

“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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Synesthesia, the Savant, and Swedenborg

During my time teaching piano, I was privileged to work with a number of gifted young individuals. One young boy, Noah, began lessons with me in his early years of primary school, at age six or seven. His mother, also a keen pianist, had spent the previous year teaching Noah the basics at home. Being an enthusiastic student, he progressed quickly, encouraged by his mother's careful and expert practice supervision.



A couple of years after lessons began, I entered Noah for his first piano exam, and he quickly showed an unusual aptitude for aural tests (listening tests). Now these tests are not easy: for example, naming the interval (difference in pitch) between two notes played by the examiner; hearing two (or three) notes playing together and being able to pick out only one of them to sing; singing a melody after hearing it only twice; singing one of two short melodies played simultaneously. By the time Noah concluded piano lessons in year 10, he had completed Grade 6, having recorded only a handful of mistakes in the Aural section of his exams throughout that time. Every single error involved rhythm, never melody or pitch.

It was a few years before we discovered his secret. Noah exhibited the rare condition called Synesthesia, “. . . in which stimulation of one sensory or cognitive pathway leads to involuntary experiences in a second sensory or cognitive pathway.”

(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synesthesia>): in short, Noah could hear in colour.

Even more rare, is the Savant: a person, often “. . . with significant mental disabilities, who demonstrates certain abilities far in excess of average.” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Savant_syndrome)

$$\frac{-12 \pm \sqrt{(-12)^2 - 4(9)(13)}}{2(9)} = ?$$

The researcher and writer, Colin Wilson, in his book, *The Occult*, describes individuals with the ability to answer complex mathematical equations almost

instantaneously, and with seemingly little effort. Where most of us might have a one-dimensional, linear relationship with numbers (we learn them one at a time, in sequence, and require a great effort to perform a mental calculation), Wilson describes how the savant “hovers” above the field of all numbers, not so much calculating as perceiving the answers to mathematical problems, as though watching a traveller on a road on the landscape below them.

Then, we have Swedenborg, and his view of Scriptures. As you read his works - especially books like, *Heavenly Secrets* and *Apocalypse Explained* here, which expound the inner meaning of the Bible - he draws insights which can seem utterly bewildering at times, sublime at others, and far from the simplistic notions we ourselves entertain when reading the same text. Yet, as you read patiently through his work, the logic of his descriptions just makes sense, and from time to time I have heard similar insights glimpsed by preachers here or there. These examples represent entirely different ways of perceiving the world. Yet my student Noah had no inkling that he was unusual or special. He thought that everyone hears music as he does, until the day a chance comment revealed the difference between his own experience and that of his mother. Hearing in colour was his norm: what reason had he to suspect that anyone else was different?

Aren't we just the same? The unspoken assumption most of us walk around with is that everyone sees the world in the same colours and hues as we do ourselves, witnessing the same events from the same perspective, and that we should therefore draw the same conclusions. We cannot experience the world through the eyes and ears of others, and we rely solely upon their testimony to see it any differently. So, this is entirely understandable. But it is not a mature way of looking at the world, nor does it lead to greater wisdom.

All too often, our first reaction upon hearing the views of another is one of judgement: are *they* right or wrong? We unquestioningly accept our own beliefs, based upon our perceptions of the world, and use them as the yardstick of truth. When something challenges those beliefs, we typically retreat into a defensive (or offensive) position, whose sole aim is to protect those perceptions. But such an attitude is fruitless. It's far better to hear another's perspective and allow that to supplement the experiences which led to the conclusions you currently hold. You may not change your mind, but in that case you will have strengthened your position, not weakened it.

True religion and true science both begin from an attitude of wonder, and learning. Only when they succumb to entrenched positions do they come into conflict. Swedenborg's work, as wonderful and insightful as it is, points out that we cannot know it all! The Divine will always be beyond our intellectual reach. So, the only reasonable position for us to take is one of humility, searching for the truth. My beliefs will always fall short, so there will always be room for the thoughts and opinions of others.

I will leave you with a few passages from the Word. May we all strive to be teachable first, rather than right. In that way, we may come closer to the truth.

*Show me Your ways, O Lord;
Teach me Your paths.
Lead me in Your truth and teach me,
For You are the God of my salvation;
On You I wait all the day.*
(Psalm 25:4,5)

*Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge,
But he who hates correction is stupid.*
(Proverbs 12:1)

With every blessing to you all.

David

Rev. David Moffat
Spiritual Leader

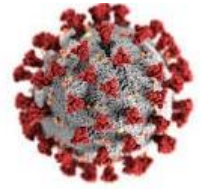
Something Worthwhile Remembering

Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day. It is a choice based on the knowledge that we belong to God and have found in God our refuge and our safety and that nothing, not even death, can take God away from us. Joy is the experience of knowing that you are unconditionally loved and that nothing – sickness, failure, emotional distress, oppression, war or even death – can take that love away.

**Henri Nouwen
(Dutch Catholic Priest & Theologian)**

One Day at a Time

After coming through a period with significant restrictions on everyday activities and the expectation that life would slowly revert to pre-Covid-19 conditions, we find them re-imposed here in Victoria. This is particularly so in Melbourne and a few surrounding Shires where restrictions are even more stringent in the second wave with a concerning number of cases detected each day. As we head towards the end of July, we are well into the announced 6-week 'lockdown' although many commentators are anticipating this timeframe will have to be extended. Having completed a spring-clean of the house, completed an inventory of household items needed or worthwhile keeping and disposing of unwanted items, and getting the garden in good order, for many this new period is more challenging in finding things to do within the confines of their homes.



Personally, I am grateful to our Australian politicians and those in responsible positions for having taken many obviously difficult decisions, generally under considerable pressure, for the health and economic welfare of all. Yes, looking back, mistakes may have been made and some issues perhaps better handled; hindsight is a wonderful 'tool' if used to learn from but not for 'finger-pointing'. Like everyone, I am sure, I am also most grateful for those health workers who, day upon day, continue to look after those in their care, putting their own welfare at risk of infection from the harmful virus. And this appreciation is extended to those enforcing restrictions, educators in face-to-face contact with students, etc.

We all will be approaching this abnormal period in our lives from our own perspective and learning from it. Naturally, the direct contact with some family members and friends, plus activities normally involved in, are missed. For those fortunate to have access to modern technology, Skype, Zoom, etc. are really beneficial, albeit no substitute for the real thing. As for myself, I count my blessings that being retired, my wife and I in good health, a roof over our heads and food in the cupboard, a garden to tend and books to read, so that I am able to take *One Day at a Time*.

Concern, though, must be felt for those struggling with life, living below the poverty line, whether or not caused by coronavirus restrictions, not knowing where their next meal will come from; those without accommodation or under the threat of eviction at not being able to pay rent; those living in isolation alone, not able to interact with family or friends; those not able to have personal contact with relatives in nursing homes and hospitals; parents struggling to home-school children while working at home; those facing long-term unemployment. These and many such examples tear at the heartstrings.

Religious people may well be asking themselves if this virus is a punishment from God, thinking of what is stated in the Book of Revelation about the plagues coming in the end times. From the teachings given through Emanuel Swedenborg, in the New Church we understand that the imagery in the Book of Revelation is not about external events but what goes on in our inner nature when we struggle against temptations of selfishness arising as we endeavour to grow spiritually in life using the Lord's truth we have come to freely accept.

One of those truths is God will or can never punish us or anyone. God is Divine Good and can do only what is good, only loving things.

Jehovah God, the Lord, never curses anyone, is never angry at anyone, never leads anyone into crisis. He does not even punish us, let alone curse us. It is the Devil's crew that does such things. Nothing of the sort could ever come from the fountain of mercy, peace, and goodness.

(Swedenborg: *Secrets of Heaven* paragraph 245).



This coronavirus is not in any way God's punishment, just as other major pandemics in past centuries, or tragedies for that matter, haven't been. Nor is God able to step in to stop them occurring for that would be contrary to His laws of creation, particularly by removing our freedom of choice to decide how we should act in such circumstances. What our teachings also tell us is that God is constantly working with us all to bring us through these trials in ways which will best suit our individual eternal welfare.

While in my present circumstances, my own ability to be useful and helpful to my neighbours and others is limited but there are things I can do. What I must do is obey the health requirements to regularly wash hands for 20 seconds and when by necessity away from home, social distance, wear a mask and hand-sanitise. Just as importantly is to think of those facing much greater challenges than I am and ask the Lord in prayer to lead them through it . . .

One Day at a Time.

Keep well ~ spiritually whole ~, and stay safe ~ spiritually connected.

Neville Jarvis



Washing

(from Reg Lang's *Daily Readings from the Word*)

*Wash yourselves, and make yourselves clean;
Put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes.
Cease to do evil
(Isaiah 1:16)*

When you wash your hands, say to yourself “I must wash my spiritual hands as well”. Then, you will begin to see why, and understand what spiritual washing means. For this you will need Bible water which is God’s truth. This will wash you and make you really clean. It will remove evil from your doings through your desisting from them; and in looking on you, the Lord will see before His eyes, someone who loves Him. While washing, reflect on the evils you are imploring Him to remove, and soon they will cease to afflict you.



Prayer:

O Lord, send out your light and your Truth! Let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill, and to your tabernacle. (Psalm 43:3)



Church Giving

As we have not met as a congregation for four months, and this is likely to continue for some time, the opportunity to make a regular offertory for the work of our church has not been available. In reality, current bills and expenses still need to be paid and our anticipated outreach work, which will include subscriptions for internet services (for example, the Soundcloud account by which Rev. David Moffat posts talks for the wider public to access - <https://soundcloud.com/lovelearnserv/>) and advertising costs to promote the teachings of the Church. We all need to be uniting behind these activities as this is one of the principal purposes for which our organization exists.



If you wish to donate your offertory, there are two ways in which you may do so:

- Via the Internet by simply clicking on the link - <https://donorbox.org/new-church-victoria> - and following the straightforward instructions;
- By sending a cheque payable to ‘The New Church in Victoria’ mailed to the same name at PO Box 2224, Mt. Waverley, Vic 3149.

All contributions will be greatly appreciated.

Diary of Events in August & September 2020

While Coronavirus Restrictions are current, all activities will take place on
YouTube and/or Zoom until further notice.

Refer to details regularly provided by our Spiritual Leader via email

August	
Sunday 2 10.30am	Family Service of Worship led by Rev. David Moffat (YouTube) Topic: <i>The commands of Jesus (13): DO GOOD, PRAY, FAST, IN SECRET vs. PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.</i> Children's theme: <i>Crossing the Red Sea – Exodus 13: 17 – 22; 14</i>
Sunday 9 10.30am	Doctrine of the Lord – Consideration of Chapter 2 (YouTube and Zoom) <i>To say that the Lord fulfilled all of the Law is to say that He fulfilled all of the Word</i>
Monday 10 8.00pm	Bible Study
Sunday 16 10.30am	Service of Worship led by Rev. David Moffat (YouTube) Topic: <i>The commands of Jesus (14): FORGIVENESS, ANGER, NAME-CALLING, DISPUTES</i>
Sunday 23 10.30am	Service of Worship led by Neville Jarvis (YouTube) Topic: <i>The Kingdom of Heaven</i>
Monday 24 8.00pm	Bible Study
Sunday 30 10.30am	Details to be advised
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September	
Sunday 6 10.30am	Family Service of Worship led by Rev. David Moffat (YouTube) Father's Day. Topic: <i>The commands of Jesus (15): LITTLE CHILDREN</i> (Children's Theme: <i>Quails and Manna - Exodus 16</i>).
Monday 7 8.00pm	Bible Study
Sunday 13 10.30am	Doctrine of the Lord – Consideration of Chapter 3 (YouTube and Zoom) <i>The Lord came into the world to subdue the Hells and to glorify His Human Nature; the Suffering on the Cross was the Last Battle by which He completely defeated the Hells and completely glorified His Human Nature</i>
School Holidays run from 19 September to 4 October	
Sunday 20 10.30am	Service of Worship led by Rev. David Moffat (YouTube) Topic: <i>The commands of Jesus (16): DO NOT JUDGE</i>
Monday 21 8.00pm	Bible Study
Sunday 27 10.30am	Service of Worship led by Neville Jarvis (YouTube)

Question Time Sessions

Currently these are being held on every Thursday, alternately at 10am or 8pm on Zoom. Consideration is being given to hold them at both times each week. If you wish to participate in these sessions, again, refer to the information regularly issued via email by the Spiritual Leader.

ITEMS FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER

While it will be 2 months before the next Newsletter is issued, please think **NOW** about sending an item to be included in it which in some way demonstrates to you something of God's creative love at work for sharing with other readers. The earlier it arrives, the better. Just send them to Neville Jarvis. (contact details on front page).

FROM THE BOARD

Lay-led Services

You will notice that, starting from August, a monthly lay-led service of worship is included in our calendar of events. Some of you may be curious as to why there is a lay-led service when we have a full-time spiritual leader? When Rev. David Moffat was approached by the Church Board to take on the spiritual leadership of the Church in Victoria, it was proposed that a monthly lay-led service would be included in our calendar, to release David's time for other, alternative ministries, whilst maintaining the traditional services valued by many members of our community.

The Board recognises that there is decreasing demand in the wider community for the services which are familiar to our members, and David was appointed to continue the work he engaged with in Canberra exploring how we might address new and emerging needs. Those projects might include establishing a children's ministry, alternative forms of worship, study groups, life-issue groups, and outreach projects. David will be present for many of those lay-led services, offering support to the leader, and providing some of the music.

David hopes that more willing leaders might step forward to develop their leadership skills. It is certainly true that these opportunities offer rich rewards, developing your own personal faith at the same time as supporting the faith and life of others. If you are interested in participating in the work of the Church - as a worship leader, or in other ministries - please do phone or email David to discuss the many and varied possibilities.

New Premises

After waiting months for various permits to be issued by Council required to allow our new premises at 3, 20 Duerdin Street, Clayton, 3168 to be used for our activities and negotiating with a builder regarding required refurbishments, the Church Board is very pleased to advise that renovations are beginning. It is anticipated that they will be completed by mid-September. Whether we will be able to then begin holding services and other meetings there will, of course, depend on where Melbourne is at with coronavirus restrictions.