

# 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.



*“...and she will bring forth a son and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1 verse 21*

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*See inside this Newsletter for our Christmas services*  
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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**

### **THE LIGHT OF GOD**

Welcome to the season of greater light – longer daylight for us down under, the enjoyable Christmas season where we actually think of others more than ourselves, the religious teaching about God who came into the world to be the Light of the World, and our own experiences of seeing and understanding more and more about life, its richness and diversity.

I stood in the shower this morning and realised that its four minutes downpour had taken me through about 37 rapid thoughts about the meaning of life. One coursed into another as each one washed over me. If only I had written them down! Believe me, each thought was so important, so essential. But they came and went.

This is just one example of the ways in which we get the light of God. I really appreciate the verse in John chapter 1 which says, “That was the true Light which gives light to every person who comes into the world.” That’s a mammoth statement embracing all of us because we are human beings and we have been made to get the Light of God.

Goldfish don’t get the light of God; they get the life of God, and that’s fine by them. But we do; we have language which lets us think and also think about what we’re thinking. You are doing this right now as you read. And what this faculty does is to make us a receptacle to keep getting the endless stream of the Light of God. I don’t actually think we can ever switch it off!

An important thing about this provision is that for a lot of the time we are completely unaware of it. We get on with living our lives that seem to be our own. And when someone points out that we are getting our life from God every single moment, we might give that a nod and say 'Maybe' because that idea doesn't really impinge on what we are doing.

But if we are told that as well as getting life we are also getting an uninterrupted flow of the Light of God (which gives light to every person who comes into the world), that might make us sit up. We have to deal with the light that comes to us, in fact we are always dealing with it. We only need to listen to ourselves to find that out. And this is the crunch, we might well not realise that we are always dealing with it.

We can welcome it, marvel about it, co-operate with it, make use of it, benefit from it and so on. And we can ignore it, counter it, muddy it and pretend that it isn't really happening. But come what may, we can't stop it. And so we need to find out and get to know what this Light of God is telling us all the time.

Here is how I understand it. Everything about it is entirely positive. It tells us that we are not alone; we are connected to the source of life, to God, like everyone else is, and we depend on God and it being like this. We can find real peace just by taking that fact on. It encourages us and drops hints about living by loving other people and discovering we will then love ourselves and be glad. It reassures us about what we think have been our faults, and says that now we know them we can deal with them and "I'm here to help you". And a lot more.

So let's become aware of it when we're calm and when we're frantic. I think we might be both of those over the Christmas period, where, along with everything we do, there is this Light of God prompting us. Most of all, learn to listen to it and give it more attention. Have a delightful Christmas and a safe journey through 2017.

*Julian*

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING NOTICE**

We shall be holding the AGM of the Sydney Society of the New Church on Sunday February 26<sup>th</sup> in the church hall at 11.30 a.m.

Members and friends are welcome to come to this open meeting and are urged to do so to take part in our discussions. Only registered members are entitled to vote should a vote be necessary.

Reports and financial statements will be sent out to members about ten days before the AGM. Reports will be presented at the meeting, and the financial statements will be summarised. The AGM appoints the officers of the society, the church committee and some other individual positions.

There may be other specific matters to bring to the attention of the meeting. These will be included on the Agenda and may well be made known before the meeting.

The meeting normally lasts for a maximum of one and a half hours.

We do hope that you will be able to be present and to take part.

Graham Hall,  
Secretary

## **THE EXODUS FOUNDATION**



At the end of November, there was a collection of items given from the Church, and the Exodus Foundation especially asked that the church be thanked for its generous giving. The collector gave us a sheet to help us,

from which come the following –

- ✓ Canned meats and fish, soups, casseroles, spaghetti, baked beans, instant noodles (only in a cup), only ring-pull cans of soft drink, and food tins preferably with pictures on, dried food in packets and boxes
- ✗ no pasta or rice, high sugar items, high salt items, out of date items, loose food items or raw food items

Helpful website: [exodusfoundation.org.au/giftsankind](http://exodusfoundation.org.au/giftsankind)

And yes, please, do keep on donating to this wonderful bunch of people.

**SNIPPETS FROM THE SCRAPBOOK**

If a child gave up at the first fall, it would never learn to walk.

The gem cannot be polished without friction nor man perfected without trials.

Don't try so hard – the best things come when you least expect them.

Worry is like a rocking chair; it gives you something to do, but it doesn't get you anywhere.

When Thoreau was dying, someone asked him if he had made his peace with God. He answered: “ I have never quarrelled with Him”

Whatever the question, love is the answer. - Dr Wayne Dyer

**STEWARDS AND FLOWERS FOR DECEMBER AND JANUARY**

<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Steward(s)</b>	<b>Flowers</b>
4 <sup>th</sup> (Nativity)	John Wilson	No Flowers
11 <sup>th</sup>	Graham Hanna	Ruth Duckworth
18 <sup>th</sup> (Lessons/Carols)	David Curry	Christine Gospodarczyk
25 <sup>th</sup> (Christmas Day)	Michael Chester	Ruth Duckworth
January 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Rhonda Hall	Glen Hart
January 29 <sup>th</sup>	Graham Hanna	Elizabeth Kemmis

**MY BRAIN IS AVAILABLE**



I gave a talk recently, along with my first ever Powerpoint presentation about the Brain – how it works and also ages, and some current amazing findings – and about Swedenborg’s studies on the brain which lead closely into his spiritual writing a few years later.

My notes and my Powerpoint presentation are available if you ask me.

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## **FRIENDSHIP GROUP**

We will be having our Christmas gathering on Wednesday December 14<sup>th</sup> (note it's the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wed of the month) and we would love to have you with us.

We will sing some carols and Julian will give us a talk on "When Mary and Elizabeth met up". Feel free to bring a Christmas reading from any source, to share, and then after another carol or two we will have our Lunch.

As lunch ends, we will have our 'Santa' present exchanging and if you are coming we ask you to bring a wrapped present with a value of not more than \$10 please.

Glen Hart



## **SWEDENBORG CENTRE NEWS**

We are starting to get ready for our involvement at the third Afterlife Conference where we will have a table and stand for people to come and look, come and chat. This is in Byron Bay at the Byron Community Centre on Friday and Saturday January 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>.

The 'we' are Joe Vandermeer, Michael Chester and Julian Duckworth. Two features for our helpfulness at this event are: a CD set of 3 talks by Rev Michael Stanley on Life After Death and The Spiritual World, along with transcripts. Also we are experimenting in offering people a USB 'stick' which will be loaded with quite a number of 'goodies' from our Swedenborg resources, with afterlife ones being the main. These sticks are very inexpensive and make a novel and original way of promotion.

Several people are waiting for books ordered through us from the Swedenborg Foundation. These have just come through to us and we will be letting people know.

On books, we have received 36 or so boxes of Swedenborg books which the UK Swedenborg Society decided to dispose of. They are new – mint! – and come to us without charge, and each box's value is

well over \$500. Due to our cost for sending over and also commercial storage, we are offering each identical box at \$50. If you would like to know what is in the box, then contact the Swedenborg Centre.

The gold-fronted Perpetual Calendar which was produced at the end of 1999 for the next millennium is now being re-issued. I imagine some of you know it but for those who don't, it is a spiral-hanging illustrated week to a page calendar, with a 52 part weekly theme such as 'Prayer' and 'Loving the Neighbour' with seven short modern wording quotes from Swedenborg on each page. Yes, being undated, it is never-endingly perpetual. Just start all over again!

The Centre has recently got a colour printer and one of its first jobs was to produce in colour the latest issue of the Candela, which is now out. Among other things in it, this has a great article on Two Christmas Stories (Matthew's and Luke's) by Wayne Kasmar, and an article on The Brain by Julian Duckworth.

Those of us at the Swedenborg Centre wish all of you a joyful Christmas time and a really good New Year when it arrives.

Joe Vandermeer

## **FROM THE BIBLE SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA**



On March 7<sup>th</sup> 2017 the Bible Society in Australia turns 200 years old. In 1817 Governor Macquarie – with urging from Elizabeth Macquarie – founded a branch of the British and Foreign Bible Society in Sydney. It began one month before the first Bank (the Bank of New South Wales, now Westpac) and all the original directors of the bank were directors of the Bible Society. The Word came one month before Mammon! Today the NSW Governor, David Hurley, is our patron.

“We want 2017 to be a celebration of the Bible Society and of the Bible itself. Our major event will be on Sunday March 5<sup>th</sup> to be held at the Hillsong Convention Centre with various church leaders.”

## **OUR CHRISTMAS AT ROSEVILLE**



The dates and times for services and other events was in the November Newsletter, plus an email from Ruth sent to many. You can make a final check with the green Calendar.

We will, as usual, be donating the Offertories from the Lessons and Carols Service on December 18<sup>th</sup> and the Christmas Day service (on a Sunday this year), to a New Church charity, this time to the Loving Arms Mission. If you are coming, please be as generous as you can. Thank you.

## **...AND INTO THE NEW YEAR**

Sunday January 1<sup>st</sup> kicks off the Camp at “The Tops” south of Sydney, ending on Saturday January 7<sup>th</sup>, with people from across Australia, one family from New Zealand (Longstaffs) and at least one overseas person. There will be 12 going to Camp from our church.

Day visits are welcomed, with a charge. Please see Julian for the day rates depending on which meals you would book.

Services will not be held in January until Sunday January 22<sup>nd</sup> and from then on as usual.

## **SOCIETY NEWS**

It was very pleasant to welcome some visitors recently: Paula and Helen, and Ben Tranter. Earlier in November, everyone enjoyed the violin and piano duet after the sermon, played by Katrina and Julian. Encore! was the call.

Eleven came to the New Church in Australia Joint Meeting and General Meeting, at the manse for two days, with a good agenda. Two that stand out are the decision to allow individual membership of the NCIA, and discussion about the ordination of women.

Thank you to those who provided food items which were enjoyed. Thank you to Ruth for organising amazing food and accommodation, and thank you to the Beiswengers in Hurstville for taking 2 ministers!

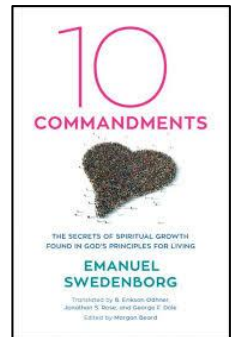


Six of us went round the corner after our Bible Study group finished, to have lunch together. We had a great time and the food was excellent. It was a kind of Christmas lunch, but also our opportunity to farewell Myriam Albert who will be going to Mauritius in the New Year at some point.

And yes, one last sad point, that we had to put our wonderful dog, Brodie, down after he became extremely ill. We are still missing him, and because he so often came over to church, you will be too. He was 10 ½ years old.

### SWEDENBORG FOUNDATION NEW BOOK

The Foundation are producing excellent books these days, and we received their latest one “Ten Commandments” subtitled ‘The secrets of spiritual growth found in God’s principles for living’. They add that while Swedenborg discusses the Ten Commandments in many places through his writings, he wrote three complete different commentaries in the Arcana, in True Christianity and in Revelation Explained. These have been combined in this single volume. Cost \$US 9.95



### **ABOUT LONELINESS – from an article from ‘the guardian’** with acknowledgements to the writer, Oliver Burkeman



Loneliness is everywhere in the world of psychology these days. Perhaps you know that loneliness can be lethal: it’s linked to heart disease, insomnia and depression, and is a better predictor than obesity of an early death. But the new view on loneliness is that we ought to welcome it, in modest doses. As long as we then do what we should do – reconnect with people – then loneliness is a good thing. This notion gets greeted with surprise -

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loneliness, a good thing? – but the surprising thing is that we ever imagined otherwise. Why would we have developed this response to isolation if it didn't serve some purpose?

The same can be said for boredom, a warning that you need some more meaning in your life; for anxiety, which helps prepare for potential threats. This becomes obvious if you think about physical pain. A throbbing ache in your abdomen isn't pleasant, but it's a "good thing" if it prompts you to head to the doctor and address what's causing it.

If we tend to resist thinking about emotions as warning bells, it's probably because it sounds like dispensing blame. Telling lonely people they ought to get out more seems to imply it's their fault they're lonely. No, it isn't their fault; it's the overall situation.

The nasty twist in all of this is that loneliness can turn chronic and vicious circle begins, where you begin to see your surroundings as hostile and so you may avoid contact altogether. You need to heed the warning bell while not heeding the thoughts to which it gives rise. Reach out, even if it feels unappealing. Once again, the analogy with physical pain is helpful – surgery's rarely appealing, either, but sometimes it's exactly what we need.

(I thought this was a helpful article with a valid point to it. It reminded me immediately that Jesus sought solitude (a much better word than loneliness and isolation) on a regular basis, not, presumably from weariness or stress – but who knows? – but from the legitimacy for any person to be by him or herself for some while.)

## **NEW ADDRESS**

Jack and Johanna Benson moved fairly recently from Runaway Bay to Mudgeeraba. I got a good call from Jack who mentioned the move.

They now live at 3 / 45 Swanton Drive, Mudgeeraba QLD 4213 and their landline phone number is 07 5559 0717.

Those of us who know them will wish them well in their new place.

## THE PILLARS OF NEW CHURCH BELIEFS



Continuing a series about our beliefs in plain English. This month it is about **BEING POSITIVE**

It is just too easy to talk about always being positive and looking on the bright side. People have written books about it and we can only hope they have helped. Jesus handled it well when he saw the paralyzed man and said to him “Son, be of good cheer...” but immediately went on to say, “Your sins are forgiven you.”

That’s a legitimate reason for us to brighten up, knowing that our faults and woes and troubles are known by the Lord and okayed by the Lord because it’s human nature to get caught up in such things. Who on earth doesn’t?

I don’t think we can be positive all the time and we shouldn’t be making that a goal for us. It’s just too hard and unrealistic and we will end up being negative about being positive! But it is important to develop the positive in our life, when we can, and because we believe in the Lord who understands everything and arranges many things beyond our ken, we can draw from that and let it lift us.

In our church teachings, it talks about an affirmative principle. That’s a bit of a mouthful so let’s put it simply. When you hear something about the Lord, or something the Lord says, or perhaps some church teaching, say, about life after death, think about it and say to yourself that this is true, because the Lord has said so. In other words, start from a positive view of it, even if you can’t feel it. And then other things will come to you because you started out well.

The world around us needs us to be like this, to spread the positive message when we can and when it’s right to do that. All good comes from the Lord; we do not know the results of each smile and kind face or helpful word. Nor should we. But they are so important, for us and for the people we live with. It isn’t just putting on a brave face.

## **CITIES AND NATIONS**

This is just a pleasant pastime for a five minute break between courses during some Christmas period meal...

Words often end in –city and –nation, for example ‘electricity’ and ‘abomination’ so, given the meaning but not the word, people have to come up with the word. You can tell them this one is a –city or a –nation, which might help.

Below are 12 meanings – 6 cities and 6 nations, in that order. The answers are underneath the final fable so you can try them out first.

### **CITY**

1. The cheek of it! 2. Going out to tell everybody. 3. Sheer happiness. 4. Not giving up or giving in. 5. Able to talk the hind legs off a donkey. 6. The limit to what anything can have inside it.

### **NATION**

7. Making a verbal attack on something. 8. Accusing someone who’s accusing you. 9. You’ll do it if it kills you! 10. What Christmas is actually about. 11. Blending this with that. 12. Maybe I will tomorrow, or the day after.

### **FINAL FABLE**

In the school, the students learned about what is right and what is wrong. The following day one of them stole something and was dragged to the teacher, who let him off. The students were cross about this. A week later the same thing happened, and again the teacher let the student off. And it happened again. The class decided to confront the teacher about this and demanded an explanation. The teacher listened and then said, “This student does not know the difference between right and wrong. If I punish him, he will never learn. If I show clemency, he will begin to learn, even if all of you don’t.”

1. audacity 2. publicity 3. felicity 4. tenacity 5. loquacity 6. capacity 7. fulmination 8. recrimination 9. determination 10. incarnation 11. combination 12. procrastination