

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.



Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, “O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter? Look, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. Jeremiah 18.5-6

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Our Friendship Group’s Christmas meeting/Lunch is Thursday November 30th
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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

LAWS GOVERNING LIFE

I've always had a huge respect for the legal system which stands apart and independently from the various goings-on in life and determines the rights and wrongs. Take that away or weaken its place in society and we're asking for trouble. In today's world it's needed more than ever and current news often throws up the reasons for it and the attacks on it.

'Laws' kind of underpin the whole of life. A good word to use is that they are about 'consequences'. Physical laws deal with things like gravity and magnetism. Then there are what you can call 'quirky' laws which tell us about situations. Parkinson's Law, where work fills up all available time. Murphy's Law, if something can go wrong, it will. And then there is this, Herblock's Law: "If it's good, they'll stop making it."

I have a few personal 'laws'. Duckworth's "first law of interference" is that, for example, if you start going to the dentist you will keep having problems with your teeth. Duckworth's law of velocity is that by 2020 people will check their devices more frequently than my grandmother blinked.

And then there are some exceptionally good (and true) spiritual laws which underpin our lives. I have a set of about 25, and here are three that seem helpful. "The Law of Increase: In loving without thought of reward there is the reward of greater love." (which of course is what Jesus said); "The Law of Attraction: We are attracted to and inevitably drawn to what we love, and we become so." (which is exactly what New

Church teaching on heaven and hell rests on); “The Law of Respect: Every person and each thing is commanded to be given absolute respect.”

And then there are the Divine laws or the laws of the Lord. Psalm 19 sets the basic idea of these down along with useful comments each time – “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”

But we also need some examples of the Lord’s laws in our life. The laws about Providence (God’s government of our lives) are helpful here. Here are some of them: 1. We should have no other feeling than we have life which seems to be our own, yet we should acknowledge and believe that the truth of our thoughts and actions are from the Lord. 2. We should do what we do from our freedom and by means of reason, yet know that both these are given to us by the Lord. 3. The Lord is continually withdrawing us from evil so far as we are willing to be withdrawn. So far as we are willing we are led by the Lord and led to heaven.

I hope some of all of that is helpful. To our senses, life looks fairly random, doesn’t it? We might wonder if we are getting anywhere, or worse, what is the point of it all. So it is going to be useful for us to know that life is not really random but only looks like that on the crust, and that underneath there are a good number of developments and even progress based on what we determine, choose and settle on.

I watched a video clip about releasing wolves into Yellowstone National Park. There hadn’t been wolves there for decades and the deer were breeding like mad, driving away other species and reducing vegetation. The Park was declining all round. Introducing the wolves triggered off a connected chain of consequences, which resulted in otters and beavers returning and a lush fertile beautiful regenerated park. This too is a law about the balance of all life that is given to us by the Lord. ***Julian***

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FRIENDSHIP GROUP

Our next meeting will be our Christmas one and our Lunch. This is on **Thursday December 7th** starting at 10.45 a.m. and if you are coming please bring a wrapped gift of about \$10 for the Santa sack. Please make a note that this is not our usual Wednesday for meeting.

More details in the next newsletter.

Glen Hart

CHURCH KEYS

This comes from Ruth. She would like everyone who has a church, hall or church/hall key to show it to her so she can check the number on it. Quite a few have been handed out over quite a few years and this exercise is to keep tabs on our security. Please bring your key the next time you are going to see her. Thanks!

NEW CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

The Board of the New Church in Australia is having a “face to face” meeting here in Sydney, at Roseville, on Friday and Saturday November 10th and 11th. These happen twice a year and in between them the Board regularly meets by phone.

If you would like to drop in and say hello, you’re very welcome to, and the best time would probably be between 12.30 p.m. and 1.30 p.m. in the lunch break on either day. Just come, you don’t need to tell us.

The national church is holding a 2nd Assembly which will be at The Tops (Stanwell Tops) from Thursday to Saturday May 3rd – 5th 2018. Members of the New Church in Australia and Society Representatives will be invited and the content of the Assembly will be given in due course.

The Alexandra Heads Queensland Camp (1-8 January 2018) is getting organised now and looks to have good numbers. Rev. Glenn Alden and his wife Mary (who’ll both be at Camp) arrive in Melbourne during November and it will be great to see them again.

STEWARDS AND FLOWERS FOR NOVEMBER

| Sunday | Steward | Flowers |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| November 5 th (Sacr.) | John Wilson | Lynne Twemlow |
| 12 th (Rev Todd B.) | Ben Tranter | Ruth Duckworth |
| 19 th | Michael Chester | Julie Smith |
| 26 th | Graham Hanna | Elizabeth Kemmis |

OUR CHRISTMAS SERVICES AND EVENTS



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|-----------------------------------|--|
| Thursday December 7 th | Friendship Group Christmas 10.45 am |
| Sunday December 10 th | Nativity and Gifts Service 10 a.m. and Church Party after |
| Sunday December 17 th | Morning Service 10 a.m. Carols by Candlelight 7.30 p.m. |
| Monday December 18 th | Ashley House Carols 10.30 a.m. |
| Sunday December 24 th | Christmas Eve Lessons/Carols 10 a.m. |
| Monday December 25 th | Christmas Day Service 10 a.m. |

More details will be in the December/January Newsletter

NOTE There will **not** be services on the following Sundays ~
December 31st, January 7th and January 14th.

There will be services each week from January 21st onwards.

Please make a note of these seasonal dates and we look forward very much to seeing you with us over the Christmas period.

SNIPPETS FROM THE SCRAPBOOK

Be kind whenever possible, and know that it is always possible.

- Dalai Lama

Evil is whatever distracts.

- Franz Kafka

I may not be where I want to be but thank God I am not where I used to be.

- Joyce Meyer

There is always the danger that we may just do the work for the sake of the work. This is where the respect and the love and the devotion come in. We do it to God, and that's why we do it as beautifully as possible.

- Mother Teresa

Memories are like mulligatawny soup in a cheap restaurant. It is better not to stir them.

- P G Wodehouse

When I have a terrible need for – shall I say the word – religion, then I go out and paint the stars.

Vincent Van Gogh

500 YEARS EXACTLY SINCE THE REFORMATION

On October 31st 1517 Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the castle church in Wittenburg. This action basically led to the



Reformation which was the start of the Protestant branch of Christianity. Martin Luther was a German theologian who took issue with the widespread sale of indulgences to people to buy their place in heaven. He translated the whole Bible into German. He believed that salvation is more a matter of faith than of good works. He was finally outlawed by the Pope. But Protestantism took off.

The point of his protest ('protest'ant) led to the start of many denominations in the Christian Church across Europe and beyond. To a certain degree, the New Church can trace its 'ancestry' back to the action Luther took five hundred years ago.

In Germany they have celebrated this anniversary for a whole decade!

WHAT A BRICK CAN TELL US...



Somewhere around your place you'll be able to find a brick... They're hard, like rock, but the difference is that they are man-made and not natural. They are used to build walls and buildings. They are carefully shaped so that many bricks will fit snugly together.

Bricks are Biblical – the story of the Tower of Babel, where “they had brick for stone” and they began to build a city to reach up to heaven. And Pharaoh made the Jews in Egypt make bricks, and when Moses challenged him, he increased the quota to make the people suffer more.

From that we can get two ideas to think about – that we are meant to build our life, and building our life will involve us in some kind of personal challenge, maybe some suffering as it goes against the grain.

Now look at the shape of the brick. It is six-sided, with six faces. Two are the front and the back; two are the left side and the right side, and two are the top and the bottom. These suggest some kind of directions and also some balance. We need direction and balance in order to build our our life, our “house”.

Let's interpret each pair a bit. The front end is our future and what's lying ahead. The back end is our past and everything we have come through so far. The sides are perhaps not quite as obvious, but they could be helping us see things to avoid, some extreme, where the balance gets lost. “Do not turn from My law to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.”

The top of the brick faces up while the bottom faces down. This seems to tell us that we need to make distinctions between higher and lower things, heavenly and worldly concerns, “as in heaven so upon the earth” as we bring beliefs down into actions and raise up what we do into being something we offer to the Lord.

.....Bricks are simple but they're helpful !



SWEDENBORG ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

Friday 7.45 p.m. November 24th 2017
at the New Church, 4 Shirley Road, Roseville
\$5 members / \$7 members and concession

“MIND, THE GAP, AND THE LAWS OF CREATION”

Presented by David Millar, from Adelaide



The material creation may not be what it appears to be.

In this talk David Millar explores the relationship between mind and matter, and questions whether a dualistic view of reality that draws a separation or gap

between the spiritual world and physical phenomena is consistent with the laws of creation as revealed in Swedenborg's Writings. In doing this he hopes to show that the question is not a theoretical abstraction but that it carries very real consequences so far as our spiritual life is concerned.



David Millar is the spiritual director for the New Church College, based in Adelaide. As well as running the work of the College, David encourages people to use Swedenborg's writings for personal spiritual practice and works with groups of people who take part in “Logopraxis” – which is about working with the Word.



A SWEDENBORG ANTHOLOGY

The Swedenborg Centre has published a Swedenborg Anthology. This is available in either print form or online. It gives clear explanations of many of Swedenborg's terms used in his Writings and gives a brief outline of many of Swedenborg's spiritual teachings. There are 219 entries, each covered in a few lines. At the end of the Anthology there is a list of all the entries, each one linked to a reference or two in Swedenborg's Writings where this particular subject is dealt with.

An additional use of the Anthology would be to provide information for someone wanting to know more about Swedenborg's spiritual approach.

The 219 entries have been written to give clear definition but also with our own spiritual experience and practice in mind. This is important in today's world.

A5 size, 60 pages, durable card cover, clear print, coloured headings.

Print copies cost \$10. Online copies are free of charge but we invite people to consider a \$10 payment to help with the cost. Available from the Swedenborg Centre

You are welcome to let other people know about this helpful new production. It's also coming towards Christmas! This could be a gift to consider.

Here is one entry as a sample:

RELIGION

Swedenborg says that all religion is to do with life and that a religious life is in doing what is good. Religion is the worship of God and it involves the discipline of living by the teachings of the religion that we have. Everybody who follows their religion and lives by its truths is able to be received into heaven after death.

THE PILLARS OF NEW CHURCH BELIEFS



This time we're looking at the meaning of various **NUMBERS**.

Somebody once told me that numbers are a bit like a clue which we should take good notice of. In the Bible, numbers are very much like that – there are Ten Commandments, twelve disciples, five loaves and two fish, and Jesus spent forty days being tempted in the wilderness.

At a quick glance, we might think that the number that is given is simply how it is or was at the time. But take 40 and you will find that quite a lot of other 40's get mentioned and they are always to do with a tough experience which is called 'being tempted' – the Jews were forty years in the wilderness, it rained without stopping for forty days and nights in the flood with Noah's ark, and the giant Goliath taunted the Israelites every day for forty days, "Give me a man to fight!" This seems to add up.

'Six' and 'Seven' are important numbers too. They often get put together, like in the story of creation, where there are 6 days of creation and then the 7th day on which God rests. Six is about God helping us with our spiritual work, and seven is its completion and rest. This has become the Sabbath Day where we 'do no work' and turn to the Lord before the next period begins. And in the book of Revelation the number of the 'Beast' is 666, a huge multiple of a 6!

12 seems to mean everything that our spiritual life needs to have in order to make progress. So there are 12 tribes of Israel, each named, and 12 disciples, again each named. And the Holy City has 12 gates. Multiply 12 by 12 and get 144 and then add lots of 000's you get 144,000 which is the number (in Revelation) of those who will stand before God. When we know what 12 means, we will understand that otherwise mysterious number. "Only 144,000 saved?" "No, everything about you can be raised to heaven!"



SABBATH BREAD

Every Friday night after sunset, Jewish families have the Sabbath meal which usually involves the breaking and sharing of the specially-prepared Sabbath bread called a Challah.

Challah is a light sweet-tasting bread which is braided like the picture shows. This represents the family being bound together. The sweetness represents the joy which the Lord brings to the family. The bread itself represents all the goodness and nourishment which the Lord gives us.

One of the older customs with the Challah bread was that the dough was prepared, and before it got baked, a portion of it was pulled from the lump and given away, sometimes to the priest or to a neighbour. This represents remembrance of the Lord and kindness to others. Something is shared. And the name Challah seems to be linked with Hallelujah (far more familiar to us) which means “Praise the Lord!”

It is amazing that a simple loaf of bread can hold within it so many meanings, reminding those taking part about all the Lord’s presence and goodness. A recipe is available online at:
allrecipes.com/recipe/172633/easy-challah-bread

FINAL FABLE

A student was determined to learn a certain area of knowledge and he went to ask his teacher how long this might take him. “It will take you ten years,” said the teacher. The student told the teacher that he was very serious about studying and would work hard every day and if necessary every night as well, to acquire this knowledge. Then he asked the teacher once more how long this would take him with such application. “It will take you twenty years,” said the teacher.