

# Sydney Society Newsletter

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

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On Facebook – Sydney Society of the New Church - Roseville

## *April 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.



*“Then, looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him, “Ephphatha” that is “Be opened!”* Mark 7 v 34

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We have a Meditation group each Tuesday, 9.30 a.m. in term times

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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**

### **APRIL**

So we are now coming into April which is one of the loveliest of all the months of the year, and I think that is something which applies everywhere around the world. April in England is the height of spring – “Oh to be in England now that April’s there” is from Robert Browning. “April in Portugal” is one of the old big-band numbers of the 1950s. April in Japan is all cherry blossoms, and for us in Sydney, April is settled, sunny, cooler and very enjoyable.

Unlike a lot of other months, April doesn’t tell us what it means. November means the ninth month but of course it is the eleventh one because a Roman Emperor named July and August months after himself! April means “to open” and it is very close to our words “aperitif” (a drink to open our appetite up) and “aperture”, a small opening or chink. And it is obvious why April is when it is because everything is opening up.

I have come across several prayers which concentrate on our need to be open to the ways of God. Here is just one, “Lord, open my eyes so that I discover what you want me to be; open my ears so that I can hear your loving words; open my mind so that I can think about other people and not only myself; and open my heart so that I am ready to serve you and love you in return.”

You can keep that prayer going... open my hands, my arms, my face, my spirit and my life. Being open is like wearing a parachute because it works at its best when it has opened.

We don't have that many rituals in New Church services, but one which is very common is that we deliberately make a point of opening the Word of God right at the start of the service, to show and remind us that the Lord is present with us most of all in the teachings of the Word.

And in that same Word, there are so many mentions of open, opening, openness. Let's quickly run a few through. Noah opened the window in the ark, Joseph opened the grain storehouses to feed many people, the Wise Men opened their treasures, Jesus opened his mouth and gave the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord opens his hand and fills the hungry with good things, and the Lord opened the womb of Hannah.

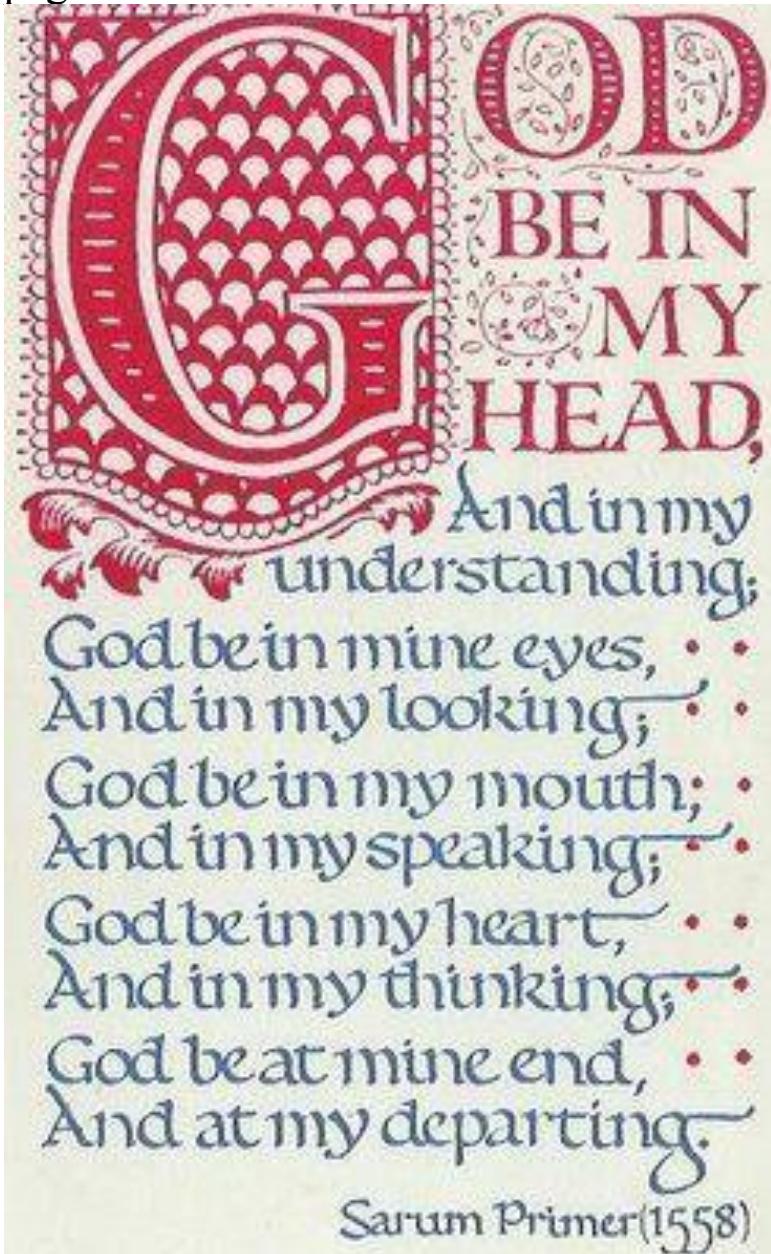
So why is 'opening' such an important thing? It's because when something is opened it provides a way in, a way out, a way through and nothing is barring the way. Communicating what needs to be shared or dealt with needs openness and quite a lot of courage. When someone is depressed they are likely to lock themselves in their room which physically describes what they are feeling like inside, and others try and help them be able to open their door again.

Supremely, openness is between the Lord and us. If we only knew how much the Lord is willing us to come to him, giving so much to us, keeping us, leading us and protecting us, we would be amazed. There isn't any difficulty in that direction. It's us towards God which brings the difficulties. We can't see, which often means we won't see. We get caught up with how things look ("the world's such a mess") rather than how they might be trying to show us better ways to live.

We are so much more environmentally aware today because people have dumped plastic and used bad chemicals. Fifty years ago we didn't even realise, but goodness, we do now. We can see the same shift in many of our own personal and spiritual needs to become more open to what is going on. Openness starts things moving, currents of air, shafts of light, new decisions in our hearts.

So, enjoy April.....

*Julian*



Following my article about April, here is a well-known prayer and hymn, “God be in my head” written, notice, in 1558 and probably anonymous.

Beautiful words requesting God’s presence in each and all of our faculties, and ending, very rightly, with the wish that God will be “at mine end and at my departing”.

Some of us will know it well and remember that we sang it perhaps at the end of a service as a vesper. It’s good to bring it out again because it will have been lodging in our memory these many years. Something to learn by heart...

## FRIENDSHIP GROUP

Please note the change of date to **Wednesday April 11<sup>th</sup>** for our next meeting beginning at 10.45 a.m.

After enjoying coffee, Julian will talk with us about “What we can see when we look at a tree.”

We will miss seeing Stella who has settled in to Estia Health up at Tea Gardens. She will be making new friends and we wish her well.

Our year text is Matthew 11:28 “*Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*”

Glen Hart

## SOCIETY NEWS

We recently had the delight of welcoming Ben Tranter into membership of our church. This was approved at the AGM and as we always do, it was followed by a service of membership in church on Sunday March 25<sup>th</sup>. We wish Ben well in being a member, we like his dedication to his beliefs and his wish to serve the Lord, and that he finds his home among us.

We gave thanks for the Harvest on Sunday March 11<sup>th</sup> and the front of church looked the part with fruit and vegetables all around the altar. Brian Talbot gave the address and based it on the short parable of the seed growing secretly, “sprouting and growing he does not know how.” Brian talked about how strange inspiration can be for us, and gave his own personal examples. He also shared some of his upbringing in the Sydney Church.

The Salvation Army in Chatswood were very pleased to get our boxes of fresh produce and said that people ask for fresh food a lot these days.

The committee has drawn up and started to fill in a schedule of tasks to get done in the next few months. The situation with the church part of the visa process seems to be making progress after almost a year of preparation.

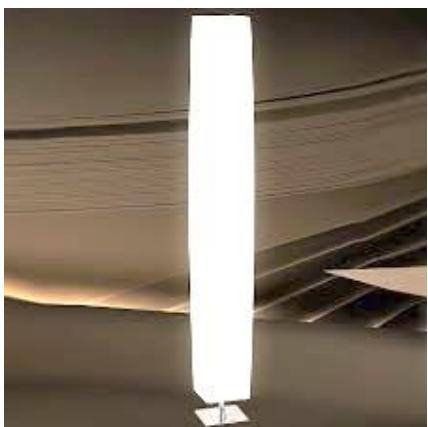
Our love and good wishes to a few church people who have been unwell in recent weeks, and we pray you have a full recovery.

Some of you may remember Alex and Jacqueline Coull and their children now middle aged, Jacqueline, Patricia and Walker. I was asked to take the funeral for Jacqueline (mother) who passed on during March at 90. I remember meeting Alex and Jacqueline just the once but some people, perhaps further afield now, will remember the family quite well.

Our electrician is replacing the transformers for each church light because heat has burned them badly. You may have noticed the back two lights not working. They soon will be!

## A DREAM I HAD

I'm not aware of me dreaming that much but a week ago I had a very curious short dream. I don't usually try and work them out because I believe dreams are always healing us whatever goes on in them, even with nightmares too.



In this dream there was a column of pure white light, full of power, and I was some way from it. As I watched, people came and touched the column and were caught fast. I felt that I absolutely must not go and touch this column. That was the dream.

I can come up with a few possible ideas about this dream. Pure white light seems to suggest truth, so was my reluctance to go and touch it saying something about me resisting the truth? Maybe. But on the other hand (excuse the pun!) those who were caught fast couldn't carry on with their normal lives and be useful, so perhaps it was telling me to see what is true (which I was doing) but not get over-involved so that I can, in freedom, continue to be useful.

One last thing. I did not get any “feeling” about this pillar, whether it was true heavenly light or some evil trickery making itself out to look what it wasn’t.

## STEWARDS AND FLOWERS FOR APRIL

Sunday	Steward	Flowers
1 <sup>st</sup> (Easter, Holy Supper)	Michael Chester	Ruth Duckworth
8 <sup>th</sup>	Graham Hanna	Elizabeth Kemmis
15 <sup>th</sup>	John Wilson	Philip Brodsky
22 <sup>nd</sup>	Rhonda Hall	Christine Gospodarczyk
29 <sup>th</sup>	Michael Chester	Glen Hart

## SNIPPETS FROM THE SCRAPBOOK

*Try to keep your soul young and quivering right up to old age*

- Georges Sand

For beautiful eyes, look for the good in others; for beautiful lips, speak words of kindness; for poise, walk knowing you are never alone.

- Audrey Hepburn

*Architecture is the thoughtful making of space.* - Louis Kahn

Let a wife make a husband glad to come home, and let him make her sorry to see him leave. - Martin Luther

*The best way to pay for a lovely moment is to enjoy it.* - Richard Bach

So long as the memory of certain beloved friends lives in my heart, I shall say and know that life is good. - Helen Keller

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### SWEDENBORG CENTRE

Quite a few of us were treated to a presentation by Dr Michael Popplewell on “Stillness” as an authentic spiritual practice. This was shared at the March Swedenborg Association event.

Michael spoke personally of his wide range of experiences of stillness and he told us that it is estimated that 2 and a ½ billion people take part in it in some way, with meditation, retreats and personal silence. Michael talked about his frequent ‘time-out’s to Vipassana retreats and also his time with monasteries at Mount Athos in Greece.

Vipassana is Buddhist and has worldwide centres. They offer ten days of silence retreats at very little cost to those who come. He told us how physical pain comes up quite early in the period but then grows less. One’s poise is important, and is usually a slightly curved spine with side-placed legs. And he told us that ten days of silence is a hard ask for

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anyone, and that some people pull out after a couple of days. Michael throughout the presentation brought in words from the Bible, from Swedenborg, and from Dr Philip Groves with whom he was a student.

The monthly open discussion sessions attract a number of people coming to share things, and as well as that, individual people come into the centre off the street, as did a Swedish man recently, enquiring about Swedenborg, and going away with an armful of books, delighted to have come.

I wish us all a very heartfelt holy Easter and see you sometime soon.  
Joe

## BELL GRAPHS

Bell graphs are shapes that describe all kinds of things to do with numbers, statistics, abilities, preferences, finance, health and sickness, and much more. Here's the classic shape they take...



The shape the diagram makes is shaped like a bell, bulging in the middle and flattening out towards each side. The diagram shown describes it very well, that the majority of people are in the middle, balanced, moderate in their views, and acutely aware that there is a danger in taking up either of the two extremes.

If we use this bell graph with education, it shows us that the majority of children are standard achievers. They learn well, they pick up on reading, writing and numeracy. But it shows that a smaller number of children will be either slow readers or poor at numeracy while some

others will be exceptionally good at language or numeracy (or both). Every teacher, getting a new class, understands this is how it is.

If we start working with this more spiritually, we see that the same thing applies, the balance we need at the centre, and the limitations of any extremes. Balance is the key thing here.

Our church teachings are packed with an emphasis on the centre ground, on two things to keep and hold together. We are to acknowledge God being over everything but we are to live our lives as if we do it all by ourselves. Our faith in God must take us into a loving care for others. Our care for others must come from our faith that God is there with us all. Every truth we come to see is given to us to make us a better and wiser person who seeks what is genuinely good in our care of people.

The extremes show us the imbalances in life, putting too much emphasis on a judgemental moralistic stand, or having a purely emotional feeling view of life with nothing solid to base it on.

This is the bell graph. It is an accurate picture showing us that balance is always the wisdom we need for our lives. One prayer puts it well, “God, grant me the courage to change what can be changed, grant me the serenity to accept what cannot change, and grant me the wisdom to know the difference.”

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## FROM SWEDENborg

Spiritual equilibrium, balance and free will can be compared to a pair of scales with equal weights on both sides. The result is that even though something small is added to one side, the pointer above will move in that direction. It is just like carrying a pole on your shoulder or like a large plank balanced on its pivot.

Every part of our body is in the same kind of equilibrium. And as a result, every part of our body can do what it does in a state of complete ease.



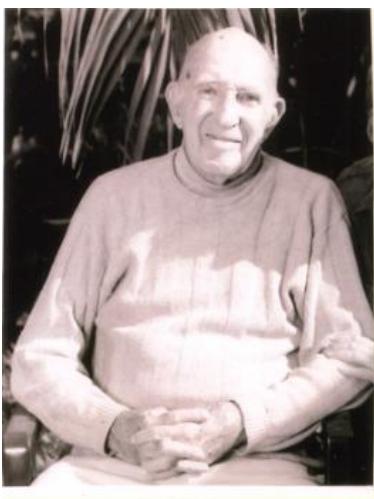
**Swedenborg Association of Australia  
Friday April 27<sup>th</sup> 2018  
At the New Church, 4 Shirley Road, Roseville.**

**READING AND EXPLORING A LECTURE OF  
DR PHILIP GROVES**

**PHANTASY AND REALITY**



It is both honourable and useful to re-present spiritual talks from the past. I have chosen to do this with the talk of Dr Groves called “Phantasy and Reality” as it struck me that this particular talk is of enormous value and it also directly involves us personally. For me, this is my dedication to the tremendous work and help from Dr Groves over many years to very many people.



The talk – which is one in the book of talks called “The Mighty Contribution of Emanuel Swedenborg” – will be read in full as it should be, but as we do this there will be additional comments and time for those there to comment and share on the insights we are hearing and getting.

The presentation will be for roughly one hour and a quarter, followed by refreshments and socialising.

## ἀγάπη

### Agapé – the Christian way of love

Agapé is a Greek word describing the kind of love for others which a Christian person seeks to uphold, a love for them because of one's own love of the Lord above all things.

The Greeks (unlike us) had their four words to cover all kinds of love.  
*Eros* is a physical and sexual attraction love towards another person.  
*Philia* is a love based on strong close and equal friendship.  
*Storgé* is a love one has towards one's own children, the love of having children, with the love to bring them up safely, wisely and well.  
*Agapé* is the love for another person because of one's love for God. It accepts, gives, feels and endures. It is the nearest we can approximate to the ideal of unconditional love.

In the first epistle to the Corinthians it says that love suffers long and is kind. Love does not envy nor parade itself. It is not puffed up. Love does not behave rudely. It does not seek its own. It is not provoked. It thinks no evil. Love does not rejoice in iniquity but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things. It believes all things, it hopes all things, it endures all things. This love never fails.

This agapé is the love that the Bible advocates to be our love.

Here are 10 Biblical ways to love. They are there to help us with agapé.

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|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Listen without interrupting | Proverbs 18 verse 13     |
| 2. Speak without accusing      | James 1 verse 19         |
| 3. Give without sparing        | Proverbs 21 verse 26     |
| 4. Pray without ceasing        | Colossians 1 verse 9     |
| 5. Answer without arguing      | Proverbs 17 verse 1      |
| 6. Share without pretending    | Ephesians 4 verse 15     |
| 7. Enjoy without complaint     | Philippians 2 verse 14   |
| 8. Trust without wavering      | 1 Corinthians 13 verse 7 |
| 9. Forgive without punishing   | Colossians 3 verse 13    |
| 10. Promise without forgetting | Proverbs 13 verse 1      |

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## BIBLICAL ODD ONE OUT

Below are 7 sets of things that are mentioned in the Bible. Each time, one should not be there with the others. Which one is the odd one out?

Example *John, Matthew, Simon, Luke, Mark* Obviously, *Simon*. These 7 sets get progressively harder. The answers are underneath the Final Fable.

1. Judas, Peter, Thomas, Andrew, Jairus (Disciples)
2. Seas/Dry Land – Volcanoes – Light – Fish/Birds – Waters above/below (Creation)
3. Bethany, Bethel, Bethlehem, Bethesda, Bethphage (Towns Jesus was in)
4. Trellis, Ark, Lampstand, Curtains, Altar (parts of Temple)
5. Darkness, Flies, Locusts, Ice, Hail (Ten Plagues)
6. Salt Sea, Blue Sea, Sea of Reeds, Sea of Galilee, Great Sea (Seas mentioned)
7. Leah, Bilhah, Beulah, Zilpah, Rachel (mothers of Jacob's children)

### FINAL FABLE

A man wandered through a village which he had never visited before and he came across a man who was throwing crumbs all around the outside of his house. The man went up to him and said, "What are you doing, throwing crumbs everywhere?" He replied, "I am keeping the tigers away from my house." "But there are not any tigers here!" "Yes, I know. It's effective, isn't it?"

### Answers to Biblical Odd One Out

- |           |              |           |            |
|-----------|--------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. Jairus | 2. Volcanoes | 3. Bethel | 4. Trellis |
| 5. Ice    | 6. Blue Sea  | 7. Beulah |            |