

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



“Ask rain from the Lord in the season of the spring....”

Zechariah 10 verse 1

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Our monthly Prayer Circle is sent out for September 1st
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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

DEALING WITH NATURAL DISASTERS

You may know that many insurance companies have a property exclusion clause that describes certain natural disasters as “acts of God”, being outside human control and inevitable. Tornadoes, earthquakes, violent winds and very high tides would be some of them. The phrase ‘act of God’ at least brings God into the tragic consequences in which He certainly is ... present, supporting, caring, loving and bringing each person over from this world into the next.

But to lay the cause of something like the tragic recent earthquake in Amatrice in Umbria in Italy as something that is designated and timed in the mind of God is misplaced. God covers everything but God does not cause everything. The idea that the Lord “sends” such things makes God out to be a Viking warlord. The only things that the Lord ever sends are good things, blessings, people’s kindness, angels with us at times, and the seasons like the new spring we are awaiting.

I have two personal associations with God and natural disasters. One was after a church class on Divine Providence years ago when I was about 25. As we went out, I heard a man say to a lady that he could see how Providence worked with every single thing in life, and then added ‘but I can’t yet get my head round natural disasters’.

Some years after this I was at a weekend church retreat and a minister told us that a natural disaster happens when God needs to fill up a hole in the spiritual world! This is complete nonsense. There are no ‘holes’

in the spiritual world. When 6000 people are wiped out all at once by an earthquake, each one of them goes into the next life and takes their place in it. And without fail, each of them is welcomed, helped, given time and patience, and gradually introduced into this new level of life.

We are such ‘numbers’ people if we’re not careful. 30 people in church is great, 11 is a bit thin. Death tolls make us feel sadder as they rise higher and become the measurement of the tragedy. When a newsreader tells us that in a terrorist attack, only one person was killed, we tend to think that it’s not so bad then! In the Lord’s eyes it is on the same basis every time – no fleets of heavenly ambulances – but simply dealing with each of the people involved, and fully so.

The Lord doesn’t “send” but I do think he “takes”. He takes people safely from this life into the next. But there is something more. I think the Lord takes away the memories of those involved about the event, the horror, the crashing, the pain, and relieves them of this as quickly as possible. It is the poor survivors who will bear many years of adjustment and disturbance, and yet the Lord is with them too, helping their healing. And so are other people, and the Lord is with them too.

Natural disasters are simply the signs of a living changing natural world which is habitable by people and yet it is still settling down after its creation by God. If it was all settled and nothing ever happened, it would probably be way beyond human occupation! So I think two things come out of this: God created things and people, and in creating, he had to allow for a volatile environment and all its goings-on. This is given – God-created – so that you and I can exist!

The other thing is that such a world that erupts and cascades can help make us feel more for each other, with empathy and care, and come to appreciate life, honour the fact of death, rebuild Amatrice... And perhaps we should finish with the thought that we too have our own spiritual or personal earthquakes, there in ourselves, changing our world right around or at least giving us a wake-up call. Does God send these? I don’t think so, but I know that God is very close to us then.

Julian

JANUARY 2017 CAMP UPDATE



The camp in January 2017, at “The Tops” at Stanwell Tops looks very much like it will be safely going ahead. Our minimum numbers are 60 and we now have 60 people definitely coming to the camp or who have already booked. Several people have paid their full camp payment!

← **View of nearby coast, famous for hang-gliding.**

The camp is in just over four month’s time. Its dates are **Sunday January 1st to Saturday January 7th 2017**. Have a look at the Camp link on the New Church in Australia’s website, newchurch.net.au and if you are interested in coming but you haven’t yet indicated this to anyone, help yourself to a Camp Leaflet from one of our bookstands.

The final bookings need to be with the host Hurstville Society by Thursday December 1st. Or you can book and even pay your deposit online via the website. The leaflet tells you everything you would want to know. And importantly, final full payments need to have been made by December 1st.

FATHERS DAY from Swedenborg

“The place for you to dwell in” in Exodus 15.17 means where the Lord is. When the idea of ‘place’ is mentioned in the Bible, it means our state, a state of us being with the Lord as our Father. In the gospels the Lord very often talks about the Father who is in the heavens, and when he does, it means the good from the Lord which makes heaven what it is. In one sense God is infinitely above the heavens but “our Father being in heaven” is to do with the presence with us of that which is good. So the Lord says,

Be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5.45)

Our Father who is in the heavens..... (Matthew 6.9)

He who does the will of my Father who is in the heavens.

(Matthew 7.21)

SNIPPETS FROM THE SCRAPBOOK

Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow – only today of its strength. – Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892), English Baptist Minister

Woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him; not out of his feet to be trampled on by him, but out of his side to be equal to him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be loved.

- Matthew Henry (1662-1714), English non-conformist clergyman

The best things are nearest: breath in your nostrils, light in your eyes, flowers at your feet, duties at your hand, the path of God just before you.

– Robert Louis Stevenson

If you have two loaves, sell one and buy a lily. – Chinese proverb

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

Life satisfaction is determined less by material acquisition and more by a sense of meaning, purpose, personal growth, healthy relationships and self-acceptance.

- Richard Gilpin

Stella Green

STEWARDS FOR SEPTEMBER

Sunday	Steward(s)	Flowers
4 th (Fathers Day, Sacr.)	Dave Probert	Lynne Twemlow
11 th	David Curry	Ruth Duckworth
18 th	Wayne Kasmar	Jan Primrose
25 th	Rhonda Hall	Glen Hart

It's great when people use the 'pew' Bibles to follow the reading, for that is what they are there for. Please 'seat' the Bible back fully in the chair slot so that no damage gets done to the pages of the Bible.

CUTTINGS FOR NEW GROWTH FROM THE SWEDENBORG CENTRE

It has been a busy month at the Centre. Not so much because of the volume of books we are selling, which remains a steady quantity, but because of the conversation traffic we have enjoyed. By the way, the top-selling book this month was the title “Regeneration, Spiritual Growth and How it Works,” a statistic that delights me, because I regard that book as a very good example of how a collection of practical advice from Swedenborg’s many works is now sought after.

To me the trend suggests that people coming into contact with Swedenborg’s material are seeking practical wisdom over and above intellectual material and that they seek wisdom which can be applied within their personal lives as they deal with the issues we all face.

Why so busy? This trend in the choice of subject in our literature has been backed up by the steady stream of phone calls and visits from people from all walks of life, from researchers and artists to 12-Step facilitators on their search for something to help them on their spiritual journey from the influential writings of Swedenborg. These visitors have been willing share their experiences and it has been an absolute delight to see the Centre used for this purpose.

Feel free to add to that exciting use of the Centre by phoning or dropping in for a visit and adding your story. There have already been some interesting ideas evolve out of conversations with visitors, including the possibility of sharing dreams, having group discussions, or simply coming to read books from the library over a coffee and exploring any ideas, insights and experiences with each other. This is what makes us a community rather than a solo seeker. Heaven is made up of such mutually supportive communities, so we may as well make a start here. Each of us can grow from the various facets of perspective that we all uniquely bring to every conversation.

Of the books we have available, Swedenborg’s own works are now more accessible than ever. Several of the excellent *New Century Editions* are available as free downloads from the Swedenborg Foundation (www.swedenborg.com) so that you can explore them on

your digital device. Our online bookshop at www.swedenborg.com.au (note the “.au”) can give you more details, a price and a channel for ordering, or ring the Centre on (02) 9888 1066.

Have a great month, may you grow and flourish!

Joe Vandermeer - Swedenborg Centre Director

THE NUMBER EIGHT



or on its side,



the symbol of Infinity...

The number eight is possibly one of the most exciting numbers there is. In numerology, it is one of the best numbers for your name or birth sign (they say), but more importantly, the Bible mentions “On the eighth day” quite a number of times.

It is basically the symbol of “new beginnings”. It comes immediately after 7, which is the Sabbath Day which in turn comes straight after 6, the days of work and labour. So we get the ‘8’ pattern, of a new beginning after the stop and rest of the Sabbath.

New beginnings are important for us. We take a break, and then we come back to our work refreshed, and get going again. We reach a watershed or problem and decide we will get going again, anew. This is the idea of the 8.

Look at the shape of 8 though. It starts at the bottom and gyrates to the top and then comes back down to the bottom. Notice especially the ‘twist’ in the middle, perhaps the symbol of a joining point – heaven with earth, truth with some practical use, God with us, and us with God.

Turn it on its side, to the infinity symbol, and you have ‘you’ reaching out into the lives of other people, and them into your life. Whatever you may get from 8, it is full of motion, fluidity and connection.

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SOCIETY NEWS

We offer our best wishes to Elizabeth Kemmis and Graham Hanna who will be moving in September up to the Lake Macquarie area. It has been a very busy time for both of them.

Also to one of our very regular Tuesday Bible tutorial members, Katy Wild, who will be going back to live in England, in Yorkshire, in Ripon. We will miss Katy, because she wonderfully 'stirs the pot' and brings a great freshness of thinking when we get together, plus those blueberry scones.

Ruth has been over in England for the last few weeks of August, spending time with her mother who is fairly frail but managing, and giving her brothers and sisters a break. It will be good to have her back on September 1st. It is astonishing that Michael Chester and Julie Beynon went out with Ruth one lunchtime for a pub lunch together, as they were in Kent at the same time.

Over thirty people came to the Swedenborg Association monthly meeting in August, where Joe Vandermeer gave a presentation on the spiritual background to Sound and Colour, using a large number of visual projections on screen and talking free-lance about each of them. The first fifteen minutes, with some excellent visuals, was a coverage of Swedenborg and his spiritual teachings, which I am very glad was recorded on camera because it was so wide-ranging. Joe told me that several people were coming who had made enquiries about Swedenborg, knew almost nothing, and this was an opportunity to give an outline before moving into the subject of the evening.

Thank you to Kathryn and David who have been doing the cleaning while Ruth has been in England, both outside and inside.

One of our Sunday School children, Henry, is amazing at table tennis and takes on several adults when the table is set up, and is quite their equal. This bodes well, because Henry and his mother, Leiane, will be at the January camp, and one of the camp activities is a serious table tennis competition.

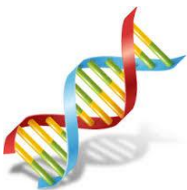
WORTH HEARING ABOUT

A contemporary author, Gregg Braden, well-known for his book about prayer, gratitude and quantum physics, called 'The Isaiah Effect', has spoken about three experiments that were done under very controlled conditions which resulted in quite amazing outcomes.



The first experiment was to create a vacuum inside a container so that the only thing left in it were photons, or (non-physical) particles of light. They measured the distribution of the photons and found they were random inside the container. Some DNA was placed in the container and the distribution of the photons was re-measured. This time they found that the photons were orderly and aligned with the DNA. The DNA was removed, and the photons stayed orderly, where the DNA had been.

Another experiment was done by the military. White blood cells were collected from donors and put in chambers where electrical changes could be measured. The donors went to a different room and watched video clips which produced different emotions in the donors. The DNA was measured and it showed exactly the same responses as the donor. The same correlation happened when the donor and his DNA were separated by 50 miles. No lessening, no time lag, still the same.



The third experiment involved DNA from an independent source, measured according to the feelings of the people doing the research. When they felt gratitude, love and appreciation, the DNA strands unwound and the length of the DNA increased. When they felt anger, frustration or stress, the DNA tightened.

The point of all this seems to be that energy and emotions are very connected. Time and distance are virtually irrelevant in this area. One outcome seems to be that positive emotions create a resistance to disease, and that things that seem separate are highly connected. It is science approaching the spiritual level of life.

Aspects of Personal Growth from a Sufi Perspective



presented by Jack Metcalfe
7:45pm, Friday, 30th September,
2016

New Church, 4 Shirley Rd, Roseville NSW

"Only those who have digested their shadow can know the meaning of compassion."

Man as the Divine reflection is explored through the prism of the emergence and continuing development of the self. This is the Totality unfolding to Itself. While mystical traditions offer a variety of perspectives and practices from which unprecedented opportunities for integration have become available, the journey is one of hazard and the destination is perfect. The talk refers to the works of great Sufi mystic Ibn Arabi, the warrior sheik, Abd al-Kader, Ken Wilber, founder of the Integral Institute and evolutionary anthropologist, Cadell Last.

"Everyone sees the unseen in proportion to the clarity of his heart, and that depends upon how much he has polished it. Whoever has polished it more sees more..." - Jalaluddin Rumi

Sufism seeks the selfless experience and actualization of the Divine attributes in us, through devotion to realise the Divine love and wisdom. Sufism is focused on a personal experience of truth. Sufi's are Islamic mystics. Sufi work resonates with Swedenborg. His advice is not to leave self-examination until our outer self is taken off to find out what our inner self is like, but to conduct regular self-examination.

Psychologist, **Jack Metcalfe** has been involved for many decades with the study and practices in human perception and the development of awareness. He has enjoyed close associations with various individuals and groups around the world, including many years with Dr Philip Groves in Australia.

THE PILLARS OF NEW CHURCH BELIEFS



Continuing a series about our beliefs in plain English.

This time we are going to look at the **TRINITY**

Let's start with something we're all familiar with, a chair. You may be sitting on one right now. A chair has three things about it, what it is made of, what shape it is, and what it is meant to be used for. These three things are quite different from each other, but they all come together in the chair.

It is basically just the same with what is called the Trinity which is about God. Traditionally, Christianity talks of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. If you keep the fact that there is only the one God, this trinity way of describing the activity of God is perfectly okay.

But if you pull the Trinity apart and create the idea that in some way there are three persons making God, it becomes complicated and even wrong. The classic example of this is where some Christians say that Jesus as the Son of God offered himself to God to become a sacrifice in a human life so that God and Man could be reconciled. See how complicated this becomes. This is the problem with the Trinity.

Always stay with One God not Three. It was God that was Jesus! And God's presence is the Holy Spirit with us. One of the best trinities to use about God is to think of him as the Creator, the Redeemer and the Saviour. Translated that means God creates everything there is, God is stronger than the power of evil, and God's spirit works with us as we try to follow God's way and be a really good person.

Most people switch off with the Trinity, which is a great pity. It doesn't seem to have much connection with practical everyday life, and yet it does, when you keep it right. We receive life from God; we have freedom to choose, from God, and we feel the power of God in our own life as we show love, live well and respect other people.

BEFORE YOU SPEAK...

They say that before you speak, THINK

T	Is it True?
H	Is it Helpful?
I	Is it Inspiring?
N	Is it Necessary?
K	Is it Kind?

And they say that it should be at least one of these every time.

The Bible is full of commands for us to be careful when we speak, not to be a teller of tales among people, not to bring shame on another person, not to speak to cause hurt or pain but at times to reprove or admonish when this is important and helpful.

One of the New Testament epistles has a passage on ‘the tongue’. Here is part of it.

“Look at the ships; though they are so large and driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.” (James 3 verses 4-5)

FINAL FABLE

The Creator called all the animals to Him and said that he wanted to hide something from humans, that they decide their own reality. But where? The eagle suggested the moon but the Creator said one day humans will go there. The salmon suggested the deepest ocean but the Creator said that one day they would go there too. Other not very helpful suggestions were shared. Then the blind mole quietly spoke up. “Put it inside them.” “Done,” said the Creator.