

“All religion has relation to life and the life of religion is to do good”.

Swedenborg

# The New Church In Victoria Newsletter

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## *Personality: the Good, the Bad and the Ugly*

A message from Rev. David Moffat

“Always be yourself, express yourself, have faith in yourself, do not go out and look for a successful personality and duplicate it.” (Bruce Lee)

“My personality is that I like to express myself, and that is not something I will look to change.” (Dele Alli)

Take a moment to consider: What do you think is the BEST THING about you?

No doubt, you have a wide range of characteristics and qualities, some you enjoy, even treasure, and perhaps some others you'd like to change. These qualities constitute a personality which is unique. One of the wonderful things about our teachings is the recognition that every personality may find its own place in heaven, and our individual uniqueness is an integral part of the glorious diversity - and unity - to be found there. Swedenborg calls it the “Greatest Human” or “Grand Man”, the apostle Paul, the “body of Christ” (see 1 Corinthians chapter 12).



In earthly groups and organisations, too, that mix of personalities exhibits the same vibrancy and colour we look forward to in heaven. But we know from bitter experience that it is not always wonderful and uplifting. Personality can be divisive, and downright destructive. Personality clashes can lead us to see only the evil in others, and drive us to separation, alienation, and hatred. Clearly, personality alone is not the key to success we might think it is. So, what is the place of personality in a thriving organisation? And what IS that elusive key?

Intellectually, we know that personality contains both good and evil traits. I say, “intellectually”, because it is much harder for us to acknowledge both sides of that particular equation when it comes to our own personalities. At its heart, there is what the Lord has created us to be. Alongside this are many good qualities derived from our parents and our upbringing. But there are also many evils present in our nature, which also come from our parents and our upbringing. I have noticed two things we all tend to do with this.

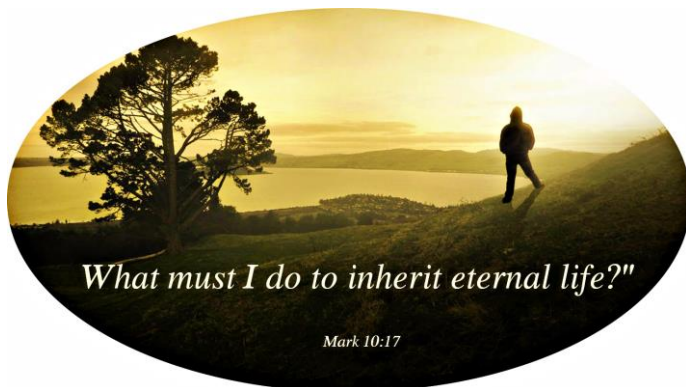
Firstly, we tend to make a virtue out of the personal qualities we treasure. So, for example, I value listening: I regard myself as a good listener, and so I look for it in others, and cherish listening in my interpersonal relationships. That doesn't mean I always get it right, but it does mean that I gravitate towards other listeners.

On the flip side, we tend to judge others based upon their possession - or lack - of those same qualities: so I know I look down on people who might speak too quickly (before they've really heard what another person has expressed), or who steamroller their own opinion through as though it were generally accepted and self-evident truth. You may well consider other qualities to be of particular importance: strength of character, morality, determination, wit, courage, etc.

The second thing we tend to do is excuse our own bad behaviour, "That is just who I am, it's my personality." This is how we cope with those qualities we are less happy with. It is easier to view them as fixed, immutable, rather than take the responsibility of actively seeking change.

Considering a more balanced view, it may be useful to look at our personal qualities as neither good nor bad, rather having both a light and a dark side, needing to be moderated or guarded. For example, determination can see us through many of the obstacles of life, and bring success where competitors fail. But determination can easily become stubbornness, which ought to be moderated by merely listening to the wisdom of others' experience. Courage, likewise, can lead to unnecessary risks, and also ought to be balanced by wisdom: "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

But it is especially important for us to acknowledge that not one of us earns a place in heaven by virtue of our personalities. There is no such thing as a "heavenly personality"! That may seem a strange thing to say. But let's consider for a moment, the question asked by the rich young ruler, "What should I do that I may inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17; Luke 18:18).



I'll come back to Jesus' answer in a minute, but I'd like to look at another one first: from Swedenborg's,

*Heaven and Hell*. This book is essentially an eye-witness account of his spiritual journeys. It answers many questions: What happens when I die? What are heaven and hell like? But it begins with the Lord. He tells us plainly: "It is the Lord's Divine Nature that makes heaven." (paragraph 7) "... the Lord dwells in angels in what belongs to himself, ... This is because the good from the Lord is the Lord within and among them ..." (paragraph 12)

"What should I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Clearly, I should accept the Lord more fully into my life. But fostering a relationship with the Creator of the universe can be a difficult concept for us to grasp. What does that look like? What should I actually do to bring this about? It's easy to think that involves going to church, engaging in religious activities. But Swedenborg's next chapter title says it all: "**The Lord's Divine Nature in Heaven Is Love for Him and Thoughtfulness toward One's Neighbour.**" (chapter 3 [paragraphs 13-19])

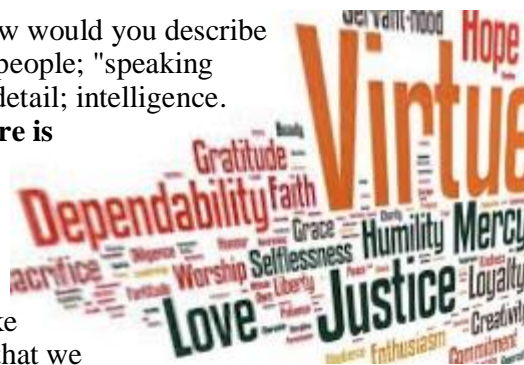
It is not the activity itself that matters so much as the love that drives it. The same must be said of personality. There will be many personalities, many different qualities we might all express in various ways, but what matters most is the love that drives it all: in everything that I do and say, who is it for?

Externally, the rich young ruler ticked all the right boxes. He lived a pious life, following the commandments of the law. Yet he held onto riches as though they were the source of his security and happiness: "Jesus looked at him and loved him. 'One thing you lack,' he said. 'Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'" (Mark 10:21 [Luke 18:22])

My "riches" may well be the belief that I am worthy of heaven. How would you describe yourself? What are your greatest virtues? Listening, being nice to people; "speaking the truth" (calling a spade a spade); conscientiousness; attention to detail; intelligence.

**Understand this: NOT ONE of them is, in itself, heavenly. There is nothing intrinsically of ME that is heavenly; it is all the Lord's.**

Personality, **focused on others** and led by the Lord, certainly can yield the beautiful variety of heaven. But focused on self, it is entirely destructive. Together, as we begin this next chapter in the history of our church, I pray that we can all remember this, and make love for the Lord, and care and concern for others, the centre of all that we do and say.



"*A magnetic personality doesn't necessarily indicate a good heart.*" (Laura Linney)

## *A Reflection for Christmas Day*

*“They rejoiced with exceeding great joy”. Words we associate with the wise men, but they can be applied to everyone associated with the Christmas story. The shepherds heard the good news and wanted to tell everyone they met. The angels rejoiced at the news and you sense the whole heavens were in accord. I suppose we all feel the same way at the birth of a child; there is great rejoicing among relatives and friends.*

*But it was the Christ child who was born, the Saviour of the world. It is the Saviour's day, his birthday that we celebrate. We may have the presents to remind us of the event, but there is joy on every face as presents are given and received - excitement with the young and equal excitement when we are old. We might say what we want for Christmas, as the little child writes a letter to Santa Claus. But to open the present is to sense the joy of the gift. I don't think any one of us ever forgets the wonder of Christmas.*



*A Saviour born for us - someone coming into our world to help and support us; a child maybe to evoke in us joy and concern, care and love, and above all, wonder. Scrooge (A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens) was wrong when he spoke of humbug - though he might be right if Christmas is no more than the tree and trimmings, the wine and the turkey, the presents and the cards. These are things to help in the celebration - but it is the Christ child who is at the heart of Christmas. He should find room in our hearts, if we are to celebrate truly his coming into our world.*

*To rejoice with exceeding great joy is to recognise the Christ child, and all that he can do for us - to welcome the Saviour who is the light of the world; to invite a friend for all times into our lives. Let us then rejoice on Christmas Day for it is the Saviour's day, for the Christ child is the reason for our rejoicing and his presence transforms, changes, makes over a-new. The principles of religion are there to reform us; but the presence of the Saviour in our life is there to transform us. So let us all rejoice, and be happy for this is the Saviour's day.*

Rev. Leslie Chambers (UK)

Readings for quiet reflection, especially on Christmas Day ~ Luke 2: 1-14; Matthew 2: 1-11 and *Doctrine of the Sacred Scriptures* 23<sup>3</sup>

*The knowledge of correspondences remained among many eastern nations even until the Coming of the Lord. This may be seen from the story of the wise men from the East, who came to the Lord at His nativity. A star went before them, and they brought with them gifts; gold, frankincense and myrrh. (Matt. 2). For the star which went before them signified knowledge from heaven; gold, celestial good; frankincense, spiritual good; and myrrh, natural good; and from these three all worship proceeds.*



### *Our New Spiritual Leader – Rev. David Moffat*

Something we have all been looking forward to for nearly a year now will be happening very soon! – the arrival of Rev. David and Pam Moffat into our midst with David taking up his role as the Spiritual Leader of The New Church in Victoria. We have been hearing from David through the pages of this Newsletter for several months now, becoming aware of his vision for his future ministry amongst us. We cannot but be encouraged by his enthusiasm and desire to see the influence of New Church teachings spread.

While David's ministry commences on 1 January next, he will be spending the first month in Canberra doing preparatory planning for the period ahead in consultation with the Board. David and Pam will move into rented accommodation in Melbourne at the end of January and then look for a permanent home in the following months. David will conduct his first service as our Spiritual Leader on Sunday 2 February, a family service. The Board hopes that as many members and friends will be able to be there to support David and Pam. Arrangements for a formal induction are under consideration by the Board and David. Full details will be advised in due course.

## News of Events and People

The additional Annual General Meeting for 2019, required following the adoption of a new Constitution at the March 2019 Annual General Meeting, took place after the sacramental morning service, conducted by Rev. John Teed, on 20 October. A short period of silence took place for the memory of long-standing and fondly remembered member, Eva Teed, who had recently passed on into the higher life. The pre-circulated Board Report on activities was received and adopted, as were the Church financial statements as at 30 June 2019. It was decided that despite now having our financial records supervised by a firm of Accountants, they should continue to be audited annually. The current Board of Alexis Jarvis, Neville Jarvis, Karl Robinson, Marika Sivak, with Helmut Lopaczuk as Secretary, was re-elected for the coming year. The meeting expressed sincere appreciation to Klaus Drevermann, who had retired from the Board due to his current ill health, for his participation on the Board over many years and unstinting property maintenance work. Our Secretary spoke on arrangements for the forthcoming arrival of our new Spiritual Leader, Rev. David Moffat, along with his wife, Pam, early in 2020. Neville Jarvis provided a brief pictorial presentation on the building recently purchased plus details of proposed required renovations before it can be properly utilised. We now enter a new period in the life of the New Church in Victoria with considerable optimism. Congratulations go to Sina & David Carter on the birth of Ava, born prematurely at 30 weeks but doing really well, still in hospital. Ava is the well-loved sister to Emily and Alyssa; they are so looking forward to having their new sister at home with them very soon. Elke & Klaus Drevermann are proud grandparents.

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## Diary of Events in December 2019 & January 2020

All activities will take place at Wadham House, 52 Wadham Parade, Mt. Waverley unless otherwise advised.

<b>December</b>	
Sunday 1 10.30am	<b>Advent Family Service</b> led by Neville Jarvis <b>Children's Nativity presentation</b> during the first part of the service after which there will be a craft activity for the children
Sunday 8	No service
Sunday 15 10.30am	<b>Service of Worship</b> led by Karl Robinson with a Christmas theme
Sunday 22	No Mt. Waverley service <b>Ballarat</b> – 318 Fussell Street. Devotional worship led by Judy Robinson commencing 3pm. For more information, phone (03) 53 315 638
Wednesday 25	Christmas Day. No service. Home devotions
Sunday 29	No service
<b>January</b>	
6 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup>	<b>There will be no services of worship during the month</b> New Church Retreat - Nunyara Conference Centre in the Adelaide Hills
<b>Following Month - February</b>	
Sunday 2 10.30am	<b>Family Service</b> led by Rev. David Moffat There will be <b>Bible story time</b> and related activities for the children

### Duty Roster – Mt. Waverley

<i>December 2019:</i>	Sunday 1	Rose & Karl Robinson
	Sunday 15	Alexis & Neville Jarvis
<i>February 2020:</i>	Sunday 2	Marika Sivak

Note: If you are unavailable on the Sunday allocated, please contact another member of the Duty Roster to swap.