

# Sydney Society Newsletter

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

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## *September 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.



A pearl is a beautiful thing  
that is produced by an injured life.  
It is the tear (that results)  
from the injury of the oyster.  
The treasure of our being in  
this world is also produced  
by an injured life.  
If we had not been wounded,  
if we had not been injured,  
then we will not produce the pearl.  
~Stephan Hoeller~

*“The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”*

Matthew chapter 13 verses 45 and 46

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The new Minister of the Sydney Society is Rev. Howard Thompson and from now on he can be contacted at any time by phoning the church office (02) 9416 7026 or by a personal visit to 4 Shirley Road, Roseville, for any pastoral help or guidance. Please let Howard 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**

### **CHANGE**

This week I and my family find ourselves in the midst of change. Of course, not just this week, our transition from the Colchester Society of the New Church to the Sydney Society of the New Church has taken several months of packing, living out of suitcases, visiting with family and friends in three countries, and staying in temporary accommodations. Change is an interesting subject, how many of us find ourselves conflicted about change? By conflicted I mean that we find ourselves both looking forward to some changes while wishing other things would never change.

Take a few minutes to reflect on the many examples of change you have experienced in your life. Even the youngest and certainly the oldest of us can acknowledge that our physical bodies have changed. Even young people 8 or 10 years old can reflect on how their bodies have changed in just a few years, how they can now reach things at home that they could not reach just a year or two ago. And puberty, that incredibly dynamic period of monstrous growth that all of us experience in our early teens.

Let's not forget the changes those of us who are older, for these purposes I am referring to anyone over 35. We are experiencing daily changes when we recognise that our body is no longer getting "better" but in fact it is already starting to break down.

If our bodies change so do our minds, so does the way we think and the beliefs we hold... “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.” (1 Corinthians 13:11-12) ...maybe you see your own spiritual growth and change reflected in these words.

If our bodies and our minds change so also does our society. For the really wise among us, those 60 years and older you have seen unprecedented changes in our society. Many of you were born into or even lived through a world at war, and today you have lived through 60 plus years of unprecedented economic prosperity.

Think of how easy it is today to travel, to move house, to live where you wish to live. Think of your children and how much easier it is for them to create the life they wish to live, no longer limited to living the life they were born into. Along with this consider how the home you live in today differs from that you grew up in. This may be hard to believe for my children but I know people who grew up in homes that did not have indoor plumbing. Some change is good and some unwelcome.

But the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, speaking of change, note that “without change or variation, life would be monotonous and consequently lifeless. There would be no differentiation of goodness and truth, let alone any awareness of them” (AC 37). Change is actually listed as one of the laws of Divine Providence. From this perspective, though change is difficult, even scaring at times, change is to be embraced. Something to remember when the stress of change seems to be taking its toll.

With my very good wishes to you,

***Howard***

**A POEM SENT IN**



**“ IT’S ME ”**

from an unknown source

I stood by your bed last night; I  
came to have a peep.  
I could see that you were crying;  
you found it hard to sleep.

I whispered to you softly as you brushed away a tear.  
It’s me, I have not left you; I’m well, I’m fine and I am here.  
I was close to you at breakfast, I watched you pour your tea.  
You were thinking of the many times your hands reached out to me.  
I was with you at the shops today; your arms were getting sore.  
I longed to take your parcels, I wished I could do more.  
I was with you at my grave today; you tend it with such care.  
I want to reassure you that I am not lying there.  
I walked with you toward the house as you fumbled for your key.  
I gently put my hand on you; I smiled and said, “It’s me.”  
You looked so very tired and sank into a chair.  
I tried so hard to let you know that I was standing there.  
It’s possible for me to be so near to you each day.  
To say to you with certainty, “I never went away.”  
You sat there very quietly and then smiled; I think you knew ...  
In the stillness of the evening, I was very close to you.  
The day is over. I smiled and watched you yawning.  
And said, “Good night, God Bless. I’ll see you in the morning.”

And when the time is right for you to cross the brief divide,  
I’ll rush across to greet you and we’ll stand side by side.

I have so many things to show you. There is so much to see.  
Be patient, live your journey out, then come home to be with me.

## FROM THE SWEDENBORG CENTRE



The Swedenborg Centre has been in its new home at 4 Shirley Road for just over a month, using the front two rooms and porch entrance off the street. A huge amount of heavy work and careful installation has been going on for weeks but now it looks like it should, and any visitors are absolutely welcome to come on in, as quite a few already have. The coffee's great, the kettle's always on, and Joe and often others around would be delighted to see you and enjoy a meaningful conversation.



This is the new Centre's business card. Please note the new phone number **(02) 9416 2812**. If you call in, you will be given one for sure, possibly a few to hand around to all those interested people out there.

We are excited about the future and all its potential usefulness - always under the hand of Divine Providence – and we know that you are too. All the best to everyone, from Joe.

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## **SOCIETY NEWS**

First, a big thank you to everybody for your care and co-operation with the last four month's irregularities and uncertainties. It's been a challenge and at times a bit unclear or unsettled but considering what has gone on in that period, there have been no great dramas which is to everyone's credit.

Thank you very much indeed to a great number of people who stayed on after church on Sunday August 5<sup>th</sup> for the Working Bee and who got ever such a lot of things done. It is very much appreciated.

As Howard, Debra and Lance are now here (Welcome to you!) the process of how things move forward from this point goes into the nitty-gritty details. One of the difficulties in writing this particular newsletter is that it is coming out betwixt and between things. There are things to discuss and sort out so that we can decide what will change and what will stay the same. Please bear with us then as we begin a new course.

The Induction Service on Sunday September 2<sup>nd</sup> lies ahead at this point. It will be taken by Rev David Moffat, our national President, and we're having a barbecue lunch afterwards. We hope you'll be able to join us.

Some pastoral things are that our good friend Roy Simmonds has had time in hospital (he calls it 'my second home') but he is back home and while frail, is doing quite well. Ruth and I called into Tea Gardens and saw Stella Green recently on our way back from Sydney and found her happy and enjoying things where she is. She sends her love and best wishes.

The Friendship Group got together on August 17<sup>th</sup> and there were 9 of us, hearing about some of the musical instruments of the Bible, looking at some unusual examples brought along and sounded, and talking about the place music has in our lives and emotions. We covered quite a lot of ground.

The Angel service on August 18<sup>th</sup> went back to basic things about angels and about angels being with us to help us and bring things out of our



minds and hearts. The idea that angels can be so close to us that they feel our mind is their mind – today we would call that ‘syncing’ – led to a demonstration of one person being exactly behind the poise taken by another person so that the person behind was unseen and seemed to have blended in. Later in this newsletter there is an excellent quote from our church teachings about this closeness.



## SNIPPETS FROM THE SCRAPBOOK

Personal beauty is a greater recommendation than any letter of reference.  
- Aristotle

*Beauty surrounds us, but usually we need to be walking in a garden to know it.*  
- Rumi

Sometimes, what you are looking for is already there.  
– singer Aretha Franklin who passed on recently

*God wants you to be a winner, not a whiner.*  
- Joel Osteen, American clergyman

When you are enthusiastic about what you do, you feel this powerful energy. It's very simple.  
- Paolo Coelho

*Listen with the intent to understand, not with the intent to reply.*  
- Stephen Covey

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A Prayer – Lord, be there with those who have the task of governing our country. Our country has many freedoms and great scope for people to live as they choose. We do not take this for granted, yet there are values and responsibilities for us all to endorse. In this time of political change, we pray for respect, support, wisdom and integrity among all those who govern our country, and we pray for this in your name. Amen

## THE TABLE OF THE LORD



Tables are remarkably common things and come in all shapes and sizes, there in homes, at the post office, exhibition halls, verandas and bedsides. The one thing they have in common is they provide a *flat* surface on which to put things. Tables, in a way, are like a bit of the floor which has been lifted up higher, to where we are.

Some churches call the altar ‘the Lord’s Table’ and in taking the Holy Supper invite people to come to the Lord’s table, on which bread and wine are set. It’s a lovely way of putting it to call it that because it reminds us of the Lord’s invitation to come to him and the Lord’s offering to be given to us.

Flat surfaces \_\_\_\_\_ The world we live in is mainly flat by and large and there on this flat surface is God’s creation, spread out around us for us to use, enjoy and most of all respect. Some places are even called tablelands. This greatest table of all extends in every direction: deserts, pastures, cornfields, moorlands and jungle.

Come back to our own tables: there they are, these focal points which give us such convenience for placing things, working at or doing a display. This takes us towards the spiritual meaning of a ‘table’ which among other things is about what we have got to ‘show’ of what we are making of our personal life. In a real way we are all on display to the world around us and our table – there inside us but also on show – has our beliefs, attitudes, actions, loves, kindness and our thoughtlessness.

One thing about any table is that if it is left the same for too long it becomes unnoticeable. It will also gather dust! So spiritually we need to change our display, first with a wipe and then with some new items from recent things we’ve found out and learned. Let’s carry that idea when we hear the words in Psalm 23, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies” realising that these enemies are not other people but the wilful stubborn desires of a selfish heart.



In Luke 16 there is the parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus who lay at the rich man's gate, wishing he could be fed with the crumbs which fell off the rich man's table. We're told that this means having a longing for some truths from the Word because 'a table' is a receptacle in us for knowledge, intelligence, wisdom, and generally for every good and truth. And for having this longing, Lazarus was carried after he died into Abraham's bosom.

### STEWARDS AND FLOWERS FOR SEPTEMBER

Sunday	Steward	Flowers
2nd (Induction Service)	David Curry	Glen Hart
9th	Wayne Kasmar	Synthetics
16th	John Wilson	Ruth Duckworth
23rd	Graham Hanna	Elizabeth Kemmis
30th	Michael Chester	Lynne Twemlow

### SWEDENBORG ON ANGELS WITH US

If you have read the item about the recent Angel Service on pp 6-7 I promised to share a passage about the closeness of angels to us and what they do for us. I feel it is one of the best references in the whole of Swedenborg, and while it's a bit long, it gives us a lot to think about.



“The angels through whom the Lord leads and also protects a person are near his head. Their work is to inspire charity and faith and to notice in what direction a person's delights are turning and, as far as they can without interfering with the person's freedom,

moderate them and bend them towards good.

They are not allowed to act violently or to break the person's loves and beliefs, but are to act gently.

It is also their work to rule evil spirits from hell, which is done in many ways, some of which will be mentioned. When evil spirits pour in their

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bad feelings and falsified ideas, the angels introduce thoughts about what is true and good, which, even if it isn't received, are still the means of reducing the onslaught. Hell's spirits continually attack, while angels always protect, and this is how it is.

Angels particularly try and regulate a person's affections because these make a person's life what it is and they also provide our freedom. Angels also notice whether any hell has become opened up that wasn't open before and which is now influencing the person, something which happens when a person takes himself into any new evil.

The angels close these openings off so far as the person allows that and they remove any spirits who try to still get out. Angels also disperse any strange or new influences that would result in new evils.

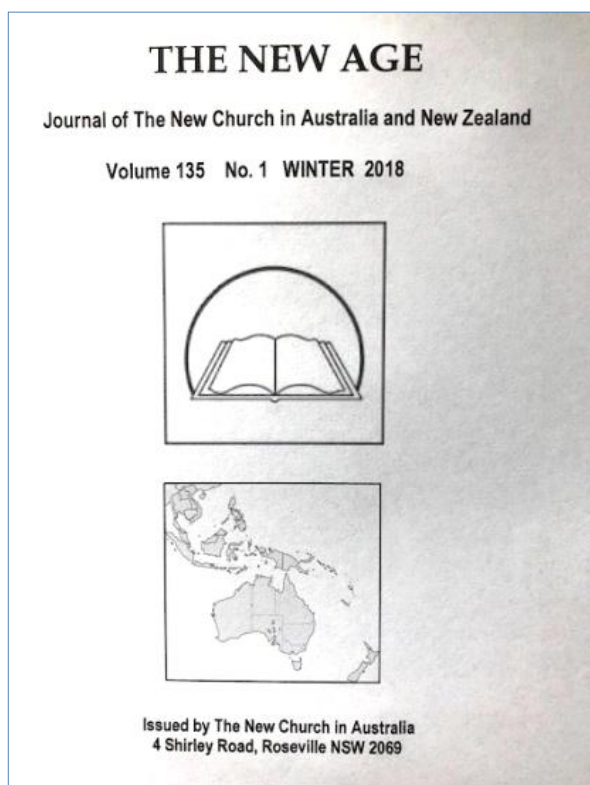
Most of all, angels bring up things about goodness and truth that a person has in himself, and they set these up against the evils or false ideas which the spirits from hell try and excite. As a result, the person is in the middle and isn't aware of either the evil or the good, and because he is in the middle he has the freedom to turn himself to either one or the other.

In such ways angels from the Lord lead and protect people, every moment, even every moment of a moment. If angels were to stop doing this for a single moment a person would be precipitated into evil from which he could never afterwards be brought out.

Angels do these things from the love they have from the Lord, because they see nothing more delightful and happy than to remove evil from someone and lead him or her to heaven. This is their joy. Yet hardly anyone believes that the Lord takes such care of people, which is done all the time from the very beginning of everyone's life to the last moment of it, and afterwards to eternity."

Arcana Caelestia (Secrets of Heaven) 5992

The picture is from the 1998 movie 'City of Angels' in which much the same ideas as given above are wonderfully portrayed.



## THE NEW AGE MAGAZINE

This national Australian New Church journal comes out every three months and it has been continually produced since around 1885 to its credit. It nearly always has a sermon in it, and various articles and each issue has reports sent in from most societies which help people to keep up to date with what is happening.

It's a good read and one of our national church's activities.

It comes out in print and gets sent out or it is also available online at [www.thenewage.net.au](http://www.thenewage.net.au) The online one is added to previous ones which means that it is all archived but findable. If you would like to get a print copy, they are free, and you can either go on the mailing list or pick one up from the half dozen extras we always have in Roseville. Just let me (Julian) know if you're wanting it.

## THE JANUARY RETREAT IN JYNDABYNE

This is happening from Monday January 21<sup>st</sup> to Sunday January 27<sup>th</sup> 2019 at the Jyndabyne Alpine Lodge close to the Kosciusko National Park in the Snowy Mountains area of New South Wales. Apparently the snowfields are very enjoyable in the warmer months.

Details are available online at [www.newchurch.net.au](http://www.newchurch.net.au) then go to the menu item New Church Retreats. This will inform you and tell you about booking and dietary needs and take you to a booking form.

I believe numbers are coming in and that the minimum number has been reached so that the retreat will go ahead. There are still quite a few spaces left, and it helps to book as early as you can. A deposit is needed, final payment before the retreat and subsidies are available on request.



# Swedenborg Association of Australia

at the New Church, 4 Shirley Rd, Roseville NSW

\$7 non-members, \$5 members/concession

**Friday 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2018, 7:45pm**

## **SWEDENBORG & LIFE VIDEO PRESENTATION: ANGELS AFTER TERRORISM**

presented by Joe Vandermeer



Where can you find God in the tragedy of a terrorist attack? When Nicolas Leslie was murdered by terrorists on Bastille Day 2016, his parents Conrad and Paola were devastated. They had no idea how to move forward. With the help of eighteenth-century philosopher and theologian Emanuel Swedenborg, they learned that no one dies alone...

This will be preceded by the Reading Group at 6.30 p.m. Light refreshments afterwards.

### FINAL FABLE

It was a bitterly cold day and a heavily-clothed man noticed that a wise-looking man was only dressed in flimsy clothes. He said, "How is it that I am dressed in thick clothes and still feel a bit cold while you are dressed in almost nothing and it doesn't seem to bother you?"

"Well," replied the wise man, "I don't have any more clothes so I can't afford to feel cold but you have plenty of clothes and so you have the liberty to feel cold or not."