

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

Swedenborg

The New Church in Victoria Newsletter

June / July 2020

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What does the New Church mean to you?

Whenever I am asked to talk about the church - say, introducing it to a friend, or newcomer for the first time - one of the best ways I can do that is by talking about what it means to me, personally. By that, I mean identifying those teachings which are particularly attractive to me - and why - and those teachings which have been helpful in my own life. That is true for every person in our congregation. There are a couple of reasons why that is useful.

Firstly, whether or not I am an expert in the teachings, I am certainly the only expert in how I relate to those teachings, and no one can tell me I'm wrong! Secondly, those teachings that I relate to most strongly, the ones that I apply to my own life, shine most powerfully through my life and experience. So, it is concerning those ideas that I can speak with both confidence and conviction.

So, what attracted you to New Church teaching? What has helped you make sense of your own life? Perhaps you might feel able to write about it for a future edition of this newsletter, or as a testimony for the website. What follows are my own reflections, but I look forward to hearing yours (*before you read on, I'd encourage you to note yours down*).



The God who Is Love Itself. Our understanding of God is such an important foundation, it pervades our every thought about religion and spirituality. For the New Church, God Is Love. Righteousness and justice are certainly important ideas, but whatever else God is, every aspect is driven by one overriding quality, and that is Love. So I need never fear approaching the Lord. The only thing I have to fear is my own selfhood: “*And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*”

Matthew 10:28 (English Standard Version)

*NOTE - although many translations capitalise, “fear Him”, there is no demand in the Greek that this refers to God at all, certainly not exclusively, and in context it makes sense that some other agency is to be feared, NOT God.)

I understand that this great love is aimed squarely at me, but not only at me (and those like me), but to all His children, everywhere. The Holy Spirit is proclaimed by many Christians to be:

“... present *within all believers*, illuminating their minds to grasp the truth of Scripture, producing in them his fruit, granting to them his gifts, and empowering them for service in the world.” (Scripture Union, NSW, [emphasis mine])

Yet, if the Lord is within me in my present belief, that is only because He was with me BEFORE - in my unbelief - leading me towards that faith which I now enjoy. So, I warm to the idea that God reaches out to all of us, in ways suited to our own cultures and understandings, leading us onward, and I celebrate **the universal possibility of Salvation**. That is not to say that everyone WILL find their way into heaven, but the possibility of heaven is open to all, without compulsion. And this is what the Lord Jesus Christ achieved through his life and death in this world: that he defeated sin and set us all free to reach for that promise.

The Lord's Providence is another important idea for me. Indeed, the book, *Divine Providence*, remains my favourite of all Swedenborg's considerable output. The Lord ever reaches out to us, but always leaves us in freedom (because love cannot compel the beloved). The Lord is constantly leading me towards my greatest potential, even when I am headed in the opposite direction, and he is doing this in the smallest details of my life:

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” Revelation 3:20 (New King James Version - NKJV)

As I was fortunate enough to be raised within the New Church, many of its truths provided a foundation and an anchor for my life experiences. In particular, I found the idea of **influx** both reassuring and grounding. Understanding that we are not our thoughts and feelings, that they do not originate in ourselves, and that they do not in any way define us, is an idea that has come into fashion these days. But as a teenager, long before mindfulness was on everyone's lips, the New Church helped me to set aside many difficult and troubling thoughts which might otherwise have caused me to feel despondent, or to draw false conclusions about myself.

But most of all, I have valued **our church's fearless approach to the truth**. As a young man, I was encouraged to think issues through for myself. When many churches held my peers' intellects in tight reins - proclaiming some answers to be mysteries beyond our understanding, the mere consideration of some questions to be shameful heresies - the New Church set mine free. Think, reason, question, seek for answers. To be sure, I was given a solid foundation, but once I had matured, I was given permission - even encouraged - to roam and explore, and to test the truth. Some of my most challenging questions were explored in theological school without raising an eyebrow, and of course, I discovered that the truth will never disappoint.



“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.” Matthew 7:7-8 (NKJV)

“Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the LORD, And righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, Who seek Your face. Selah” Psalms 24:3-6 (NKJV)

So, that's a little of my journey. I look forward to reading yours.

With every blessing to you all.

David

Rev. David Moffat, Spiritual Leader



Your Journey

Please email your reflections on where your journey has brought you thus far to Rev. David Moffat at david-moffat@grapevine.com.au or mail them to him via PO Box 2224, Mt. Waverley, Vic 3149.

Spiritual Leader's Absence

Rev. David and Pam Moffat will be moving into their new home on Thursday 4 June, the address being 3A Maher Street, Highett VIC 3190. David's phone number and email address will remain unchanged.

David will be away from his 'desk' from 3rd to 12th June inclusive for the move, getting settled in etc. During that time, should any pastoral matters arise for you about which you would normally contact David, please direct them to either Karl Robinson (0417 514 960) or Neville Jarvis (03 8555 9116) who will ensure they are dealt with appropriately. Any urgent administrative matters should be referred to the Church Secretary, Helmut Lopaczuk, on 0409 184 643.

The best wishes of all members and friends of The New Church in Victoria go with David and Pam on this exciting move for them and that much happiness and many blessings will be with them there over the years ahead.



Remembering Margaret Ange Parker (9th December, 1922 to 3rd April, 2020)

Margaret was a Sydney girl, the third child of William and Annie Burl. She met Eric when he was serving in the Army in Sydney. They were married on 3rd May, 1947 with Margaret's father, being the Leader of the Sydney Society, officiating. They moved to Melbourne and built a house in Highett where they lived for a number of years before moving to the Forest Hills area.

Margaret and Eric had three children – Geoff, Christine and Helen. Sadly, Christine passed on at 29 due to a heart condition. They will be joyfully reunited now as she will be with Eric. She had 4 grandchildren and 1 great grandchild.



Margaret was a stalwart of the Melbourne Church and attended every Sunday except when she and Eric were away on their travels – an activity they thoroughly enjoyed. Margaret had a lovely soprano voice and would sing in a quartet for special Church services. She played the organ for a number of years and later would fill in when the regular organist was unavailable. She served as Secretary of the Church and was involved with the Women's League, always being available to help out at the Church Fete and on the duty roster.

Outside of Church activities Margaret was a member of the Maroondah Singers for many years and sang in the Myer Music Bowl at *Carols by Candlelight*. She belonged to the Girl Guides Association and ran Brownies and Guides and held other positions. At different times she was a member of other clubs often helping to run them. Margaret was an avid reader and enjoyed solving Crossword puzzles.

She will be missed by all who knew her and enjoyed her company.

Alexis Jarvis



June 1770 ~ 250 Years Ago

1770 saw the birth of several 'giants' in their particular fields such as William Wordsworth and Ludwig van Beethoven. However, so far as world events occurring that year, a Google search only disclosed one, very relevant to Australia, that continues to be regularly recalled. This is Captain James Cook's voyage in the southern oceans, discovering New Zealand and our own east coast. In June 1770, the voyage nearly came to a disastrous end when HM Bark *Endeavour* struck a section of the Great Barrier Reef, requiring months of painstaking repairs. Major events were planned to recognise the 250th anniversary of Captain Cook's journey south, including exhibitions and a re-enactment of the voyage using a replica. Sadly, COVID-19 has curtailed them.

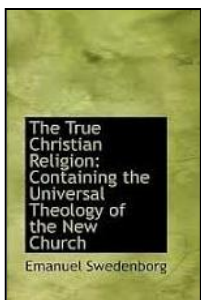


Yet something else happened in June 1770 which was far more momentous for all humankind, and 250 years later, remains largely unrecognised. It was witnessed by just one person in this world, who made it known the following year when the book in Latin, *Vera Christiana Religio*, was published. The English edition is titled *True Christian Religion* or *True Christianity*. Its author was Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), who called himself 'Servant of the Lord Jesus Christ', a position to which we would all aspire.



The particular section in the book relating this event was covered by the four sentences of paragraph 791:

After this work was finished, the Lord called together the twelve disciples who followed him in the world. The next day he sent all of them out to the entire spiritual world to preach the gospel that the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns and that his kingdom will last for ages of ages, as foretold by Daniel (Daniel 7:13, 14) and by the Book of Revelation (Revelation 11:15); also that "people who come to the wedding feast of the Lamb are blessed" (Revelation 19:9). This occurred on June 19, 1770. This is what the Lord was referring to when he said, "He will send out his angels, and they will gather his chosen people from one end of the heavens to the other" (Matthew 24:31).



This paragraph is essentially a postscript to the book's final chapter, headed *The Close of the Age; the Coming of the Lord; and the New Church*. The chapter begins by explaining that at that time the Christian era had in spiritual terms come to an end. Essentially, this was because the message of love and kindness brought by Jesus at his coming into the world, replacing the Judaic requirement of total observance of their entrenched laws and traditions, had itself been gradually replaced by self-love, greed and inhumanity in the Christian world. In a similar way to what had happened in the period leading up to the Lord's incarnation, by 1770 genuine goodness no longer existed, and all divine truth had either been falsified or rejected. An almost total disconnect between people and their God was the result - the end of the age as foretold by Christ in passages such as Matthew 24:3. It was essential for the eternal welfare of humankind that this connection be restored.

Swedenborg goes on to show that it could not be achieved by the return of the Lord in person as at his first coming; the purpose of the incarnation had been achieved for all time. This promised second coming could only be accomplished by a new revelation of the genuine truth contained within the literal text of The Word, that is, its spiritual sense. Swedenborg claimed he was chosen by the Lord as the instrument to reveal this truth via the written word, which he did in the series of books we have today. It is a claim we are free to accept or reject; as is ever the case, the Lord leaves his people in freedom to make up their own minds on matters of faith.

For the New Church, June 19, 1770 marks the commencement of a new relationship between the Lord God and his people, a new spiritual era for humankind. It is not the date when our New Church organisation began; that came several years later.

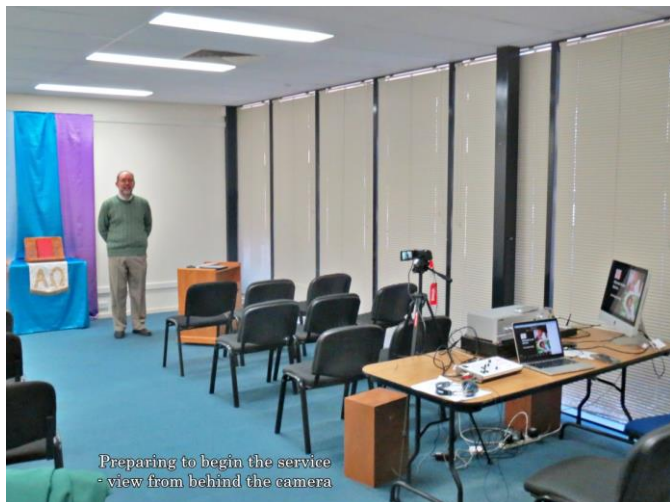
This can be only a brief overview of the importance to us of a date we celebrate each year - 'New Church Day' - and this year is its 250th anniversary. Should you have a copy of Swedenborg's *True Christian Religion/True Christianity* on your bookshelf, I would encourage you to spend time reflecting on paragraphs 753 to 791. It is the crux of why our Church organisation exists. You can also read them online by clicking on the link:

https://swedenborg.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/NCE_TrueChristianity2_portable.pdf
Alternatively, contact me (see front page) so that the text can be provided.

A Challenge. While this event took place in the spiritual world, it undoubtedly has implications for life at our worldly level of existence. We can look at the world today and sadly see the continuation of what was occurring prior to 1770 - wars, strife, greed, inhumanity, and the like. On the other hand, can you find positive changes in society and individual lives resulting from this new revelation of truth provided by the Lord? Your contribution up to 100 words for publishing in the next Newsletter would be welcomed.

Neville Jarvis

Live Streaming Services & Discussion Sessions



Live streaming began on Palm Sunday, 5 April and by the end May, worship services or discussion sessions will have been 'Zoomed' on nine Sunday mornings. This has been achieved through the technological expertise of our Spiritual Leader, assisted by his son Alex Moffat. Those members and friends who have been able to join these occasions have greatly appreciated being able to do so. The Church has had to acquire some equipment to enable the broadcasting to occur; more will be required to enhance production aspects and make the whole process easier to manage. Volunteers will be needed in future to be part of a team

to manage the equipment while live-streaming takes place. Speak with Rev. David Moffat should you be interested in assisting in that way.

There have been occasional issues with the loss of the picture, the video 'freezing' and the like which are being attended to. The number of active screens over the period has averaged between 20 and 25 with some involving more than one participant. The highest number of participants occurred on Sunday 17 May when we know there were at least 42 present. While the majority have been in Melbourne metropolitan areas, there have been participants living further afield including Ballarat, Bendigo, Maryborough and even Canberra, Port Macquarie, Brisbane and Perth, a wonderful coming together of New Church friends and members. Bible study sessions have also been held fortnightly on Monday evenings via Zoom and the Church Board has met twice using this same facility.

All this is pointing to one way for everyone to maintain good contact and meet new people throughout the State interested in our Church teachings.



Church Giving



With services being suspended for the time being due to COVID-19 restrictions, the Church Board is providing a straightforward method for those with Internet access wishing to continue to make freewill offerings. All that is required is to click on this link and follow a few steps:

<https://donorbox.org/new-church-victoria>

You will receive a receipt via email for your contribution. For members and friends without Internet access, a cheque payable to 'The New Church in Victoria' can still be forwarded to the Church via our Post Office box – PO Box 2224, Mt. Waverley 3149.

Even through this period of the pandemic, as it will in increasing ways after restrictions are lifted, the work of the Church throughout Victoria has continued and will do so in increasing ways under the leadership of Rev. David Moffat. Contributions towards maintaining activities and implementing ways to spread the knowledge of the teachings we hold precious to the wider community will always be much appreciated.



News of People

As referred to earlier in this Newsletter, Margaret Parker passed into the higher life on 3 April. Margaret contributed so much in so many ways during her long life for which those who knew her will remain eternally grateful. It was delightful to have Margaret, and daughter Helen, with us at the Induction service for Rev. David Moffat in February, a lovely memory for those present that day.

With Margaret's passing on during the coronavirus restrictions, it was not possible to hold a memorial service at the time. The family intends holding one when restrictions are sufficiently lifted; members and friends will be advised of details accordingly.

We have also learned of the passing on of Claire French on 13 April, aged 95. Claire attended Swedenborg meetings in days gone by and occasionally attended Church services. The Swiss psychologist and psychoanalyst, Carl Jung, was a particular interest for Claire and for many years she ran regular classes at her home as well as giving talks on his philosophy. Qualified in the Arts and Philosophy, Claire enjoyed cooking, catching up with her 'children' and friends.

"I admire Swedenborg as a great scientist and a great mystic at the same time. His life and work has always been of great interest to me and I read about seven fat volumes of his writings when I was a medical student". **Carl Jung**

Events in June & July 2020

With COVID-19 requirements continuing to restrict gatherings, Sunday morning activities and Bible study sessions will continue utilizing the Zoom facility. Where email addresses are available, separate advice will be forwarded detailing each occasion. If you have an email address but have not been receiving the regular notifications, please advise the Spiritual Leader so that you can be added to the circulation list.

Please Note: Rev. David Moffat has elected to take Tuesdays as his day away from Church responsibilities. Other than when circumstances are exceptional, you are requested to hold back from making contact on Church matters on Tuesdays.

Rain

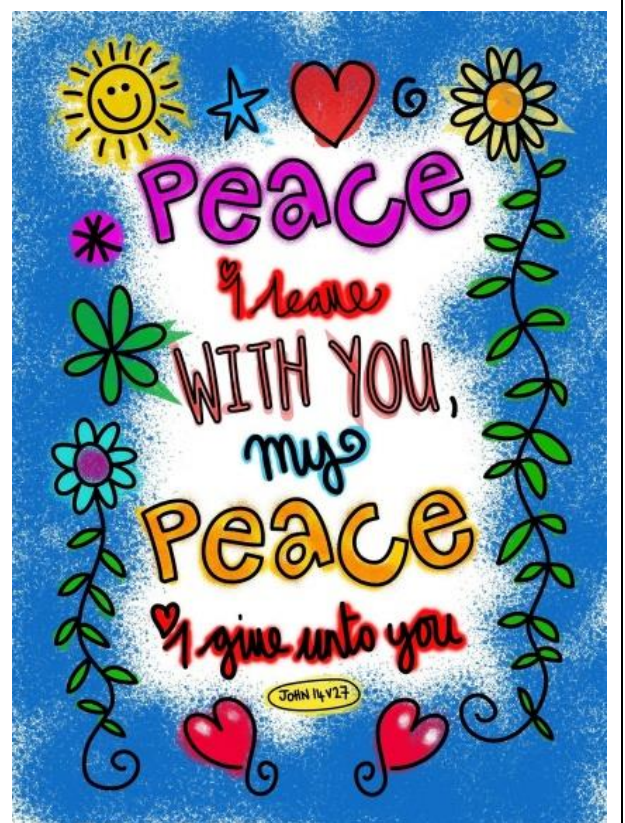


"Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. Let my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distil as the dew, as raindrops on the tender herb, and as showers on the grass". Deuteronomy 32:1,2

In the Bible water corresponds to truth, and rain corresponds to truth falling from the spiritual skies of the Lord's Word. When rain falls on the earth it comes together and forms pools of water; and when truth falls into our minds it forms pools of truth, which we call teaching or doctrine. Therefore, the words of the Lord, and His doctrine, are said to drop as the rain.

Lord, give me understanding and I will keep your law; yes, I will observe it with my whole heart. Amen

From 'Daily Readings from The Word' by Reg Lang



AN APPEAL!

NO ~ not for money or even physical help. **NO**, to make this Newsletter your own.

Please think about making a contribution which demonstrates to you something of God's creative love at work to share with other readers - writing a piece related to an experience in your life, a significant event, a favourite quote, a photo etc. They can be emailed to Neville Jarvis or phone to arrange for them to be obtained (see front page for contact details).

