



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society May 2020

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A New, New Church Tradition: Spiritual Lent AFTER Easter?

by Rev Todd Beiswenger

Many of the teachings of the New Church are at odds with traditional Christianity; so let me submit this idea for your consideration, which would make us further unique from other Christians. Should we do some sort of lent type ritual *after* Easter?

Here's my thinking: the core of the Gospel message is personal transformation that rises from a new understanding about life and death. I've been working on a sermon series based on the book of 1 Corinthians, and what Paul keeps hammering on us is the need to give up on who we were before the resurrection. Don't bicker or quarrel he says, it only shows that you're still spiritually immature and worldly. Associating with people who are sexually immoral, greedy or swindlers? Expel them from your life... even if you like them.

The calling for us is not to suffer ourselves out of empathy for Christ, but to suffer and sacrifice the longings of the body and our ego for the sake of our regeneration. Paul compares our regeneration to a runner, and that everyone who competes "goes into strict training." You train with a purpose. It isn't necessarily fun. You don't always have motivation. But in order to transform your body to get the prize you seek you have no other choice. Paul writes, "No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize" (1 Corinthians 9:27).

That's the point of all forms of spirituality that is to flip things so that the mind is in charge and the body is the slave. However, when we do this for lent, I think there's a certain sadness that goes with it. We feel bad that we can't have chocolate for a month. But if we were to flip this around, and restrain ourselves *after* Easter, it wouldn't be done in sadness, but should be done in gladness because we are transformed because we are given our spiritual freedom. Christians have long said that they are "free in Christ." They're quite right! Maybe we should walk that talk. After Easter, we're free from... well, you decide what you want to be free from. Or to phrase it more forcefully, what you ARE now free from. Free from quarrelling? Free from an addiction? Free from the need to have things your way? There are plenty of things to choose from. Dare to think big! Give your problem to God. How will Christ transform you?

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Death for Breaking Quarantine?

As you have likely heard, the police have been given the authority to issue on the spot fines of \$1000 to people who they deem to breaking quarantine rules. When that news hit, I think a lot of people, myself included felt that it was pretty harsh. Well, my good friend Rev Julian Duckworth reminded me that modern penalties are much less severe than penalties from a few hundred years ago.

Here's the actual reference for the story from Swedenborg himself about breaking quarantine in London in 1710 and nearly being hanged for it:

1710. I travelled to Gothenburg and thence by ship to London. On the way to London I was four times in danger of my life. 1. From a sandbank on the English coast in a dense fog, when all considered themselves lost, the keel of the vessel being within a quarter of a fathom of the bank. 2. From a crew of a privateer, who came on board, declaring themselves to be French, while we thought they were Danes. 3. From an English guardship on the following evening which on the strength of a report mistook us in the darkness for the privateer; wherefore it fired a whole broadside into us but without doing us any serious damage. **4. In London I was soon exposed to a still greater danger, for some Swedes, who had approached our ship in a yacht persuaded me to sail with them to town, when all on board had been commanded to remain there for six weeks, the news having already spread that the plague had broken out in Sweden. As I did not observe the quarantine, an inquiry was made; yet I was saved from the noose with the declaration, however, that no one who ventured to do this in future would escape his doom.** In London and Oxford I spent upwards of a year.

He wrote this account in his "Journals of Travel," written in Swedish but never published. After Swedenborg's death the journal was found and is now part of **Tafel's Documents concerning Swedenborg Volume 2 Document 204.**

I thought it an interesting little story that reminds us that the policies and procedures we're enduring today aren't really anything new, and that we can be grateful that our government isn't threatening death as punishment for breaking quarantine!

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Digital Church Viewership

We've all experienced change as a result of the coronavirus lockdowns, and one of the things we have done at the church is to promote our live streamed services to the greater Australian New Church. People have certainly responded positively to this! The last few weeks our views have been up considerably. Before the lockdown we would get 20-30 views on a service over the course of a week. Now it's more like 80-90, with the Palm Sunday service currently over 150.

Now we're not the only ones offering digital church content, **David Moffat** is doing a live service on Zoom that he later uploads to YouTube, and **Howard Thompson** is also producing his "Spiritual Shorts" videos, and what I've heard from a few people is that they're watching multiple services including ones in the US and Canada. Conversely, I'm aware that we're also picking up viewers from the US as well, so maybe there are some positives for the church even though we've had to close our doors! Maybe we should have done it sooner!

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Back in the Saddle

Just a short note here to share the good news that **Rev Garry Walsh** has returned to full-time ministry. Garry left a couple years ago in order to move to Pittsburgh so their family could tend to the health of his mother-in-law, and since there wasn't a pastorate available to them at the time Garry took on secular employment. However, since then, the pastor for the Sarver New Church which is near Pittsburgh resigned, and Garry took on some part time duties to help keep them going. This relationship has gone very well, and as a result the Sarver society has called Garry to be their new full-time pastor. This is great news for Garry as he really wanted to get back into full-time ministry, and obviously great news for Sarver as well. We wish them all the best!

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Mike and Kerry's 50th Anniversary

April 4th, 1970, a young Kerry Clancy and Michael Lockhart married at the Bryn Athyn Cathedral USA. They've got two kids, a couple of lovely granddaughters, and a lifetime of memories. They're an impressive couple the Lockharts, because despite the fact that they really are very different people when you observe their external lives, it is their shared core values that have kept this marriage going. They keep the Lord and His teachings front and centre, so hats off to you Mike & Kerry, thanks for all you have brought into our lives, and for all that you have done for Hurstville New Church.



From Kerry's Facebook Post

Today 50 years ago Mike and I married. Celebrating today will be different to past plans, thanks to the coronavirus, but celebrating we will. We have the wonderful chef from Aqua Restaurant from Shelley Beach Golf Club personally delivering our 2 course meal this evening. We plan to go a bit formal for dinner tonight, so will have to see if I can still fit into my glad rags. Kylie from next door has agreed to come over to take pictures on her phone, keeping in line with social distancing.

It seems rather trite to say these 50 years of ours has flown, but in retrospect, they have. Some details are as fresh in mind as tho they only happened yesterday. Some I'd rather forget, but I have learnt some things along the way.

The biggest lesson I've learnt is I'll never change the way Mike constantly closes windows, blinds, doors and tidies things that aren't his to tidy. Learning to put up and shut up hasn't come easy to this feisty girl. Biggest lesson ever. Remembering to be thankful for the billion little things I love about him when I'm upset and furiously angry with him has kept our marriage surviving and actually thriving. Our personalities are poles apart which I think has enhanced both our lives. Our love of the Lord is the cement that has kept and is keeping us going. We are grateful to all our family and friends for travelling along with us. Without you we would be lost. Thank you..., all of you.

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Another Successful Women's Weekend

Last August, a group of women gathered for our first Australian New Church Women's Weekend together. That was such a success that, in early March this year, a dozen ladies did it again! The group consisted of some 'newbies' and some 'oldies' – some who'd attended the last weekend, others who had not, some who've been part of the New Church for decades and others who'd only discovered it within the past few years. We spent the weekend in a spacious 21-bed, 6-toilet Airbnb house in Penshurst, NSW, coming from as far as Port Macquarie and as near as four minutes down the road. Our biggest contingent drove all the way from Canberra!

Once again we shared delicious home-made meals, fun ice-breaker games, insightful instruction on a woman from the Bible (this time Rebekah), regeneration and Jacob & Esau, and relaxing & enlightening meditations on the Lord's Prayer and the woman at the well from John 4. Oh, and we again assembled 200 sterile birthing kits for childbearing women in developing nations! Despite the packed schedule there was still time in-between for prayer, conversation, JennTangles and friendship-building. This weekend received good reviews, once again; so much so, in fact, that we're already looking ahead to another wonderful women's weekend in September, possibly in the Southern Highlands! Please let Jenn know if you'd like to be on the email list for that one. (jenn@beiswenger.net)

Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them!
(Matthew 18:20)

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General Church Translations on Amazon

Historically the General Church has been very interested in the cause of translating the Writings, and in recent years Bruce Rogers was the primary translator. **Lisa Childs** has been working on putting these translations into e-book form and has now made the following available on Amazon:

Apocalypse Revealed volume 1 & 2; Divine Love and Wisdom;
Doctrine of Faith; Married Love; and Divine Providence.

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Professional Development

Over the past year I've put a lot of effort into my YouTube channel, and in a lot of ways it has been successful. However, most of the learning has been through my own research combined with trial and error. I'm at a point now where I feel like I could really use some help to get the channel and videos to the next level. As a result I've signed up for a YouTube Creators course that started 2nd April, and runs for 8 weeks. The idea is that they'll teach me ways to make my videos better, but also how to make them so that YouTube will promote them more for me. So you should expect to see some changes in the digital content coming from me. The General Church has paid for this out of their budget for the professional development of pastors. This certainly wasn't where I thought a career in ministry was going to take me, but apparently this is where I'm going.

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Letter to the Editor

I got and read your Newsletter and enjoyed the Coronavirus and God's forbidden foods article. Nice piece. You mention lobsters scavenging off decaying dead debris (hell no less!) and it reminded me of a science article about 5 animals that never need to die. By far the biggest is the lobster - the others are more microscopic. The only thing that will kill off a lobster is outgrowing its shell size (proprium?), or being preyed upon, or becoming diseased. Otherwise it has the amazing ability to live on indefinitely.

Many correspondences to hell in all those things, especially the eternal will of hell to endure.

Here's the link so you don't have to kind of believe me...

<https://www.science.org.au/curious/earth-environment/animals-can-live-forever>

We're going okay. Hope you all are.

Thanks, Julian [Duckworth]

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Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **John Sandow** (18th), **Naomi Heldon** (20th), **Matthew Cooper** (25th), **Daniel Walsh** (27th), **Brian Walsh** (31st)

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