

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 showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.” Revelation 21.10

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Our New Church Day service is on Sunday June 18th
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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 NEW JERUSALEM

This month, on June 19th or thereabouts we celebrate New Church Day. Part of its meaning is linked with the vision of the Holy City in Revelation 21, descending out of heaven from God, a description of spiritual perfection, clarity, balance and perhaps most of all of a person or a community in which the presence of God is everywhere, being its very light.

I've been struck by the name of this visionary holy city being the New Jerusalem. I know we sometimes build cities and call them New York or New Orleans, or areas called New South Wales and New Zealand. Part of it is simply obvious; Jerusalem itself was the main city of Israel, the hub, and particularly where the Temple was. Jerusalem was an ancient site and is mentioned in an Egyptian inscription of around 2000 BC as Rusulamum.

The prophet Ezekiel describes an eight-chapter vision of "something like the structure of a city" but most of it describes a visionary temple. And the last verse of Ezekiel says "and the city's name shall be "Jehovah-shammah" (notice some similarity...) which means "The Lord is There."

In the New Church we see the New Jerusalem as a model of our regeneration and completeness or completion, which is why it is there in the last two chapters of the whole Bible. Everything about it is right and as Ezekiel says, "The Lord is There". Note that it is a city which

has been built by people, but spiritually, this means the work that we have put into building our life on God's Word and truth.

Other religions have other views about the New Jerusalem, some physical and some spiritual. The Puritans took the idea very seriously in their pioneer work in the 'new world'. One large religion saw that the New Jerusalem would finally be established in Independence, Missouri.

Even the building of St Paul's Cathedral in London is said to contain elements of the New Jerusalem which pleases the British Israelites who believe that the ten lost tribes of Israel ended up on the shores of Britain.

And a devout Quaker, Jemima Wilkinson, started a New Jerusalem community in the seventeenth century by a lake near New York, now called Jerusalem, but it quickly died out after her death.

None of these beliefs or attempts should be ridiculed, because deep within the human spirit there is the sense of and the yearning for our perfection as ordained by God. The New Jerusalem is what we are intended to be, and may people's endeavours long continue towards that end.

But we still have a long way to go, not only individually, but also politically. Today's Jerusalem is seriously divided and causing one of the main barriers to effective peace talks in the Middle East, right now.

So we shall celebrate New Church Day on June 19th, the 18th for us in church that Sunday. Yet while that date comes and goes, the work of building the New Jerusalem carries on in us every day of our lives. Seeing a truth we didn't see before which spurs us on to try and live by it. Seeing something in our attitude or make-up which tends to stop us from getting any further along our spiritual path, and deciding to manage it better. Seeing other people in new ways and accepting and admiring them, or like William Blake (an ardent New Jerusalemite) said, "The tree that is before you is to some just an obstacle but to others a thing of exceptional beauty." And perhaps most of all, seeing your own great place in the whole scheme of things, a bit of the great city, the New Jerusalem.

Have a good New Church Day!

Julian

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FRIENDSHIP GROUP

We are having our next gathering on Wednesday June 7th starting with coffee and cake at 10.45 a.m.

Julian will give us a talk about “Why so many servants are mentioned in the Bible” and connect this with our service to the Lord and to each other. After this we will enjoy our shared lunch together, and we hope that you will be able to join us for our meeting.

Glen Hart

NEW CHRISTIAN BIBLE STUDY

This is an excellent website which is managed by Steve David in America and which has become popular with many people including some of us in Australia. I have corresponded with Steve several times and he seems very happy to hear from people and is understandably excited about the website’s growing success.

He sent the following to put in newsletters –

News from the New Christian Bible Study Project

Have you ever wished that you could read the Word and the Writings side-by-side? Would you like to be able to look up the correspondence of words in the literal sense, as you read? Would you like to be able to see New Church commentary on the internal sense? You can do all that, and much more, on the New Christian Bible Study website.

*More than 100,000 people visited our website last month. This crowd is growing quickly. Bible readers and spiritual seekers are coming from all over the world. It's one of the most exciting projects in the church today. Check it out! Look us up at **newchristianbiblestudy.org***

As a regular user, I completely recommend this website to everybody.

QUEENSLAND 2018 CAMP JANUARY 1ST TO 7TH 2018

Another reminder to think about coming to the next Camp at Alexandra Park and to indicate your definite interest or send off the booking form and deposit. Unsure of what to do? – see Ruth or Julian.

STEWARDS AND FLOWERS FOR JUNE

Sunday	Steward	Flowers
June 4 th (Sacr.)	Wayne Kasmar	Philip Brodsky
11 th	John Wilson	Jan Primrose
18 th (NC Day)	David Curry	Julie Smith
25 th	Michael Chester	Glen Hart

WINTER SOLSTICE DINNER

You are invited to a celebration in the church hall, on **Saturday 24th June at 6 p.m.** to mark the middle of winter. This will be a shared meal. We are inviting everyone who attends any of our church activities, Hurstville New Church and the Swedenborg Association of Australia. You may also like to invite a friend.

We will have a fire, candles, rugs and music and share a hot meal together.

Please bring either a hot casserole, or a warming dessert and the drink of your choice.

We will provide the set up, and also rice to go with the casseroles and ice cream to go with the desserts.

R.S.V.P. to Ruth on **0408 101 250** by 21st June please.



TINS & PACKETS FOR EXODUS FOUNDATION

...while we are on the subject of Winter, a particularly hard time of the year for the homeless, please remember that we are a “Drop-Off” point for Exodus Foundation and please bring an occasional or regular tin or packet (no glass or non-food items). And Thank You to those who do this virtually every time they come to Church. Very much appreciated!

SNIPPETS FROM THE SCRAPBOOK

The world is full of suffering. It is also full of the overcoming of it.

- Helen Keller

Don't waste time wondering if you love your neighbour. Act as if you do.

- C S Lewis

The moment you stop pursuing contentment, it will find you.

- Zen saying

The supreme happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved.

- Victor Hugo

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

Have nothing in your home that you do not know to be useful and believe to be beautiful.

- William Morris

Stella Green

CONCERT IN THE CHURCH

Sunday July 9th at 2 p.m.

Riley Lee (shakuhachi) and Cliona Molins (harp) play music inspired by William Blake's poem

"To see a world in a grain of sand

And a heaven in a wild flower;

Hold infinity in the palm of your hand

And Eternity in an hour."

Riley and Cliona's music create a meditative atmosphere of introspection and contemplation.

Bookings: trybooking.com/QATY

Cost: Adults \$30 Concession \$25



**RILEY
LEE
&
CLIONA
MOLINS**

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour
WILLIAM BLAKE

Riley Lee (shakuhachi) and Cliona Molins (harp) perform music inspired by this poem. Both venues are intimate spaces ideal for these two instruments. Riley and Cliona's music create a meditative atmosphere of introspection and contemplation.

When: Sun 2nd July, 2PM
Where: 1/37 Fairlight St, Fairlight
Bookings: trybooking.com/QATB

**Sunday 2nd July 2017
2PM Fairlight**

When: Sun 9th July, 2PM
Where: New Church, 4 Shirley Rd, Roseville
Bookings: trybooking.com/QATY

**Sunday 9th July 2017
2PM Roseville**

Cost: Adults \$30
Con: \$25

www.rileylee.net www.clionaharpist.com.au/

ANGEL SERVICE

At our weekly Angel Service in May, on two occasions we did something special...

On May 22nd we each wrote one or two things in nature or man-made objects on a piece of paper and drew them out of the bag to think about their spiritual idea or correspondence. This produced quite a lot of interesting thoughts and lively discussion.

Here are the things which people listed, and you are invited to think about them in a spiritual way as a meaningful image...

BELT	SHOULDER	FLOWER	BAT
EYEBROW	TABLE	SLOW COOKER	KNEE
COIN	ANT		

The week afterwards, on May 29th, due to two terrible incidents in which many children died, we celebrated the beauty and innocence of all children and read how all children go directly to heaven and are cared for as they develop there, how children ask penetrating questions about so many things, and we read a few lovely healing poems from Robert Louis Stephenson's "A Child's Garden of Verses".

NEW CHURCH DAY SERVICE

SUNDAY JUNE 18th



In the New Church we have an amazingly clear and relevant set of teachings about this life and how we should live it, about the afterlife, the Bible, God and his care for us and much more.

It is not always easy to explain these beliefs that we have – and which we have individually – to other people. In our service to mark New Church Day we will look at finding good ways for us

to be able to share what we believe with other interested people.

After the service we will have a special morning tea in the church hall.

THE MEANING OF THE NAME ISRAEL

יִשְׂרָאֵל

If you know your Bible you will know that the word “Israel” runs through it all the time from beginning to end; in fact, from Genesis 32 when God changed Jacob’s name to Israel all the way through to the Holy City in Revelation 21. This makes it a very important feature of the Bible and one which concerns us too.

The name Israel means *“he who strives or contends with God”*. Immediately we can see a whole area of meaning for us in that – all our questions about what goes on in life, the things each of us has to contend with, the difficulties we can sometimes have with believing in God, following God’s teaching, reconciling this loving God and the innocent suffering which is there around us, and much more. So it is an accurate meaning.

Of course, Israel in the Bible can sometimes be understood politically, the “chosen people”, the right to have the land which God promised to their forefathers. But the Bible is not about political justifications and rights, it is about the pathway of our own spiritual life and growth, each one of us. And this is carried by the name ‘Israel’ and all the hundreds of references to Israel in the Bible. This is actually why Israel is called the chosen people – God chooses us to live spiritual lives!

The Rabbis say something which is very helpful with this spiritual idea. They say that the name ‘Israel’ grows larger from beginning to end. If you go back to the Hebrew word at the top and start from the right hand end (Hebrew is written from right to left) the first letter on the right is the smallest letter. It’s a Y. It’s what Jesus meant when he said that “not a **jot** (this tiny letter) or a tittle will pass from the law until all is fulfilled”. Then go to the other end and the big letter there. It’s an L – by far the biggest letter in Hebrew. The name grows from small to large!

And this is what our spiritual life is intended to do.

SOCIETY NEWS

We had our Mothers Day service on Sunday May 14th and looked at the work of mothers through using the Biblical story of Hagar and Ishmael.

There are several people who are unwell at the moment and we send them our love and best wishes for better health and recovery. There are also several people hit with coughs and colds from the onset of colder weather and we wish them well too.

We now have a donation method in place for any contributions to the church. It is an online program called DonorBox and it is simple to use. Go to <https://donorbox.org/sydney-new-church>. 3 easy steps -

1. Choose your amount and say monthly or one-off 2. Next page give your name and email address 3. Next page give your secure credit card details. Note that it is a monthly action not a weekly one. Thank you.

Over the last 12 month I have put together an Anthology of words and phrases that are found in Swedenborg's writings. There are about 200 of these, done alphabetically, and in doing the work I have aimed to be extremely clear. This has now been put together in an attractive booklet form by the Swedenborg Association of Australia and it is available on request. As well as being an explanation, I think it will also be useful in giving someone a general understanding of New Church teaching.

The Brisbane Society dedicates its new premises on Sunday June 18th so here is one photo of the interior. They will have new chairs by the time of the dedication service.



WINTER



Winter begins for us on June 1st. It is our coldest time of the year and yet we don't have the extremes that some parts of the world have in their winters.

Winter is when the garden takes a rest. We might stay indoors that bit more. It is a time for going within and even becoming a bit

more reflective. Warming meals and curling up with a blanket and a good book.

Unlike spring and summer, winter gets mentioned much less in the Bible, perhaps because it is so cold and unproductive. Where it is used it is often as a contrast, like in God's words after the flood, "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest and cold and heat and winter and summer and day and night shall not cease."

But there's one mention that sounds interesting. Jeremiah the prophet spoke about Israel's wrongdoing and dictated this to a scribe who wrote it down. The king heard about this and was furious and summoned his scribes to bring it and read it to him. And he burned it in the fire. And it says that the king was sitting in his winter house with a fire burning on the hearth before him. It seems appropriate, winter in the heart.

OUR MONTHLY PRAYER CIRCLE



For many years, a number of people have taken part in being part of our church prayer group. It now gets distributed at the beginning of every month with a list of just names and some other things for prayer.

If you would like to be included as one of the group, let me know, and thank you.

As I often mention, everyone is welcome to pass names of people on to me to be included in the list. We don't have know them, nor their details. Prayer is something all of us can take part in, the loving, wishing, good energy for other people.

THE PILLARS OF NEW CHURCH BELIEFS



This time we're going to look at what is called our **BOOK OF LIFE**.

If I say to you that you are writing a book, you might be surprised. But you are writing one, even though it doesn't come out in print. It is your own personal book of your life.

This idea of us "writing" a book is also there in the Bible, mostly in Revelation, where it talks about those whose names are written in the Book of Life. That sounds a bit different, just having your name in the list, but of course to have it there we also need to be worthy to be included.

Our book of life we're writing every day, even all the time we live, is the imprint and record of our own decisions and choices. Even those that look as if they don't matter very much, like that moment when we couldn't be bothered to.

The important point about it is that none of it is held against us to stop us from being in heaven or being so bad that we must end up in hell. It is simply a record of everything. We go from this moment to that moment and forget all about what we felt yesterday, but the book doesn't; it keeps the recording.

It isn't even a book. It is really the collection of our thoughts about things, especially about people, and our feelings, but most of all it's about our decisions and our wish to be a better person or a more authentic person in spite of what might be going on for us.

And maybe while we sleep, things are getting filed in their right place inside us so that they can be accounted for. We won't be involved in reviewing during this life, but in the next life, we will have access to it, and we'll be able to say what we think about it all. And in fact, we will.

SWEDENBORG'S INFLUENCE

Some of us know that there are quite a few people who have been influenced by their awareness of Swedenborg's teachings. People like Helen Keller and William Blake come to mind, and even Australia's second Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin.

I sometimes wonder if we go too far in saying 'influenced by Swedenborg'. Sometimes it might only be 'aware of him'.

But recently I found a person with a definite stated influence of Swedenborg. This is Sibelius, the Finnish composer, who wrote 'Finlandia' and seven symphonies and so much else. He was married to a lady called Aino, who was very much into everything spiritual and supernatural.



His recent biographer wrote a three-volume in-depth life of Sibelius and mentions that Sibelius bought a copy of Martin Lamm's 'Life of Swedenborg' and said that he completely devoured it. And he (Sibelius) went on to say that Swedenborg's idea of everything being in divine harmony helped him to complete the writing of his 5th

Symphony which he had been struggling with.

So next time you hear or sing Finlandia....

FINAL FABLE

Once there was a garden which was tended by a young monk who loved the shrubs and plants. Next door, over the wall was a monastery where lived an elderly wise monk. One day the young monk was tidying the garden most carefully and raking all the leaves into piles. The elderly monk asked him why. He replied that important people were to come there today.

The elderly monk asked him to help him over the wall, so he came over and helped him. The old monk praised the tidy garden and went to the big tree and shook it, and very many leaves fell down and scattered. Then the elder monk went back over the wall.