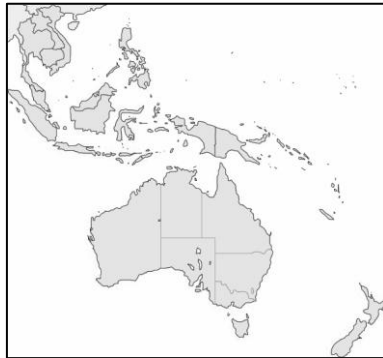
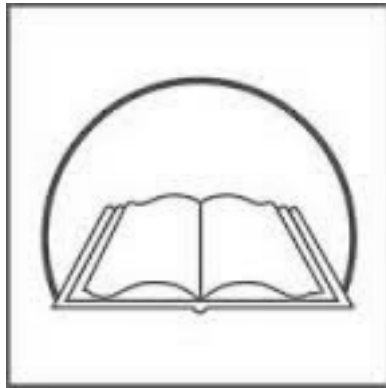


THE NEW AGE

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THE NEW CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

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Editorial

Here is the Autumn / March 2021 new issue of The New Age which we hope you will enjoy, gain from, and find something you can make use of in your own life, you inside and the one you share outwardly. The wonderful and true statement in Swedenborg, 'All religion is to do with life and the life of religion is to do what is good' holds true for us every single moment of our lives.

The word 'religion' means 'to be tied back to' and while you might tie yourself to a ship's mast in a violent storm, religion is about making some commitment, some 'tie'. It's related to the word 'ligaments' which are those tough connecting sinews which hold cartilage, bones and joints together so that you can move, flex, turn. Re-lig-ion is the same thing for the person we are inside our body, our spirit.

More personally, religion means that because of your beliefs, your faith in God and your wish to live by these, you have and aim to keep a number of personal values and standards. Religion strictly means that you have these values to live by because you believe in God and you acknowledge the Word and its teachings.

Of course, you aren't going to rob a bank nor, we hope, tell someone a downright lie to their face. It's not so much on the level of those things. Religion covers them – as it should – but it covers the much subtler areas of our lives as well. I once gave a talk to an outside group and I based it on seven personal values that for me seem important. Here they are... Speaking with care for the receiver ~ Honouring any commitment I give ~ Being courteous ~ Having self-esteem and allowing others theirs ~ Feeling and showing gratitude ~ Giving service or being involved in community ~ Summoning up kindness.

You would probably come up with quite a different list – try and do one sometime. But you undoubtedly have a number of personal values which help and guide you, a reference to check out at times. Bring in the Lord to be involved in you living them ... and there is a large part of your religion.

Julian Duckworth

EASTER SERMON: “HE IS RISEN! HE IS NOT HERE.”

A 2021 sermon by Julian Duckworth

Read Mark ch 16 vs 1-8

At the centre of all our celebration of Easter is the word “Risen”. Notice that it’s usually put as “The Lord **is** risen” and not “The Lord **has** risen”. The first way seems to give it more of a personal feel, an action in the present and a greater sense of excitement. Put this way helps us to engage with it now and to feel that the fact that the Lord is risen should be making a difference to us. Hopefully it is!



The original word that is used for ‘risen’ has a whole set of different meanings to it. ‘Egeiro’ can mean to excite, to arouse, to waken, to decide to do things better, to rise up from lying down, to restore to health, to be roused to make war, to raise something up that has fallen down, to draw something up out of a ditch, to exist, to appear there. All these can be meant by this one word, which is also the one used to mean rising from being dead, to be resurrected.

And when you think about it, it isn’t very hard to see why this word has so many meanings. Think about yourself when you feel flat, a bit down, fairly ordinary and then, for some reason, you start to feel re-motivated or more positive. That emotion trickles through to affect the rest of your life in so many ways. The day seems brighter, maybe it feels like a special day; the people you’re with seem closer, nicer, easier. You can find all kinds of areas in your life that become or feel different when you rise to meet and greet them.

When I was teaching children around the age of 9 and 10 (such a great age to teach!) I soon learned that motivation is most of the children’s need. If you can motivate children you can get them to be interested in the most amazing things, carrots, dust, corners, the surface of water, the surface of Mars. It’s no wonder that we say that the yeasted bubbling bread dough is ‘rising’. Of course it’s higher up than it was, but what a tremendous amount of energy is pushing it up.

If we go back to that long list of meanings of the Biblical word I would like to single out three of them to bring us towards a more spiritual and personal understanding of the words of the young man in the empty tomb, "He is risen! He is not here." The first is 'to decide to do things better'. I can relate to that very easily. I can often fall short of what could have been done, given more care. A teacher of our children regularly told her class when she wasn't very pleased with them, to "Lift your game!" Every musician knows that every single piece of music can be endlessly improved on.

The second one I would pick out is 'to be roused to make war'. Actual war is horrific, even though it may be necessary. Spiritual war is essential, when we take a stand against vile thoughts poisoning our mind or against the persecution of some minority group who are fully human beings like all of us are and who are probably a whole lot better people than many of us. Psalm 144 begins, saying, "Blessed be the Lord my Rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle."

And the third one would be 'to draw something up out of a ditch'. I don't think it actually has to be a ditch every time; it can be a hole or a dark place. It's really the drawing back up to where we are that is the point. I don't think it would be the word used to mean drawing water up from a well. Let's stay with the ditch though. What is a ditch? It's a trench that runs along some distance often by the side of a road or field to drain away excess water.

Jesus mentioned ditches. "And he spoke a parable to them: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch?" Literally, yes they will; spiritually, yes I will, if I don't think about what I'm letting myself be led by because I'm blind to that, then my thought leading me up the creek will send me and my thought into the ditch, down there.

But if I keep watch and stay alert about how I am thinking, I am seeing properly and I'm not being blind, and I won't fall into the ditch. But if I am in the ditch, I need to be drawn out of it. That is the value of truth, of the Word, of seeing life more clearly. These are the gifts that come from following the Lord instead of the crowd or ourselves.

This fits very well with the news that that young man in a long white robe inside the empty tomb said to the three women who came. "He is risen! He is

not here.” For obvious reasons the three women were amazed and soon they fled in fear and trembling. We’ll come back to amazement and fear in a moment, but first, let’s stay with the two short statements of that young man.

“He is risen! He is not here.” Usually when we give any new information you and I would put them the other way round. Deal with how it looks first, and then give the explanation. “He is not here (because) He is risen!” But it’s put the way round it is. What I get from that tiny little detail is that to be told he is risen leads on to the fact that he is not here.

Now let’s make it more personal for us. Jesus once said, “My Kingdom is not of this world.” (John 18:36) That seems to mean that worldly things like finance, politics, advertising, arguments, sex scandals and so on are not really the kind of things that make us think of Jesus, heaven and the kingdom of God. Our response to them is more likely to be an “Oh, not again!”

Jesus and the Kingdom is not there but elsewhere and with care, we could rightly say that it is “higher”. In other words, we have to rise up to be able to see it there.

Jesus also once said about God, that, “He is not the God of the dead but the God of the living.” (Mark 12:27) That’s very true, even literally, but we know that deadness in us lacks the brightness and warmth of being alive, of feeling alive. God is God of that livingness. Being alive is different to deadness; it is higher, more risen up.

So, to wrap up the point of this small detail, we will not find the Lord in a tomb, in deadness, in lethargy, negativity, turgid living. “He is not here!” We will find the Lord in warmth, positivity, use, care for others, concern for them, taking interest in them to the loss of thought for ourselves.



I said that we would come back to the three women who heard this news and were amazed and fled in fear and trembling. One would hope that such news as they were told would thrill them to the core so that they fled to go and tell everybody! But no, they were fearful and afraid to hear it. And they

were probably like that because they couldn't comprehend it or even see that it could be possible.

If we stay focused on the affairs of the world and on the typical attitudes that go on between person and person about how bad / awful / worrying / everything is, we shall not be in any open state of mind to appreciate where the Lord is to be found. "He is risen!" But we are not; we are still traipsing the ground floor of life with shocked bewildered faces.

You see, we can't see or find God in many of the visible things which are in the news and in things which confront and sadden us every so often. All they can do is to leave us wondering why God allows it all! And that is not an accurate question to ask.

We need to look for, see, and find God in the risen part of life, with a risen attitude, a risen mind and a risen heart. It is less visible to our physical senses, for sure, but it can become more visible to our spirit's eye and become more real than "real life".

So take the young man's point... "He is risen! He is NOT here." Amen

From Arcana Caelestia 2917

The Lord emerges and rises again with a person when He is acknowledged. Before this acknowledgement He is enveloped in night because He does not appear. He rises again with every person who is being regenerated.

Living the Pattern of the Inner Court:

Solomon's Temple and Worship



The great structure described in careful detail in 1 Kings, Solomon's Temple, was built close to 1000 years before the birth of Christ. It was an effort of two kings, for David had been forbidden to build a temple himself, but the stability his reign pursued directly contributed to his son Solomon

shepherding this project to completion. The building process, which took place over seven years, is astounding considering the unique and incredibly rich nature of the building and can be found explained in detail in 1 Kings chs 5 to 8. This temple had some similarities to the Tabernacle, which it replaced. Solomon's Temple was plundered by Nebuchadnezzar II during the Babylonian attack on Jerusalem and 10 years after, it was destroyed during the siege of that city by the same people.

*Exalt ye Jehovah our God, and bow yourselves down at His
footstool, Holy is He. (Ps. 99:5)*

*We will enter into His tabernacles, we will bow down at His footstool.
(Ps. 132:7)*

When speaking of the Temple, or houses of worship in general, we can keep those verses above from the Psalms in the forefront. Historically and representatively in our minds, temples are the footstool of the Divine Human.

By this is meant that a temple on the earth is a place where human beings can have a sense of connecting with the Divine through the enactment of prescribed rituals within a physically-defined space. In our minds the concept of 'temple' holds the idea of our approach and worship of what we know as God. As always when discussing the Divine Human, it must be noted that a big part of this puzzle is the understanding that the Divine Human is what we humanly experience of the vastness of the Infinite Divine. It is what we can worship of the infinity of God. It is very appropriate then that the Divine Human be at the forefront of the idea of the temple, for here is where worship takes place. Another idea to hold, is that in this article we will be exploring only that part of worship, part of interfacing with the Divine Human, that relates to what takes place within the inner court of Solomon's temple.

The other aspects of worship belong to other areas of the temple and will not be addressed at this time. These other areas are the Holy place, and Holy of Holies, which belong to the spiritual and celestial levels of the Divine Human. Here, we just work with the natural level of interface with the Divine Human, the Inner Court.

Before we get started, I invite you to reflect for a minute on your own experiences of worship. Perhaps you have a place that you worship that

feels extra special to you. Perhaps there is a specific worship service that you hold as the most reverent. Perhaps there was a life event, at which you worshipped with a depth of peace and spirit commitment. Think about the qualities of that experience. What was it made of? What thoughts or loves were being stirred? What brought you to that state of worship in the first place? Identify a word or two that encapsulates your experience of worship. Write it down or commit it to your memory. This will enable us to use our own experience as a reference point to move and connect to what the Word offers us as truth about worship.

Looking first at the temple of Solomon, I'd like to point out that the bronze objects found within the Inner Court were made by Hiram, who was a worker of bronze from Tyre. Hiram represents natural good, or the pieces of the Lord's good in our lives that serve to construct a place of worship. He was directed by Solomon at all times, as he built the bronze pieces discussed below, just as the Lord directs with His providence the construction of a life that is suited for us to encounter and interface with His Divine Human.

The contents of the Inner court were these: The Brass Sea, Ten lavers, and the Altar of Burnt Sacrifices. We will work with these three main objects as they would have been used in a possible sequence during a day in Solomon's Temple.

An offering would be brought to the temple as a form of worship, an approach of a human mind to the Divine Human, the see-able God.

Offerings for the Israelites were both regulated as seasonal, scheduled if you will, but also offered spontaneously to worship and atone for sins committed.

This is true in our minds as well. Perhaps we go to church regularly, we schedule worship and interface with the Divine Human. But at times we approach the Divine Human when we perceive that we must work through a question or repent. So, we both regularly and spontaneously approach the Divine Human. Note that the Israelitish people did not themselves enter the Inner Court, priests were the ones to receive and perform the sacrifices in this space. We can see a parallel with that in our own worship. When we approach the knowable God we must leave behind the Israelites, or the focus of external worship alone, and instead see our ritual and interface with

the Divine Human as sanctified by what flows in, what the priests of the Lord's Love perform for us. The first act of worship is to surrender our offerings, our thoughts and affections, our sins, our hopes, over to the "priest".

The "priest" is the vehicle of our salvation, and is the work of awakening, seeing and surrendering our proprium. So, in a sense our commitment to the process could be seen as the priest of the temple, but that is just our sense of it, being sensual beings. Really, the priest is the Lord working within us to give us a sense of the spiritual world and His salvation.

We turn now to the first step of the Inner Court, which is the Brazen Sea. This is a very large brass vessel which was carved intricately, rested on the backs of bronze oxen, and contained a vast amount of water for the priests to wash in so that they were prepared to serve. The Heavenly Doctrines say that the Brazen Sea represents general purifying. The placement of this large bath was important, it was east and south of the Temple proper. This holds the idea that general purifying happens in a state of working with love (east) where it is most clearly lit by truth (south).



To be made of brass, as all the implements were, shows that we are looking at purifications that happen in the natural man, or the levels of the mind we have access to, such as the senses, thought life, and rational concepts. Brass represents the good things that emerge from external

worship. What is being said by the priests washing first in the giant brass pool, is that the states of truth that serve to carry us to worship must be cleansed. And recognizing this starts in the natural, in the level of the world that we can perceive is very important. We are not puppets to be manipulated by God's will to worship, we are offered the opportunity to approach seasonally, and momentarily, and part of that effort to begin is an acknowledgement that this is happening in the natural body/thought life. To wash in water, is to purify something from falsities, so at first keen observation of our thought patterns and responses to the Word will give us a

chance to wash in water, to rinse our proprial reactions to the idea of worship, and to see them for what they are.

It is interesting to note that the Brazen Sea is mentioned as being oriented toward the four compass points. This suggests that to approach the Divine Human, there is a need for orientation, a recognition of states. To come to the Brazen Sea in our minds, we are offered the opportunity to see the states we are living in, and use truths to identify what they are. Specifically, the Heavenly Doctrines says the Brazen Sea represents the memory knowledge of the natural man. These knowledges serve as a bridge to the Divine, they can be worked with if we use them in love, but we must wash them as we approach, for those knowledges aren't worship yet, they are preparation for worship. So where are we heading? True worship, as defined by the Heavenly Doctrines, is repentance, and this is what is being initiated here.



The next piece of the temple that is in the sequence is the Ten Lavers. These were ten smaller pools of water, again made of brass, which held water for washing the sacrifices themselves. The number ten represents remains, or what cannot remain. In this piece of worship, what is being offered, our effort to interact with the knowable God, is

supported by the remains that we have been given. These remains make it possible for the sacrifice itself to be offered, for without the washing, it could not approach the Divine. The remains are a means to approach.

But the ten lavers also are a process, for what is brought to be sacrificed must itself be cleansed, some parts of it won't remain. The Lord's goodness that we experienced in our life, remains, is what will accomplish this cleansing or removal. The Heavenly Doctrines state that the Lavers represented "all who are purified".

The placement of the Lavers on either side of the temple, to the north and to the south is a great mercy. Directional orientation in the Word, such as right and left, "signifies pleasantly, freely, and of choice." This is because the Lavers to the south signify parts of the mind which are bathed in the light of

Divine Truth, and the Lavers to the north those parts which are in the shade and don't have straight access to those rays of truth. But all these lavers serve to bathe our minds. Parts of our minds will be more directly in reception of truth. Other parts of our senses, mind, rational thinking will not have the Lord's direct sunlight on them, yet they still can be bathed. To have this as an option is a great testament to the Divine Human reaching all people, as all states of each mind are provided for in these Ten.

The final phase of sacrifice, or approach during worship of the Divine Human, is for the pieces of the sacrifice to be burnt on the Brazen Altar. This altar was a large structure which was made of stone possibly, or earth and was covered over in brass. It was a square object, and at each corner of the altar were hollow boxes which made horns, protrusions which stuck out farther than a large cardboard box on each corner. The altar area was approached by an enormous ramp, for steps were forbidden to be constructed to it. "Do not climb up to My altar with steps, so that your nakedness not be revealed on it" Exodus 20:26.



Once again, the object is made of brass, for we are still talking about the life of the mind as it is aware of life in the sensual, intellectual and rational places. For our efforts toward worship to make it thus far, we have held them up and been cleansed by truths both general and particular. Now what

happens is an elevation of the offering, and ascent of what is brought through continuous steps to be sanctified by burning.

Let's first focus on the aspect of elevation. The Heavenly Doctrines say that "enlightenment of the natural mind does not ascend by discrete degrees, but increases in a continuous degree, and as it increases, that mind is enlightened from within by the light of the two higher degrees." DLW 256 This refers to the idea that enlightenment is not attained by the natural mind on its own, but is shone down from higher levels which are the province of the Lord. To our experience of new thoughts and visions of truth in this phase, it is a gradual and sequential enfolding. It does not happen from the

level it is experienced at, however, the genesis of the change is from the higher plane that man is not part of. This is why the verse from Exodus says that there were to be no steps to the altar, as the approach from below was not discrete, or actually fuelled by man's knowledge, it was to flow in and be experienced as a slow rise.

The focus now is the altar itself. Altars in general represent the Divine Human, the fire on them the mercy of the Lord as it burns to save us. Fire indeed is another type of cleansing. The horns, truths which emerge that contain good, seem to move out of the altar itself. A sacrifice, or our intention to worship the knowable God, is purified by water, and enlightened by ascent (which is actually the descent of the Lord's Love in the form of truth) is now burnt or received by the Lord. It must be remembered that we don't actually have anything to offer in worship, but our participation is given to us by the Lord as life in such a way that it feels like our own, and even the reception of our worship by the Lord gives a sense of reciprocity with the Divine Human. In actuality, that worship is received by His mercy, wishing to provide salvation.

The entire play is for our benefit, and is enacted to allow for Love to love, and for us to receive it. As this happens, the smoke of the fire ascends as a "sweet savour" before the Lord. As an act of worship this speaks to our own willingness to give up any sense of ownership we might carry over what we experience as our life. The fire of love to the Lord and neighbour consumes proprial elements and in the smell of that burning there begins the opportunity for something new to come in in their place. The horns of the altar could be an expression of this, as they spring forth, as if moving out from the sacrifice, new impetus being born from the act of worship, new truths in our natural, now within our grasp, holding goods in them.

We leave the Inner Court at this stage. Conjunction has come, for that is what the altar enacts and offers. It should be noted that although we leave the Inner Court, having travelled what it has to offer, the story of worship does not end with the removal of our sense of ownership as represented in the burning up of the offerings on the altar, our worship now having been washed and made new and offered to our God. The priests which ministered

in the Mercy Seat would take the fire from the altar of burnt offering to light the incense there (Leviticus 16:12).

This small action encompasses the entire purpose of the sacrifices in the Inner Court. The act of worship and approach of the knowable God by us is not one done in a vacuum, instigated by a God who is having fun, or wishes to put us through our paces. The ash residue of the process of the removal of self-love from our attempts at worship settle on the coals of the fire of the Lord's mercy, and those coals, the source of Love, will go into the holier, unknown levels of the God that we cannot approach and create a reciprocal relationship between God and us. Those sacrifices in our natural mind, for they can feel like sacrificing our own life, burn out above the fire of the Lord. That fire, that Love, lights the incense, which could be an intense sensual perception in our bodies of the realness of the Lord. So we participate, we are not the doer, but by being part of the cycle, we enter into greater light and perception of the Divine.

The beautiful story is that we have approached the Divine through the effort to bring what is of the lower aspects of the human mind, its rational, sensual and bodily things, so that they can be changed by His truths and purified by the fire of His love, we receive a sharper perception (incense) of His reality and Love.

I invite you to think back to the words you chose in the beginning. Remind yourself of those words. Take a moment to see how those experiences of the Divine Human could possibly relate to what we have explored in this article, in the Inner Court: washing, offering, ascending, burning.

If nothing else, leave here remembering that the Divine Human is already yours as an experience, for the Divine reaches everyone. Opportunity to worship is yours, as the knowable God provides what is needed for all to be joined with Him.

Erika Brown.

Erika has been a student of the Australian New Church College for several years. She is studying towards becoming a Chaplain. She lives in Kempton, Pennsylvania USA with her husband and five children. Erika has been and is very involved in Logopraxis work for about twelve years. She regularly offers presentations to others.

SOCIETY REPORTS

ADELAIDE

The AGM held on 18th October saw only one change from previously being the addition of Dianne Roberts to the committee.

A carol service was held on 20th December followed by our traditional BBQ break up for the end of year.

Activities recommenced with a garage sale on January 16th in the Church hall and a follow up is planned as there is plenty left to sell. Several people commented that they remembered Biruta's jam and plants and missed that.

Our website has been down for some time due to *Telstramarketplace* changing over to a new format that did not work for us.

June has found a new local Web company who will soon have our new site up and running.

Randall Rabone

BRISBANE / S E QUEENSLAND

Following the long Summer break Services resumed here on Sunday, February 7th, a first Sunday in the month Family Service, very pleasingly attended, and at which Darren wrapped up his series of sermons on the Book of Revelation. These have stretched over close to three years and everyone appreciates what, with the help of the Writings, he has unpacked for us over that time and from what, on the surface, is the most challenging book of the New Testament.

Now being more seriously ill, and at the beginning of February, Mr Brian Heldon relinquished all aspects of his involvement as Treasurer of the Society. It marks the end of an era, Brian having been Treasurer for near 30 years, his wife Gaye serving as Secretary of the Society alongside of him. Having held these key and demanding offices for most of a generation both have now resigned from the Committee. We walk their present journey with them and hold them in our prayers. Mr Paul Evans is our Church's new Treasurer.

Amongst the new faces in our congregation is a (so far) small group of Chinese speaking friends, invariably at Services and always appreciative.

Guang bin Liu's Wednesday evening Chinese Swedenborg Study Group, (online), is now in its fourth year. These meetings have an attendance of between 7 and 9.

We were delighted to welcome Glenn and Haly Harris and family to our Christmas Service, December 22nd. They are temporarily "stranded" in Brisbane due to Covid-19 restrictions which, when lifted, should see them back in The Philippines. Haly is a daughter of retired USA New Church minister, Rev Willard Heinrichs and his wife Vanessa. How lovely to see the Sunday School children in their colourful costumes taking part in the Nativity Tableau that morning.

Though only very occasionally able to join us for Services Mrs Lyn Williams, now 96 and widow of the Rev Bruce Williams, lives contentedly in a Nursing Home facility on the north side of Brisbane, well supported and cared about by her family, especially Brisbane based daughters Frances and Annabel, and their families,

Wishing everyone a safe and happy Easter.

Ian A Arnold

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

This year has been a momentous one for the Church in Auckland. After much soul searching at an SGM it was accepted that the sensible thing to do, due to the small size and age of the congregation, was to downsize by selling our building. It has been an emotionally difficult time for us, and this project has dominated our thoughts and energies.

When the congregation decided to move from the city to Ellerslie they designed and built their new home themselves. It is especially sad for those of us who helped build it 55 years ago. All the church furniture apart from the altar, which came from the previous building, was made by the then resident minister Revd E.C. Howe. Since that time it has been a focus for New Church worship and spiritual nourishment.

One thing that has pleased us is that we have been able to sell it to a Hindu charity for use as a food kitchen. This means that the building will remain standing, even though its use has changed. The amusing completion date is April 1st.

Our intention was to hold a closing service of thanksgiving on February 28th. However, due to a Covid cluster on the 27th, Auckland was put into immediate lockdown, a big fat anti-climax. We then postponed it until March 14th next Sunday. During the service we will be thanking the Lord for what He has done in the lives of those who have been part of the Church community. We will also be remembering the people who have been part of the community. We will be presenting a gift to Doreen Akrigg who at 93 years has been a faithful member of the Church community since she and Brian emigrated from the UK with their family in 1965. The final act will be the processing of the altar out of the church to the singing of 'Siyahamba', 'We are marching in the light of God'.

While we have been busy disposing of possessions we have been tentatively planning for our future. At the moment we are to have a home service every two months and a zoom shared service once a month, with a catch up and coffee at a café once every two months. In addition some are also doing Logopraxis.

It all feels very strange and challenging as we step out into a new era for the New Church in New Zealand. We hope that we can find new ways of helping people discover and use the life changing truths of the Lord's New Church. It is going to be interesting to see what the Lord has in store for us.

John Sutton

SYDNEY (ROSEVILLE)

Our recent AGM here in Sydney was the first to ever have online attendees. From Port Macquarie, 300 kms north, we had our former minister Julian Duckworth and his wife Ruth. Also Graham Hanna from the Lake Macquarie area (80 kms north) joined us. It felt like they really were present as their images were on the giant TV screen at the front of the church. Our committee meetings, on the other hand, have gone the other way, with the first face-to-face meeting for about a year having been just held. That's of course due to the abating of the health risk.

The outbreak of Covid back in December meant that we did not have a Christmas Day service nor a special communal time in the church at the switch over to the new year that our minister Howard had planned. That

outbreak in Sydney started when a group of people had unwisely been singing in a club. We're now at the point where the government will allow hymn-singing in the church if we're prepared to wear masks.

The busyness of Joe Vandermeer at the Swedenborg Association is increasing as he is now hosting a Swedenborg reading and discussion session each Thursday morning. Divine Love and Wisdom is the book we've started with. Anyone can join in via ZOOM by going to the Swedenborg Association of Australia website at www.swedenbprg.com.au for easy event listing, event details and Zoom links.

Happily I can report that church officer Debra Thompson is recovering really well from the major spinal surgery that she underwent just before the summer.

With all good wishes,

Wayne Kasmar

VICTORIA

- Membership Classes

This year a series of classes is being run, covering the essentials of New Church teaching, with a particular focus upon the requirements of membership.

These classes are offered both face-to-face and online via Zoom. Each series 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
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 began on Sunday 28 February, following the Sunday morning meeting.

- News Of People

We sadly 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.

Elizabeth Deutscher, 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.

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 everyone in a party mood. An impromptu 'Happy Birthday' was gustily sung to the bright-eyed birthdayee.

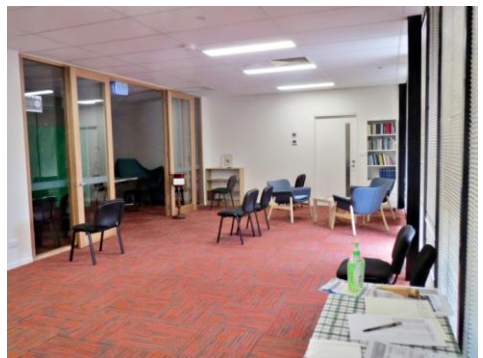
Congratulations and good wishes were duly paid to Rev. John Teed, a long serving minister in Melbourne, on the celebration of his 90th birthday on 29 December.

- New Premises Exposed

To complete the exposition of renovations at our new premises, begun verbally in the last issue of The New Age, herewith a visual addendum.

Left: Exterior Foyer

Right: Multipurpose room entrance



Left: Multipurpose meeting room set up for social distancing



Right: First floor library/reading room with small meeting area.



Helmut Lopaczuk Secretary, NCIV

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Living The Lord's Prayer

"In this manner, therefore, pray ..." (Matthew 6:9)

The Lord's Prayer, found in Matthew chapter 6 and Luke chapter 11, is the most universal of Christian prayers. In many churches it is a vital part of weekly worship. We teach it to our children. It is familiar to us. But do you really understand it? And do you live it?

When Jesus gave his disciples this prayer, His intention was to teach not so much the words to use when we consciously talk with God but our attitude as we do so. Beyond that, once we truly understand that attitude it becomes clear that it is an attitude with which to approach every waking moment of life.

Take some time to read and meditate upon Matthew 6:5-8. These verses contain two clear lessons about prayer.

Firstly, prayer is not about show, putting on an appearance. Jesus is not telling us that it is wrong to pray in public - that misses the point. I can put on a show just as effectively when I am the only person in the room to witness the prayer. In fact, I am probably the person I most dearly wish to convince

of my own holiness! The key phrase occurs at the beginning of the lesson: “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites” (v. 5) The “secret place” from which our prayers should be offered to the Lord is our heart. If we are to pray one thing and act in such a way as to defeat that prayer then such a prayer is useless. Prayer must be rooted in and draw nourishment from our lives.

The second lesson is simply the flip-side of the first: prayer is not about using the right words. The words themselves do not matter. Paul writes, “For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” (Romans 8:26 NKJV) But when our words are empty, not spoken with true intention, “vain repetitions” of all the “right phrases”, they are of no effect. Isn’t it easy to fall back into an automatic mode when we speak the Prayer! This will always be the danger of rote learning. But when we do understand the Prayer, it becomes so much more powerful to meditate upon its meaning as we pray, and more powerful again when we actively intend it.

However comfortable and familiar the Prayer may be to us, it is not just an attractively worded formula. It has substance and meaning, and it teaches us as much about the life in which the Prayer should be grounded as it does about prayer itself. The Lord’s Prayer is a blueprint for spiritual living.

This project began life in a small Bible study group, meeting in Canberra in late 2006. Our method was simple: taking one phrase of the Lord’s Prayer at a time, we looked at each image as it is used elsewhere in Scripture. From these, we drew insights and applied them to our understanding of the text under consideration. We then created short, simple tasks intended to be remembered and applied through the days following each session.

As the title suggests, this guide is about Living the Lord’s Prayer. It looks for the spiritual instructions found in the Prayer and the application of those principles. I pray that you will find it both easy to understand and challenging to apply. I hope that you will find this to be so much more than merely, “interesting”. Living the Lord’s Prayer must be more than an intellectual exercise if it is to make any impact upon your walk through life and upon the prayer which springs from that life.

As a final note, it is worth saying that the insight listed here are not intended to be exhaustive or authoritative. Though derived from the text, I do not pretend that they represent everything contained in those words, and I hope that you will be stimulated to enter your own journey with the Lord's words. To put it another way, there is no substitute for your own study and application. This guide outlines the way we approached the task in relation to the Lord's Prayer, although I would venture to suggest it applies equally well to any portion of Scripture. I urge you to add your own insights, and especially to confirm them in your own life. In the end, whether you agree with my conclusions or not, I hope you come to see the great benefit and pleasure of Living the Lord's Prayer.

"Our Father ..."

A few weeks ago I realised something. Again. Something that I already knew, because I remembered that I'd realised it before, and just forgotten it. Possibly more than once. I realised that I spend way too much time on my phone playing Patience. I'm sure you've got your own go-to time-waster. Scrabble With Friends, or whatever. I've tried Bubble Pop, but nothing does to for me quite like Spider Patience. I suppose the thing that made this particular realisation different from all the other times was the accompanying thought. That was something along the lines of, "There are things I'd really LIKE to do with all this time I spend playing Spider Patience." Not, "things I COULD do", but, "things I'd LIKE to do". I was motivated to make a change.

One of those things was writing this study on The Lord's Prayer. We had run a study group on it years ago and I had the notes almost ready to go. I'd really LIKE to use that time putting that together. I'd thought about it several times in years gone by, it was achievable, even desirable. So, following my epiphany I loaded the notes onto my phone, making the mental commitment that whenever I sat down to play a couple of games of spider patience, I would turn to my notes instead. BOOM! Problem solved! I was feeling pretty happy with myself and my shiny newfound pastime.

Over the following weeks, I think I opened that file once and did a little extra research. On the plus side, though, I think I progressed another ten levels in Spider Patience.

Then I shared this with a group of friends. What had I learned from this? Even when I felt that I was motivated enough to make a change to my patience-playing existence, I fell back into time-wasting, because however strong I felt my enthusiasm was for something really valuable, my motivation to play patience was stronger. And that illustrates what is so important about, “Our Father”.

The word “Father” holds interesting connotations as it used in Scripture. Sure, there is the warm fuzzy version - “Abba” (Mark 14:36; Romans 8:15), meaning something like “Daddy” - against which “Father” sounds stiff and formal. But Jesus uses “Father” in the prayer, not “Abba”, and there must be a reason for that.

Jesus has a really interesting conversation with the Jews in John chapter 8. There’s that very famous confrontation over the woman caught in adultery at the start of the chapter, but once she’s sent on her way, the debate intensifies to the point where they’re ready to stone Jesus, and eventually he slips through the crowd and disappears. But look at the way, “Father” gets used here:

37 “I know that you are Abraham’s descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. 38 I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father.” 39 They answered and said to Him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham. 40 But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. 41 You do the deeds of your father.” Then they said to Him, “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God.” 42 Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. 43 Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. 44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. (John 8:37-44 NKJV)

The Jews are trying to hang onto the fact that they are descended from Abraham, as though that is their saving grace, but Jesus points to something quite different. Jesus acknowledged that they are descendants of Abraham, but he is not their father. The father Jesus is talking about here is the source of your actions. Your true “father” is the one who inspires you. Now, take that idea, and look at some of the other things Jesus said.

Then another of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” But Jesus said to him, “Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead.” (Matthew 8:21,22)

And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.” (Matthew 12:49,50)

But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. (Matthew 23:8,9)

John the Baptist agrees.....

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (Matthew 3:7-10, cf. Luke 3:7-17)

Doesn't that put a different slant on things!

“Our Father”: To be moved by God is entirely different from any other motivation we might claim or experience. My own personal motivations are measured one against another: I can be full of good intentions, but if another motivation overpowers it, I am simply helpless. My good intentions become null and void. But to be motivated by God, to make Him the reason and the power behind my actions, that is quite another story.

The question becomes, then, how? How can I make the Lord my motivation, instead of my own “willpower”? Well, I found the renewed commitment to actually begin my appointed task, by acknowledging my weakness before friends. I begin by recognising that my own motivations, however well-intentioned, were lacking and I was powerless without Him. Admitting this before a trusted friend our mentor can be a great help. It holds us to account. But, in a sense, it doesn't really matter whether we are honest with another person. That's just a useful tool. What matters is that we are honest with our Lord and with ourselves.

REGIONAL SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR:

our proposed first appointment to a new form of ministry

It is my great pleasure as President, to announce the Council of Ministers' expectation that Sarah Walker will shortly be ordained as our first Regional Spiritual Director. Sarah was raised in the New Church in Perth, and she has been active in the New Church throughout her life. No doubt many of you will be familiar with her regular contributions to Family Retreats. Beyond that, Sarah has been participating in Logopraxis



since 2016, and has been leading a number of Logopraxis groups as well. She has been studying at the Australian New Church College since 2018, and she's combined all of this experience into various talks she's given via

the college's "Emmaus Road" project. She is now close to the completion of her formal studies, and in doing so has submitted to the Council a request for ordination along with her "vision for ministry" that outlines what she hopes her ministry will look like in the years ahead (more on that below). This vision is a sensible next step in a Providential progress for Sarah, and as such the Council and NCIA are happy to support and endorse it.

We are all aware of declining interest in traditional services, and opening up our vision to new forms of ministry is part of our desire to meet the spiritual needs of future generations. Following its paper, *The Church in the Future*, issued in 2003, the Council of Ministers spent some time reimagining ministry: reaffirming its core values and goals, but reframing it for new contexts and challenges. What emerged was the role of the Regional Spiritual Director (RSD).

While identified as a ministry of the New Church in Australia, the activity of the RSD was not seen in the traditional sphere, but opened the possibilities of serving new expressions of what it means to be "church". Our definitions were deliberately loose. Firstly, the Council understood that we did not know what those new forms would be and we were unable to define something we ourselves had no experience of. Secondly, it allows those forms to evolve over time, given the changing needs of the community at large. The role of the RSD is open to any person, male or female, expressing a call to serve the Lord in ways unique to each individual. The course of study offered by the Australian New Church College was seen as fitting training for such individuals, helping them explore and affirm their emerging sense of ministry.

While Sarah is also recognised as a lay worship leader, it is in Logopraxis that she sees her ministry finding its primary expression. The Council look forward to watching Sarah's work develop, and we hope that the rest of the church will similarly rejoice in this new expression of ministry.

The following is taken from Sarah's vision for ministry.

"When I hear the word ministry, my mind immediately thinks that it is nothing other than the way one responds to the Word as the Lord in their life and how they live from this. So in that sense we all have a ministry that we are

called to and I'm going to do my best to describe what that feels and looks like for me. ...

Mission statement (celestial)

Practice the Word and stay open to the life from His love that is offered to me from this.

Vision statement (spiritual)

Offering to and working with those people who are searching for connection with the Lord Introducing others to the power of Word to transform the life of their minds and hence how they live and move in their day to day existence.

Supporting others in experiencing their own personal process through the Texts of Divine Revelation.

Facilitating others to connect in communities where the focus is in a life of living from the Word.

Core values and strategy (natural)

... Whilst the mission and the vision statements are fairly generic and could apply to many different forms of ministry, it is the Logopraxis approach that I am drawn and called to. So I am going to frame the core values and strategy or the natural manifestation of the spiritual and celestial elements of my ministry, in terms of what I feel called to offer to the Logopraxis community. And by saying that I feel "called to it" simply means that it is where my heart and my loves are most excited and ignited and where I feel a greater sense of "being" in, of "being" in the Lord. Where I feel myself unfolding into the Divine.

- The Word is what is offered for the regeneration of the human mind because it is the Lord
- We can only know the Lord through another and by offering to another
- Variety is heavenly
- The Lord is always present, infinite and whole in His fullness whereas we are finite and therefore always working from an appearance or an understanding that is limited but this is the eternal process of the Lord becoming known to us

Conclusion

Ministry is an unfolding into the authentic self, which is the self of the Lord within us. It's a difficult thing to articulate and put into a practical, external manifestation that is specific to outcomes or based on a future vision because part of living from the Word as your life, is about trusting in the unknown tomorrow and staying present in the moment of now, as that is where the Lord is. And the life as our soul, as we experience it in our mind, which is felt in our physical body, reminds us that we are alive and awake if we remember to be present to it."

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## LOGOPRAXIS

A spiritual community based on the practice of the Word : online and face to face groups  
<http://logopraxis.online> Email inquires: [enquire@logopraxis.online](mailto:enquire@logopraxis.online)

## THE NEW CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

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## PERTH GENERAL CHURCH GROUP

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