

# Sydney Society Newsletter

Issued by the Sydney Society of the New Church

Established in 1875

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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.



*And on the seventh day God ended His work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day.*                      Genesis 2.1

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*The Swedenborg Reading Group is on Friday July 22nd*  
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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**

### **GOODNESS ONLY KNOWS !**

No, this isn't a comment about the result of the election but an introduction to the idea of good and goodness. You can see that the heading is a phrase we often use but it's so common that we might not have stopped and thought about what we're saying. "Goodness only knows!"

I was introduced to such sayings several years ago when, during a service Ruth and I went to, one of our retired ministers came out with a beauty. "You know," he told us, "people say that something is too good to be true." And then he went on to comment superbly about how ridiculous that idea is and how if something is genuinely good it must be absolutely true! I could have hugged him.

If something is good, it can mean many things. It might taste good, do us good, feel good, encourage us, help someone practically, be right, be just and fair, and so on. But maybe we can go deeper and get to the heart of something that is truly good. In our teachings there is a great phrase that "Good is love in action". I really like that because it brings love out into doing something which is good.

I am sure it's no coincidence that 'Good' and 'God' are very similar words. I'd even go so far as to say that from our end of things it's very helpful to think of genuine goodness being the will of God. We're given minds and hearts, and arms and legs, so that we can go around doing what is good, knowing why we do it and how best to.

In one of the epistles in the New Testament there is a powerful statement. *“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God.”* (Romans 8.28) That sounds very encouraging. If you love God and if you love what is of God, then your life will begin to come together well and be on an even keel or a good footing.

Try to see that this is not so much about events out there in life as about things going on inside you. Good people get killed in road accidents as well as bad or stupid people, but maybe not so many. People I have known who seem genuinely good have died from cancer or lost their job. And yet, while that is true, I would still suggest that living a sensible life based on a love for God brings us a protection. There are many things I just wouldn't do, so I don't.

It's about all things working together for good, and this is mostly meant to happen inside us, in our mind and heart. One way of describing it is to see how our understanding of life broadens out and deepens when we go on the path of a love of God. We're steadier and more observant.

I remember another retired minister making us smile when he said that being in a bad mood is likely to trigger off a chain of events. You break the milk bottle and cut your hand and then scald yourself on the cooker as you reach out, and then miss the step as you rush out of the room for a cloth. This is a picture of all things not working together. Try and picture the opposite, and you've got it. Good for you!

Good is love in action. Love is a verb as well as a noun. Find some way to do something useful and do it for somebody else than yourself. God did well in making us individual people because while we might feel lonely or feel sorry for ourselves we can also begin to build relationships and make bridges and find out what we have in common and learn from each other. After creating it all, God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. Of course it was, because God knew what wonderful good things would come from it all.

*Julian*

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## **CHANGES AT THE SWEDENBORG CENTRE**

Joe Vandermeer will become the Director of the Swedenborg Centre from July 1st this year. He takes over from Michael Chester who has been the Director for six and a half years. It will be a full time appointment of five days a week.

Michael recommended this changeover to the Church Committee two months ago and after discussion and consideration it has been agreed and happily endorsed. Michael will be available to assist at the Centre in any way that is needed.

We have much to thank Michael for during his time at the Swedenborg Centre. He has worked hard on the kind of changes in today's world that are needed. This has been in regular upgrading of the websites, in placing advertisements and dealing with subsequent enquiries, in arranging for a much appreciated Swedenborg presence in two Afterlife Conferences, in arranging the talks that are presented at the Centre, in creating several specific projects such as making the Swedenborg Radio Talks available online, in the running of the Centre during a period of considerable changes and its physical improvements, and of course with the bread and butter day by day work.



Joe brings his skills in modern technology, business management, his experience in counselling and his own personal passion to bring the teachings given through Swedenborg to other people for their awareness and benefit. He has a wide range of interests and also contacts with others and is very keen to develop initiatives.

Joe, his wife Ellie and their son Damian live in Berowra. He has been the President of the Swedenborg Association of Australia for a term of

five years and has been a regular contributor to its quarterly journal, Candela.

We look forward to new things with the Swedenborg Centre and we give Joe and Michael our support and encouragement in this important work of sharing what we have the privilege of having been given.

Julian Duckworth

### **SWEDENBORG CENTRE NEWS**

This Newsletter announces my retirement of full-time work as Director of the Swedenborg Centre, with Joe Vandermeer taking over on the 1st of July 2016. So this will be my last Newsletter report as Director.

With my reports, you have learned what's been happening at the Centre in a general way, with announcements of new books published; Swedenborgian events around the world that I found exciting and wished to share with you; and occasionally the deep appreciation of customers who express their delight in encountering Swedenborg via his Writings and associated works. And in my May report you would have read my reflections on the good that the Swedenborg Centre does.

As I retire, I would like to express my appreciation to the Church committee for facilitating this smooth transition to a new Director, and in particular the Finance Committee.

I have had the privilege of knowing Joe for many years and consider our friendship a great blessing. I have gotten to know him better during the time he has assisted me at the Centre. He has looked after the Centre when both Elizabeth and I have been on holidays. He is a very gifted person, and during his time here, I have had the opportunity to appreciate his skills better and see him well suited to the role of Director of the Swedenborg Centre. In fact, he is

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outstanding in many ways, and I see it as providential that the timing has worked out well for this transition.

There are exciting things happening in the world associated with Swedenborg's legacy and I mentioned them in my annual report to the Roseville Society's AGM. One of them relates to the fantastic work being done by the Swedenborg Foundation. It's been a privilege to be the Director for the past 6 1/2 years carrying on the good work of my predecessors. It's an exciting time in many ways regarding Swedenborg's life-enriching influence, and with Joe's enthusiasm and charisma you will see the good working continuing.

My connection with the Swedenborg Centre will continue as I will be available to do casual work when needed.

I wish Joe all the very best as he commences his new role and if you don't know Joe, please introduce yourself when you see him and wish him well too.

Michael Chester, Director

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### **SNIPPETS FROM THE SCRAPBOOK**

*No government can be long secure without a formidable opposition.*

- Disraeli

Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak out and remove all doubt.

- Abraham Lincoln

*It is bad enough to know the past; it would be intolerable to know the future.*

- Somerset Maugham

A doctor can bury his mistakes, but an architect can only advise his client to plant vines.

- Frank Lloyd Wright

*It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.* - Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Talking about our problems is our greatest addiction. Break the habit.  
Talk about your joys. - Rita Schiano

Stella Green

### STEWARDS AND FLOWERS FOR JULY

Sunday	Steward	Flowers
3 <sup>rd</sup> (Sacrament)	John Wilson	Christine Gospodarczyk
10 <sup>th</sup>	Graham Hanna	Elizabeth Kemmis
17 <sup>th</sup>	David Curry	Glen Hart
24 <sup>th</sup>	Wayne Kasmar	Tracey Glendenning
31 <sup>st</sup>	Rhonda Hall	Elizabeth Kemmis

### SYNCHRONICITY SPOT

Just last Sunday I decided to get the train to Hurstville to take their service and come home on the train too. I was dismayed that from Central to Hurstville would be by bus. So I got on the bus at Central Station and saw that someone coming off the bus had dropped a \$5 note. I picked it up and handed it to the bus driver. He just shrugged his shoulders and gave it me back. I thought I would ‘pay it forward’ to a charity. And so to Hurstville.



The bus back to Central was packed, and a Chinese lady sat next to me and turned round to talk to her husband. She kept changing position on our narrow seat. At Central the two of them got up to ‘disembark’. I was by the window. Lo and behold, on the seat was \$2.15 in four coins. Not mine, I thought. Hers! I picked them up and rushed through the crowd to hand them back. She was puzzled, then pleased, then grateful, and her husband looked back at me smiling, three times. If you get a bus, get it on a Sunday. You never know what you’ll find.

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## **SOCIETY NEWS**

Our service for New Church Day was a good one. It was well attended and there was a savoury special Morning Tea after the service which everyone enjoyed. Thanks to those who brought the food. It was good to see Graeme Doherty again and catch up with him.

The previous two days I was with Hurstville friends down in Loftus at Camp Wanawong. Todd Beiswenger and I shared sessions and there was good free time and a camp fire with stories. But I remember the eating the most. Well done to those Hurstville people.

The Angel Service had a Winter Solstice dinner on Saturday June 25<sup>th</sup> and there were eleven of us, and we too had a log fire blazing away. The food was good winter warming dishes, and dessert warmed us too. In the Angel Service we looked at and talked about a list of our feelings.

Our love and good wishes and prayers to Anne Stephen who is due to have more treatment for her back. Roy Simmonds is now in 'rehab' and going fairly well, with a visit back home to assess things. Several people are going away during July and we wish them well.

You will see earlier in this Newsletter that the Director of the Swedenborg Centre will change from Michael to Joe on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Before June is out, several of us – around 12 – will gather at a restaurant further along Avon Road, newly opened, and come together to thank Michael Chester.

## **JANUARY CAMP**

I believe that several people are more than thinking about going to the Camp. If you are, do pick up a leaflet and booking form, or ask me for one. You can book online and pay the deposit online these days. But we need your booking in by September 1<sup>st</sup> so that we know where we are with numbers.

I hear that several people will be coming from a great distance to the camp. We're a bit closer, almost down the road. So do think about it.

## THE SPECIAL NUMBER 7



Seven days in a week  
 Seven notes in a normal musical scale  
 Seven colours in the rainbow  
 Seven chakras  
 Seven New Testament virtues  
 Seven days of creation

This month of July is the seventh month of the year. The number 7 has always been seen as significant by many cultures and religions. It's a number that stands alone and doesn't fit in. It is the first real prime number with no other relationship before it.

It is also seen as the truly spiritual number. The best-known example of this is the seventh day on which God rested after the six days of creation. And Islam has the seven heavens which might have given us the idea of being in seventh heaven.

In the Hebrew alphabet the 7<sup>th</sup> letter is 'zayin' our 'z' It looks like this:



Its name means 'a sword put away in its sheath' like the picture shows. In other words a sword at rest, which seems close to the Creation story of the seventh day on which God rested after ending his work. Even the shape looks fairly like our number 7 but I don't know if there's a connection.

7 is seen as holy, perfection, completion and divine. We have what the Bible calls the seventh day or later, the Sabbath. "You shall do no work on the Sabbath for on the seventh day God rested....." What did God rest from doing? That's easy. Making everything. Yes, but what does that mean? It means the Lord's work with us, regenerating us, remaking us, changing us from being worldly to being heavenly, from being self-centred to being someone who serves others. This work is God's work and God's wish for each of us. And when it is done it is holy, perfect, complete and divine. And we have been made.

## **A DOWNSIZING INVITATION**



I have started to downsize my books and my music, and already six boxes of books have gone off to the Lifeline Depot in Lindfield, open on Polding Road 24/7.

But I have a lot of books left, many of which I would love to hand on. Many are New Church books, quite a few are religious and Biblical, or the rich store of mythology. Some are stand alones I have picked up over the years. And some I will always keep. And some are rare... (And you too may be downsizing.)

In today's world, so many books are available online so one whole shelf of all Thomas Hardy's novels and poems can simply 'go'.

You may be interested in something. How shall we do this? I will make a full list of what I think are the interesting ones, and you can have a copy (email?) and look through and ask. Then we'll sort it out.

I have already started with my music. Again, with a list. But of course that is for a much more specialised kind of person.

## **A REMINDER AGAIN ABOUT THE CENSUS**

When you come to fill in your religious affiliation in the census, please be sure to write 'The New Church in Australia' as any other name of our church will not be included or acceptable. Please do not forget. We want to provide accurate information.

## **THE PRACTICAL SIDE OF OUR CHURCH**

Never think that our church is only people talking about things. We have a practical side too, fairly small because many people live at a distance and we're not a parish church. You know about the Exodus Foundation food, the stamps for the Leprosy Mission and small change for PLAN sponsored Pinki. Do keep helping with all of these.

We also have quite a swathe of outside lettings which in addition to serving a community use also bring in some income. And over the years we have supported many charities and we still do give to several that we agree should be helped. And we also help other parts of the New Church, such as the Australian New Church College.

## THE PILLARS OF NEW CHURCH BELIEFS



Continuing a series about our beliefs in plain English.

This time we are thinking about **WHAT HAPPENS TO OUR EVILS?**

Let's start with some explanation. You and I are not evil. You and I are likely to be fairly normal well-intentioned people. But even so, simply by being human and because we get caught up in how things seem, we have evils which can influence us. Everybody does. Nobody is perfect.

Even when we are living an active religious life and wanting to do what is good, various evil tendencies affect us. Part of religion is knowing this and knowing how to manage it properly. Nobody, least of all God, is blaming us for being like this. It is just how it is.

Now we come to the point and can ask, What happens to our evils? What happens to them when we have turned away from their influence and seen what they can do to us (and yes, to other people too)? Some churches would say that when we turn to Jesus and make our personal commitment to him for what he has done for us, then our evils are no longer of any account and they are wiped away as if they never were.

This is like saying that your belief in Jesus overrides everything else and to use the phrase 'I am saved' puts it very clearly. But the New Church doesn't go along with this. It says that when we turn to the Lord (as we should) we then work with the Lord in dealing with whatever evils are there in us. And when the Lord and we have sorted it out, then these evils are taken away, made dormant, but not wiped away as if they had never been.

The reason for this is that they can be brought back and shown to us as gentle reminders, never to accuse us but just to help us see our progress more clearly. They are over and done with, and dumped at the side, but if needed, we can be shown them, and that is to help us.

### CHECK OUT SOME SPIRITUAL MEANINGS

Here are two columns. In the first column there are sixteen things or objects. In the second column there are sixteen spiritual meanings or 'correspondences'. But they are not in the same order.

Try and match the thing or object with its general spiritual meaning.

SUN	POWER
BED	OUR UNDERSTANDING
FLOWERS	OBEDIENCE
HAND	THOUGHTS
GOLD	KNOWLEDGE
RIVER	THE LORD
HORSE	TRUTH THAT LEADS US
GRASS	DELIGHT
MOON	LOOKING FOR TRUTH
EARS	LOVE
BIRDS	OUR BELIEFS
FISH	GOD'S FLOW OF LIFE
SILVER	TRUTH WE HAVE LEARNED
A WELL	FAITH
ROCK	NEW AND LIVING TRUTHS
STAR	TRUTH THAT SHINES

Clue: It will help if you think about the quality of the object and what it does.

#### FINAL FABLE

A man's wife was expecting a baby. The man prayed fervently it would be a son and if it was, he would give away all his possessions. Sure enough, a son was born and he carried out his vow. Years passed, and old friends came to see the man who had given everything away. They were told he was sitting in prison. How so, they asked. They were told that the man's son had done a great wrong but he had run away and the authorities had decided to take his father off to prison instead.