

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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CANCELLED!!

The Roseville New Church is following the COVID-19 (coronavirus) advice from the NSW Government and, until advised otherwise, all services are cancelled.

CANCELLED!!

Roseville Services Update

During the period that church will be closed we will be delivering online content to aid you all with home-worship. As we have not historically had live feeds of our services I have created a YouTube channel, "Spiritual Shorts." If you are on Facebook or receive this newsletter electronically, You may already have seen some of this content. For those who have not I have included an article in this newsletter explaining this new mode of delivering spiritual content. ~ Howard

Time is Relative

WOW! Am I ever present to that these days. I must begin this newsletter with an apology. Time, you see, has gotten away from me. While I haven't really been here as minister of the Roseville New Church for long, I have been here long enough to fall into a nice pattern of Newsletter production. But the situation we all find ourselves in now has caught me out. Last week, as the various newsletters from societies and groups around Australia started hitting my inbox and my post box, I realised that I had forgotten my own newsletter. So, appropriately, I am starting this month's newsletter with an apology and a reflection on time.

Who among us can not relate to the experience of "time flying," particularly when we are doing something we thoroughly enjoy? And the opposite, time seemingly proceeding at snail's pace when we are bored, or waiting in anticipation of something exciting. And we all know how interminably long the kettle takes to boil...when we are watching it.

Take a few minutes to think of how things have been going for you these past 5 weeks. How have you experienced the passage of time? Do you find yourself thinking, as I have, "I'll have plenty of time for...?" Do you find your sleep patterns have changed, that you wake at odd hours or find yourself feeling sleepy at odd hours?

Emanuel Swedenborg, in his work "Secrets of Heaven" (#487) notes that references to time in the Word "symbolize the nature of states...in other words, they symbolize the specific states." A clear and obvious example of this is the number 40. Swedenborg notes that the number 40 represents temptations. But to clarify, when 40 is referenced in the Word it is referencing "the" time temptations last not "a specific" time temptations last. Because it is the change of state that occurs, not the passage of time. It is interesting to note that we recently passed 40 days since our NSW government instituted strict social distancing rules which included prohibitions against church services. I don't know about you but I have certainly experienced what I would refer to as states of temptation in the last 40 days and I certainly expect that to continue until our lives begin to return to some semblance of normal.

So, welcome to May and the (slightly delayed) May Newsletter. For the second month in a row I have not included a calendar but I do look forward to the day that I can.

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Happy Mothers Day

May 10th, across Australia, people will be celebrating Mothers Day. And it will certainly be a Mothers Day to remember. Mothers Day 2020 will likely be remembered for the celebrations that won't happen as much as for those that will happen. But the last months, particularly the weeks of isolation have

given me many opportunities to reflect on my mother. My mother certainly passed on to me my love of cooking. As a friend once noted; "I see Howard, cooking is how you show people you love them." His statement would certainly have applied to my mother. My mother also passed on to me her love of the home, of being at home and of having that home filled with her family. My sister and I still laugh every once in a while when reflecting on how much our mother loved "snow days," those days in the higher latitudes when so much snow falls that schools are cancelled. My mother would relish the opportunity to head to the kitchen and prepare a full breakfast for us kids, then send us out to play in the snow for hours. When we returned for some much needed warmth and dry clothes she was always there to greet us with hot chocolate and a hot lunch, fuel for the afternoon of outdoor activities. It's a lot greener and a bit warmer here in Roseville, but the snow day analogy is a good one for our current situation. My mother was far from perfect and certainly had her battles to fight but today all I can think of is the good, the love, she shared with her children. I am including in this newsletter a sermon on the 4th Commandment which looks at the question of how we honour our fathers and mothers in a world where we are all far from perfect.

For those of you who are, or who serve the role of, mothers, Happy Mothers Day.



Some flowers captured on recent walks around Roseville. My Mothers Day Offering for all of you.

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Swedenborg Centre Update

Joe is very busy and says simply, "check the website, it has all of our scheduled activities there."

<http://www.swedenborg.com.au/meetings>

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Spiritual Shorts

When we were rather abruptly forced to close our doors and no longer permitted to hold public services I was asked to come up with an alternative

method for delivering services and spiritual content to our congregation. This I have accomplished though maybe not as other churches and ministers have done. That being the case I thought I would share with you some of the background on the launching of my YouTube channel, Spiritual Shorts. For several years I have been incubating the idea of a YouTube channel that delivered spiritual content. By “incubating” I mean watching other YouTube channels, making lists of subjects I would like to cover and even designs for a studio. Upon arriving in



Roseville I began a dialogue with our marketing guru, Joel Duckworth who has been very gently guided me in the direction of creating online video content. But I must admit that I have had a bit of an approach-avoidance conflict with the whole idea of offering online content. In other words, I have wanted to start one, have been making many notes and plans for both the physical studio and the type of content, and at the same time I have been hesitant to actually do it. I'm not certain as to why I have been hesitant, probably some deep-seated and unresolved self-esteem issue. But here I am, I've started.

You can find Spiritual Shorts on YouTube at this address:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsrICJGeGmrnXVawn_Y7UQA

Before you head over there, some additional background may be helpful. When first viewing one of my videos you may note that the logo and the intro music may not be what one would expect from a ministers YouTube channel. There is a reason for this. I feel it important that the branding of the channel reflect who I am, not adhere to someone else's idea of what it should be. I wear Hawaiian shirts, always have, even before moving to Australia where they are a bit more the norm. I also wear shorts, most days of the year since I moved to Australia. So the name is a pun; “short” videos by a guy who lives in Australia and usually wears “shorts.” Long term I want the channel to provide more than just online worship. I'm sincere in the introduction of my videos when I say that Spiritual Shorts are "5-10 minute videos on faith and life from a uniquely Swedenborgian perspective." While I plan to release videos to support home worship I also plan to release more casual videos on how faith should be showing up in a person's life. Hence the tone and branding of the channel is specifically designed to capture both my own natural and spiritual sides.

In the last 6 weeks I have produced 11 videos, 7 to support home-worship (including Good Friday Holy Supper) and 4 less formal spiritual reflections. I

even did one episode on how to make Holy Supper bread recognising most of us would be celebrating Good Friday in our homes. The learning curve is steep, I think you will note a significant fluctuation in sound quality in the first few videos. I think we finally have a good solution on sound now and episodes 10 and 11 are much better. So, tune in, click like and click subscribe.

One last thought. They may say you can't teach an old dog new tricks but I truly believe that the way to avoid becoming an old dog is to continue to learn new tricks. WOOF-WOOF!

A Heavenly Inheritance; A Mothers Day Reflection on the Fourth Commandment

Anyone who studies the Ten Commandments knows that when they were given to Moses by God in Exodus that they were written on two tablets of stone. We find ourselves today at a transition point in our study of the Ten Commandments. This transition is both physical; from the first tablet to the second tablet, and spiritual from how we are to love the Lord to how we are to love the neighbour.

True Christianity (456) teaches that The union of the two tablets shows the connection between loving God and loving our neighbour. The first tablet covers all aspects of loving God and appropriately so as unless a person loves God first they can not truly have love for anything outside of themselves.

The second tablet covers all aspects of loving our neighbour. We will even see in the weeks to come that those Commandments of the second tablet themselves are broken into two groups those of what we are to "do" towards the neighbour and how we are to "think" towards the neighbour.

Finally, concerning the two tablets True Christianity goes on to show that with people who have genuine goodwill the two tablets are connected.

It is the fourth Commandment that connects the two physical tablets and it should also, in many ways, be the fourth Commandment that connects the two tablets in our hearts.

From Exodus 20:12

"Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you."

My dictionary tells me that "to honour" means to "hold in great respect, to admire, to defer to, to appreciate and to value." As transitions go this commandment immediately challenges us. Think about it, the only thing we know of God is what we are taught about him in His Word, at church and from other people. God, for most of us, really only exists in our minds. In this sense our idea of God can be quite nice, idealised, even perfect. But our parents, our natural parents and those people we look to as parent figures, do

not exist only in our minds. Our parents exist in this world. Even if a parent is absent their existence is one of absence. Ideally we would want every child to grow up with both a mother and a father they could love and respect. Parents who could nurture them in their childhood, support them as they move into adulthood and provide wise guidance to as they bring their own children into the world. But this idealised view of parenthood is not the reality of most of us today and, honestly, hasn't been the reality for many for generations.

Quite possibly, that is the key point to be understood in the Commandment, the key point to be understood in our lives; that we are not perfect, that nothing about our natural lives is in reality idealised. And yet, still, we are to honour (to love and respect) our parent figures.

Making this Commandment easier to follow than it may appear, the Lord, in His infinite mercy, has also hard-wired us to love those who provide for our care and protection. For most children, particularly young children, have any sense of the biology of parenthood, all a child knows is that the person or people they can count on for nurturing are, for all intents and purposes, their parent. We can see this in the simple example of children whose lives may not have been ideal by our standards still having a deep love for the one they call their parent in spite of any evidence to the contrary that their "parent" was anything but an ideal parent.

So the Lord wants each of us to know the love of a parent as knowing this love prepares us for the heavenly life. Or as the Commandments says; "that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you."

This Commandment when fully understood teaches us that the father and mother we are to honour are more than the man and woman who made us genetically. The father and mother we are to honour are first those who served the role of father and mother in our childhood, those who provided for us, nourished us and protected us. The Commandment also teaches that the country we live in is to be loved as our father which is why people refer to their country as their "fatherland." This is because our country, or the wider community we live in, nurtures and provides for us much like a parent does. Our country does many things for us that we cannot do for ourselves, just as fathers and mothers do or did for us in our homes.

And, of course, as children loving our father and mother, those who serve the roles of nurturing like a father and mother and our country is a very natural preparation for loving our ultimate father, God the Father. In our prayer today we said, "Our Father, Who art in the heavens." We do this because all of us are His children. Even all the angels are His children. They, too, call Him their "Heavenly Father."

True Christianity teaches that we have also a "Heavenly Mother," that the Church is our "Heavenly Mother" because the Church nurtures us with

spiritual food like our natural mother nurtures us with natural food. The Lord Himself calls the Church His Bride and Wife.

“Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband...and the seven angels spoke to me saying “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God...” ~ Revelation 21:2, 9, 10)

The Lord says that it the Church is the “Mother” of all who learn from her the wonderful things taught in the Word.

So the Lord’s Commandment, “Honour your father and your mother,” means that we are to love our parents, the father and mother figures in our lives. We are also to love our country. And above all, we are to respect and love the Lord’s Church and the Lord Himself.

If we keep this Commandment the Lord promises that our days will “be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.” By this are meant two important aspect of how the Lord functions in our lives. If we keep the Commandments we will experience living in a heavenly state (represented by “the land”) and when living in a heavenly state the Lord flows more freely into us vivifying us more and more with life from Himself (represented by the phrase “which the Lord your God is giving you”). For we shall become angels and live happily in His kingdom of heaven.

Now, I started this talk with an acknowledgement that the Fourth Commandment immediately challenges us because of the very natural state of many of our lives. This acknowledgment is an important one in understanding a different way in which we can honour our father and mother. You see, when reflecting on the less-than-perfect aspects of those who are our father and mother it is important to acknowledge what the Writings identify as hereditary evil. Those evils that we are inclined to for no other reason than our parents were inclined to the same evils.

There may be several aspects of our parent’s lives that we find hard to honour, to love and respect, but often when we reflect negatively on these aspects of their lives we ignore our own inclination to the same evils or failings. A child raised by an alcoholic parent may, as an adult, condemn the memory of that parent while ignoring their own inclination to addictive behaviour. Child whose parent was absent may condemn the memory of that parent while ignoring their own inclination to be absent in other (non-physical) ways in their the lives of their own children.

Inspiration for a different way to hold the memory of our own, natural and imperfect parents comes from these words from the Book of 2 Timothy. I saw these words inscribed on a headstone of a British soldier at the Imperial War Cemetery in Bayeux, France:

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (2 Timothy 4:7)

We honour our father and our mother by continuing their fight. We honour our parents by keeping the Commandments and fighting the good fight against our lesser nature and, in turn, reducing the likelihood our children and our children’s children will have as difficult a battle before them. And that is one inheritance that no amount of money can give them; a heavenly inheritance.

AMEN!

Lessons: Exodus 20, Matthew 12:46-50, NJHD 70

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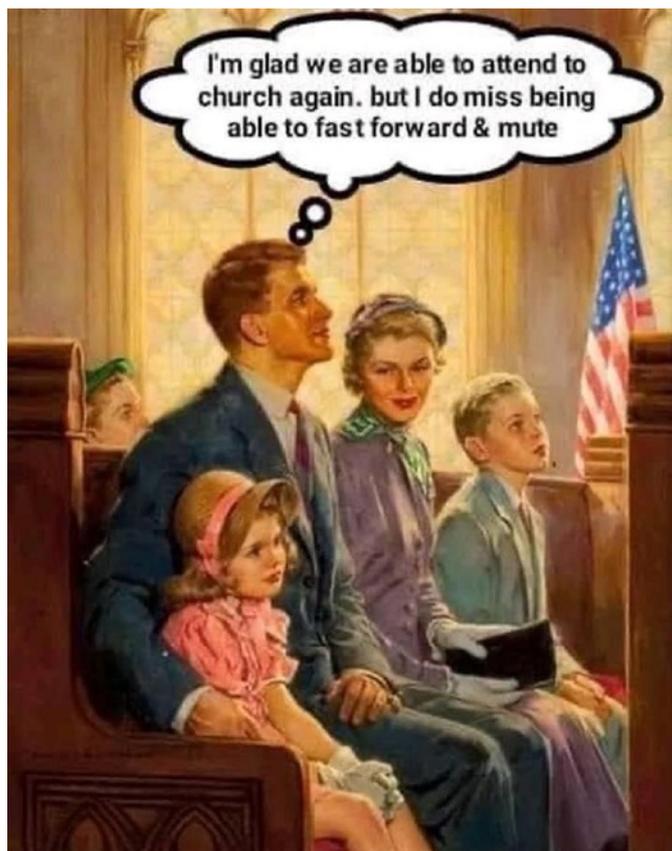
Online Giving

Some people have asked if there is a way to continue to make offerings to the church in the absence of weekly church attendance. For some who may not be effected economically by the current situation we do have a “donor box” online:

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

If you enjoyed the piece on Spiritual Shorts earlier in the Newsletter then I am certain you will appreciate this:

Pulpit Humour



Holy Supper Bread Recipe

Ingredients

1 cup unbleached, sifted flour

1/3 cup olive oil

1/2 teaspoon salt

5 teaspoons water

Method

Mix all ingredients to form a non-sticky dough.

(If too dry and doesn't hold together add tiny amounts of water until it does. Be careful, too much water will make bread dense and hard.)

Roll dough between two sheets of baking or wax paper (to 4mm thickness) and cut into circles using round cookie cutter or glass 5-8cm in diameter.

Bake on cookie sheet at 175c for 18-20 minutes.

I like to add a sprinkle of fresh ground salt just out of the oven.



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