



THE NEW CHURCH

ROSEVILLE

June/July

2019

Directory

Society Minister

Rev. Howard Thompson

Officers

Secretary

Graham Hall

Treasurer

Joel Duckworth

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 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 each month on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays at 5 p.m.

Different **classes on New Church teachings** are held midweek. These are generally held fortnightly, but vary. Consult the coloured calendar insert 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 Opening hours are Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30pm. More events details at 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

4 Shirley Road, Roseville, N.S.W. 2069

Church Office phone: (02) 9416 7026

Minister's e-mail : revhathompson@gmail.com

On Facebook – Sydney Society of the New Church - Roseville

June/July 2019

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 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.

Moments of Healing

(Take a moment to reflect on the Lord's power to heal)

When the Word speaks of healing it is speaking of the manner in which the Lord alone preserves us from evil. Sickesses in the Word mean evils, curing a person of them and preserving a person from them is meant by 'healing.'

Arcana Coelestia 8365

"O Lord, if you heal me, I will be truly healed; if you save me, I will be truly saved. My praises are for you alone!"

Jeremiah 17:14

"I will give you back your health and heal your wounds"

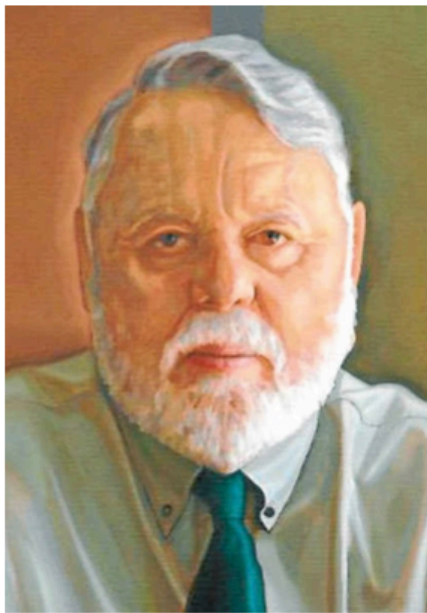
Jeremiah 30:17

"May they have abundant peace, both near and far," says the Lord, who heals them.

Isaiah 57:19

"Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do...I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices...I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners."

Matthew 9:12-13



Reflections on Selfishness

The doctrine for the New Church often refers to the importance of investigating our own motivations. Particularly, we are urged to weed out selfish motivations within us and behind our actions.

To the extent that people are free of selfishness they can be wise in divine matters. Selfishness is what closes off our deeper natures from the Lord and heaven and opens our outer natures and turns them

toward ourselves. So all people in whom that selfish love predominates are in the depths of darkness as far as heavenly realities are concerned, no matter how much light they may enjoy in regard to worldly matters. (Heaven & Hell 272)

“Selfishness” is wishing well only to ourselves, and not to anyone else except for our own benefit. When we are selfish, we do not love our religion, our country, any human community, or our fellow citizens. We do good things for them only to increase our own reputation, status, and fame. If we do not see any advantage to ourselves in something we might do for other people, we say in our hearts, “What’s the difference? Why should I do it? What’s in it for me?” So we do not bother. (The Heavenly City, A Spiritual Guidebook 65)

That which is a person's intention or end in view constitutes his actual life, that end in view being his love, and that love his life. What is more, a person's essential character is exactly like the end he holds in view; and the image of him seen in the light of heaven is also exactly like it. And what will perhaps astonish you, as is the image that he presents overall, so is the image presented in every smallest feature of his will. This means that a person is wholly and completely identifiable with his end in view. Arcana Coelestia 6571)

I heard an interview recently with Terry Waite that just exploded my simple understanding of selfish motivations that I thought

would be useful to share. Terry Waite was the Assistant for Anglican Communion Affairs for the Archbishop of Canterbury in the 1980s. As an envoy for the Church of England, he travelled to Lebanon to try to secure the release of four hostages. Lebanon is a tiny country sandwiched between Syria, Israel and the Mediterranean Sea. For much of the last quarter of the 20th century Lebanon was embroiled in a largely sectarian civil war. One of the strategies used by the combatants in the war was kidnapping, particularly of westerners. Terry Waite himself was kidnapped and held captive from 1987 to 1991. In a recent interview, Terry redefined and expanded my understanding of selfishness in a way that caused me some serious pause. The circumstances that lead to Terry's being taken hostage by Islamic militants in Lebanon in 1987 included his concern that one of the hostages he was working so hard to secure the release of was gravely ill. It was this fact (or belief) that led him to agree to the immensely risky act of handing himself over to the militants. He believed that he was being taken to see the man face to face and did so with the full knowledge that he very well could be taken hostage himself. But, as he says, "they gave me their word." Terry went on to say that in the end his decision to take this risk was not entirely altruistic, that there was a self-serving aspect to his decision. Terry includes, as a selfish motivation, the regret he would feel for the remainder of his life if he had not made every effort to visit with a dying man. What I heard Terry say was that if he was not entirely (100%) selfless then he was still being selfish.

Accepting, of course, that none of us can truly know what our motivations are, there is a nice and simple passage that tells us where the correct motivations will place us: "those who do good for their neighbour's or for the Lord's sake are in heaven" (AC 9210.3).

Finally, this brings to mind the Lord's words to one of His disciples; "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God" (Luke 18:19).

From the Swedenborg Centre

Here are some of the noteworthy activities taking place around Sydney in the months ahead and organised in association with the Swedenborg Centre and the Swedenborg Association of Australia:

“Art and Spirituality”

A special tour of the Museum of Contemporary Arts (MCA) in The Rocks for a special tour of the MCA by artist and art educator Michelle Heldon.

Wednesday, May 22nd

(tour departs precisely 6:15pm from the cafe on the 4th floor)

“Correspondences Made Easy”

A talk by special guest Rev. David Moffat
at the Roseville Church.

Friday, May 24th 7:45pm

“Seeking the Divine”

A talk by John Bayot (student of Dr. Groves)
at the Roseville church.

Saturday, May 25th 7:00pm

“Beyond the Fourth Way Film Festival”

Throughout the month of June we will be commemorating the passing of Dr. Philip Groves 20 years ago with the showing of five films starting with *Meetings With Remarkable Men* (a symbolic ‘autobiography’ of spiritual Fourth Way teacher G. I. Gurdjieff), and films of Dr. Groves lecturing on:

June 1st - Synthesis of Science and Spirituality

June 8th - Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphs

June 15th - Fantasy and Reality

June 22nd - Western Mandalas and Myths and Symbols

Swedenborg Centre (continued)



Dr. Philip Groves

Monthly Open Discussion

2pm and 6pm

Swedenborg Centre

Tuesday, June 11th and July 9th

“Primavera, Sermon on Canvas”

Our very own Joe Vandermeer will show us how Italian Renaissance painter Sandro Botticelli’s painting Primavera (“Spring”) depicting the process of spiritual regeneration. (note: this event

replaces the usual fourth Friday of the month SAA activity)

Saturday, July 13th at 7pm

“Sermon in Stone”

This Fourth Friday SAA talk will have Joe Vandermeer looking at how the great Gothic Cathedrals depict in their construction the process of spiritual regeneration.



7:45pm at the Roseville Church

Friday, August 24th

We look forward to your company and any of your friends at the above events.

For further details, see the SAA and Centre’s website at www.swedenborg.com.au particularly the meetings page www.swedenborg.com.au/meetings

Heaven in a Hospital

As some of you know I have recently been in hospital several times which brings its worries but also its privileges of seeing the dedication and humanity of so many people brought together to do so much good to others in need, often in pain. When you are in it and among it you can't help but catch the heavenliness of it all. I can't count the number of times I have heard people say that "those nurses who looked after me were just like angels".

While I have been in hospital I have been working some of the time on an indexing of many of our church teachings to make them accessible in a much shorter version. The second one I worked on said this: "Jesus Christ is the invisibleness of God made visible. Everything spiritual must be seen by us through natural forms." Through what's seeable, through what we're familiar with, and through things we can understand. Jesus Christ is personal, like us, but perfect like we are not, and Jesus told parables that used sheep and seeds and birds and houses which the listening crowds would 'get' because they knew them daily.

So, back to the hospital as a picture for us of heaven. Every time my hospital room door opens, it's someone who seems to be saying on their face that I am the most important person around. That sounds heavenly! Yes, they will go next door and do that again but that's not the point. They haven't been trained to care, they are caring. I haven't yet met a day nurse who took up nursing because they didn't know what else to do.

One of the impressive things about hospitals is their staggering co-ordination between different departments. Of course, today a lot of middle-level hospital workers and others have it all to hand on a computer screen and can find in a flash when someone was tested for ringworm. That has made things more efficient but any hospital has to have its systems in place, even those that were around in 1919!

In Swedenborg's work 'Heaven and Hell' there are many descriptions of heaven (and of Hell). A lot of these pictures of how it goes in heaven talk about principles, like being useful, being wise, acknowledging the Lord, everything has its place in the scheme of things, and they often add a visual description to make it more personal. I found myself thinking that you could wander around a big hospital with a copy of Heaven and Hell and see so many instances of what we're told heaven is like. Hell? Well, you might have to go somewhere else to do that but I'd better not say more.

So here are three chapter headings from Heaven and Hell as I wander round the hospital seeing various heavens with my own eyes...

Heaven is made up of countless communities. This is an obvious one because all hospitals are packed with their -ologies (haematology, neurology, oncology...) each one with its expertise and function but none any less than any other.

The Divine of the Lord makes heaven. Perhaps not as easy as the first one but let's give it a try. The Lord's Divine really means what the Lord is like in himself plus what the Lord gives out and shines forth with, which is his love and wisdom. So where do you see that the most in a hospital? Perhaps it is in everything and everyone who works for the welfare of all. But I think I felt it when I waited for my op in the surgical department, this large space full of doctors, nurses, anaesthetists, admin, porters, each looking busier than busy, but all driven by the desire to heal and make it better. It's that which shines forth in surgery.

Heavenly Joy and Happiness. Simply the idea that while we enjoy a lot of worldly things which seem, we think, to make us happy, the real joy and happiness is something else, something purer, finer and which moves our deeper levels of our soul and spirit. In terms of the hospital, this would be the occasional but powerful feeling, "What a wonderful place this is," adding perhaps, "This is none other than the house of God."

Julian Duckworth

My Ministry Tour

Roslyn Taylor

As I write, I'm about to leave Sydney and fly to Melbourne for the last leg of my "Ministry Tour" of Australia. It has been a great pleasure to get to know some of you at the Roseville New Church and the Swedenborg Centre, and to renew friendships with others, during my month in Sydney. Thank you for the warmth of your welcome!



Some of you may know that I am approaching ordination as a minister of the Swedenborgian Church of North America (AKA "Convention") in July this year, based on my Diploma in Spiritual Christianity from the Australian New Church College, and other ministry training and experience. My plan as a Swedenborgian/New Church minister is to serve the NCIA for several months every year. For the remainder of each year, I will be serving Convention in the region of the USA where I live with my family.

In my "ministry tour" of the NCIA this year, I have spent a month each in Adelaide and Sydney, and will spend a month in Melbourne. The Adelaide church has family connections for me, since my grandfather Rev. C.D. Brock was the minister there for 23 years. While there I was able to help out with leading worship and classes. The other focus was preparing displays for the 175th anniversary of the church, in conjunction with South Australia's History Festival. The Adelaide church was the first organised New Church congregation in the Southern Hemisphere.

Ministry Tour (continued)

In Sydney, I've been volunteering at the Swedenborg Centre, hoping to be of some assistance to Joe Vandermeer. A highlight for me was being a speaker at the April meeting of the Swedenborg Association of Australia, on the topic of "When Swedenborg is Antiquated: How Readers Interpret Difficult Texts." In Hurstville I was able to give two classes: a preview of my SAA talk and a reflection on "I'm Only Human." Another highlight, for me anyway, was playing the piano for church two times, as I had done decades ago in the Sunday School at Hurstville. And of course, I've enjoyed the view of the lovely Sydney Harbour while traveling across the Sydney Harbour Bridge several times a week, or on a ferry.

And now it's on to ministry adventures in Melbourne, where the church building has just been sold and plans are underway for Rev. David Moffatt's ministry, starting next year. I'm looking forward to see how the Divine will unfold this part of my ministry tour. And I'm grateful for all the wonderful people and experiences and ministry opportunities that have been part of my tour thus far.

Roslyn Taylor



L'Alp d'Huez

“Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.” (Isaiah 2:3)

Meditating on the image of the path to heaven the Lord has shown us in His Word, I am struck by the reality of both a path to heaven for all people and the unique path we each take.

First I wrestle with the imagery of a straight path, because I do not feel that the path, even if followed, is intended to be straight. I am a bit of a fan of professional cycling. One of the classic climbs of the Tour de France is that of L'Alp d'Huez. Through 21 switchbacks riders climb just over 1,000 metres in 14 km of riding. These guys are racing up a mountain most humans could not ride up. The path up the alp is not straight, but it is the easiest route, probably first traversed by shepherds accessing the high meadow for their flocks in summer (the significance of this is not lost on me either). I think the path to heaven is like this. It is not a straight road but it is the easiest. We can try to cut corners or take a different route but we will suffer in the effort.

The other interesting aspect of the climb is that some who have conquered the climb have felt that they had done it on their own, while the true champions of the sport acknowledge that they only accomplished the climb with the support of their team, their sponsors and the technical equipment that allowed them to perform and climb the mountain. Those who reach the top without this acknowledgment do not remain at the top very long. We do not go up to the mountain of the Lord on our own either. We need to acknowledge that the Lord has made the path for us. We need to acknowledge that when we step off the path and our friends are there to help us, that it is the Lord working through them to keep us on the path.

“On our own we are constantly falling but the Lord is constantly putting us on our feet again” (Arcana Caelestia 8391)

Howard Thompson

Marriage Moats: “The Twins”

The story in church was about twins. I was delighted to be sitting between my own girls that morning, and enjoyed the enactment of the conflict between Jacob and Esau. Their tussle started in the womb, and did not wane in adulthood. The brothers wrestled for dominance their whole lives.

Esau was impulsive, and his emotions showed up in his actions. Jacob had a more measured temperament, and could be called sneaky. Their father Isaac loved Esau while Rebecca, their mother, favoured Jacob.

Years ago I attended a lecture about the development of babies in the womb. What stays with me is the spinning. Early on the heart is above the head. Later in the pregnancy they switch. Then they swivel again a few times until labor when, ideally, the heart is again above the head.

For me it mirrored the tug of war between knowing what is true and doing what is good. It has been a scuffle, as I lean between holding the line and reaching out to someone I care about. There has been uncertainty, and the pain of contractions. Clench and release. Submit and expand.

The minister explained that Esau represents what we love, and our desire to act on it. Jacob symbolises that part of us that learns how. He gave the example of how he wanted to play the piano as a child. But the steps of practicing and learning scales sometimes bordered on drudgery. The desire to make music is how it began, but took a back seat to plodding through the primer. In the end, his talent has emerged as a source of joy. Amazingly, there is enough gladness to go around. In fact I am listening to him now.

It happens that I put that story to music thirty years ago. It is not a well known hit, but the musicians performed it. As I sat there, a twin on each side, singing together I knew that the struggle is worth it. More than.

Marriage Moats (continued)

But the children struggled within her, and she said, "If all is well, why am I like this?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb. Two peoples will come from your body. One people shall be stronger, and the older shall serve the younger." Genesis 25

Lori Odhner
Caring for Marriage

**** What are “Marriage Moats” you ask? ****

“Marriage Moats” is a daily reflection on marriage from someone who could be legitimately called an “expert” on marriage. Lori Odhner is a wife and mother of 9 children who, along with her minister husband, John, began a marriage ministry in 1988. Together they manage the www.caringformarriage.org website, organise an annual marriage conference and put out a monthly newsletter. Lori writes daily e-mails called Marriage Moats intended to support people who value marriage. Debra and I enjoy reading these daily reflections and I have decided that each month I will choose one to share with our Newsletter readers. The above came out recently and seemed to me to be another good way for our readers to get to know Lori.

Religion and marriage walk hand
in hand, every progress in one is
a progress in another.



General Church of the New Jerusalem

Regional Clergy Meetings

The General Church (the episcopal organisation of which I am a member) will be holding their regional clergy meetings 31 May - 3 June, and it will be a good opportunity to meet ministers from around the world. There will be seven from Korea, two from Japan, and a lay leader from China. Not to mention Dick Keyworth from New Zealand will be attending, as will Dave Lindrooth (Asst. Bishop), John Jin (Asian Regional Pastor) and Bishop Pete & Teresa Buss who are coming from the US. From Australia David Millar will be attending as will Todd Beiswenger and myself. For those interested, following are the several opportunities to meet and talk with some of those ministers in town for these meetings:

Meet and Greet at the Swedenborg Centre Wednesday 29 May

Join us between 2:00 and 4:00 at the Swedenborg Centre for an informal visit with Rt. Rev. Peter Buss, Executive Bishop of the General Church as well as Rt. Rev. David Lindrooth, Asst. Bishop of the General Church and Rev. John Jin, General Church Regional Pastor for Asia.

Special Service, Hurstville New Church Sunday 2 June - 10:00am

Join the Hurstville Society and the visiting ministers from Korea, Japan, China, New Zealand and, of course, the pastors of the Roseville and Hurstville societies for a special service concluding their regional clergy meetings.

(note: there will be no service in Roseville on this day)

Minister's Availability

As a reminder, the front rooms of the manse, formerly the minister's and church officer's offices, have been repurposed as the new location for the Swedenborg Centre.

The church vestry has been re-established as the minister's office. Initially our minister was declaring Monday as the minister's day-off but adjusting to the flow of the Roseville Church has necessitated the switch of this day from Monday to Thursday. Lastly, the vestry is no longer accessible by the stairs, only from within the church. If the minister is expecting you the front door of the church will likely be open but if not, a good knock on the door should get his attention (or a phone call).

Feel free to stop by for a cup of tea or coffee and visit.

Minister's Contact Information and Office Hours

Rev. Howard A. Thompson

Office Hours: 11:00 am - 4.00 pm

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday

Email: revhathompson@gmail.com

Phone: 0432 357 475

THE LAST WORD

Some people believe that God is a “contingent god,” that our relationship is one whereby God only flows into us with His Divine Love if we do what He wants us to do. This very idea is antithetical to the nature of Divine Love. Every single one of us is worthy of God's love. Whether or not we are willing to accept His love is the only question we are left with. We open ourselves to receive by living a life in obedience to His commandments:

**“The Lord is good to everyone.
He showers compassion on all his creation.”**

Psalms 145:9

