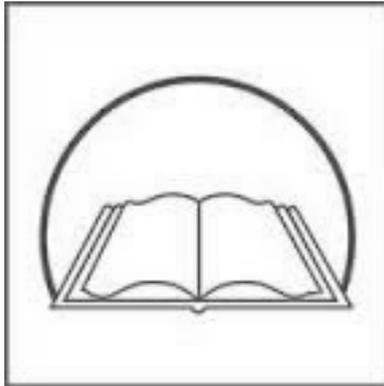


# THE NEW AGE

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## THE NEW AGE

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Ukraine has been, is, and will be very much in the news. Its heartache, tragedy, human suffering and human determination should lead us into prayer for each person involved, situations we will never know about, and the work towards an end to guns and bombs and the establishment of a just and lasting peace, hopefully by the time you read this.

Swedenborg Ukraine has not been in the news, but it is there, at least we hope it still is. One several fronts. First, if you google Swedenborg Ukraine you will find a website with a minister and contact details for both Eastern Ukraine and Western Ukraine, respectively, being Rev Dimitri Rogavoy contact [swedenborg.org.ua](http://swedenborg.org.ua) (which I tried but it didn't open), and Rev Alexander Vassilieff who offers a youtube presentation which had Swedenborg itis title and was a recording given in St Petersburg. Underneath each of these is a map of where Swedenborg activity happens in Kharkiv and Lviv.

Second, in the late 1990s I was contacted by a Sergey Loginov who lives or lived in Kherson, north of Crimea. He translated the Shorter Heaven and Hell which I had a hand in creating and we talked via emails. I was able to send him quite a large number of books over several years and a Steve Parrish book for his daughter Olexa who was then six. He sent me his paperback translation.

Lastly and certainly equal to everything else were reports via the Swedenborg Publishing Institute SPI of activity in Dnepopetrovsk and well-attended discussion meetings, with several photos (sorry, no longer available) showing young men and women standing and sitting around a pleasant room with books out and bookcases behind them. I recently checked Dnepopetrovsk and it is part of the large central city Dnipro (bombed around March 10th), so named by being on the large Dnieper River.

These people in places such as the Ukraine take nothing for granted. We have a lot to learn from them and hold them in our hearts.

## AN EASTER SERMON

## "THOMAS"

by Rev Peter M Buss

*He said to Thomas, 'Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.' Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed.'* John 20:27-29

In the wonderful events of Easter there is the account of the disciple Thomas, a story which will surely touch responsive chords in each one of us. The disciples had seen the Lord led away by the soldiers of the high priest. They knew that He had been tried and crucified, and it seemed that all their hopes, all the uplifting and thrilling things they had expected to happen, were now of no account. Jesus of Nazareth was no more; the prophet of Galilee was dead, and buried in a sepulchre.

They hadn't understood His teaching about rising again, nor about a heavenly kingdom, and so they assumed that therefore evil must have triumphed. But then women came who said that the sepulchre was empty, and Peter and John confirmed it. Yet they still feared, and gathered behind locked doors for fear that the Jews would wreak their anger on them.



Thomas wasn't there the first time the Lord appeared in a closed room and showed His disciples that He had indeed risen triumphant over death. But he was there the second time. It was a human failing to refuse their testimony, and say that only the evidence of his own eyes and hands would convince him. Yet it merited a rebuke from the Lord: "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."

The story of Thomas, when we see it spiritually, underlines the wonder of the Lord's glorification (making His human life Divine), and the manner in which He could then be fully-joined with all people. Thomas's spiritual meaning isn't specifically given in the Writings, but several things together

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make it fairly certain. Firstly, the whole drift of this account is to do with faith. Secondly, the name 'Thomas' means a twin, as the Greek name Didymus also does, which he is also called by in the gospels. Twins in the Word represent both good and truth, or faith and love; and Thomas here, because of the sequence in which he appears, seems to represent a type of faith.

Finally, one passage in Heaven and Hell (461) talks about Thomas as being connected with those who are mostly led by their senses. From these three things, we can conclude that he stands for a senses-based faith.

We are also told that the disciples were chosen because they were like the things which they represented. Thomas's attitude, that he wouldn't believe unless the evidence of his own senses proved the truth of the Lord's resurrection, very well mirrors the spirit of a sense-based faith, because it wants evidence, even proof, things shown to it, being unwilling to accept any other kind of dimension than the physical.

No doubt, when the other disciples spoke to Thomas, saying they'd seen the Lord, their words must have been compelling. With eyes full of wonder and excitement, they must have told him all that happened, what the Lord said to them, and how He looked. When he became doubtful, they may also have recalled Jesus' earlier comments, that He would rise from the dead, and their disbelief at the time. But nothing would suffice for Thomas. "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the nail prints, and thrust my hand in His side, I will not believe." The sense-based person says, "Show me! Let me see for myself, and only then will I believe."

There are many people in every generation who are like Thomas, and we should also realise that this trait is there in us as well, prompting us on similar lines. Such people - and us - haven't had firsthand sight of the Lord risen from the dead, nor standing before us with the print of the nails in His hands, and the wound of the spear in His side. Yet

they want that kind of assurance before they will believe, and they feel doubt about things they've heard put forward.

They're the doubters, like Thomas, people whose faith is uncertain. They may be negative, and have no living faith, saying in themselves they will wait for some physical, evidential assurance before committing. Or they may be people who are willing to believe, or are somewhat committed to a faith, yet they waver and vacillate - not between faith and doubt, but between faith and the promptings of their physical senses which can so quickly deceive.

The Lord can't come to people who are negative in their spirit. They're not disciples, because secretly they have already hardened their hearts against Him. They might say that they would believe if they were shown the truths of religion in some physical way, but actually they still wouldn't, even then. (see *Arcana Caelestia* 2588). They are negative not because of the absence of evidence but because that is the way they've decided to feel.

But wait; there are many senses-based people who can be led to heaven. They may be worldly-minded people who live shallow lives and may appear to do many wrong things; but in them there's a spirit which is affirmative to the Lord. They are disciples, as Thomas was, and they show their affirmation in various and maybe curious ways. Thomas was a disciple. He was a senses-minded man, given to doubt and having earthy attitudes. But he loved the Lord very much. When the Lord set His face to go to Jerusalem, where the leaders of the Jews were known to be plotting His death, it was Thomas who said to his fellow-disciples, "Let us go too, so that we may die with Him" (John 11:16). And when the Lord showed Himself to Thomas after his moment of doubt, Thomas made the most comprehensive confession of the Divine Human which the gospels record. "Thomas answered and said unto Him, 'My Lord, and my God'."

Who are these sensuous people, who are potentially of the Lord's

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church and His heaven, and who are represented by Thomas?

Fundamentally a sensuous person is one who lives in and for this world, finding their delight in the things that belong to life on earth alone. They may be quite simple in outlook, doing some unrewarding job. They may be professors or nuclear scientists. It isn't a matter of intelligence; it is a matter of where their delights lie. If their loves are solely concerned with life in this world, they are sensuous, but the great test is whether eternal or material values drive them.

Now a highly intelligent man who is sensuous covers over his desires with all sorts of sublimations, all manner of coatings, so that they seem more refined than they really are. In order to get a picture of a potentially good sensuous man, therefore, let us talk generally about the sort of attitudes such a man might have.



He would be a man of strong feelings, probably on most subjects, and a man of strong loyalties too. He would be capable of great warmth and would be easily touched by those whom he loved; but he could also give in to anger towards them as well, and say, perhaps even do, things to them in anger which he would regret. He would tend to form friendships in his own circles, and look down on members of other races, other nationalities, political

parties, even social strata.

He would thus be subject to the mass prejudices, and easily swayed by events, rather than by quiet logic. His opinions might be formed on his own experience, and he would be loath to relinquish them because someone else has had the opposite experiences. He would be a man who worked fairly hard at his job, but made no pretence at preferring work to his vacation and free time. He would do his duty by his wife and family, would know that he was attracted to other women, but

remain faithful. He would spend time with his children, but perhaps not get to know them very well.

Each of us knows various people who fit this description, or parts of it, and probably we will recognize a lot of ourselves in it too. Each part of the description emphasizes the temporal, the power of experience, and physical or imaginative influences over rational, and charitably intelligent thought. Each one points to a distinction between duty and charity.

And a sensuous person, even if he is well-disposed, actually stands very close to hell. His feelings are from the earth, and they are prone to temptation, and many times will come when he is tempted, greatly tempted, to seek a delight which is wrong. Then, because of his nature, he is in danger of being swept away into evil, of giving himself up to it, and using a wealth of confused arguments to justify himself. The sensuous man is more in danger than any other, because his delights so easily turn to excess.

In resisting these temptations the sensuous man has to employ the only guard against evil-faith, conviction in the power of the Lord. But he does doubt the power of the Lord to save, and is tempted to feel that he would like more assurance than he presently has. After all, he is being tempted to give in to an evil that is very delightful. He needs to trust the Lord, and feel that choosing the Lord's way really is better.

Perhaps in the terms of the New Church, such a person might be one who wonders if the Writings themselves can be trusted completely. He knows that they forbid certain things, and when powerfully tempted, he is doubtful. He lacks the saving faith in the Lord which he needs desperately. Without that faith there is no real reason why he should not yield, and yield he will, for sensuous evils are so very strong.

The message of the internal sense of our text is that the Lord can

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speaking even to such men. It is true that in their concentration on external and worldly things they stand close to the door of hell. It is true that in thinking about themselves and their delights, and seeking them first, they often hurt people when they ought not to do so. Viewed from the strict law of truth, they have done far more bad, selfish, earthly things than they have ever done heavenly things. Yet through His glorification, the Lord can be present with them, and have contact with them. Through taking on a body and a human, and glorifying it, the Lord made it possible for Him to be present, even with sensuous people such as those represented by Thomas.

They are lowly in thought and feeling: earthbound, almost! But He can talk to them, and he can make them feel His presence. "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side." This is an invitation, and a promise, to the sensuous man. From his own standpoint, from his minimal power to good, let him learn of the Lord in His glorified Human, and he will find points of contact. He will sense from the Word which teaches about the Lord Jesus Christ that here indeed is his Lord, and his God.

The miracle of the glorification is not a simple one, and the manner in which He established communion with even sensuous people is a subject too deep for a sermon easily to cover. Suffice it to say that in the pages of the Word which tell of the Lord on earth there is a great deal that speaks directly and forcefully to the sensuous man who is of tender faith. And as he listens, so the Lord Jesus Christ, in His glorified Human, illumines from within those truths, and causes the sensuous man to be reassured, and to feel more strongly his faith and his certainty that the way of life that the Lord has shown is right, and the powerful emotions to which the hells dispose him are not truly productive of happiness.

For the Lord came to save every single human who could be saved. He knew that there were countless millions of people who would rise very little above a sensuous faith, and who, without His coming, would fall prey to the hells. But through His coming He made

a pathway to heaven for them, and now we are told that every day hordes of people from this earth are being admitted into the lowest reaches of heaven, where are the sensuous-people who otherwise would have been evil. But because the Lord glorified His Human, and rose on Easter morning as God and Lord, they could reach forth and touch Him, if they willed. It is this presence with all who are willing to listen and be moved that He signified when He gave the more universal invitation to all the disciples - "Handle Me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have."

Of course, sensuous faith by itself is not enough to save a man, for it will not be strong enough in the face of infernal cunning. This is what the Lord meant when He said, "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." (Blessed means receiving the joy of heaven, or being saved.)

But through His glorification, the Lord has opened a path for people who are sensuous to ascend upwards to a saving faith. Thomas is not condemned for his unbelief. He is shown the truth that the Lord lives for evermore, and then told to have more faith in the future. So he is strengthened.

And this the Lord does to each of us, leading through His glorified Human even our most sensuous states towards the blessedness of true confidence in Him. Amen

### **A thanksgiving to the Lord for Richard Keyworth's earthly life**



This was presented at the Zoom Service of the Auckland New Church held on March 6th 2022



Richard, during his life had three or four major passions. From very early in his life he discovered the joy of fishing, even if you did not catch anything all day. Lately he had posted pictures of himself with a huge smile on his face with his latest catch. He also loved messing about in boats with the Sea Scouts and playing rugby with his mates.

Throughout his early life he attended the New Church in Newton Road with his family. Under the inspiration of Revd Robert Strong, Revd Richard Teed and later Revd Ted Howe he developed a passion for the Lord's Word and Heavenly Doctrine of the New Church. During Mr Howe's ministry he enthusiastically helped the members build the church. His love for the Church led him to attend Church camps at Woori Yallock in Australia. Here his passion for the Church was further enhanced by meeting Gillian Tayler who eventually became his wife.



After several years of marriage and the births of the first of their children his passion for the Church led him to train for ministry in the UK.



Throughout the rest of his ministry his passion was to fulfil the Lord's command to become fishers of men.

Following his ordination in 1982 he and Gill served the Adelaide New Church. There they came to develop their other passion, the care of children. After having 5 of their own they were led to foster many children over the next 30 or so years. As foster parents they had to deal not only with sleepless nights with babies but all the traumas and difficulties that children from dysfunctional families bring with them.

Another big part of their job description was as taxi drivers for all the children's activities. This passion also led him to serve on a local primary school board and as chairman of a children's charity. During all this time he was preaching and teaching, firstly as minister of the Adelaide Church and then the Auckland New Church. He certainly lived his life passionately and to the full.

As the Lord puts it in Matthew when speaking about the parable of the talents, "Well done good and faithful servant you have been faithful over a few I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your Lord." Matthew 25:21.25.

Let us think of him as the angels see him now, free of all heart problems and restored to his old self and enjoying the life of his new spiritual heart.

Our thanks are to the Lord for all the blessings that have come to us from Him through Richard's earthly life. Our thoughts and prayers are with his three sisters, his wife Gill and their large number of family and friends.



Richard and Gill Keyworth

(Several of the photos are borrowed, with Gill's permission, from Richard's Facebook page.)

by John Sutton

Postscript, by Julian Duckworth

On behalf of us all, I give our love and blessings to Gill and all the many members of their very large family.

I first met Richard in 1977 when he and his family arrived in London to begin training for ministry at the New Church College in Manchester. They arrived with their five children, Richard and Gill smiling, the children wondering and sleepy.

During training I got to know Richard very well. His optimism and positive outlook shone through all the time, often witty, always perceptive. His advocacy for being fishers of men, linked with the 'classes of the neighbour' and the first place of Charity will be known by many. Richard drew from the well of the Word all the time, reminding us with how some idea or some teaching is like what Jesus said here, or the story of Jericho or Daniel there in the Lion's Den, and always with a knowing smile. We will miss him, heaven will welcome him. Bless Richard for everything he is, a servant of his Lord.

**President's Page**

As in heaven, so upon the earth  
ως εν ουρανω και επι γης

Growing up in the church, I learned the Lord's Prayer by heart, as did many others. In a sense it was effortless, and I don't ever remember anyone taking time to "teach" us the prayer, because we recited it together every week. I suppose that having a group of others repeating it around me provided an opportunity to build on last week's attempt and correct any errors that might arise from time to time.

However, I also learned that there were other churches who used different forms of the Lord's Prayer, and the phrase, "as in heaven, so upon the earth" is one example of this. Many of my friends in other churches learned instead, "on earth as it is in heaven." In English, the two phrases aren't so very different, so does it really matter? Why does the New Church use that form?

Well, it preserves the order of the original Greek, but more significantly it also begs the question: Which comes first, Heaven or Earth? And that begs another question: Are we talking first in Time or Priority?

A few weeks ago, I met another pastor who made the comment that the ancients always seemed to write their lists backwards. He quoted some very well-known words from Paul's epistle to the Galatians:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22,23)

He observed that we all start our spiritual journey from the end of that list, and move backwards towards its start. Love is the goal, but self-control is the first step. Given that, I think it's safe to say that heaven comes first, and we find that to be the case throughout scripture (have a look at Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 30:19; Isaiah 66:1; Jeremiah 23:24)

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So how do we get to heaven? Well we don't, we must bring heaven to earth, and that is the second important point about this phrase. You see, Heaven isn't a place, at least not primarily.

We often think of heaven as a place, where it is actually a state of being. We are "in heaven" only to the extent that heaven is "in us". Why do I say that? We have it expressed in Jesus' words:

"Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, 'The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, "See here!" or "See there!" For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.'" (Luke 17:20,21)

But what about those texts in the Bible that talk about "heaven" as a place? Take for example:

"For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it." (Deuteronomy 30:11-14)

It's useful to remember that the word translated as "Heaven" often also means, "Sky". But it also reminds me of the folk-tale hero, who goes on a seemingly impossible journey - a quest - to retrieve some treasure or cure for an ailment. Often as we read these, we imagine ourselves as that hero, and indeed we must become the hero in our own folk-tale, the journey is ours to take, and no one else can do it for us. This is what is meant here in Deuteronomy. However, the idea of a journey, or a quest, is one that reflects a progression of states of being. We talk about the "Journey of Life", and we know instinctively that we're not talking about a physical journey. That journey is one of finding out who we are, how we fit in, what our purpose is, our "place

in the world". The quest is not an external one but an inner one, and although it is amazing what inner resources we discover by earthly travel, that discovery is first and foremost an inner process. "But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it."

"It can never be said that heaven is outside anyone. It is within; because every angel accepts the heaven that is outside in keeping with the heaven that is within. We can see, then, how mistaken people are who think that getting into heaven is simply a matter of being taken up among the angels, regardless of the quality of their inner life, who believe that heaven is granted merely because of [the Lord's] mercy. On the contrary, unless heaven is within an individual, nothing of the heaven that is outside flows in and is accepted." (Heaven and Hell, paragraph 54)

The problem with heaven as only a place, is that we often imagine what heaven must be like - in an idealised state - and we know that we're not there yet. We look forward to the time when we "enter heaven", and in the meantime we resign ourselves to simply endure the hell we live in now. But I'm going to suggest that we create much misery for ourselves and others by doing so, especially if we're not too careful about how we live our lives. We just hang onto the vague hope that, one day, things will be better than they are now ... and we do nothing about it.

So, what should we do? We have to live from the heaven that is within, as though heaven is possible here and now. Remember the first part of the prayer:

"Our Father who art in the heavens,  
hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done,  
as in heaven, so upon the earth."

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Heaven, you may remember, is whatever is of the Divine. Our task is to live under the rule of heaven, under the rule of the Divine, and to do so without reference to the circumstances we find ourselves in on earth. Because what rules us is what rules within us. The only question for us to answer is, what is within?

“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” (Matthew 6:31-33)

Every moment, every encounter, presents a choice. Do I allow the circumstances that meet me to rule my life, or do I live by the principles I say I subscribe to?

““But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ... “But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.” (Luke 6:27, 32-36)

This is the mustard seed that grows to become a great tree, the little idea that grows - with time and dedication - to transform our lives (Matthew 13:31). It is the treasure hidden in the field, the principle for which we must give up all others (Matthew 13:44). What is the principle you can master and practise consistently?

What rules us is what rules within us. Although you may not be aware of it, we are familiar with this idea. It has been discovered and rediscovered many times.

I recently came across a company advertising their own weight loss programme, with the words, "Changing the way you eat starts with psychology."

As that well known saying goes, "Take care of the pennies and the pounds will look after themselves." In his book, *The Barefoot Investor*, Scott Pape goes to great pains to state that it's not the fancy car, or the big mansion in an affluent suburb that makes you rich. It's the little actions, the habits you form through repeated discipline and conscious effort that make all the difference in the long run. If you can waste a little, you can (and probably will) waste a lot. It's finding meaning, purpose, and fulfilment beyond the money itself.

And another, "Where there's a will there's a way."

Victor Frankl found it in the Nazi concentration camp.

Our challenge is to make inner concerns our guiding principles, rather than external ones. It's learning to be content whatever our circumstances, instead of focusing upon circumstances to make us content. Then, watching our outer world transform.

"For every smallest fraction of a moment of a person's life entails a chain of consequences extending into eternity." (*Heavenly Secrets*, paragraph 3854, section 3)

What rules us is what rules within us. As in heaven, so upon the earth.

David

## SOCIETY REPORTS

### ADELAIDE

The Adelaide society is starting to resume normal activities after the new year break.

Ken Johnson recently had covid with mild symptoms (vax booster helps), June luckily avoided it but still had to isolate.

Our coffee and chat mornings 10.30 Thursdays resume and anybody can walk in off the street.

We are investigating the installation of CCTV to help deter intruders following the theft of copper pipe from the Church.

A large television in the Church is now being used to show New Church / Swedenborgian videos from YouTube and we thank those Ministers who post them.

Randall Rabone turns 80 this month and a letter of congratulations from the local State Liberal member reminds me that there is a State election here on March 19th.

Randall Rabone

### BRISBANE

Hi All,

It seems to have been a slow start to the New Year with restrictions of one sort and another, but our first Family Service on Sun 6 February gave those who attended a feeling of all's well with the world, despite still having to disappear behind masks!

The Brunne family tackled and despatched the impact of the Covid virus during the January holidays, but it seems most others have remained free of that particular infection.

We wish Rev Ian Arnold and Doug Nash well as they face ongoing health issues and intermittent specialist visits. We are always greeted at church with ready smiles by both Ian and Doug, who are shining role models of quiet acceptance despite their health battles.

A big Thank You to Max Fitzgerald, who has kindly taken on the role of organist for our Family Services (first Sunday of each month.) He is

doing a splendid job.

The rains and consequent flooding have managed to wreak their havoc on south-east Queensland and on our lengthy, northern coastline which, despite the disaster it causes to many, provokes a wonderful spirit of community in its volunteer brigades that stride forth to help in whatever way they can. Our young ones and not so old at church jumped into action to help remove sodden carpet tiles from a corner leak downstairs displaying a ready willingness to help, which lent a real air of camaraderie and had the job done in no time. Our hearts go out to Paul and Ruth Evans, who have undergone another inundation.

And to all the Keyworth family in New Zealand, our condolences at the passing of Rev Dick Keyworth, who was known to so many of us from annual family camps and visits to NZ. We will sincerely miss his gentleness, warmth and friendship that he so readily extended to all. Wishing our far-flung New Church friends a belated Happy New Year and good health throughout 2022.

Gaye Heldon

## **PERTH**

The month of January was very quiet on our church front. Many of us were happy to remain indoors due to a prolonged very hot month with a record number of over 35 degree days. This followed an equally hot Christmas period. Trevor and Joy were fortunate to be camp hosting at Lucky Bay near Kalbarri for the month so didn't really notice the heat. With school returning in February the heat continued to see Perth break the record of days over 40 degrees. Thankfully now with autumn arriving we have finally been blessed with slightly cooler weather. Then how can we complain when we see the devastating floods on the east coast. If any church friends are affected our thoughts and prayers are with you all.

The Walker family celebrated the marriage of this son Phil to Lexie on New Year's Eve. David conducted the ceremony which was held on

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the banks of the Swan River at Matilda Bay. It was a very happy occasion for all family and friends.

Services resumed in February . These we hold on a fortnightly basis in the homes of David and Ros Walker and Trevor and Joy Moffat , alternating, with David and Trevor conducting the service held in their home. Lunch follows each service with a time of fellowship and chatter often well into the afternoon.

Several of our members and friends have lately been unwell or in hospital following surgery. Helen Cozens has missed a service or two because of ill health. David Walker has had surgery on his back and has had a somewhat lengthy time in hospital recovering. We hope this will solve David's problems and he will be able to walk more easily soon.

Mary Smuts and family are celebrating the arrival in early March of Abigail Eve Griffiths, baby daughter of Verity and Michael.

Submitted by Joy Moffat

## **ROSEVILLE, SYDNEY**

In the last two or three weeks in Sydney we have returned to normal on the church front with no Covid restrictions of any kind. This last two-year period is one when we had hoped to have attracted more people to our activities. Our minister Howard was conducting a Facebook outreach project when the pandemic hit and certainly its impact severely reduced the chances of anyone taking up the invitation to join us in our activities. To add to Howard's frustration, he currently finds himself having to isolate with his family as his son Lance has just come down with Covid. So there's no church service or bible study for us for a week or two.

But the lockdowns and restrictions may have had an effect on numbers coming through the church doors apart from this. In fact, at our recent AGM the matter of low numbers and the long term

implications was raised. Howard is thinking a more communal approach may yield better results. An invitation to the neighbours to a pizza get together is something he feels would be worth a try. Free pizza at the local park that's nearby might do the trick in creating a connection between us and them to mutual benefit. We can only try.

Wayne Kasmar

## **VICTORIA - SWEDENBORG COMMUNITY VICTORIA**

For us Victorians, last year was the toughest year in modern times. We opened 2021 with optimism that the worst of the pandemic had passed; the new Delta variant changed all that.

Many of us wilted through those months, lockdowns felt like a never-ending misery of rising case numbers, pessimistic projections and little chance of freedom any time soon. Mental health hospital admissions soared but we never gave up hope; it felt everything was thrown at us – even storms and an earthquake. We were battered and bruised, yet we stayed standing. The political change of heart that we could not beat the virus, was a tacit recognition that we have to learn to live with it. Plainly, we face a revised threat in the form of Omicron, a virus mutation which is less severe.

A promise of no future lockdowns has been made by our Premier. This year, we can reset for new challenges ahead knowing that 2022 will not repeat the most onerous restrictions of 2021. There is optimism in the scientific community that not only Omicron is less severe, but that this variant may also propel the world towards safer times.

After almost two years of working from home, life changed from Monday 28<sup>th</sup> of February. Finally, Victorians can start their post-Covid work and head back to the Office. Before this virus wrecked our lives, Melbourne was a city filled with energy, excitement and possibilities where hundreds of thousands came to work. Getting back to work will end the isolation and will bring back the human interaction which was missing from our lives.

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## Church News

Rev. Moffat continues utilising the internet to make Bible study and other ongoing projects available to members via zoom, and/or YouTube.

## Virtual Retreat

Between 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> January we held our first virtual retreat. There were 6 sessions held over three days, led by a national and international team of presenters, which culminated in our service of worship here in Melbourne. The sessions on Friday and Saturday were live streamed to YouTube. It was a very successful event with between 10 and 17 devices joining for each session and many others watching on YouTube since then. Rev. Moffat has indicated that we might have another session soon.

## Bible Studies

Bible studies are conducted fortnightly on Mondays at 8.30 pm. We are continuing through the Book of Genesis.

## Question Time

Question Time takes place at 10.00 am and 8.00 pm on a weekly basis. This is a very much liked program as it helps us communicate with members who live remotely.

## Heaven and Hell

We continue to produce one Chapter of the book each week, both reading the text and accompanying notes. They are available in video format on our YouTube channel and in audio format for download from Soundcloud.com. They can be found by searching for "Swedenborg Community Victoria" on either platform, or through our website.

## News of People

Rev. and Mrs Moffat have taken a short overseas holiday to the "Apple Isle" Tasmania. Initially they wanted to travel to Western Australia but because of the fluid nature of the pandemic and imposed lockdowns,

had to change their plans and travelled to Tasmania instead. It was a great choice because according to the Tasmanians they have the cleanest land air in the world.

Alexis and Neville Jarvis also had enjoyed a nice quiet break. They travelled to Lorne, a picturesque seaside town in Victoria along the Great Ocean Road tourist route. It is a popular destination, along this Road are the most photographed landmarks in Australia.

With Love and Light, Marika Sivak

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## 150 PSALMS ... A PERSONAL SPIRITUAL COMMENTARY



Over the last eighteen months I've been working on each and all of the Psalms for inclusion in New Christian Bible Study (NCBS) content. I've almost finished, another week should see them done.

I've been sending them in batches of six to be posted up on NCBS and most of them are now there. I have also kept a single continuous file of my commentary on them all, which I'm very happy to "hit and send" to anybody who would like to have this. (apply to [julian@duckworth.me](mailto:julian@duckworth.me))

I'm going to give you a 'taster' of my work on one psalm and it will be one of the less well-known ones. First, I want to tell you my approach, a personal spiritual commentary.

Spiritual commentaries can be explaining the Bible text in terms of New Church teachings and also the correspondences of things that get mentioned. That's all good, but it can be a bit 'over there' and

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technical. We are moving into an age where we are more interested in what goes on in us, in our heart, in our mind, in our life. Changing states and our proprium and the Lord's help. This is the area of a personal spiritual commentary which doesn't ignore doctrines or correspondences at all but links them helpfully with our experience.

The psalms are beautiful expressions of gratitude, praise, fear, trust, confidence, deliverance, inner warfare and inner peace, and much more. There is no story line (though some are alluded to) and people have found in them the language of their heart and the presence of their Lord.

They can seem repetitive but I can assure you they just are not!

The commentary I've worked on works through each part of the psalm after giving an introduction, and each part covered includes a reference to a relevant passage in Swedenborg. I have never not found one or been stuck! In fact, some have just come up from somewhere.

The length of each commentary is between 500 and 750 words, depending on the psalm's length. Psalm 117 only has 2 verses and Psalm 119 has 176 verses but there's not much between them in terms of relevance to us, or length.

Here's the taster; it is Psalm 63, quite a joyful psalm about our relationship with the Lord.

Psalm 63 11v

Psalm 63 is a psalm of joy in the Lord and of longing for the Lord. The tenor of the psalm is uplifted praise, nearly all the way through, with a relatively brief reference in the last three verses about those who seek to 'destroy my life' and of their downfall. There is probably not a single psalm that is only praise and adoration of the Lord because spiritual life necessarily involves knowing one's enemies which are 'the foes of our own household, our hereditary evils and our proprium.

When we link this psalm with the Lord and his work of glorification we see it as the desire and love of the Lord to be united with his Divine. Phrases in the this psalm testify to that very powerfully, 'Because your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise you (verse 3). In terms of our desire to be conjoined to the Lord, this psalm well expresses our longing, especially during a period of less awareness or uncertainty. The Lord's human was fully united to the Divine, with us we are conjoined but never one with God.



The opening words say so much, 'O God, You are my God.' This affirms our whole faith and understanding and nothing gets in the way of such directness. This immediately leads into early seeking, thirsting and longing in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. The idea of 'early' shows a care to guard against resting easy in believing and our need for vigilance to spot our dry and thirsty states. (Arcana Caelestia 5221)

Immediately following this thirst, it mentions looking for You in the sanctuary to see Your power and glory. The spiritual idea here is that it is important to have the means to reconnect ourselves with the Lord as quickly as we can. The sanctuary may be several things; it can be the Word for our devotion and recognition, it can be the inner peace we take up, or gratitude or something, all of which are as our sanctuary, our holy place. (Arcana Caelestia 9479)

That 'the Lord's lovingkindness is better than life' reminds us of the angelic and heavenly sense of the Lord, that because He gives us life and keeps us alive, He is everything and so our hold over our life becomes relatively less, even while we serve our use and love life's joys. (Heaven and Hell 9)

The spiritual idea in lips praising and blessing the Lord while I live is that the ultimate plane of life is the theatre for living and giving out our

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devotion to the Lord in charity, goodness and use. And when all levels in us are caught up in serving God, our soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness. Spiritually this is the completeness of our life's nourishment. ((Arcana Caelestia 2830.8)

Then the speaker turns to quieter moments, of remembering the Lord on my bed in the watches of the night, in meditating, rejoicing in the shadow of Your wings, with my soul close behind You, and Your right hand upholds me. Spiritually, these moments describe sensing the Lord in the recesses of thought, reflection, remembrance and simple trust. (Divine Love and Wisdom 404.3)

In this whole devotion to the Lord, all that would be against it or would seek to destroy it is firmly cast down to the lower parts of the earth, to fall by the sword and be a portion for jackals. Spiritually, 'jackals' stand for the self-destructive devouring nature of evil. (Heaven and Hell 506 end)

Devotion to the Lord brings us a clear, full and sharp sense of what is true and holy and of what is false, profane and offensive to our whole being. This realisation is the 'king' of verse 11 who rejoices in God and who silences whatever, even in us, speaks against it.

Julian Duckworth



# THE NEW CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

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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)

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## PERTH GENERAL CHURCH GROUP

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