

“All religion has relation to life and the life of religion is to do good”.

Swedenborg

The New Church In Victoria Newsletter

October / November 2017

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Important Dates for your Diary:

- October 1st : **Clocks forward by 1 hour at 2am**
Service of Worship (Mt. Waverley) - 10.30am. Conducted by Rev. John Teed including the sacrament of the Holy Supper.
- November 28th: Rev. Glenn & Mrs. Mary Alden arrive in Melbourne from USA to begin a 3 month visit.
- December 3rd: **Service of Worship** (Mt. Waverley) – 10.30am. Conducted by Rev. Glenn Alden followed by a welcome lunch provided by the Church

A Pastoral Message from Rev. Glenn Alden

Greetings dear friends of the NCIV, both those we already know and those we have not yet met:

Thank you for the opportunity for my wife, Mary, and me to come to Victoria to serve the New Church there. We come with a sense of enthusiasm and hope. We also come with humility and a trepidation learned over nearly 40 years as pastor and wife. No matter what we do or how hard we try we cannot build the church. “Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.” (Psalm 127:1)

OUR ROLE IN CHURCH GROWTH

The Lord wishes the church to grow, just as He wishes heaven to grow. There will never be a time when heaven or the church will have reached capacity. This is a direct outcome of the nature or essence of the Lord's Love and Wisdom which are infinite and eternal. In *True Christianity* (Swedenborg) in the section on the Creator and Creation we are told “Three things constitute the essence of God's love: his loving others who are outside of himself, his wanting to be one with them, and his blessing them from himself.” (n.43) This is given as the underlying reason for creation. We may also see it as a statement of the Lord's desire that heaven and the church may grow.

People often wonder why the church seems to grow so slowly. The book of Revelation and Swedenborg's unfolding of its words seem to warn us not to expect the church to grow quickly. At the start we might look at our individual part in the church's growth. A fundamental teaching of the New Church is that the first of charity is to shun evils because they are sins and the second of charity is to do goods because they are uses. We can't do uses that are truly useful if our motives are not good. If we wish to partner with the Lord to build his church our first step must be to examine ourselves and then shun (turn from) the barriers we are given to see in ourselves. These barriers, often referred to as evils because they oppose what is good, can be summarized as selfishness or egocentricity and worldliness or materialism. They are the root of all our spiritual dis-ease.

Unless we are aware of the way selfishness and worldliness corrupt our motives, and thence our thinking and actions, we will not see how, rather than being the Lord's partner in building the church, we are actually working at cross purposes to Him. As a pastor I need to ask myself, "Are my motives in wanting the church to grow in harmony with the Lord's motives? Am I primarily concerned for the happiness of others or with my own success or my reputation? Do I want the church to grow to solve the church's financial problems? Am I afraid of change? Do I worry that the teachings will be watered down or its' culture lost?" In addition to these there are many other questions I might need to ask as I set out to partner with the Lord. Not all the things I have listed are necessarily evil. Change is frightening. Wanting the church to have a sound financial basis is a good thing. Although we are told to make righteous judgments, I need to look for underlying selfishness and materialism within my motives if I hope to truly partner with the Lord.

As members of a church community which has expressed a desire for the church to grow, we all need to ask questions of ourselves. Who do we hope to serve in this growing church? Will these people be like us and come from similar backgrounds? All people are children of God, and He wishes to draw all people as closely to himself as they are willing to be drawn. "God's love goes out and extends not only to good people and good things but also to evil people and evil things. It goes not only to the people and things that are in heaven but also to those that are in hell." (True Christianity 43) Are we prepared to be comfortable with the people the Lord might bring to our church organization?

Asking these questions, examining ourselves, repenting, and becoming willing to change does not guarantee we will be successful in our own personal or community goals. It *will* help the church to grow if only in ourselves, and it is likely that the Lord will be better able to use us as He builds His church. In setting out as a community I believe it is the first step, the "first of charity" in our becoming a serviceable tool that God may use.

Glenn Alden 21/09/2017

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Hello from Mary Alden

It is Autumn here in the Northern Hemisphere, kids are going back to school and activities are resuming after the Summer hiatus. Glenn and I just attended our first rehearsal of the year for our singing group, the Whatcom Chorale, where we began practicing Handel's Messiah for a December concert. Because we will be in Victoria for December this year we will not be performing the Messiah with them but we are greatly enjoying going to rehearsals because we love the music and the community of singers.



Mary & Glenn Alden

Glenn grew up in a family of singers. His parents taught their children to sing in harmony and the family once gave a performance together on a local morning TV program when he was young. My family was musical but we never really sang together until the occasions of our parent's memorial services many years later after we had all grown up. My first experience in choral performance was as a teenager when I went to a summer music camp. Part of going to high school for both of us was learning to sing the New Church hymns in 4 part harmony when we attended the General Church Academy in Bryn Athyn Pennsylvania (where we first met over 50 years ago). We both enjoyed singing in a choir, always connected with church. Over the years in a succession of small church pastorates, opportunities were few and far between with tiny choirs occasionally cobbled together for special events or when I could twist arms.

My love of Handel's Messiah in particular made me long for a broader choral experience. Many years ago I asked for a score of the work so that I could sing along to tapes and then CDs. My daughter found one for me in a used book store and I was thrilled. My other daughter will likely never forgive me for making us all sit around and try to sing a few choruses from this book along with the taped music when she brought her new boyfriend home for his first visit one Christmas Eve. When we moved to Tucson 16 years ago, the community had a Messiah sing-along every year where they hired a conductor, an orchestra and soloists, and the audience was seated in vocal sections and sang the choruses. While I loved it, I was dismayed to find that mostly I could not accurately read and sing the intricate parts or keep up with the rapid fugues. If I wanted to really sing it, I would have to study and practice, but church and work kept me too busy to join a real choir.

It was when we lived in Brisbane in 2012 that I first got my chance. I looked on the internet for a Messiah sing-along there and did not find one but found an advertisement for the Messiah performance by the Brisbane Chorale. Looking at their website I saw that they were looking for new members and periodically hosted auditions. Prior to seeing this I had not even thought about joining a choir there, but the idea immediately seemed appealing. Being close to performance time they would not audition me prior to the Messiah but invited me to a general audition in January. With great trepidation I showed up, almost losing my nerve while waiting in a hall with other people, some speaking about extensive musical experience and training. I passed the audition, was accepted as a 2nd Alto, and immediately began attending weekly rehearsals with this wonderful 100 member choir. The choir's next planned performance was Verde's Requiem. In the week prior to the concert we had two rehearsals with the Queensland Symphony and I first felt the sublime experience of being a small voice in the midst of a large choir and orchestra. This gave me some inkling of what it might be like to experience the heavenly choirs that Swedenborg speaks of.

Six months later the Chorale planned a tour of New Zealand to perform Elgar's "Dream of Gerontius". I was thinking of not going due to the expense but Glenn encouraged me and we decided to make the trip together as we could bring our non-choir partners on the tour. When we had made the arrangements and trip numbers were tallied, our conductor bemoaned the fact that we had an unusually low number of tenors who had committed to the trip. I raised my hand and told her that I had a fine tenor already coming along and went home to convince Glenn to audition. He did, he sang with us, and both of us have never looked back.

We sang many things with the Brisbane Chorale, the last major work there being the Brahms Requiem, which we sang again this spring with the Whatcom Chorale. The picture posted was taken as we were waiting for the final rehearsal with the orchestra before this performance. One of the first things we did when leaving Australia 3 years ago and moving to a new state in the US was to find a chorale to join. We hope that as long as our voices hold out and we are able, we will continue to sing in community performing choirs. I have already looked around a bit on the internet for the possibility of a choir to join for the time we will be in Melbourne. In any case, we look forward to singing with you in church over the coming months.

One last thing. Looking back over the past few years, it is impossible for me not to be amazed and grateful for the Lord's leading in this little story. I wasn't looking to join a choir but was lead to the opportunity and given blessings that I could not have imagined because of it. Glenn was not planning to join the choir in Brisbane. He took the opportunity to go for it when a need was presented and feels similarly blessed. It is also something we enjoy doing together as a couple. For anyone interested, both the Brisbane Chorale and Whatcom Chorale have websites where you can see and hear examples of what we have been blessed to be a part of.

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NEWS OF PEOPLE

It is pleasing to report that Brian Robinson is recovering well following a skiing accident resulting in broken bones. Brian anticipates being back to an almost normal routine within the next few weeks although full healing will take a few more months.

Everyone able to attend Eva Teed's 90th birthday celebration on 10th September had a great time being with Eva, her family and friends. There was plenty of reminiscing!

Sadly Norma Whelan suffered a mild stroke during September requiring a short stay in hospital and then plenty of rest. Thankfully Norma is getting on well and we trust it will not be too long before she is able to get to Church once again. Another face we have not seen at Church in recent times is Sandra Misson due to a knee replacement and a period of rehabilitation. We also look forward to Sandra joining us at Sunday services. Margaret Parker sends her greetings to everyone expressing the hope that she will eventually be able to get back to attending worship. Margaret is using her walking frame again after a long period having to use a gutter frame which is difficult to manoeuvre.

NEWS OF PEOPLE (contd.)

Lorna Brown has been struggling with osteomyelitis in her foot for some months on which an ulcer formed causing much discomfort. Lorna had to accept medical advice that the only effective cure was amputation of the foot, although doing so gladly to relieve the pain. Following the operation, Lorna is now back at her nursing home, learning to live with her changed circumstances but very cheerful with life. Love and best wishes go to Norma, Sandra, Margaret and Lorna.

Congratulations to Linda & Michael Francis on the birth of their daughter, Lucy Alexandra Joy, a sister for Harry and Charlie. Mother and baby are doing very nicely. Alexis & Neville Jarvis are proud grandparents again.

Visit of Rev. Glenn and Mrs. Mary Alden

The Board is currently working on a program of activities with Glenn and Mary during their stay in Victoria. Details will be provided in due course either in the next Newsletter or separately.

Diary of Events October / November 2017

October 1 st 2am	Clocks forward by 1 hour at 2am
October 1 st 10.30am	Service of Worship (Mt. Waverley) conducted by Rev. John Teed including the sacrament of the Holy Supper
October 15 th 10.30am	Service of Worship (Mt. Waverley) conducted by Karl Robinson
October 17 th 10.15am	Tuesday Bible Study in Hall (Mt. Waverley)
October 29 th 10.30am	Spiritual discussion group in Hall (Mt. Waverley)
October 29 th 3.30pm	Service/Discussion Group in Ballarat ~ home of Len & Judy Robinson, 318 Fussell Street, Ballarat
November 5 th 10.30am	Service of Worship (Mt. Waverley) conducted by Karl Robinson
November 14 th 10.15am	Tuesday Bible Study in Hall (Mt. Waverley)
November 19 th 10.30am	Service of Worship (Mt. Waverley) conducted by Neville Jarvis
November 26 th 3.30pm	Service/Discussion Group in Ballarat ~ home of Len & Judy Robinson, 318 Fussell Street, Ballarat
November 28 th	Rev. Glenn & Mrs. Mary Alden arrive in Melbourne from USA to begin a 3 month visit
December 3 rd 10.30am	Service of Worship (Mt. Waverley) conducted by Rev. Glenn Alden followed by a welcome lunch provided by the Church