reason for the boost was YouTube’s recommendation algorithms – for reasons known only to itself, YouTube suddenly began promoting this episode heavily to people who had never seen the channel before, resulting in a spike in viewership. Although the numbers have settled down a bit, we’re still seeing traffic that’s about 25% higher than it was before the spike.

With this we can see that people are interested in questions that are greater than who won the cricket test match. We can also see where they are getting their answers: the Internet, and more specifically Youtube.

This news pleases me in a few different ways. One, I’m happy that people are finding the Foundation’s videos. Two, I’m really happy that YouTube is taking people there via its algorithms and not just from paid advertising.

Three ...

Well, back in August I embarked on a project. The idea was to start uploading all the audio sermons I have created over the past 4 years to YouTube. Since people are using YouTube and watching videos to learn answers to spiritual questions, it feels like putting the sermons on there is a good idea. Sure, there’s no video, but I figure audio is better than nothing. It’s about putting the information out there to start with. I have sermons going back to August of 2012, though not all are recorded. Typically I have not recorded festival services or outdoor ones because usually I have those services built around some visual aid that won’t come through in the audio.

To make the YouTube project work, I need to have good tags, i.e. Biblical references and sermon description noted in the YouTube description so that people will actually find the talks. This has meant going back into all the old orders of service – yes, I keep digital copies of them all – and putting in the references from the Word into a database along with the description of the service that was originally posted on the Hurstville website.

Having put this database together would also have another benefit. I could, and did, provide the database and the audio sermons to the New Christian Bible Study website for them to use as well. This way when somebody is using their site to research the Bible, and they want an explanation of the story, they can choose to listen to the audio sermon. This part of the project has been completed and they now have 161 of my sermons, or “explanations” as they like to call them, up and live on their site.

At this point the next step is to now actually start loading them up to YouTube. It should be a relatively straight-forward process, though I'm going to do a little more research to see if there is any strategy that works well to boost my channel's profile on YouTube.

But wait, there's more! Just when you're all Youtubed out, there is another angle on this that I've been pursuing. Many of you have likely noticed that at the front of the church there is often a laptop sitting up on a pedestal, and it exists so that people at a distance can watch our services from home. Up to this point it has just been people we know who live outside of Sydney, and it's been run on a Skype-like service. Essentially a video conference call. However, this service has shown to have limitations in quality, and is not any good for getting new people to participate.

Well, wouldn't you know that YouTube has a solution for this. Yes, we can now broadcast our services live on YouTube. The first live streamed service was on October 19th, and if you would like to join in you can watch as well by going to YouTube and searching “Todd Beiswenger.” If you go on at 10:00 am (or really I hope to be ready a few minutes before that) on a Sunday, you should see a red box that says “LIVE,” indicating that the service is in progress. Just click on it and you'll be watching with us! It is my understanding that there are copyright problems with including the music in the video, so my plan at the moment is to cut the music out of the video after the broadcast is done.

One other benefit to YouTube evangelization I'll mention is that it is a lot less expensive to advertise and promote a video on YouTube than it is to advertise on Google's search engine.

Like you, I have no idea where this is going to go, but just as people don't watch TV shows at particular broadcast times anymore, people are doing their “church” at times convenient for them too. Our job is to have good information for them when they go to seek it out. That's the new model in my opinion: spirituality on demand. It's happening now.

Solomon's Wisdom: Bonus Material

By Rev Todd Beiswenger

Recently I did a sermon titled, “Why Solomon's Wisdom Was Actually Wise.” The whole idea was that Solomon was able to get the bad person to identify themselves as the bad person. He didn't have to declare who was good or bad because the people had already done it for him. I used an example of how the Catholic church used to have “trial by ordeal” to achieve the same result. If you haven't heard the story before, take a listen to the sermon online.

What I found though, was that it wasn't just Solomon or the Catholic church that has used this technique to let the garden weed itself. Back in the 80's there was a very famous and popular band named “Van Halen.” Like many rock stars, they were known for their excess. When they would offer a contract to perform at a local venue they would have all sorts of ridiculous requirements. Certain beverages had to be provided, specific brands of snacks, particular types of cigars ... the list went on and on. One that drove many promoters to the brink was the requirement of having a bowl of M&Ms ... but all the brown ones had to be taken out.

Well, in 2012 the lead singer of the band, David Lee Roth, did an interview and was talking about the old days and their rock and roll touring. He was asked about their crazy contract requirements, and the singer gave a surprising answer. He said that their show was designed to be spectacular, and to create a spectacular environment they used a LOT of lighting. He said typically they had to hang 1000 different lights to achieve the effects. One of the challenges of doing this was hanging the lighting so that it was safe. There's a fair bit on engineering required to hang 1000 lights – we're not talking light globes, but spotlights – in a way that the structure won't collapse. Of particular concern was that the band didn't want the lights to collapse on them! So they provided the venue with a very detailed plan as part of the contract as to how the lighting and stage was to be set up.

You might imagine that some local promoters didn't want to put the time in to reading the contract in a detailed way. So the band devised a plan. Ask for a bowl of M&Ms, but no brown ones. If they arrived at the venue and there were brown M&Ms in the bowl, they knew that the local promoter hadn't done their job correctly, and as a result they would have to have the lighting work double checked. If they had asked the person if everything was done correctly, certainly they would have said “Yes.” But the brown M&Ms would reveal whether they were telling the truth or not.

Next time you hear of rock 'n roll excess, you'll have to wonder whether or not it is just pure indulgence, or a case of the band employing Solomon's wisdom.

The Blessings of Rising Above Selfishness

by Bill Hall

“From [angels with us] we have the ability to rise above selfishness to express love to our spouse, family and friends.” Bishop Brian Keith.

What a wonderful blessing it is to rise above selfishness, for when we rise above selfishness we are able to live as the Lord wants us to love, always loving others and being of service to others. We may even love others more than we love ourselves.

So much of our lives depend upon our daily focus. When we strive to do the best we can for others, free from the desire for reward, we are concentrating on what we can do for the others and not for ourselves. Yes, we always have to take care of our legitimate needs. But when these needs are satisfied, we can turn our focus toward being useful.

There is no doubt that focusing on the present is a true blessing. Naturally, this focus needs to be free from fear and anxiety. When we acknowledge that the Lord is providing angels to lead us throughout our lives, we feel the hope and joy the angels are providing. This is like a barrier of doubt and uncertainty being lifted permanently from our lives.

Obedying the Golden Rule and the Ten Commandments are fine examples of how the Lord wants us to live our daily lives. May we ever rejoice in the Lord's never-ending leading of our pathway to heaven. As we go forward in our daily lives, may we come to be like angels who love others more than themselves.

“This is the day which the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.” Psalm 119:24

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Baby Baptism

It just missed the cut-off for our last newsletter, but on September 25th we had an infant baptism for **Lucy Anne Ellard Evans**. She's the second daughter born to Mike and Karen (Lockhart) Evans. As per standard baptismal procedure she was perfectly quiet and happy until she was given over to the minister for the actual baptism, and then she started fussing. However, the baptism doesn't take long and I don't take such outbursts personally, so before long she was returned to her parents and she was happy again ... no doubt because there were angels even closer to her now.

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November Classes

A few months ago we placed a suggestion box in the church, and as a result there was a request for a class topic that we did in October. We've got another request for a class, which is to talk about what New Church teachings exist regarding homosexuality. Certainly with a push for legalizing same sex marriage in Australia, it is a hot topic in some corners. As you might imagine, there has been a fair bit written about homosexuality in various New Church publications the last several years, so I will put

together a compilation of what has been written about it for us to discuss. This class will be on November 7th, 8pm. We will have a dinner that night at 7. If you are not local to us, but are interested in watching this class, let me know as we could stream this on YouTube.

There will also be a class on the 21st, at 7:30, with a subject to be determined.

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Camp Activities Confirmed

An update to the outdoor afternoon activities as camp. Good news!!! We are now going to be doing SIX and all included in the costs. Two are on the same time so you will have to choose which four you would like to do. These will be happening between 2.00pm and 4.00pm.

Monday	High Ropes
Tuesday	Abseiling and Bottle Rockets
Thursday	Climbing Tower and Archery
Friday	Giant Swing

Some people were a bit upset about the minimum ages. Good news here too. Children younger than 12 can also do most of these activities. The High Ropes and Climbing Tower are still an option for children around 8 and up but an adult must be with them throughout the activity. For Archery they have children's bows. The Bottle Rockets look very interesting indeed and has the youngest age limit. For more info, photos and videos go to <http://www.thetops.com.au> and click on the activities tab up the top.

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Birthdays

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

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