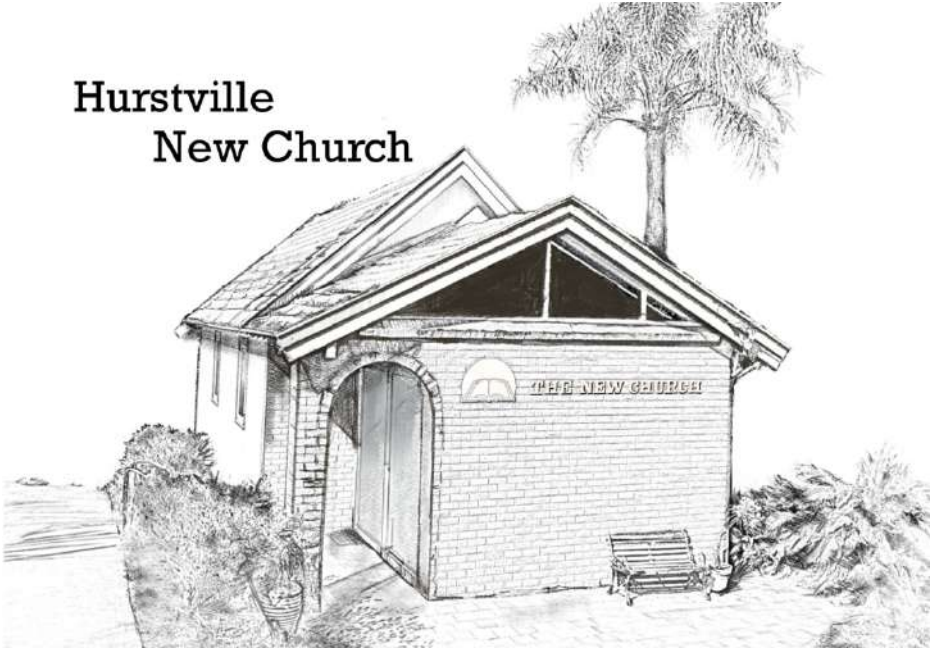


# Hurstville New Church



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## The New Church Newsletter Hurstville Society April 2025

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### What Church Are We Trying to Build? (Part 2)

By Rev HyunJin Yang

This is a follow-up on the previous discussion of “What Church Are We Trying to Build?” in the March issue of the Newsletter. In this issue, I want to discuss some of the challenges we may face as we try to build the church according to our understanding of what makes a church a church, inviting for thoughts on our human struggle in building our church, as well as on a positive outlook for what we can bring into it.

Meanwhile, a quick review of Part 1 can be useful, in leading us to the next discussion. The previous discussion was made on the essential

elements that make a church a church, with one of the quotes being “A church is a church from doctrine and from life according to it” (AE 384, AR 17, 876). One of the finalizing thoughts was that “[the most important cornerstones for the church are] First, study the Lord’s Word and have the right understanding of it. Second, put its life or our life according to that right understanding as the primary goal of the church” (pp. 5-6).

What we can note in the final lines is that it seems as if there are two pillars that make church as church. In fact, we can say that one pillar that supports church is the Lord’s Word and our understanding of it, and the other pillar is the faith and life of church in living according to that understanding. In other words, one pillar has to do with the Lord and His Word (that is, our understanding and acknowledgement about the Lord, His Kingdom, heavenly life that He offers for us) and the other pillar has to do with our applying such understanding and acknowledgment to our daily practice. Such concept isn’t unfamiliar with us, if we think of the two tablets of the Ten Commandments.

It could be ardently discussed how important and critical it is to go to the Word and study it for the right understanding of it, with an argument that Christianity throughout its history has seen so much corruption because of the lack of their right understanding and by equating selfish and earthly desires to the will of the church and what the Word says (See TCR 133, 176, 232).

But the focus of this article is rather on the challenges we may face in realizing into something real what and how we understand about the church and our spiritual life in the ways we understand through the Lord’s Word, the internal sense of His Word, and the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Church. For example, when we speak of putting the church’s life or our lives in line with our right understanding of the church, we could readily recognize how different or even dissociated these two things – that is, such understanding and our life from it – can feel on us, and that indeed it is a life-long committed task to be able to link such

understanding with our daily lives, thus being able to live in a new will according to that understanding.

Such understanding manifestly known and taught in the New Church as the essentials of the church, as it should have been in church universally not just as matters of faith in their lips but matters of their life, is that the faith and the life of the church hinge on our love of the Lord and love towards the neighbor. This, we are told in True Christianity 287 for instance:

It is generally recognized that the Ten Commandments in the Word are called the law in a supreme sense because they contain all the principles to be taught and lived. They contain not only all the principles related to God but also all the principles related to us. For this reason, this law was engraved on two tablets, one of which relates to God and the other to us.

It is also generally recognized that all the principles to be taught and lived come down to loving God and loving our neighbor. The Ten Commandments contain all the teachings about these two kinds of love. The entire Word teaches nothing else, as the Lord's words make clear:

Jesus said, “You are to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself. The Law and the Prophets hinge on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:37-40) (See also AC 3427:2)

Some of us may not feel that it is not such difficult to live up to that. In other words, some may feel that there isn't such a big gulf between our new understanding that is being taught in the church, developing and

emerging from the Lord's Word, and the kind of life we have led daily and naturally. Then, I would say with joy, "good on you." "Good for you!" Though I still imagine that most of us would naturally face major hurdles in our challenging and allowing ourselves to be taught and regenerated by the Lord so that we may live in the goodness of His will, not in our own native one that is tainted with every kind of selfish desires and justifications that want to excuse them.

That is an inherent challenge for everyone and anyone who want to be in the church and part of the church. We could put it this way. Each person has his or her own yoke to bear, one's being different from another's. What it says, in speaking of the church as a group of people who gather together and of building our church of people, is that we have a body of people who engage in, come to, and be part of the church, its worship service, and its various activities. That is to say, each one of us will bring one's own flaws, unhealthy habits, thoughts and ideas that can be far different from what we are envisioned through the Lord's Word and His teachings.

Nonetheless, we will have to say, "That is quite natural". It may sound to be a bit ideal and naive, but it is still a fact that we are a community or a congregation of people who come together, not because we are as whole as we can be, but because we want to be better in the Lord's eyes. And yes, in order for such a change to be brought about, the key is for us to bring with us the awareness of such a change and the willingness to work towards it.

After all, what we will be seeing is the question of "what church are we trying to build?" certainly has a human struggle to consider, both as an individual and as a group of people. On one hand, we carry the duty of studying the Word, having the right understanding, and protecting it against false ideas, and on the other hand, at the same time, we carry our own fate of struggling to live according to it daily and making a stride in a community of people who are likewise willing to walk that path and

share that fate. In this view, building a church that is truly a church doesn't sound easy, asking us for serious commitment.

Meantime, we can't just think that people are the problems. In fact, people are the ones who form a society of the church, embody the Lord's teachings in real forms of use and service, and make it as a living community. While it may worry us how our mere human flaws and misunderstandings, the part that needs to be regenerated by the Lord, can bring disorderly thoughts and behaviors, rather we can think by the same token that we as the people are the ones who can and should bring wonderful gifts to our church. We can be the ones who bring what is good and true in ourselves into the society and the church. Each one of us can bring our unique talents, share our wisdom from our life in the faith, and help introduce ways to keep and grow the church healthy. Moreover, and ideally, we can be heavenly examples who others can look up to, and for whom others can look to the Lord and His Word.

## The Path of Integrity Review and Reflection

I enjoyed much our Journey Program with *the Path of Integrity*. For 7-week period, we covered most of Joseph's stories appearing from Genesis 37 through 48. Sundry services, I think, went well, as they tried to make 7 consecutive sermons be



linked with each other closely as a single storyline as they should be. They also tried to incorporate the theme of integrity throughout, laying out how integrity can develop into the leading force of drawing us closer to a deeper love and faith in us from the Lord, how at times, we can be

put into doubts or times of temptations down in the path, and how the Lord guides and provides for those who are willing to walk in that path.

I can't speak for others, but it seems that the congregation, as well as those who participated on Thursday small groups, appreciated the Program and the series. One of the impressions that struck me as the benefit of working on a series like this was that we could cover an extended part of a major storyline such as Jacob's sons and Joseph's story, unlike going to a segment of a story here and there, which sometimes makes our understanding of a linear storyline rather a bit patchy. My conversations with several people struck me that they were actually picking up more about details of the bigger storyline leading up to the first part of Exodus. Thus, the benefit is to be able to see the story, not as segmented information but as a continuous story.

### **Small group Review**

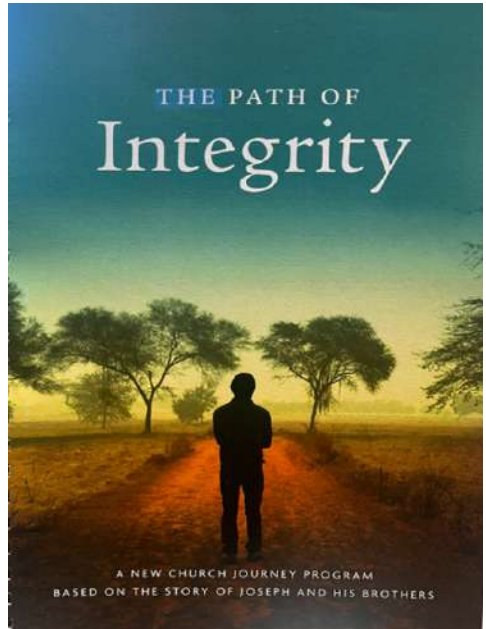
Our Thursday small groups with the Journey Program have seen 4-6 participants on average, our meeting space being the social area, once "the bookroom" at Baringa. I think they went well. The strength of the program lied in the fact that we focused on our own process of seeing more integrity in our lives, with keeping up with journal exercise for 7-weeks side by side. They were practical, reflective, personal, but safe. One of the great things I noticed was that the small group dynamic, where we should be able to express about ourselves, to respect others in the group, and to listen to them was a big part of the Journey Program itself.

One thing that can be changed with our Journey Program next year is that we change a day of the week for our weekly small group meeting. For me and a couple of others, we have found that having small group meetings on the following Thursdays could be a bit confusing. The first week was okay. We were just a slow starter, being several days late, in catching up with our workbook and journal exercise for Week 1. But as our second week kicked in on the next Sunday, just a few days later, while we were still working on Week 1 for the workbook, materials for Week

1 and Week 2 were getting crossed over with each other, and so on. So, we could consider that next time, we start our small group meeting on the same Sunday as we start our Journey Program. We could meet or reassemble for small group after social time. We could also have small group meetings on Mondays, just the following dates.

### **Acknowledgment of the Program**

My appreciation also goes to Rev. John Odhner and others in the General Church Outreach team who compiled the workbook. What a great workbook it is to read through and work with. I believe it makes our reading of the Word (or the Scripture) and our journey with the text so much easier. As we were able to hang on to that, everything seemed to make much more sense in reading and following. I find that the way it weaves the whole workbook around the core quality of integrity that runs through the whole Joseph's story is very effective. What a great program.



I also appreciated the fact that the language the workbook has used. As the one who led the program, I also worked closely with Arcana Coelestia's (or Secrets of Heaven's) treatments on the series. For me, it was fascinating and enlightening to go through them side by side. On the other hand, it came to my mind that some of the terminologies used in the original language could be hard to digest for some readers. In that regard, I appreciated that the workbook brings them down to more

common language we are more familiar with, by paraphrasing them and elaborating on the concepts, rather than directly quoting.

More things to be said about the workbook, but the encouragement is that you can buy the workbook and work at it for yourself as well. Here in Hurstville Society, we currently don't have an extra copy of the workbook. But just so you know, can order here:

<https://newchurchbooks.com/product/the-path-of-integrity-workbook/>

## Movie Night on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March

As the organizer of the event, what I had in my mind was to offer a memorable time about the wonderful story and series we were on. What if we could laugh and be filled with inspirations over a wonderfully made animated film? There we go. A group of 13 people gathered at Richard Morse room at Baringa to watch Joseph: King of Dreams.

It was one of the hottest days in March, so we had three fans on with all windows open, letting out the heat. Being in the evening, it wasn't all that bad. The running time of the film was about 70 minutes. Not too long, not too short. It seems that people enjoyed it too! It wasn't probably one of the most exciting movies you could watch, but certainly it



resonated much with what we had been talking and thinking in terms of the messages of the Journey Program, such as patience, faith in the Lord, forgiveness, etc. Simply, it was touching.

Refreshments were provided. With Lori's help, we had a variety of them – chips, beverages, cakes, veggie, and fruits.

Next time we have another movie night, I would like to see it happen at 6:00 pm rather than 7:00 pm for better accessibility for more people. By the way, if you know of a good movie, an animated film, or any movie that has a New Church message in it, feel free to contact me for tipping me off. Another movie night can be organized!



## Harvest Festival Service

As I am putting together this month's issue of the Newsletter, I am realizing that March has been quite busy for the Society with different activities and themes it has seen. I want to end the Society's activities section by sharing a couple of pictures from our Harvest Festival Service Sunday on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

I particularly like the photo below taken just before Society



Meeting, as everyone in it is smiling!



## Newsletter Logo

It must have been notable that the Newsletter Logo in the front page has been changed! The current logo was put together by YoungHee (not her own drawing though) in consultation with me, and it is subject to modifications or so, if I have the majority voice saying, “no” or “not good”. The rationale for the attempt for such a change is that I thought the old logo was growing old or outdated, not accurately representing Hurstville Society church of the day. Moreover, I asked around about the history of the old logo, hearing from people that it wasn’t historically significant. I heard that it was a drawing given as a farewell gift by one of Japanese students who came by the Society. Correct me if I am far off or mistaken with that history. Anyway, it didn’t seem to be a big part of the Society’s history. On the other hand, the new logo depicts our church building accurately and quite nicely, I think. So, I would love to go with the change, unless we have far different thoughts being collected. Feel

free to reach out to me for your input. Below is the old logo, for comparison.



## Family Gift Mailings



In case the information has not been known and circulated, the Education Department in the General Church in the United States runs a program of mailing free family gift packages for Easter, New Church Day, and Christmas to the **families with children ages 0-10**. Such families can fill out a form online to sign up for the program. When you sign up, free gift packages will be mailed directly to your homes. See a note from Rachel Glenn from the team on how to apply:

The gifts for Easter will go out very shortly. These [not only for Easter, but also New Church Day, and Christmas] are for families with children ages 0-10. If you know of any families who are not receiving them and would like to, here is an online form with some additional information that they can use to sign up:

<https://newchurch.org/landing-pages/family-gift-mailings/>

## **Birthdays!**

Happy Birthday to Donna Heldon (5th), Dylan Johnson (7th), Riley Evans (11th), Aneira Robson, (14th) Huiling Sun, (20th), Kerry Horner (22nd), David Horner, (25th), Lucy Evans (27th), April Hams (28th)

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Call or come at any time.

