



The New Church Newsletter Hurstville Society March 2025

What Church Are We Trying to Build?

By Rev HyunJin Yang

“A church is a church from the good of love to the Lord and the neighbor” (AE 938).

Readers, did you know that there is a wonderful repetition of a phrase found in the Writings of the New Church that goes as “a church is a church from ...”? The first time this phrase caught my attention was about 4-5 years ago, and I was reading Bishop Brian

Keith's article entitled, "What and Who is the Church?" which was presented to a General Assembly in 2005 (See New Church Life, August 2005, pp. 265-282). The article did a wonderful job of having put together New Church teachings from the Heavenly Doctrines and discussing the essential elements that make a church a church. Essentially, the article touches on the definition of what and who is a church. But here, while I will be quoting some core passages from the article, I would like to offer some thoughts in connections with a following question of "then, what church are we trying to build?"

"A church is a church from the Word and according to its understanding" (AR 740:2).

This statement says a lot. It essentially touches on how a church and different churches are formed based on and according to their different understanding of the Word. In fact, this passage is found in the reference to how a noble church is formed according to its right understanding of the Word or genuine truths from it versus how a destroyed church is formed according to its falsified truths or doctrines. The most relevant here is, though, that for a church to be a church, it is essential, no it is basic to study the Word and draw a right understanding or doctrines from it. In a word, we need to read, study, and understand the Word, so that we can build a church according to how it says so.

The simple truth is that a church is not a church when it does not align what it promotes and aims to what the Lord says about Himself, His eternal Kingdom, His Church on earth, and life that leads there and to Him. When and where a church is not from the Word and its right understanding of it, it is not a church. We can see the point by flipping the passage around, which will be "a church is not a church when it is not from the Word and according

to its understanding.” There are a lot of churches out there, and externally, they are fine-looking churches. But they may not be churches in the Lord’s eyes and from His perspectives.

Enough of talking about elsewhere. Instead of looking out, we may ask for ourselves whether we have in our minds clear visions and understanding of what the Lord envisions and shows in His Word about His eternal kingdom in heaven and His Church on earth, and life that leads there. We may ask for ourselves whether our church, individually and collectively, is a church from the Lord’s Word and according to its understanding, the right understanding of it. It is a healthy question to raise as a matter of reflection, not that I mean that we don’t have them.

“A church is a church from doctrine and from life according to it” (AE 384, 799; AR 17, 876).

One of the most frequent and peculiar languages we hear in the church or in any church is the word “doctrine.” Doctrine means a set of beliefs taught in the church. As much and often we hear it, it means it is important! Just as a church cannot be a church without the Word and having the right understanding of it, a church cannot be a church without doctrine. The emphasis has been already made. But note that this passage adds to doctrine that life according to it makes a church a church. We are well aware of how much and often it is said in the teachings of the New Church that truth and good cannot be separated in the church and that they must go as a marriage, making one not two (See TCR 398).

Doctrines without life or truths without goodness make no effect. Studying them and bring them out in the ways we see and understand is one of the building blocks to build our church, but without our actions of goodness that give actual life to the truths

we see, we cannot really say we are building a church that is properly a church.

Rarely quoted in the New Church, but worth being quoted in the context is a famous line from Paul:

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1-2)

We can substitute “I” with the church, and it will hit home to the point.

“The church is a church from the Lord” (Lord 55:4), and “all that makes the church is from the Lord” (AC 4614).

A plenty can be said, but to make a single point, nothing but what comes from and what is from the Lord makes a church a church. Externally, we see thousands and thousands of churches out there, and every one of them is called a church, in that it has a building, a name, a congregation, a cross on the roof, and etc., but the question is, “are they churches that the Lord will call a church?” “Are they churches in the Lord’s eyes?” “Can the Lord be found in a church where it regards its finances, a number of people in the pews, the size of its temple (some churches do call their church buildings as temples), and making or inducing people to recite their faith in the mouths as the underlying goal of their mission?” The

following passage from *Arcana Coelestia* or *Secrets of Heaven* cuts to the core:

[A]nyone who acts like a robber, mercilessly depriving others of their goods, provided he does not do so openly, or who practices deceit against his neighbour, or infects the works of charity with dishonour, or commits adultery, is for all that called a Christian, provided that he attends church services and utters what doctrine teaches. From this it is evident that at the present-day doctrine constitutes the Church, not life, and that the fruits which people link with faith reside merely in doctrine and have no place at all in their minds. (AC 4689:3)

One big take-away from the passage for the discussion here is that a church (or a Christian) isn't about external signs people, or we showcase. A church is not a church whether individually or collectively, unless what it thinks, desires, intends and does is from the Lord. A church is not a church unless its qualities, its missions, the life it leads people to, and other many things as such are from the Lord and His teachings.

What church are we trying to build?

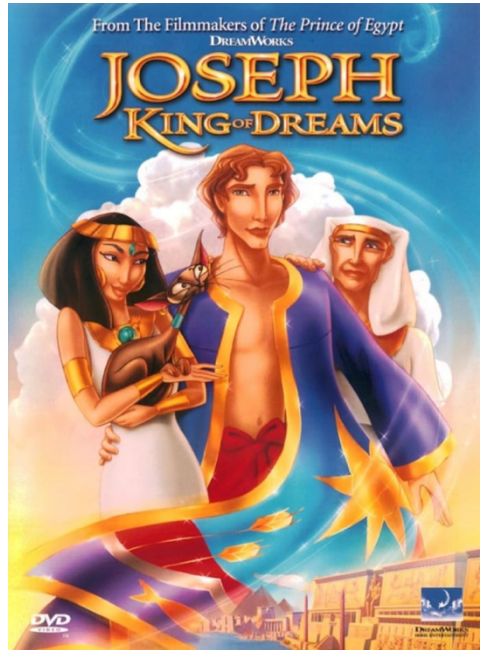
This article isn't any attempt to suggest specifics on what our church should be like or what our worship's priority should look like. But the encouragement is on making a note of what the most important cornerstones are for the church and building it around. Two things, at least, have been discussed here. First, study the Lord's Word and have the right understanding of it. Second, put its life or our life according to the right understanding or doctrines as

the primary goal of the church. There can be many others that are derived in connections with these two. But the thought I am leaving for us is that we can think again about what these mean to us as a church in building our church forward.

A Movie Night at 7:00 pm on the 14th of March

We are a halfway through with our Journey Program, *the Path of Integrity*. As you know, it is all about Joseph. And I imagine that it is the best time to watch a famous animation movie about his story in the Bible. The movie of choice is *Joseph: King of Dreams*. I am happy to invite you all to our movie night on the 14th of March, at 7:00 pm at Baringa.

I chose the date because it is just before our 7th sermon on the series on the 16th. My hope is that the movie encapsulates the series for us and imprints



ivid images in our minds about Josephs' journey, which is one of the most uplifting stories in the Word or the Bible. We may find some tweaks or changes for adaptation from the original story, but it still has the core message there.

For your interest, the movie is a companion piece to *the Prince of Egypt* released in 1998, one of my favorites as well. It is featured with great music, such as *You Know Better than I*, with its running time 75 minutes which is not too long. The movie is considered as a children's film, which doesn't mean that only should children watch it, but that

everyone can watch and enjoy it! Refreshment and beverage will be provided. Save the date for it! – the 14th of March, 7pm at Baringa. If you are planning to come, **please let me know** via a message, email, or calling me **ahead of time**, so that we could prepare refreshment accordingly.

A New Church Website

As far as I know, our current website: hurstvillenewchurch.com was developed by Rev. Todd Beiswenger, the predecessor of me. The homepage of our current website looks like below.



To begin with, I offer apologies for the fact that it has not been regularly updated as it had been before. In the past, it used to be weekly updated, and as some of you have noticed, it has not been

so. It is because I am planning on developing a new church website, which will have the same domain as hurstvilleneewchurch.com. It is being delayed for the time being, because I haven't gotten hold of my helper to get it going. My helper or a technician is YoungHee, my wife. And without her help, the project cannot really get started.

YoungHee and I have an experience of having developed an outreach website for the church in South Korea a couple of years ago, when I was serving over there. As a team, I created contents and did some managements, while she orchestrated other things such as creating the website on the WordPress and doing maintenance as well.

As her life has been very busy with the move and settling in, and mine as well, we have not yet planed out the project. Good news is that as YoungHee and I are rather quickly settling in the manse (special thanks to Ralph Horner for doing a lot of wonderful job and to Murray Heldon for various arrangements), we are hoping to get it started in a couple of weeks.

Meantime, it will take some time, probably months... Todd has been helping me by keeping our current website occasionally updated, but it shouldn't and cannot last long. Again, I ask for your understanding for the inconvenience until the website gets back on weekly updates in a new website.

Some may say why not have someone else or outsource a company to do so. One of the biggest benefits of developing and managing a website on our own, as has been the way it worked with our current website, is the flexibility and accessibility of being able to use it, change it, and update it at any time, without outsourcing anyone or anything and fumbling around it because of the second hand and indirect maintenance through others.

I will keep it updated as there are major progresses made!

In memory of Terry Schnarr

Rev. Terry Schnarr passed away on the 7th of February. There is not any public information about a memorial service.

As many of you know, he served for Hurstville New Church from 1991-1993 as an assistant and as Pastor from 1993-1997. He served as the pastor of the Chicago New Church as of 1997 and taught at Glenview New Church schools for a number of years, though unfortunately, he left the General Church of the New Jerusalem ministry in that time.



Terry also served in other places such as Toronto, where he was assistant to the pastor for years and worked as administrator of “Information Swedenborg, Inc.,” a Canadian non-profit corporation dedicated to spreading about Swedenborg and the Heavenly Doctrines. In summary of his ministry with the General Church, Terry worked for the church for about twenty years.

After he left the church, he worked as chaplaincy for hospices and in retirement homes for years and took on care-taking duties at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Kitchener, Ontario for seven years. Lately, he joined in the ministry of the General Convention, continuing his ministry in Florida.

Path of Integrity Small Group on Thursdays

We will have three more Thursdays for our Journey Program small groups as of 2nd of March. It has been about finding a quiet time for an hour, reading the workbook together, and sharing what comes to our minds. We have had about 4-6 people joining in. Note that our last small group on the 20th of March will be geared towards looking back our own journey for 6 weeks and reviewing it.

Birthdays!

Happy Birthday to Debbie Walsh (7th), Margaret Ward (7th), Graham Horner (12th), Edward Horner (18th)

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