

The New Church

Roseville

FEBRUARY  
2019

## Directory

Society Minister

Rev. Howard Thompson

### Officers

Secretary

Graham Hall

Treasurer

Graham St. Quintin

Church Officer

Debra Barratt Thompson

### Sunday School

Sunday School is held at the same time as the 10 am service each Sunday (children meet in the church to begin with).

### Sunday Social Hour

After every service we have tea and coffee in the hall and the opportunity to meet socially, sometimes more formally.

### The Friendship Group

See note later in this edition.

The Secretary is Mrs. Glen Hart.

### The Angel Service

The Angel Service is an informal service that invites participants to reflect on the active role the spiritual world plays in our physical lives. The service involves reflection, discussion, sometimes a brief talk and always concludes with prayer. It is held by the participants as an invitation to healing.

The Angel Service is held on the 2nd and 4th Saturday at 5 p.m.

Different classes on New Church teachings are held midweek. These are generally fortnightly but vary. Consult the coloured accompanying calendar inside the Newsletter.

The Swedenborg Centre can be visited at 4 Shirley Road, Roseville NSW 2069. You are welcome to drop in and look around. The Centre is generously supported by the Sydney Society of the New Church and provides an independent and relaxing place to meet and discuss a personal approach to finding spiritual meaning. The Centre has a wide range of study materials, Swedenborg's works, and books by supporting authors. The Centre and its director Joe Vandermeer can be reached on phone (02) 9416 2812 or email [info@swedenborg.com.au](mailto:info@swedenborg.com.au) Opening hours are Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30pm. More events details at [www.swedenborg.com.au](http://www.swedenborg.com.au) The Centre can also be used to answer enquiries about the New Church, its literature and its teachings.

# 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

## 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.



### Thoughts for a New Year

*“those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.”*

Isaiah 40:31

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”*

Jeremiah 29:11

*“though you started with little, you will end with much.”*

Job 8:7

## **FROM THE MINISTER**

### **LEAD US INTO TEMPTATION?**

The Lord's Prayer is the most perfect prayer, but we say “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Does the Lord deliberately lead us into temptation? Does this supposed loving God set traps for us to fall into? If He does not, then how are we to understand these words?

This question offers us the opportunity to better understand the Lord and the manner in which He communicates with us through His Word. Some people reject the Word entirely based on the terrible things God is said to have done as punishment to people. In the Commandments even, the Lord is spoken of as a “jealous God.” Angry, vengeful, jealous? These are not the qualities one would expect if one was told we are to worship a loving God.

But the Word is replete with language and stories that could best be described as “for appearance sake.” An example of this is that many people experience punishment for sinful behaviour. A person who commits adultery, for example, often experiences turmoil with the end of a marriage, the loss of custody of children, even the painful knowledge that one has not lived up to their own expectations of behaviour. Sometimes we feel this pain as a punishment that must be coming from God. But this is only an appearance, God can not be at one time loving and another time punish us. You and I may behave like this but God can not, it is not in His nature.

The same quality of appearance is at work in the Lord's Prayer. Temptation are the means by which the internal of a person is opened up and brought into existence (AC 10685). That the Lord uses these temptations for good does not mean that he leads us into them or brings them on us, though to us it appears that He does. In one of his many spiritual experiences Swedenborg speaks of how he came to understand the “thinking” of angels on this matter.

“I was allowed to see the angelic ideas surrounding these words in the Lord's Prayer, 'Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil'. Good spirits nearest to me began to remove 'temptation' and 'evil' by a certain idea that was perceptible within me, and this they

continued to do until that which was purely angelic, that is, good, remained, and no idea of temptation or evil was there - the literal sense thereby perishing altogether. Of that good countless ideas were being formed when that removal first began - ideas of how good may come out of a person's affliction when yet the affliction originates in that person and in his evil, which holds punishment within it. And coupled with these ideas there was a kind of indignation that people should suppose that temptation and the evil going with it should come from any other source, and that there should be any thought of evil when they thought about the Lord. These ideas were being purified every time they rose up higher. These risings were represented by removals, also described in 1393, which were carried out with a rapidity and in a manner that were indescribable, until they passed into the shadowy side of my thought. At that point they were in heaven where angelic ideas beyond words exist regarding that good which is the Lord's." ~ Arcana Coelestia 1875

I do not know if any of us will ever truly be able to allow the good spirits to remove the words "temptation" or "evil" from our minds when we say The Prayer. But it is a good thing we can do to have an affection for replacing those words with angelic ideas of the Lord, His love for us and His mercy.

Good wishes to you all,

Rev. Howard A. Thompson

### **Minister's Question?**

The above piece was written in response to a reader's question submitted to the last Newsletter I edited in the UK. I liked the regular interaction with the readers and will try to include the same in the Roseville Newsletter going forward. If you have a question, no matter how simple or silly you may feel it is, please feel free to submit it. I can guarantee that among our readers any question you may have will be a guest another person has.

Questions can be submitted to the Newsletter via email ([revhathompson@gmail.com](mailto:revhathompson@gmail.com)) or post (Newsletter, 4 Shirley Road, Roseville NSW 2069).

## Friendship Group Update

For the last several years the Friendship Group has continued to be an outlet for church members to gather for fellowship and organise community outreach such as singing visits to aged care homes and organising small but meaningful Christmas gifts for our elderly friends. The activity of the Friendship Group would not have been possible without the dedication and commitment of our former minister, Rev. Julian Duckworth, his wife (Ruth) and a small number of dedicated members. For their dedication and spirit I would like to say, thank you. Originally constituted as the Women's League, the Friendship Group had grown to attract upwards of 15 regular participants and even expanded to include a few men. Unfortunately, with several members moving away and others hampered by age, those still involved have decided that now is an appropriate time to bring to an orderly end the activity of the Friendship Group.

I am very happy to report that proceeds from the Boulton Memorial Fund are being fully dispersed to two worthy causes within the church; namely the Australian New Church College and the New Church in Australia Church towards future Church Retreats. I'm certain that Bob and Muriel Boulton would be happy with this decision.

Our church treasurer was able to have the Fund wisely invested and the amount grew very well. We do thank Graham for this.

Best wishes for a fulfilling year ahead.

Glenys Hart

ps. (from our minister) - As in the natural world, nothing ever really disappears. Even plants that die are absorbed into the soil where they serve to nourish the new growth for a new season. I am certain that as the Roseville Church continues its work in the coming years a new stem will rise that will offer new leaves in this wonderful community. It is a funny thing that I have observed in churches; when people gather to worship the Lord they almost inevitably look to ways they can serve the neighbour. It is certainly no coincidence that when asked about the most important commandment the Lord responded by saying: "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:37-40).



# News from the Swedenborg Centre

*by Joe Vandermeer*

We trust that you have had a worthwhile Christmas and New Year holiday break, and however you celebrated this important time, I hope that you found it a joyful as well as a meaningful time, considering what it is we are celebrating.

By the time you receive this news, the Centre will have been present with books and other material at the NCIA Family Retreat in Australia's high country (Jindabyne). I find being in the mountains always an uplifting and refreshing spiritual experience, and I will assume in advance that we will have had a wonderful time there.

The doors of the Centre at Roseville will continue to be open every second Tuesday of each month, as we had done successfully last year, to invite and encourage people to use these facilities as a place to meet and explore their ideas and spiritual interests, or if you wish, even to borrow or buy some books. Of course, any weekday is usually fine for you to drop in, as visits are by no means limited to Tuesdays. So, if you feel like coming past for a cup of tea, you are most welcome to do so. If you wish to check that it's a good day for it, you could give us a call on (02) 9416 2812 beforehand.

Also, by the time you read this, the Swedenborg Association of Australia (SAA) will have had their annual planning meeting to set in place the program of activities for the fourth Friday night of every month at Roseville commencing with February 22<sup>nd</sup>. Keep your eye on the website for all the latest information – [www.swedenborg.com.au](http://www.swedenborg.com.au) – which has all the details of all the SAA and Swedenborg Centre events with associated fliers, contact and location and transport info, opening times, and other relevant up to date news.

During the holidays, I heard about a wonderful Lithuanian preacher and storyteller called Jacob ben Wolf Kranz who lived in Swedenborg's time (1741-1804). He was famous for his fables which he designed to teach or illustrate instructive lessons based on Jewish tradition. His most famous fable is about the way in which he was able to find such fitting fables for each situation. When asked about this, he replied: Once I was walking in the forest, and saw tree after tree with a target drawn on it, and at the centre of each target an arrow. I then

came upon a little boy with a bow in his hand. "Are you the one who shot all these arrows?", I asked. "Yes!" he replied. "Then how did you always hit the centre of the target?" I asked. "Simple", said the boy, "first I shoot the arrow, then I draw the target".

And during the holidays I also revisited a useful work derived from a series of lectures by Rev. Hugo Lj. Odhner, which discusses Swedenborg's writings on the topic of creation. And because this is a brand-new year of creation, I thought some passages from it – adapted for this newsletter – would be appropriate content for this new year. The material in quotes are from Swedenborg's writings. You can find Rev. Odhner's entire lectures on it and all quotation references on the [SwedenborgStudy.com](http://SwedenborgStudy.com) website.

Enjoy!

### ***Human Beings are the Focus of All Creation***

"The end of the creation of the universe is people, in order that from people there may be an angelic heaven." For so there may be "an eternal conjunction of the Creator with the created universe," which is not possible without subjects which are recipients of the Divine, so that they can - as of themselves - reciprocate His love. All things created by the Lord are uses only "in that order, degree, and respect in which they look to people, and through people to the Lord." All things "have been created for the use, for the benefit, and for the delight of people, some things more directly, some more remotely." And in serving people, they are of service to life itself, which is the Lord.

Regarding the general state of those human beings who are first referred to in the story of the spiritual development of mankind, as recorded in the book of Creation.

The idea that Adam and his wife were the first individual people - and were created perfect, is rejected in the Writings. 'Adam' was not an individual but the personification of a most ancient primitive church of celestial type.

There were "Preadamites," whose spiritual development is what is described in the internal historical sense of the 'six days' of creation. These people at first "lived like wild animals but at length became spiritual."



The creation which followed was a spiritual creation, a gradual awakening of people's faculties, a revelation of some of the countless possibilities and powers for use and delight that are hidden in the soul and in the substances of the person's spirit... It was a creation of spiritual things which people accept freely from the Lord and which contain interior possibilities, ever fresh, of which they never dreamt. Only by the aid of sensation and knowledge coming through nature, could human beings ever become aware of these spiritual things. Even after death, when the senses of the natural body have been closed and removed, and the natural memory with its concepts of space and time has been laid to sleep, a person still has their mental life - their reception of wisdom and love from the Lord - based, directly or indirectly, on the material ideas of living people, which are indeed the common basis for all the heavens; although only spiritual ideas are entertained by the angels.

Another phase of this same truth - that the spiritual takes form in the natural - is also important.

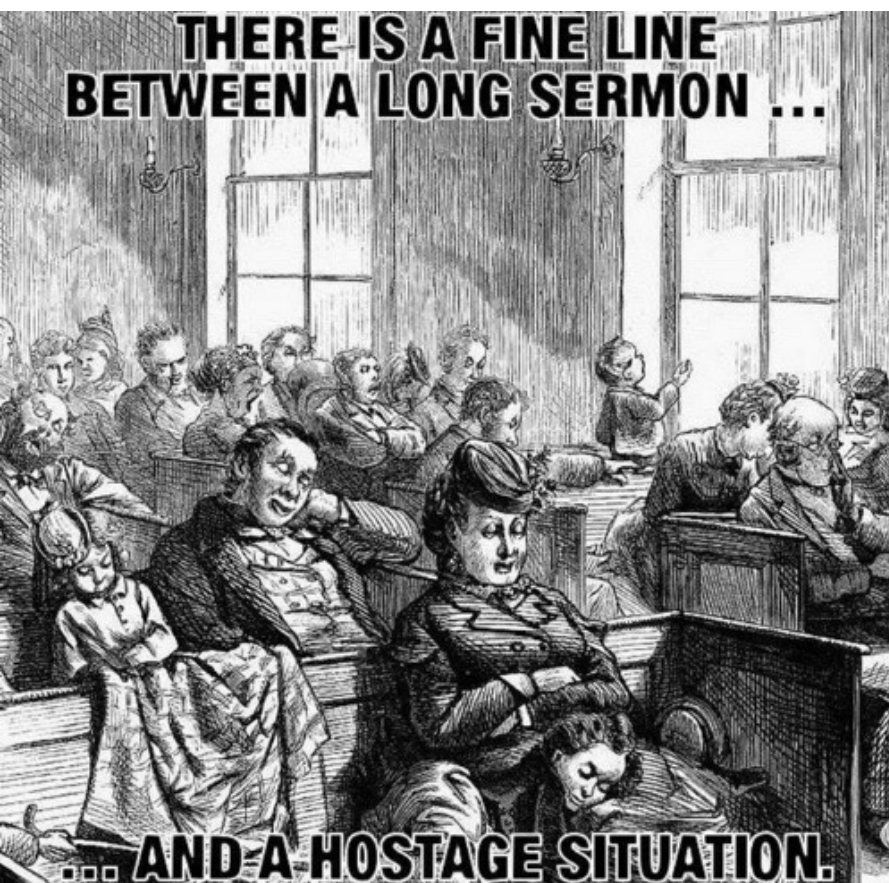
The general teaching is that "people are born spiritual as to the soul, and is clothed with a natural which constitutes their material body; wherefore, when this is put off, their soul, clothed with a spiritual body, comes into a world where all things are spiritual." "The spiritual body is to be formed in the material body, and is formed through the truths and goods which flow in from the spiritual world and are received by people inwardly in such things of theirs as are from the natural world, which are called civil and moral."

Everyone therefore "has their soul from the life of the body formed by themselves"; which means, of course, that a person's natural mind is so formed. The order of his or her ruling love, as they have formed it, is indelibly inscribed in all the twists and connections of their corporeal memory; and this - in turn - is held unchangeable by the inmost or purest things of nature, which are organized as a fixed container called a "limbus," or "medium."

What is seen in the spiritual world as an angel or spirit, is the spiritual body, which is in the actual form of the person's ruling love. This body, and within it the mind, is the spiritual as the person formed it within the natural. It is the character of a person, the spirit, organized not from anything physical, but through truths and goods which had

inflowed from the spiritual world with the person's consent. It is indeed a spiritual creation, but permanent as to all essentials, because formed in the natural and having "a relativity to those things which are in nature, and also a correspondence to them."

The spiritual body is permanent, and a form of the ruling love. From examining the body of a spirit, exploring angels can reconstruct the person's past life! Yet a spirit or an angel undergoes changes of state; some changes flow from the development of their own love; other changes arise when they set their mind to uses of various kinds; still other changes are occasioned by contacts with other spirits, or with people with whom these spirits are associated. These changes of state are principally those of thoughts and affections, and pertain to the spirit or angel's mind. But every spiritual thing is in the inclination to act, to create, to form! And as the substance of the other world is spiritual, all effects there are spiritual: each new state of mind is a new manifestation of the Lord's creative power out of the living substance of that world, and a new realization on the part of an angel or spirit of spiritual productions. This is the sole origin of the productions or creations which occur around the angels, and angels well know that nothing about them is material, but that everything is an expression or mirror-image of a human state! and this as a new creation from the human and living substance of that world.



## **Pulpit Humour**

## OUR CHURCH SERVICES IN PORT MACQUARIE

Over the last three to four months we have met up on the first Sunday of the month to have a service. There are just the four of us, Kevin and Erlinda Attwater and Ruth and Julian Duckworth. We alternate whose house we meet in. Kevin and Erlinda moved to Port Macquarie several years ago and began a Sunday 'devotional' by themselves. Our arrival has doubled the number!

So what do we do? Basically, it is in two or even three sections. After meeting and greeting, we have a Bible passage and a prayer, then we discuss a New Church sermon which Kevin has found and send around to quite a few people each month, which we have read in advance. So far we have always found a lot to share and talk about and these sermons really generate a lot of spiritual thought and understanding as well as some questions. This is for about 20 minutes.

After this, we have the Holy Supper which is very pleasant to take part in either inside or outside and this involves some readings, prayers, commentary and the breaking of bread and pouring of wine. We close with a blessing but we could include whatever we want.

When we have finished, we have some time to catch up and socialise over a cold drink or a cup of tea and coffee and repeat dips in the cake box, before going our separate ways. We have all said that these monthly services work for us and are easy to organise. Our way of doing church.

Julian and Ruth Duckworth. Kevin and Erlinda Attwater.

*"For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them."*

Matthew 18:20



## **Minister's Availability**

With the arrival of a new minister for the church and the repurposing of the from rooms of the manse as the new location for the Swedenborg Centre, you may be asking yourself; 'Howard, where and when do you work and how can I get in touch with you?'

Well, have no fear, much thought and work has gone into addressing this question. First let me note that having spent 20+ years in the business world before entering ministry I have come to value a work space separate and distinct from my home space. Aligned with this approach is a preference for "set" office hours. Will I often work at the island in the manse kitchen? The answer is; 'of course.' Will I often work outside of "set" office hours? Again, the answer is; 'of course.' But experience has taught me that endeavouring to follow a regular practice of being in a dedicated work space for a designated span of time aids and improves my focus.

With this in mind I spent several weeks before Christmas re-establishing an office in the church vestry (the small room to the left of the church chancel). This office is accessible from both within the church and by the set of stairs down the path to the left of the church. Going forward my availability and contact information will be as follows:

### **Minister's Contact Information and Office Hours**

Rev. Howard A. Thompson

Office Hours: 11.00 am - 4.00 pm

Tuesday through Friday

Email: [revhathompson@gmail.com](mailto:revhathompson@gmail.com)

Phone: 0432 357 475

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### **THE LAST WORD**

The Sydney Society of the New Church will hold its **AGM** on

**Sunday 24 February at 11.30am**

2 Shirley Road Roseville NSW 2069.

The purpose is to discuss and manage the affairs of the church as an organisation, all are welcome though only formal members may vote.