

Table Tennis Final at the 2026 Retreat. See pages 8-16 more about how the camp went!



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society February 2026

Own It for Yourself

By Rev. HyunJin Yang

*“Whoever hears these sayings of Mine,
and does them”*

(Matthew 7:24)

Garden Service on the First Sunday of the Year

It is our thing to have the first Sunday service of the year in the garden, and that was what we did on the 4th. There certainly was something special about it for some good reasons, probably the best one being that we were out there with the things of nature—the trees, grass, birds, sunshine, and others. It was certainly refreshing.

I hope that the topic for the service was as refreshing as our surroundings were. The topic we explored was ‘Own It for Yourself.’ We began the service by going over two stories from the Word: the story of Adam and Eve blaming others for their disobedience (Genesis 3), and the story of King David’s blindness to his own sin (2 Samuel 11, 12). Inherent in the stories was a message that we often look away from our own issue, rather than perceiving it as our accountability. In other words, we don’t own it but rather dump it on or blame it on others.



Does Blaming Help Us at All?

Sadly, I or we have seen or heard people blaming the whole world, their parents, their pastors, their family background, or pretty much everything else, for their unhappiness and even for their wrong choices.

While it is worthwhile examining what has influenced us or how other things helped shape who we are now, we can’t imagine our end goal being to think that we haven’t contributed to any of our difficulties or haven’t done a thing wrong.

And I suspect that we often leave out 'us' from our issues because "it can't be me or us" can feed us with a momentary relief of "O, I am not the culprit, and now I can put my finger on something else than myself." In fact, it can feel good to do so because it relieves us of our own burden and accountability. There comes a delight.

But I also suspect that such a relief is momentary and self-serving. And as a matter of fact, it doesn't help us, if we think about it. For one, there is no growth in it. And second, what else does it leave us with if we finger point at others but are blinded about ourselves? Since we've moved the focal point and our life's accountability from us to others, we end up being sorry and miserable for ourselves, rather than being encouraged and empowered towards what we are able to do for ourselves.

It Is Not Even About Blaming Ourselves

In the service, it was also addressed that it isn't either about blaming ourselves. We may even say that it is not even about blaming on anything at all levels. Blaming, which is different from seeking justice and holding someone rightly accountable for what they have actually done wrong, most of the time doesn't help.

Let's say we've failed our driving test. Some blame it on bad luck, thinking, "I was driving great but was unlucky because the examiner on the passenger seat didn't know what he or she was doing". Or we were driving drunk over the legal limit, got pulled over and caught. Some may think, "I was so close to getting away with it, if I didn't have the second glass, or if I'd driven in a different neighborhood." But some may blame themselves, beating on themselves, "how stupid I was, and I am so undone!" But all these are not necessary. Will any of these help us?

The way I picture 'owning it for ourselves' is that it is essentially about examining ourselves. It is an effort to find a fault(s) with us first, in the hope that we may learn something about ourselves, that we may be brought into an affection for a change, and that thus we may move forward. First, this is different from blaming ourselves. Also, it is not a 'blame game' of trying to

find faults with others. Instead, our end goal should be a better awareness of ourselves.

Rather, It Is About Ourselves—Ownership of and Accountability for Our Spiritual Life

Numerous teachings in the Word direct our attention to our part to do. They keep on calling us for our awareness, our choice, our determination, and our accountability.

The following passages are just a few of those teachings for our reflection here.

“Therefore, turn and live!” (Ezekiel 18:32)

“Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand” (Matthew 7:24, 26)

“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” (Joshua 24:15)

Reflecting on the Society’ Next Chapter

Our Sunday worship on the 11th was led by our guest minister, Bishop Peter Buss. Afterwards, we gathered at the Richard Morse Room for a potluck lunch, and most of us stayed on to visit with him for an hour session, where he presented ideas and snapshots of how some of the General Church congregations in the United States have been envisioning for their future.

At the meeting, Peter addressed a Scriptural phrase of “the book of Life” as in the book of Revelation. We could easily see how its concept would apply to the Society’s next chapter to write for the future to come—with the

question of how we can continue to write its unique story as a New Church congregation.



From here, you will also see my own reflection here and there. First off, in my mind, our underlying mission is manifest: we continue on providing people with worship services where the Lord and His teachings are placed at the centre. We continue to strive to be a congregation and a community that puts an emphasis on how to become a new person as the Lord's teachings invite so.

The beauty of Christian faith is people coming to see the presence of the Lord in the Word, the power of the Word, and how it can affect their lives. For the New Church, we can offer more. We can help people see how the Lord's Word can be illuminated by the teachings of the New Church or the Heavenly Doctrine, and how they together can help us in our daily lives. This may not be a 'new' chapter per se, but we can write our 'next' chapter in that direction.

As for reaching out to people with this mission beyond us individually, Peter spoke of one idea or a model, which resonated with me a lot. The idea is that Hurstville Society serves as a hub or a centre for people out there beyond the local area. This is also to say that our goal doesn't need to be filling the pews with a pack of people.

Working from within, But beyond Ourselves

For me, this was to say that while we work towards and long for people to join in person, we can also find ways to reach out to those who are out there.

Who can those be? Can't say anything specific, but we may say that it will be those who have the hope and faith that the Lord's Word has the wisdom to speak to them and inspire their life.

Trusting the Lord

How do we reach out to more people? We have limited resources and the means. What else or how else can we do? And I wonder what we need sometimes, if not most of the times, is our simple faith in the work of the Lord and in the power of the Lord's Word to bring, or bring His people back to His church. What we do, in the faith, is simply 'trying', 'inviting', and 'offering'. And we remain in prayer that the Lord's help is on the way, as long as we do the work, seek for His will to be done, and remember the Lord's teaching in Matthew 6:33.

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

This may hardly be a clever manoeuvre in some people's view; Some may find it to be naïve. But I believe that this is what we do as children of God. We keep on trusting. We keep on trying. We keep on seeking His will, not ours, to be done, even when we have no answers and even when we don't get what we desire.

Bishop Peter Buss and Teresa's

Visit in Australia



Their first visit to Australia since 2019 began in Perth, then continued to Sydney and to the Sunshine Coast for the 2026 Retreat.

Their arrival at Sydney on the 10th coincided with the hottest day and the hottest time of the year, when the highest reached 42 degrees. It may have been a good reminder that they were in the Southern Hemisphere and that the temperature could go up that high in January.



Snapshots of Peter and Teresa's Visit—Sometimes, words don't carry what images do.



In Perth (After Worship Service)



(A time with children)

In Hurstville (A Potluck Lunch after the Service on the 11th)



2026 NCIA *Family* Retreat on the Sunshine Coast(15th-19th)



The 2026 Family Retreat saw a variety of sessions and programs that spoke to, engaged, and reached out for all who were present. The number of attendance was forty three (thirteen children) for overnight stay, sixteen to seventeen (three children) as day visitor, and nine people for virtual.



We had programs that covered a range of subjects from spirituality in general, an envisioning session, a deep reflection on the Lord's sayings in the Word; Among others were Basil Lazer project's updates on Our Shared Spirituality, useful discussions around how to use AI in the work of getting a New Church message out there, and so on. We also had separate programs for the kids and the teens in the mornings. These were not all! We had creative, hands-on activities in the afternoons, 80's disco and a game night in the evenings, and so many others.



Fifteen people, including ministers, coordinated this five-day and four-night Retreat by bringing in their expertise to share with others. They did what they could do best to enrich the experiences of the people in the walk of their faith in the New Church. And I am sure that it helped themselves greatly as well.

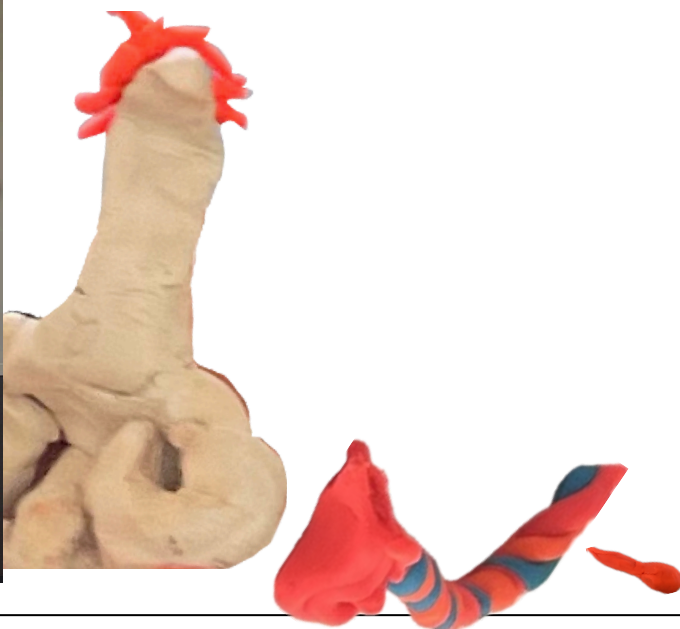






Plenty of Other Fun

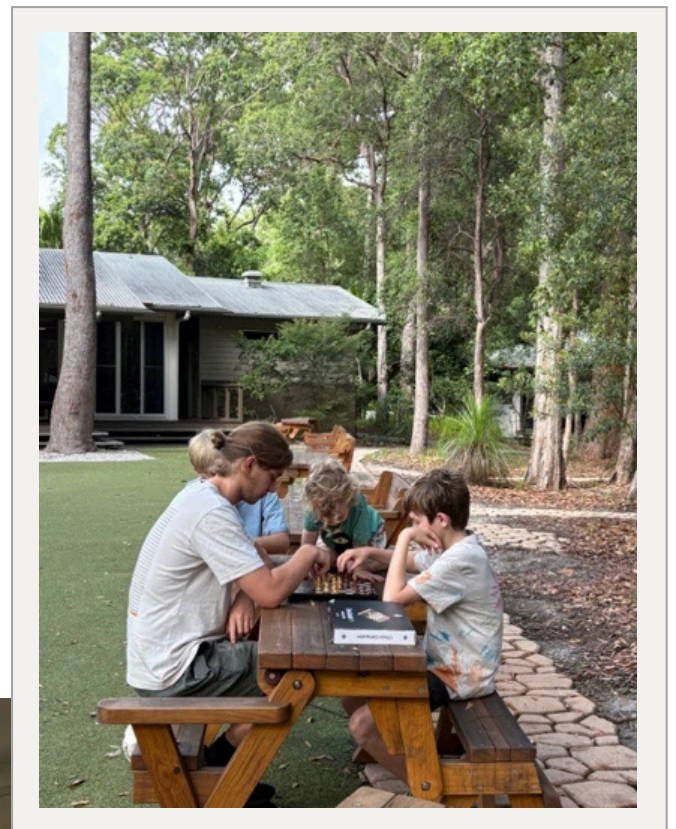
Some retreated a bit more into a smaller group to play chess and play table tennis; Some went for swimming at the beach as their first thing to do in the mornings; The older teens as well as some kids as a group went into the swimming pool in the afternoons. One afternoon, they spent three and a half hours in the water, playing Marco Polo, and so on. And of course, the final table tennis match of Peter with Michelle got filled with excitement, chants, and joy.



It was also great to see people forming new friendship with others. For this Retreat, some came from afar! Mary Smuts and the Hester family flew from Perth; Peter and Teresa were from the United States. For some of them, it was their first time attending the Family Retreat; for some others, it was their first time in ten years or so.

Some More Photos

It is virtually impossible to capture and illustrate every precious moment we experienced at the camp, or to include hundreds of photos that could've shown it more vividly. So, I have selected just a handful of photos that I hope show some of the highlights.









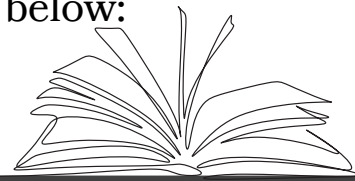
What's Coming Up?



7-Week Journey Program Series

Our Sunday services beginning on the 1st of February will see the beginning of a seven-week series based on a Journey Program *Pause: Make Space for God*.

Our weekly message and reflection will follow the sequence of the topics as below:



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| 1 | WEEK ONE, How Does God Speak to Me? |
| 19 | WEEK TWO, Why Did God Create Me? |
| 37 | WEEK THREE, Who Is Jesus, and How Does He Relate to My Life? |
| 55 | WEEK FOUR, How Does the Lord Work in My Life? |
| 73 | WEEK FIVE, What Does the Lord Want from Me? |
| 91 | WEEK SIX, How Do I Follow the Lord? |
| 109 | WEEK SEVEN, How Does the Lord Want Me to Serve Others? |

(A small group will gather on Monday evenings at 7:00 pm at Baringa).

No Doctrinal Class in February and March

In the months we hold our weekly small group for the Journey Program, we don't hold our monthly class.

Work Party after Church Service (on the 8th)

Some will garden; some will weed. But here is another idea. Some can join in for cleaning the cabin located in the backyard of the manse and putting a couple of missing pieces back. It can become a small but a bit of an extraordinary thing to work on.

If we can turn the cabin into a tidier place or what not, I am hoping that we may be able to use it towards something for a church activity or the like. We will see how the later part may play out.

And we know what it will end with: good pizza, drinks, and some chats afterwards!

News From the Wider Church

The Compass Program at ANC: Learning with Purpose

Mary Williams is the director of the Compass Program that has been just launched at the Academy of the New Church located at Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, the United States. See the blurb below about the program, and you may contact her and make a further enquire via the contact details at the bottom, if you find it interesting for your children.

The Academy of the New Church has launched The Compass Program, a new learning pathway for high school students seeking an individualized, purpose-driven education. Students in the program combine project-based learning, internships, and dual-enrollment college courses with spiritual study through Rise Above It, a course on the Ten Commandments led by Ray and Star Silverman.

The Compass Program helps students connect their education with their calling and develop the skills and habits to live a life of meaningful use. Compass students also have access to all that ANC has to offer in the way of extracurriculars such as Instrumental Ensemble, sports, clubs, and the dramatic productions.

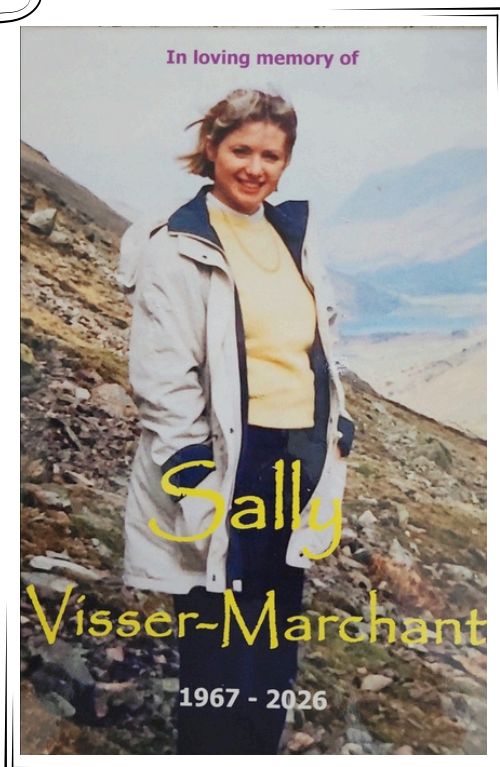
To learn more or visit, see our page on ANC's website (<https://www.ancss.org/educational-program/compass-program>) or contact Mary Williams at:

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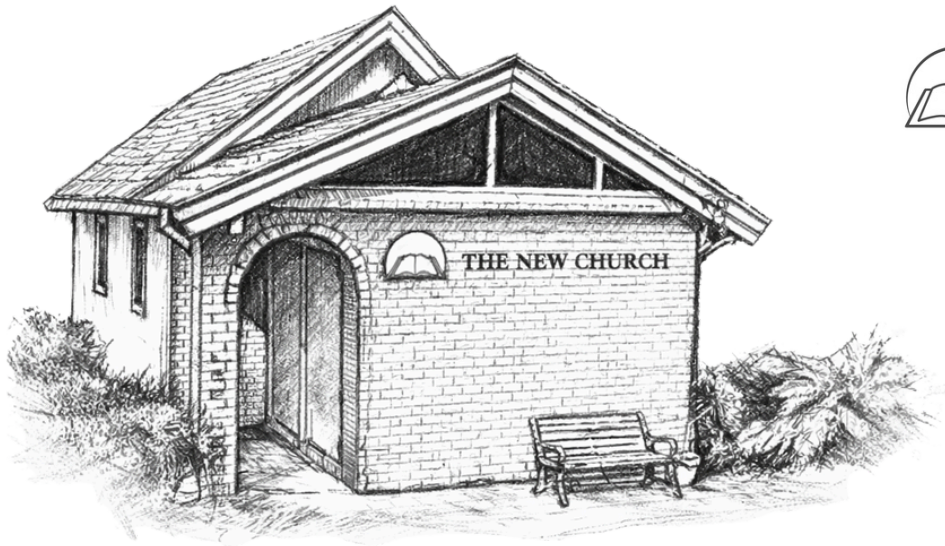
In Loving Memory of Sally Visser-Marchant

We share the sad news that our old friend Sally passed into the spiritual world at 8:00 am on the 27th. Cor, her husband, was by her side as she passed away. Sally has been a great inspiration and a fighting spirit for all of us over the years as she battled cancer. Cor's strong presence and journey with her have been a big inspiration for many. We hold her family in our prayers and wish them nothing but peace and comfort from the Lord.





Hurstville 1905
New Church



Happy
Birthday

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



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