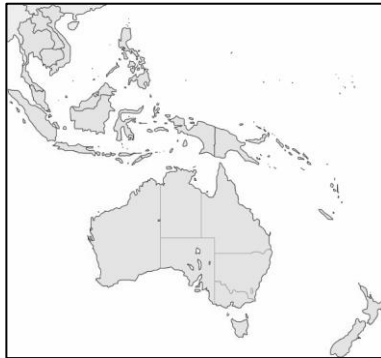


THE NEW AGE

Journal of The New Church in Australia and New Zealand

Volume 137 No. 3 SUMMER 2020-2021



Issued by The New Church in Australia
4 Shirley Road, Roseville NSW 2069

THE NEW CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

PRESIDENT Rev David Moffat P O Box 2224 Mt Waverley VIC 3149 0402 944 889	TREASURER Mr Graham Hanna 75 Regent Street Bonnells Bay NSW 2264 02 4973 4141	SECRETARY Mr Kevin Attwater P O Box 9043 Port Macq NSW 2444 02 6582 7229
--	--	---

SOCIETIES AND GROUPS ARE LOCATED AT

ADELAIDE 287 Oaklands Road Marion SA 5043 08 8277 1891	Leader Mrs June Johnson 33 Freebairn Drive Hallett Cove SA 5158 08 8326 9663	Secretary Mrs June Johnson 33 Freebairn Drive Hallett Cove SA 5158 08 8326 9663
BRISBANE 1/24 Railway Terrace Dutton Park QLD 4102	Minister Rev Darren Brunne 9-11 Dunbar Road Burpengary East QLD 4505 0421 319 252	Secretary Mr Darren Lawler P O Box 408 Woodridge QLD 4114
MELBOURNE Wadham House Community Centre, 52 Wadham Parade, Mount Waverley VIC 3149	Minister Rev David Moffat P O Box 2224 Mt Waverley VIC 3149 0402 944 889	Secretary Helmut Lopaczuk P O Box 257 Monbulk VIC 3793
BALLARAT 318 Fussell Street Ballarat VIC 3350 03 5331 5638	Leader Mr Len Robinson 318 Fussell Street Ballarat VIC 3350 03 5331 5638	Contact Len & Judy Robinson 318 Fussell Street Ballarat VIC 3350 03 5331 5638
PERTH GROUP		Secretary Mrs Lyn Rocke 20/10 Williamson Way Trigg WA 6029 08 9243 5251
SYDNEY 4 Shirley Road Roseville NSW 2069 02 9416 7026	Minister Rev Howard Thompson 4 Shirley Road Roseville NSW 2069 02 9416 7026/0432 357 475	Secretary Mr Graham Hall 263 Trafalgar Street Annandale NSW 2 02 9692 0941
CANBERRA	Convenor Philip Richards 02 6282 1157 philip.richards01234@gmail.com	

THE NEW AGE

The Official Journal of the New Church in Australia
Editor/Publisher: Council of Ministers 4 Shirley Rd Roseville NSW 2069
New Church in Australia website: www.newchurch.net.au

THE NEW CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

INDEX OF CONTENTS

Editorial	page 2
Christmas Sermon: The Birth of Jesus By Rev. Peter Buss Sr.	page 3
President's Page David Moffat	page 8
Philip Island Adventure Resort: July 2nd - 8th	page 10
Society Reports	page 11
Five-Minute Swedenborg Talks	page 16
Swedenborg, Dickens and "A Christmas Carol"	page 19
Summer Online/Zoom Church activities during January 2021	page 22
... And finally	page 24

Editorial

From now on for a few months it's likely to be hot. At times, very hot. Maybe for several days. The Bureau of Meteorology issues a fairly detailed checklist of essential care during heatwaves. Most are obvious, like drink much more water and wear light loose clothes. One caught my eye, which was to always take note of available shade areas, remembering that over the course of a day, this will change.

I've always liked the effect of shade. If you go on a suburban roadside walk on a sunny day, you get an instant change whenever you get the odd ten metres of shade on your path from a building or tree. Suddenly it's cooler! You can sometimes even notice a pleasant breeze, but then bang, you're back out in it, direct sun.

The Bible offers us several welcome verses about shade: One you will know is Psalm 121:5, "The Lord is your keeper, the Lord is your shade at your right hand." Two others are, "For You have been a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat." (Isaiah 25:4) and "I have covered you with the shade (or shadow) of my hand so that I may plant the heavens." (Isaiah 51:16)

What I would like you to notice is how, in the physical world, all shade comes about from something higher to something lower where the shade is. You can't make shade at ground level! So this fits very well with the idea in those three verses above that the Lord offers us shade from burning heat (or exhaustion in being too flustered or feeling angry with someone...)

We stand under the Lord and recover and regain ourselves with his overarching care. How do we do that? One way is to just think about the Lord and something you know about him. Or think of how you – or all of us – are unable to do everything just by ourselves. Realise there's a greater love and wiser understanding than any of us have, and that we can trust it. Or just picture yourself under the Lord's care.

Over the summer, find comfort in the welcome shade and find strength and renewal in being under the loving care of your heavenly Father.

Christmas sermon: The Birth of Jesus by Rev. Peter M. Buss Sr.



In the Bible story of Jesus being born in Bethlehem, His birth on earth represents His birth in our hearts. His birth in us is the creation of unselfish love in our hearts. We cannot create this; only He can do it.

Before He can come to us we must do our part - obedience to His law, shunning the evils forbidden in the Ten commandments, doing good to the best of our abilities. The story of His birth

follows those actions in our lives.

Luke 2:1: "And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place when Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city."

Rome was the earthly government at that time. It brought order - subject to its whims. It represents the external government of our own reasoning power - that ordered, logical process which can amass legions of thoughts in patterns and attack a problem with ruthless force.

The Emperor called a census. He wanted to know how many people he had so he could tax them better. This tells of our life, when we are trying to be good. We too gather our mental powers, put the things of our minds into a more proper order so that we can live our lives. We do it from a rather worldly perspective. We feel that we are good, and that we have the power to order our lives.

Think of that census. Think of all those families criss-crossing the land, each going to the place from whence they came. Remember that when the tribes came into Canaan hundreds of years earlier, each was given an inheritance,

page 4

and in fact the families' genealogies were kept in their original cities, recording each birth and all the descendants. It made sense that Rome would call such a census in Judea and Galilee.

This shaking up of the families represent our re-ordering of our minds as we try to live good lives, obedient to God.

But unknown to Caesar or to Herod, one journey was taking place which would change the course of history. It was of the Lord's providence that the census took place, and that Joseph, who was living in Nazareth, not in Bethlehem, would make a journey. For while we are trying to order our minds, rearranging our priorities, there is a part of our mind which is lifted into a new realm.

Luke 2:4: "And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David."

Joseph was a carpenter - working with tools of iron on wood, shaping the wood into useful items. He represents the human understanding - perhaps particularly that part of the understanding which is interested in religious and truly moral matters. Joseph, carving wood into pleasant forms, stands for how we use our understanding to mold our goodness, believing that this will bring us true happiness.

But true happiness comes from a much more miraculous source. It comes from the Lord incarnate, flowing into our hearts from within.

However, as we use our understanding to seek for the meaning of life and of goodness, we are lifted up into higher thoughts. The journey of Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Judea, and especially to Bethlehem, represent a spiritual journey - the uplifting of our understandings to see deeper truths about life. Bethlehem, which means "the house of bread," represents the deepest meaning of the Lord's Word, a spiritual understanding of truth. So as Joseph went up to Bethlehem, our understandings are secretly raised up to see deeper truths. We think it's because we are working on understanding

life. Joseph thought he obeyed Caesar's command, whereas it was the Lord's providence that led him to Bethlehem. So it is the Lord who secretly uplifts our thoughts.

David, the great king of Israel, represents spiritual thought also. Joseph was of the house of David. Our understanding seems to be very practical and earthly, but it is endowed with the power to see above the body and beyond the world. It is "of the house and lineage of David."

Luke 2:5: "To be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child."

As Joseph was promised to Mary, so our human understanding is promised in love to something rather precious inside of us. Mary, the virgin, represent the innocent affection for truth. Each of us has a strain of idealism deep within us. The understanding receives impulses from many sources, but as we try to obey the Lord it promises itself to the spiritual Mary - to a love of more innocent, apparently naive truth. We fall in love with ideals and with dreams of unselfish, worthwhile love.

We all have this idealism, for the Lord has secretly implanted it in our beings from the moment we are born, Every lovely feeling, every true thought, is stored within us by our loving God and becomes our spiritual Mary.

Joseph naturally thought that his marriage to Mary would produce a child who would bring them happiness. We think that if we marry our understanding to our ideals, we will build our happiness. And in one sense that is true. Yet in fact, it is the power of almighty God inflowing into our idealism that produces true love. As Joseph was not the father of Jesus, but was his natural guardian, so our understanding plays a role in our future happiness, but true love is a Divine birth within us. This is the true message of Christmas - that He who came to earth, He alone can warm people's hearts with love.

Luke 2:6: "And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered."

page 6

It took centuries for the Lord to be born on earth. During all that time He prepared people for His birth, and because of those promises, they looked forward to it.

We lose our innocence quite early, and feel, perhaps, that we are very selfish people. It takes time for the Lord to create love in our hearts. We'd love to become kind, totally loving people in an instant. That birth needs time and patience. But its time does come!

Luke 2:7: "And she brought forth her first born son and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for Him in the inn."

He could have been born anywhere on earth - in the most splendid palace, heir to worldly power and might. He chose a humble stable. Partly this was because He didn't come to be an earthly power. As He said, "Who is greater? He who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves." (Luke 22:27).

But the reasons were greater than that. Even in Bethlehem He could not be born in the inn. The inn represents a place of instruction, a place where people gather and exchange thoughts. But the inn was full, even as in our own minds, we often think we know it all.

So He was born in a stable, where the horses feed. A horse, which carries us where we want to go, represents an understanding of specific truths which show us the way in life. It represents an understanding of spiritual truth. And He was wrapped in swaddling cloths, which represent simple, innocent truths, and laid in the place where horses come to eat. Innocent truths are the ones we are tempted to scoff at - simple ideas like "It's good to be good," or "It's wrong to hurt others," or "I can use my abilities to bring happiness to those I love." These are among the most fundamental teachings to be found in all of Scripture.

In other words, the Lord, when He descends into our minds and hearts, finds that in many parts of our lives our spiritual "inns" are full. We think we know

very well how to make our way in life. So He chooses instead to move us with His love in a special part of our mind - where we seek spiritual truths, and we do so from innocence.

We all have a spiritual manger in our minds. Every person has an innocent spot, where she or he wants to learn, and where she feels humble in learning ideas which will make life so very much better than it is now.

Conclusion: Our Saviour wants to come to all of us. He created us for heaven, and in order that we may know the joy of heaven He teaches us His laws. When we respond, then His love is born in our hearts, and that birth follows this orderly pattern:

1. All the ideas of our minds are brought into order - apparently by our own efforts. (The census).
2. A spiritual journey takes place. Our understanding is gradually raised up from thinking only of worldly values into a new light. We take our idealism (our spiritual Mary) with us into that light, to the spiritual Bethlehem.
3. The Lord is not born in those truths which we have filled and perverted with purely worldly values (the inn).
4. Instead He is born into those innocent truths from His Word which we have always trusted and loved, and easily understood (our manger).
5. They are wrapped in simple, clear observations (the swaddling cloths) which protect our newfound love as it grows within us.

* * * * *

Acknowledgement: This 'sermon' is in fact a personal explanation of the spiritual meaning of Luke 2:1-7 which comes from the New Christian Bible Study website, under 'The Bible' in the top menu and then in 'Popular Bible Stories'. This provides very many Biblical explanations, some in audio and some in text. It is well worth looking through and we acknowledge its use.

I imagine that many people in Australia, like me, have looked forward to the end of this year. It's been something of a Hollywood blockbuster hasn't it? Fire, hailstorms, plague: 2020 has had it all. I wonder how you're all holding up, and whether you're looking forward to 2021? I wonder what it will bring?

At the moment, the view from my desk is a hopeful one. I know that many people have suffered many things we would not wish on our enemies, but there's a sense that this particular episode is behind us, and better times are ahead. We are very fortunate in Australia and New Zealand to have come through the coronavirus pandemic relatively unscathed so far, and we have much to be thankful for: our government's efforts, along with our health workers and emergency services. Many other countries have not acted as decisively, nor have they been as fortunate.

Of course, we don't know what's around the corner, we never do. And I think that's a mercy. I am glad that 12 months ago I was blissfully unaware of everything 2020 has brought us.

While Pam and I were on holiday – we happened to leave Melbourne for a week on the first day they opened the so-called, “ring of steel” – I picked up a book called, *Learned Optimism*, by Martin Seligman. Since then, I've been sharing it with anyone who cares to listen. What impressed me so very much was his observation that pessimism is borne of an attitude that takes SPACE, TIME and PERSON out of adversity. In other words, the optimist looks at difficulties and realises three very important things:

1. Pervasiveness: Just because this is bad, doesn't mean everything is bad,
2. Persistence: Just because it's bad now, doesn't mean it will always be bad, and,
3. Personalisation: It isn't my fault.

This accords with Swedenborg's words, on thinking spiritually:

“There are three things in general that perish from the literal sense of the Word when it becomes the internal sense, namely, what is of time, what is of

space, and what is of person. The reason is that in the spiritual world there is neither time nor space, these two belonging to nature; and therefore it is said of those who die, that they pass out of time, and leave behind all that is of time. That in the spiritual world nothing is regarded as determined to person is because directing the attention in speech to person narrows and limits the idea, instead of extending it and making it unlimited.” (Heavenly Secrets, paragraph 5253)

The final thing Seligman points out, although it's very much at the end of the book, is the importance of use. Seeking a solution to rising levels of depression (the book was written in 1990, and things have not improved on that score!), he points to our NEED to dedicate the self to a greater cause.

“Eternal rest,” he said, “is not idleness, for idleness produces languor, sluggishness, numbness and drowsiness of the mind, and consequently of the whole body; and these are death, not life, much less the eternal life which the angels of heaven enjoy. Eternal rest, therefore, is a rest that dispels these states and enables a man to live; and it is only this that elevates the mind. It consists therefore in some pursuit or occupation by which the mind is aroused, quickened and delighted; and this follows according to the use from which, in which and for which the work is performed. Thus the whole heaven is viewed by the Lord as a sphere of uses, and every angel is an angel according to his use. The delight of use bears him along as a favourable current does a ship, causing him to be in eternal peace, and in the rest of peace. This is the meaning of eternal rest from labours. ...” (True Christian Religion, paragraph 694)

I do so enjoy finding the truths and application of the Word emerging, almost unbidden, in other writings.

Well, I wish you all a hopeful and happy Christmas, and a productive and useful New Year.

If the Lord is for us, who can stand against us?!

With every blessing.

David

Philip Island Family Camp July 2nd – 8th 2021

Lately I've been thinking about an episode of "The Twilight Zone" titled "A Stop at Willoughby." It's the story of a businessman named Gart Williams. He's tired of his miserable job and wife, and unable to sleep properly at home, he starts sleeping on the train each night after work. He wakes to find the train stopped and that he is now in a 19th-century railway car, deserted except for himself. The sun is bright outside, and as he looks out the window, he discovers that the train is in a town called Willoughby. He eventually learns that it is July 1888. He learns that this is a "peaceful, restful place, where a man can slow down to a walk and live his life full measure". Are you feeling a bit like Gart Williams? Maybe, hopefully, you don't have his marital troubles, but I think a lot of people are getting frustrated with life. Coronavirus lockdowns, travel restrictions, civil unrest around the world... maybe you need to find your own Willoughby? An idyllic place, where things are simpler... if that's you, let me encourage you to seriously consider joining us at Philip Island in July 2021.

This has long been a favourite venue for our camps, and we're heading back there because quite honestly this is a favourite venue for the kids. There's just more for them to do than anywhere else that we've experienced. Here's a list of activities:

Solar heated swimming pools (2)	Raft Making
Indoor heated pool, spa & sauna	Archery (3)
6 acre lakes (2)	Team Rescue (2)
Giant swings (3)	Tennis/Basketball courts (3)
High ropes courses (2)	Sand Volley Ball (3)
Low ropes courses (3)	Campfire pits (2)
Initiative courses (4)	Bouldering walls (2)
Flying Foxes (6)	Indoor Rock climbing wall
Canoeing (2)	Sports ovals (3) Cricket / Aussie Rules / Soccer

Yes, it will be cold in July, but take special note of the heated pools, spa and sauna. As usual we'll have information up on www.newchurch.net.au to make expressions of interest and bookings. We have a minimum number for 55 people to make this camp a "go," and we have to let them know by February 1 that we're going to proceed. So think it over, and feel free to send questions to me at todd@hurstvilleneewchurch.com and I hope to see you in Willoughby, I mean, Philip Island.

Todd Beiswenger



SOCIETY REPORTS

ADELAIDE

Thursday mornings coffee and chat 10.30 am to 12.00 pm are active in the Church hall. Along with optional jewellery making classes by arrangement with Ruth Barr.

Four computers all with windows 10, updated from windows 7, by Raymond Nicholls, are available in the Church hall for general use, research or practical teaching of use by June.

All the best wishes to Ken Johnson who turned 80 on June 7th. Ken keeps the Church grounds in tip top condition, our large lawn area needs regular mowing.

page 12

The Church-owned former manse has recently had new tenants installed, the rent received is our major form of income and is vital to the ongoing operation of the Adelaide Church which only has a very small congregation. We wish our friends in Victoria optimism that you will soon get on top of the pandemic as we in S.A. are keen to travel there.

Randall Rabone

PERTH

News for this edition is not a great deal different from our last report. Services are continuing as before shared by Rev Moffat and David Walker with the occasional one being conducted by Sarah Walker. Sarah tends to hold a workshop rather than a formal service and we look forward to her next one on December 6th at the home of Ros and David Walker. Trevor and David together will conduct our Christmas service on December 20th when we look forward to a special lunch provided by the ladies as a Christmas celebration.

One highlight in November was a brunch held in honour of one of our number Claire (née Hickman) who turns 80 on November 29. A number of ladies met at a lovely cafe in West Perth (photo below). This cafe was very near where Claire had grown up in what was then the manse for Reverend Will Hickman and family. The building had been their local grocery store and butcher. A few of us took a short walk to look at the manse as it is now. It holds happy memories for many of us. I remember staying there as a teenager and then changing into my "going away outfit" on my wedding night some 53 years ago. Another lady remembers going there when the Riley family lived there for her younger brother to be babysat by Maureen Riley, wife of our then minister Reverend Norman Riley. So it was a lovely morning celebrating with Claire and having a trip down memory lane. Our friend Lyn Rocke was unable to be with us, and has not been with us for quite some time due to health issues of both herself and husband Cliff. Hopefully we will see them at our Christmas celebrations.

All in Perth send our very good wishes for the Christmas season to all friends throughout the country. May it be a time of happy celebrations as we remember the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May 2021 be a year we can all look forward to, free of all the issues 2020 has thrown at us.

Respectfully submitted,
Joy Moffat



These celebration photos are linked with the Perth report which is on the previous page.



BRISBANE

What a most unexpected year this has been for us all, but here in Queensland we seem to have escaped the worst of the restrictions because of the Covid virus and are at last almost back to the new normal (you know what we mean!) Our hearts go out to those who have lost loved ones, struggled with ill health or are enduring the terrible financial burdens that restricted working conditions have forced upon some.

Our services have been ongoing since July, but gathering for lunch after the Family Service is a thing of the past... just tea or coffee (from a very professional machine that has been supplied by our enthusiastic newcomers, Rev Sean and Sarah Bao, for which we are most grateful.) Guang Bin Liu continues to record our services most ably and we are extremely grateful to him for his rapidly expanding expertise in this field.

Rev Brunne has managed to keep up the weekly podcast with ever increasing listeners, which is very encouraging, and now we head towards Christmas with plans afoot for the Christmas Pageant and Carol Service on Sunday, 20 December.

We had the great pleasure in October of presenting Rev Ian Arnold with the book of tributes after so many years of dedicated service to so many New Churchmen and women, both here in Australia and overseas. It was a very special moment as you can imagine and thank you to all who contributed to this initiative.

Happy Christmas to everyone and have a safe, healthy and peaceful New Year.

Gaye Heldon

NEW CHURCH IN VICTORIA

- New entry for the next census

Alexis & Neville Jarvis added to the Jarvis Christmas lunch count with the arrival of another grandson, Joshua Clive Holst-Joshie. Their daughter Marian gave birth on 6 August and mum, dad, and Joshua's siblings Shane and Isabel, are delighted with the addition to their family.

- Good news for jewellers

A milestone event was achieved in the lives of Karl and Rose Robinson on 11 November when they celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary. This gives a new meaning to the phrase "we're from the sixties". Carbon-based congratulations to these great stalwarts of the community in Victoria.

- Goings-on

Church activities continue with members and friends accessing Zoom for Bible study and Question Time during the week, and Logopraxis-type sessions and traditional Services on Sundays via YouTube and Zoom.

- Renovations

To a great sigh of relief, renovations were completed and handover took place on 20 November. The event was celebrated over a lunch accompanied by a lovely drop of very young wine (grape juice) and attended by Board members, David Moffat and the Director and Project Manager of Storebuild, the company engaged to do the work. The finalised layout was heartily endorsed by all and the Board were very pleased with the way the company engaged with us, listened to us and provided guidance on technical, design and regulatory matters.

There just remain the chattels to decide upon (furniture, electrical, audio and presentation equipment).

Members and friends attended an inaugural Service and viewing of the premises on Dec 6.

Helmut Lopaczuk, Secretary, NCIV

ROSEVILLE (SYDNEY)

It's been a strange year, and it is proving to be a strange Christmas here in Sydney as, due to health problems, we haven't had the usual people on deck to do the work required to hold the normal seasonal activities. Most telling was that Debra, our minister's wife, needed to have a major back operation, which she has now had. Happily it went very well, but she will take a few months before resuming normal levels of functioning.

There's not a lot to report this quarter. We are very pleased with our new church sign though. It looks quite smart and gets nice compliments. An interesting story is that during COVID we had a Queensland fellow, who had been stranded in Sydney, wander in from the street one Sunday morning before the service, and though he initially didn't intend to stay for long ended up coming back for services almost every week for about two months.

It will be an interesting and different New Year's Eve this year when Howard, our minister, plans to have the church open during the countdown to midnight for a gathering. It seems altogether appropriate to mark the arrival of the new year in a way that will help us remember what we have been through during 2020 and to think a bit more soberly about the future.

From everyone here in Sydney, a very happy Christmas and a blessed New Year to you all.

Wayne Kasmar

Five-minute Swedenborg audio-talks



One minister's wife said, (after attending a session on some topic at a New Church Conference in Britain), "Something does **not** have to be long to be good!" More recently, we have the short phrase, "Less is more".

The Swedenborg Association of Australia is at the start of the idea of creating at least a dozen five-minutes-**only** audio-visual introductions to spiritual and religious topics in Swedenborg's writings.

To date, we have the first twelve topics which are more or less straight teachings you might expect, which will be followed by another dozen of more applied, more personal teachings. Five minutes allows for 800 words and not one more.

In those brief five minutes, you keep to the point and provide just the essentials, hopefully interesting people to want to find out more.

Here are the first 12 topics:

God – Life after Death – Jesus Christ – The Bible – Correspondences (Symbols) – Life – Good and Evil – Freedom and Choice – Angels and Spirits – Our Self – Religions – Rebirth/Being Spiritual.

Here is the first 'go' at the first five-minutes on "God".

"First of all, God is the reality in everything that there is: the universe, each and everything in it whether it's alive like a bird or lifeless like a stone, and of course this includes you and me. God is all of that and none of it would be there if God wasn't.

Next, God is much more than just a life-force. God loves and loves wisely. By love Swedenborg means that God wishes everything well and wants it to have its place and use in being there. God actually loves every single thing there is, feels for it and wishes it well as if God has only got just that one thing and nothing else, and that includes you and me too. So God is incredibly involved in it all.

Finally there is what Swedenborg calls influx or we can call it flowing in. God keeps everything in place by flowing into it. Think about keeping a feather floating in the air by gently blowing underneath it. You can't see the blowing but you can see the hovering feather. If God didn't do that all the time then everything would no longer exist and just disappear.

page 18

Now, all of those big ideas point to the fact that God is not somewhere but is everywhere which means that there is nowhere God isn't. Some utterly remote galaxy or black hole, a centimetre beyond the tip of your nose, a neurone in someone's brain, and in a decision that someone makes. God is there, holding it there, fully involved.

But it doesn't feel like that to us. It feels just the opposite, and it needs to. We feel self-contained, and our own boss. Swedenborg says that this is God too, creating the impressions we live with so that we seem to ourselves to be completely free to be us. If it wasn't like this, and we felt God is there, then we wouldn't have freedom or be able to choose or make decisions, or think or be moved by someone else's pain or tenderness. So while God is absolutely everything like we said, God must seem to us to not be there at all. I'll repeat that: God must seem, as far as we are concerned, to not be there at all. And this fits in very well with what we said about God loving us. God surely wants us to enjoy being who we are, which is what love by definition always wants for someone else.

Swedenborg puts it like this: The whole basis of love is to love others outside of oneself, to want to be one with them, and to bless them from oneself. This definition applies to God but it also applies to us because, as we said before, we exist from God. We are not God, we are from God and if you like, we draw on God. What this means is that the same qualities that exist in God are there in us as well, our best human qualities ... to feel compassion, wish well towards, and have delight in people for who and what they are. And all the time, it feels like it is just us. That is our God-given freedom.

Another important aspect of God is the infinite greatness that God has. God is all-knowing, all-present and all-powerful. But we shouldn't think about this as being far more knowing or present or powerful than we are. God isn't a bigger version of what we are. God is totally different than we are, and exists on another level than ours.

So when we say God is all-knowing, it goes way beyond amassing every bit of information; it means that God knows everything, every outcome that can come about, every cause of everything being there. It's the same with God's

all-presence which is completely and simultaneously universal. And God's all-power is not like any despot or autocrat, nor is it about God intervening and mopping up our mistakes. It means that God can create, reveal, renew, heal, provide and sustain everything.

When we talk about God we just have to use huge concepts to even get somewhere towards the truth about God. So it really helps to come back to the love of God, the wisdom of God, and the joy and purpose of God. These things we understand; they are on our level but they are so true about God. These are human qualities. We are human. God is human too, but divinely human.

And let's finish with the reassuring truth about God that God is always the same, always completely what God always is. God can't and won't be anything else than constant."

We hope these will be useful to people seeking a clear and personal feel for spiritual things. Yes, it's all been done before, but every age needs its own versions...

Swedenborg, Charles Dickens and "A Christmas Carol"



Charles Dicken's story, A Christmas Carol, is part of Christmas celebrations, usually with a showing of the movie of it on television. As you'll remember, the story centres on Ebenezer Scrooge with his "Bah Humbug" cynicism about the whole of Christmas. He is contacted by a deceased business partner, Jacob

Marley, who tells Scrooge that three spirits will visit him, which they each do: the spirits of Christmas Past, Christmas Present and Christmas Future. Scrooge has reluctantly given a Christmas Day holiday to his clerk, Bob Cratchit, whose poor family includes disabled Tiny Tim. (This is important because it is the very first selfless good decision.)

page 20

A Christmas Carol is a story of the afterlife, of transformation, and redemption. The interesting thing is that Dickens wrote it fairly soon after being made aware of Swedenborg's 'Heaven and Hell'.

What follows are short extracts from three articles looking into Swedenborg, Dickens and A Christmas Carol. Before this, it is interesting to note that a New Church building in England, in Preston, in Lancashire, was used by Dickens in his novel "Hard Times" depicting the grimness of town life and people's abject poverty. The church was described in one part of this wretched story.

Let's begin with comments by Jane Williams-Hogan, drawing from Bernard Lang's 'Swedenborg and Dickens': Traces of Swedenborg's Influence in A Christmas Carol...

"The meeting with spirits is a central in the writings of Swedenborg whose book on Heaven and Hell was widely read in Victorian Britain. Dickens himself owned a copy, sent to him by the Swedenborg Society in London in 1841. In his letter of acknowledgement (September 9th 1841) Dickens writes that this book "will not go unread". The paper scrutinises the novel for traces of Swedenborg's influence. "

Next, a small part of a very long essay "Swedenborg's Enduring Influence: The Resurfacing of Heaven and Hell in Dickens's "A Christmas Carol", by Mary Lutze (1990)

Both Dickens's and Swedenborg's texts include descriptive accounts of the existence of a spiritual dimension where spirits wander unseen. Within the worlds described by Dickens and Swedenborg, light and heat are physical manifestations: light portrays Divine truth, and heat demonstrates Divine goodness and love. A thorough examination of the portrayals and characteristics of spiritual beings within Heaven and Hell and A Christmas Carol reveals noteworthy similarities and further confirms Emanuel Swedenborg as one of the sources of inspiration for Dickens's A Christmas Carol. These parallels could suggest a further influence of radical Swedenborgian religious theory on Dickens during a time period when the expected religious inspiration originated with the Church of England. A Swedenborgian influence on Dickens would also extend to a greater

influence over the inhabitants of Victorian England, based on the extensive impact Dickens made through his own publications.

(Mary Lutze later describes Dicken's wide interest in and openness to the supernatural, and his care not to be caught up in spiritualism. She adds that "Swedenborg's clear depiction of the spiritual world would have suited Dickens well, and quite probably sat there in his unconscious, affecting his reference to spiritual beings.)

Finally, an extract from a 40 minute audio presentation by Rev Jeremy Simons (a current New Church minister) in which he explores the possibility of Dickens unintentionally being the means of bringing basic Swedenborg teaching about the afterlife and spiritual influences to a large number of Victorian England members of the public.

"If Charles Dickens was sufficiently interested to include pieces of Heaven and Hell in A Christmas Carol, it suggests a proliferation of some awareness of Swedenborg's afterlife concepts among the general population.

This can hardly be proved, but it is nevertheless interesting. When Charles Dickens in his magazine "Household Words" spoke about the ideas of the New Jerusalem which had come to his notice, claiming them to be divine, it got a rebuttal from one New Church minister. But the real point is that Dickens was aware of these ideas."

Whatever the connection between Dickens and his knowledge of Swedenborg, the story, "A Christmas Carol" gives a credible and delightful account of the influences on us of spirits in other dimensions and of our own ability to be transformed from selfish and mean to tenderness and generosity which is the path of spiritual progress.

SUMMER ONLINE/ZOOM CHURCH ACTIVITIES DURING JANUARY 2020

Hi everyone,

Are you at a loose end over the summer? Bereft of your annual dose at New Church Family Retreat? Look no further! Find below some of the events taking place over the summer from churches across the nation, streamed directly into the comfort of your own home or hotel room!

Seriously though, given that our Family Retreat in the coming year is planned for the middle of the year and the socially isolated year we've all endured, we thought it would be an excellent time to let you know about all the things that you can enjoy in January.

Wishing you all a blessed Christmas and New Year.
David

At The Swedenborg Centre, Roseville in Sydney

The Swedenborg Centre event Zoom links below and further event details can also be found at www.swedenborg.com.au

Monday 11/1/21 Reading and reflecting on Gurdjieff's work in the light of Emanuel Swedenborg: 11am a chapter of "Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson" (also known as "All and Everything"). Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/702567371?pwd=MFYra0FnZmhXSHZXYlJ3VE5GMGkwZz09>

Tuesday 12/1/21 Swedenborg Centre Open Discussion, bring Q&A, ideas and insights from our life 2pm and again at 6pm. Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/124469612?pwd=NjlOZ3RpU2NwV1g1a2Zmb29ZL3ZsQT09>

Friday 15/1/21 Three readings and reflections on Swedenborg based on material from Dr Philip W Groves:

These are as follows:

11am Swedenborg's Life: A Dynamic Parable

2pm The Structure and Content of the Word

7pm Swedenborg's View Of The Individual

Zoom link (same link for all three sessions):

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/320544045?pwd=QjZtbUxvVk81b2dweUtZZTE3ZE9lZz09>

Saturday 16/1/21 Swedenborg Saturday event

10am Swedenborg's life and the usefulness and influence of his ideas

Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/476372484?pwd=WmNpdHRLd0twSmZDMENQRit3aE8zZz09>

At the Hurstville New Church

Service of Worship, Sunday mornings throughout January. Information published weekly on the New Church Google Group, or subscribe at

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCflPEk7DRiaq0eIL_xtwSIA

At the Melbourne New Church - from our new premises in Notting Hill, Melbourne Services of Worship, on Sunday 10th and 24th January, at 10:30am.

Subscribe at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnCukZugciX7TsZRKNi-dBw>

Email d_a_moffat@yahoo.com.au for further information

Bible Study, continuing our series on Genesis, on Monday 11th and 25th January, at 8:00pm. Email d_a_moffat@yahoo.com.au for further information

At the Australian New Church College

Emmaus Road, typically on Saturday mornings. Watch the New Church Google Group for information.

Further information can be found at <http://anccollege.org>

David Moffat

And finally

We wish everybody who gets to read this issue of
The New Age
every blessing for the celebration and meaning of Christmas

and that we join in prayer for the times to come
from next year onwards ~
grateful to the Lord for His many blessings,
conscious of our own responsibilities towards each other,
and acknowledging that truly, the Lord's Divine Providence
is within and over all eventualities,
looking to what is eternal, good and true.

MINISTERS' EMAIL ADDRESSES

Rev. David Moffat d_a_moffat@yahoo.com.au
Rev. Julian Duckworth julian@duckworth.me
Rev. David Millar dwmilla@gmail.com
Rev. Darren Brunne drbrunne@gmail.com
Rev. Howard Thompson revhathompson@gmail.com
Rev. Ian Arnold im.arnold@bigpond.com

RETIRED MINISTERS' CONTACT ADDRESSES

Rev Julian Duckworth 9 Catherine Street, Port Macquarie NSW 2444 0427 938 732
Rev. Ian Arnold 12 Norell Place, Eight Mile Plains QLD 4113 07 3841 2552
Rev. Trevor Moffat, Unit 137, Walridge Country Estate, 45 Berkshire Road
Forrestfield WA 6058 08 9359 5137 (m) 0427 995 879 moffattrevor1@gmail.com
Rev. John Teed, 46 Washington Lane Woodend VIC 3442 03 5427 1315

NON-ATTACHED MINISTERS

Rev. Brian O'Neill 0478 686 701 oneillpsychology@gmail.com

SWEDENBORG CENTRE

Mr. Joe Vandermeer (Director) Centre Address is: 4 Shirley Road, Roseville NSW 2069
Centre ph: 02 9416 2812 Joe mobile: 0402 202 456 website: www.swedenborg.com.au

AUSTRALIAN NEW CHURCH COLLEGE

Rev David Millar - Director of Spiritual Training - mob 0412 492 587
dwmilla@gmail.com website: anccollege.org email: enquiries@anccollege.org
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

THE NEW CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

Mr Kevin Attwater (Secretary) P O Box 9043 Port Macquarie NSW 2444
02 6582 7229 email: attwaterk@bigpond.com

HURSTVILLE SOCIETY OF THE GENERAL CHURCH

22 Dudley Street Penshurst NSW 2222 www.hurstvillenewchurch.com
Minister: Rev Todd Beiswenger 26 Dudley Street Penshurst NSW 2222
02 9580 1589 todd@hurstvillenewchurch.com

PERTH GENERAL CHURCH GROUP

The General Church in Perth: Aurora Circle 20 Clydesdale Road, McDougall House, Como
Rev Todd Beiswenger www.newchurch.org/perth-gcnj

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland Society 5 Ballarat Street Ellerslie Auckland NZ 0011 649 579 6819
Secretary: Mrs Lis Keal, 46 Daffodil Street, Titirangi. Auckland New Zealand
Ministers (Retired)

Rev. Richard Keyworth 7 Hekerua Road, Oneroa, Waiheke Island 1081 NZ
+64 21 1494020 r.j.keyworth@newchurch.org.nz

Rev John Sutton 59A Balmain Road, Birkenhead, Auckland 1310 NZ
0011 649 419 7509 johnsutton41@gmail.com