

ROSEVILLE NEW CHURCH

NOVEMBER 2023

“Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.”

(Psalm 23)

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.



Peace holds within itself trust in the Lord, the trust that He governs all things and provides all things, and that He leads towards an end that is good. When a person believes these things about Him, they are at peace.

Arcana Coelestia 8455

Roseville New Church Newsletter

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On Facebook – Roseville New Church

November 2023

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 Update

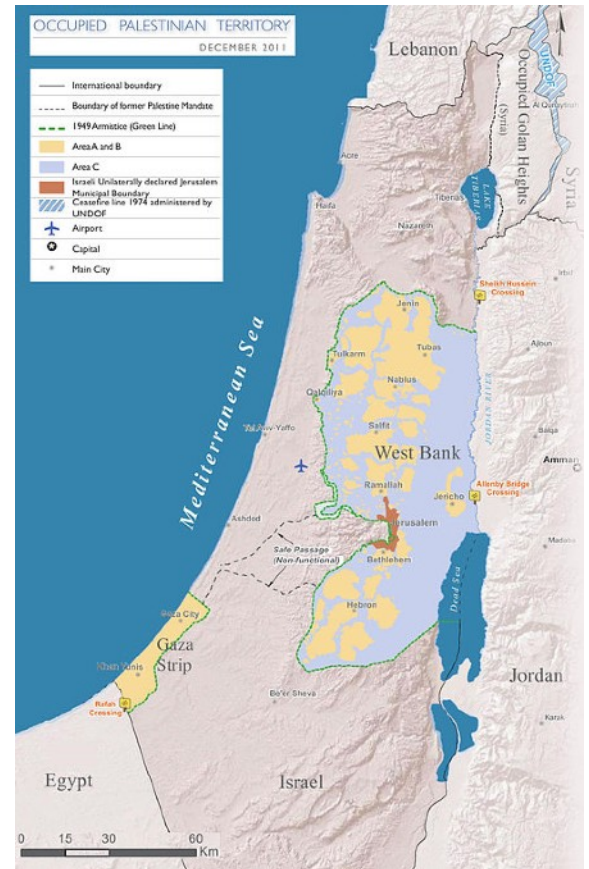
Our minister, Rev. Howard Thompson, posts a weekly video on his YouTube channel, Spiritual Shorts. Begun during the pandemic to support home worship, these videos are currently undergoing a format change. Take a look. The new format will dispense with the “ritual” elements used in the previous videos and should be around 5 minutes in length.



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

War in the Middle East

Like so many of our readers, I have been heartbroken by the news and the images coming out of Israel and Gaza over the past several weeks. I am also quite certain that I will continue to be heartbroken, probably even outraged at times, in the weeks and months ahead and this conflict continues. While at this time of year my thoughts begin to turn to Israel, it is not typically Gaza that I am thinking of, but of Bethlehem. Unfortunately, with the horrors of war once again front and centre in that region, the spiritual issues at play simply can not be ignored.



It is from this perspective that this month's RNC Newsletter is primarily focused on thoughts related to this conflict. Of course, no conflict can stop our our earth spinning, our days ticking over and the months passing by. We are barely 60 days away from Christmas. As such I am offering some thoughts on the subject of our preparation for the Birth of the Lord in our hearts.

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The War You Are Ignoring!

Here we go again. The all-too-familiar cycle of headlines has returned, drowning our news channels and social media platforms in a deluge of grim details surrounding yet

another international military conflict. Even my YouTube feed, which I've meticulously curated to cater to my hobby interests, seems to have been hijacked, with distressing updates overshadowing the content I usually turn to for escape and relaxation. Faced with this external chaos, I turned to the Lord who provided a perspective that shifted my focus inward, reminding me of the importance of addressing the wars that rage silently within us all.

In Matthew 23:8 Jesus says to His disciples; “You have only one teacher, Christ, and all of you are equal as brothers and sisters.” It is difficult not to recognise the undeniable truth that genuine security and peace can only come about when humanity looks to the divine, to the Lord. The present state of the world might present external challenges, but the crux of the problem and indeed the solution lies within the human spirit.



Wars are not just external confrontations between nations, but they are a manifestation of the internal struggles each individual grapples with. If each of us were truly fighting and winning these important spiritual wars that rage within us, the need for natural wars would diminish.

This spiritual understanding of the nature of war is analogous to the weight of an individual's vote in a representative form of government. At face value, one might argue that a single vote in the vast sea of a nation's electorate seldom tips the scale. However, imagine the ramifications if large swaths of

citizens, believing their individual votes to be inconsequential, chose to abstain from the democratic process. This collective apathy, born from individual disillusionment, would undermine the very foundation of the representative democracy.

A healthy nation thrives when each citizen exercises their right to vote with an understanding that their collective voices, much like their collective spiritual alignment, define the destiny of the nation. Just as the internal spiritual wars of individuals collectively manifest in external conflicts, the collective action or inaction of a nation's citizenry shapes the health, integrity, and direction of the entire nation.

Undeniably, in our current global scenario, nations feel the need for armies to ensure their security. It's an imperative for a country to guard its citizens against potential harm. However, influencing or intimidating others with the threat of force is not the path towards lasting peace. We must remember that each nation grapples with similar problems be they social, economic, or political.

When the Lord walked this Earth, He did not champion a specific societal or political structure. His teachings were focused on the internal battles that define the very essence of our character. These are the battles that determine whether a system uplifts or oppresses its people. Therefore, it is imperative that nations and individuals align their goals with the Divine will, trusting not in their own power, but in the Lord's guidance.

There's a profound realisation that if every individual and nation acted on this divine truth, prioritising it above all else, war would become an obsolete concept. On the contrary, if we perpetually wait for others to make the first

move towards this realisation, conflict remains an inevitable outcome. True peace can only emerge when each entity, whether individual or nation, recognises this truth and begins the journey of internal transformation, fostering mutual love and respect.

It's crucial to understand that while national boundaries have their significance, they should serve as bridges rather than barriers. Rather than plotting routes for conquest, nations should build paths for mutual service and assistance. In doing so, we further the Lord's design, where each individual and nation has a divine purpose and is equally cherished. The Lord's love is all-encompassing – loving each for the sake of all, and all for the sake of each. When we open our hearts to this divine love and actively manifest it in our actions, the dream of universal brotherhood becomes an achievable reality.

In this divine perspective, how can one nation justify seeking its own advantage at the expense of another? The love that binds individuals should be the same love that binds nations. Prioritising the welfare of the global community does not diminish one's love for their homeland. In fact, it is through this broader lens that patriotism finds its true meaning. A patriotism not confined by borders but extended to the entire human family.

The journey to global peace starts from within. It's not solely about diplomatic treaties or international agreements, but about each individual recognising and addressing the spiritual battles within. It's about nations embracing a universal love and understanding that their well-being is intrinsically linked to the well-being of all. When we individually and collectively align with this divine truth, a

world of mutual love and everlasting peace becomes more than just a possibility – it becomes our reality.

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To Blame or to Explain?

Is The Bible to Blame for Another War in the Middle East?

Yes, But Not in the Way You Think.

When sectarian violence flares up in the Middle East, numerous underlying factors are scrutinised, with religion frequently standing out as a primary suspect. This isn't surprising, as the region's historical and contemporary conflicts often intersect with religious divides encompassing Jews, Muslims, and Christians. Furthermore, even within these religious umbrellas, there are significant internal rifts that fuel tensions. A prominent example is the struggle for regional influence between the Sunni majority of Saudi Arabia and the Shia leadership in Iran.

Amplifying the blame on religious texts are certain Messianic prophecies found within both the Old and New Testament Bibles, such as the vision of the "Son of Man" coming with the clouds of heaven in Daniel 7:13-14, the detailed signs of the end times including wars, rumours of wars, and earthquakes as mentioned in Matthew 24:4-8, and the entire Book of Revelation which provides a vivid depiction of the end times, including the judgments of God, the rise of the Antichrist, and the climactic final battle at Armageddon (Revelation 16:16). Though I am by no means a Quranic scholar, I do understand that it also includes some of what we would recognise as Apocalyptic Messianic prophecies.

These two factors often combine in leading some people to believe that the Bible and other sacred scriptures themselves are responsible for many wars, both historic and contemporary. To be fair, sacred scriptures do little to assuage such concerns given the many wars, battles and rules for retribution they contain. Are these ancient scripture really at fault? Turning our attention specifically to the Bible, I would argue that it is, but not in the way many people say it is. In fact, the Bible could hold the key to preventing wars.

Human Nature and the Bible

In the mid-1700s, the renowned Swedish inventor and scientist, Emanuel Swedenborg, shifted his focus to spiritual matters. Following a series of profound spiritual encounters, Swedenborg diligently documented his revelations. He posited that the Bible, much like the layers of an onion, isn't merely a historical account of events and individuals. Instead, it mirrors humanity's spiritual evolution and journey. At its essence, the Bible unveils the complexities of human nature—our dreams, vulnerabilities, and crucially, our innate tendencies.

The Biblical narratives, rich with tales of greed, deception, and power ambitions, transcend mere historical recounts of kings and kingdoms. They remain timeless, illuminating the darker corners of the human psyche. Episodes such as Cain's envy of Abel or King Saul's hunger for dominance serve not just as stories but as allegories, highlighting the



deep-seated human inclinations towards selfishness and control.

The Middle East Conflict Through a Biblical Lens

Given this interpretation, one could argue that the recurrent conflicts in the Middle East aren't just about territorial disputes, religious differences, or political ambitions. Instead, they are manifestations of the timeless human tendencies the Bible warns about. The desire for dominance, the proclivity for division, and the aspiration for superiority are elements intrinsic to humanity, regardless of epoch or geography.

To say the Bible is to blame is not to suggest it incites violence, but rather that it foresaw and depicted the potential consequences of unchecked human tendencies. The unrest in the Middle East, viewed in this light, becomes a manifestation of the very propensities the Bible has long showcased.

A Call for Self-Reflection

In pointing fingers at the Bible, perhaps what we're really doing is pointing at a reflection of ourselves. The real blame lies not in the scriptures, but in our inability to learn from them and transcend our baser instincts. The challenge, therefore, isn't to distance ourselves from these texts but to delve deeper into them, understanding their true essence and applying their wisdom.

Swedenborg's teachings encourage such introspection. They invite us to recognise the Bible as a tool for self-awareness, a manual that can guide humanity away from the precipice of its darker inclinations. In doing so, we can foster a world of greater understanding, compassion, and, ultimately, peace.

While it's simplistic to directly blame the Bible for contemporary conflicts, it's insightful to see it as a guide that sheds light on the root causes of these disputes. The Bible doesn't instigate violence; it warns against the very attitudes that lead to it. And as such, if blame must be placed, let it be on our collective failure to heed its timeless wisdom.

A closing thought. It seems clear to me that a person who kills in the name of God, wasn't listening to God but to self.

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!A January Conversation!

In September the NCIA had to make the difficult decision to cancel the planned Church Retreat scheduled for 15 to 20 January 2024. The decision was based on our inability to garner enough interest to reach the minimum number of participants. As a note, this minimum was only 25

participants.



As unfortunate as it is that we will not be holding a retreat next year, we remain committed to engaging in a dialogue around the important themes that were planned for the Retreat.

Our planned theme; "What's the Use!" remains a resonant theme, especially in an era where traditional expressions of faith seem to be waning in our rapidly changing culture. As our church communities

experience these shifts, many of us might find ourselves grappling with the profound question, "What's the Use?" Yet, this question, poignant as it may seem, isn't just limited to our collective faith journey. It's also deeply personal. Each one of us, at different moments in our lives, might question the purpose or significance of our thoughts, intentions, or actions. What value do they bring? What impact do they have? Frankly, some of us may even question our own use in this world.

It is for this reason that the Roseville New Church has decided to hold a 2-day retreat for those who want to engage with this subject. The rough plan is for the weekend gathering (20-21 January 2024) at the Roseville New Church. Formal presentations will be held Saturday and we will all meet for worship and a wrap-up discussion on Sunday.

In a world constantly evolving and redefining its values, how does an institution as venerable as the church retain its significance? How can it remain a beacon of hope, guidance, and solace in today's landscape? We'll embark on this journey of discovery, seeking answers and perhaps finding even more questions, as we explore the enduring relevance of the church in our contemporary world.

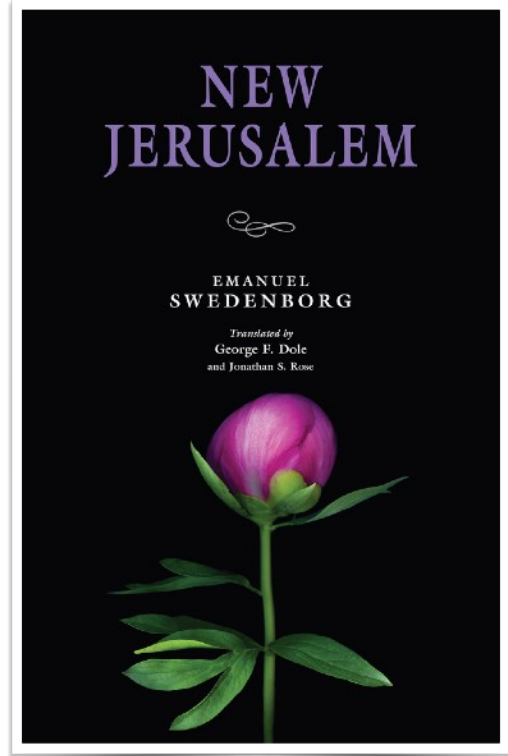
More information will be forthcoming in the December issue. For more information please contact Howard.

Rev. Howard Thompson
(revhathompson@gmail.com)

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Swedenborg Centre September News

As mentioned in last month's news, the Swedenborg Reading sessions (10am Wednesdays) are exploring a work by Swedenborg called "The New Jerusalem" (also available under the title "The Heavenly City"). Here is a little more info on that. In this small book, Swedenborg manages to collect together wonderful brief summaries of the main points of the heavenly teachings with which he was brought into contact for at least the final 27 years of his life. Swedenborg's heavenly



education consisted of him experiencing many examples of the truths and meanings of those heavenly principles. In this way, he was able gradually to see reality as it really is.

Why did he call that work "The New Jerusalem" (subtitled "and Its Heavenly Teachings")? Let me use Swedenborg's own words in the book to explain that:

"It says in the Book of Revelation [chapter 21]: 'I saw a new heaven and a new earth, because the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven... Its wall was made of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were made of precious stones of every kind. The twelve gates were twelve pearls. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. The glory of God illuminated it...'"

That really sounds like something magnificent and significant, doesn't it?

Swedenborg continues:

“When people read this, they understand it only in literal terms... Angels understand it in a completely different way, though. They understand in a spiritual way the details that we understand in an earthly way, and they understand what those details really mean. This is the inner or spiritual meaning of the Word. In the deeper or spiritual meaning that angels are engaged in is that heavenly teachings will come down to us from God about everything that is good and true, all gathered together.”

Some of the meanings he shows as follows:

- The city walls means the truths that protect it.
- The measure of the city walls are the measure of a human being.
- The twelve gates are introductory truths.
- The foundations mean the knowledge on which the teachings are based.
- The gold like clear glass that the city and streets were made of means good actions done out of love, which cause the teachings and their truths to shine.

Swedenborg reminds us that the spiritual meaning of the Word is like that, while the earthly or literal meaning serves as its foundation, that these two levels of meaning are bound together by their correspondence.

A sample of the kind of wonderful chapters covered in this succinct work are Goodness and Truth; Will and Understanding; Inner Self and Outer Self; Love; Love for Ourselves, Love for the World; Love for Our Neighbour; Conscience; Freedom; Taking Credit; Regeneration; Heaven and Hell; and Providence.

The breadth and power of these teachings cannot be underestimated. Join us for an interesting exploration of this and other amazing Swedenborg works on Wednesdays at 10am, online via Zoom or in person at the Centre. Zoom links are on the website mentioned below.

Here is a list of events coming up. All Swedenborg Centre events, activities, news and Zoom links are listed on the website at www.swedenborg.com.au:

Coming events: -

Swedenborg Readings on 10am every **Wednesdays**
Bible Study with Howard, each fortnightly, **Tuesday** at 11am (i.e. on **November 14th and 28th**).

Dr Groves Readings are on **Friday November 3rd and 17th** at noon & 7pm.

Swedenborg Saturday discussions will be held **November 4th and 18th** at 10am.

Looking forward to seeing you at any event or visit at the Centre. With very warm good wishes, Joe

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Christmas Preparations

Christmas is a time of joy, reflection, and celebration that is eagerly anticipated by millions around the world. As the



season approaches, many of us dive headfirst into a whirlwind of preparations: homes twinkle with fairy lights and ornate decorations, shops bustle with eager gift-hunters, and the air is filled with the familiar scent of baked goods and the

melodies of cherished carols. Don't forget, of course, how quickly our calendars fill up with the Christmas events we simply "must" attend each year. While these traditions set the mood and bring warmth to our hearts, they are but the externals of Christmas preparations. Beneath the tangible festivities lies a deeper, spiritual dimension to the holiday that, truth be told, many of us find missing in the face of all these preparations. With this reality in mind I thought it useful to look at some other forms of preparation that often takes a backseat to these more external preparations.



As much as we enjoy many aspects of the Christmas Season, it is interesting to note that in the teachings for the New Church, Swedenborg actually has very little to say about Christmas directly. In a quiet corner of his Writings, we are reminded of a profound interpretation of Jesus' birth. Imagine, for a moment, that the birth of Jesus is not just an event in history, but a mirror reflecting the birth of unselfish love and wisdom within each one of us (Secrets of Heaven 3762.2, 3, 5). Envision a world where Jesus' presence isn't just remembered but is reborn in the crevices of our individual souls, illuminating our inner lives with divine affection and enlightenment.

Such a birth, however, doesn't simply manifest. It beckons us to prepare, to participate. Picture yourself, a traveler on a spiritual journey. The first leg, reminiscent of ancient purification rituals, finds you confronting and shedding the

weight of your own harmful tendencies. This is repentance in its purest form. As you advance, the path takes you through lands of reformation and regeneration. These terrains transform your intellect and heart, allowing the seeds of the Lord's wisdom and love to sprout. You soon discover that belief alone won't sustain you. Just as trees need to bear fruit, your faith must be complemented by acts of charity, reflecting Jesus' teachings in every gesture.

On this journey you will find that books are gateways. For



you, the Bible is more than just words; it's a conduit to the divine. As you read, reflect on its depths and pray, you feel closer to the Lord, preparing your heart to be a worthy dwelling for the Lord.

Yet, amidst all this, humility remains your compass.

Through whispered prayers, you acknowledge not just your journey and the progress you have made, but the guiding hand of the Lord orchestrating this internal rebirth.

In this narrative, consider the humble stable of Bethlehem. It stands not just as a location, but as a symbol of the simplicity and humility required for the Lord's presence. Just as the stable cradled Jesus, our humbled hearts, too, can become sanctuaries of divine love. Every character in the nativity, from the innocently loving shepherds to the wise men seeking knowledge, reflects stages and states of our spiritual journey. They remind us that the nativity isn't just a tale; it's an allegory of our journey towards the divine, our preparation to welcome the Lord into our souls.

Rev. Howard A. Thompson

2023 Christmas Readings

In keeping with the thoughts expressed in the previous piece on Christmas Preparations, the 2023 Christmas Readings will be coming your way in time for the first reading on 1 December. This collection of daily readings are a valuable tool in maintaining the proper balance between externals and internals this Christmas Season.

Focusing this year on the virtues of **Trust, Confidence, and Strength in the Lord**, every reading concludes with thought-provoking reflections and queries. From December 1st to the day after Christmas, these twenty-six readings aim to guide you through the season and into the New Year with a heart full of faith.



As a reminder to those who receive the E-Newsletter, if you would prefer to receive a physical copy of the Christmas Readings please send me an email (revhathompson@gmail.com) and I'll be certain to get it into the post in time for your first reading.



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.

The **MAGIC** you are
looking for, is hidden in
the **WORK** you're avoiding

Final Thought

With the news of hostilities in Israel, the following prayer was offered at the opening of our 15 October service.

Lord God, from Psalm 122, you reminded us, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." Today, not only do we pray for the physical peace of that ancient and holy land, but we also recognise the deeper, spiritual meaning of these words. For in the teachings of the New Church, "Jerusalem" symbolises Your Divine Church on earth and the church within each one of us.

Oh Lord, may peace reign not just in the streets and homes of Jerusalem, but also in the spiritual "Jerusalem" that resides within our souls. Let us find harmony in our innermost thoughts, and let that inner peace resonate outwardly in our actions and interactions.

We ask for Your guidance and comfort for all those affected by conflict. Protect the innocent, heal the wounded, and give wisdom to the leaders. May the spirit of reconciliation overcome division, and may understanding surpass the barriers of misunderstanding.

Lord, guide us to be instruments of Your peace, and let our lives and our church be a testimony to Your infinite love and mercy. Today and always, we pray for the peace of Jerusalem—both the city of stone and the church within our hearts.

In Your holy name, we pray.

Amen.

November

2023

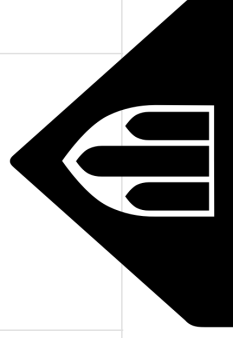
October

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 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

December

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
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
10:00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson		Bible Study 11.00				Swedenborg Sat. 10:00am
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
10:00am Service of Worship Including Holy Supper Rev. Howard A. Thompson				Minister's Personal Day		"Armistice Day"
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
10:00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson		Bible Study 11.00				Swedenborg Sat. 10:00am
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
10:00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson			SAA Committee 6:30	Minister's Personal Day		
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
10:00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson	SSNC Committee 7:30pm	Bible Study 11.00		Minister's Personal Day		



ROSEVILLE NEW CHURCH

