



## **The New Church Newsletter**

**Hurstville Society April 2017**

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## The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society April 2017

### From the Pastor

Hello and thanks for reading our April newsletter! As you may have noticed, we've had several people who were long time members of the church pass away over the last year. **Doug & Christine Taylor, Shirley Taylor, Bill Hall** and now **Graeme McLeay**. The good side of it is they had all lived full lives, so their passing can be met with a certain amount of joy as they transition on to something better.

For the rest of us, we must keep pressing onward, refining ourselves and working on being that kind of a person that you can be proud of when you look yourself in the mirror. I tend to think that those who we are close to, and have gone ahead of us, are still with us, working as best they can to guide us along our way. Maybe a deceased parent, or even a grandparent... it could even be a relative that you never knew... whomever, they are with you, watching out for you. The Lord Himself watches over you at every moment as well. You are never alone.

As Easter approaches and we celebrate the Lord's victory over hell, consider the people that you know who have died... people who you know to be good, kind, and bound for heaven, and just remember, that those people were given the opportunity to choose heaven because of what the Lord did 2000 years ago. He's a personal saviour, and it's because of Him that Doug, Christine, Shirley, Bill and Graeme's passing can all be celebrated, because we know they ended up in paradise.

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### Passing of Graeme McLeay



Our last newsletter was published on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February, and it was on that day that Graeme McLeay passed away. We held a service for Graeme here at the church a few days later on March 2. He was introduced into the church by his friend **Basil Lazer**, and had been coming to church here since 1963! Ever since then he was a regular part of our church community. When I came to this church 5 years ago, Graeme was still coming every other week. He'd leave his home at about 5:30 in the morning, walk 2 kilometres to the train station at Moss Vale, and take a 2 and a half hour train ride to Hurstville to walk another kilometre to the church here!

He was born in Drummoyne, a suburb of Sydney on August 22, 1931 to a set of parents that were French/German language teachers. They were sure to see to it that their son had an excellent education. He was a smart lad and attended opportunity school at Summer

Hill. He later went through High School and University in Canberra. There he earned a degree in electrical engineering and found a job working for the Commonwealth. However, trials soon came for Graeme when he developed a brain tumour which led to epilepsy. He underwent surgery which left behind a series of complications that left him mentally unable to return to work. He moved back to Sydney to live with his mother in Avalon who taught him to speak again. He persevered through what was a very trying circumstance and to the end of his life we saw that if he put his mind to something, you weren't going to stop him. If he wanted to go somewhere, he was going to go there, no matter what limitations existed with his earthly body, he still managed to do the things he wanted to do.

Those physical limitations are now long gone though. We read in *Heaven and Hell* (#553) that, "In heaven those who are moved by mutual love are constantly approaching the spring-time of their youth. And the more thousands of years they live the more joyful and happy the spring-time which they are approaching."

More importantly though we remember the good, inner qualities that made Graeme such a fine person. For one, he loved his country, both his ancestral home of Scotland and his life-long home of Australia. While it may not sound like a big deal, the Word teaches us that it is a real spiritual quality to love our country.

Others will remember Graeme for his love of giving gifts. As your eyes move around our church, you'll quickly see a couple of gifts that he gave: the oil candles and the offertory bowl. Not to mention a Roman coin for the Sunday school. There were many other things too, from plants for the garden to tools, and anything that he thought would be useful for the church to have. He never gave expecting anything in return, but he gave from a generous heart that was interested in helping out others. For all the effort Graeme put into going to church, true worship is actually just giving back to God and the neighbour, so these gifts were truly acts of worship by Graeme. (Secrets of Heaven 349)

He also loved plants and gardening. He spent many hours in the church garden with his friend **Norman Heldon**, transforming it into a special place that was designed to elevate the mind of the people who walked through it. Heavenly gardens "stir the inner feelings of the people there, and so gladden not only the eye but also at the same time the understanding"(Secrets of Heaven 4528) and that is exactly what he and Norm created here in our own back yard.

Despite the fact that Graeme was a kind, loyal and giving man, he never married or had any children, so we weren't entirely sure how many would turn up for his service, but we were pleasantly surprised when people from all around Australia showed up to remember him. There were nieces & nephews, friends from the distant past, church friends, cousins, and friends who had known Graeme most of his life.

The memorial service started at 11:30, which included some music that he loved, as well as a eulogy by his cousin **Robyn Ferguson**. We did live-stream the service, and as such it is now available on YouTube. Just search "Graeme McLeay" and it should come up for

you. I would encourage you to watch the memorial service as I'm sure you'll learn something about Graeme's life that you wouldn't have otherwise known. I will note that of all the videos I've broadcasted recently, it is his service that has had the most hits. It just shows that Graeme had other friends from around the country who just weren't able to attend.

Personally, I'm excited for Graeme... he spent the last couple years of his life in an aged care home, and he wasn't real happy about it. He missed his home. Now he's in his home, a place that he has earned by a life well lived here. He'll be meeting a woman that will share his inner qualities that he'll spend eternity with... and I'm sure there will be some amazing plant life there for him!

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## Good Friday, Palm Sunday & Easter Items

The last 4 years I have run the Easter season working with one of the four gospels, which was done in an attempt to help us see their differences and the unique perspective that each gospel writer was giving us. This year it will run a bit differently in that I'll be highlighting the commonalities between them, and pick up some of the stories that for one reason or another weren't used previously.

Format wise this will also be a bit of a departure from previous years because on the **Good Friday** service it won't be just readings and music. While it will still be mostly that, I'll also be interjecting some teaching points as well. Holy Supper will be offered at this service, and hot cross buns will be available afterward.

For **Easter Sunday** we are once again encouraging people to **bring flowers** that we can then give to **Bupa Bexley** aged care facility. We're also planning to have an Easter egg hunt after the service, so bring your children young and old to participate! Who knows, maybe they'll actually find all the eggs this year!

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## Work at Church and Get Paid Like You Work at Coles!

I'm not sure if you heard, but a couple weeks ago a manager at Coles got into big trouble for asking his staff to put in an extra four hours of work and not get paid for it. Apparently he needed help getting stock from the back and onto the shelves, but didn't have the budget to pay for it, so he begged for some goodwill and offered to give them pizzas as a "thank you." Some were outraged over this. I just figured the poor manager must have been a church pastor before working at Coles because that's how we get things done around here! Speaking of which...

Grab your work gloves and gardening tools, it's time for another **working bee**! After church on the first Sunday back after school holidays, **April 30th** - will include a **pizza** lunch for all hard workers.... :) This is an opportunity to put in a concerted effort toward prettying up our gorgeous church grounds. We've got gardens galore needing TLC - this

is a prime opportunity to work on 'your' garden! We've started an adopt-a-garden program: anyone and everyone is invited to pick a section(s) of garden to look after, on your own time and/or during working bees. There's a map & sign-up sheet on the church bulletin board. Not in the mood for gardening? Baringa has plenty of windows that could use cleaning, too. Some supplies will be provided, but please bring your own if you've got them. No job is too small, no child is too young! Every little bit helps.

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## Kogarah Store House Update

A couple weeks ago we once again had one of our food & toiletry drives for Kogarah Store House. They're always very grateful for the donations, and this time was no exception. After I drop the items off they are always quick to send a "Thank You" note acknowledging the gift, and we typically place the note up on the bulletin board at the back of the church.

When I dropped the items off this time they were their normal grateful selves, and then they asked if I had received the "Thank You" card from last time. I said that we had and had placed it up for the congregation to see. Well, they had an 86 year old volunteer named **Ellen** who would always write those cards out, and took special pride that they were all hand written. Apparently ours is the last one that Ellen wrote. It was just before Christmas when she passed away, and in a most unfortunate way. You may have heard about it on the news because she was hit by a car and pinned to a fence in St Leonards. She was just walking on the footpath when the driver – also an elderly lady – hit a bollard and then crashed into Ellen and the fence. She died on the scene.

This time we send a little extra love to our friends at the Kogarah Store House as they grieve for their friend, and fellow servant of the Lord.

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## Perth Visit

I went out to Perth for the weekend of March 17-19, and all went more or less according to plan. The flights ran on time, and got me there and back safely, even if the flight going out wasn't terribly comfortable. We had a class on Saturday morning, and I used the material from the class I'd given here on "Innocence," which was chosen because there have been a number of children born into the congregation out there in the last 2 years. We had a chance to look at the innocence of small children and compare it to the innocence of old age.

That evening there was pot luck dinner at Mary Smuts' home, and we looked at some passages from *Secrets of Heaven* about the memory. At first glance a class on memory can sound rather dull, at least it did to me, but when you consider the implications of the teachings on our life here and now, suddenly the memory became much more interesting. With the readings we had a good and lively discussion, and one participant stayed and talked about spirituality until 11pm that night.

The next day we had a Palm Sunday themed service since it would likely be the last service they have before Easter, along with Holy Supper, which was followed on with a pot luck lunch. Of particular note is that it would be the last service attended by **Moira Frost** who is set to move to South Africa shortly, so we had a farewell to her as part of the post-church activities. All told it was a good and worthwhile trip and I'm sure that we'll do it again sometime in the future.

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## Scouting Mission

Our good friend **Julian Duckworth** is intending to retire come May of 2018, and as such Roseville is currently looking for somebody to take over the reigns. One candidate is **Rev Howard Thompson**, who is currently the pastor in Colchester England, and Roseville is bringing him out to Sydney April 3-14 so that they can get to know him, and vice versa. He'll be accompanied by his wife **Debra** and their youngest son **Lance**.

I'm sure there will be some opportunities for you to meet them at some Roseville functions, so you may want to check out the Roseville newsletter if you want to get in on any of it.

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## Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **Todd Beiswenger** (3<sup>rd</sup>), **Donna Heldon** (5<sup>th</sup>) **Dylan Johnson** (7<sup>th</sup>), **Gaye Heldon** (15<sup>th</sup>), **Merv Kennedy** (17<sup>th</sup>), **Huiling Sun** (20<sup>th</sup>), **Kerry Horner** (22<sup>nd</sup>), **David Horner** (25<sup>th</sup>)

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