



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society September 2018

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Liberating Books from the Physical

by Owen Heldon.

Some of you may have heard of or be aware of the existence of the “**Basil Lazer Fund.**” Basil had a real love for the teachings of the New Church, and would often say to me, “If only we could get people to read Swedenborg’s Writings.” To help in this cause, he embarked on trying to make some of the topics in the Writings easier to access. He would take a particular topic, and then compile all the relevant quotes from the Writings and put them into a book.



After his passing, Basil left money to the church to assist in getting the Writings out there. One of the requirements specified by Basil Lazer in his bequest was that we should use some of the money to promote Swedenborg’s works using the books he (ie Basil) had written. It was back in 1996 that the Trustees at the time **Rev Ian Arnold, Rev Terry Schnarr** and **myself** decided to choose one of Basil’s books and give it a complete revamp to make it more attractive for use in outreach work. **David Gladish** was engaged to do an updated and more readable translation of the quotes from Swedenborg which form the main part of the text and **Donna Heldon** was contracted to design the layout and introduce illustrations in the reprinted book. At the time Donna was in her final year as a

Graphic Arts student at Wollongong University and one of the major tasks she had to do was to take a book through to publishing doing the layout, illustration and actual printing. A happy coincidence. book through to publishing doing the layout, illustration and actual printing. A happy coincidence.

We had several hundred of the books printed up, and have been faithfully giving them away to anybody who was interested for over 20 years now. We still have boxes of them here! But the world is steadily transitioning away from paper books, and there have been fewer opportunities to pass them on.

Well, sometime back in July I had a conversation with **Joe Vandermeer** the director of the Swedenborg Centre in Sydney in which he revealed he had been asked for a “digital copy” of Basil Lazer’s book *Temptations*. “Sure”, I said “I don’t think that should be a problem”. Initially it was thought we could easily satisfy this need with the creation of a pdf file from the original computer files which fortunately my daughter Donna still had. However we soon realised that this was going to be a much more involved and ultimately much more useful task as I will outline below.

First of all, although Donna had the original files they were created in a very old version of the publishing program QuarkXPress and she ran into problems with fonts which threw the alignment out for printing. The easiest way to correct this was to convert the files to Adobe Indesign. Problem One solved. Then it was discovered that there was keen interest among more than one group for the extraction of a text file that could be used in translation work into Chinese and possibly other languages. Fortunately Donna was also able to achieve that.

With the creation of a digital copy the book *Temptations* takes on a new lease of life. In the words of Joe Vandermeer it will “liberate this work from its physical printed version and launch it into the digital domain, because doing so creates many new uses and opportunities to activate its contents in the lives of more readers. Many thanks to them both (Donna and myself) and to the Basil Lazer Fund for allowing further distribution of this PDF for free”. The only restriction Joe has placed on the distribution of the digital files is that the copyright of Donna’s work is respected and that further distribution of the digital copy is free.

The translation work to Chinese will be done by **Guang Bin Liu** who is a (recently retired) Senior Lecturer in Human Physiology at The University of Southern Queensland. **Steve David** who runs the popular New Christian Bible Study Project hosted in Pittsburg USA newchristianbiblestudy.org is also keen to use the digital files and the book will appear on his website in due course.

I believe Basil would be delighted as he often distributed his books for free including to places like Africa. As I mentioned earlier, he often said to me “If only we could get people to read Swedenborg’s Writings,” and with this effort we are faithfully continuing his work. Finally with the renewed interest in *Temptations* the trustees of the Basil Lazer Fund are looking at the possibility of producing a revamped version of another of Basil’s books.

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Want to Study in Bryn Athyn?

While there is an Australian New Church College, there is something special about studying in Bryn Athyn USA. You won't find any other place in the world where there's a larger campus and more people studying the teachings for the New Church than in Bryn Athyn. Way back in 1981 a New Church Education Fund was established through a bequest by **Will White** to help people from Australia go to Bryn Athyn and study. The fund was primarily set up to assist with the travel expenses of getting there, and over the past 37 years we have given out money to 32 different people, with most of them receiving multiple grants. (The Education Fund has also provided funding for ministers to study at the New Church College in England.)

Most recently we granted some money to **Jordan Brunne** who will be attending at Bryn Athyn College for the first time. She just flew over there a few days ago and is embarking on a new adventure! If you find yourself or some one you know to be inspired to study at the College or the Academy High School, please send me an email to get in an application for the Education Fund. We'd love to help out!

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Tennis Court Resurfaced!

Over the past couple of years we have been debating what to do with the tennis court. The surface was wearing out, and overall the number of tennis players seemed to be decreasing. We seriously considered removing the tennis court and putting a granny-flat there as it would have provided an excellent return on our investment. However, after much deliberation we decided to repair the surface and hold off on adding structures to the property.



While the repairs bought us some time, they really weren't a long term solution. But slowly tennis business started to pick up as other courts were closed. No doubt that like us they were finding the land was worth a lot more than what tennis court hire fees were generating! However, we ultimately decided that we liked the service to the community that our court was providing, and since Graeme MacLeay had recently left the church some money in his will, we could use that to resurface the court.

It turned out to take a lot longer to get a quote, and actually get somebody to come out than expected, but when it finally came together it came together very quickly. We had agreed to proceed with Courtmaster in mid-July, and they were estimating that they'd be able to schedule us in for late August, to mid-September. However, the next call from them was that somebody else had cancelled and that they would like to come out in just two days time! So they did. The court was out of operation for a total of 8 days, which was a little longer than expected, but after the removal of the original surface we found that the foundation was in need of more repairs than anticipated.

Anyway, it is all done now. We had new posts and a new net installed as well, and because of all the sand that was put into the new turf, it looks a bit like a beach at the moment, but before long it will all settle in place and look really good. The players really like it as it provides a less slippery surface, with no tripping hazards and consistent bounce, albeit a slower one until the court really gets broken in.

Best of all is that we have even picked up a new social group that will be hiring the court on Wednesday mornings, and we encourage you to come out and have a hit sometime too!

Pancake Breakfast



For a change of pace and something new we decided to put on a pancake breakfast on the 19th of August. The idea was to have some social time *before* church instead of after, and since your pastor has what he thought was a pretty good buttermilk pancake recipe, it seemed logical to try the pastor's pancake skills on the congregation. Jenn cooked up some bacon, and did all the shopping so that there were plenty of topping options for the pancakes as well.

The results were quite tasty! We even managed to start church on time, which was a bit of a surprise to me. The whole thing went so well that we're contemplating when we will offer an encore performance, and wondering if it is something we want to offer on a regular basis. Maybe not even pancakes every time, but some sort of

church breakfast. Thanks to everybody who came out this last time and made this event a success!

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Spirit and Life Bible Study

One of the patterns I've seen repeated over and over in the New Church is the desire to create new brochures, pamphlets and other introductory materials for new comers. It seems that we think that we're only one new, correctly worded brochure from opening up a floodgate of new comers. What I often think we fail to do is to actually promote the materials that we already have. One example of this is Rev Dr Jonathan Rose's "Spirit and Life Bible Study." He did a live stream of these Bible Studies on Ustream, and what I noticed is that they weren't getting a lot of views. As an experiment, just over a year ago I downloaded one of those videos and uploaded it to my Youtube channel to see if it would get any views. I didn't do any special editing, or promotion, I just uploaded it and let it fly.

A month or so ago I decided to check in on that video to see how it was performing. Much to my surprise it had over 60 views, and most impressively the number of views seemed to be increasing every month. I've seen plenty of YouTube videos uploaded, get some initial views, but then die off. Well, with this bit of data I decided it was worth putting more effort into getting this material onto Youtube. I've contacted Jonathan and with his blessing I've created a Youtube channel titled, "Spirit and Life Bible Study." The plan is that I'll upload a video or two a week – there are over 300 of them! - so that viewers get the sense that there is a stream of new content, and having regular uploads will help with our rankings on Youtube. In addition I'll actually put some effort into these

uploads and add thumbnail pictures, search terms, a description and some other bits to help make them come off a bit more professional and easier to find.

But we could use your help! And it won't cost you a cent! What we need are subscribers, "likes" on the videos, and watch time on the videos. Basically the more people watch the videos, the better our rankings are. You don't even have to actually watch or listen to the video, but if you would just let it play in the background it would give the channel the watch time we need. Then click on the "thumbs up" icon and subscribe to the channel and we've got a win! Eventually if we get enough people doing this, Youtube will funnel more traffic our way which will hopefully lead to people around the world being exposed to New Church teachings.

So please give it a go! Just go to www.youtube.com, and search "Spirit and Life Bible Study." You'll see a picture of Jonathan Rose that will take you to the channel with the 12+ videos I've already uploaded to get the initiative going. Then start subscribing, viewing and liking! Thanks!

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Induction of Rev Howard Thompson

Rev. Howard Thompson, his wife Debra, and their youngest son Lance arrived in Sydney as planned on the morning of August 15th. They've been busy meeting new people and settling in as best they can the past few days. We got to see them for a bit on Saturday evening, and eventually hope that they can come down to Hurstville some time to socialize with folks down here. He's still not officially the Roseville minister yet, as the official induction happens on the 2nd of September. Their secretary, Graham Hall sent out the following invite to the induction ceremony:

The members of the Sydney Society of the New Church warmly invite all members and friends, wherever you may be, to come to the induction of Rev. Howard Thompson as our new Minister. The service will take place at the church, 2B Shirley Road, Roseville, at 10.00 AM on Sunday 2 September. It will be conducted by Rev. David Moffat, President of the New Church in Australia. There will be a lunch afterwards.

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Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **Owen Heldon** (6th), **Carolyn Heldon** (8th), **Klaire Horner** (9th), **Liam Johnson** (10th), **Sylvia Hicks** (13th), **Karen Evans** (13th), **Jeffrey Heldon** (15th), **Phillipa Horner** (15th), **Phillip Walsh** (29th).

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