

# 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](mailto:julian@duckworth.me)

On Facebook – Sydney Society of the New Church - Roseville

## *April 2017*

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 they clothed him with purple, and twisted a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and began to salute him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Mark 15 verse 17*

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***Our Good Friday 'focus' is on April 14<sup>th</sup> at 5.30 p.m. See page 5.***

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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 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**

### **PEOPLE WHO COME AND GO**

We are used to people who come into our lives for a while and then we lose contact with them or they with us, and we never meet them again. We also know, in the life of the church, that there will be some people who come along to a service and say how good it was, and we never see them again. People come and go.

This is something that is Biblical as well. Someone comes into the passage of a story, does something and then never gets mentioned again.

One thing I like about that is how it fits with one of my own favourite ideas about goodness – Do the good that you see needs doing and then move on. Don't hang around feeling good because all good is from the Lord, not us, and don't expect to get accolades or necessarily thanked because that can be the same thing ... just move on.

Here are two examples: Ahab and Elijah were opposed to each other. Ahab's house officer, Obadiah, was a man who loved the Lord in his heart. He met Elijah who told him to tell Ahab where he was. After a bit of feeling scared about doing that, Obadiah told Ahab where Elijah was, and we never hear of Obadiah again!

Jacob married Laban's two daughters, Leah and then Rachel. It is a long story over a long time. Then Jacob set off with his wives and kids and Laban came and accused him of stealing things (Rachel was the guilty one!) but he found no evidence and he made a covenant with Jacob. Then there's no more Laban after that.

I am mentioning this type of briefly-mentioned person because in the story of Good Friday there is a man called Simon of Cyrene who is told by the Romans to carry Jesus' cross because Jesus grew weary. It sounds as though the Romans taking Jesus to the place of his crucifixion picked on someone in the crowd, some passer-by, and forced him to come and carry this undoubtedly heavy cross. Simon did so.

The question then is, on a purely physical level – did Simon of Cyrene do what he was told to do, perhaps begrudgingly, and when it was done, did he simply melt back into the crowd feeling indignant at being made to do this? Or did Simon, by carrying the Lord's cross, experience a life-changing transformation and perhaps became a follower of Jesus and was never the same again? Well, we don't know because ... Simon of Cyrene is not mentioned ever again!

But there it is, in the Bible, this sort of 'insertion' into the story. And of course some people would say that it's mentioned because that's what actually happened. However, everything that happens in the Bible is there for a reason, for some spiritual reason for us now, about ourselves. Let's start simply: perhaps it is about what I was talking about before – do something good and then move on without any expectation.

Now, try this idea. We know that the crowds of people were anti-Jesus on the day he was crucified. They mocked him. They said things like, "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!" and wagged their heads. And they had called for him to be crucified when Pilate offered a release. So the crowd was against him. The disciples were weak, and Peter denied knowing him, and they all fled the scene. The women, loyal to Jesus, stood afar and watched. Jesus was all alone and even felt that God had abandoned him...

So, maybe – and it is a 'maybe' – Simon (whose name means "hearing") is something that can serve the Lord when all the chips are down, like during our own deep temptations or spiritual rock-bottoms. Something in us which 'hears' and obeys, against our will at the time. You know, sometimes we have to force ourselves to do what is right, like it or not.

*Julian*

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## **FRIENDSHIP GROUP**

Our next get-together is on Wednesday April 5<sup>th</sup> starting with coffee and cake at 10.45 a.m. We would love to have you with us. Everybody is welcome.

Julian will talk to us about “writing” - a bit about its history but more about the spiritual meaning of writing, and why some people in the Bible were commanded to Write!

After this we will enjoy our shared lunch.

We send our love to Anne Stephen and also to Stella Green who is now back home in Turramurra.

Glen Hart



## **VISIT OF THE THOMPSON FAMILY IN APRIL**

We are now looking forward very much to meeting Rev Howard Thompson, his wife Debra and their youngest son Lance who is 12. They arrive in Sydney in the early morning of Monday April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The program has built up to be quite full and varied but also giving the Thompsons time to see Sydney and its surrounds, and hopefully near the start, some time to recover from the journey. The program will be included in the accompanying Calendar so if you only get the Newsletter online, do open the online calendar too.

Howard will be leading the Palm Sunday service on April 9<sup>th</sup> after which we will have lunch and time to meet each other socially. If you haven't yet told Ruth that you will be coming to the lunch please do that as quick as you can, and also what you will bring – entrée, salad, dessert.

Charlie Zarb has offered to do a barbecue of chicken pieces and sausages.

We hope that as many of you as possible can meet the Thompsons that Sunday or during their stay.

## ***OUR EASTER PROGRAM***

See the previous page for **Palm Sunday** (April 9<sup>th</sup>).

We will be decorating the front of church with our usual assortment of palm branches which come from some very kind neighbours and friends on Bromborough Road.

On **Good Friday** (April 14<sup>th</sup>) at **5.30 p.m.** we will have our service in which we shall be commemorating this special and yes, sombre day. Over the years we have done many things on Good Friday, some devotional, some activities, some about historical things ‘back then’. This year we will base the service around the one direct question –

***Why did Jesus have to die?***

We hope you will be able to join us.

**Easter Sunday** (April 16<sup>th</sup>) will be at 10 a.m. and we will share in the Holy Supper communion during the service. The service will be based around the two words “Living” and “Life” – words which come to the forefront of Easter and our celebration of resurrection and renewal.



### **STEWARDS AND FLOWERS FOR APRIL**

<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Steward</b>	<b>Flowers</b>
2 <sup>nd</sup> (Sacr.)	John Wilson	Philip Brodsky
9 <sup>th</sup> (Palm Sunday) (Rev Howard Thompson)	Graham Hanna	Elizabeth Kemmis
16 <sup>th</sup> (Sacr./Easter)	Wayne Kasmar	Ruth Duckworth
23 <sup>rd</sup>	Michael Chester	Christine Gospodarczyk
30 <sup>th</sup>	David Curry	Elizabeth Kemmis

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## **LINKS 1. A LADY CALLED SOPHIE RAWORTH**

Sometimes things just turn up out of the blue. My brother in England emailed me about a BBC program called “**Who do you think you are?**”

You may have heard of it or even seen it. Each program has a different well-known person going back into their family and their roots.

Sophie Raworth is a very well-known popular TV presenter and it was all about her ancestors and where they came from. Part of her family came from Birmingham, the Mott family, who were all involved in the family business of piano-making. They were also members of the “Church of the New Jerusalem” (one of the names of the New Church) but they found they were ostracized for their religious beliefs, so they emigrated to New York where, unfortunately, many of them caught Yellow Fever and died.

An earlier program in the same series focused on Alistair McGowan, a well-known impressionist, artist, comedian and singer who had the TV program in the 2000s, “The Big Impression”. His direct ancestor was Suetonius McGowan, who was Indian and also a Swedenborgian. This link got mentioned in his program.

If you are interested, both of these programs are up on YouTube.

## **LINKS 2. SHERIDAN LE FANU**

I’ve been reading one or two of the many “gothic” novels by the Irish Victorian-era novelist, Sheridan Le Fanu. “The House by the Churchyard” ... “Uncle Silas”. Apparently Sheridan Le Fanu is often called the “father of modern horror stories” and many of his books have a dark aspect to them and very often involve the idea of evil spirits and good spirits being with us. Mysterious characters come and go.

In several of his books, Le Fanu refers to Swedenborg both directly and indirectly, and to his teachings about the spiritual world. He wrote a vampire novella called ‘Carmellia’ quite a few years before Bram Stoker wrote his groundbreaker ‘Dracula’.

As a teenager, I often went to large Women’s League gatherings at Swedenborg Hall in London, where I met, truly, a rather austere lady in black, who was the widow of Bram Stoker’s son Neil who died in 1961.

## SNIPPETS FROM THE SCRAPBOOK

*You can't have everything. Where would you put it? - Ann Sanders*

To be content with what we possess is the greatest and most secure of riches. - Cicero

*Loneliness is the poverty of self, solitude is the richness of self.*  
- May Sarton

Procrastination is the thief of time. - Edward Young

*Our life is frittered away by detail... simplify, simplify.*  
- Henry David Thoreau

All man's miseries derive from not being able to sit quietly in a room alone. - Blaise Pascal

Stella Green

## SOCIETY NEWS

We had our Harvest Thanksgiving service on Sunday March 12<sup>th</sup> and a lot of good work got done from beginning through to the end. A good number of people helped to display the church on Saturday, then on the Sunday to get the "simple" lunch ready, and a whole battery of helpers boxed and bagged up the produce ready to take in the afternoon to Mission Australia.

The single man on duty there was wide-eyed as he looked at what we'd brought and immediately made a phone call to headquarters to alert them to buy other things for eating instead! In other words, it was much appreciated.

We had the "pulpit swap" on Sunday March 26<sup>th</sup> where Todd and Julian switch churches. Thank you to Todd for giving a service on the story of Ulysses and making comparisons or contrasts with some of the Bible's

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heroes. Thank you just as much to David Duckworth who ran the music with both recorded organ for hymns and live guitar playing all of which was different and therefore special, and enjoyable.

Several of us very much enjoyed the new initiative to have open discussions each second Tuesday of the month at the Swedenborg Centre. A lot came up at the evening session I went to and it is certainly a really good experience seeing the way that topics lead on to other ones.

The next discussions are on Tuesday April 11<sup>th</sup> at either 2 p.m. or 6 p.m. each for about two hours.

The Angel Service continues and we have had some good sessions recently. One focused on our need to stay awake to what is going on in us. Another one was about putting our personal goals and wishes on paper, folding it up into a boat and sailing them on the “sea” that was provided. In other words, stay afloat!

## **GIVING TO THE CHURCH**

We encourage all members to give regularly but it can be difficult to find cash on a Sunday morning.

You now never have to worry about that again. You can set up an online donation through our new donorbox system that we tried out over harvest. The advantages of this are that:

- You can make a donation even when you can't make it to church.
- You can set up a recurring donation and not have to think about it each week.
- You don't have to find cash (this is especially a younger generation problem but an increasing one for us all as we become a 'cashless society'.

So please consider this method of giving to the church. You can go to this address to set up your payment.

<https://donorbox.org/sydney-new-church>

It is simple to use, with three easy steps.

You chose the amount you would like to give and say if it is a one off or monthly payment, on the next page you give your name and email address and on the last page you give your credit card details.

Please note it is a **monthly** action, not a **weekly** one.





*Swedenborg Association of Australia*  
**FRIDAY APRIL 28<sup>th</sup> at 7.45pm**  
(after the Reading Group which starts at **6.30pm**)

Free admission

**AT THE NEW CHURCH, 4 SHIRLEY ROAD, ROSEVILLE**

## **THE POWER OF DREAMS**

**Facilitated by Michael Chester**

Michael is basing the presentation on an excellent interview (28 mins) between Kelly Sullivan Walden and George Noory, in which they explore the power of dreams.



Where do dreams come from? What do dreams indicate about the nature of Reality? She covers different kinds of dreams and the possible meanings of common imagery in dreams. There are some amazing dreams described and you'll be impressed by her interpretative skills to make sense of it. A way to help you connect and remember your dreams will be provided.

Connecting to dreams is very powerful as illustrated in the life of Swedenborg. The evening will be fascinating and practical so we hope you can join us.



Here's a brief intro to **Kelly Sullivan Walden**. *Kelly is on a mission to awaken the world to the power of dreams. She is a well-known dream expert, bestselling author, certified clinical hypnotherapist, inspirational speaker, and much more. She began her dream career at age five. Kelly and her younger sister shared a room and often shared dreamscapes. They would discuss*

*their dreams every morning and compare notes about what they thought they meant. Since those early years Kelly has grown into a trusted advisor, coach and consultant, enriching the lives of countless individuals.*

**Michael** enjoys listening to interviews on life related matters. This one on Dreams is highly rated by him for the depth of understanding of the importance of dreams, benefiting the listener in many ways. Michael has appreciated the view of reality in Swedenborg's teachings over 20 years and will complement Kelly's conversation with various quotes.

*More SAA events info at*

[www.swedenborg.com.au/meetings](http://www.swedenborg.com.au/meetings)

## SWEDENBORG CENTRE NEWS



It's nothing new to find the buzz of interesting conversation taking place in the Centre over a cuppa. A Swedish immigrant walks in off the street to find out more about Swedenborg. A postal worker making a delivery happily walks away with a book to satisfy his curiosity about what we have offer. A Jehovah's Witnesses team knocks on the door and leave an hour later with a Swedenborg book in hand promising to visit again. Those are some of our

delightful unexpected visitors.

But recently we began advertising a more dedicated opportunity set aside each month to come through the doors of the Centre to explore a question, deepen an interest, belief or personal practice which is connected to people's encounter with Swedenborg's works.

The aim is for that to remain an open free exploration, not tied to any format or prescribed reading, with no follow-up or expectation of commitment for future attendance. These open sessions are on the 2nd Tuesday of each month. You can choose to come anytime between 2pm and 4pm or between 6pm and 8pm (or both times if you're keen for a longer chat). Feel free to bring your lunch or dinner, a friend, a question or idea.

The first of these new ventures was a pleasant meeting of good minds who were keen to share in developing a deeper understanding and application of some theme from life and from Swedenborg's writings. This will no doubt evolve, but to begin it is very exciting. Of course, if those times are unsuitable don't let it prevent you from dropping in to the Centre on other occasions when you will be equally welcome. See [www.swedenborg.com.au/meetings](http://www.swedenborg.com.au/meetings)

Meanwhile, the Swedenborg Association held another interesting evening to focus on the challenge of maintaining our good health. This was energetically delivered by practitioner and author Martine Negro, drawing material from her new book on the subject (available from the Swedenborg Centre). These monthly Association presentations are held on the fourth Friday of each month. The next topic is dreams (a further note appears elsewhere in this newsletter). Dreams can form an important aspect of our personal spiritual growth, as Swedenborg made clear by his personal example of taking note of his dreams and trying to fathom their significance and instruction from higher life. This meeting is on 28<sup>th</sup> April at the New Church, Roseville at 7:45pm, and is preceded at 6:30pm by the option to read and reflect in a group some significant passages from Swedenborg (it's free and there's no need to book).



Wishing you all a productive month of joy and growth. Joe Vandermeer

## THE PILLARS OF NEW CHURCH BELIEFS



This month we are looking at Adam and Eve, described in the Bible as being the very first man and woman. In the New Church we don't believe that there was an Adam and an Eve back at the beginning of things. It's a story, but it is also a very true story. The story of Adam and Eve in Genesis chapters 2 and 3 takes us through what is called the Fall, because they disobeyed God's command.

Adam and Eve represent the very first people of all who lived a very different life than ours. They didn't think about themselves at all, they just lived full of trust and innocence and the delight of being like that. They knew God provided everything and would always care for them.

They lived in real Paradise and felt that heaven was very close to them. This loveliness is described by them being naked. It says that God told them to eat from every tree but not from the tree of knowing good and evil. If they ate from that, they would 'die'. In other words they would lose all this trust and innocence.

God made people to be different from animals – to be people who could be aware of God and love God in return. But God knew right from the start that by making people, they would eventually start to think for themselves. This is where the serpent comes into the story. There never was a crafty serpent. There was the dawning thought (after who knows how long) that 'I am me!' – 'I have my life' – 'I can do this or do that'.

And this is what happened – a bit like with every baby that gets born and becomes aware of himself or herself. Hey, I want things! The first innocence got lost and Adam and Eve realized they were naked and made clothes to cover themselves.

God knew all this would happen – they didn't thwart God's great plan. They (like each of us) developed and lost their innocence, so that being out of it they would spend their lives searching, choosing, and learning in their hearts. And that is good because it leads to a wise innocence.

## **SOME BIBLICAL TRIVIA TO TRY**

*Answers at the bottom of the page – maybe cover them up!*

1. What insects did John the Baptist eat?
2. Who had a troubled dream and begged Pilate to release Jesus?
3. How many elders sat around the throne of God?
4. Which gospel writer was a doctor?
5. Where was the man going to who was helped by the Good Samaritan?
6. How many fish did the disciples eventually catch in their net?
7. Which important man did Luke write his gospel for to explain things?
8. In which city did Simon Peter declare, “You are the Christ!”
9. What is the very last word of the Bible?
10. What are four of the seven “I am”s that Jesus said about himself?
11. What was the name of Adam’s third son?
12. Which tribe of Israel looked after its religious affairs?
13. From which part of Adam’s body did God create Eve?
14. How did Uriah die?
15. What was the name of David’s father?

### **FINAL FABLE**

A ruler sent his servant to the market to buy the very best meat. He returned and showed the ruler he had bought a tongue. The ruler was a bit annoyed, so he told the servant to go back to the market and buy the worst meat he could get. The servant came back and showed the ruler he had bought a tongue.

The ruler was exasperated and demanded an explanation. “Oh master, the tongue can be the best thing there is, but you see, it can also be the worst thing.”

Trivia answers: 1. Locusts; 2. Pilate’s wife; 3. Twenty four. 4. Luke; 5. Jericho; 6. A hundred and fifty three; 7. Theophilus; 8. Caesarea Philippi; 9. Amen; 10. Bread of life; Light of the world; Door;

True vine; Good Shepherd; The Resurrection and the Life; The Way, Truth and Life.

11. Seth; 12. Levi; 13. Rib; 14. He was put on the frontline of the battle;

15. Jesse.