



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society July 2024

A New Church Prescription for Mental Health?

by Rev Todd Beiswenger

A couple months ago I wrote about mental health and spiritual accountability, because it seemed quite relevant to some of the stories in the news. To me, developing strong mental health is one area where I think the New Church should really excel. However, I don't know that we do because we're not willing to be as weird as we should be. What would the church look like if we actually embraced some of the seemingly weirder teachings in the Heavenly Doctrines? What would happen if we put it on the line: the second coming has already

happened, there are beings on other planets, and there are spirits with us that have a profound effect on our thoughts and emotions.

That last one is a biggie in my opinion. All through the Heavenly Doctrines we are told again and again how closely we are connected to other spirits, and how they profoundly influence us. Now I've been through most of the GC Educational system, and while I heard plenty about the second coming, and occasionally a reference to other worldly beings, there were regrettably few references to the spirits that are with us and the impact they have. I'm starting to think that is because we're not wanting to be that weird. I mean, really, I get it, it sounds 14th century with a crazy green faced witch whose got a big nose chanting "double double toil and trouble" to say, "You know Fred, the reason you're feeling depressed is because you've got some evil spirits with you."

But maybe it is the truth. Take a look at this excerpt from Heaven and Hell:

I have been enabled to learn where we get the anxiety, distress of mind, and inward sadness called depression. There are spirits who are not yet united with hell because they are still in their first state. They love half-digested and noxious substances like the foods that are becoming excrement in the stomach, so they attach themselves to the same sort of matter in us, because they find delight in it; and they talk with each other there out of their evil affection. The emotional tone of their conversation flows into us, and since it is contrary to our affection, it brings about a sadness and an anxious depression; while if it agrees with our affection, it brings about a sense of happiness and exhilaration.

These spirits can be seen in the neighborhood of the stomach, some on the left and some on the right, some lower and some

higher, nearer or farther away-variously depending on the affections they are involved in. A great deal of experience has convinced me that they are the source of our anxiety of spirit. I have seen them, heard them, felt the anxieties that well up from them. I have talked with them, they have been driven off and the anxiety has ceased, they have come back and the anxiety has returned, I have observed its increase and decrease as they drew near and moved away. (HH 299)

Not exactly a pretty picture, but nonetheless it is establishing the concept that our depression doesn't come from our brain. It comes from our gut. Far out? Not really. Modern science is starting to figure this out as well. Take for example this headline from an article posted on September 12, 2013 on the ABC News website: "Anxiety In Your Head Could Come From Your Gut¹." Okay, so it doesn't say "Evil spirits in your gut are causing depression" but it does establish the same origin of the depression.

The article offers a host of interesting ways that particular bacteria create specific mental health problems. For example, "[autistic children] treated with antibiotics effective against the bacteria clostridia show a decrease in symptoms." Another example is one where a person is cured of OCD. This is fabulous! Think in terms of different evil societies corresponding to different bacteria that cause different symptoms. It all adds up.

Since that 2013 article, people have studied this further, and the National Institute of Health published an article in 2023 titled, "Gut Microbiota in Anxiety and Depression: Unveiling the Relationships and Management Options²." The abstract for that article states:

¹ <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/anxiety-head-gut/story?id=20229136>

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10146621/>

Several neuroscientific studies have shown the significance of microbiota in developing brain systems. The gut microbiota and the brain are interconnected in a bidirectional relationship, as research on the microbiome–gut–brain axis shows. Significant evidence links anxiety and depression disorders to the community of microbes that live in the gastrointestinal system. Modified diet, fish and omega-3 fatty acid intake, macro- and micro-nutrient intake, prebiotics, probiotics, synbiotics, postbiotics, fecal microbiota transplantation, and 5-HTP regulation may all be utilized to alter the gut microbiota as a treatment approach.

Feeling depressed? I'd say before spending a fortune with a therapist or putting yourself on mind altering drugs maybe you should at least do some things to get your gut right. To me, this is seeing things from a New Church perspective. *This* is New Church education. Taking the teachings given to us, no matter how weird they may sound at first, and doing something with it. Depression is very common, and I bet many New Church people have sought very mainstream therapies like counseling, prescription drugs and the like...but how many started with or even considered a good colon cleanse and probiotics? Probably not many.

With all of this in mind, it is worth noting that the Writings do tell us that not all depression is the same. For example, sometimes it comes from us obsessing over something, but other times depression is just part of a required process that we must go through in order to grow. Depression isn't necessarily bad. It can just be part of life.

Traditional talk-therapy isn't bad either. However, what I am suggesting is that what I'd try first is some sort of regimen to get my gut healthy. In fact, I think it would be even better if New Church people had been running with this approach for the past 200+ years. We could have

been attracting new members because people look at us and say, "I'd like to be as happy and content as they are." Plus, with these studies we could issue a big, "I told you so!" to the medical world that is just figuring this out now. Because, after all, the New Church is all about being right. Right? Nah, that's not me talking, just some evil spirit with me. =)

Owen and Margaret Heldon Celebrate Their Golden Wedding Anniversary by Donna Heldon

Fifty years ago a young couple were married at the Hurstville New Church. That couple was Owen and Margaret Heldon. Today they remain happily married and this year they celebrate their Golden Wedding Anniversary. Margaret Horner grew up in Victoria and for most of her childhood lived in Sorrento near Melbourne. Owen Heldon was born and raised in Sydney and his family lived in Roselands. They probably would never have met if not for one fact, both their families belonged to the New Church. They got to know each other during family holidays visiting with church families, but their friendship didn't



develop into something more until after Margaret returned from 2 years studying in Bryn Athyn.

They were married by the Reverend Doug Taylor at the Hurstville New Church on 6 July 1974, shortly before Doug Taylor moved to the USA to take up a new posting in Bryn Athyn.

After a honeymoon in Queensland which included a stay on Dunk Island at the Great Barrier Reef and a scenic 5 day train trip from Cairns to Brisbane (no surprise to anyone who knows Owen and his love of trains!), they settled into their new home in Loftus near the Royal National Park, Southern Sydney, and still live there.

They have been key members of the Hurstville Society of the New Church over the last 50 years. Both taught Sunday School and served as office bearers for Society Meetings, Property Trust, Theta Alpha and Women's Guild and they produced this newsletter and the calendar for many years, up until earlier this year. Owen has been a lay leader at various times when the pastor was away or when there was no regular pastor. Margaret played the piano for church services and has been very involved in the organisation of pageants and other events.

While their home is relatively quiet now, it was rather raucous at times during the years they were raising their five daughters! Donna is the eldest, followed by Carolyn, Rachel and then twins Angela and Michelle. Owen was working at AGL, where he worked for a total of 44 years, often doing long hours. Margaret was very involved in helping with school projects and events including a stint as the costume coordinator for school musicals. There was always a lot happening, and many late nights, continuing throughout the years their daughters were at university, college, or art school. When all their girls had finally finished studying it was the end of an era of almost 25 years.

With their children now adults, a new era began. There were travels and weddings, including some spectacular destination weddings, combining the two! One of these weddings was in Bryn Athyn when Angela married Jon Caldwell, who is a grandson of Doug Taylor, the pastor who married Owen and Margaret all those years ago. Owen has never lost his love of trains and over the years, with Margaret, has done all the major scenic train journeys in Australia, including the Southern Aurora, the Overland, Indian Pacific, The Ghan and Spirit of

the Outback and in the USA, the California Zephyr from Chicago to San Francisco after Angela's wedding.



There have also been times of difficulty and sadness with illness and injury, great loss and

worry. Also, a few years ago Owen was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease and this has brought a number of challenges as the disease has progressed. A defining feature of Owen and Margaret's marriage though has been the strength of their partnership and their enduring love and support for each other and for their children. The closeness of their family is a testament to this.

In recent years their family has grown with the addition of seven grandchildren, April, Aneira, Erik, Anna, Evie, Ash and Zaeli, who were all born in a relatively short number of years. The eldest is 8 years old

and the youngest is 4. Watching their grandchildren growing up brings them great joy.

Margaret and Owen are planning a small celebration at home with their family for their Golden Wedding Anniversary, giving thanks for a fortunate and blessed 50 years of marriage.

Owen & Margaret's 50th – from the Pastor

Last month I wrote about “That Missing Chapter from Conjugal Love,” and concluded that despite having been married for 25 years, I’m sure I will learn more about marriage over my next 25. What I should have done for this month is asked Owen & Margaret to write an article building off of that for this month, speaking to the challenges of years 26-50!

Surely they would have some good tips to offer, because being married – to the same person! – for 50 years doesn’t happen by accident. It happens because both partners live a principled life, which includes loving the other when they may not feel like it. We can all see that life throws all sorts of things at marriages, things that can cause a disconnect in a relationship... children, jobs, finances... you name it. Not to mention that the hells do their best to tear marriages apart, because of how marriages lead to happiness. Yet here they are, 50 years later, and they really do still love each other. I’m sure they’ve frustrated many a demon that has tried to tear them apart!

What I observe with Owen & Margaret is that they do share a love of nature, including going hiking, taking care of the bush, and the simple, subtle pleasure that go with it. They support each other, Margaret goes along with Owen for his train adventures, and Owen has supported Margaret’s desire to not be a career woman and instead be a full time

mother & grandmother. They are each other's biggest fan, and they are further united by their common beliefs about the Lord, His Church, and what this life – both here and the next – are about. As a result they've not just given us a great example to live by, but they've brought a lot of good into the world. Well done to you Owen & Margaret! May you continue to frustrate the hells and have an eternity of happiness together!

New Church Day Celebrations Recap

Every year we have been given a generous donation from Kurt & Martha Asplundh, and while they have never required us to do anything in particular with it, they have suggested we use at least some of the money for some sort of a social event geared to the younger members of the congregation.



In the past we used it to fund the Road Rally, and also used it to subsidize people going to the church camp. However, as camp didn't happen this year, we decided to invite folks to a dinner

out on June 19th at the Mortdale RSL. We did manage to get an 18 year old **Matthew Cooper** to show up(it was good to see you Matthew!), and another young adult in **Ben Tranter**(don't be a stranger Ben!), perhaps next year we can figure out a way to get some of our other irregulars to join in on the fun.

This was in addition to our normal New Church Day celebrations, which included a Revelation themed sermon titled – Why was the dragon so angry? – followed by some social time that culminated in what I will



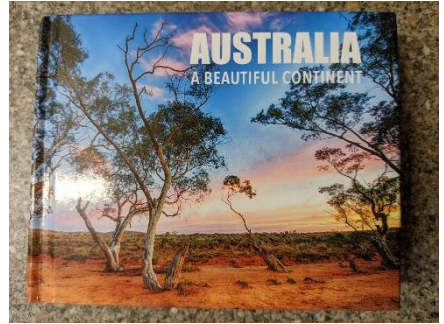
call an “organized pot-luck lunch.” It was a good time, and I did my best to try to soak it all in for my last New Church Day here.

Until We Meet Again – Perth Trip

Part of my experience in Australia has been flying out to Perth, usually twice a year, to give a worship service, lead a couple of classes, visit with people and sometimes to conduct a memorial service. With my departure planned, they invited me to come out one more time for a farewell tour. I arrived on a Thursday May 23rd, and I stayed busy until I got back to the airport Sunday afternoon.

As I’ve said before, I have really enjoyed my visits to Perth. I’m super grateful to everybody who made time to visit with me, those who dragged their not always cooperative children to church, and those who made the effort to show up at the classes. Hopefully they had some fun as well, and maybe even learned something too.

They kindly gave me this book as a gift, but the important part is all the messages they wrote inside. A special thanks is in order for Mary Smuts, who has been the driving force for the church and these visits over the last 12 years. She has always hosted me at her home, looked after me, organized the schedule, and did everything she can to encourage participation. She did it all with a love for the Lord and His church, and I admire her greatly for it.



HyunJin Update

People have been asking, “What’s the latest with HyunJin? When is he going to be arriving?” The short answer is that he’ll be flying out of Korea on August 12th on an overnight flight that arrives on the 13th.

After that, things get a little tricky because he’s arriving on a tourist visa. We have hired an immigration lawyer to help with the process of getting HyunJin a work visa, and things are actually going well. However, despite that, HyunJin won’t be legally allowed to work here

until the work visa comes through, so he'll be limited as to what he can do at the start.

At this point what we're expecting is for him to spend a good bit of his time learning his surroundings, and getting to know people. We have been advised that he can "help" the church with some things, and serve as a guest preacher on occasion as well. It is worth noting that he will be arriving without his wife, YoungHee, as she is going to stay behind in order to get things organized in Korea in anticipation of getting their visas approved and a move to Australia.

One other thing we can definitely look forward to as well is that we are still on track for HyunJin to be ordained into the second degree of the priesthood sometime in September. Dates have yet to be worked out with Rt Rev Dave Lindrooth, but the plan is he'll be here for a week or two, and during that time HyunJin is hoping that YoungHee will come to Sydney as well, even if it is only temporary.

As you can see, some things are still in flux, and will change as we get updates from the department of immigration. But this is where things stand for now, and I'll let you know as things develop.

Birthdays

Happy Birthday to James Kermond (10th), Babbette Horner (14th) and Danita Horner (15th)

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Call or come at any time.