



# Breaking Bread

Newsletter from the Brisbane Society of The New Church

**OCTOBER and NOVEMBER, 2014**

## EDITORIAL

"I have never seen the point of marriage"

I had first picked up on Dame Helen Mirren, the much-admired and Oscar winning actress, saying this in a TV advertisement promoting the current issue of "The Australian Women's Weekly". In it is a featured interview with her. And if you know me well you will not be surprised that it set me thinking, just as if you also heard her saying it or read that interview it's almost certain to have set you thinking as well.

Resistant at first, I have come to believe that it is actually useful and healthy to have her comment in the public domain, hoping as I do that it stimulates thought and conversation about marriage generally. The thing is, customs, expectations, family pressures, naivety, companionship, romantic idealism and even escapism, can differently be at place causing people to marry. But what is the point of it?

Some might say that marriage is about creating a stable set of circumstances for bringing children into the world. I have heard that often enough, and there is a lot to it. I have also heard it said of marriage that it is about sharing lives and about care and support for one another. True, it is. But both these things can be reasonably achieved outside marriage.

For me, it is hugely significant that the Lord Himself blessed and sanctified marriage. This is my starting point. In the book of Genesis it talks about it not being good for 'man' to be alone. It could be stretching the bow a bit but I get from this, as well as companionship, the suggestion of incompleteness. We 'complete' each other: men and women, in marriage, bringing to it their differing approaches, perspectives and ways of coming at life and issues, each enriching the other. (If you get a chance, and the book "Heaven and Hell" is handy, take a look at paragraphs 368 & 369, especially, 'Men think from the understanding, women think from the will,' etc.)

Here again, marriage is the creating of something that is bigger than either partner can create alone. No more than we, as individuals, live for ourselves, marriage is not so much about ourselves –just to serve each partners' needs – but about the two making

of their relationship a vehicle through which the lives of those around them can be even better served and blessed. I think of things that couples via their marriage can accomplish, the marriage becoming a creative force for good, a couple achieving outcomes through it and by means of it, that neither by him or her self, singly, could hope to do.

And there is another thing. We are in this world not just to learn who we are – though that's mightily important – and not just to get what we can out of life; but to become other than the self-focused individuals who by birth and instinct we incline to be. Within the safety of the commitment of a marriage relationship lessons can be learned about ourselves, rough edges chipped away, behaviour reflected back to us, all to the good of the journey of regeneration to which the Lord is calling us all.

Like I said above, I hope Helen Mirren's comment has triggered all over the country good, healthy and maybe robust conversations about the point of marriage. Let's have such discussions! When the challenges are presented the door is open for clarification and new appreciation and understanding. □ All so very much to the good.

The Lord bless and keep you, always, Ian

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## Message from Rev. Darren Brunne

### "Usefulness and other boring words"

I mean no disrespect with the title. I really do appreciate the way Swedenborg teaches the subject of 'Usefulness' and 'Use'. It truly is an important theme:-

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*Before creation, God was love itself and wisdom itself. That love and that wisdom had a drive to be useful. Without usefulness, love and wisdom are only fleeting abstract entities, and they do indeed fly away if they do not move in the direction of usefulness. The two prior things without the third [love and wisdom without usefulness] are like birds flying across a great ocean that eventually become worn out, fall into the ocean, and drown.*

*God created the universe so that usefulness could exist. Therefore the universe could be called a theater of useful functions. Because we, the human race, are the principal reason for creation, it follows that absolutely everything else was created for our sake. All aspects of the divine design have been brought together and concentrated in us so that God can perform the highest forms of useful service through us.*

Usefulness grounds us and makes us whole, but what are the 'highest forms of useful service'? I believe they are Love and Connection.

When I think of "Use" and "Usefulness" I prefer to think of "Connection", real deep spiritual connection with each other and with The Lord. For me, this word "connection" lifts the word "use" out of the realm of "boring". If I ask myself why hesitate with the word "use", I think it has something to do with the way modern and

post modern society has harmed the word, especially with insults like, “You’re useless!”.

Society in general makes statements like this because an individual has struggled or failed at something that most might consider an everyday duty that is contributing to the needs of others. Here in lie false ideas. Take, for example, someone who is unable to care for themselves let alone others. A person who is sick or incapacitated is contributing to the needs of others by giving others an opportunity to render service. They may be contributing in many other subtle ways too.

The other reason I like the word “connection” in place of “use” is that it clarifies for me the importance we have for each other in even the smallest things such as a smile or a word of encouragement. I find it liberating and a very powerful thought process to see someone who is being selfish, self absorbed or "useless" as being "disconnected" and "isolated" from the source of life. I'm not suggesting we do away with the word "use" but that we explore "connection" as one of the highest "uses" of the human form.

In the end, the object we all seek for and long for is to “belong” and to be connected to something greater than ourselves. We might try and achieve this through selfish domination of others, but it never authentically works nor does it ease the dark, chaotic, emptiness inside us. When we surrender to each other in Love and Wisdom, we can experience real connection with the highest reality, The Lord Himself (Divine Love and Wisdom 14).

If you want to be successful and do well in life, seek real meaningful connection with others. Take the time, energy and effort to authentically “be” with others, listening to them and knowing them. In this way we “Love” them and are “Useful” to them.

Amen

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## Notices

### Annual General Meeting

Just to remind everybody that the Annual General Meeting of our Church is to be held at 12.30 p.m. **following** the Family Service on Sunday, 5 □ October, 2014.

It would be great to have a well-supported meeting, this being Darren’s first as our new Pastor and a fine opportunity to hear him map out his vision for taking the Church forward into the future.

### Philip Island Camp Monday, 29 December to Sunday, 4 January 2015

Some 80 people, adults and children, have signed up for the Camp and this is excellent. We have a contingent of just over 20 going from Queensland and there are some 15 people from Perth who have booked.

There remains room for more, so if you are turning it over in your mind, whether to

go, act fairly quickly and book your spot! Remember there is a subsidy for the children.

## Bi-monthly all-age Family Service

In response to a request by the parents, Darren is trialing a bi-monthly all-age Family Service, every one of all ages remaining in Church for the whole Service. Be sure this all-age Service will be child orientated but also holding a very short message for the adults present. The first of these Services is to be held on Sunday, 5 October, 2014.

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## "Depression and suicide"

by Rev. Todd Beiswenger

No doubt by the time you read this you will have heard that actor and comedian Robin Williams took his own life on 11 August. Apparently he had fallen into depression, something he dealt with most of his life. He was on a cocktail of medications to help, but in addition to his antidepressants he was taking medications to combat early stage Parkinson's disease which may have exacerbated his depression and led to the suicide. Some of his friends have speculated that he committed suicide because he used cycling as a means to keep sober and out of alcohol addiction, and he was afraid that when Parkinson's took away his ability to cycle he would fall back into alcoholism. Maybe it is some combination of both...we'll never really know.

However, his passing does make it a good time to talk about suicide and depression. When we look through the Bible we find many instances of people being depressed, and we can find examples of people wanting and actually committing suicide, so they are not problems exclusive to modern times. Recently I've preached on the subjects individually, and you can find the sermons on our web page in the media section. But I think this is a really important subject, which is why I want to take some space here to write about some general teachings available to us in the New Church.

First off, let me say that there's no reason to believe that people who commit suicide go to hell. That's just not stated anywhere in the Bible or in any of Swedenborg's Writings. I do think we can say suicide is "wrong" because we are upsetting the natural order of things. When a person is created, God does not intend for them to kill themselves. He intends for them to live a long life and die of old age in their sleep. It just doesn't always work out that way. Yet despite a person upsetting the natural order of things, that one act does not commend them to hell. Hell is for evil people. Hell is not for good people who do one evil thing.

A good general teaching on this comes from "Secrets of Heaven". Essentially it states that good spirits, i.e. people who have passed into the next life but have not yet made it to heaven or to hell, are not punished at all in the next life. In fact, when good spirits do something bad, they're given some slack:

*But, as regards good spirits, if perchance they speak or do evil, they are not punished, but pardoned and also excused. For their end is not to speak or do evil. And they know that such things are excited in them by hell, so that they have not come to pass by their fault; and the same is also observed from their resistance, and afterward from their grief.” (6559)*

This general teaching provides comfort that a singular act such as suicide, or any evil for that matter, doesn't condemn an otherwise good person.

While they are not destined to hell, there is reason to believe that a person who commits suicide is going to have some things to work out on the other side....and it might not be any fun. While in a depressed state we have spiritual associations that aren't good, and we come to see and be with these associations when we transition into the next life. Swedenborg writes about this in his diary:

*A certain one in the life of the body had committed suicide by stabbing himself, having been driven to desperation through depression, to which he had been driven by diabolical spirits. He came to me complaining that he had been miserably treated by evil spirits, and said that he was among the furies who were continually provoking him...He also seemed to have a knife in his hand which he wanted to drive into his breast. He laboured hard with that knife, wanting to throw it away from himself but without success. For whatever happens in the last hour of death remains for a long time before it disappears, as I was told. (Spiritual Diary 1336, 1337)*

This is a specific instance for one person, not a general teaching, so whilst this one person went through a process of being tormented by evil spirits for a time, we really shouldn't make generalizations based on something written in Swedenborg's diary. However, there are general teachings that say whatever inner problems we have in this life we will generally have to face in the next life...and it might not be pleasant dealing with them.

But what if you can't deal with them here and now? I think all of Christianity teaches that life comes from the Lord, and that of ourselves we have no life of our own, rather we are receivers of life. At first pass it sounds like a pretty abstract teaching that isn't particularly useful to us, but when considering depression or any mental illness we start to see why we are taught this. You see, if we are in fact just receivers of life, it does allow for the receiver to be broken. Think of it like this: your radio is a receiver of FM and AM signals. There is no music in the transistors, but when they function properly music is played through them. If, however, some electronic part fails, the radio will cease to be a proper receiver of the signals, and a similar situation can occur in people. Something can be biologically wrong that essentially “tunes” us in to more negative frequencies. When this is the case, we are not able to deal with our problems and change our ways. Here's how it is written in “Divine Providence”:

*The reason no one is reformed in a state of mental illness is that mental illness deprives us of rationality and therefore of the freedom to act rationally. The mind is sick and not healthy, and while a healthy mind is rational, a sick one is not. The illnesses are things like depression, imagined or illusory guilt, various kinds of hallucinations, mental anguish brought on by misfortunes, and mental anxiety and pain brought on by physical disorders. These are sometimes thought of as temptations, but they are not. Real temptations focus on spiritual issues, and during*

*them the mind is in possession of its skills. The states I am talking about focus on earthly issues and during them the mind goes mad.* “(Paragraph 141)

This can be comforting in one way, because it is nice to be able to think that, “Yes, there is something wrong with me! It’s not my fault I feel lousy.”

There are, however, other kinds of depression. There are what amounts to “spiritual” depression and a “natural” depression. The former has more to do with not living up to the kind of person you want to be and the inner fight and acknowledgement of failure can bring on depression. The “natural” depression is more about bad luck, misfortunes and worrying about other issues that don’t have to do with our spiritual life but are nonetheless unpleasant. With these kinds of depression the common problem is the spiritual company we keep. The more depressed we allow ourselves to get, the more depressing thoughts pour in. Even when miserable if we are able to keep our thinking positive we can return ourselves to only hearing the good, affirmative and assuring teachings that the Lord loves us, has a plan for us, and is taking us to a good end. We must suffer ourselves to hope, and if we’re good at it – which isn’t always easy – we, with the Lord’s help, can dig ourselves out of the pit of despair.

*Reprinted with Todd’s permission.*

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## Birthdays –



*To all our friends celebrating birthdays in the next two months we wish you birthday greetings and blessings.*

**In October:** Vivian Lawler (5<sup>th</sup>); Mrs Annabel Duff (11<sup>th</sup>); Mrs Lyn Williams (17<sup>th</sup>); Mrs Muriel Barrett and Sophia Barns (18<sup>th</sup>); Alex Lee (21<sup>st</sup>); Matthew Heldon (23<sup>rd</sup>); Ken Thompson (28<sup>th</sup>); Daniel Harry (30<sup>th</sup>).

**In November:** Callum Glenn (1<sup>st</sup>); Justin Keane (5<sup>th</sup>); Brian Heldon (8<sup>th</sup>); Mary Alden (9<sup>th</sup>); Jacob Glenn (10<sup>th</sup>); Gabrielle MacFarlane (21<sup>st</sup>)

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**Note:** The lovely pastel drawings at the top are by Lenore Sandow.

## News from Glenn and Mary

*(Excerpts from an email to Ian)*

“We think of you often, though time has been flying. We had a good trip in the Canadian Rockies for our anniversary on the 22<sup>nd</sup> August, went sailing in the San Juan islands with the same friends we sailed with in the Whitsundays, Ken and Jennifer Lee, and then this last two days we entertained friends who came up from Tucson. We spent one day sailing on a ferry out to an island off the coast, and exploring around and eating fish and chips and clam strips. A jolly time.

In an hour or so (6 September) John, Hilde and Ursula will be coming down for the weekend. We have lots of work to do and plans to discuss for the winter with them.

It is wonderful to be around our grandchildren and our daughters. We haven't seen our sons yet.

Love, Glenn”

## **Wedding**

Warm congratulations and very best wishes to Peter Larsen and Eva Samachis who were married in Romania on 16 August. A Service of Blessing on their marriage is to take place on Saturday, 4 October on Mt. Tamborine, where they now live, Ian officiating. Their new address: 45 Sequoia Drive, Mt. Tamborine, Qld, 4272

## **Christmas Services**

Arrangements are now in place for two Services:

The first on **Sunday, 7 December**, a **pre-Christmas Family Service** followed by lunch as usual and then **Carol Singing** at Rosalie Nursing Home. The Service is to be led by Ken Barns, possibly assisted by Darren Lawler, (depending on work rostering).

Then two weeks later on **Sunday, 21 December**, our **Christmas Service** will be led by Darren Brunne and include a **Nativity Tableau**, followed by festive lunch and children's games. A soccer match is proposed at the nearby Park on Baroona Road! And, who knows? This could become an annual event.

## **Youthful travellers**

Two of our young people, Georgie Duff and Tasha Lee are looking forward to overseas travel in the next few weeks. There is an element of uncertainty about Georgie's trip to Japan, under the auspices of “Cheer Leaders”, but she has her fingers crossed it will go ahead. Tasha is off to Cambodia to experience – and to be immersed in - village life there, the trip (organised under the auspices of her School) being all about learning what it is like for people living in disadvantaged circumstances there, no doubt being challenged and hopefully being inspired at the same time.

And this is lovely news, Daniel Harry with his brother Scott and Carers, leave for a short ocean cruise on 1 November, something they have longed to be able to do.

## **Church contact details**

The Church is at 21 Agars Street, Rosalie, just up from Baroona Road. Presently Services are held on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays of each month at 10.30 a.m. Always

check the Calendar at the end of our Newsletter.

Pastor: Rev. Darren Brunne, contactable on 0421 319 252.

Secretary: Mrs Gaye Heldon, contactable on 07-5577 8772. Address: P. O. Box 359, Sanctuary Cove, Qld. 4212.

For activities on the Gold Coast and Mt Tamborine meetings contact Mrs Gaye Heldon on 07-5577 8772.

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## Calendar

### OCTOBER

- Sun 5<sup>th</sup>** 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday – All-age **Family Service** at 10.30 a.m incl. Holy Supper. No separate children's classes. Light lunch together afterwards. Followed by **Annual General Meeting** at 12.30 p.m.
- Fri 17<sup>th</sup>** Mt. Tamborine Discussion meeting at John and Lenore's home at 2.30 p.m.
- Sun 12<sup>th</sup>** No Service.
- Sun 19<sup>th</sup>** 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday – **Morning Service** at 10.30 a.m. (Ian)
- Sun 26<sup>th</sup>** **Worship Circle:** Bible focus and reflection (Ian)

### NOVEMBER

- Sun 2<sup>nd</sup>** 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday – **Family Service** at 10.30 a.m incl. Holy Supper. Children's classes and a light lunch together afterwards.
- Sun 9<sup>th</sup>** No Service.
- Fri 14<sup>th</sup>** Mt. Tamborine Discussion meeting at Brian and Gaye's home at 2.30 p.m.
- Sun 16<sup>th</sup>** 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday – **Morning Service** at 10.30 a.m.
- Sun 23<sup>rd</sup>** **Worship Circle:** Bible focus and reflection (Ian)
- Sun 30<sup>th</sup>** No Service.