

February
25

Sunday
11:30



**ROSEVILLE
NEW CHURCH**

**FEBRUARY
2024**

“While we are in the world we really ought to worship outwardly as well. External worship stirs deeper dimensions, and it maintains the holiness of our external acts so that deeper elements can influence us.”

(Secrets of Heaven 1618)

Directory

Society Minister

Rev. Howard Thompson

Officers

Secretary

Graham Hall

Treasurer

Joel Duckworth

Church Officer

Debra Barratt Thompson

Sunday Service -

The Roseville New Church holds a regular service of worship each Sunday at 10:00am. The first Sunday of each month includes an opportunity to partake of the Holy Supper.

Sunday Social Hour -

After every service we have tea and coffee, an opportunity to meet socially, sometimes more formally.

Calendar - *Included*

The Swedenborg Centre -

The Centre is generously supported by the Sydney Society of the New Church and provides an independent and relaxing place to meet and discuss a personal approach to finding spiritual meaning. The Centre has a wide range of study materials, Swedenborg's works, and books by supporting authors. The Centre and its director Joe Vandermeer can be reached on phone (02) 9416 2812 or email info@swedenborg.com.au Opening hours are Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30pm. More events details at www.swedenborg.com.au The Centre can also be used to answer enquiries about the New Church, its literature and its teachings.



A partnership with God would not be possible
if it were not reciprocal, and it becomes reciprocal
when we act freely.

True Christianity 504

Roseville New Church Newsletter

Issued by the Sydney Society of the New Church Established in 1875
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Church Office phone: (02) 9416 7026

Minister's e-mail : revhathompson@gmail.com

On Facebook – Roseville New Church

February 2024

The Faith of the New Church is summarised as follows:

There is one God in whom is the Divine Trinity. He is the Lord God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Saving faith is to believe in Him. Evil actions are not to be done because they are from hell and of hell. Good actions are to be done because they are from God and of God. These are to be done by a person as though they are done by himself, while believing that they are from the Lord working in him and through him.

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Spiritual Shorts

Our minister, Rev. Howard Thompson, posts a weekly video on his YouTube channel, Spiritual Shorts. Begun during the pandemic to support home worship, these videos underwent a format change in 2023. This new format dispenses with the “ritual” elements used in the previous videos and results weekly episodes of around 5 minutes in length.



Spiritual Shorts YouTube Channel:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsrICJGeGmrnXVawn_Y7UQA

Christmas Report



There was a wonderful energy in our church this past Christmas season. This seems to have been driven by two factors. The first was the introduction of a Candlelight Carol Service (see below) and the second was the scheduling of our Christmas Service on Sunday 24 December. While this latter change meant that we did not have a service on Christmas Day, it also meant that our Christmas Service on Sunday the 24th was well-attended. Looking forward I am hopeful that we can continue the Carol Service and return to Christmas Day service.

A New Tradition: Christmas Candlelight Carol Service

This past Christmas season, our Roseville Church community joyfully initiated a "new" tradition - one that I believe has left an indelible mark on our hearts and will continue to light up our festive celebrations for years to come.

On the evening of December 17th, we held our very first Candlelight Carol Service at 7:00 PM. As the pastor here for over five years, this was a first for me as well, and I must say, it was a truly magical experience.

There's always a bit of uncertainty when trying something new. No more so than when you plan an evening event in a non air conditioned building in December, when temperatures can exceed 30°. However, any concerns about the late hour and the

heat quickly dissipated as the event unfolded into a beautiful and memorable evening.

The service was attended by nearly 20 people, a mix of familiar faces and newcomers, including children from several families. The atmosphere was one of warmth and communal joy, as we all gathered to celebrate the season of love and giving in the glow of candlelight. The flickering candles created a serene ambiance, bringing a sense of peace and togetherness to our congregation.

An additional highlight of the evening was the special gift given to each attendee - a decorative scented candle, lovingly provided by Mary and Litsa of the I Am Project. These candles not only added to the festive spirit but also served as a reminder of the light and fragrance the Lord's love that we are called to carry into the world.



The success of our Candlelight Carol Service has filled me with hope and excitement for the future. I believe we have started a trend that will grow and become a cherished part of our church's Christmas celebrations. The service not only provided an opportunity for spiritual reflection and community bonding but also allowed us to welcome new individuals and families into our church family.

As I look forward to Christmas 2024, I am eager to see this tradition flourish and become an integral part of our annual festivities. The Candlelight Carol Service has proven to be a beautiful addition to our church's celebration of the birth of Jesus, and I am confident that it will continue to bring light, joy, and unity to our community for many Christmases to come.

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We Had A Gathering

January Mini-Retreat



In lieu of our annual retreat, which was unfortunately canceled for 2024, the Roseville New Church community hosted a mini-Retreat, aptly named '**The January Gathering**'. Despite the change in plans, the spirit and enthusiasm of our community were undiminished, as evidenced by the attendance of 20 dedicated members. Inspired by the theme of the cancelled retreat (“**What’s the Use**”), the decision was made to build our min-retreat around the same, looking at the question of what is the use of church in today’s modern society.

The gathering was marked by a series of engaging and thought-provoking presentations given by three presenters on Saturday. The event continued on Sunday with a service that included a celebration of the Holy Supper, providing a fitting conclusion to our time together.

The presentations sparked lively discussions among attendees, bringing forth a wealth of ideas that are sure to enrich future discussions, particularly at the upcoming April NCIA Assembly (see announcement on page 14).

Rev. Howard Thompson welcomed the attendees and lead our opening



worship. This worship explored the parable of the sower, likening the Lord to a farmer who plants the seeds of His teachings in the soil of our minds. Just as seeds need care to grow, so too do these spiritual truths require our love and attention to flourish. Unfortunately, in our minds these teachings can be lost or forgotten if we don't truly listen or

care for them, much like seeds that fall on bad soil. Teachings must be nurtured, removing selfish thoughts like weeds, and striving to live according to the Lord's guidance. By doing so, our spiritual garden can blossom and we



can offer the Lord the gifts He cherishes most: acts of righteousness, mercy, and humility. This process of spiritual growth and cultivation mirrors the Lord's desire for us to develop a deep, meaningful connection with Him and ultimately bear a bountiful harvest of spiritual fruits in our lives.

In our first presentation "**Why Worry?: We Were Told This Would Happen**" Rev. Ros Taylor addressed the concern of declining church attendance and religious affiliation. Through her presentation, she illuminated how Swedenborgian theology not only anticipates these trends but also offers insightful ways to embrace and navigate through them. In an interesting (maybe even controversial) aside, Ros suggested that there exists a link between the rise and fall of major spiritual epochs in Western religion and Earth's climactic changes, particularly heating and



cooling periods that lead to flooding. Ros posits that significant climatic events, such as those experienced during the various Dryas periods, have historically led to the

TAYLOR SPIRITUAL CLIMATE CHANGE HYPOTHESIS

Jewish Church ended with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE at a time when there was significant local flooding in Palestine, from flooding of the Nile and decades of higher rainfall.

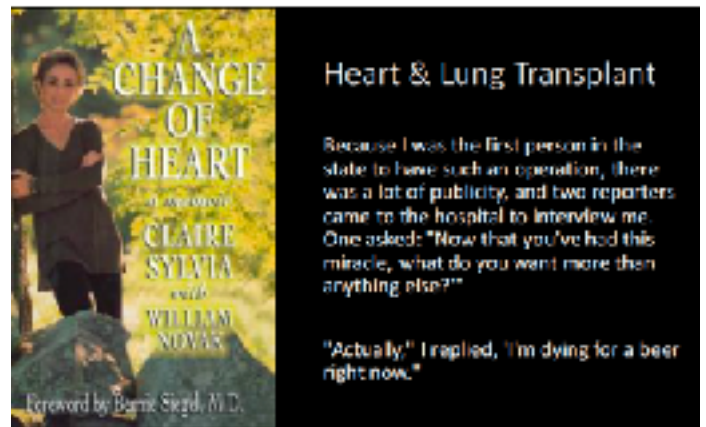
Christian Church is ending now during our current climate change, which has also involved flooding and fires, and more.

destruction of civilisations, subsequently influencing the development of human spirituality. According to this theory, major floods have not only wiped out physical communities but also symbolise

the end of certain spiritual eras due to the inundation of false ideas among the people of those times.

In his presentation "**Uses of the Church**" Rev. Howard Thompson provided an enlightening overview of Emanuel Swedenborg's writings about the role and relevance of the church in modern times, offering a renewed perspective on our spiritual community's purpose. The concept of "Usefulness," as articulated by Swedenborg, highlights that true love and wisdom are demonstrated through action and beneficial service. This idea is echoed across various philosophical and religious traditions, emphasising the importance of actions serving others and contributing to the common good. Howard emphasised the importance of organising the Church for spiritual uses, engaging in individual spiritual practices, and fostering communal activities to fulfil the Church's purpose in our rapidly evolving world. Howard's presentation was punctuated with several break-out sessions to discuss several different aspects of "usefulness" within the various manifestations of "Church."

In his presentation "**Organ Transplants: A New Church Perspective**" Rev. Todd Beiswenger presented a fascinating exploration of the unique side effects experienced by organ transplant recipients. He discussed how Swedenborgian theology might offer explanations for these phenomena, adding a new dimension to our understanding of the human experience. Noting that 89.3% of participants in one study of organ transplant recipients reported changes in their personalities following the transplant. One middle-aged woman who received the heart of a teenage boy reported a new-found appetite for beer and physical attraction to women. Todd posited that the spiritual mechanism that may be at play here is influx, which Swedenborg writes is specific to the organs of the body. Suggesting that once influx is begun in a person that influx is "tied" to the organ and follows it in a transplant.



Heart & Lung Transplant

Because I was the first person in the state to have such an operation, there was a lot of publicity, and two reporters came to the hospital to interview me. One asked: "Now that you've had this miracle, what do you want more than anything else?"

"Actually," I replied, "I'm dying for a beer right now."

In his presentation "**The Gospel According to Ted Lasso**" Rev. Howard Thompson drew parallels between the themes of the popular TV series "Ted Lasso" and spiritual themes found within our faith. "Ted Lasso" effectively uses comedy as a medium to address serious themes concerning the human condition, such as revenge, forgiveness, personal growth, hatred, anxiety, greed, and the love of dominion. In the case of "Ted Lasso" comedy serves as an effective vehicle for delivering serious messages, as it disarms viewers, lowers their defences, and opens them up to new perspectives. The show's blend of humour and heartfelt storytelling allows people to connect with the characters and



their journeys, potentially inspiring them to address similar issues in their own lives. This work-in-progress presentation resonated deeply with the audience.

Video Recordings: We are currently working on

editing the videos of these presentations. Once completed, they will be made available for those who were unable to join us at The Gathering. These recordings promise to be a valuable resource for our entire community.

In summary, the January Gathering in Roseville was a testament to the resilience, commitment, and intellectual curiosity of our church community. The event not only provided a platform for learning and discussion but also reinforced our collective dedication to spiritual growth and understanding.

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Swedenborg Centre News

Here is the newest news from the Swedenborg Centre, because you presumably already know the old news (or perhaps don't care about the past).

Starting with an old joke (well, it was new to me, but I call it 'old' because it refers to old age): What's the prize we win for ageing? Atrophy!

Now that I've got your attention...



Our regular events are in full swing again, except for a small hiatus coming up in February while I take some annual leave in Tasmania from Thursday 15th Feb to Monday 26th Feb (inclusive). So we're open again on Tuesday, February 27th.

Here follows our February schedule of events. Keep an eye on the website at www.swedenborg.com.au for any last minute event changes, Zoom links, other news, etc, etc, not to mention a history of all the Candelas magazine editions and other free goodies, documents, booklets, audio lectures, and links to useful sites.

- **Swedenborg Readings** on 10am every **Wednesday** (Julian Duckworth has kindly offered to attempt to run the **February 21st** session while I'm on leave).
- **Bible Study** with Howard, each fortnight beginning, **Tuesday February 27th**).
- **Dr Groves Readings** are on **Friday, February 2nd** (then **March 1st**) at noon & 7pm.
- **Swedenborg Saturday** discussions will be held **February 3rd** (then **March 3rd**) at 10am.

See see you at the Centre or online. Best wishes for a lovely end of summer.

Joe

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Bible Study Update

For much of the year Howard runs a fortnightly Bible Study, Tuesdays from 11:00 to 1:00 in the Swedenborg

Centre. He will be doing so again in 2024, but with a delayed start.

Unfortunately, owing to the preparations required for the mini-retreat and several other seen and unforeseen circumstances, I got on the back foot of several projects that require attention. Bible Study will resume for 2024, just not until late February. Please join us 27 February for our first class.



Our subject for study to begin this year will be the Sermon on the Mount. In this year's study we will compare and contrast the differing account of this discourse in both Matthew and Luke.

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Sermon Summary

“One Thing”

Rev. Howard A. Thompson

In a recent sermon by our minister, Howard Thompson, we explored the profound truths that define the New Church's approach to our spiritual journey and the means to attain its ultimate goal. Howard began by highlighting two fundamental principles: that the purpose of creation being the formation of heaven from the human race, and that the Lord gave us His Word as a means to unite with Him and accomplish the former.

Howard emphasised the vast chasm between Creation and Heaven, which we are all inclined to cross. The Lord desires for us to make this journey. He has bestowed upon us the autonomy to choose our path.



This sometimes making us feel distant from the Lord, even though His presence is unwavering.

Our own autonomy (a sometimes necessary evil) parallels with modern self-help trends that seem to offer quick, easy and

oversimplified solutions. True personal growth is multi-dimensional, involving physical, behavioural, intellectual, and spiritual aspects. Howard noted that how we approach any aspect of our life reflects our approach to everything, resonating with Swedenborg's teachings that our character is embodied in our deeds.

Howard used the story of Jacob's dream (Genesis 28), commonly referred to as "Jacob's Ladder," to illustrate our spiritual journey. It shows that while God oversees everything, it does not absolve us of our responsibility to act. The dream's imagery of a ladder signifies the path to God, and our recognition of this path is the first step towards spiritual awakening and growth.

While there is no single solution to spiritual transformation, there is a definitive first step – opening ourselves to the Lord through His Word. This step is crucial in establishing a comprehensive path of spiritual development.

This initial engagement with the Lord's Word is not the complete solution but the beginning of a journey that encompasses various dimensions of our spiritual lives. Engaging with the Word is not just reading about God but interacting with Him. Building upon this foundation, we address interconnected dimensions of our spiritual lives, such as cultivating a life of charity, deepening spiritual understanding, practicing repentance, and fostering a prayerful life.

Quoting Matthew 6:33, Howard reinforced that seeking the kingdom of God involves drawing close to the Lord and striving for spiritual, moral, and social good. This pursuit ensures our spiritual needs are met, with nourishment for our souls in the form of love and wisdom.

Swedenborg's writings were cited to further explain the importance of engaging with the Word. They emphasise that reading the Word not only brings us into the Lord's presence but also establishes communication with heaven, enlightening our minds and helping us understand truths.

Howard concluded by affirming that while there are many aspects of our spiritual lives that contribute to the progress we make in our journey, there is one singular starting step. The Lord desires that that singular step leads to living of life of usefulness to others, as we are born not just for ourselves but for the good of others.

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Sydney Society of the New Church

**Annual General Meeting
25 February 2023 - 11:30am**

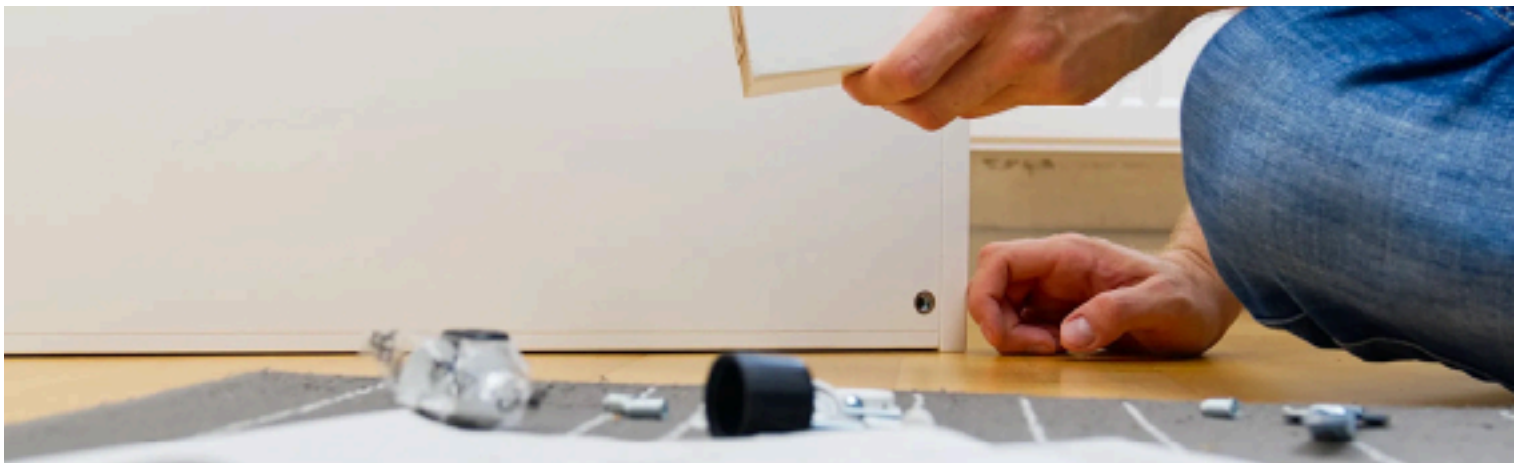


The Sydney Society of the New Church (Roseville New Church) will hold its Annual General Meeting on Sunday 25 February at 11:30am. The meeting will be held in the church sanctuary following the 10:00am Service. All members are encouraged to attend. Remote attendance via Zoom is available, please email Howard (revhathompson@gmail.com) for a link.

Church Committee

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Some Assembly Required



No, not THAT kind of assembly.

When I was serving as Pastor of the Colchester (UK) New Church we would occasionally have a visit from other New Church ministers. One year in particular, we had visits from three different ministers. When I

told my Pastor's Council that over the next few months we would be have visits from Rt. Rev. Peter Buss Sr., Rt. Rev. Peter Buss Jr. and Rev. Erik Buss, one member of my Council (Kathy Wyncoll) commented: "Well, isn't that just like life...you wait all day for a bus and three come at the same time!"



I thought of the quick witted Kathy Wyncoll recently when I realised that 2024 holds the opportunity for those interested to attend both a New Church in Australia Assembly and a General Church Assembly, all within a 12 week period. Below are details of both:

NCIA ASSEMBLY

The NCIA will hold an Assembly at Stanwell Tops from Friday **5 April 2024** to Sunday **7 April 2024**.

The purpose of the Assembly is to consider NCIA membership models, the ongoing management of The New Church in Australia and the Australian New Church College.

- All NCIA Members, Associate Members and friends on the National Register are invited to attend the Assembly and to participate in the discussions.
- The cost of travel to and accommodation at the Assembly is the responsibility of each attendee.
- Cost for Assembly attendees is \$215 (To be confirmed). This will cover two nights of

accommodation, linen and all meals from Friday evening through to Sunday lunch.

- It is envisaged that Assembly attendees will arrive in Stanwell Tops on Friday evening 5th April 2024 in time for the evening meal at 6pm and depart on Sunday 7th April 2024 after lunch (by 2pm).
- The agenda will allow for plenty of free discussion time.
- There is a maximum number of people that can be accommodated and so bookings will be accepted in order of receipt.

Your reply, expression of interest in attending and any proposed agenda items should be received by the Secretary on or about **5th February 2024**.

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COME AND LET US GO
UP TO THE MOUNTAIN OF THE LORD

General Church Assembly

June 27 - 30, 2024

Are you looking for a refresher on how to truly love the Lord and your neighbour?

Do you need an inspirational reset in facing your daily responsibilities?

Are you wishing for deeper connections with people who share some of your important values?

What is the General Church Assembly?

The Assembly is a community event dedicated to deepening one's faith through a weekend-long curriculum of worship, workshops and socialising. This opportunity is for people of all ages from around the world. It is intended to offer you space to reconnect to the ways your faith feeds you, worship the Lord, participate in enriching New Church learning and connect with friends old and new.

More information and registration details are available at <https://gcassembly2024.org/>



Minister's Contact Information and Office Hours

Rev. Howard A. Thompson

Office Hours: 11:00 am - 4.00 pm

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday

Email: revhathompson@gmail.com

Phone: 0432 357 475

Coach's Corner

The following message was posted on a gym notice board. Its message is as applicable to our spiritual life as it is to our physical.

"How you do anything is how you do everything."

Swedenborg himself wrote similarly in *Heaven & Hell*;

"Everything of our character and our spirit is [embodied] in our works or deeds"

(H. H. 475).

Final Thought

*"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."
(Joshua 24:15)*

When you read, hear, or meditate on these words from Joshua what thoughts come to your mind?

For many, this declaration symbolises a steadfast commitment to faith in and worship of the Lord. Yet Swedenborg invites us to delve deeper into the essence of what it truly means to serve the Lord. Swedenborg challenges the notion that mere faith or worship in isolation is sufficient for salvation. He posits that genuine faith is inseparable from charity—expressing love through action towards others.

In other words, faith without some outward manifestation of an intention to do good for others is incomplete, akin to a tree devoid of fruit. Further, Swedenborg explains, that merely doing good to friends and family or because of some reward you will receive is no better. True worship encompasses living according to divine commandments, which fundamentally call us to love and serve our neighbour or, more accurately, the good within those we serve. This perspective shifts the paradigm from faith alone to a faith that is alive and active in the world.

Spiritual growth flourishes in community, through acts of charity and usefulness. Serving the Lord, therefore, is not confined to liturgical practices but is vividly realised in our daily interactions and service to others.

This understanding transforms the phrase "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" into a holistic commitment to living a life of compassion, justice and kindness. It reminds us that true devotion to God is demonstrated through our love and service to our neighbour, making every act of kindness a divine service. Let this be a call to action, inspiring us to embody our faith through acts of charity, thereby bringing us closer to the essence of serving the Lord.

Howard

February

2024

January

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

March

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
						31

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
			Swedenborg Readings 10am			Swedenborg Saturday 10am - 12pm
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10.00am Service of Worship Including Holy Supper Rev. Howard A. Thompson			Swedenborg Readings 10am			
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
				Minister's Personal Day		
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson			Swedenborg Readings 10am			
				Minister's Personal Day		
25	26	27	28	29	1	2
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson 11.30 SSNC AGM		Bible Study 11.00				



**ROSEVILLE
NEW CHURCH**

