

Roseville New Church 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 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.

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Our Second Voice (Excerpted from a talk by Rev. Howard Thompson given at the New Church Retreat 2020)

We all have “that” friend, family member or business colleague. You know the one. The one who regularly sends you links to articles with titles designed to enflame passions and illicit outrage on some hot-button political issue of the day. I know I have one, or two...or three. Several years ago one such person sent me an article with the simple question; “What does your church teach about this?!” I thought for a moment and replied with the only appropriate response I could think of. “My church doesn’t teach anything about that. My church doesn’t focus on WHAT a person should think, but on HOW a person should think.” Of course, such a response was easy when responding to an email. Would I have had such an appropriate response had I been face to face with this person. You see, most of us are aware that what we want to say immediately may not always be the best thing to say. There is often a distinction to be drawn between what we want to say and what we choose to say. A distinction between what we want to do and what we choose to do. It is this “second voice” that I am interested in, because it is this voice that represents our developing conscience. A conscience that develops little by little, decision by decision, throughout a person’s life. As an aid in developing our conscience, in making decisions, the Bible is able to teach us how to make the right decisions every time we are faced with decision-making opportunities. One of the ways it does this is by showing us how people make the wrong decisions, even when they have the opportunity to make right choices. The Bible presents to us various figures who made wrong decisions in their lives. Some of the negative

consequences of these decisions could be put right again, but many of them had irreversible effects that, unless God intervened, would affect more than just the one who made the wrong choice.

Several examples of big decisions made by characters in the Bible:

- Saul's disobedience in victory over the Amalekites
~ 1 Samuel 15
- David's adultery and murder over Bathsheba
~ 2 Samuel 11
- Solomon's wise resolution of a dispute between 2 women ~ 1 Kings 3
- Even Moses was not perfect when he erred at Kadesh
~ Numbers 20

Making decisions, particularly thinking about and reflecting on the decisions you have made, is a vital step in the development of a conscience. Decision making is a learned skill and there are five, generally accepted, simple steps to effective decision making:

1. Identify the problem
2. Generate ideas
3. Evaluate ideas
4. Decide on a solution and try it.
5. Did it work?

Anyone with a basic understanding of the steps of repentance spoken of often by the Lord in the works of Emanuel Swedenborg will recognise the similarities between the steps of repentance and these steps for effective decision making. It is no accident. I'm certain.

Swedenborg on the subject of a person's conscience notes the following: "There exists, between the Lord and the church (or the person of the church) an intervening space. This middle, or intervening space, connects the Lord and the person. What fills this space, what connects the Lord and the person is conscience, the soil in which goodness and truth are planted by means of charity..." *Arcana Coelestia* 1862

As conscience is a "second voice" a person hears on matters of good and evil, Swedenborg also notes that our rationality is connected with our conscience: "As conscience is the intermediate between the Lord and the church in a person...Rationality is the intermediate between the spiritual and the natural person (Apocalypse Explained 846).

Our best opportunity for salvation comes from a cultivation of our conscience. And, the best way to cultivate our conscience is to cultivate our rationality. Our rationality is best cultivated by seeking alignment between our degrees of understanding; natural and spiritual.

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Adelaide New Church Retreat Review



As has been our tradition, New Church people from across Australia gathered in January again for our annual retreat. This year's location was the Nunyara Conference Centre located in the hills south of Adelaide and with an excellent view of the city less than 10km away.

The first challenge for many of those attending, particularly those from NSW, was just getting to Nunyara. Many of those attending drove to the retreat which took them straight through some of the more devastated areas of the fire-ravaged southeast. Fortunately no one put their lives at risk but many reported long stretches of thick smoke, burned out structures and even dead wildlife lining the route. However, once through the worst of it, Adelaide a welcome respite for those in our group who have been suffering through frequent days of choking smoke from the many fires burning around QLD, NSW and VIC. While at Nunyara we only experienced one day of smoke, likely from the fires burning on Kangaroo Island.

Once safely in place at Nunyara the whole crew fell quickly into the retreat routine; breakfast, morning worship, age-specific classes and an all-ages plenary session immediately preceding lunch. Sessions were led by our usual compliment of ministers along with a few special guests including Rev. Ros Taylor, Rev. Jane Seibert (President of the Swedenborg Church of North America) and Rev. Dick Keyworth from New Zealand.

One of the nice aspects of these retreats is that they allow for a different style of presentation and discussion than a typical church worship service. As a result it also opens up different topics to talk about. For example, Dick Keyworth gave a talk about climate change from a doctrinal point of view. One point he was making was that whether you

see climate change as real or not, man-made or just a natural cycle, it is doctrinally sound to be good stewards of the planet. But also that we need to take a good look at ourselves, and instead of focusing on problems external to ourselves, we need to be as vigilant on our own personal “climate” and ecosystem as we would like people to be about our planet.

Julian Duckworth gave a talk about the sense of smell. Now, Julian takes great pride in the fact that he does not use technology in his presentations, so in his quirky style he engaged the audience through a myriad of props to demonstrate how our sense of smell corresponds to spiritual perception.

Todd Beiswenger’s talk was on the dangers of social conformity. The Lord calls us his “chosen people,” but often we just want to be like everybody else. In this presentation we got to see a number of social experiments that demonstrate just how easily we are manipulated by others around us. It was shocking to see how people conformed to the group, even when they knew that the group was wrong.

Howard Thompson gave us a look at the development of conscience and the role of decision making in this process. We desperately need a true conscience from the Lord, but like everything else in our spiritual path, a true conscience comes from a process. See page 1 of the Newsletter for a summary of Howard’s talk.



Jane Siebert gave a talk about Helen Keller, which included a brief history of her life. If you’re not familiar with Helen Keller, she became deaf and blind from an illness at 19 months old.

Her story is one of personal triumph over tragedy, but readers of Swedenborg appreciate that this influential woman described the Writings as “a light in my darkness.” As such, Jane reported that the Convention New Church is setting up a Helen Keller information centre attached

to one of their churches in the US.

Afternoons were noticeably less structured and each day people chose from the various activities including Zumba, creative doodling, a demonstration of how a Logopraxis group runs, a talk on Bush Art and how it can help us see the Divine in nature, and many more talks and activities. And, some times we just sat on the porch and talked.

One of our offered afternoon activities was Choir. This was not drop-in choir, participation required a full commitment to rehearsing every day of the week. But what a reward in the end. 17 attendees stepped up to be part of the choir and, ably led by Rev. Julian Duckworth the choir learned 4 songs including a brand new piece written and arranged by Julian; “Live Your Word.” What a treat for those of us who were not in the choir but I suspect the real joy came to those who were.

Lastly, no camp or retreat can ever happen without the tireless effort of those who volunteer their time to organise the event. Planning for the event usually starts 18 months out, which means that each year we gather at camp, the organising committee has already been working on the next year’s event for 6 months. This includes especially Carolyn Heldon, Chris Kendrick and David Millar (responsible for scheduling and organising the clergy). Thank you!

**Happy New Decade from your friends
at the Swedenborg Centre.**

Following a very enjoyable, refreshing and enlightening week in Adelaide at the annual Family Retreat, we have swung back into the full gamut of discussion topics here at the Centre, covering such wide-ranging subjects as:

- the spiritual basis for fair and ethical government;
- the power of attention;
- The events in Swedenborg’s life when he transitioned from his scientific focus to his spiritual pursuits;
- the overlap between Sri Ramakrishna’s teachings and Swedenborg’s;
- the overlap between Gurdjieff teachings on the Fourth Way and Swedenborg’s (and their unique value);
- C.S. Lewis’ work Mere Christianity (worth reading!);
- Swedenborg’s work Divine Love and Wisdom; and how divine providence plays out in history (exploring the link between the truths of mythology and history, and watching a fascinating recent SBS series which retraced the journeys of Alexander the Great from Greece to India);

And of course some studies of sacred scripture, and the self-examination practices which it naturally leads to, plus some meditations and readings. If you want to participate in any such things, simply come along or drop in for a chat and a coffee.

There was a recent Saturday night presentation in Roseville by Dr Michael Popplewell of the Healing Aspects of Prayer. For other upcoming events visit the website at www.swedenborg.com.au.

A more regular program commences from February onwards, as follows:



Second Tuesdays of each month will be open discussion days, starting with **Tuesday, 11th February 2020**. Join us on the 11th, 3pm and 7pm, as we host well-known Sydney photographer Tim Hixson at the Centre. He will be there to share ideas around his latest work "Build a Boat," a body of work which expresses Tim's experience and approach to using faith and prayer to recover from a significant health scare.

We are currently working on the programming for our regular **fourth Friday gatherings**. Please contact us if you're interested in helping on the team who create the annual program of Swedenborg Association topics and speakers.

The "Swedenborg Saturdays" – a celebration of the works and teachings of Swedenborg – will continue to be held on the **second Saturday** of each month. The next meeting being on Saturday, 8th February from 10am until noon. Come to share in the appreciation for Swedenborg and his writings over plenty of free coffee and biscuits. Bring your ideas, questions, observations, or a reading to share.

Also on every second Friday of each month, there will be a reading of the work of Dr Philip Groves (which is very much based on Swedenborg with some Fourth Way practical material added). These reading and discussion sessions will be from **2pm-4pm**, starting **Friday, February 14th, 2020**. Anyone is welcome to come and join in.

Lastly, we will be migrating and rebuilding the website at www.swedenborg.com.au to a new platform, so if you have any input regarding our website, or some useful user experiences, or simply ideas and suggestions about it, please let us know while we're planning this transition (we're aiming to have it completed in May, 2020).

Thank you all for your kind and generous support of all these activities. We wish you a wonderful month!

Joe

Sermon Summary **“Joy Beyond Christmas”**

The Sunday closest to the New Year is often used as an opportunity to preach on repentance, atonement or life change. There is, however, a trap to this approach. Such a look often focuses on the negative; what’s wrong with me? what needs to be fixed? Where have I failed to follow the Lord. A bit of a downer, when you think of it.

This year I thought a look ‘beyond’ was in order. A look to the heavenly joy that awaits us when we move beyond many of the natural delights just experienced at Christmas and indulged in on New Year’s Eve. The scriptural vehicle I choose to do this is the story of the Children of Israel’s journey from slavery in Egypt to a heavenly existence in the land of Canaan.

The children of Israel had been led out of the horrible circumstance of slavery in Egypt. They were on their way to a land of their own where they would be free. Of course this journey had only started when they began to complain. But every time they complained the Lord gave them just what they needed (food, water, protection). And yet, still, to the very end of their journey they continued to complain.

None of us are really any different than the Children of Israel. We all want to be satisfied now, to be fed, to have plenty of water and to be safe. In fact, most of the time, we are far more concerned with what we need now than with some promised future. When it comes to enjoying the delights of now; good food, drink and celebrations, Christmas almost can’t be matched.

By contrast to these natural delights, what does spiritual love or its delights offer? A promise of ‘something’ in the future? Most of us say “I’ll take the joy I can find here and now.” This is our complaining in the wilderness.

The Lord tells of the delights that follow from serving Him and serving others—peace and joy. But these seem, to our natural self, vague and foggy compared to the vivid and tangible delights of the self-gratifying Egypt state. In the teachings for the New Church to be led out of Egypt is to be led out of slavery to our natural desires into the freedom of heavenly love and its delights.

Do we really believe this? Do we know, acknowledge, and understand that our natural loves hold us in bondage, and that in the exercise of spiritual loves alone is freedom? Are we ever really present to the ways our natural delights can hold us in bondage?

Everyone is born into a love of self and the world. But we are told that we must be born again. Our first loves are not heavenly loves. Yet the Lord in a marvellous way bends them to His service and gradually supplants them with love to Himself and to the neighbour.

This bending is not an instantaneous and complete change from earthly to heavenly. Natural loves still exist. The Israelites did not immediately come into the Holy Land. We may enjoy the good things in the world, but there must be the love of use to others to purify our enjoyment of them. At first we give natural delights first place and uses last, but in time this order is reversed, and love to the Lord and the neighbour come first and natural delights become secondary.

AMEN!

Roseville New Church
Harvest Festival Meal

As in years past we will be celebrating the Harvest with a special service followed by a meal in the hall. Keep an eye out for dish sign-ups in the church foyer over the next few weeks. This is also a time all are encouraged to bring fresh fruit and vegetable offerings which we will deliver to our friend at the Salvation Army. Fresh food is always a special treat for those the Salvation Army serves.

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

Rev. Howard A. Thompson
Office Hours: 11:00 am - 4.00 pm
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday
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Pulpit Humour

“There should be a misprint in every order of service.
Only God is perfect.”

Rules for Reverends, Jeremy Fletcher

February

2020

January							March						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2		3	4	5	6	7	8
10.00am Service of Worship Including Holy Supper Rev. Howard A. Thompson		Church Committee 7.30pm - 9.00pm	Meditation 9.30 Bible Study 11.00		Minister's Personal Day		Swedenborg Saturday 10am - 12pm ***** Angel Service 5 p.m.
9		10	11	12	13	14	15
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson			Meditation 9.30 ***** SAA - Tim Hixson "Build a Boat" - 3-7			SAA Dr Philip Groves Reading 2pm-4pm	
16		17	18	19	20	21	22
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson			Meditation 9.30 Bible Study 11.00		Minister's Personal Day		Angel Service 5 p.m.
23		24	25	26	27	28	29
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson 11.30 SSNC AGM			Meditation 9.30		Minister's Personal Day		



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NEW CHURCH**