



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society February 2025

The Role of the Priesthood

By Rev HyunJin Yang

Who are ministers? What do they do? It is a bewildering question because the one who is raising these questions here is one of them, myself. But I think these are crucial questions for a minister to ask for himself, but also for anyone in the church or any church. The balanced understanding of the priesthood will set a right and healthier boundary and proper expectations for a minister himself and for his congregation. It will help foster a shared sense, where a minister doesn't claim authority that isn't his, and the congregation or a congregant doesn't overly idealize him, and so on. The issues that are sprung from the misunderstanding of the role of the priesthood can be very

destructive and manipulative. The teachings for the New Church have numerous things to say about it.

But here in the article my goal is to present my understanding of what the balanced role of it is. The bottom-line is that the priesthood is a body of ministers who are called to the various and essential uses for the church especially in teaching and leading people to the Lord, His Word, and the ways to salvation. Direct teachings on the subject can be found in *The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine*. To quote some of them below:

The governors people have in charge of affairs which relate to heaven, that is, church affairs, are called priests, and their office is the priesthood. [...] As for priests, their duty is to teach people the way to heaven, and also to guide them. They must teach them in accordance with the teaching their church derives from the Word, and guide them to live in accordance with it. [...] Priests must be given status and honours because of their sacred functions. [...] Priests are in charge of affairs concerning God's law and worship. (The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine 314, 315, 317, 319 – Chadwick)

Everything said above is directly quoted, and the passages by themselves seem to impose a great deal of importance on the priesthood in the matters of church affairs. Yes. Its duty and the sacred functions are essential as they are the specifically ordained function to help, teach, and lead people towards the ways to find the Lord and salvation in Him. These are important and even vital. But the priesthood of this vested importance also obliges a minister or a clergy with another commitment. We are told that they must not ascribe the honours to themselves, and that if they do, they are taking away what is the Lord's from Him. We read,

But those of priests who are wise ascribe the honours to the Lord from whom what is holy comes, and not to themselves. Priests, however, who are unwise attribute the honours to themselves, and so take them away from the Lord. (NJHD 317 – Chadwick)

In my own term, a minister or a pastor is simply a servant who is appointed to the work and duty so that they can facilitate the Lord's work in building His Church on earth and work for the uses of the church in a professional manner. I want to emphasize the word "servant" and imagine the semantic implication of it. I included it in my declaration of faith, which I read before the congregation about four months ago. Here I quote a piece of it.

I believe that the priestly duty lies in teaching people the way to heaven and also guiding them (AC 10794). I believe that it is my duty, in the faith I hold, that I shall perform the work of the ministry sincerely, justly, and faithfully. And I acknowledge that a priest's duty is not simply a matter of external performance but also of his daily life of going to the Lord and shunning evils as sins against Him. In this way he is affected with a desire for the salvation of souls (See Charity 160). And yet, I believe that everyone is taught and led by the Lord alone and that the work of salvation of people's souls solely belongs to the Lord (See Divine Providence 172:6, Arcana Coelestia 10795-10796). This sacred work belongs to Him only. I confess that I am just nothing but one of myriad instruments through which He brings it out.

To this I am further adding:

Priests must not claim for themselves any power over people's souls, because they do not know the condition of a person's interiors. Much less must they claim the power of opening or closing heaven, since the Lord alone has that power. (NJHD 316 – Chadwick)

This is written in addressing and against critical issues that Christianity has brought to itself by misinterpreting and corrupting the role of the priesthood to pander to their love of dominion and self-interests. The historical details should be saved for later. But the simple point we can draw here in the bigger grasp of what has been said and discussed about the subject is that a minister's role is limited to teaching and leading people to the ways to the church, heaven, and thus the Lord. He is unable and incapable beyond that. He cannot and thus must not be nor seen as any form of a saviour or as one who is spiritually superior in any possible manners. It can only be said that “particular form of enlightenment and instruction” is given to the clergy (True Christian Religion 146 – Chadwick).

To sum, the simple truth is that the Lord alone has the saving power of our souls. We read, “Besides Me there is no saviour” (Isaiah 43:11; See also Isaiah 45:21-22; Hosea 13:4; Jeremiah 50:34). By the same token, we are told that we are taught and led by the Lord alone, though, in appearance it seems that it is us who teach and lead ourselves (DP 154). The Lord leads and teaches us by influx and enlightenment, and also by the agency of others (DP 154:3, 172). Thus, the Lord and His Word is the only One Whom we ought to go to.

Back to the role of the priesthood. The above doesn't do away with the necessity of the function of the priesthood in teaching and leading people to the ways to heaven. The healthy and balanced understanding can be found in our recognition that the office of the priesthood is ordained by the Lord for that specific and special use and function. But again, a minister is a mere servant who helps and facilitates, in his own capabilities and limitations, the work of the Lord in building His Church on earth.

NCIA Retreat 2025 Review



We had NCIA Retreat 2025 from Thursday January 2nd through Monday January 6th at Stanwell Tops, NSW. It was well attended by about 50 attendants, with the number of them being slightly different each night. Here are some positive words from participants for the Camp: “informative”, “strongly practical”, “variety of the contents”, “relatable”, “room for participation” among many others. Speaking for the variety of the contents, we had sessions on Stoicism, Aladdin, and Tao of Pooh, not to

mention discussions and small groups for more direct teachings for the New Church.

Some others, including myself, much appreciated the kid sessions in the mornings that Julian led not only for the contents but also for the fact that kids had programs set aside for them. The camp was also featured with a variety of outdoor activities such as bottle rockets, go-cart racing, archery, and swimming in the on-site pool. In the evenings, we had various social time, including evening games that turned the main floor into our own little amusement park for the most unexpected moments for fun and ingenious laughter.

Personally, I loved the Retreat! The sessions and activities were great and inspiring. What I loved the most, though, was the interaction I had with the people. Getting to know about people more closely and being able to share what falls on the path of living in the same faith we have struck me as a unique opportunity that only such an occasion like this could offer.

In my own eyes the Retreat was a big success. In fact, with the majority of favouring it, the next Retreat for 2026 has been decided and planned to take place **15th-19th January 2026 at Alexandra Park Conference Centre, on the Sunshine Coast, QLD**. Save the date!

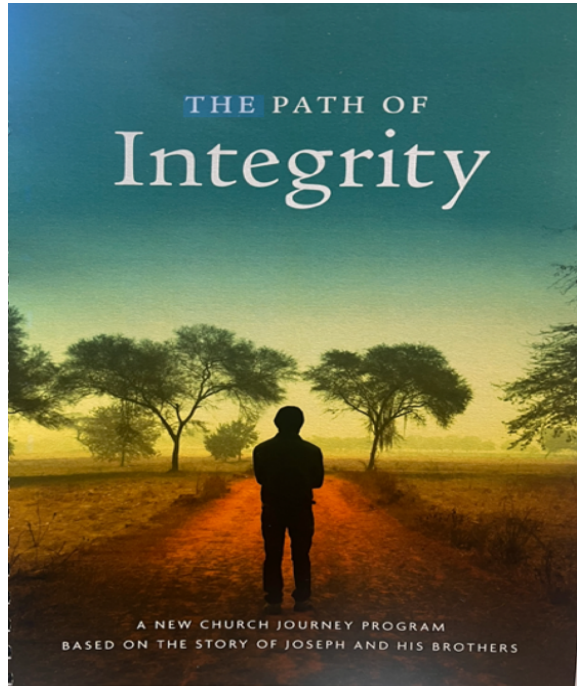
Journey Program

This is a final reminder for the Journey Program. We will have *The Path of Integrity* Journey Program for 7 weeks starting on the 2nd of February. The program will cover Joseph's story from Genesis chapter 37 through 45 skipping 38, and 48. It has three components:

- 1) Weekly Worship (Each Sunday)
- 2) Daily Reading (Daily)
- 3) Small Groups (Thursdays)

Each Sunday for the seven weeks will focus on Joseph's story in the theme of the path of integrity.

For daily reading, we have a workbook that will guide us with a daily reading portion and provide a self-study guide and questions to work with. In short, the workbook has every instruction needed. Just open it and follow along! Don't have the workbook with you? Let me know. I can simply print a copy out for your pick-up. It can be mailed to you if needed.



As for our small groups, we will meet at Baringa on Thursdays, beginning on the 6th of February for 7 weeks. Come at ease. Weekly worship and daily reading will naturally prepare us. We will read the story, follow the questions, and share our thoughts and useful insights that arise in come to our minds.

For myself, this 7-week journey can be a wonderful opportunity to dive into Joseph's story, one of the most uplifting stories in the

Word or the Scripture. For all of us, it won't be just going to the church, sitting and listening. This program is for our lively participation in the story itself. We are invited to dream like Joseph, stay positive in our struggle and as forgiving as Joseph, and proper like Joseph. This can be our daily practice for the 7 weeks. Come join!

In Loving memory of Gretchen W. Schnarr.

Gretchen Schnarr passed into the spiritual world on the 21st of January 2025. She was a wonderful and useful friend to the Church and wider community while living in Penshurst for 7 years – 1990-1997.

Obituary:

Gretchen W. Schnarr nee Williams, was born November 19, 1951 in New Kensington, PA to Robert and Patricia Williams; she was the loving mother of Annie Schnarr, John Schnarr, Sara (Mitch) Straeffler, and Rita (Mark) Byrne; cherished grandmother of Rita Wheeler, June Wheeler, Stevie Straeffler, Harrison, Zoe, and Madeline Byrne; beloved sister of Michael (late Bonnie) Williams, Robert (Donna) Williams, Mary (Bill) Cappleman, and Mark (Tracey Campbell) Williams; fond aunt of many nieces and nephews.



Ms. Schnarr taught elementary school for many years including at Westbrook Elementary School in Glenview and in Toronto, Canada, Sydney, Australia and Philadelphia, PA. Teaching children and being a mother and grandmother were her passions. She will be greatly missed by all who knew her. A memorial service will be held Saturday, February 1, 2025 at 11am at the Glenview New Church, 74 Park Drive, Glenview. You can watch here:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/GlenviewNewChurch>

Teatime in Baringa after Sunday Service

We will be having teatime in Baringa after Sunday services. One difference, though, it won't be at Richard Morse Room. We have modified the book room area – the first space once entering the building – having created social area for tea and social time. The library room has been also modified: the big couch that was blocking the window area was removed, and the bookshelves were rearranged. There won't be any magic happening with our social time in that room except our kindness, compassionate and thoughtful words for each other, and friendship that we all will be bringing in that room. Be part of it!

Birthdays!

Happy Birthday to John Hicks (9th), Mike Lockhart (11th)

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Call or come at any time.

