



## **The New Church Newsletter**

**Hurstville Society March 2021**

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## **The Butterfly Effect**

by Rev Todd Beiswenger

Perhaps you're familiar with the idea of the "butterfly effect?" Basically it is the idea that a butterfly flaps its wings in China, setting into motion a chain of events that causes a drought busting rain storm on the other side of the world. It's illustrating for us how even the smallest things can make a big difference. In the New Church we would just call it "Divine Providence," and say that "Providence is in the least of things." However, "butterfly effect" brings to mind some good imagery which may help us understand Providence better. I think this is a really important concept for us to hang on to because in my experience people often struggle with feeling like they're not making a difference. The Writings tell us that we don't often get to see the Providence in action, but recently I got a glimpse of it... here's my story...

About six months ago I had this great idea. I would buy a pallet of radio controlled trucks and sell them online. The idea came about because for Christmas 2019 I bought a couple for Zach and I, and I had a hard time getting them. So I thought I'd buy a bunch, sell them on eBay and Amazon, and make a few bucks to pay for my new radio truck habit. When they arrived there were 4 trucks in a case, and I had 26 cases, all of which I stored in our empty guest room in the basement. They've been selling reasonably well, and so I've got this pile of empty boxes in my basement that I've done nothing with. I didn't really want to recycle them because they're a heavy cardboard, and really a good size for somebody who is moving.

But a couple weeks ago a situation evolved where a friend from out of town needed a place to stay. She was coming from out of town, and her original plan for accommodations had fallen through, so Jenn and I offered up the guest room. I figured we could move things around downstairs in order to free up the room, and help out somebody else in the process. So part of what needed to happen was to make all of those empty boxes go away. I put an ad on Gumtree stating, "Free Moving Boxes," figuring that would do the job.

Sure enough, a day later a woman contacts me and makes arrangements to pick them up the next day after school drop off. In between, three others contact me for them, but I say that they're spoken for at this time. The next day the woman fails to pick them up, and says she's too busy and to just give them to the next person in line. Ok, so I contact the others... and I get no response. The next day I get to my computer and I've got another inquiry. I respond almost immediately, but hear nothing back. Then a couple hours later another woman inquires, and she shows up about an hour later to pick them up.

She greets Jenn at the door, and noticing the church next door she says, "Are you affiliated with the church next door?" Jenn replies, "Yes."

"I'm a Christian too," the woman says. And then she proceeds to tell the story of her day. Apparently she and her husband have been out of work for the past year. They've been contemplating moving to the Central Coast where things are cheaper, but haven't been sure

about it because they still think that their prospects for finding work are better here. While dealing with these conflicting thoughts, she turned to the Lord and said a prayer.

“Lord, I need a sign. A really clear sign . If I need to move to the Central Coast, let me find the boxes I need for moving for free, and let them be local.” She hops on Gumtree and my ad is the first thing she finds, and it’s everything she’s asked for. Boxes that are free and local. Of course, she only finds the ad because the first woman got busy and didn’t pick them up, and for some reason the others never followed through. You can imagine her amazement when not only does she find the boxes, but finds that the boxes are from a pastor! “The sign doesn’t get more clear than that!” So with much thanks and clarity of mind and direction, off she went to pack her home and head up to the Central Coast.

I was telling this story to our guest, because she’s an important link in this chain and it isn’t all that often that we have a chance to see Divine Providence in action. Without her showing up, I don’t get rid of the boxes, and that woman doesn’t move to the central coast. (Well, maybe the Lord could have found her boxes somewhere else.) I thought it good for our guest to see how her actions played a part in the butterfly effect known as Providence. What did she do, you may ask? Because it’s not like she set out to do good to others by coming to Sydney. As I see it, if I didn’t think she was a good person, I wouldn’t have invited her to stay with us. So just by virtue of her being a good human being, I invited her into our home and it allowed these events to precipitate, and for Providence to continue along.

Since then I’ve been reflecting on this chain of events, and what it really means to be a “servant of the Lord.” I think when we say “servant” it conjures up all sorts of unpleasant images of servitude. I think of Cinderella slaving away at the hands of the evil stepmother. It’s the servant that has to do the dirty jobs, it’s the servant that has to do the work, it’s the servant who is the lowest on the totem pole. But we need to realize that being a “servant” of the Lord is different.

I’ve enjoyed having our guest, and I’ve enjoyed being able to help somebody else with something as simple as giving away something I didn’t want or need. So because it wasn’t hard to do those things, I’ve not really felt like a “servant” in a more traditional, Cinderella-y, sense. I guess that’s what Jesus means when He says His yoke is easy and His burden light. It doesn’t always require pain and unpleasant sacrifice to be a servant and to make a positive impact on somebody else’s life. Maybe we don’t always really have to try that hard to make a difference, because the Lord in His Providence has all the right opportunities lined up for us. We just have to be ourselves. He’ll make the good things happen and if we’re lucky, every now and again He’ll give us a glimpse into how the seemingly insignificant flapping of our wings has created a great bounty for somebody else.

## Harvest Service & Pot Luck Lunch

Speaking of a great bounty... as has become our custom over the last few years, we're going to combine a harvest celebration with the conclusion of our spiritual growth program. The last week of the "Living Courageously" program is described as, "Feel the strength of coming from your convictions when they are grounded in God's word. Allow God's promises to work miracles in your life."

I think this ties in nicely to harvest because while we will be having a pot luck lunch to give thanks for the blessings the Lord has given us, we will also be taking **a collection for Kogarah Storehouse**. Some of the miracles we've seen in the program revolve around food, from being fed by ravens to getting unlimited food from a widow who has very little. From these small amounts of food, miracles happen. Likewise our collections may feel like a little, but the Lord is assuring us that He will perform miracles out of whatever it is that we give.

So give what you can, and **bring some food to share** with your church friends for **lunch on Sunday March 21<sup>st</sup>**. We hope to see you there.

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## Step Up to Clean Up

While pitching in to clean up our environment *any* day of the year is stellar, **Sunday March 7<sup>th</sup> is Clean Up Australia Day** – an opportunity for people to put in a concerted effort and clean up together. You're invited to step up to clean up prior to our worship service that day: come on over to the church at **8:30am** where there will be rubbish bags and some gloves (bring your own if you've got them), then we'll head out along various streets to pick up kerb-side & nature strip litter, returning to the church in time for the 10am service. Everyone's welcome, bring a friend if you can!

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## Virtual Women's Weekend March 12-14

We'll be having another virtual women's weekend on March 12th-14th; depending on COVID distancing restrictions at the time, ladies are encouraged to get together with others in their area, as well. We'll have a guest speaker chatting with us about Stephen Ministry, a 'virtual cook day' to benefit the neighbour, an evening of mindfulness & meditation and opportunities for good old-fashioned hangin' out, too. For more information or to join the fray please contact Jenn Beiswenger (jenn@beiswenger.net).

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## Pastoral Moves

This year has been a big one for clergy moves in the General Church. There have been changes in the pastoral staffs at Tucson, Oak Arbor, Boynton Beach, Atlanta, London, Colchester, Pittsburgh, Toronto, Kitchener and Bryn Athyn. And things may not be done yet as some of these congregations are still in process to find their next pastor or assistant pastor. Suffice it to say our Bishops have been busy trying to sort all of this out! While my

name has come up to fill some of these spots by virtue of me being here nearly nine years, I can assure you though that I won't be moving.

That said, I thought I'd mention one pastor on the move who has had a connection to Hurstville. **Rev Grant Odhner** is moving on from teaching at the Theological school to take up the spot in London England. It is the home congregation for **Grant's wife, Sarah**, so I'm sure that will be a fun adventure for them.

On this same line of discussion, a few months ago I mentioned that **Glenn** and **Mary Alden** were heading to Beucleuch South Africa. Well, with international travel being what it is these days, it has taken them a while to actually get there, but they have finally arrived.

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### **A Deeper Dive into Easter Symbolism**

You may recall that there's a place in the Easter story where a Roman Centurion pierced the side of Jesus with his spear. Blood and water came out. It's a detail of the story that I've never really spent much time with, but what does it mean?

To set the scene a bit, we have to recall that at this point in the story not only is Jesus dead, but the Romans know He's dead. We know the Romans know this because the soldiers were about to break the legs of the other two men being crucified to hasten their deaths. However, they weren't about to break Jesus's legs, which means they were convinced that Jesus was in fact dead. There was no doubt. Then the Scripture says, "But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out" (John 19:34). It seems odd that a soldier would do this as a means to confirm that Jesus was dead, because you'd think they'd just break His legs like the others if there was any doubt.

Well, as always the real answer for this curious behaviour is found in understanding the symbolism of the events. We know that symbolically the murder of Jesus was about how we murder spiritual truths in our lives. We convince ourselves of things that just aren't true. Things like there is no God, no life after death, etc. Once we feel we've been victorious over those thoughts we can't help but take one last jab at the body of Jesus; it is a display of our disdain for the truth. While evil feels like it has a complete victory, what is hidden is that some truth is still saved. The bones that weren't broken are a symbol of foundational truths. Teachings taken from the literal sense of the Word that manage to survive. It may seem like nothing that the soldiers pierced His side instead of breaking His bones, but the Writings tell us otherwise, that it is a big deal. These truths that survive are the basis for maintaining some order in our lives, and serve as a foundation for potential future spiritual growth.

I kind of see this as similar to the Noah's ark story, where sometimes there's a reset in our minds, but still something good survives. No matter how bad things get, the Lord does put limits on the destruction we can do. I think that can be a somewhat comforting message for us, because there are certainly times when it seems that evil has all the advantage, and the Lord still manages to hold us back from completely destroying everything. We just can't kill God.

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### **New Christian Bible Study Website Update**

Here's a brief roundup of NC Bible Study news:

1. It looks like we've just set a new "personal best" for traffic, with 416,000 visits in the last 30 days. That's pretty nice! Getting close to the 5 million/year threshold, which would be fun to hit. We've been working on load speed, and things that will keep improving indexing and page ranking with Google, Bing, and other search engines.

2. We've imported the New Century Edition's translations of "[White Horse](#)", "[Last Judgment](#)", "[New Jerusalem](#)", and "[Other Planets](#)". These include more than 500 footnotes from the NCE team, providing lots of context and useful cross-links. Plus, the links to all the references to the Word and cross-references to the Arcana Coelestia and other works!
3. We've been working with Peter Devassy, in India, to mark up and import his translations of the Writings into Malayalam.
4. In Korea, Gyu Dae Yang's been working on a Genesis commentary, and we've been getting help from Korean speakers to get it ready for importing into the NCBS system.
5. On the Explain the Word in 2020 push... we didn't make it, but 2021 is a whole new year, and hope springs eternal. We have some [new Psalms explanations](#) from Julian Duckworth.

All in all, 2020 was a good year for the project, and the stage is set for an even better 2021. We think this is one of the key things that the New Church can do, right now, to be working in the stream of Providence. Lots of people help, and the system's set up to run on crowd-sourcing, so there's plenty of room for more! Hope you like it, and stay in touch!

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### **Birthdays**

Happy Birthday to **Debbie Walsh** (7<sup>th</sup>), **Graham Horner** (12<sup>th</sup>), **Edward Horner** (18<sup>th</sup>)

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