

Sydney Society Newsletter

Issued by the Sydney Society of the New Church Established in 1875

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February 2018

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.



Are not two sparrows sold for a penny, yet not one of them falls to the ground apart from God's will.

Matthew 10 verse 31

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Our Friendship Group meets on Wednesday February 7th
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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

BEING A SUPPORT

I don't usually watch television but some of the Australian Open has been quite a magnet. Tennis is thrilling because it is scored in such a way that almost every point can turn a whole game around, and the players live on a knife edge during the match. They are very exposed, playing on their own, unlike a soccer team, and it is little wonder that they become people in the spotlight.

That is the players, but my attention often turned away from them to watch the ball boys and ball girls and others – the support people – who have obviously been drilled to do their job to utmost perfection. And so they do, so well that they almost become invisible which is the point of their perfect work and timing. There they are with that towel on call, catching it as it is used and thrown away. There they are, swiftly into the net area picking up a ball and returning to their spot. Blink and you'd miss it!

These people do not hit the headlines but without them a tennis match would become untidy and tedious. And we haven't mentioned the umpire, linesmen (watching their one line for several hours!), the groundsman and first aid attendants. We watch the tennis players.

Our niece was here in Sydney last year and she worked for several months with a company providing people in black to serve food and drinks at major functions, pop star events, bank lunches, corporate do's. Part of the training was to learn invisibility and to understand that

people are there expecting food and drinks to come whenever. Sure, the occasional kind person says “Thanks!” but it’s a rarity.

This kind of support happens in many ways. The pianist accompanies the singer who gets the applause, but even the pianist may have a page turner! I watch a movie and I’m always staggered when the credits roll to include everyone from hairstylist to gaffer’s mate. But of course, that’s what it takes to make a movie.

There is a support story in the Bible involving Moses, Aaron and Hur. Some people called the Amalekites came and attacked the children of Israel so often and so shamefully (hitting the weak and feeble at the rear) that the Lord told Moses to stand on the mountain with his hands held high. So it was, when Moses held up his hands, the Israelites prevailed, and when he let down his hands, the Amalekites prevailed.

But Moses’ hands became heavy, so (and this is the point) Aaron and Hur supported his raised hands, one on each side, until the sun went down and the victory came. The spiritual meaning of this is excellent. Moses stands for the Word, Aaron stands for its teaching and Hur stands for our experiences in life. Put those three together and you’ve got a very helpful picture.

Now come close to home – husbands support wives and wives support husbands. Couples support their children and in time, they support their own ageing parents. This is how it is, how it is meant to be, like Jesus said, Do good, expecting nothing in return, and be willing to go that second mile.

Above everything, the Lord is always supporting us in ways we know about and in ways we don’t. When we make a sensible decision to change some pattern or habit, the Lord has been busy, giving us the thought that this would be a good thing to do, bringing up some truths into our mind to confirm it, giving us the will to change, and then supporting us for however long it takes to set it in place.

Never overlook the need and the place of being a support.

Julian

OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

We will have the AGM in the church hall on Sunday February 25th starting at 11.30 a.m. and going for about one hour. It's the time when we go through reports of things and the financial accounts during the last year and when we make plans about the coming year which for us will be an important one.

Reports need to be with Julian and Ruth by February 10th please, for distribution.

Everyone is welcome to be present at the meeting, and we hope that you will come and take part. Should some voting be required, only formal members have the right to vote.

FRIENDSHIP GROUP

Our Annual meeting will be on Wed 7th February as part of our first meeting of the year, beginning with coffee and cake at 10.45 a.m. Julian will talk with us about "Praise".

We will choose our Text for the year, so please bring along one for us to consider.

Afterwards we enjoy a shared lunch and anyone who would like to come is warmly welcomed.

Looking ahead to March 11th, we will celebrate Harvest and we'll be decorating the church on the Saturday (10th) starting at 2 p.m. If you can join us to help with that, that would be really appreciated. Thanks.

Glen Hart

FROM THE NEW CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

The national church is holding a second Assembly at The Tops Centre (Stanwell Tops) from Thursday May 3rd to Saturday May 5th. The content of the Assembly will be made known fairly soon. Several things will come forward from the first Assembly in April 2016.

Everyone is welcome to attend and take part in this open discussion forum.

It is also a great opportunity to meet and catch up with people from around the New Church in Australia and New Zealand.

REPORT ON THE QUEENSLAND CAMP

A good number of people came together for the week, plus a number of day visitors at Alexandra Head Centre on the mid-Sunshine Coast. The centre is in easy walking distance of the local beach, shops and places to eat. It is set in 25 acres of rainforest and bush and has been in existence since 1946.

Thanks were given to Carolyn Heldon and Chris Kendrick for their excellent work over many months in putting the camp together, and to the Brisbane Society and Rev Darren Brunne for overall hosting and ensuring things went according to plan.

The first evening – always a little strange – was taken up with a number of mixing activities and a bit of explaining about the week, and then a devotional from Darren which took us into the spiritual feeling of everyone sharing in being a camp. Then for some a relatively early night after travelling.



The first session the next morning is probably one of the most original ones that have happened at camps. David Moffat explained fractals – endlessly repeating identical patterns – and then got us to create cubes from business cards which, added to other cubes, became large versions of the same cube. David linked this with several neat Swedenborg quotes about heaven being the same in the largest and the smallest of its forms.

After morning tea we broke up into age groups sessions. The five ministers at camp – Darren, Todd, David Moffat, Julian and Glen Alden each rotated each age group as well as doing a full camp session. The afternoons were fairly free, with the beach and shops being one attraction and the centre pool and pretty good weather being another. Some afternoons included Zentangle (lovely art work went on) and Zumba, thanks to Jenn Beiswenger, and several Yoga sessions, thanks to Julie Beynon.



But people certainly enjoyed the leisurely round of chats and some took on the task of jigsaws or crosswords or adding to that fractal.

The evenings were spent in various ways, with a variety of games. On the Tuesday evening, Paul Evans and two of his children came and ran a Trivia Night which, for me, was pitched at the right level of sufficient difficulty.

The other full camp sessions were enjoyable. Glenn Alden led us through our need to spy out the land (Canaan) now, Todd Beiswenger used a corporate management tool, The Prisoners Dilemma and Julian worked with the fact that there are so often Things inside Things.

The Choir practised after dinner each day and eventually did a very acceptable performance of three items: Let there be peace on earth (in four part unaccompanied harmony), The Lord is my Shepherd (to a Tchaikowsky symphony theme) and a piece called Walk in the Light.

Table tennis tournament is a camp feature, and this years final was between father and son, a friend of Darren Brunne, Chris, and his young son. A tight thrilling great match.

Thursday was the outing day and people went off in groups to various places. Quite a few people had flown to camp so cars were quite a premium. But somehow it all got sorted.



Saturday night is the Talent Night and people come out and do something. One that delighted us all was the re-telling of God calling Samuel done beautifully by Audrey and Finn Ralls (pictured) helped by mum Sarah.

SOCIETY NEWS

Going back to Christmas, our services and events went very well. The Nativity and Gift service, followed by our Lunch, was enjoyed by about 50 people. The Nativity was done by thirteen children and a full video of it is available if you are interested (see Ruth).

Carols by Candlelight was in the hall, even though it didn't rain until after everyone went home. The clouds had looked ominous and a decision had to be made. A good number came along including several local people and friends joining us.

Our service of Lessons and Carols on Christmas Eve also went pleasantly, bringing its helpful quiet hearing of the Christmas event, with prophecy and story, interspersed with various carols.

Christmas Day also brought fresh faces and a good number there, and the theme of the service was on the Family, first the family of Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus, then the importance of family life for us and finally the spiritual family that should be there in each of us – of the qualities of love, truth and good actions or uses.

Our two last Christmas services offertories this year were given to the Rohingya Refugee Relief Fund through the United Nations Refugee activity. It is wonderful that this raised \$750 among us to send off. Thank you everybody for your generosity.

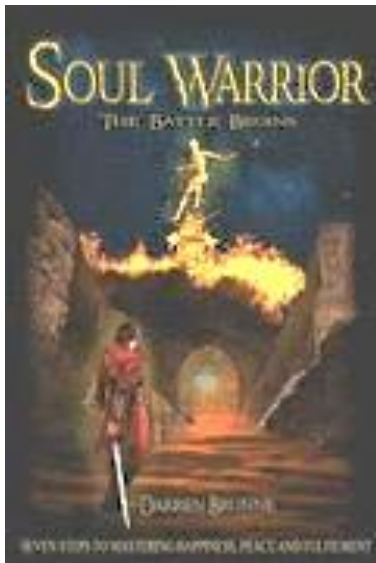
We shall be starting again with our regular fortnightly Bible tutorials on Tuesday February 6th and anyone who is interested in going deeper into what is in the Bible is welcome to come along any time. It begins at 11 a.m. and goes for 1 ½ hours. Not just a lecture, more an open discussion.

Our love and best wishes to a few people who have been unwell over recent weeks and some who have needed to be in hospital. We pray for their better health and good recovery.

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SWEDENBORG CENTRE

We had a well-supplied book table at the Queensland Camp which generated a lot of interest from people during the week. There was quite a significant amount of buying. The one which was by far the most popular – selling out in fact – was a book from Darren Brunne – “Soul Warrior – The battle begins” ...



Seven steps to mastering happiness, peace and fulfilment.

As Darren says, “The path of the spiritual warrior is fraught with challenges. Each warrior needs a teacher, a mentor. To not fight is to give up, to believe that life is random with no real purpose. Suffering has no meaning it just is. To fight is to live, knowing that we have a destiny and a purpose. The warrior fights against the darkness because it is the right thing to do. Suffering leads to learning, study leads to mastery and mastery

leads to victory. Follow the footsteps of apprentice Mathetis as he discovers the secret path of the Soul Warrior.”

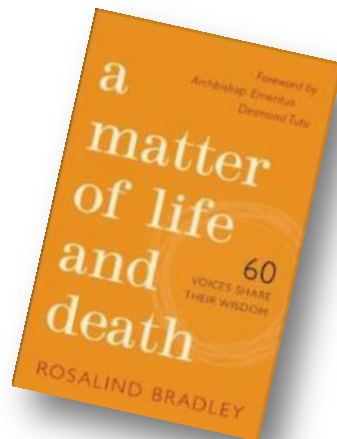
Apart from that, the Swedenborg Centre looks forward to all the uses and events of this new year, in its wish to help people on their spiritual path, to provide interested and open-minded people with insights that they can use.

The monthly open discussion get-togethers begin on Tuesday February 13th with two sessions of about two hours each, at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. where we meet up to help each other with a wide range of insights and experiences. Everybody is welcome to come along and if you do, you may find it is helpful.

The monthly program of the Swedenborg Association also begins this month with a presentation on “The Circle of Life” which will be led by Rosalind Bradley. This will be on Friday February 23rd at 7.45 p.m. and there is a flyer about it on the next page of this Newsletter.



Swedenborg Association of Australia
Friday 7:45pm, 23rd February 2018
at the New Church, 4 Shirley Road, Roseville
\$5 members, \$7 non-members/concession



Presented by author Rosalind Bradley

Ros talks about her latest book for which she collected 60 amazing stories from a fascinating range of people from all walks of life. Sharing their unique insights and wisdom about death and dying using a chosen image or passage which best expresses death for them, they reveal that beyond the heartache and mystery of death lay invaluable lessons on how we live our lives.

About Rosalind

After life in the UK, Ros had an eclectic career from teaching in remote Papua New Guinea to freelance marketing in Sydney. She worked for charities including The Fred Hollows Foundation, was Board Member of The Asylum Seekers Centre of NSW, and Eremos, a forum for exploring Australian spirituality. Her interfaith interest was triggered while in London during the 2005 bombings, resulting in her book **Mosaic: Favourite prayers and reflections**. Her mother's death sparked a curiosity into death leading her to compile **A Matter of Life and Death**. A volunteer biographer at Sacred Heart Hospice in Sydney, Ros also worked with Palliative Care NSW and their Volunteer Program.

More SAA events info at www.swedenborg.com.au

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SNIPPETS FROM THE SCRAPBOOK

Whenever there is a human being, there is the opportunity for a kindness.
Seneca, Roman Orator

How glorious a greeting the sun gives to the mountains!

John Muir

In winning, have humility, in defeat, have grace.

Rico Iken

You will not be punished for your anger, you will be punished by your anger.

Buddha

Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues but it is the parent of all the others.

Cicero

Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened.

Dr Seuss

THE WIND



Windy days are exhilarating and boisterous. They are part of our weather, yet, unlike rain and sun, wind itself is invisible, which is why it says in John 3 verse 8, “The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but you can’t tell where it comes from or where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Holy Spirit.”

It’s only recently that I understood why there is wind. It happens because of high and low atmospheric pressure which comes about because there are warm and cold currents of air. Warm air rises up and cold air sinks down, and then the atmosphere tries to make them equal, resulting in a lot of wind.

That is a wonderful picture when we think about it spiritually. The things of God “up high” try to flow down into people’s lives and affect

them. So if we go back to that verse from John, we begin to understand the last sentence, “So is everyone who is born of the Holy Spirit.”

That is telling us that we are meant to be affected by the power of God which blows over and through us, helping us to change from being people trying to cope with life into people who know and feel that God is there in everything that goes on. This – if we are willing to receive it – is the Holy Spirit, the energy and drive of God in believer’s lives.

Swedenborg says that the Holy Spirit is the divine which proceeds from God. Like the wind, it is invisible but discernible. We feel it when we are thrilled with the beauty and use of some truth. We feel it when we are caught up in our love for God and everything that he does for us. And we feel it when we take part with others in working towards a goal and come to see how everyone else feels the same thing too.

One modern song puts it well: “Blow, spirit, blow, set our hearts on fire.” You either know what that is saying or it doesn’t mean anything. Being moved by the power of God is like the wind which blows on our faces – you can feel it but you can’t see it. And another older hymn reminds us that God moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform.

STEWARDS AND FLOWERS FOR FEBRUARY

SUNDAY	STEWARD	FLOWERS
4 th (Sac.)	Michael Chester	Ruth Duckworth
11 th	John Wilson	Jan Primrose
18 th	Wayne Kasmar	Lynne Twemlow
25 th (AGM)	Graham Hanna	Elizabeth Kemmis



Our monthly Prayer Circle will be sent out at the beginning of February and you are welcome to give people’s names for inclusion in it. If you would like to join the group and offer your own prayers in the way that feels right for you, let Julian know, and thank you.

SWEDENBORG QUOTES

Here are some good short quotes from Swedenborg's writings. They were chosen by a group. Do you have a favourite quote? If so, let me have it to include so that others can enjoy and benefit.

1. We are because God is.
2. Heaven is made more perfect by the variety of the people coming into it.
3. Death is the continuation of our life.
4. Those who are in heaven are continually moving into the springtime of their life, for to grow old in heaven is to grow young.
5. The kingdom of heaven is in the desire and action of being useful.
6. Concern about the future is something which dulls and slows down the flow of spiritual life.
7. In heaven there is a communication of all thoughts so that no one needs to ask someone else what they are thinking.

FINAL FABLE

A village boy was put into the service of a wise teacher and did many things to help, washing up, brushing the floor and bringing cups of tea. One day, making some tea, he dropped the teacher's best cup and it lay broken. Fearfully, he hid the pieces behind his back. In came the teacher for his tea. "Master" the boy asked, "you are wise. Tell me something." The master replied, "Everything has its beginning and its ending." The boy brought his hands round, holding the shattered cup. "O Master, it seems that your cup has come to its ending."