

Sydney Society Newsletter

Issued by the Sydney Society of the New Church
Established in 1875

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February 2015

The Faith of the New Church is summarized as follows:

There is one God in whom is the Divine Trinity. He is the Lord God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Saving faith is to believe in Him. Evil actions are not to be done because they are from hell and of hell. Good actions are to be done because they are from God and of God. These are to be done by a person as though they are done by himself, yet believing that they are from the Lord working in him and through him.



“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

Luke 5.31-32

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Friendship Group begins its year on Wednesday February 4th
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The Minister of the Sydney Society is Rev. Julian Duckworth and he can be contacted at any time either by telephone (02) 9416 7026/7032 or by a personal visit to 4 Shirley Road, Roseville, for any pastoral help or guidance. Let the Minister know in good time about pastoral concerns with people - including yourself too - so that he can give help where and when it is needed.

FROM THE MINISTER

POWER

I said to somebody recently that it might be a good idea for all power outlets to be switched off for one day each year, essential services like hospitals and so on being left on. This would make people do normal things differently, like read a book, talk to actual people, walk to the shops and so on. Of course, while we do have Earth Hour, this suggestion will never happen and I'm not really on a hobbyhorse with it. But we do depend on power usage for so much and increasingly.

Another form of power is with people themselves, especially those who hold high positions and seek to get things done. We all know the phrase 'Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely'. I've always valued those words in the gospels where Jesus says such things as "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and the servant of all" and about himself Jesus said, "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Personally I have always much preferred the word '**empowering**' to 'power' because it's truer, and it also keeps alive the sense of being given power for something useful and good. So again, in the gospels, Jesus says, "The Son of Man has power on earth to **forgive sins**" and the sinful person – not the Lord – is the beneficiary. The disciples too were given power "to cast our demons" and "to have power over unclean spirits" leaving troubled people free of their torment.

We begin to build up a picture that all power is given to people to use

for greater good. It can come in all sorts of ways. If you are eloquent, you have the power of persuasion. If you are charismatic, you have the power of attraction. If you are organised, you have the power to set up and run a team, and if you are physically strong, just think what you could do. All of these can be used for good or for harm.

So with this in mind – empowering, not only being powerful – it isn't a surprise that one whole chapter in 'Heaven and Hell' is all about the power of the angels of heaven. You might like to read it, in paragraphs 228-233 but we'll just mention a few interesting things from it. Some people, it says, think that angels are so pure and vapoury (my word) that they can't have any power, but angels are spirits and it is our spirit – our will – which gets our body doing what we tell it to, not the other way round.

There's also the point that myriads of bad spirits can be put to flight by a true word from one angel. Numbers count for nothing with angels, nor do tricks and cunning because they see through them and shatter them there and then. It all sounds a bit cosmic, but it happens here at times, perhaps less dramatically. A group of people discuss a situation and come up with ideas, and then someone says, "But this is simply ridiculous!" and everything changes.

The most important point though is that angels have all their power from the Lord, not from themselves. And they only have their power as they acknowledge that it comes to them from the Lord. Forget that, and it disappears!

So I think that the main things for us to pick up from all this are that we have power, that we may have more power than we realise, that we can misuse our power if we're not careful, that we carry the responsibility of having the power we do, and that we watch it like a hawk and keep it clean, yet use it with all our might to bring about whatever changes need to be made.

Think about empowering rather than raw power.

Julian

OUR ANNUAL MEETING

Formal notice of this was in the December Newsletter. Please come if you can to be part of the AGM on **Sunday February 22nd**. Everybody is welcome. The meeting is at 11.30 a.m. and should last for about one hour.

Reports and Accounts will be sent about 10 days before the meeting.

THE PHILLIP ISLAND FAMILY CAMP

Close to 80 people came together for nearly a week stretching either side of New Year. The weather was lovely for much of the time and we were able to be outside. This is the fourth time we have used the resort for a camp. It has excellent facilities and onsite outdoor activities.

Thanks go to Rev Martin Pennington and his team of helpers – Len, Judy, Marian, Peter – for running a successful camp, and equal thanks to Rev Chris Skinner and Margaret for a huge amount of work prior to the camp. Chris and Margaret were unable to be there.



Devotions and Presentations were given by the ministers at camp: David Moffat, Todd Beiswenger, Trevor Moffat, Martin Pennington and Julian Duckworth. This year we didn't have a theme but everyone did what they chose to present. It works well. The first all-camp

sessions included David's activity on how the Old Testament in Hebrew gives concrete forms for abstract ideas ("stiff-necked" people = rebellious people); Todd's all-camp activity on how to survive heaven, likening it to being on the moon and using NASA's list of moon-related survival items; Julian's all-camp activities on Climbing up and down Ladders and also the profound question of "Does God actually think?" Martin led 2 adult sessions on Paul (NT Epistles) and

Swedenborg, working towards their similarity not their often-claimed difference.

Phillip Island offers a large number of things to see and do, including a boat trip to Seal Rocks where the largest colony of seals in Australia is, the famous Penguin Parade, and the beaches, shops and tourist activities.

It was good to have nearly 20 people from South East Queensland, along with children, and nearly 20 people all the way from Perth, again with children.

Hundreds of photos are up on www.newchurch.net.au but here are 4 –



We are pleased to let people know that the 2016 Family Camp will be at Vision Valley in Arcadia, beyond Dural and it will be from Monday January 4th to Sunday January 10th.

STEWARDS AND FLOWERS FOR FEBRUARY

Sunday	Steward(s)	Flowers
1 st (Sac.)	John Wilson	Glen Hart
8 th	David Curry	Philip Brodsky
15 th	Tracey Glendenning	Lynne Twemlow
22 nd	Wayne Kasmar	Jan Primrose

FRIENDSHIP GROUP NEWS

Our first meeting for the year will be on Wednesday February 4th beginning with coffee and cake at 10.45 a.m. It will also be our annual meeting and our text for the year will be chosen, so please bring along your ideas for a suitable one.

Julian will talk to us about “Five Smooth Stones” and we will enjoy a shared lunch afterwards.

Everyone is welcome and we look forward to it.

Glen Hart

HARVEST IN MARCH

Please make a note that our Harvest Thanksgiving will be, as usual, on the 2nd Sunday in March, on **Sunday 8th**. We will decorate the church the day before, and have a lunch in the hall.

SNIPPETS FROM THE SCRAPBOOK

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.
– John Donne

In all the universe nothing remains permanent and unchanged but the spirit.
- Anton Chekhov

There is only one step from the sublime to the ridiculous.
- Napoleon Bonaparte

Resolve not to be poor: whatever you have, spend less.
– Samuel Johnson

That best portion of a man's life, his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love.

- William Wordsworth

Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.

- Lao-tzu

(These are all taken from "Immortal Words – History's Most Memorable Quotations" by Terry Breverton)

Stella Green

SWEDENBORG CENTRE NEWS

We hope you've had a relaxing and enjoyable holiday season and have much to look forward to in 2015.

Afterlife Conference

We attended the Afterlife Explorers Conference held on 24-26th January 2015 at the Parramatta RSL Club. The main person organising the event is Mick Turner. Two people who spoke and are familiar with Swedenborg's writings were Joe Vandermeer and Dr Michele Knight.

I was very happy in attending the Conference which had an interesting and diverse range of topics, with many people knowing of Swedenborg and quite a number having read some of his writings. We provided a complimentary copy of 'Awaken from death' by David St Armour & James F. Lawrence. (1990, 70 pages, paperback). Sub-titled 'A detailed description of the soul's journey into the spiritual realm upon bodily death', the first part of this book contains a selection of quotations taken from Swedenborg's book Heaven and Hell concerning a person's waking from death in the spiritual realm and the processes immediately thereafter. The second part is a succinct biography of Swedenborg. This gift was well appreciated.

Sales were excellent, interest in our display of items very strong with people signing up for future news.

It was a wonderful opportunity to network with the possibility of two of the speakers giving talks at the Swedenborg Centre and the

opportunity to have a radio session on Swedenborg and the Afterlife.

There was a good buzz at the inaugural Afterlife Explorer's Conference with the participants very happy with the program and talk of making it an annual event and holding it in New Zealand and Melbourne. It was a very worthwhile event to be part of. If you wish to find out more, their website is <http://www.afterlifeexplorers.com.au/>.

Michael Chester

SOCIETY NEWS



Our Church Christmas services and events all went well. The Nativity Play was done by William who read and sang, Zachary, Amelia, Lynabella and Zoe, in a simple but effective retelling of the Bible story leading up to the Christmas story. Santa

dropped in to the church party afterwards to give presents.

The Salvation Army were delighted with the gifts we took which were many and very special. Thank you very much to church people and also to several of our outside lettings groups who gave generously.

The Exodus Foundation wrote to us: "Dear Friends, Thank you so much for your kind donation of groceries. Without your generosity we simply couldn't be here day after day providing support to those less fortunate than ourselves. Your contribution helps to keep costs down, allowing us to spend more money on frontline services for our guests. God Bless, Rev Bill Crews"

Our love and prayers continue to go to Judy Probert and to Dave and their family. I visited Judy on January 25th (Sunday) and found her looking good and able to join in chat. She will move from the Mater Hospital to Greenwich Palliative Care Hospital.

Eight of us went to the recent camp, reported elsewhere, and very much enjoyed everything that went on.

The combined Offertories at the Lessons and Carols and on Christmas Day came to \$550 and this will be donated to Hope House, the foster care program in Auckland New Zealand run by the Keyworths. Thank you.



In conjunction with the Swedenborg Association we are offering an opportunity to read directly from Swedenborg's writings in a group setting during 2015 and possibly beyond. This will be at least on a monthly basis on Friday evenings and possibly fortnightly with other groups happening midweek if there is an interest.

We would read pages aloud for a while and then stop for comment or question and then repeat all this a second time. There is great benefit from this activity especially doing it together with others.

We will be using the book 'Regeneration' which is a collection of 5 major chapters in Swedenborg dealing with spiritual living.

An introduction to this will be covered, along with a try-out, at the Swedenborg Centre on Friday January 30th, starting at 7.45 p.m. Anyone is welcome and also to join in at any time from then on. Ask Michael Chester or Julian for more information.

SOME SPIRITUAL MATHS

Here we are in the year 2015. One of the things at the camp was a Treasure Hunt, one for the children and one for the adults. One of the adult searches was to work out the binary number for 2015. Binary uses only 0s and 1s. 2015 in binary is quite 'beautiful' – take a look...

1111101111

The first thing you notice is that it is symmetrical or a palindrome like 'radar'. But I thought it offered some interesting spiritual ideas for 2015 such as all things in life gathering round the centre which is the Lord; such as the equal balance between the two sides, like love and wisdom, faith and charity; and such as the two sets of 'five' which are like our hands carrying out good actions done for others and offered to the Lord in our life. You may get some other ideas.

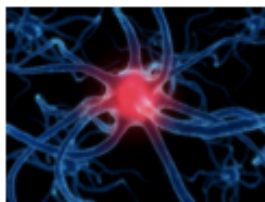


Swedenborg Association of Australia Inc.

North Ryde Group - Telephone: (02) 9888 1066

website: www.swedenborg.com.au

What our cells can teach us



**A conversation between
Dr Bruce Lipton and Tami Simon**

Facilitated by Michael Chester

FRIDAY 27TH FEBRUARY 2015 at 7.45pm

**Swedenborg Centre,
1 Avon Road, North Ryde**

Cost: \$7; concession \$5 (including refreshments)

The evening is focusing on a far-reaching conversation between Dr Bruce Lipton and Tami Simon that is a podcast from Insights at the Edge. They spoke about the lessons we can learn from our cells, the connection between what he calls "the field" and our physical body, and what he believes really drives evolution.

This conversation was chosen because Bruce bridges science and spirituality in his own unique and wonderful way and Tami Simon is an amazing interviewer. We will gain greater insights into the human body, better appreciate what a wonderful body we have, be encouraged to utilise our sensing capabilities better, share in the transformative insights that Bruce discovered in his studies on cells that helped him realise his true identity and immortal nature, and see a modern way of appreciating Divine Influx.

The conversation goes for half an hour. Michael has appreciated the uplifting message of Bruce Lipton for many years. Bruce is a wonderful teacher and speaker and has a knack in conveying his highly significant ideas in terms that are appreciated by many people. Michael will introduce the conversation and facilitate discussion afterwards.

THE PILLARS OF NEW CHURCH BELIEFS



Continuing a series on our beliefs in plain English. This time we'll think about **holiness**.

The word *holy* is closely linked to two other good words – heal and whole. Some churches offer healing services to help people become whole. Today, most people know that a holistic approach to life means looking at everything together, mind, body and spirit.

This is very different from the popular idea of holy as something set apart or revered. A church building can be seen as a holy place – or place of holiness – because people get help from its quietness, or feel its atmosphere or the beauty and awe of its décor. It is not of the world.

So while we might need and value such helps and reminders, we shouldn't limit holiness to them. There is personal holiness in many people's lives when they live sincerely, act authentically, carefully manage the way they respond to the people they are with and choose to join in things or not join in as they see fit.

People like this set their personal standards very high but they aren't walking around in white robes. You might not notice any difference about them to anyone else, but when you get to know someone like this fairly well, you begin to sense there is something special about them.

So try and see holiness more completely rather than compartmentally. It all comes from God and this is the ground of everything holy. See it in ordinary things like a box of matches or a toothpick – yes it's there. See it in astounding things like the motionless hovering of a hawk and its sudden plunge. But most of all see it in humanity and the endeavours of those who wish good to all others.

Wherever you see it, God is being received in holy ground.

HOW SHALL I SING THY MAJESTY?



I recently went with one of our members to St James on King Street for a magnificent Choral Service. At the end we all sang a hymn with the above title to a tune called 'Coe Fen' which looks Welsh (to me) but is near Cambridge. The choir led us and I got caught up in it.

Here are its four excellent verses ~

How shall I sing that majesty which angels do admire?
Let dust in dust and silence lie – sing, sing, ye heavenly choir.
Thousands of thousands stand around thy throne, O God most high;
Ten thousand times ten thousand sound thy praise, but who am I?

Thy brightness unto them appears, whilst I thy footsteps trace;
A sound of God comes to my ears but they behold thy face.
They sing, because thou art their sun, Lord, send a beam on me;
For where heaven is but once begun, there, alleluyas be.

Enlighten with faith's light my heart, inflame it with love's fire,
Then shall I sing and take my part with that celestial choir.
I shall, I fear, be dark and cold, with all my fire and light;
Yet when thou dost accept their gold, Lord, treasure up my mite.

How great a being, Lord, is thine, which doth all beings keep!
Thy knowledge is the only line to sound so vast a deep:
Thou art a sea without a shore, a sun without a sphere;
Thy time is now and evermore, thy place is everywhere.

John Mason (1645-1694)

FINAL FABLE

One day the sun and a cave struck up a conversation. The sun had trouble understanding 'dark' and 'dank' and the cave couldn't work out 'light' and 'clear'. They agreed to swap places. The cave went up to the sun and said, 'This is beyond wonderful; now come down and see where I live.' The sun came down to the cave and said, 'Gee, I don't see any difference!'