

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.



“Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean. Put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good.” Isaiah 1.16-17

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Our Tuesday Bible Study group resumes on February 7th at 11 a.m.
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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

WHEN IN ROME, DO AS THE ROMANS DO

Assimilation is certainly high on the agenda these days. You don't need me to give you examples, either for or against, because they keep coming up. But here's one from this morning's radio news. In one of the western European countries, the ruling party has just given an edict, "Assimilate, or leave!" Why? Well, they have an election coming up later this year and the far-right far more extreme party than the one in government is riding high in the polls, as they are in many other European countries.

I feel for Europe. Norwegians are – or were – Norwegians, and many countries have a very long history behind them. So anyone coming in, by immigration or by being a refugee, needs to understand that. Yet they also have come from somewhere with its culture, language, religion and so on. Do we downplay that because they're now here, and insist they take up ours? It's a never-ending circular argument, and maybe that's how it has to be.

Over here, we're relatively free of a lot of this because from 1788 all non-indigenous people came in from elsewhere, and have since come in, in waves. We've integrated by and large and in the process allowed people to have and cherish their background and heritage. But we're now tighter and more watchful than we once were. It takes precious little to raise the fears and bring out opposition.

Does assimilation also have a spiritual aspect to it? Jesus said two

apparently opposite statements: “He who is not with me is against me” (Matthew 12.30) and yet “For he who is not against us is on our side” (Mark 9.40) I used to think that these were diametrically opposite statements – they look like that at a quick glance – but I believe they are the same truth put in two different ways. Jesus uses the word “against” in both of them. That’s the key in each one. If we are against the things of God, we are against. It’s also helpful to see that the first one is in the context of a person doing good in the Lord’s name while the second is about ‘Satan’ and doing evil. Two very different ‘contexts’.

On a more down to earth level, each of us should and can assimilate towards each other. That’s what love is all about. That kind of assimilation (notice the closeness of this world to ‘similar’) often shows itself, especially in a couple who have been together for many years, intimately. Even their facial expressions often come to resemble each other’s!

Assimilation between people – friendship, attraction, sharing, agreeing, being together and having respect – is something beautiful. Not the same but different, yet not letting that come between things. In a way that’s what we’re here for. It’s certainly what we should be aiming for and work towards. In the wider context of migrants and cultures, the same thing applies. Keep your culture because that’s your roots but also join us in the way we do things here.

Over it all is the Lord, the Father of us all. Never lose sight of that fact, especially when differences bother us or divide us. Nobody else is going to be just like you, and other people might find you hard to cope with just as you find them the same too. Concentrate on that and we drive in the wedge. Override that with patience and care and we discover the riches of the Lord’s creativity. “Behold, how good and how *pleasant* it is when brothers dwell together in unity.” (Psalm 133 verse 1) And let us pray for a more united, safer world for everyone, and their children and their children’s children.

Julian

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ANNUAL MEETING

We gave notice in the last Newsletter so just a reminder that our AGM is on Sunday February 26th after the service, starting at 11.30 a.m. We hope you will be able to join us, and join in our plans for the work of the church into the future. The meeting lasts about one hour.

FRIENDSHIP GROUP

Our first meeting of the year will be on Wednesday February 1st, beginning with coffee and cake at 10.45 a.m. This meeting is our annual meeting and we shall also choose our Bible verse for the year, so do have a think and a look.

Julian will talk to us about 'Healing' which is important and understood in many ways. It's Biblical too. February was the Roman month of purification.

Afterwards we shall have our shared lunch, and we hope that you will be able to come along and join us for it all.

We wish Stella well after her nasty fall in Turrumurra recently. She has been in hospital, then Rehab and will return to hospital for further treatment. We wish for good healing Stella.

RICH AND POOR

a contribution from John Wilson

Last Sunday Julian, in his sermon, referred to the 'Rich Young Ruler' and the problems of wealth and poverty.

I was reminded of one of King Solomon's hard-hitting, pithy sayings – Proverbs 30:8 – 9.

Freely translated it says... "Lord, give me that which is needful for me so that I can live and not be forced to steal and curse you. On the other hand, don't let me be so rich that, in my seeming self-sufficiency, I forget you."

OUR HARVEST

Harvest will be on Sunday March 12th and we invite you to make a contribution towards it. This can be a financial contribution which should be passed over to Ruth, or a produce one – fruit, vegetables, packets, tins etc – which can be brought. Thank you in advance. We will be decorating the church on Saturday afternoon (11th) from 2

p.m. onwards and if you can come along to help with this that would be terrific. We will also be having a Harvest Lunch on the Sunday (bread, cheese, pickles) and you can let Ruth know about coming to that early in March.

SNIPPETS FROM THE SCRAPBOOK

(Stella Green is currently in rehab and not able to provide her monthly great quotes, so I have chosen some that appeal to me.)

Keep looking and don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. - Steve Jobs

Look deep into nature and then you will understand everything better. - Albert Einstein

The human body is the best picture of the human soul. - Ludwig Wittgenstein

The highest result of education is tolerance. - Helen Keller

The soul should always stand ajar, ready to welcome the ecstatic experience. - Emily Dickinson

The best vitamin for a Christian is B1 - Church Noticeboard

STEWARDS AND FLOWERS FOR FEBRUARY

Sunday	Steward(s)	Flowers
5th (Sacr.)	Dave Probert	Ruth Duckworth
12 th	John Wilson	Philip Brodsky
19 th	Wayne Kasmar	Julie Smith
26th (AGM)	Graham Hanna	Elizabeth Kemmis

Ruth will send out the February - July roster. Thank you to all those who take part in this act of serving the church. If you would like to join the roster please let Ruth know.

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BIBLE STUDY IDEAS FOR THE YEAR

Our fortnightly Bible Study continues on – see the green calendar for the dates each month. Last year we said farewell to Katy Wild and Myriam Albert, both regularly with the group.

Thinking about this year, I have come up with the following suggestions, though we are open to any requests as we go –

1. The stories of Elijah and Elisha, two prophets who both faced challenges and who stayed faithful to the Lord their God. These fascinating stories are found in 1 Kings 17 through to 2 Kings 9.
2. Jesus' disciples always make a helpful study for us as we too are disciples of the Lord. There are very many incidents in the gospels which directly involve some or all of the disciples.
3. Deuteronomy chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 are just sublime. They read very much as though the Lord is speaking directly to us, with love, encouragement and some warnings.
4. Babylon, often referred to as the Scarlet Woman, is a picture of power, control, wealth and domination. It's there in places in the Old Testament and its nature and fall is described in the book of Revelation.

Everyone is welcome to join us for the Bible Studies whenever you want to come. They run from 11 a.m. through to 12.30 p.m. and we start with a cuppa and a chat.

MEDITATION

Have you wished to do meditation but been unsure how to begin?

There is a small meditation group that meets each Tuesday at 9.30am in the New Church Roseville. We welcome new members and strive to meet the needs of each meditator through a short discussion on spirituality then a guided meditation. Ends by 11am and cost \$10. Run by experienced teacher, Kathryn.

“THE TOPS” CAMP REPORT



About 70 people gathered south of Sydney from New Year's Day till January 7th at The Tops. For some it was a new experience, for most others, another great camp and meeting old friends. It was extremely well-managed by those who had put the work in beforehand, and they were thanked at the very start.

The mornings were led by the ministers: David Moffat had organized a treasure trail which took us spiritually around the camp and gave the groups some activities to complete. Julian introduced us to our knees, and then led a session about letting our light shine. Brian Keith got the children thinking about and handling pebbles, and then showed us photos of the African New Churches. David Millar worked with the children out front about Moses' signs to Pharaoh with dramatic effects, and then to the adults about how we deal with our issues when we do our spiritual work.

After morning tea, age groups happened which were really good.

Wednesday was Outing Day and a large contingent headed for Jamberoo, and others visited nearby beaches and shops. That was the only full day of sunshine all through the week!



Afternoons brought adventure on The Tops activities onsite.

Evenings gave us a range of fun-filled quizzes and group activities, with Trivia Night and Talent night towards the end of the week.

Good evening devotions were led by various lay people during the week, and on the last morning Todd led a particularly “unfair” session bringing home to us that the Lord agrees with each of us a fair payment however long or short the time may be. The children excelled themselves in reacting here.

Yoga (twice), Zumba (power and noise), Zentangle (so artistic!) and Needlework (more sedate) were offered during the afternoons with happy results. The Choir practised and sang exceedingly well. Cameron Robinson took the Table Tennis trophy after a finals battle with Wayne Kasmar.

Thanks from us all to Todd and Jenn Beiswenger, Carolyn Heldon, Chris Kendrick and Graham Hanna and no doubt others too for providing a great week which will linger long in our memories.

There were people from every state in Australia, and from New Zealand, and a representative from overseas whom I understand was attending his 10th Camp!

The 2018 Camp is very likely to be at Alexandra Heads on the Sunshine Coast on the same dates – Monday January 1st to Sunday January 7th. Details will come through before too long.

SWEDENBORG CENTRE REPORT

The Centre continues to receive enquiries and phone calls from people who have recently happily encountered Swedenborg's writings for the first time in answer to a lifelong search for a deeper understanding of spiritual life or of the Bible. A newcomer's delight is often seen by their frequently posed questions: "Why didn't I come across his work before?" and "Why is his work not more famous?"

Not long after the Centre's presence at an enjoyable Family Camp at Stanwell Tops, we took the books of Swedenborg's writings to the Afterlife Explorer's Conference in Byron which attracted a good deal of interest and discussion from a wide range of backgrounds of conference attendees. The conference was followed by a "Close Encounters Conference" on the discussion of life from other planets, so it's perhaps not surprising that Swedenborg's book *Earths in the Universe* ("EU", also known as *Life on Other Planets*) drew the greatest interest. Swedenborg no doubt wrote that work as a drawcard using a popular topic which could engage people to look more closely at the Writings. A pamphlet by Wilson Van Dusen was handed to purchasers of EU in which Van Dusen points out that the alien life Swedenborg described were communities in the spiritual world which correspond to states we might encounter on our exodus from Egypt (our scientific, natural thinking) and on our regenerative journey to reach Canaan (the Lord's Celestial Kingdom brought to life in us). This interpretation is supported by the fact that in the Heavenly Secrets the EU material can only be found among the chapters dealing with Exodus.

Apart from the illusions display about trusting our senses, another item which attracted attention at that conference was our USB memory stick (16 Gigabytes) which contains a great deal of resource material of interest relating to Swedenborg and many of his works. The intention
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Swedenborg Foundation
111 Red Gum Walk (10m)
SHIRLEY ROAD ROSEVILLE
NSW 2157
Phone: 02 9387 4444
www.swedenborg.com.au

Resilience in Times of Change

Facilitated by Michael Chester



When faced with life's challenges, why do some people bounce back easily while others stay stuck? Michael Chester will be

basing the presentation on an excellent recorded interview between Regina Meredith and Joan Borysenko in which Joan explains how you can master the important life skill called resilience.

This will be a very illuminating evening which covers Joan's spiritual journey and some of the important insights she learnt along the way. You will hear about transformative experiences, experiences transcending this natural world, the nature of the mind, and the main characteristics of resilience.

There will be passages of wisdom interspersed during the presentation that complements the engaging conversation.

Here's a brief intro to **Joan Borysenko, Ph.D.** She is a distinguished pioneer in integrative medicine and a world-renowned expert in the mind/body connection. She is a Harvard-trained medical scientist, licensed psychologist and New York Times bestselling author, with more than a dozen books to her credit. Her work has been foundational in an international health-care revolution that recognizes the role of meaning, and the spiritual dimensions of life, as an integral part of health and



healing.

Michael enjoys listening to interviews on life related matters. This one on Resilience is highly rated by him for the warmth of interaction between the two women and the flow of experiences covered that benefits the listener in many ways. Michael has appreciated the view of reality in Swedenborg's teachings over 20 years and will complement Joan's conversation with various quotes.

More SAA events info at www.swedenborg.com.au/meetings

THE PILLARS OF NEW CHURCH BELIEFS

Continuing a series about our beliefs in plain English. This month it is about **THE LOVE OF GOD**



This is an important one for the start of another year. The title suggests two ways round – God’s love for us and our love for God. They both matter. They’re connected.

God’s love for us must be many times more than any love we will have for someone else. It’s an infinite love for a start and it is the only unconditional love that exists. It is a love that planned our creation and brought us into being, that never once lets up or changes, that wants us to be eternally right, happy and fulfilled.

God’s love for us includes wisdom. The moment we say wisdom we tend to think about brains and minds and making wise decisions. But God’s wisdom is all wrapped up with his love. Because God loves us, he knows every possible turn we can ever make, good or not, and already has it covered, lovingly. So there is nothing we can do which will either perplex God or put us outside of his love. He is already far ahead of us.

Even so, God wants us to love him in return, love him back. We can know about God and be amazed at that. We can worship God and make our commitment to his commands, and keep them. We can love other people because he asked us to love one another. We can give him our life and entrust it to him. We can be full of gratitude and find that we are becoming a completely different and God-centred person. Our love for God can be felt and expressed in countless ways which all matter.

Try and take on the fact that you are loved more than you can ever know. And that the more you love God in the ways that you do, the more you are going to meet and find and feel God’s love for you. That’s because you are becoming more open to something that was always there, even when you were not thinking about it, or doubted it.

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was to give people an item which remained useful even if they didn't retain their interest in the content we included. This started a number of conversations with passers-by around the centrality of usefulness. Meanwhile the Swedenborg Association of Australia has made further progress in planning its activities for the year and we should see a few new event offerings popping up during this year. The program in Sydney kicks off on Friday February 24th at Roseville. See the website for more details at <http://www.swedenborg.com.au/meetings> With much gratitude for your support of the Centre and its activities as we continue to promote the great inner work. Feel free to drop in for a chat if you're in the area.

Joe Vandermeer, Director

SOCIETY NEWS

Services began again on January 22nd. The Angel Service on the 28th. It was really lovely to have Leiane and Henry and William joining us for the Camp for the first time.

Our best wishes and love to Stella Green who is currently in rehab and receiving treatment and healing after a fall.

Congratulations to Sophie Gospodarczyk who did the choreography for "Cats" at the Concourse in Chatswood. It's a great show!

Myriam Albert left for Mauritius early in January and we will be in touch with her and she with us.

FINAL FABLE

A friend said that his house was so full of family people it was crowded out. So I told him to bring his chickens inside. He said that it was even worse. So I told him to bring his donkey inside. He said that this just made it even more squashed. So I told him to bring his goat and horse inside. He told me there was now no more room left. So told him to take all his animals and birds out again. The next time I saw him he was beaming..."There is so much more room in our house now and everybody is really happy!"