

News & Notes January 2025

No Church December 29th, January 5th and 26th & January Garden Services

At our last society meeting we decided to take a break from our regular services, and so we'll be closed on the 29th of December, and 5th of January, resuming on the 12th of January. As it is the first service of the new year, we will have a Holy Supper afterwards. Just as in years past, I will plan out the 12th and 19th as outdoor services in our garden, provided that the weather permits. On the 26th of January, we won't have church service either.

NCIA 2025 Retreat

I don't have anything whatsoever to compare this Retreat with the ones in the past, as it will be my first NCIA Retreat. And yet, there, I heard, will be one big change: No plenary sessions. I can't tell what difference it will make, but I have a sense that the sessions will be more geared towards life-applicable discussion for our New Church faith.

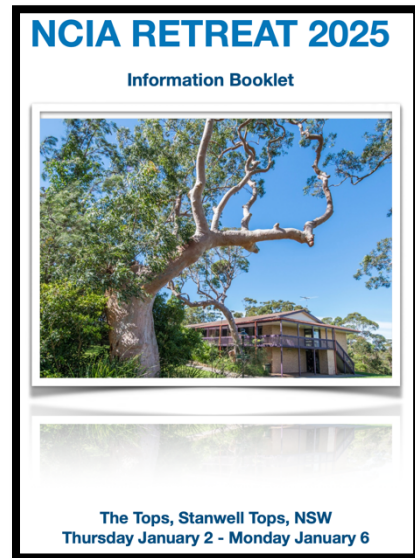
My hope is that this gathering can remind us of our root in the New Church faith and rejuvenate our affections for it. In our repeated daily business of making another day, we sometimes can feel that we are drifting away just as the world, or our daily momentum carries us away. And yet, we know that it is when we find something touching and meaningful that somehow talks to our faith and our hearts that we feel still connected to or walking in the life of our faith. Otherwise, we could easily feel lost and get caught up in thoughts like "why would we bother to go to church or be still part of it?" Our gathering at the Camp can give us an opportunity to think about what the Lord offers and provides through the teachings of the New Church, as we affirmatively choose to live by them.

Speaking for myself, I very much look forward to what I can learn and take from the Camp, as well as new friendships I will be making there. I am sure I will have more to share in our next Newsletter once we are back.

Spiritual Growth/Journey Program – The Path to Integrity (Joseph's Story) - Starting February 2, 2025

A little bit of background might be helpful. We have used this Journey Program about 12 years ago. Actually, it was Todd's first journey program that he has ever led here, and it will be my first one too. The reason I chose this one was because I have wanted to do a series sermon on Joseph's story. Even if a small group were not available, I could still use the program for 7-week series on the story. The turn-out is better, because we will have our small group going on as well. As many of you know, Journey program is in twofold. We will have 7-week series sermon on the Journey Program of choice, followed by small group at 11:00am in Baringa on following Thursdays beginning on the 6th of February. Here's the official description from the book:

It is amazing to remember how much goes on within us at every moment. If you will, please put a hand over your heart and wait. What do you notice? You may feel the steady beating.



You may even find yourself breathing more deeply, or feeling more peaceful. This small gesture of hand-over-heart can center us and help us reconnect with what's within.

This program is designed to help us do that in a lasting way. It involves getting in touch with our higher nature so that we remember who we really are. It is an ongoing process, but once we have experienced what it feels like to get in touch, we will know when we are on the path of integrity and when we have stepped off. When we walk the path, we are authentic, and our words and actions bless others.

Being in touch with our higher nature means being connected to God. That is because our higher nature is made in the image of God: radiant, wise, loving and whole. That wholeness is the source of our integrity. When we act from this place, our inside and outside align, creating a strength of character that can withstand the toughest pressure.

When we lose touch with God, though, everything breaks apart. Unfortunately, this happens all the time. As we disintegrate, conflict breaks out on every scale: between countries, groups and within families. Around us we see the shattered pieces of broken agreements, broken homes and broken hearts. This brokenness, though, can heal. As we learn to reconnect with God, we step back on the path toward wholeness and integrity.

By looking at ourselves honestly and making positive changes, we participate in this healing.

Here is how 7-week looks like: Week 1: Listen to Your Dream. Week 2: Drop the Distractions. Week 3: Create Positive Experiences. Week 4: Ask for Help. Week 5: Take Responsibility. Week 6: Have Compassion. Week 7: Celebrate the Blessings. I hope we all can participate in this Journey Program in our own ways.

2024 – Year in Review

In 2024, we have seen a couple of major events like my ordination service into the second degree in September and the farewell to the Beiswengers just a few weeks ago. I personally very much appreciated them. One big take away for me in the past months of crossover with Todd was that I could pull myself back a little bit and put myself as a member of the congregation. As we know, Todd and I did back-to-back preachings alternating, and one of the benefits of me sitting in the pews was that I was able to be a participant in the worship services, not as a preacher or pastor. This has allowed me to see how important it is to cultivate worship atmosphere. We come to church so that we can be in a different space where we can focus on what goes on inside of us, be in a prayerful mind, and allow for thoughts and affections that the Lord and His Word moves. Besides, our bigger gatherings at those two services taught me how wonderful it is to gather as a community.

As I am just coming in, there aren't many changes for us to see for the time being, except for a new church website I will be working on, which also will take at least some months. Meantime, I want to concentrate on our Sunday services and things that we have committed to so far. I want to get to know more and better of the Hurstville Society community as well as the members around, too.

