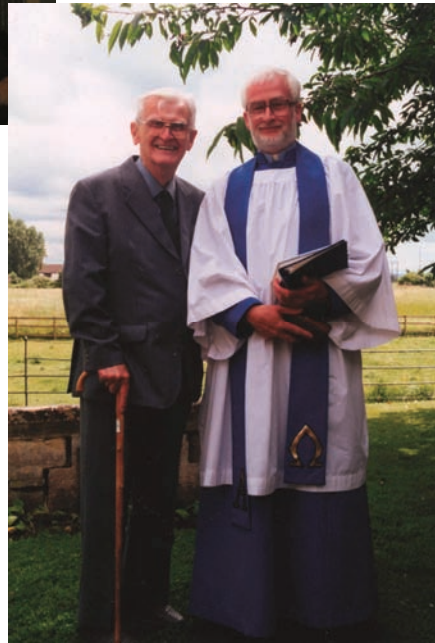




Swedenborg Society Bicentenary

26th February 2010



Elisabeth Brooks (pictured above) makes a presentation to the Swedenborg Society on the occasion of the bicentenary and refers to her late father Rev Claud Presland and her late brother Rev John Presland (both pictured on the right).

See the full details in the bicentenary report on page 4.

Lifeline

Lifeline is published in the first week of the month by the General Conference of the New Church. Articles and notices should reach the editor by the end of the second week of the month prior to publication.

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ISSN 0308-3624

new church

Lifeline



Swedenborg Society Bicentenary 26th February 2010



Richard Lines
Secretary, Swedenborg Society

Lars Bergquist
President, Swedenborg Society

(see page 4 for a report of the bicentenary meeting)

April 2010
Number 384

Our mission is to express, share and experience with others in life an inclusive, non-judgmental vision of God's kingdom.

“A Man of Sorrows”

At this time of year we think again of the stormy events of Easter. They help us to realise that the Lord God our Saviour, far from being a distant spectator, observing our troubles and temptations, is in reality sharing our problems and pain.

Some people are taught to fear God in quite the wrong way. They fear the heavy handed Divine discipline that is sometimes called judgement', as though God demands that His people shall suffer to appease His Divine displeasure! This feeling comes out in the cry 'what have I done to deserve this' in other words, what am I being punished (by God) for?

The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ presents us with a totally different picture. He is not man suffering to satisfy God, but GOD SUFFERING TO SAVE MAN. For the significance of the events of Easter to sink in, we need to realise the full impact of the apostle's words, "*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself*". God is no spectator here. Jesus made the union of the Divine and the Human in His being quite clear. He spoke of "*the Father in me*". Another time when Philip asked "*Lord show us the Father and it will be enough for us*", Jesus replies "*Don't you know me Philip even after I have been among you such a long time?*" John 14:9

(Continued on page 3)

Contents

“A Man of Sorrows”	2	Judas	11
Swedenborg Society Bicentenary	4	NewSearch 4	15
From the Governing Council	9		
New Church Children’s Society	10		

For the current issue of Lifeline, back issues and other resources visit:

www.new-church-lifeline.org.uk

AVAILABLE SOON - NewSearch 4

NewSearch 4 (Windows) allows full searching of the theological Writings for the New Church. Compared to NewSearch 98 that it replaces, NewSearch 4 has much more extensive document collections and greater searching capability. Most of the English translations of the Writings are included and much of the original Latin. The user may choose to search other document collections including New Church Life (1881-2007), over 100 Books and Monographs by New Church authors, several New Church journals and some of Swedenborg's Pre Revelatory works. Also included are New Church translations of the 5 books of Moses (Pentateuch) and the New Testament. The New Church Life collection allows field searching (author, title, etc.).

For 20 years NewSearch has been a prime tool for the study of the Heavenly Doctrines. For a sampling of NewSearch 4, check out the online version at www.heavenlydoctrines.org.

Copies will be available soon from the New Church College - priced approx £20.00 - Note for Ministers and Worship Leaders - this cost can then be reclaimed against any allowance you receive.

We [Swedenborg and a group of angels] said, “It is pointless to talk to you about the Son of God born into the world, but we are going to do it nonetheless. “Faith is like a bubble in the air. It was beautifully coloured in the first and second ages, but was in danger of bursting in the third and following ages because no one saw God. Therefore to preserve our faith about him, faith in him, and faith from him, it pleased Jehovah God to come down and take on a human manifestation. He did this to bring himself into view and to convince us that God is not a figment of our imagination; he is the absolute being who was and is and will be from eternity to eternity. God is not a three-letter word; he is everything real from alpha to omega. Therefore he is the life and salvation of all who believe in him as a God who can be seen, although he is not the life and salvation of those who say they believe in a God who cannot be seen, because believing, seeing, and recognising are one. This is why the Lord said to Philip, ‘Those who see and recognise me, see and recognise the Father.’

Part of a memorable occurrence in **True Christian Religion 159:7**

convey these Truths and to use them to create a deep and wonderful way of spiritual life. But their leaders and many of the people themselves polluted them. Eventually these Truths were given to the Gentiles.

Swedenborg tells us that the 2 names together, Judas Iscariot, represented the Jewish nation as to the Church. 'For the Lord's twelve disciples represented the Lord's Church in general; and each of them represented some essential of it; and Judas Iscariot represented it such as it was with the Jews.' Apocalypse Explained 433. Of course there were good, wise and kind Jewish people who behaved according to God's will but by the time of the incarnation the leaders and those who knew better twisted what was intended to free people from their own selfishness and introduce them into heavenly existence, into a legal system to control and profit from the man in the street.

I am sure we would all be appalled to be called 'a Judas' yet I'm sad to tell you this Easter that there is a Judas in every one of us. Every time we go against God's will and follow our own will, we betray Him. Judas wanted Jesus to think as he thought and to want what he wanted. We all say "Thy will be done" in the Lord's prayer but how many times do we secretly hope His will is the same as our own will? This is why the quotes in John's gospel regarding Judas also apply to us too.

In John 6:70 Jesus calls Judas "a devil". In John 13:2 it says "the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. A few verses on in John 13:27 we read "As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him". The first quote is about false thinking, the second about loving one's own will and the third is evil thought which becomes action. You see one leads to the other. We start thinking falsely because we want something and get upset and angry when we don't get it. This leads to our loving our own will instead of God's which we see as preventing our having what we want. This in turn leads to our thinking becoming action and we actually do something that is contrary to God's will. We all do it, sometimes in things small and sometimes in things very large. We all have skeletons in our cupboards!

So my question is, "What's in a Name?" Let's try to reject the negative sides associated with names in The Word and instead try our best to act on the positives – for that way lays spiritual growth and happiness. And then we will not betray Our Lord but embrace Him with a kiss.

Rev Gillian Gordon

In the events which led to the glorious Easter resurrection, the love of God was put in the dock by the people whose hypocritical lack of love He challenged. Then they passed judgement. The Lord was condemned as guilty of crimes of which He was then (and is now) totally innocent. Condemned by a court of law that even broke its own laws. Then as now, Divine Love condemns no one, and the Divine Truth which Jesus revealed as the Word made flesh, pleads not for our condemnation but for mercy. "*Father forgive them for they know not what they do.*"

Humankind suffers not because God inflicts punishment but because people reject the truth revealed in the Lord God Almighty's self giving act of love to save them. To claim that the latest disaster or act of violence is a judgement - a punishment sent by God - is to again falsely accuse the Lord who came on earth as Jesus Christ. Surely here is a demonstration of love that no one can fail to understand and acknowledge - a man who gives his life for his friends AND His enemies, for his own beloved, rebellious and sinful people.

This Easter let us celebrate the unconditional love and the never-ending mercy of the one who comes to save us from our self love and self deception, from our guilt and fear. The One who constantly works to open our eyes to the sad consequences of some of our choices in life by showing us another way - His way - the way of love and service, of openness and honesty, of humility of heart.

"*Surely*" says Isaiah "*He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows*" but then he asks "*who has believed our report?*"

It is WE who are the problem. It is HE who has the answer. When things go wrong the Man of sorrows suffers with us. When things come right His resurrection triumphs in us.

May the Risen Lord bless your Easter with new hope and joy.

Rev Clifford Curry

Two things - love and wisdom - constitute the essence of God; but three things constitute the essence of God's love: his loving others who are outside of himself, his wanting to be one with them, and his blessing them from himself. The same three constitute the essence of his wisdom because in God love and wisdom are united, as was just explained. It is love that wants those three things, however, and wisdom that brings them about.

True Christian Religion 43

Swedenborg Society Bicentenary

On Friday 26th February 2010 the Swedenborg Society celebrated its bicentenary. Although many events are taking place throughout the year to publicise the continuing work of the Society the meeting and reception at Swedenborg Hall to mark the actual foundation was a significant event.



People start to gather in Swedenborg Hall for the Bicentenary meeting

The meeting commenced quite informally with a few words from Patrick Johnson who explained that he had been present at the 150th celebration in 1960 when Roy Griffith was President of the Swedenborg Society. Patrick had been the youngest member present on that occasion and the President had asked him to convey a message to the 200th meeting in 2010. Patrick was very pleased to be present at the bicentenary but acknowledged that he had actually forgotten what the message was that he was meant to bring to this special occasion.

The meeting began formally with the current Secretary, Richard Lines, talking about some highlights of history from his forthcoming book *A History of the Swedenborg Society 1810-2010* to be published later in the year. Richard started by giving a survey of the history of the time and noted that 40 people, 36 men and 4 women, had formed the Swedenborg Society on Monday 26th February 1810. The first meeting took place at the home of George Prichard at his house in Essex Street off the Strand. Later in the year the first Annual Meeting was held at 47 Devonshire Street, the home of Mrs Mary Butter. Mary Darby, as she then was, and William Butter had both been baptised into the New



**Betrayal of Christ
by
Giotto di Bondone**

c 1305

Detail from larger
painting

What's in a Name?

Shakespeare has Juliet asking "What's in a name?" referring to a rose, but as any Swedenborgian worth their salt would tell you, when it comes to The Word, the name has it all because people's names encapsulate their essence and purpose and in turn reflect a characteristic innate in us also.

Jesus had more than one follower named Judas but it was Judas Iscariot whose name is still famous to this day, or to be more accurate, infamous. Would you name one of your children Judas? No? Do you know anyone named Judas? Probably not. What do you associate with the name Judas? Most people would reply on the lines of betrayal, greed, cowardice or evil. Not the kind of traits one would want to be associated with, even by name.

The name Judas means 'celebrated' with a sense of 'using the hands'. This is directed toward acts of reverence and celebration in worship. This sounds positive and delightful except that the name also has a negative sense, which is to 'throw out or discard'. So if the hands are not used in acts of reverence and celebration in worship they are used to throw out or discard the reverent and worshipful. This reflects the fact that the Jewish people had been instructed and led by God for generation after generation and they could have celebrated God's Divinity as opposed to turning to worshipping idols and used their God given wisdom and knowledge to make life good for everyone. Instead the wonder of God's love in its useful form was thrown out - discarded.

Iscariot means 'from Kerieth' a town in the south of Judah. There is in this a sense of building something good and substantial but in the negative sense Iscariot means bad or polluting. The Jewish nation had been given wonderful Truths from God for centuries. They were the chosen vehicle to preserve and

similar meaning, and indeed there are clear parallels. Judah too was one out of an important Twelve (the sons of Jacob from whom were descended the twelve tribes of Israel), but stood apart from the others. He also betrayed his brother Joseph for money but later repented.

Swedenborg explains each of these Twelves as standing for all the types or qualities that make up a true Church, both Peter and Reuben representing faith, and so on. Judah and Judas each seem to stand for self-love, which expects to gain some reward from religion, whether material welfare or reputation and influence. It's a motive which can be useful for starting our interest in spiritual things, but is very liable at some stage to betray these essentials, for heavenly joy comes from doing good with no thought of reward. However, self-love has its place - a lower place than love for God and the people around us (see True Christian Religion 394), but we do need to keep ourselves healthy and happy enough to lead loving and useful lives. This is reflected nowadays in the recognition that without basic self-esteem we cannot be balanced effective characters.

The story of Judah in Genesis is quite complex, and In Arcana Coelestia (especially nos.4750-4751) it is explained that, like many others in the Word, he represents two opposites at different times – love to the Lord and love of self. After prompting his brothers to sell Joseph, Judah is changed, and later puts his own life on the line to save Benjamin, the youngest brother. However, there seems to be no equivalent bright side to Judas, yet we are left with questions, and I wonder if we are meant to look harder at him. (As Swedenborg might have said, Here is a deep arcanum, or mystery.)

The fact of Judas' treachery seems to be quite unexpected by the other disciples, especially in John's Gospel. (Read 13:21-30) There indeed it sounds almost as though Judas himself did not know until that moment. And notice that Jesus never condemns Judas. In contrast he gives Judas bread – symbolically shares with him his love and life – and urges him to do quickly what he has to do. Are we meant to understand that self-love, a necessary part of our character, is bound at some time (or times) to be a traitor, and in this to try our resolve, yet can be forgiven and can change? The repentance and suicide in Matthew's Gospel (surely more credible than the account in Acts) could represent, not self-destruction, but a dying to make way for new life.

Ian Johnson

Church on 23rd October 1791 at the Great Eastcheap church and they had married in 1794. By the time of the formation of the Swedenborg Society she was a widow but her young son Henry Butter was to become closely associated with both the Society and the New Church generally as well as becoming well known to the public for his books on reading and spelling. In 1864 Henry became Secretary of the Society when he was nearly 70 and held that office for 8 years. Annual meetings were, for many years, held on the 19th June and this was the case when Dr John Spurgin was Chairman in 1837. The following day, the 20th June 1837, William IV died, Victoria ascended the throne, and the long Victorian age commenced. Dr Spurgin had received his medical education at St Thomas's and Guy's Hospitals and was greatly respected in the medical profession through the first half of Victoria's reign. Tragically he was attacked by robbers on 29th September 1866 and died of his injuries, having been a member of the Swedenborg Society for 50 years.

The Victorian Age was a great time for the Swedenborg Society. At the beginning of this period an Anglican clergyman, Rev Augustus Clissold MA, became associated with the Society. Augustus had married Eliza Crawshaw in 1835 and inherited her father's estate originally known as Crawshaw's Farm but later as Clissold Park. Rev Augustus Clissold gave liberal financial assistance to the Society and helped finance the Society's first building in Bloomsbury in 1855. [Readers of Lifeline who remember the time when London telephone exchanges were known by letters may recall CLI as the letter code for the Clissold exchange (numerical code value 254) which covered the area now known as Dalston. This must be the only case of a telephone exchange named after a Swedenborgian!].



Clissold House

The original house was built in the 1790's.

A major restoration is planned of the Grade II listed building as well as the park and river.

After the Victorian age had come to a close and before the horrors of the 1st World War there was a wonderful centenary celebration in 1910 - the International Swedenborg Congress under the patronage of King Gustav V of Sweden. The Chairman at the time, David Wynter, entertained 950 people at a Garden Party on his estate, Bishopswood, in Highgate with music from the band

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

of the Grenadier Guards. He too, like Augustus Clissold, was liberal in his financial support of the Society and helped finance the current building.

From the time of flying bomb raids on London in 1944 right until 2002 the Swedenborg Society was very ably led by women rather than men. Dr Freda Griffiths was Secretary from 1944 to 1973 and was succeeded as Secretary by Madeline Waters who continued in this role till 2002 with the excellent support of Nancy Dawson as Librarian. In this period the work of translation and publishing continued as before with the notable efforts of Rev John Elliott and his translation of the 12 volumes of Arcana Caelestia as well as the translations by John Chadwick of True Christian Religion, Conjugal Love and others. Richard Lines concluded his talk by mentioning the forthcoming new translation of Heaven and Hell which will be launched later in the year.

Richard then went on to introduce a very special part of the proceedings. He explained that one of the 'founding forty' in 1810 was John Presland. His grandson Rev William A Presland had been a committee member in 1910 and one of his direct descendents, Elisabeth Brooks, was present at this bicentenary celebration. Richard then invited Elisabeth to speak to the meeting as follows.

"I am standing here today, as a member of the Presland family, holding a letter written on the 30th June 1917 by my great grandfather, the Rev W A Presland. William Alfred Presland was born of a New Church family. His great grandfather, John Presland, heard Robert Hindmarsh preach at the Great Eastcheap chapel in 1790. Returning to his home in Epping he related with such enthusiasm what he had heard that his son, another John Presland, visited a New Church, went home and said: '*I have belonged to a religious society all my life and I have heard a great many ministers preach; but I have never heard the pure truth until now.*' He then became a founder member of the Swedenborg Society.

I would now like to read to you the letter I have in my hands written, as I said earlier, by my great grandfather, the Rev William Alfred Presland.

It is my desire that my descendants may take steps to ensure, if possible, that this parcel shall be in the care and keeping, at the time of the Second Centenary of the Swedenborg Society in February 26th 2010, of one of them bearing the name Presland provided always that each successor into whose care it shall pass shall be a convinced receiver of the Heavenly Doctrines disclosed in Swedenborg's Writings.

Will my heirs in the direct male line be so good as to provide that, if possible, it passes to one who, from such conviction, will value it, and so aid the attainment of my desire? The holder of it at the time above stated, will make such use of it as may be most interesting or serviceable to the Swedenborg Society.

Judas

The following two articles both tackle the subject of Judas and provide insights into how we might better understand his role and his meaning for us. **Editor**

The Truth about Judas

With Easter fresh in our minds, we may be left still puzzling over some aspects of the Gospel story, such as the role of Judas Iscariot.

Making sense of what we're told

The Gospels agree that Judas was one of the Twelve (the inner group of Jesus' disciples), but that he betrayed Jesus in assisting the Jewish authorities to arrest him, also that Jesus foresaw this betrayal and seemed to accept it as fore-ordained.

The details of the action vary, and the Gospels are not explicit on Judas' motive, or on what he expected to happen. John's Gospel makes no mention of Judas being paid, though it does refer elsewhere to his dishonesty with money. Matthew's Gospel is alone in telling us that, when he saw Jesus had been condemned, he repented, tried to return the money to the chief priests, and hanged himself. In contrast Acts of the Apostles asserts that he bought a field, and there collapsed and died horribly.

It's no surprise then that people have formed intriguingly different ideas of his character, and quite naturally we wish we knew the truth of the matter. But is the truth a question of historical fact?

In expounding Genesis Swedenborg commented that histories can do little to improve us, and nothing to bring us eternal life. For this we need spiritual teaching from the Lord, and that is what the Bible is really, inwardly about. (See Arcana Caelestia 1886) So let's direct our curiosity to the questions. What is it in our lives that Judas stands for? And what is the truth about that?

Judas in us

Swedenborg wrote little about Judas, mostly taking him to represent the Jewish Church, but told us much more about his ancestor Judah (these are Greek and Hebrew forms of the same name). In one passage he links the two as having

The New Church Children's Society



The current recession puts pressures on single parent families in many different ways. Previous comparative affluence is replaced by reduced income and debts. Most of us caught in these situations would find it hard to adapt to a much lowered standard of living with increased demands for repayments.

Many of these families are unaware that the Society can offer help in these circumstances. Ministers and church leaders are aware and this has resulted in an increase in requests for help during the past year.

The result is that NCCS is facing a deficit of around £7,000 for the year. This is a record for us. Happily we can afford it. During the previous 10 years we have run mostly surpluses and have managed to accumulate some funds. If the requests run at the same level, the deficit will be less next year.

We remain extremely grateful to our regular donors both individuals and churches. We thank the many people who act as visitors to the families on our behalf.

NCCS is a 'quiet' organisation whose sole purpose is to relieve the plight of children being brought up with a New Church back-ground. Please help us if you can.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on the school platform of Derby New Church on Saturday June 26th at 12.30 pm. Please come!

Geoffrey Bentley
Honorary Secretary

(Continued from page 9)

differently now, remodelling our Charity / Company to move into the future. We are small in number and challenged financially. A small group is preparing us for an extra meeting in April - we are looking for inspiration. Do you have some? Please will you contact one of us with your ideas? Can we do this with voluntary help? What do you think? Please let us know.

Judith Wilson

(Continued from page 6)

Great grandfather asked for one of his heirs '*in the direct male line*' to perform this honour but, unfortunately for my family, there is now no male Presland who is '*a convinced receiver of the Heavenly Doctrines.*' My well-loved brother, the late Rev John Presland, would have been perfect for this task and today he is represented by his widow, my sister in law, Margaret Presland.

In a moment, it will give me great pleasure to pass over these papers which I hope will be of use to the Swedenborg Society and I finish by quoting these words from two members of my family. First of all, my father, the Rev Claud Presland, wrote: '*I am proud that for generations the Presland family has held firmly to a faith in things spiritual and unseen. I declare from my heart that I have never weakened in my belief in the providence of God to lead us to a new age.*'

And, last of all, these words come from John Presland, one of the founder members of the Swedenborg Society – '*The Church of the New Jerusalem is the sheet anchor of the whole world.*'"

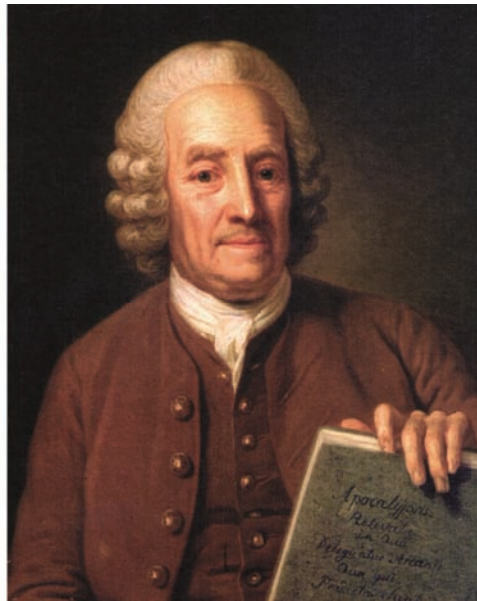
After this fascinating speech by Elisabeth Brooks, Richard Lines invited the President of the Swedenborg Society, Lars Bergquist, to address the meeting. Readers of Lifeline may recall that the Society published Lars Bergquist's biography of Swedenborg, *Swedenborg's Secret*, in 2005 and that in his earlier career Lars was the Swedish Ambassador to Beijing and the Vatican.

The subject of the Lars Bergquist's presentation was *Swedenborg and Linnaeus*. He noted right at the beginning that although they were related this was not his reason for this presentation. Linnaeus was 19 years younger than Swedenborg and both lived for some periods of their lives in Stockholm. Both men grew up in strong Christian households and both their fathers were clergymen in the Lutheran church. From an early age Linnaeus was interested in botany which led to his pivotal work on the classification of plants. Such was his renown that he was one of those who founded the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in 1739 and it was Linnaeus who introduced Swedenborg to the Academy in 1741. Linnaeus had married the daughter of one of Swedenborg's cousins in late 1739 and so they were now related. Linnaeus and Swedenborg lived at a time when the growth of the Age of Reason caused increasing difficulty with the prevailing Christian ethos. Lars further explained that for him, the two men Swedenborg and Linnaeus represented the two quite different philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. Intriguingly Lars also referred to the German writer and Lutheran theologian Johan Arndt whose principal work, *True Christianity*, was written in the early 1600's. Linnaeus was very familiar with this work and it seemed to have had some influence on him.

(Continued on page 8)



Carl Linnaeus



Emanuel Swedenborg

Both men, Lars continued, were looking for the answer to the question – “What is life?” And although both had started their careers immersed in the natural world Swedenborg was soon to leave Linnaeus behind. They were at a crossroads – Linnaeus proceeding on the basis that there was no space for the Divine in the science of his plant classification whereas Swedenborg was being led to see that the earthly world is united with the spiritual world through correspondences as a mirror. Linnaeus became, through his work, the hero of the Swedish nation and the distance between the two men continued to grow as Swedenborg left behind the natural and concentrated on the spiritual. Swedenborg does not discuss earthly scientific classifications but looks at flora and fauna in terms of the Divine image within.

Lars Bergquist concluded his presentation by saying that these two giants of the Swedish 18th Century tackled the same problem. They had differing views on almost all the problems of the time but they never had an open discussion about it. And this dispute goes on – is life nothing more than the natural or is the Divine in everything?

Some excellent refreshments then brought the celebration of the bicentenary of the Swedenborg Society to a close.

Alan Misson

From the Governing Council

Our senior Minister, Mary Duckworth, opened our meeting on 2nd March with readings from AC5949 concerning what ‘reigns’ in us and how all we do should have this ‘essential’ for us in view. Mary talked gently, we reflected and a sphere of love enveloped us - and was recalled at various times throughout the Council’s meditations. Rev Catherine Lauber joined the group of nine in order to communicate as much as possible of the meeting to the ministry. Her presence was a delight with her contributions being very valuable.

Considerable time was used for discussion of communication. The written word is recognised not to be the best tool although we rely on it so much. Minutes can appear very cold and articles like this are not always helpful despite best efforts! There is recognition of the need to consult, share, listen and listen some more, where ever and when ever possible. Some 3000 years ago Epictetus observed, ‘Nature has given to man one tongue, but two ears, that we many hear from others twice as much as we speak.’ Communication punctuated the discussion at frequent intervals - this greater awareness being a new and welcome aspect of our reflections.

It is a huge pleasure to spread good news. Roland Smith has completed his set of 25 magnificent pictures illustrating the book of Revelation. The Apocalypse Study Group has worked ceaselessly to bring about a new understanding of the book of Revelation at the same time and this work is now coming to fruition for the benefit of all those interested. The mounting and framing of the pictures is a current need - watch Lifeline for an opportunity to help by sponsoring completion of a picture!

Further exciting news comes from Scotland with the offer from a team to set up an Internet Church. Members of the Council beamed with delight at such an offer. So many people are working to reach out with the Lord’s Kingdom in view. Purley Chase is looking and feeling great! It is buzzing with activity (to about its maximum capacity with present staffing levels) and is reaching out successfully both locally as it becomes known and nationally through well selected advertising. There is something for anyone who seeks to go. Members of the Council expressed gratitude to all who are working so hard to make this happen and to the volunteers who maintain the grounds so wonderfully.

Creative and inventive people are finding new and exciting ways to move ahead. Maybe some of you can help the Council? Michael Hindley, our CEO, retires next year and we have to find ways of managing without him in post! The Council has been trying and has failed so far. It feels as though we should work

(Continued on page 10)