

Sydney Society Newsletter

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

4 Shirley Road, Roseville, N.S.W. 2069

Church Office phone: (02) 9416 7026

Minister's e-mail : julian@duckworth.me

On Facebook – Sydney Society of the New Church - Roseville

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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, while believing that they are from the Lord working in him and through him.



“Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life.”

Psalm 54 verse 4

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Our Friendship Group is on Wednesday August 3rd
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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

HELPING OTHERS

I'm pretty sure that every children's talk I have ever given mentions the word 'help' at some point or other. Helping is that basic, that obvious. Everyone can understand that we are here to help other people around us. Of course there are a lot of other good reasons we are here, but this one is a big one. And it can happen in all kinds of ways.

For example, you happen to be in the right place at the right time, say in the city, in a restaurant, and on the next table are two French tourists studying the menu and one says, "Bangers...and Mash?" And they haven't a clue. So, always ready with your French, you interrupt their discussion and launch into an explanation. "Merci!" So you helped them.

One of the best is a video clip showing a man in a city square with a bit of writing on a piece of cardboard. "Help me. I am blind." People walk past and hardly a person tosses a coin in. A girl comes and takes the cardboard and writes on the reverse and puts it back. This time, nearly everyone puts some money in the man's cap. She'd written, "I can't see the sunshine like you can." She helped him.

Maybe you've been helped. Grandchildren help their grandparents with their computers. A teacher lays her hand over the hand of a child clutching a pencil, struggling to write "*today*" and guides him. I

don't know about you but I can think of so many people who have helped me, and some of them didn't know the first thing about it. I think that is one way God helps us, by keeping us in the dark about how we have helped someone without realising. Otherwise we might feel a bit too good inside.

I really have to leave it with you whether or not you would give some money to someone telling you they desperately need to get to Wollongong on the 5.27 train. No hard and fast rules there. Our church teachings say that we are sometimes not helping by giving money, and for obvious reasons, yet there are times when it will help someone out of a jam. How do you tell? Maybe you help them with a few questions.

Here's a short passage from Marriage Love by Swedenborg. *"Everyone knows that a husband's jobs are in some way linked to those of his wife, and her jobs are linked with his, these getting done and being caused by their mutual help."* (176) ...not to mention taking care of their children between them, which is a love given by the Lord.

Another way of saying 'helping' is 'being useful'. The kingdom of heaven is a kingdom of use. We are meant to live our lives outwardly. Why? Easy. So that we don't stay wrapped up in ourselves and then look at other people as objects that are there to help us.

So let's think of some ways that God helps us – and you had one at the top. God, who is way beyond our comprehension, came here as a man and taught and lived by love and spoke truths. We can see that; it really helps us. And God shows us who he is by giving us the Word. And God plants a conscience into us. And God gives us a strong strange joy when we do things for other people without expecting anything in return. And in a minute I am going to run out of space, coming up with what God does. Come up with your ideas about that.

There are so many ways to be helpful and there are so many people out there needing the right kind of help. Be an angel, take part in it.

Julian

FRIENDSHIP GROUP NOTES

We are meeting on Wednesday August 3rd starting with coffee and cake at 10.45 a.m. Julian will give us a talk about “The Wind and the Holy Spirit (see John 3 v8)” We will enjoy our shared lunch together afterwards.

Everybody is welcome to come and join us. We finish around 1.30 p.m.

Glen Hart

LAST MONTH’S CORRESPONDENCES ANSWERS

Here are what you might have got, matching up the object with its general spiritual meaning. Hope so.

Sun = The Lord; Bed = Our Beliefs; Flowers = Delights; Hand = Power; Gold = Love; River = God’s Flow of Life; Horse = Our Understanding; Grass = New and Living Truths; Moon = Faith; Ears = Obedience; Birds = Thoughts; Fish = Knowledge; Silver = Truth that Shines; A Well = Looking for Truth; Rock = Truth We Have Learned; Star = Truth That Leads Us.

FIVE FINGER PRAYER



Last Sunday we had a service about Prayer, and I came across this excellent Children’s Talk called the Five Finger Prayer. Each finger gives us something or someone to pray about...

Our thumb is closest to us, so we pray for the people who are closest to us and us to them, our family and friends.

Our first finger points, so we pray for the people who give us direction: teachers, coaches, ministers.

Our middle finger is the tallest, so we pray for the important people, prime ministers and presidents, kings and queens.

Our fourth finger is our weakest finger so we pray for the poor and those in need, and people who face problems and troubles. (Being the ring finger we could pray for happy marriages)

Our fifth finger is the smallest finger so we pray for ourselves that we don’t get too big-headed and that we try to live our life the right way.

SNIPPETS FROM THE SCRAPBOOK

What do we live for, if not to make the world less difficult for each other?
- George Eliot

Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time; for that's the stuff life is made of.
- Benjamin Franklin

Happiness is not in our circumstances but in ourselves. It is not something we see, like a rainbow; or feel, like the heart of a fire. Happiness is something we are.
- John B. Sheerin

When everyone travels, it will be very nice to stay at home.
- Dame Freya Stark

Sports do not build character, they reveal it. - Anon

The moment you stop pursuing contentment, it will find you.
- Zen saying

Stella Green

SATURDAY ANGEL SERVICE



During a recent Saturday Angel Service with 10 of us there, we shared ideas about how important it is for us to be bright (positive) and share a bright outlook with others. Angels do this all the time and the Lord asks us to do it too – have a look at Matthew 6 v16-18.

Then we spent a delightful time simply tearing up a range of bright

coloured A4 sheets of paper and sticking them on to a white sheet.

The results were all different, quite stunning, and lovely to behold, which we did for a while after we finished.

(Sorry to print readers for the lack of colour, but you get the idea...)

HATE and HOT

I will just preface this but not go into details, and say that with the recent weeks of various attacks and yes, atrocities, almost daily, some of you must be wondering about the awful world we live in. I would say to try and be careful about that very natural and understandable thought. It is not simply an awful world, but yes, there are people in it who do awful things. The great majority of people are trying to live good decent lives, and succeeding in doing so.

Now to the title... I came across a connection between these two words 'hate' and 'hot'. Way back in the start of English, back to Anglo-Saxon talkers, these two words were one and the same! It looked like this 'hāt' and apparently it sounded like 'heart'. So a person who hated someone else could say 'I hāt you!' but on a summer's day could say 'I feel hāt!' You hope that this never got misunderstood! Perhaps it's why the word 'hāt' eventually separated into two different sounding words.



These two cartoons show hate and hot. They're different, but they have a similarity. Hating actually makes you hot (hot under the collar) and being hot tends to fray our nerves and we're likely to snap.

In what we call 'hell' it is normal for people to feel hate. It's basically what drives them. They hate other spirits who hate them, they hate how their schemes don't work out, they even hate the mention of God. This is not saying though that people who feel hate here will go to hell.

The traditional picture of hell is a lake of burning fire and it's quite an accurate one so long as we only see it as a state of mind and not a place of condemnation. It's hot hate and hateful heat which you have allowed to consume you and run your life.

STEWARDS AND FLOWERS FOR AUGUST

Sunday	Steward	Flowers
7th (Sacr.)	Dave Probert	Ruth Duckworth
14 th	Michael Chester	Philip Brodsky
21 st	Graham Hanna	Elizabeth Kemmis
28 th	John Wilson	Julie Smith

FROM THE SWEDENBORG CENTRE

In 1788, the First Fleet brought reminders of European culture and thought. It brought a Bible, Prayer book, a number of Swedenborg's works, complete works of Shakespeare, sheet music of Mozart and a piano.

Almost a century on, 1875 was Edward Grieg composed "In the Hall of the Mountain King," a major epidemic of scarlet fever engulfed Sydney, and the game of Snooker invented. Oh, and "The Swedenborg Club" was formed in Sydney. Soon it was renamed the Sydney Society of the New Church. The Club's objectives: to prepare and present talks "whether scientific or theological" on Swedenborg's writings.

A few years later, Sydney homeopath Dr William Moore was active on the Sydney Society New Church committee. On his death, his funds were made available to promote New Church teachings, 40% in support of the Sydney Society and 60% for a Library Committee to supply works of Swedenborg to NSW country libraries. The Sydney Society Library Committee was formed with Rev John Teed appointed Manager. He diligently pursued the new role and drove far and wide around the state delivering books to willing libraries.

Various ways of making Swedenborg's writings known have since been tried, including radio talks, travelling exhibitions to libraries, lecture tours and university visits. At one tour I met Rev Michael Stanley. I was delighted at being able to ask physics and metaphysical questions of the same person.

It seems the aims of our organisations remained fairly consistent. Meanwhile, public tools, ways and tastes continually evolve, like the internet which breaks old organisational hierarchies and opens new channels of access to things we love. Travel distance is no longer a big

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stumbling block because groups can meet 'virtually' to share interests. Information is ubiquitous and cheap. Privacy changes, libraries go digital, publishing and consumption habits shift. Organisations which controlled the old channels of information are challenged. A recent trend is the increasing number of parents homeschooling their children, a symptom of the change of attitude to traditional institutions and systems which controlled learning.

Religious organisations are not immune to similar attitudes. While belief in a higher power and interest in spirituality reportedly remains strong (and is critical to the future success of society), people want to be free to taste new things and anonymously test the waters without obligation to commit and belong. I enjoy keeping a finger on the pulse of such change and hope to explore effective ways to connect people with the valuable ideas Swedenborg offers in his writings.

The Centre is available as a place for you to call and visit to share and explore your ideas, or to ask or answer questions in the quest to grow. Your use of the Centre can help us build a positive community focused on practical spiritual values. Naturally, I enjoy seeing you there to support these aims. There's also a pleasant café just along the road.

For historical details on the Australian activities of the New Church I found an excellent work to be "*The New Church in Australia*" (1981) by I.A.Robinson.

Joe Vandermeer

SUNDAY'S SERMONS

I use a typescript for my sermons, although I may add things as I give them. I do this to keep them a suitable length but also to send out by email or post. They go out to quite a few people.

In today's world, being in church is a personal choice and we are mostly people who live at quite a distance. If you would like to get the sermons, it is very easy, especially by email. And you can get them weekly or monthly, or how often you want. Just let me know at any time.



Swedenborg Association of Australia
Friday August 26th at 7.45 p.m.
(following the Regeneration Reading Group
which starts at 6.30 p.m.)
The New Church, 4 Shirley Rd, Roseville
Cost: \$7 non-members, \$5 members

AN AUDIO VISUAL TOUR OF SIGHT AND SOUND
Presented by Joe Vandermeer



We will be exploring how producing and hearing musical sounds and our seeing of colours are experiences of nature which contain an exquisite order which reveal many useful spiritual insights. Bring and share your curiosity, wonder and experiences.

SWEDENBORG ON SOUND

“It is well known that various musical instruments are used to express different sounds and that when a fitting melody is played, this stirs our affections. The reason for it lies in the very nature of sound and its resonance with affections.”

SWEDENBORG ON COLOUR

“The Lord’s love flows constantly and brings us life. It is like the sun’s rays falling on objects and converting them into the most beautiful colours, as a diamond, ruby, sapphire, emerald and other precious stones do.”

THE CENSUS IN AUGUST and some spiritual connections



**Marble Roman artwork
Census Frieze, 2nd century BC.
From the Campo Marzio, Rome**

On Tuesday, August 9th (“Census Night”) Australia will take a census of its population, their housing and some of their personal details. This information helps the government to see growing trends and to provide for them.

One of the best known censuses is when Caesar Augustus sent out a decree that all the world should be registered, and all went to be registered, each to his own town. These words open the familiar Christmas story, leading on to Joseph, with pregnant Mary, travelling from Nazareth to Bethlehem, his home town, the city of David, and the birth of the Lord, there in Bethlehem, which fulfilled the scriptures.

In the Old Testament, especially in the well-named book of Numbers, there are several reckonings-up of the number of people. A census.

Spiritually, and especially with the census at the time of the Lord’s birth, the idea is that we, in ourselves, should take good account of our life, our thinking, our sense of values, our feelings and emotions, our intentions and wishes to be good, our actions and behaviour.

We should run a census every so often over our whole life and see it for what it is, and honestly so. Everything in us should “go, each to his own town”. We put our own house in order. We sort ourselves out.

The birth of the Lord is really about the coming of the Lord’s life and help to each of us. The Lord already knows everything about us. For him to come, we need to be ready and receptive so that he can come. We take stock. We take a census so that we know, and by knowing, we can begin to change.

THE PILLARS OF NEW CHURCH BELIEFS



Continuing a series about our beliefs in plain English.
This time we are thinking about **REPENTANCE**

First of all, before we go any further, throw out any ideas you may carry that link Repentance with regrets about past wrong actions; or remorse, where you cringe or feel guilty about what you once did. These don't help. They are what they are.

Repentance is best described as a turning round and the start of a new outlook on life. We look ahead, not backwards. Both John the Baptist and Jesus preached the gospel of repentance very early on in their ministries, and 'gospel' actually means "the good news".

The good news is that we can turn around, but it's going to need the Lord's help. If we try to go it alone, we will make a start but not be able to sustain it because our old habits (or whatever you want to call them) will inevitably keep coming back. So, with repentance, we really do need to have a clear understanding about God. Even, if we can, a working relationship with God.

Let's talk about doing repentance and doing it regularly. It's going to mean that we take an honest look at ourselves, we look into our heart and out into our life, and where we see something that isn't right, we spot it. Then, spotted, we bring it to the Lord, and tell him that we want to be without this. We confess this. And we mean it.

It is the Lord who will now help us to get rid of it. But he doesn't just take it away or wave a magic wand. He tells us that He has already forgiven it so that we can know it doesn't matter any more, and he asks us to have the courage and trust to start living our life free of this burden.

The most important thing, though, is that we stay in our relationship with the Lord as we keep on living our life, and doing our repentance.

FERNS



Ferns are wonderful plants. They unfold in a beautiful coiling way. They are feathery and elegant. One small part, called a frond, is a tiny reproduction of the whole plant. Even the sound of the word ‘fern’ seems to describe them well. They are lovely to be among.

We once visited the Brisbane Botanic Gardens and went into the fern house. There were leaflets by the entrance, so I took one and read through it. I was fascinated. They have “a secret life”...

The leaflet disclosed that there are two entirely different plants in the life cycle of each fern. They produce spores on the underside of mature fronds. These blow away in due course. When a fern spore lands in favourable moist habitat, it grows into a tiny green, heart-shaped plant. This plant bears male and female reproductive parts. The male part swims across the moist surface and fertilises the female part.

And then a brand new plant is formed from this union which becomes the growing fern we enjoy seeing. And the first plant then dies. It has served its purpose and now it can go, because the task is done. What an amazing picture this gives of our life and our spiritual path.

FINAL FABLE

One day a woman went into a shop and was surprised to see Jesus at the counter. She asked him, “Are you Jesus?” “Yes, I am,” he said, “Enjoy your shopping here.” She walked up and down the aisles and saw so much: “Peace on Earth”, “Be Happy”, and “Share your Joy” among many things. She took a long list back to Jesus. “This is what I would like,” she told him. He reached under the counter and brought out many small packets. “What are these?” she asked. “These are seeds,” he told her. “What for?” she said. “For you to take and plant and grow.” “Oh!” she said, “I don’t think I want to be doing any of that!” And she bid him good day and left the shop.