

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.



“But my kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall my covenant of peace be removed.” Isaiah 54.10

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Our Mothers Day service is on Sunday May 14th
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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

ORDINARINESS

Life is quite surprising sometimes. Every now and then, we have a special day or we have that experience of something happening that just seems to fit in with where we are at. All that is good because these are special, these are peak moments.

But a lot of life is quite ordinary, which doesn't mean it is weary or dreary (unless we make it that!) – just normal, routine. And such times are also good. We get things done, we catch up on jobs, and perhaps follow through with time for a personal interest.

Here, in Roseville, we have just had an unusually busy period in the church, with the visit here of Rev Howard Thompson and his wife and son, which also overlapped with the Easter period. All of that was good and went well. And now we are back into a normal pattern for a while.

They say that when a great performer finishes their performance, singing, playing, acting or whatever, they always need a longish period of time to “come back down”. All the adrenalin plus the audience plus the expertise plus the emotions need to settle and recover.

Many years ago there was a New Church pamphlet called “An Ordinary God” in which the writer focused on God's blessing on everyday things, a kind word, doing what we have said we will do, getting through each day's jobs. God particularly blesses such a wonderful yet very unremarkable chain of events. Why? Because they are real and because

they are good. Nobody is going to make a song and dance about them but if they are not the bedrock of life, life will soon begin to fall apart.

We can read about how people have had their life changed by an extraordinary God, who lifted them up and held them on high. How wonderful for them indeed! We would not take that awesome change from them, but the following day they would still have had to wash the dishes and wipe up some spill etc.

“Good” is a very special word that is worth some thinking through. One of our church teachings points out that we are often aroused by what isn’t good but bad, or evil. We prick our ears up to find out more. And it goes on to say that we do this because by nature we are naturally attracted by things that are evil, unseemly or disorderly. And that can sound harsh to us, but it’s true. Look at the front covers of so many magazines for a start, and they sell well!

So we should not take “goodness” lightly or as a matter of course. We need to work on it and grow to love it even though it is ordinary and rather bland. This is why in our church teaching there is a regular call for us to abstain from evil as a sin against God. In the Bible it says, “Cease to do evil, learn to do good.” That’s put the correct way round.

Sometimes we can get the wrong idea about “evil” and think of it as being deliberately cruel, or doing something that would be very bad. But none of us surely would ever take part in that kind of thing, so then we’re not evil, we’re pretty good! Try and see that the important thing is to notice what excites us at times and then deal with it as we should.

C S Lewis wrote: “Good is hard to preserve, but it is terribly hard to eradicate completely. As one professor said, “There have been civilized people in every age.” I was out walking with a friend during the war and we were talking about the recent invasion of Norway, and he said to me, “Yet, you know, even there, at this horrendous time, there are still people who are tidying up tables and falling in love.”

Julian

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FOR MOTHERS DAY

Begin, baby boy, to recognise your mother with a smile. (Virgil)

So for the mother's sake the child was dear, and dearer yet the mother for the child. (Samuel Taylor Coleridge)

A man may not marry his mother but he may well wish to marry her likeness. (Anon)

Few misfortunes can befall a boy which bring worse consequences than to have an over-affectionate mother. (Somerset Maugham)

He asked water and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish. (Bible: Judges 5 v 27)

In the dark womb where I began
My mother's life made me a man.
Her beauty fed my common earth
Through all the months of human birth.
I cannot breathe, or see, or stir
But through the life of part of her. (John Masefield)

The mother's yearning, that completest type of life in another's life, which is the essence of real human love. (George Eliot)

Moreover, my mother taught me, as a boy, ever to confess that 'You are bored!' means that you have no inner resources. (John Berryman)

Something was amiss! My father grew perplexed but my mother picked it up in an instant. (D H Lawrence)

Motherhood ... everything begins there. (Robert Browning)

You shall honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.
(Bible: Exodus 20.5)

THE “DUTCH REACH”



I listened carefully to a radio news item the other day which talked about the “Dutch Reach”. This is about opening the car door with the **other** hand than the one we would normally use when we have parked. For us that would be to use our

left hand rather than our usual right hand. The effect – see the photo – is that doing it like this swivels your body round to make you look behind you and so notice the cyclist who may be coming up behind as you suddenly open the door. You might even save a life or a serious accident!

Apparently, this is normal practice in the Netherlands and has been for many years, hence the name, “The Dutch Reach”.

In New Church language, doing this is very much a work of charity!

STEWARDS AND FLOWERS FOR MAY

Sunday	Steward	Flowers
7 th (Sac.)	Rhonda Hall	Lynne Twemlow
14 th (Mother Day)	Dave Probert	Glen Hart
21 st	Michael Chester	Ruth Duckworth
28 th	Graham Hanna	Elizabeth Kemmis

SOCIETY NEWS

We have had a busy period this last month. The visit here of Rev Howard Thompson and his wife Debra and their youngest son Lance was an enjoyable two weeks. Howard took the service on Palm Sunday where there were 42 people at the service, and he told us about our need to check our expectations of the Lord’s work with us.

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We had a very happy lunch after the service and we hope that everybody managed to share some time to talk with the Thompsons. Thank you to many people who brought things to share for the lunch.

Howard and Debra were taken around various scenic parts of Sydney during their two week stay. Thank you very much to those who took them around. They were with us for various regular events, like the Bible Study group and the Angel Service, and they were with the Church Committee who for an hour before interviewed them. They went across to the Swedenborg Centre to share time with Joe Vandermeer and Michael Chester, and they were part of our Good Friday service the day before they left to return to Colchester.

The Committee has given an invitation to Howard to be the minister here in 2018 and they will be responding to that invitation in the next few weeks. Thank you very much to all those who helped so generously to make their visit a good experience, for them and for us.

Our Good Friday service was a larger number than usual and it was about the question, “Why in fact did Jesus **have** to die?”

Our service for Easter Day was well-attended and its theme was on those who came to the tomb at dawn, finding the Lord was risen, and the way that things also ‘dawn’ on us, often powerfully so, at times.

Ruth is enjoying being in England, in Kent, mostly with her mother but also having visits from her family. She sends her love to you all. Ruth gets back on Thursday May 4th.

Our loving thought and prayers to several people who are undergoing surgery or the results of that in the last few weeks. We are right there with you, and even more importantly, the Lord is there with you as you recover and mend.

Don’t forget that anyone can be included in our monthly Prayer Circle. Just let Julian have just the name of the person to be included.

Swedenborg Centre News letter

If 'news' was a letter
 It might be an 'N',
 Or perhaps even 'W'
 For "who, what, where, when?"
 Is new always better?
 Soon it becomes old
 And wraps all our litter
 Once stories grow cold.
 Yet some news ne'er ages
 And doesn't go stale,
 Like truths from the pages
 Of Swedenborg's grail.



The good news we're told
 Which is useful each day
 Though it's centuries old:
 Is the hope that I may
 Shine God's light deep inside me
 Then with some daily toil
 It can help me to see
 When I dig up my soil
 That it's well worth the labour: -
 He can use me much more
 To love Lord and neighbour.
 Now that's news worth payin' for!

This Friday 28th April brings some interesting Swedenborg Association events in Roseville, namely the monthly reading group at 6:30pm, followed by a presentation at 7:45pm on the Power of Dreams. Both are free. On Tuesday 9th May will be another opportunity for discussion at 2pm or 6pm at the Centre in North Ryde. Keep your eye on the Website for more at www.swedenborg.com.au/meetings which will also be updated soon to announce a visit to the Sydney Writer's Festival in June as an SAA activity with Desi Anwar on Spiritual Encounters, Saturday

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May 27th at 3:45pm (free event). Also, a sneak preview that on Sunday 9th July afternoon we're planning a special musical concert at Roseville of shakuhachi Japanese bamboo flute played by the famous Riley Lee with Cliona Molins on harp.

Look forward to seeing some of you drop in at the Centre for coffee, conversation and books!

Joe

THE WORLD AS A PICTURE FOR THE WORLD



I've been watching a History of the World series where at one point the rapid spread of people 70,000 years ago was depicted on a map. If you

look at the map you can see how it can have been so rapid. Each continent is distinct but fascinatingly always closely linked or even joined to another by an isthmus (Panama and Suez) or by a narrow stretch of water (Indonesia and Australia, the closeness of eastern Russia to Alaska).

But let's look at this spiritually as a great model for us individually and even for the world as a whole. Each of us is an individual person but we live among others who are who they are. We are together but we are also distinct. We share life, we form relationships, we exist alongside each other, which can be difficult sometimes, but we give and we receive from each other across our vital links. And hopefully we live in harmony. The map says it all, for us, for world peace, and also for the Lord's heavenly kingdom in eternity. It seems providential that this is.

THE MONTH OF MAY



I used to sing in a madrigal group and one of the merriest madrigals was “Now is the month of Maying, When merry lambs are playing, falalala...”

May is linked with spring in the northern hemisphere, so there are maypoles and hawthorn blossom or “may blossom”. But the name, “May” comes from the Latin word ‘magnus’ which means large or great – think magnify, magnificent, major, and others.

Down here, it’s beginning to be chilly when May arrives, but try and see this season as a time of growth and ... personal blossoming.

Here is a great passage from Swedenborg about the greatness of God.
The Lord is great and glorious and wishes us to acknowledge that, not because He benefits but because we will. It is from His love that he wishes our response, for He wishes to be joined to the human race and give it eternal life and happiness..

This can’t be done unless we worship God in humility, knowing that we are ‘dust’ and that the Lord is the Greatest and Most Holy One. When we do so, He can come to us and bring us into heaven. (Arcana 7550)

JANUARY 2018 CAMP

It’s important to keep this annual event before us all. The Camp in January next year will be at Alexandra Park Conference Centre on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland from Monday January 1st to Sunday January 7th.

It is a great site, very close to busy shopping and eating out and also it’s only a ‘stone’s throw’ from the beach and ocean.

Bookings can be made by post or online, and bookings or indications should be made by September 1st. If you are interested and need more help, just have a word with me and I’ll show you more. Look at the poster up on the church hall window. It has the website address.

RULES OF LIFE



The other day I sat down and wrote down what I would choose as my five overall rules of life. I kept it to five because that is the fingers on one hand so I can run through my rules, one per finger.

I thought that perhaps I should come up with 12 but I decided not to, not only because there would be more rules to remember, but also because I wanted to keep to the very essential ones.

Here they are –

1. Regularly be very mindful of God
2. Strive to be useful
3. Keep the commandments of the Bible
4. Examine oneself and make adjustments
5. Keep a positive and good outlook

It's fairly well-known around the New Church that Swedenborg wrote his own four rules of life. They were never published in anything but found as a handwritten manuscript among his personal effects after he had left this life.

Here they are –

1. Diligently to read and meditate upon the Word of God.
2. To be content under the dispositions of Divine Providence.
3. To observe a propriety of behaviour, and preserve the conscience pure.
4. To obey what is commanded; to attend faithfully to one's office and other duties, and in addition to make oneself useful to society in general.

I wonder what you would draw up as your rules of life?

THE PILLARS OF NEW CHURCH BELIEFS



This time we're looking at an important teaching but one that isn't very often explored – **TAKING CREDIT**

First, imagine two different situations. In one, after a big event finishes and the thanks are given to those who put it all together, you did a lot of the hard work but you don't get mentioned once. You feel a bit overlooked and upset.

In the second one, you and a friend decide to trick an elderly person out of all their money. It's very easy because they are always confused about everything. You arrange most of it all. But somehow it goes wrong and your friend gets caught but nobody bothers about you. And you think, that was lucky!

Taking the credit or needing to be recognised for the good we do is not a good place for us to be in. We are diverting the good that is done away from the Lord, away from it being done for its own sake, and syphoning it back to ourselves. What do people think of me? Did I do well?

There is the other side of the coin, and how we think we were lucky to get away with some robbery (or whatever it is). It's the same pattern – we are diverting the fact that we did a great wrong but we didn't get found out. We are again syphoning it back to ourselves. Hey, I got away with it!

Put very simply, while this can happen in the privacy of life here, it isn't going to be possible in the spiritual world. So, there, after we die, taking credit will come right out into the open, and so will bad intentions that we got lucky with here. What we are like in our heart is what comes out.

And one more thing. People here can blame themselves for something that once happened, and carry the guilt of it for decades. God knows the secrets of our hearts and he will bring that – whatever it is like – to the fore and then everything else will fall into place accordingly.

THE TIMES OF DAY



Of course, clock time is a bit artificial, but our personal time or sense of how we are is very real. It is reflected very well in the passage of a day – through morning, noon, evening, and night or ‘rest’. Here’s the pattern –

Morning	looking forward, feeling ready, being eager
Noon	being in active life and getting on with things
Evening	completion, coming out of busyness a touch at times of how well we did it! (twilight)
Night/Rest	handing our endeavours over to the Lord

This summarises the pattern of each of our states, intentions and hopes as we involve ourselves in serving life and wanting to be useful. It always will be, both here and in eternal life.

In the Bible, times of day get a lot of reference and if you look at what is going on when some time of day is mentioned you’ll see just how appropriate it is for that event.

Here are 4 mixed Bible references to have a look at sometime...

Genesis 42 verses 24-26

Luke 2 verse 8

Psalm 143 verse 8

Luke 24 verse 28-29

FINAL FABLE

Once there was a town made up of two parallel streets. One day, a man in tears came along one street and its residents saw him and cried out, “Someone has died in the other street!” (He had actually been peeling onions.) Panic broke out for fear of the plague and news of this got picked up in the other street. Both groups of residents quickly fled from the town, one to the west, and one to the east, and to this day the town has stayed, deserted, with a village to the west and a village to the east.)