

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

Swedenborg

# The New Church in Victoria Newsletter

December 2020 / January 2021

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## Getting back to (Covid) NORMAL

After eight months of being unable to meet as a congregational community, two factors have come together at the same time to allow the resumption of meeting face to face:

1. The significant lifting of Covid-19 pandemic restrictions; and
2. The completion of the renovating of our new home at 3, 20 Duerdin Street, Clayton.

The Church Board has determined that Sunday 6 December will be the first occasion (see the *Diary of Events* on the last page of the Newsletter). Procedures will be in place to meet continuing Covid and Council requirements which must be adhered to. **Initially, the main one will be to notify the Spiritual Leader at least 2 days before the Sunday you plan to attend so that we can be sure adequate social distancing can be achieved.** Thank you for your co-operation with this.

The Church in Victoria begins a new and exciting chapter in its life.



## Coming to the Light

*The people who walked in darkness  
Have seen a great light;  
Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death,  
Upon them a light has shined.* (Isaiah 9:2, NKJV)



*In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.* (John 1:4,5)

Anyone may discern that spiritual light is altogether different from natural light if he attends to his mind's thoughts. For when the mind thinks, it sees the objects of its thought in light, and people who think spiritually see truths, and this just as well in the middle of the night as during the day. Therefore, light is also predicated of the intellect, and the intellect is said to see. Indeed, in response to the declarations made by some other person, another sometimes says that he sees it to be so, meaning that he understands. Because the intellect is spiritual, it cannot see in this way on account of natural light. For natural light does not last but departs with the sun.

*"It is apparent from this that the intellect has another light than the eye, and that that light comes from another origin". (Divine Love and Wisdom, paragraph 96)*

At Christmas, we celebrate the coming of the Light. In the Northern Hemisphere, Christmas occurs just after the winter solstice, the shortest day (and the longest night) of the year, and it takes on a special significance as people look hopefully towards the end of winter. It's different in Australia, of course, but I grew up in the UK with this association, and in many ways it sustained people through the dark and cold.

Much of the Christmas story takes place in the dark, of course: the angel appeared to Joseph in dreams (Matthew 1:20; 2:13, 19); the wise men follow a star (Matthew 2:2); the shepherds are tending their flocks at night (Luke 2:8). We see also another form of darkness present at the time, in Herod's massacre of the innocents (Matthew 2:16). This is the world into which our Saviour was born, and into which He brings such hope.

But there is another side to the light we find less comfortable, and that is judgment. I'm fond of one particular passage in the Good News Bible's translation:

*"This is how the judgment works: the light has come into the world, but people love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil. Those who do evil things hate the light and will not come to the light, because they do not want their evil deeds to be shown up. But those who do what is true come to the light in order that the light may show that what they did was in obedience to God."* (John 3:19-21)

We all entertain the hope of heaven, but simultaneously we have the sure knowledge that not all is well with us. We know that we hold a mixture of good from the Lord and evil from self, and our instinct is to hide it. We must remember these two sides of the light are absolutely necessary. Judgment IS salvation. The separation of what is good and true from what is evil and false is what allows the Lord to fill our lives with good. Think of those harvest parables told by the Lord: Who wants to fill their barns with weeds?!

*"... by His Divine providence the Lord nevertheless continually provides and disposes that evil may be by itself and good by itself, and thus that the two may be separated ..."* (Divine Providence, paragraph 227<sup>2</sup>).

This requires that the full contents of our lives are clearly seen, and for that, we need light:

*"For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light."* (Mark 4:22)

I was reminded, in a recent discussion, of Swedenborg's words in *Divine Providence*, paragraph 278: ***"Evils cannot be removed unless they appear."*** *We do not mean that a person has to commit evils in order for them to appear, but that he must examine himself, not only his deeds, but also his thoughts, and what he would do if he did not fear the laws and disgrace - especially what evils he makes in his spirit allowable and does not regard as sins, for these he continues to do."*

As disconcerting as that might seem, the process is nevertheless a hopeful one. The Lord yearns to gather us all, if possible, into heaven. At Christmas, we celebrate that renewed promise. Without the Light, none of that is possible.

The contemporary world seems as dark now as it ever was at Jesus' birth. Secularism and materialism rule. We sense evil everywhere. Nevertheless, Christmas has found an unwitting ally in consumerism. Nothing is so compelling to modern greed than a good excuse to make another sale. So, even though religion seems to be taking less and less prominence, the Coming of the Light will continue to be celebrated beyond the confines of organised religion for ages to come. Even if it is shrouded in the dark materialism of our age, the Light waits, ready to break out of its gift-wrapping. Even if we do not hear the message for years, that call remains embedded in our culture, waiting to be rediscovered. It doesn't matter to the Lord whether He achieves His ends en masse or one at a time.

*"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* (John 8:12)

I wish you all a safe, happy, and loving Christmas.

*David*

Rev. David Moffat, Spiritual Leader

## ***Meditations on the inner vs outer meaning of Scripture ~ A response***

The Editor

The New Church in Victoria Newsletter

Dear Neville,

I am responding to your invitation to put “pen to paper” in response to Vidura Jayaratne’s ***“Meditations of the inner vs outer meaning of Scripture”*** which you published in the October and November Newsletter. It would have been special to have been a “fly on the wall” when Vidura and Rev David Moffat discussed this matter. And I say this, not just because of how interesting that must have been but, as well, that I might not then run the risk of a clumsy response or a misreading of points Vidura is making.

It’s interesting that I read this article, I think it was on the same day as I read a sermon titled “Healing from Afar” by Rev Grant Odhner. In this sermon, and at the outset Rev Odhner explores the literal meaning of the healing of the Centurions’ servant, Matthew 8:5-13, concluding with the comment, “It might be noted in this connection that we need to be careful not to just gloss over the literal stories of the Word, or spend all our time dissecting words in search of higher meaning. We may be tempted to do this because we do believe that there is deeper-than-surface meaning in each and every word of Scripture indeed, that there are deeper and deeper levels of meaning there. But we need to remember that the higher sense rest on the literal sense.” (And then he goes on to unpack something of that higher sense.)

What I am highlighting in mentioning this is that – *and as I read him* – Rev Odhner is highlighting what I take he has picked up and that is an inclination within the New Church to want to quickly move beyond the literal sense, or meaning and, in the process, missing out on so much that the literal meaning, in fact, holds for us.

As I’ve indicated I am concerned that this be a clumsy response to what Vidura wrote and I continue to try to unpack what he (Vidura) means where, in his 6<sup>th</sup> paragraph, he writes, *“It is important to remember that it is not as though there is the Text (the Outer Lord) and hiding behind/deep beneath the Text is the Inner Lord. No! It is the whole Lord Himself – inner and outer – that appears to you in and through His Text (like I, all of me – inner & outer – appear to you through my text, or photo, etc.).”*

Fine! But there is, as I understand, so much of the Lord “obscured” at least in most places in the outer or literal meaning of Sacred Text. I see the Lord in that outer meaning, but only so dimly, “as in a glass, darkly” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

But I read on into the article, and think to myself that perhaps Vidura agrees on this point.

The Teaching in Swedenborg’s Writings that came to me when I first read Vidura’s article is the Teaching about “accommodation”. And it still does. It is the Teaching about how it has been that the Lord has “accommodated” revelation of Himself, down through the Ages, according to people’s states and different stages of spiritual awareness and development. And so you get a very different impression of God from the Old Testament as you do from the New. This is where I am struggling! Because in the Old Testament, as it seems to me, that the Inner Lord *is* “hiding” for want of a better word behind (or within) the Outer Lord as presented there.

With very best wishes,

*Ian*

Rev. Ian A. Arnold



### **ITEMS FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER**

Items for your Newsletter are much appreciated. Please think NOW about sending the Newsletter Coordinator (*contact details on front page*) a contribution to share with other readers which demonstrates to you something of God’s creative love at work or on a spiritual issue which particularly interests you. Preparation for the next issue will commence around 20 January 2021 and the earlier contributions arrive, the better.

## Crossing over

*On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side."*

Mark 4:35

We often have to cross over to the other side. From one set of circumstances to another: for as we say, there are two sides to every question.

Spiritually it is the same. One side of our life is lived in outside natural things. The other side is lived among internal or spiritual things. Between the two positions there is a continual crossing over, for the internal must bring the external part into harmony with itself. To this end there is interplay between the spiritual and the natural positions.

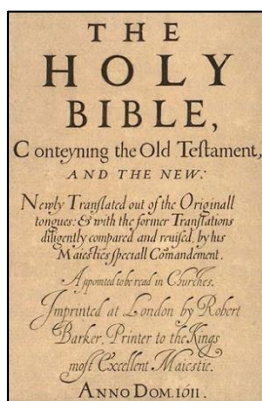
When Jesus crosses over with us, all is well.

Based on one *Daily Readings from the Word* by Reg Lang  
(submitted by Alexis Jarvis after reading Vidura's article)



## A Questionable Comma?

As the Advent period approaches, like many, I look forward to listening to Handel's Messiah on the radio and very occasionally at a concert to hear in words and music the events of the Lord's life. Interestingly, the sections related to the birth of Christ are relatively short compared to those of the oratorio's text covering the Lord's death, resurrection and ascent into heaven. Handel actually composed the work for Passion week, its first performance being on 13 April 1742 in Dublin, just after Easter. It continued to be principally performed at that time of the year until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century when the majority of recitals moved to Christmas and today it is rarely performed in the period leading up to Easter. According to author, Ace Collins, in his book *Stories Behind the Great Traditions of Christmas*, this was a marketing ploy to take advantage of the longer lead time to Christmas providing more opportunities for performances. Whatever the reason, the Messiah is now predominately a Christmas work.



When listening to the prophecy of the Lord's advent in the Messiah, from Isaiah 9 v. 6 - *And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.* (NKJV) - I find myself reflecting on the pause between the words 'Wonderful' and 'Counsellor'. The last three names have a preceding adjective describing the noun. This is not the case with the first two names. Clearly Handel was faithfully following the text of the 1611 edition of the King James Bible which has a comma between 'Wonderful' and 'Counsellor'. Was the translator of this first English version of the Bible correct in including the comma? At this point, I must openly admit I am no linguist, Hebrew scholar or the like and what follows is simply based on what I have found in other places. Alternate views would be gratefully received.

Verse 29 from Isaiah chapter 28 reads '*This also comes from the LORD of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in guidance*' which perhaps brings the inclusion of the comma directly into question.

A new translation of the Bible made with the aid of previous versions and with constant consultation of Jewish Authorities was issued by The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1917-1919, titled *The Holy Scriptures according to the Masoretic Text* # includes the following wording in Isaiah 9:5:

*'For a child is born unto us, A son is given unto us; And the government is upon his shoulder;  
And his name is called<sup>a</sup> Pele-joez-el-gibbor Abi-ad-sar-shalom;'*

(footnote <sup>a</sup> That is, '*Wonderful in Counsel is God, the Mighty, the Everlasting Father, the Ruler of peace.*') #

this useful translation of The Old Testament can be found by following the link –

<https://jps.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Tanakh1917.pdf>

I have not followed up on the reason for the change in verse numbering other than a relatively quick search about the Hebrew editions of the Bible which indicated verse numbering was not a part although markings and spaces were. I could be shot down in flames about that! Today, we have an increasing number of new English translations which do not separate 'Wonderful' and 'Counsellor' with a comma.



In closing, perhaps another question needs to be asked: *Does it matter whether or not there is a comma here?* Translating must be an extraordinarily difficult process, accuracy to the original being paramount. This question I leave to the words in the work *Secrets of Heaven*, from paragraph 9349<sup>2</sup> by Swedenborg:

*It has come to pass through the Divine providence of the Lord, that the Word, especially the Word of the Old Testament, has been preserved in respect to every jot and point from the time when it was written . . . [the Word] remains in its Divine sanctity; because, as before said, each and all things therein still infold holy Divine things, which are perceived in heaven while the Word is being read; for in every detail there is a holy internal which is its internal sense; that is, its heavenly and Divine sense.*

*For unto vs a child is borne, unto vs a Sonne is giuen, and the gouernment shalbe vpon his shoulder: and his name shalbe called, Wonderfull, Counsellor, The mightie God, The euerlasting Father, The Prince of peace.*

1611 King James version with archaic English spelling

Neville Jarvis



Love came down at Christmas,  
Love all lovely, love divine;  
Love was born at Christmas,  
Star and angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,  
Love incarnate, love divine;  
Worship we our Jesus:  
But wherewith for sacred sign?



Love shall be our token,  
Love shall be yours and love be mine,  
Love to God and to all men,  
Love for plea and gift and sign.



Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830 – 1894)



## NEWS OF PEOPLE

A milestone event was achieved in the lives of Karl and Rose Robinson on 11 November when they celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary. Our belated congratulations go to Karl and Rose whose enjoyment of the day continues with family, now our travel restrictions are easing. Congratulations and good wishes also to Rev. John Teed who celebrates his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on 29 December. It will be a momentous day for John with members of his extended family joining him for the festivities.



## A Centenary Celebration ~ Four decades on



The New Church in Melbourne was abuzz with anticipation and activity in December 1980 as planning for a Convocation to celebrate the centenary of the formation of The New Church in Australia (NCIA) was about to come to fruition. An organising Committee of 8 had been appointed several years earlier, spearheaded by the then President of The New Church in Australia and Melbourne Minister, Rev. John Teed. Along with John, Committee members Mary Teed, Sam Teed and its Secretary, the writer, are alive today to recall all the hard work and time which was involved.

Victoria was chosen as the location for the celebration as it was during the 1881 national Conference of the individual Australian New Churches that the decision was taken to form the NCIA.

Sunday 4 January 1981, the day before Convocation was to begin, the service in the Mt. Waverley church was conducted by the late Rev. Christopher Hasler (father of Mrs. Ruth Duckworth) who was then President of the British New Church Conference at the time. As reported at the time, it was 'a packed house' with many of the Convocation attendees already in Melbourne.

A well-appointed Centre owned by the Uniting Church in Merricks on the Mornington Peninsular had been hired for the eight-day event. On the Monday morning, a large advance party of Victorians were first on the scene to set up the site to suit our requirements, including a 'tent city' to provide additional sleeping quarters mainly for the younger generation – the extremely long line of cars and trailers all packed with equipment was an amazing sight. The remainder of the approx. 200 who had booked for the event - from around Australia plus those from New Zealand, USA, England, Scotland and South Africa – arrived in the afternoon, some on a coach which had been rented for the purpose. 12 ordained minister and several in training were present,

The next 8 days were filled with spiritual food provided for adults, young people and children alike, natural food, special services of worship, various entertainment and sporting competitions (the highlight being the Australia vs The Rest of the World cricket match – result unknown but in the spirit of Convocation, likely to have been a draw), swimming at the local beach, several coach outings and the like. The weather was perfect except for a freak hurricane early one evening, the narrow path of which came right through the grounds bringing down branches and causing havoc. Thankfully, there were no injuries with nearly everyone safely in the Centre waiting to listen to the choir of eight from South Africa. Darkness descended due to the loss of electricity, but the delightful voices lifted across the whole centre after it had passed through with all present spell-bound. The concert ended dramatically with the lights coming back on.

14 issues of 'Convocation News' were distributed, 5 before the event and the remainder daily during it. Should anyone wish to read these, along with the souvenir programme (which explains the significance of the Convocation emblem ~ more than meets the eye!) and the main service leaflets, please contact the writer.

A truly New Church World Assembly in the southern hemisphere. It would be wonderful to think it could be repeated and surpassed. The 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the formation of the NCIA occurs in 2031 – just a thought!

Neville Jarvis



## Church Giving

Even though our services and meetings are now beginning again with freewill offerings being taken, should you wish to make donations to the ongoing work of the Church at other times, this can be achieved either by:



- 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 are greatly appreciated, and the Church Board extends grateful thanks for those received while activities have been curtailed.

## A Christmas Reading Program

Below are suggested sections covering prophecies for the coming of the Messiah and the birth of the Lord in The Word for daily reflection leading up to Christmas.



Tuesday Dec. 1	Genesis 3: 1 – 15	Monday Dec. 14	Isaiah 61: 1 – 3
Wednesday Dec. 2	Genesis 22: 15 – 19	Tuesday Dec. 15	Daniel 7: 9 – 14
Thursday Dec. 3	Genesis 49: 1 & 2; 8 – 12	Wednesday Dec. 16	Micah 5: 2 – 5
Friday Dec. 4	Numbers 24: 15 – 19	Thursday Dec. 17	Malachi 3: 1 - 5
Saturday Dec. 5	2 Samuel 7: 8 – 17	Friday Dec. 18	Luke 1: 5 - 25
Sunday Dec. 6	Isaiah 7: 10 – 17	Saturday Dec. 19	Luke 1: 26 - 38
Monday Dec. 7	Isaiah 8: 11 – 18	Sunday Dec. 20	Luke 1: 39 - 45
Tuesday Dec. 8	Isaiah 9: 2 – 7	Monday Dec. 21	Luke 1: 46 - 58
Wednesday Dec. 9	Isaiah 11: 1 - 10	Tuesday Dec. 22	Matthew 1: 18 - 25
Thursday Dec. 10	Isaiah 35: 1 - 10	Wednesday Dec. 23	Luke 2: 8 - 20
Friday Dec. 11	Isaiah 40: 1 – 11	Thursday Dec. 24	Matthew 2: 1 - 12
Saturday Dec. 12	Isaiah 42: 1 – 9	Friday Dec. 25	John 1: 1 – 14
Sunday Dec. 13	Isaiah 53: 1 - 6		

# Diary of Events in December 2020 & January 2021

**Note: Unless stated otherwise, Sunday activities will be held at our new premises:**

**3, 20 Duerdin Street, Clayton (just off Blackburn Road between Ferntree Gully and Wellington Roads)**

You can also participate via Zoom or YouTube. Refer also to weekly update from our Spiritual Leader

December		
Sunday 6	10.30am	<b>Family Service of Worship</b> led by Rev. David Moffat Topic: <i>Is religion and irrational optimism?</i> Children's theme: <i>The Shepherds and the Angels</i> – Luke 2: 8 – 20 Children's activities will be home based
Monday 7	8.00pm	<b>Bible Study</b> (Zoom)
Saturday 12	2.00pm	<b>Children and family celebration – Duerdin Street</b>
Sunday 13	10.30am	<b>Doctrine of the Lord</b> – Consideration of Chapter 6: <i>The Lord as the Divine-Human One is Called "The Son of God" and as the Word is Called "The Son of Humanity"</i>
Sunday 20	10.30am	<b>Nativity Service</b> led by Rev. David Moffat
Monday 21	8.00pm	<b>Bible Study</b> (Zoom)
Friday 25	9.30am	<b>Christmas Day service – at Duerdin Street, commencing 9.30am</b>
Sunday 27		<b>No Service</b>
January		
Sunday 3		<b>No Service</b>
Sunday 10	10.30am	<b>Service of Worship</b> led by Rev. David Moffat
Monday 11	8.00pm	<b>Bible Study</b> (Zoom)
Sunday 17		<b>No Service</b>
Sunday 24		<b>Service of Worship</b> led by Rev. David Moffat
Monday 25	8.00pm	<b>Bible Study</b> (Zoom)
Tuesday 26		<b>Australia Day</b>
Friday 29		<b>333<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the birth of Emanuel Swedenborg</b>
Sunday 31		<b>No Service. Possible alternate activity</b>

**Question Time Sessions** Most Thursdays at 10am and 8pm on Zoom (check information provided by the Spiritual Leader)

## Duty Roster

<i>December 2020:</i>	Sunday 6	Alexis & Neville Jarvis
	Sunday 20	Marika Sivak
<i>January 2021:</i>	Sunday 10	Rose & Karl Robinson
	Sunday 24	Alexis & Neville Jarvis

Note: If you are unavailable on the Sunday allocated, please contact another member of the Duty Roster to swap.



### **Would you be interested in joining the Sunday Duty Roster?**

Participation includes:

- arriving about 30 minutes early to help setting up;
- providing flowers for the altar if required;
- bringing forward the offertory for dedication; and
- assisting with tidying up before premises are vacated.

### **Please do think about this.**

Should you wish to know more or are agreeable to participate, please speak with either Rev. David Moffat or Neville Jarvis. Your involvement will be much appreciated.

# PHILLIP ISLAND NEW CHURCH RETREAT 2021



The 2021 New Church Retreat will be held from **Friday July 2nd to Thursday July 8th 2021** at the Phillip Island Adventure Resort (PIAR).

The Resort is a modern purpose-built complex situated 130km south of Melbourne, offering comfortable climate-controlled dining, function and meeting areas as well as climate-controlled and ensuited guest rooms.

Featured among PIAR’s large choice of recreational facilities are an indoor heated pool, an extensive range of professionally built and accredited adventure activities, including 3 giant swings, 2x2 high ropes courses and multiple twin flying foxes, and two large recreational lakes.

More information on the location can be found at: [www.piar.cyc.org.au](http://www.piar.cyc.org.au).

## BOOKING

*The cost of the retreat includes the full week’s accommodation and full catering. All accommodation is in climate-controlled guest rooms with beds and private bathrooms. Rooms will be allocated dependent upon bookings. Bookings are subject to availability and a deposit will need to be paid before specific rooms are confirmed in writing. A pillow and a blanket is provided, other linen including a towel can be hired on request with your booking.*

Adult (14+) ..... \$565

Children (3-8) ..... \$295

Young People (9-13) ..... \$430

Pre-School (0-2) ..... Free

*A pensioner holding a current Australian Government issued Pensioner Concession Card will be eligible for \$45 off the adult rate per pensioner.*

## DEPOSIT

*A **non-refundable** deposit is required to secure a booking for the Retreat (Note: a deposit will be refunded should the Retreat be cancelled due to insufficient numbers of Covid related issues):*

\$100 per person

\$300 for a family group

Deposit and final numbers are required by 1st February 2021.

## FINAL PAYMENT

Final payment will be required by **1st June 2021**.

A Booking Form and payment details can be obtained by speaking with the Spiritual Leader, Rev. David Moffat, or Neville Jarvis.

