

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

Swedenborg

The New Church in Victoria Newsletter

February - March 2021

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In and Out

A few weeks ago, during our first service for the year, we considered the well-known words of Isaiah 40:31:

*"But those who wait on the Lord
Shall renew their strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint."*

(The talk is available to watch at www.youtube.com/watch?v=P4B9o2FqnH4)

Although we did not dwell upon it, I noted at the time that this verse is part of an extended poem, a hymn to the Lord, and consists of four lines: a two-fold pair, referring to goodness and truth, first at inner and then at outer levels (think about the heights attained by a soaring eagle, its perspective and keen eyesight, compared to the earthbound activities of running and walking). During Bible study the following evening, Swedenborg's concerns regarding inner and outer religion were also noted, as reflected particularly in his commentary on Genesis 15:2,3 (see *Heavenly Secrets*, paragraphs 1794 to 1796). So, I thought I'd write about this inner and outer religion.



Our outer world dominates our awareness: the world of situation and circumstance, speech and action, space and time. This is the world our senses bombard us with throughout the day and which most often holds our attention. I also have a private mental landscape, of which only I am aware: my thoughts and motivation, observation and planning. Of course, much of my time and energy is invested in considering outer things. Still, there are deeper worlds of which I remain blissfully unaware while in this life: spiritual associations which are the source of everything that occurs in the lower levels of awareness. All this is pictured for us in the second day of creation: the firmament separating the waters above and the waters below (Genesis 1:6-8, *Heavenly Secrets*, paragraphs 24 & 25).



Having established the existence of these worlds, Swedenborg then draws the connections between them, and shares with us his concern that they be united. The outer ought to draw its inspiration from the inner. That is the true order of things. Indeed, there will come a time, following our awakening in the spiritual world, when that will inevitably be the case. As Jesus said, "Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops." (Luke 12:3).

And Paul reaffirms, “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know **just as I also am known.**” (1 Corinthians 13:12)

Given this situation, there are two errors we may fall into. The first is if our external religious forms and practices neither draw from nor reflect inner realities. We forget the true intent behind religion, merely ‘going through the motions’ from habit or familiarity.

“The external things of the Church when they are without the internal things are of no value. It is to those internal things that they owe their existence, and in character they are the same as those internal things. ... The things of the heart make man, not those of the lips and gestures.” (*Heavenly Secrets*, paragraph 1795, section 2)

Such religion is meaningless at best, a place for evil to hide at worst. We can fool ourselves - or seek to fool others - with our religious observances. We may even succumb to the belief that there are special kinds of religious activity which are inherently spiritual in nature, devoting our time to those, in order to ‘feel spiritual’ or perhaps intending to appear so to others.

“Many people believe that a spiritual life, a life which leads to heaven, consists in piety, keeping a holy external appearance and renouncing the world. But piety without charity, and a holy external without a holy internal, and the renunciation of the world without living like this in the world do not make up a spiritual life. ...” (*The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine [NJHD]*, paragraph 123)

The second, subtler error is to retreat within, our religion becoming one of the head or heart alone, which is never expressed in outward action, what Swedenborg terms as ‘use’.

“... love and wisdom apart from use are only abstractions of the mind, which fade away unless they are applied to use. They are then like birds which, in their flight over a great ocean, wearied at length by flying, fall down and are drowned.” (*True Christian Religion*, paragraph 67)

Now, there is an important lesson for all of us to learn here, whether we are religious or not. Do you believe you have good intentions? Well, you must DO something about them! Good intentions are nothing without the corresponding action, serving only to convince myself of my own goodness.

“... unless we do what we intend, there is a lack of real intention inside that eventually becomes unwillingness.” (*Divine Providence*, paragraph 151)

“What do make ... up [a spiritual life] are piety inspired by charity, a holy external inspired by a holy internal, and the renunciation of the world combined with living like this in the world.” (continuation of *NJHD* 123)

A second lesson we can all usefully gain, is the value of self-compulsion. There may be some good we can do, although we do not feel like doing it at all. Nevertheless, if we compel ourselves to carry it out, that in itself constitutes a deeper motivation which masters our mere emotions. The same can be said of some evil we feel like carrying out, but refrain from nevertheless.

Finally, Swedenborg observes that this practical application of inner religion affects our ability to perceive truth.

“... none can see whether the doctrine of their church is true, except those who are in the affection of truth for the sake of the uses of life. They who have this end are continually enlightened by the Lord.” (*Heavenly Secrets*, paragraph 8521, section 3)

Our search for truth is handicapped unless we also hold some useful application, some good purpose in view. That search for truth was one of the key values we have explored and affirmed as an organisation in 2020. So, it is vitally important that each of us, individually and collectively, as we seek a true understanding of ourselves and the world in which we live, aim also to serve some useful purpose, to manifest good from the Lord in our lives in all the arenas in which we play a part.

With every blessing to you all.

David

Rev. David Moffat, Spiritual Leader

Anyone who has love within him is not content just with knowing, but with doing what is good and true, that is, with engaging in a use.

(see Swedenborg: *Heavenly Secrets* paragraph 503)

THE NEW CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

Some readers will recall the delightful visits to Melbourne by Rev. Obed Mooki, the then Superintendent of The New Church of Southern Africa (NCSA) with its headquarters in Soweto, Johannesburg, first in 1975 and then in 1981 when he attended the Convocation of The New Church in Australia at Merricks (see the article in the December 2020 – January 2021 issue). On the latter occasion, his wife Eulalia and several other members of the NCSA accompanied him.

It was in 1909 that Obed's father, David, a minister in The African Holy Catholic Church, came across a copy of Swedenborg's *The True Christian Religion* and two years later, along with others, he broke ties with his former Church forming The New Church of Africa. With help from the wider New Church, particularly in UK, a centre was established including a training college. The New Church in Australia has maintained connections with the New Church there, particularly following the visit by Ian Arnold enroute to London to begin his ordination studies for the ministry. Subsequent to his ordination and ministering to two societies in England, Ian returned to Australia, again calling at Johannesburg. Ian has had follow-up visits, also attending that Church's centenary celebrations along with Rev. Trevor and Mrs Joy Moffat. The New Church in Sydney (Roseville) has generously provided financial support on occasions.

In more recent times, the NCSA has been struggling with administration and the adequate maintenance of its headquarters in Soweto. In 2020, Rev. Lee and Mrs Annette Woofenden of The Swedenborgian Church of North America decided to relocate to Soweto long-term to assist in particular the training of candidates for the New Church ministry, along with the necessary accreditations. One essential practical project that has begun since their arrival is the building of a wall for security reasons around the 7-acre property on which the College and other buildings stand. Another problem faced by the NCSA is that many of its members living in rural areas are desperately poor and in much need of food relief. Also, like so many countries around the world, South Africa and Johannesburg in particular is struggling to deal with all matters related to Covid-19.

Two appeals have been recently opened for making contributions to these two needs of our sister organisation in South Africa (photos and a video can be seen on the appeal sites):

- for securing the Church property ~ www.gofundme.com/f/build-a-new-church-wall; and
- for food aid ~ www.gofundme.com/f/south-african-township-food-relief.

Please consider donating to these causes. Should you wish to but have no Internet access, or have difficulties with the process, contact Neville Jarvis (details on first page).



VIRTUAL WOMEN'S WEEKEND

After a most successful weekend last October involving a number of ladies from around Australia joining together on Zoom, by popular demand it's happening again over the weekend of March 12th-14th. However, this time depending on Covid distancing restrictions, ladies taking part are encouraged to get together with others in their area, as well as joining individually. There will be a mix of spiritual discussion, crafty instruction and good old-fashioned chatting. For more information or to join the fray, please email Jenn Beiswenger at jenn@beiswenger.net.



Harvest Thanksgiving

During February and early March, we will be collecting donations of tinned and packeted food (i.e. any non-perishable items) for our Harvest offering on March 7 (see the *Events Diary* below). Following their dedication, items will be taken to the Monash-Oakleigh Community Support and Information Service, 25 Downing Street, Oakleigh (see mocsis.org.au or on FACEBOOK mocsis). This organisation's mission is to assist members of the local community by providing support, information and material aid with the service being impartial and non-judgmental and does not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, gender, sexuality or disability.



Our New Premises – a pictorial guide

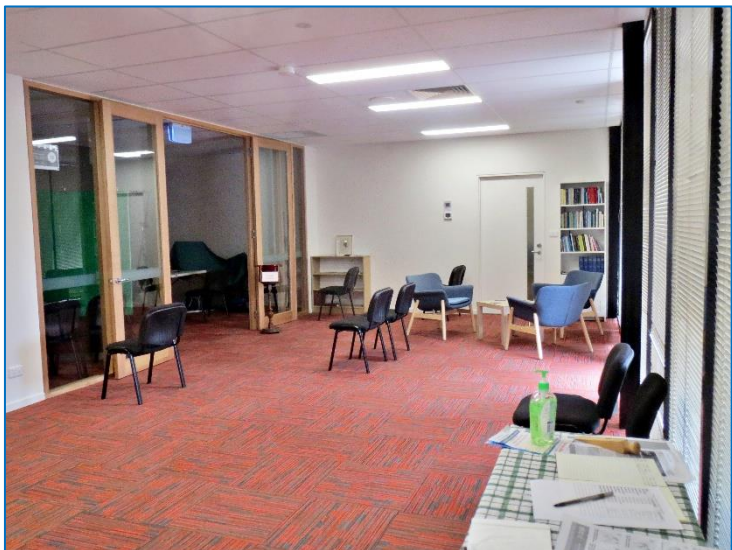


Entrance to premises (signage still to be completed)

Entrance to 20 Duerdin Street Business Park



Foyer and entrance to multipurpose room



Multipurpose Meeting Room



Children's play nook



Kitchen



First floor library reading and smaller meeting areas



Spiritual Leaders Office & Children's activities areas on first floor

Areas not shown: 6 external parking bays; 2 internal parking bays; 3 toilets (disabled, female & male)

Love and wisdom without the good of use are nothing; they are mere mental abstractions, which are only realised when they are employed in use. Love, wisdom and use make an inseparable group of three. If they are separated, none of them is anything. Love is nothing without wisdom, but in wisdom it is formed to some purpose; and the purpose to which it is formed is use. Therefore when love by means of wisdom is put to use, it actually exists, because it is realised in action.
(see Swedenborg: *True Christianity* paragraph 387³)

It is commonly believed that worship of God means a declaration of the lips in a place of worship. But true worship of God consists in a life of useful purpose. Any declaration of the lips is entirely meaningless unless it flows from this true worship in everyday living.
(see Swedenborg: *Heavenly Secrets* paragraph 7884)

Membership Classes

In the coming year, a short series of classes is planned covering the essentials of New Church teaching, with a particular focus upon the requirements of membership. These classes will be offered both face-to-face and online via Zoom. Each involves four sessions, based upon the objects of the New Church in Victoria, as found in our constitution:

1. *INTRODUCTION AND THE LORD: "... our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the one and only God of heaven and earth, and that in him is the Divine Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ..."*
2. *THE SCRIPTURES: "... the Word of God or Sacred Scriptures ..."*
3. *FAITH AND CHARITY: "... the life the Scriptures teach people to live, which is called Charity ..."*
4. *THE HEAVENLY DOCTRINES: "... the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Jerusalem as they are contained in the spiritual writings of Emanuel Swedenborg ..."*

The first series of four weekly sessions will be held on Sunday 28 February, following the Sunday morning meeting (please see the 'Events Diary'). Speak with Rev. David Moffat should you be interested in joining these classes.



New Church Family Retreat 2021

The Retreat will be held from **Friday July 2nd to Thursday July 8th 2021** at the Phillip Island Adventure Resort (PIAR). Full details appeared in the December 2020 – January 2021 Newsletter. While final payment will not be required until **1st June 2021, should you wish to attend, you need to book and organise the deposit by 1 February 2021 (n.b. deposits are fully refundable should the Retreat be cancelled due to Covid)**. Please contact the Spiritual Leader, Rev. David Moffat, immediately should you be still thinking of attending (see front page for David's contact details).



Spiritual Leader on Leave

Rev. David Moffat will be on leave from 8th to 22nd February. During that time, should any pastoral matters arise for you about which you would normally contact David, please direct them to Karl Robinson (0417 514 960) who will ensure they are dealt with appropriately. Any urgent administrative matters should be referred to the Church Secretary, Helmut Lopaczk, on 0409 184 643.

We wish both David and Pam a happy and most relaxing time away, something they both much deserve.



Spiritual Leader's Availability

Now that the refurbishing and fitting out of our property at 3, 20 Duerdin Street, Clayton has been completed, Rev. David Moffat will be regularly spending Wednesday, Thursday and Fridays there between 10am and 4pm. Should you wish to have an appointment with him at Duerdin Street on one of those days, please do make contact before attending.

David's 'official' day-off during the week remains Tuesday and he should only be contacted that day in the case of an emergency.

There is no holiness on a person's part in this, unless his internal is holy. For a person's external is such as his internal is, since the external proceeds from the internal like action from his spirit. So a holy external without a holy internal is natural and not spiritual. It is therefore possible for the evil to exhibit it equally with the good; and those who make it the whole of their worship are for the most part empty, devoid, that is, of any kind of knowledge of good and truth.

(see Swedenborg *The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrines* paragraph 125)

NEWS OF PEOPLE

Greetings were received at Christmas from Clifford & Linda Phanjoo who live in Mauritius. Some members and friends will recall seeing them at services over the years when visiting daughters Jennifer and Christelle at university and who are now pursuing their teaching careers here. It is good to know that Covid restrictions are being gradually eased in Mauritius but while noting 2020 will be remembered as an 'Annus Horribilis', they point out a lot of creativity and goodwill has been generated worldwide giving hope for a better world in the future. They ask that their best wishes be conveyed to their Melbourne friends and to all members of The New Church in Victoria, which are heartily reciprocated. Seasonal good wishes to the members and friends of the New Church in Melbourne were also received from the members of the Ballarat Circle and Mrs Margaret Lennon, a longstanding member, and her family in Longwarry North.

On a sadder note, we report the passing of Joy Wilkins into the Spiritual World on 27 December 2020 at the age of 80 years. Joy was a regular member of the Sunday morning congregation at our church in Mt. Waverley for many years. She was greatly loved amongst us and sorely missed when, due to illness, she could no longer attend. Our condolences are extended to husband, Ted, and the family.

Sandra Misson has been in touch recently and while regretting her inability to attend Church at the moment, sends her greetings to all her Church friends which are returned with every good wish.

Elizabeth Deutcher, who has been attending the Ballarat Circle meetings for a number of years, is currently in respite care in Noble Park, close to where her family live. Our very best wishes go to Elizabeth and husband Stan at this time.

It was a delight for those present at the service on Sunday 24 January to join Vidura and Cai Jayaratne in celebrating the 1st birthday of their daughter, Hannah-Vida. Vidura and Cai provided a pizza lunch with drinks to put us in the party mood and an impromptu 'Happy Birthday' being gustily sung to a bright-eyed Hannah-Vida. It was lovely to also have Mettalia Tanjaya, a friend of Steven Higson, join us for the service that morning. Mettalia is a regular participant in the Bible Study sessions.



Church Giving

Even though our services and meetings have recommenced so that freewill offerings can be made on these occasions, should you wish to make additional donations to the ongoing work of the Church, this can be achieved either:

- via the Internet by simply clicking on the link - <https://donorbox.org/new-church-victoria> - and following the straightforward instructions; or
- 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.



Diary of Events in February & March 2021

Note: Unless stated otherwise, activities will be held at 3, 20 Duerdin Street, Clayton

Refer also to weekly details provided by our Spiritual Leader

Note: F2F = Face-to-face gathering; Z = Zoom; Y= YouTube

February		
Sunday 7	10.30am	Family Service of Worship led by Rev. David Moffat. (F2F, Z & Y) Topic: <i>The Five Solas of Protestant Christianity: 1. Sola Gratia (Grace)</i> Children's theme: <i>Calming the Sea</i> - Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41 Administration of the Holy Supper Sacrament
Monday 8 to Monday 22		Spiritual Leader on Leave – see notice on page 6
Sunday 14	10.30am	VIDEO PRESENTATION (Y only). The Doctrine of the Lord , Chapter 7, paragraphs 29 to 36 - <i>The Lord Made His Human Nature Divine out of the Divine Nature within Himself, and in This Way Became One with the Father</i>
Sunday 21		No Service
Friday 26	7.30pm	Swedenborg Association of Australia (Melbourne Group) meeting (F2F)
Sunday 28	10.30am	Bible Sunday - <i>The Names of God</i> (F2F, Z & Y) Membership Class 1 follows (F2F & Z)
March		
Monday 1	8.00pm	Bible Study (Z)
Sunday 7	10.30am	Family Service of Worship led by Rev. David Moffat. (F2F, Z & Y) Topic: <i>The Five Solas of Protestant Christianity: 2. Sola Fide (Faith)</i> . Children's theme: <i>Walking on the Sea</i> - Matthew 14:22-33; Luke 5:1-11 Dedication of our Harvest Offering – see notice on page 3 Administration of the Holy Supper Sacrament Membership Class 2 follows (F2F & Z)
Monday 8		Labour Day Public Holiday
Friday 12 to Sunday 14		Women's Virtual Retreat - see notice on page 3
Sunday 14	10.30am	The Doctrine of the Lord , Chapter 8, paragraphs 37 to 44 - <i>The Lord Is God Himself, the Source and Subject of the Word</i> (F2F, Z & Y) Membership Class 3 follows (F2F & Z)
Monday 15	8.00pm	Bible Study (Z)
Sunday 21	10.30am	Service of Worship led by Rev. David Moffat. (F2F, Z & Y) Theme: <i>Paradox: What is this, "I" of which you speak?</i> Membership class 4 follows (F2F & Z)
Sunday 28	10.30am	Service of Worship led by Neville Jarvis (F2F, Z & Y)

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

Duty Roster

<i>February:</i>	Sunday 7	Marika Sivak
<i>March:</i>	Sunday 7	Alexis & Neville Jarvis
	Sunday 21	Marika Sivak
	Sunday 28	To be advised