



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society February 2020

Contents

[Adelaide New Church Retreat Review](#)

[How Does A Winter Retreat Sound?](#)

[Quarterly Working Bee](#)

[Spirit & Life Bible Study Update](#)

[Back to Basics Bible Study](#)

[Spiritual Growth Journey Program About to Start](#)

[General Church Retreat, formerly General Church Assembly](#)

[Birthdays](#)

Adelaide New Church Retreat Review



Revs Dick Keyworth, Julian Duckworth, Howard Thompson, Todd Beiswenger,
Ros Taylor, David Millar, Jane Seibert

As has been our tradition, New Church people from across Australia gathered in January again for our annual retreat. This year's location was the Nunyara Conference Centre located in the hills south of Adelaide and with an excellent view of the city less than 10km away.

The first challenge for many of those attending, particularly those from NSW, was just getting to Nunyara. Many of those attending drove to the retreat which took them straight through some of the more devastated areas of the fire-ravaged southeast. Fortunately no one put their lives at risk but many reported long stretches of thick smoke, burned out structures and even dead wildlife lining the route. However, once through the worst of it, Adelaide was a welcome respite for those in our group who have been suffering through frequent days of choking smoke from the many fires burning around QLD, NSW and VIC. While at Nunyara we only experienced one day of smoke, likely from the fires burning on Kangaroo Island.

Once safely in place at Nunyara the whole crew fell quickly into the retreat routine; breakfast, morning worship, age-specific classes and an all-ages plenary session immediately preceding lunch. Sessions were led by our usual compliment of ministers along with a few special guests including **Rev. Ros Taylor**, **Rev. Jane Seibert** (President of the Swedenborgian Church of North America aka General Convention) and **Rev. Dick Keyworth** from New Zealand.

One of the nice aspects of these retreats is that they allow for a different style of presentation and discussion than a typical church worship service. As a result it also opens up different topics to talk about. For example, **Dick Keyworth** gave a talk about climate

change from a doctrinal point of view. One point he was making was that whether you see climate change as real or not, man-made or just a natural cycle, it is doctrinally sound to be good stewards of the planet. But also that we need to take a good look at ourselves, and instead of focusing on problems external to ourselves, we need to be as vigilant on our own personal “climate” and ecosystem as we would like people to be about our planet.

Julian Duckworth gave a talk about the sense of smell. Now, Julian takes great pride in the fact that he does not use technology in his presentations, so in his quirky style he engaged the audience through a myriad of props to demonstrate how our sense of smell corresponds to spiritual perception.

Todd Beiswenger’s talk was on the dangers of social conformity. The Lord calls us to be his “chosen people,” but often we just want to be like everybody else. In this presentation we got to see a number of social experiments that demonstrate just how easily we are manipulated by others around us. It was shocking to see how people conformed to the group, even when they knew that the group was wrong.

Howard Thompson gave us a look at the development of conscience. His focus was on the importance of making decisions. If we don’t make a decision to do or not do something, then we really aren’t developing our conscience. We desperately need a true conscience from the Lord, but like everything else in our spiritual path, a true conscience comes from a process. Make decisions, evaluate the outcome, try again.

Jane Siebert gave a talk about Helen Keller, which included a brief history of her life. If you’re not familiar with Helen Keller, she became deaf and blind from an illness at 19 months old. Her story is one of personal triumph over tragedy, but readers of Swedenborg appreciate that this influential woman described the Writings as “a light in my darkness.” As such, Jane reported that the Convention New Church is setting up a Helen Keller information centre attached to one of their churches in the USA.

Afternoons were noticeably less structured and each day people chose from the various activities including Zumba, creative doodling, a demonstration of how a Logopraxis group runs, a talk on Bush Art and how it can help us see the Divine in nature, and many more talks and activities. And, some times we just sat on the porch and talked.

One of our offered afternoon activities was Choir. This was not drop-in choir, participation required a full commitment to rehearsing every day of the week. But what a reward in the end. 17 attendees stepped up to be part of the choir and, ably led by **Rev. Julian Duckworth** the choir learned 4 songs including a brand new piece written and arranged by Julian; “Live Your Word.” What a treat for those of us who were not in the choir but I suspect the real joy came to those who did.

Lastly, no camp or retreat can ever happen without the tireless effort of those who volunteer their time to organise the event. Planning for the event usually starts 18 months out, which means that each year we gather at camp, the organising committee has already been working on the next year’s event for 6 months. This includes especially **Carolyn Heldon**, **Chris Kendrick** and **Rev. David Millar** (responsible for scheduling and organising the clergy).

[top](#)

How Does A Winter Retreat Sound?

For as much as many of us have enjoyed the opportunity to attend the annual church retreats that run in January, a decision has been made to NOT have a retreat in January 2021. Fret not good friends, this does not mean that there won't be a retreat at all in 2021, but rather the plan is for it to happen during the winter.

There are a few reasons for this. First, it's just getting harder and harder to actually book a retreat venue in January. Other organizations are making a yearly booking to return to the same venue, which makes it difficult for us to get in when we change venues every year. Second, there are some who just can't come during January for work or family reasons, so this will give some different people a chance to attend.

Third, there's just a feeling that it's time for a change. Quite honestly this retreat was the lowest attended retreat in years, and while we feel that there are several reasons for this, we also think that shaking things up a bit might help. Might not. But we'll soon find out.

That said, we also could use some help in organizing the next retreat. The NCIA board has carried the load the last few years, and it would be great if somebody else would be willing and interested in stepping up and helping out. Of course you'd still have the support of those who've done it before, and we do expect this to be a team effort... you really don't want to do this on your own. But if you can put together a dream team, feel free to be the lead dog and organize the next retreat.

[top](#)

Quarterly Working Bee

Having you seen our newly landscaped gardens, yet? They're gorgeous! -And having had that done greatly reduces the amount of work we need to put into the gardens, at least at this point. Nevertheless, the front of the church property was not included in that project, and a few tweaks need to be made down below as well. Please join us after church on **Sunday, Feb 2** for our quarterly working bee and pizza. Many hands make light work!

[top](#)

Spirit & Life Bible Study Update

For the past 18 months or so I've been working on uploading **Rev Dr Jonathan Rose's** Bible studies to Youtube. You may recall that they were originally live streamed on "ustream," but since nobody knows about that platform I decided to slowly move them over to Youtube at a rate of one per week. Currently there are 75 videos uploaded out of 342 that he created. So we're not even 25% of the way there!

However, the good news is that at the end of November we received a \$2,000 USD donation to put towards advertising the channel. I picked five videos to advertise, and the

ad would come up only if somebody searched the term “bible study” while on Youtube. If they do that, then in theory one of the five ads would appear at the side. If the person is interested, they click on it and watch.

So far the results have been good. Views on the channel are up from around 700 per month to about 2,800 per month. Subscribers have gone from about 6 per month to 31, and at this moment we’re up to 165 subscribers. As expected we get some “dislikes” and comments from folks who are disagreeing as well, but that’s just the way it seems to go when you put yourself out there by advertising. The cost for this has been around \$120 USD for running the ads during December and January.

Anyway, the main reason I like to update you on the things happening on Youtube is that it’s an area where we’re seeing some success. Church attendance may not be what we’d like, but that doesn’t mean that there aren’t people who are interested. The Lord tells us that the harvest is abundant, so we know they’re out there! We just have to reach them in any way we can.

[top](#)

Back to Basics Bible Study

Speaking of Bible study, David Moffat sent out the following via email:

I currently have a small core of people wanting to start a Bible study group, and I’m wondering if anyone else is interested?

This is a geographically dispersed group, and so we would be using social media, meeting face to face via skype or similar, attendance at meetings would have to be optional, given the time zones we’re already spread across, but I’d hope to record them for viewing later.

It would also be a back-to-basics group – we’re going to begin with understanding the literal text, especially for those unfamiliar with the Bible. Correspondences may come later. It will also rely upon participants taking the time and responsibility to do their own Bible reading.

If you are interested, send an email to David at:

new-church@googlegroups.com.

[top](#)

Spiritual Growth/Journey Program About to Start

We advertised this in last month’s newsletter, but just a reminder that on **February 2nd** we’ll be starting the “**Growing Through Challenges**” program. This four-week program explores the Biblical story of Gideon, a young man who was called on by the Lord to overcome many challenges. Through his example of patience, hard work, and faith, we too possess the tools to come out stronger on the other side. Discussion groups will be on Monday nights at 7:30pm. There’s no cost to join in, so come along!

[top](#)

General Church Retreat, formerly General Church Assembly

Notice a pattern here? More and more church events are changing their names to a “retreat.” Here’s the most recent release of information for the GC Retreat that will be happening in Bryn Athyn during June 18-21.

Momentum is building for the General Church Retreat 2020. On offer is an affordable and rich program for adults and children, showcasing what the Church is striving to do to carry forward the mission of the New Church. Main sessions are coming into focus. Each main session will include interactive presentations by multiple people within a specific theme. It might be helpful to think of a TED Talk format, with opportunities to ask questions and explore the theme with others in attendance. We are truly blessed by the ways key partners have stepped up to anchor an amazing children’s and youth program including a variety of popular camps and experiences. You are warmly invited. We encourage you to talk with your family and friends about attending this GC Retreat.

We are excited to be able to offer fees for registration well below actual costs. While we will be asking for freewill offerings to offset General Church underwriting, the goal is to make this Retreat affordable for all.

- **Adult (Ages 18+)** **\$50** Price will increase to \$75 April 1
- **Adult Saturday only (18+)** **\$20** Price will increase to \$30 April 1
- **Youth (11- 18 yrs)** **\$50** Price will increase to \$75 April 1
- **Children's (0-10 yrs)** **\$50** Price will increase to \$75 April 1

Please note a few of the Adult creative workshops may incur a fee per participant for materials and will be in addition to the above rates.

On-campus housing is available in Bryn Athyn College Cottages and Suites for a fee of \$50 per person per night. Retreat attendees are welcome to stay off-campus with family, friends, or alternate accommodation. Retreat attendees may purchase individual meal tickets to dine in the on-campus dining hall. For the Friday June 19 picnic, it will be a boxed dinner.

- Adult- Breakfast \$6.00/ Lunch \$14.50 / Dinner \$16.00
- Children- Breakfast \$6.00 / Lunch \$10.00/ Dinner \$12.00

More info is available on www.newchurch.org.

Registrations will open online on February 17, 2020.

[top](#)

Birthdays

January: Margaret Heldon (9th), Kerry Lockhart (24th), , Kaye Macfarlane (30th)

February: John Hicks (9th) and Mike Lockhart (11th)

[top](#)

