

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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Don't Give Up, Pick Up **A Message for Lent**



Russian artist Boris Kustodiev's Maslenitsa (1916)

“Maslenitsa” is the Eastern Orthodox Church’s equivalent to Shrove Tuesday

As I am turning my thoughts to the March newsletter I have been seeing several reports and news articles on the upcoming celebration of Carnival, Mardi Gras and Fat Tuesday. More traditionally called Shrove Tuesday, today in many Commonwealth countries the Tuesday before the beginning of Lent is even called “Pancake Day.” Fat Tuesday is the last day of "fat eating" or "gorging" before the fasting period of Lent. This turned my thoughts to the meaning and purpose of Lent.

In many Christian faiths it is traditional to prepare for Easter, the celebration of the Lord’s resurrection from death, by committing to fasting or giving up certain types of luxuries as a form of penance for 6 weeks prior to Easter. This 6 weeks approximates the 40 days of fasting and suffering in the wilderness that the Lord endured while being tempted by the evil one. The suffering we endure in fasting or otherwise withholding ourselves from certain luxuries is meant to bring to our mind the Lord’s suffering and temptations.

While the Lord doesn't call us to fast or otherwise deprive ourselves as a specific religious practice in the same way that He instructs us concerning prayer (Matthew 6:5), He does acknowledge the practice and even encourage the practice but with modification and greater intentionality.

“And when you fast, don't make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.” ~ Matthew 6:16-18

Lenten celebrations today are often preceded by more than a little overindulgence best exemplified by Rio de Janeiro's carnival. Even in everyday conversations you may have heard one or two people commenting on the things they will be denying themselves during the Lenten season and, I'm sure, many people find value in this practice. I have noted, however, that there is often a problem that arises when well thought out spiritual practices reach the level of cultural observations. The problem becomes one of the physical practice being mistaken for the actual spiritual practice. This, the Lord warns us about even in our weekly worship. The Lord teaches that “There is an inner church and there is an outer church. There is inner worship and there is outer worship. What lies within our worship is what determines what kind of worship it is. Outward worship without inner worship is no worship at all. We are engaged in true worship when we are devoted to love and caring—that is, when we are devoted to doing what is good in our daily lives” (New Jerusalem 129).

When what was meant to be a spiritual and internal practice becomes a cultural and external observance then our self-denial takes on a decidedly useless quality. By simply giving ourselves permission to return to our indulgent ways once the “season” passes with little real effect on our spiritual lives we risk making the practice a purely external one. If self-denial should be our focus during Lent then we really should choose something worth giving up, something the absence of which will make a marked improvement in our lives. We should also not make Easter a day to return to our old evils. The joy we seek should not be that of a return to self-indulgence but the joy of deliverance from it. Maybe, instead of looking at what we will give up we should look at what we will pick up. What healthy practice of service in the Lord's kingdom can we begin that will turn Lent into an affirmative observation. Then, when Easter comes, we will be far less likely to return to our old ways as we may just have developed a new love for serving the Lord. Then, maybe

we will hear the words of the Lord: ‘Well done, good and faithful servant...Enter into the joy of your lord’ (Matthew 25:21).

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This Month at the Swedenborg Centre

Here is what is on offer at the Swedenborg Centre in the month ahead.

All events are detailed – with fliers – on the website at www.swedenborg.com.au

For the first Swedenborg Association (SAA) end of month event on the fourth Friday, this month on **28th February** when there will be a **dinner at 6:45pm at Govinda’s** in Darlinghurst. Govinda’s offers a buffet of delicious Indian vegetarian dishes, and this can optionally be followed by watching a film in one of their unique cinemas with comfortable reclining lounges. If you wish to join us, please book for dinner asap by contacting **Michael Chester on 0402691962**. Govinda’s is upstairs at **112 Darlinghurst Road, Darlinghurst, Sydney**. The movie Michael is seeing at 8:30pm is **A Beautiful Day in the Neighbourhood** starring Tom Hanks, about a kind and charitable American childrens TV show host, Mr Rogers.

Other activities lines up at the Centre are the **free Open Discussion** days on the second **Tuesday** of the month on **10th March, starting 2pm and 6pm**.

This is followed by the new event which we launched with success last month at which you can join in to read, hear, and discuss insights from Dr Philip Groves works on the second Friday of each month, namely 13th March, at 2pm and 7pm.

And the monthly chance to bring something to explore from the **Swedenborg** storehouse of ideas is on the “**Second Saturday**” of each month, namely **14th March, 10am until noon** at the Centre. Come to celebrate and explore themes from Swedenborg's writings.

Then comes the **Saturday 21st March talk at 7pm** in the Roseville New Church by **Martine Negro on Spiritual Healing as Work Process**.

Then at **2pm on Sunday, March 29th** at the Roseville New Church there is a special **Shakuhachi bamboo flute concert** by Riley Lee with harpist Cliona Molins. Those who attended this last time might recall what heavenly music that was.

Thanks again for your support of these and other activities that the Centre provides. We wish you another great month! But beware when you see this weather forecast:

Joe



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.

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Visiting Swedenborgians in Australia

Rev. Jane Siebert, President

Swedenborgian Church in North America

(Excerpted from an article published in “The Messenger”)

Since returning in January from a lifetime dream of visiting Australia, many have asked, “How was your trip affected by the fires?” It has been almost a month since my return, and I am still trying to answer that question for myself. I was a three-week US traveler through the states of New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and the capital Canberra. I saw a small part of this 6th largest country in the world. I do not profess to understand what Australians went through and are experiencing as they try to recover from the fires. These are my thoughts and feelings after sharing briefly the fear and anxiety of uncontrolled bush fires that ravaged their country and wondering what this means for the future of the unique and rare wildlife, unparalleled vistas, and relaxed independent life-style of the people. And what lessons we should learn with our Australian friends.

Some of the worst fires were on New Year’s Eve, the night in which time disappeared for me due to the time change, leaving on Dec 30 and arriving Jan 1st. Seventeen hours of travel from Dallas to Sydney and seventeen hours difference in time from my home in Wichita.

I arrived a bit dazed early in the morning on the first day of 2020 to be greeted by Joe Vandermeer, the director of the Swedenborg Center in Sydney. We drove around the progressive and stunning city, viewing sites I remembered from photos during the 2000 Summer Olympics, now clouded with a smoky haze. He shared stories of this city and religious life interspersed with country-wide concerns about the growing fires.

The fires, the smoke and this trip are intertwined in my memories along with brightly colored birds, concern for the kangaroos and koalas, inspiring gum trees (eucalyptus), and wonderful Australians interested in sharing their country, their Swedenborgian heritage and their lives.

I was fortunate to be able to attend the New Church Family Retreat in Adelaide. I was hoping to see some of the landscape from the plane, but it was mostly smoke. The retreat center was nestled in the hills overlooking Adelaide. We only had one smoke scare when the wind changed directions one night, and we awoke with concern. The fire was 20 miles away and no current danger. The views were variable dependent on the wind, and the magpies were known to mimic warning sirens for the fires. The trees and lawn were graced with laughing kookaburra, crimson rosella, cockatoo, pink Galah, myna, and other smaller birds that wouldn't stay still long enough to identify.

The best part of the retreat was conversations with the Swedenborgians gathered from all around Australia and New Zealand as we shared meals, tea, lectures, singing, sitting on the veranda and worship. They asked about retreats and camps in the US and were envious of the numbers of children and youth that are attending. I shared Rev. Sage Cole's video about the proposed Helen Keller Spiritual Life Center, and they were interested in partnering. Many picked up the wrist bands she had sent and commented about their esteem and love of Helen Keller. One woman remembered when Helen came to Australia and visited her Swedenborgian church. Some members talked about their love and interest in Logo Praxis, a type of meditative reading, commitment and sharing of personal insights from the Bible and Swedenborg's Writings. Their church attendance numbers are declining, like here, but they are trying new ways to worship and increase interest in living a spiritual life of use.

Rev. David Maffat, the president of the Australian New Church, took a day to show me around the countryside surrounding the capital, Canberra, looking for kangaroos. We found a mother and her Joey. As we were driving to the government buildings the sky literally opened up and poured rain and hail on us. The rain was appreciated, but the hail took

out his back window and completely smashed the front windshield. We huddled together under a blanket, being pelted with glass and hail, waiting for it to stop. What a way to make a friend for life. It was nearing my time to head to the airport to fly out, so he called a cab and made sure I was on my way before taking care of his demolished car. And this was the week before he and his wife were moving from Canberra to serve the churches of Victoria and live in Melbourne.

This is just a beginning attempt to share this awesome trip as the first president of General Convention to visit the New Church members in Australia, at least that anyone there remembers. The smoke may have dampened some pictures and clouded the views, but it in no way interfered with the discussions, the friendships and the understanding of fellow Swedenborgians living a half a world away. We are all one and connected in more ways than separate us. Thank you, Australia. Please take care of yourself as we all work to take care of our planet.

March Women's Weekend
(still time to participate for Sydney locals)

Women from as far away as Port Macquarie and Canberra and as close as Loftus and Peshurst - and places in-between - will be gathering for fun, inspiration and sisterhood over the weekend of March 6-8. While registration for full-time attendees has closed, day visitors are welcome to join us at our get-away location in Peshurst (not on church grounds, but not too far from it!). We'll have introductions, icebreakers and opening worship on Friday evening; Saturday will include morning worship, instruction/discussion about regeneration and Zentangle (not simultaneously ;)), assembly of birthing kits and a closing meditation; Sunday morning will consist of worship & discussion about the woman at the well (John 4) and lunch out at a restaurant. If you're local and wish to join us for any of this, please contact Jenn (0411 719 754 or jenn@beiswenger.net) for details!

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New Church In Australia Assembly
15th - 17th May, 2020

Notice recently went out to NCIA members and associate members of
the upcoming Assembly to be held in Brisbane.

At this Assembly a major item for discussion is a proposed change to the membership structure of the NCIA. The Board is looking at the future of the organisation and believes there is a need to adapt to align with the changes we are seeing in our environment. The recent dissolution of Societies in Canberra and Perth, decreasing attendance at Sunday services, along with increasing use of online resources are some of the aspects that have been considered by the Board in coming to its recommendation.

Members and associate members who have not received their notice of Assembly are encouraged to contact Kevin Attwater, NCIA Secretary (attwaterk@bigpond.com).

God is One

“You have never heard his voice or seen him face to face”
(John 5:37)

“No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God”
(John 1:18).

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!”
(Deuteronomy 6:4)

**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

Sermon Summary **“The Lord of the Trinity”**

The teachings given for the New Church tell us that it is only through understanding the Trinity can we gain a just idea of God. These teachings go on to say that from our understanding of the Trinity hangs the entire body of theology like a chain hangs from a hook. We are even allotted our place in heaven depending on our idea of God (TCR 163). It is with these teachings in mind that we undertake a series of talks on the nature of the Trinity. Mercifully, it does not appear that the question of a place in heaven hangs on our understanding of the Trinity, only which place in heaven. But this we will look to investigate later.

Most of us can recognise that it is our various loves that fuel our every waking moments and gives us something to strive for in our days and dream of in our nights. In reflecting on love each of us can grasp the idea that the the more specific a love the more heat that it can generate. The Old Testament speaks often of the need to focus this love as it does in this passage from the Book of Joshua:

“If it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” ~ Joshua 24:14,15

It is the need for this focus that, very early in the work *Secrets of Heaven*, Swedenborg notes:

“From this point on, the term Lord is used in only one way: to refer to the Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ; and the name “Lord” is used without any additions.” ~ (*Secrets of Heaven* 14)

The Lord wishes to draw every single person to Himself and it is His continual endeavour with people to accomplish this conjunction. Let’s pause on just that one truth for a moment. The Lord loves you, wishes to draw you to Himself and it is His continual endeavour to accomplish this conjunction.

But love needs to be reciprocal. It is a rather common human experience to find what we believe is a focus of our love only to find that this feeling is not reciprocal. Sometimes when we continue to focus our love in this direction such reciprocity can develop. At the same time, when such reciprocity does not develop, we can experience great sadness and disappointment.

Love must be reciprocal and, while most of us have experienced a time when we seemed to have our love for someone or something not

reciprocated, there is one relationship that absolutely will be reciprocal. Make the Lord the focus of your love and the relationship is immediately reciprocal. Immediately reciprocal because the Lord was loving you all along. We really can not love anything that we do not know.

The Lord came into the world at a time when the God of the Old Testament had become a remote and apparently unloving God. The Lord came into the world so that people may once again believe or have faith in God our Saviour Jesus Christ because this is believing in a God who can be seen, in whom is what cannot be seen. Faith in a God who can be seen—who is both human and divine at the same time—goes deep within us. Although faith is earthly in its form, it is spiritual in its essence.

A modern example of the God who can not be seen can be found in the “spiritual but not religious” movement. People who claim this title “experience” God all around them and look for God in nature. Reducing God in this way can lead a person to worship nature, ultimately worshiping the World. What we are to worship, what we are to love above all else, is the Lord. “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:4,5).

Faith in the Lord God our Saviour is a different kind of faith. Because he is both divine and human, we can turn to him and see him in our thoughts. This is not a faith with no object. It has an object from whom and in whom we have faith. Once we accept this, faith remains.

We are to see that when we worship the Lord as the one God of heaven and earth, that then we can begin to understand also the Lord as God the Creator, God the Redeemer and the God the Holy Spirit (or God in action). Then we are worshiping the one true God. From this place, from knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ we can explore and better understand the proper nature of the Trinity.

AMEN

Lessons: Isaiah 44:6-8, Matthew 22:34-40, True Christianity 81



**Fancy a Mid-Winter Break in
Sunny, Warm, Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania (USA)?**

The General Church of the New Jerusalem will be marking the 250th anniversary of the Lord calling together His disciples, in the spiritual world, and sending them out “to preach the gospel that the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns, and that His kingdom shall be for ages of ages” (True Christian Religion 791). Members and friends of the General Church are invited to gather together in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania 18-21 June, 2020 for the 2020 General Church Retreat.

More information is available at

<http://about.newchurch.org/gc-retreat-2020/>

Pulpit Humour
(No, this is not our latest marketing campaign)



March

2020

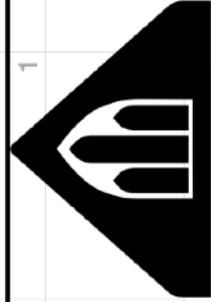
February

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April

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.00am Service of Worship Including Holy Supper Rev. Howard A. Thompson			Minister's Personal Day			
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Harvest Service 10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson 11:30 Harvest Feast	Church Committee 7:30pm - 9:00pm	Meditation 9.30 Bible Study 11.00 S.C. Open Discussion 2pm		Minister's Personal Day		Explore Swedenborg 10am Angel Service 5 pm
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson		Meditation 9.30		Minister's Personal Day		
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson		Meditation 9.30 Bible Study 11.00		Minister's Personal Day		Angel Service 5 pm
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson 2.00pm Shakuhachi Flute Concert		Meditation 9.30		Minister's Personal Day		



ROSEVILLE NEW CHURCH