

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 summarised 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 of God and from 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.



*If you keep my judgments and do them, then the land
will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill, and dwell
there in safety. Leviticus 25.18-19*

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Our Harvest Thanksgiving is on Sunday March 11th
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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

AT THIS TIME OF THE YEAR

We are coming into March, and Good Friday will be on March 30th, with Easter on Sunday April 1st. The whole of March will be in the period of Lent which began in mid-February in which people recall the Lord's forty days and nights of temptation in the wilderness. As he hungered, so we do, and so people often fast and go without.

So at this particular time of the year it is helpful for us to focus on the person of Jesus, him as a man, him with other people, him and his words, teachings and healings, and the overall picture, so far as we can know it, of his personality and manner.

Along with this of course is the truth that Jesus was not merely a man – a very wise and good man for sure – but he was also God, revealing all the qualities of God in, out, and through the life of a person called Jesus Christ. When we read any part of the gospels, it really pays to keep this “God **is** this man” in mind, and it opens right up so that we begin to see the love – and the wisdom – of God there in the life of Jesus. You begin to sense it all when you read gospel passages that way.

Perhaps the first thing to appreciate (for us) is what a wonderful gift this is. The idea of God over all things is sometimes very hard for us to get close to or get our mind around. It's like trying to put infinity and eternity into simple words; it's almost beyond us. But here we have

Jesus showing us real humanity, compassion, humility, power and grace. Much more on our level and lets add here, showing you and me those life qualities which we are meant to make ours too. A children's hymn puts it, "Let me watch you, Jesus, till I'm gentle too, till my hands are kind hands, working all for you."

Another thing for us to get from "watching Jesus" is to see how much he felt for the needy, the outcasts and the despised, spending time with them rather than mixing with the rich and the powerful privileged people who might have worked their flatteries on such a special person. But no, Jesus was not for them, but for the ordinary people with their troubles, guilt, puzzles and imperfections. Jesus aimed his strongest words at hypocrisy which is really the unwillingness to accept one's faults (yes, all of us have faults just by being human). Jesus said, 'I have not come to call the righteous but sinners (people with their faults) to repentance.'

A fascinating area about Jesus is his respect for each and every person. If you look at the way Jesus handled every encounter, differently according to the person concerned, you begin to see Jesus at his best. So often, he answered a question with a question, putting it back to the person. You see Jesus drawing people out, helping them see things for themselves. When he was with ordinary people, he told them parables using things they knew about. When he was with the authorities, he often maintained a silence.

We can learn so much just by coming close to Jesus. Watch him, see what he does, see what he says, this man in whom is the fullness of God. Truly, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me." Start somewhere with something there in the gospels. It is an astounding gift to us to see perfection in one man and through that, to understand and come to love the things of God, and then to work to be something like that in ourselves.

Ruth and I wish you a very meaningful Easter with our personal preparation for that during this Jesus-focused period of Lent in March.

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FROM THE ANNUAL MEETING

This was held after church on February 25th with a smaller number than usual, partly due to quite a few apologies including Ruth. One of the first things we did was to welcome Ben Tranter into formal membership of our society. There will be a service during March to affirm this in church and to sign the members' roll.

The reports were presented and approved. Significantly, it was noted that this would be Julian's last report and in his report he asked people to be supportive during the coming changes and thanked everybody. The Treasurer's report included two main items: that we, in selling a property in 2017, now have the cash flow for a significant expenditure in the coming months. Secondly, the management of the church finances is now being taken on by Benkorp, a Christian-based accountancy firm which manages quite a number of churches finances. After a fairly intensive period of making the change, the system will work well.

Joe presented the Swedenborg Centre report and mentioned that a steady number of people go to the monthly Tuesday discussions and some on Tuesdays in between. He also talked about current online activities and the way that people "go" that way to find things. Joe also mentioned the proposal – generally welcomed but needing some checks – to move the Swedenborg Centre to the Roseville premises.

The last item was to do with Rev Howard Thompson and family and the need to have time frames and schedules from now on. This is being managed by the committee and there is the need to find or co-opt people to help with these. We hope that the church part in the Visa process will soon be approved which will allow Howard to submit his family's visa application.

At the end of the meeting, the Chairman thanked the considerable number of people who take part in helping the church's various activities, and everybody was appreciated.

OUR HARVEST THANKSGIVING



We will celebrate harvest on March 11th and decorate the church on the Saturday afternoon if you can come to help with that.

The theme of this year's harvest is "Gratitude" and we shall be thinking about the many ways and many things for us to show and feel grateful

– to people who give help to us and our thanks to the Lord for all his good gifts.

I always say each Harvest that it is the main service in the year where we give our thanks as well as passing on the harvest to help people.

If you would like to make a donation for the harvest, please contact Ruth or Julian, and if it is some produce, then bring it on the day. The display will this year be centred around the altar.

We hope we will have a ploughman's lunch after the service.

SNIPPETS FROM THE SCRAPBOOK

Where the flowers bloom, the bees come uninvited

- Ramakrishna

Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage.

- Lao Tzu

The greatest mistake that you can make in your life is to be feared that you will make one

- Elbert Hubbard.

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We shall never know all the good that a simple smile can do.

- Mother
Teresa

God has given us two hands, one to receive with and one to give with.

- Billy Graham

God gave us the gift of life. It is for ourselves to spend it living well.

- Voltaire

SOCIETY NEWS

In the service on February 4th I talked about the meaning, symbolism and benefit of taking part in the Holy Supper. We had the supper at the close of the service.

Our dear friend Stella Green has moved up to Tea Gardens. Stella has attended the church here since 1992 and taken part in most of our activities. She holds a vivid memory of the welcome that “two couples” gave her when she first came along. It was lovely for us that Stella, accompanied by her relative Merry who lives in Tea Gardens came to church the Sunday before moving.

Ruth has been enjoying her visit to Kent in England, to be with her mum and to help the family go through items from Joy’s previous unit. On one day Ruth was with Joy along with all her brothers and sisters. She comes back on March 2nd.

Ruth was able to meet up with Howard and Debra Thompson while she was in England, going out with them for a pub lunch. I don’t know the details but it will have been very useful.

Our fond love to Glen Hart who will be celebrating a milestone birthday in early March.

Todd Beiswenger and I will be swapping churches on Sunday March 18th. We have done this twice a year for several years. It's a change of voice and style in both locations.

Please make a note that Rev Brian Talbot will be over from England and he has offered to do the sermon on March 11th, our Harvest service.

SWEDENBORG CENTRE



The Swedenborg Centre has had its home at 1 Avon Road since 1991, and the centre has a number of photo albums showing the people and celebrities at its opening, many looking much younger then, and some who are now no longer with us.

While the climb up the stairs is quite arduous, almost a stairway to heaven, the site has been successful in all kinds of ways, with its various managers and directors and assistants. Take a look at the picture a moment: there is a kind of correspondence which shows. The Swedenborg Centre is the top part of the building which fits with its work in helping people with their spiritual or higher life. It is also on a corner which fits well with the idea of spiritual and personal changes which many people have experienced, turning a corner in their lives.

The Discussion Tuesdays are going very well each second Tuesday of the month, twice that day, and with requests from people to be able to come for more on the Tuesdays in between. We decided to just let this happen as people can come and do come, always welcome to bring their questions and interests and begin what is always a great conversation and discussion.

Joe Vandermeer

GOOD FRIDAY AND EASTER

Advance notice about this , which will be at the end of March (30th Good Friday) and the beginning of April (April 1st, Easter Sunday).

On Good Friday we will re-enact the Last Supper which took place the evening before Jesus was crucified. We will do this devotionally and meaningfully, and also refer back to the Passover which Jesus and the disciples celebrated at the same time.

We hope that you will be able to join us for this, and even to take part with readings. It will begin at **5.30 p.m.** and last for 45 minutes.



On Easter Sunday we will look at the idea of Newness and Renewal which we see in so many things around us, experience in various ways in our lives, and feel that it is something going on inside us too. The Lord said, “Behold, I make all things new.”

The service will have the Holy Supper during it, not afterwards.

TWO HELPS WITH READING THE BIBLE

I really hope you will find the following helpful. Sometimes we just need a tool to help us take the message of the Bible into ourselves.

“In me” are two words which can be usefully added on to any thing or person or place we are reading about. Doing that brings the words from out there into in here, in you. For example the Bible often mentions a **river**, so think about ‘a river in me’ and you are in the world of flowing, growing and going. It becomes a personal new idea.

I have always found with any Bible verse or even a phrase, to first ask “What is this saying?” and explore that. But then I add a second question, “What is this asking me?” That’s important because it leads on to me making commitments and doing something not only reading it.

To see the flyer for the next SAA meeting please cut and paste this link.

<http://www.swedenborg.com.au/Websites/saa/images/events/nr20180323.pdf>

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SUPPORTING THE WORK OF THE AUSTRALIAN NEW
CHURCH COLLEGE

President: Rev David Moffat
33 Allchin Circuit, Kambah ACT 2902

Dear Friends,

We are writing to people about financially supporting the Australian New Church College.

This is one of our key national activities which carries out a number of things for the work of the New Church in Australia, its societies and individual people. It also works with some New Church organisations overseas, currently with some African students. It trains future ministers and offers courses for people who want to study New Church teachings. Importantly today, it works online and encourages the work of Logopraxis, personal group work based on Swedenborg's writings which has been a tremendous experience for those who do this.

The financing of the College is undertaken by the Board of the New Church in Australia on behalf of the church, with considerable help given from some societies.

About seven years ago, an invitation was made to societies and individuals to give financial support. Wonderfully, this resulted in a number of people giving a monthly direct payment, with them deciding on the amount they choose. We believe there are quite a number of others in the church who would be pleased to help support the College. If you decide to, it would be very beneficial to our available funds and it would be greatly appreciated.

The way is very simple. Here are the details. Decide your monthly amount. Then set up a monthly direct credit, either through your bank or using online banking where payments can be automatically repeated.

Our bank details are: The New Church in Australia
BSB 012-019 Account number 2264 17589

Thank you very much.

David Moffat

STEWARDS AND FLOWERS FOR MARCH

Sunday	Steward	Flowers
4 th (Sacr.)	David Curry	Jan Primrose
11 th (Harvest)	Rhonda Hall	No flowers
18 th (Rev. Todd Beiswenger)	Michael Chester	Glen Hart
25 th	Ben Tranter	Rhonda Hall

THE DEW



We are gradually changing from summer into autumn, with cooler weather, and the likelihood of dewy mornings. Dew is a strange phenomenon in nature where water actually rises rather than falls. It is all due (excuse the pun!) to moisture in the air and the warmth of the ground.

Such a combination leads to uprising air which begins to form globules of water on anything it can travel on, like a blade of grass. It literally begins to travel or roll UP the blade and if it meets more water it will form a bigger dewdrop and very often stop and hang from the tip of the

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leaf or blade. Spider webs become dewy gossamer too, using the same rolling principle.

And early morning is the time that's best to see it, for soon the sun will come up and dry nature out and the wet dew will disappear. I think that frost is winter's frozen dew.

One spiritual idea with dew rising is that, being water, it carries the meaning of truth (as all water does in various ways, being clear and often flowing). What a lovely idea that the rising of the dew is for us the ascending truth of God's truth ever higher in our life.

Here are just three of many Bible verses mentioning the dew...

Therefore may God give you of the dew of heaven, of the abundance of the earth. Genesis 27:28

Let my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distil as the dew.
Deuteronomy 32.2

Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity. It is like the dew of Hermon descending from Mount Zion.
Psalm 133

FINAL FABLE

Two young monks would often meet along the road. One was usually going to buy vegetables. One day he asked the other where he was going. The boy replied, "Wherever my feet take me." He reported this answer to his teacher who told him to ask the same question the next time. So he did. "Where are you going?" "Wherever the wind blows." Again he reported this answer to the teacher who told him to ask it again.

When they next met, he asked him the same question. The other boy looked at him and said, "I am going to the market to buy vegetables."