

ROSEVILLE NEW CHURCH

**MAY / JUNE
2023**

“After this work was finished, the Lord called together the twelve disciples who followed him in the world. The next day he sent all of them out to the entire spiritual world to preach the gospel that the Lord God Jesus Christ reigns and that his kingdom will last for ages of ages.”

(True Christianity 791)

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.

The Angel Service - SUSPENDED

The Angel Service is an informal service that invites participants to reflect on the active role the spiritual world plays in our physical lives. The service involves reflection, discussion, sometimes a brief talk and always concludes with prayer.

The Angel Service is held each month on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays at 5 p.m.

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.

Roseville New Church Newsletter

Issued by the Sydney Society of the New Church Established in 1875
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Minister's e-mail : revhathompson@gmail.com
On Facebook – Roseville New Church

May/June 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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Online Worship Reminder

A reminder that our minister, Rev. Howard Thompson, posts a weekly video on his YouTube channel, Spiritual Shorts. These videos (usually 10-15 minutes long) focus on one key aspect of the week's message and are intended to support home worship with prayer, links to hymns, opening of the Word, lessons and a brief talk.



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

ANZAC Day Reflection

On 25 April citizens of Australia and New Zealand mark ANZAC Day, a national day of remembrance that commemorates all Australians and New Zealanders who served and died in wars, conflicts, and peacekeeping operations. At dawn services across both countries speakers, including clergy, likely reference the following words from the Lord: "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).

In 2023, however, relatively few of us are called to serve in our nation's armed services. Even fewer are faced with the prospect of laying down our lives for our friends. This



stands in stark contrast to the conditions that caused many names to be engraved on memorial plaques in small towns and villages across the country, names of young men who never returned from World Wars I & II. This begs the question: how applicable are these words of the Lord today? Quite frankly, these words could not be more important than they are today.

In his teachings for the New Church, Emanuel Swedenborg wrote of multiple understandings of this passage. Yes, of course, laying down one's life for his or her friends is the ultimate physical sacrifice, the ultimate expression of love. It certainly expresses the selfless love that the Lord demonstrated on the cross.



There are other, more spiritual ways, that each of us can lay down our lives. Ways that we are called to far more frequently than in battle defending our nation. One way to fulfil the Lord's teaching is through spiritual sacrifice, which

involves setting aside one's own selfish desires and ambitions in order to serve others. The New Church teaches that this type of sacrifice is a daily practice that involves putting the needs of others before one's own desires, and making choices that are in the best interest of others. This type of sacrifice can be difficult, as it requires us to let go of our own egos and be willing to put the needs of others first.

Another, even deeper spiritual way to fulfil this teaching is through what Emanuel Swedenborg might term the "heavenly sacrifice." Such a sacrifice involves laying down our own will and taking up the Lord's will. Swedenborg wrote that this type of sacrifice is the highest form of love, as it involves surrendering our own desires and agendas to the divine plan and living our lives in accordance with the Lord's will. This type of sacrifice involves a deep commitment to spiritual growth and development and a willingness to let go of our own desires and attachments in order to align ourselves with the divine purpose. In short: *'not my will, but thy will be done.'*



Like many seemingly simple teachings of the Lord, there are different ways to fulfil Jesus' teaching to lay down one's life for others, including physical sacrifice, spiritual sacrifice, and heavenly sacrifice. Each of these forms of sacrifice requires a willingness to put others first and to surrender our own desires in service to others and to the divine. Few of our lives today may be at risk in war, but that does not mean that we don't have a life to put down that will have far greater implications for our eternal life.

Personally, I can think of no greater way to honour those who have died in service to our country than to live a life of useful service to each other.

Lest we forget.

Rev. Howard A. Thompson

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Garden of Gratitude

While writing this month's ANZAC Reflection, I realised that I had not shared with our Newsletter readers some work that has been done around the church. Many years ago the front garden of the church was "dedicated in gratitude to those who served in WWII."

This was marked by a bronze plaque affixed to a park bench in front of the church sign.

Well, during my four years here both the sign and the park bench have had to be replaced. We did retain the plaque and



spent a good bit of time deciding how best to display the dedication, given that the new design of the park bench was not suitable for affixing a bronze plaque.

Enter Kathryn Baker. For many years Kathryn has been helping maintain the gardens at both the church and the manse. I shared with Kathryn the need to find a suitable spot to display the plaque and suggested that we could repurpose a large piece of sandstone recently uncovered in another part of the garden. Kathryn, whose skills go far beyond gardening, quickly imagined, engineered and created a plinth upon which we could set the sandstone and affix the newly polished plaque. On this ANZAC Day I think the garden looks great and I wish to express my appreciation to Kathryn and her brother John (who helped with the bench and new concrete path) for their work in regenerating this area of the church property.

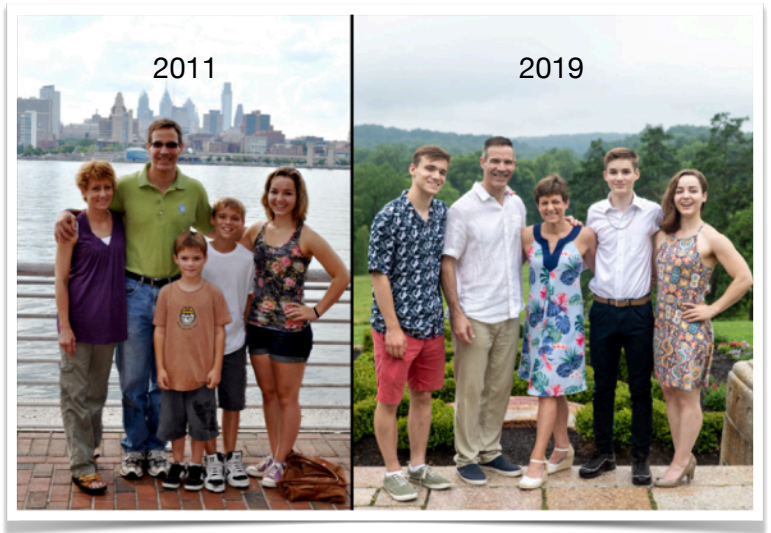


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Long-Delayed Visit

Keen readers of the Roseville New Church Newsletter may wonder why we have another combined (May/June) edition of our newsletter. This is due to the fact that our minister and his family will be making a long-awaited visit to family and friends back in the States. Family and friends have not seen the two young men, Ben and Lance, since 2019. You

will note that the visit is reflected in the Roseville calendar as we will be cancelling altogether one service and having guest ministers for two others. While we will be gone for the better part of May and a bit of June, we will all be able to celebrate the Second Coming together on Sunday 19 June. Briefly, here are the dates affected by our absence:



* * * 14 May 2023 * * *

NO SERVICE

Mother's Day - Visit With Family!

* * * 21 May 2023 * * *

Guest Minister - Julian Duckworth

10:00am

* * * 28 May 2023 * * *

Guest Minister - Todd Beiswenger

NO 10:00am SERVICE

Special Service time 3:00pm

* * * 4 June 2023 * * *

Minister - Howard Thompson

Regular Services Return

10:00am

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!Church Camp/Retreat Returns!

When last we were able to gather for an NCIA Church Retreat it was January 2020 in Adelaide. Life, shall we say, has become quite 'complicated' since then hasn't it? Well, mark your calendar, we have a date for a 2024 New Church Camp/Retreat.

Camp will be held from **15 to 20 January 2024** at the Winmalee Christian Conference Centre in Winmalee NSW.

The facility is self-contained, air-conditioned rooms and common areas, pool, outdoor facilities, many great bushwalking tracks and walking distance to closest town.

As a smaller setting, **space is limited**. Please register your interest in attending as soon as practical. This can be done by emailing me directly, until someone steps forward to serve a coordinator of registrations.

As this is my first go at organising a camp for the NCIA crew, I need your help. Please contact me if you have any interest in any of the following aspects of running a camp: program ideas, presenter (yourself or someone you'd like to see), registrations, children's program or social activities.

Your help is needed and appreciated.

Howard Thompson

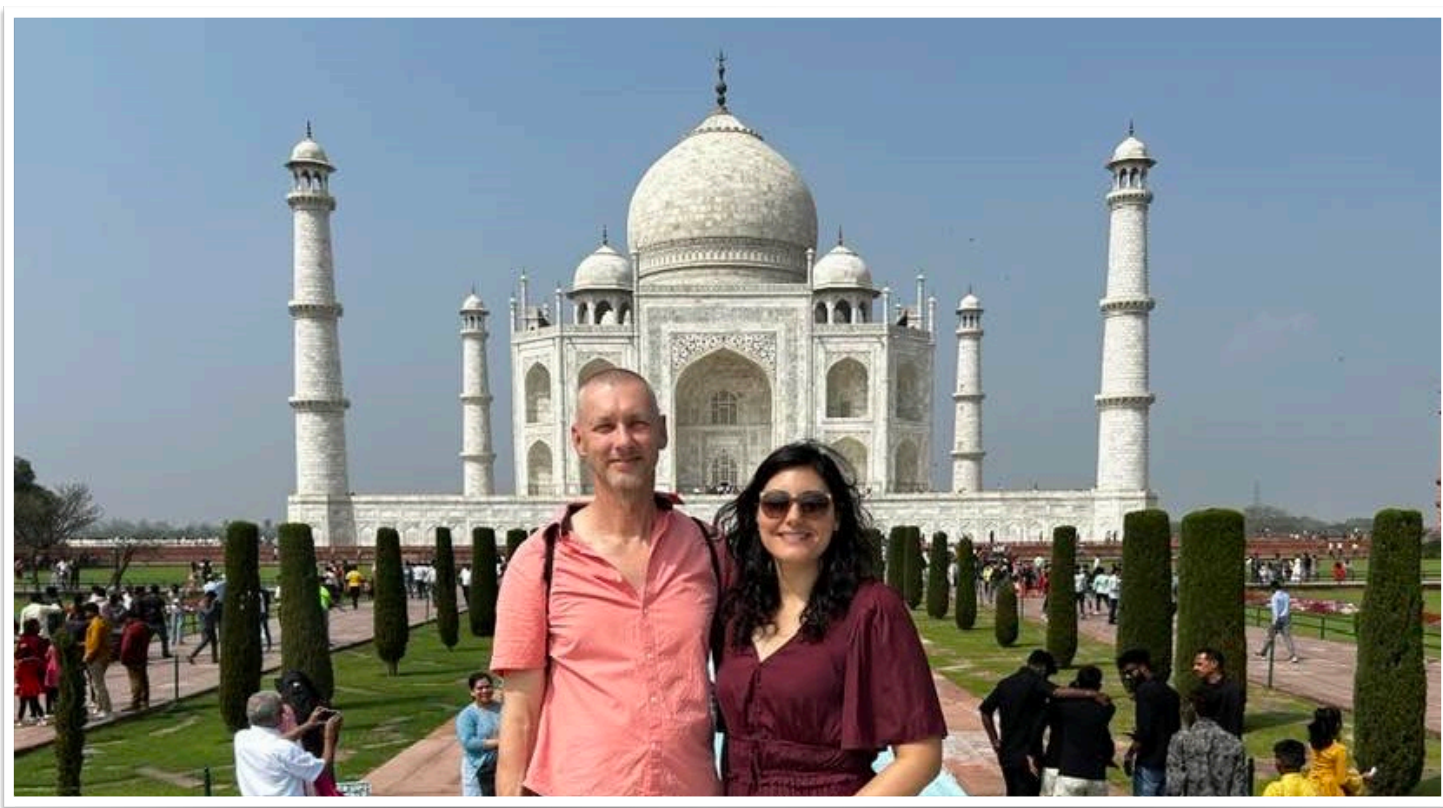
(revhathompson@gmail.com)

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Swedenborg Centre May-June News

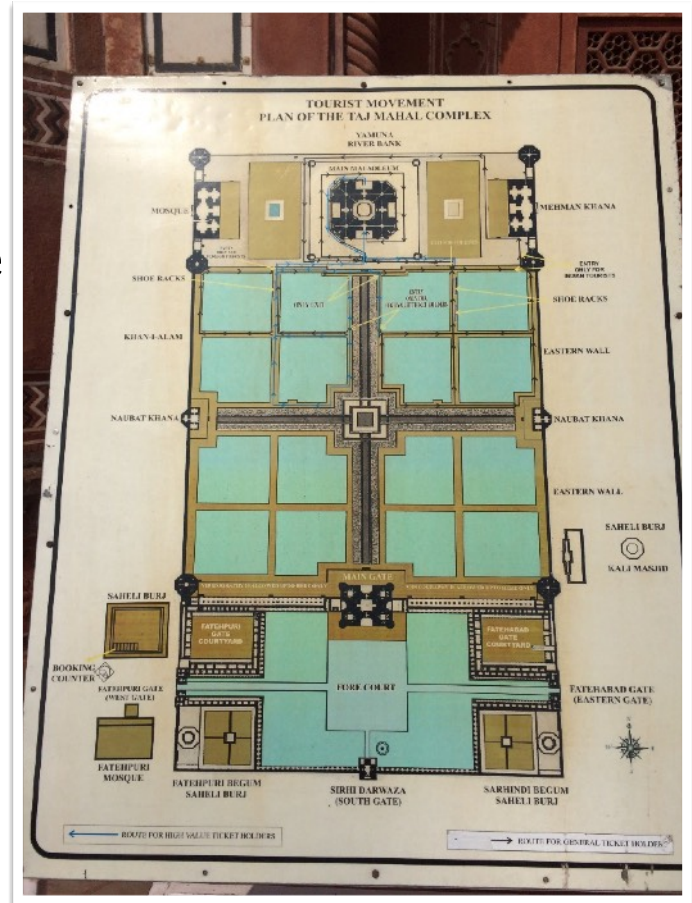
March and April took me (Joe) away from the Centre to experience India, while Liz, Debra, Howard and Julian kept a capable eye on the Centre and its activities and visitors. For their kindness and efforts I am very grateful.

India was an interesting mix of experiences. First there was Delhi, definitely a sensory shock, with its smell, dust and pollution, noise and heat, crowds and traffic. And yet it also had a certain charm, with the tenacious hope and attempt (and success!) of its numerous inhabitants to make ends meet in finding customers and obtaining some income. One driver told us that on Indian roads he needs three essential things: good brakes, a good horn, and good luck! And that horn certainly gets used a lot, even while he's busily shifting gears (most cars have manual gears), plus dodging the dense chaotic traffic on busy intersections or on narrow mountain roads, while at the same time talking to his other customers on the handheld mobile phone! Seatbelts are not required for passengers in the back. When we were at a main city intersection, our light turned green, but we couldn't move, because five cows began sauntering calmly and slowly across the road. Everything waits for the cows. India seemed a huge mass of juxtapositions of rich and poor, modern and old. Everything was precariously cobbled



together and vulnerable, like the chaotic tangled mass of electrical cables hanging from almost every power pole in the street. No wonder the power went out fairly frequently. We spent time exploring the spiritual significance of the architecture and layout of a few key historic monuments before heading to Agra by train to check out the Taj Mahal. And truly stunning it was.

The whole Taj ground plan depicts the process of our spiritual reformation and regeneration, culminating in the main building which represents the celestial state in which the love for God rules supreme in us. Leading up to it are the four rivers from a single central source, in the garden of Eden, each representing an orientation to the truth and wisdom flowing perpetually from God towards all beings. The four rivers represent our growth from first dealing with external or sensory knowledges, and culminates in the form of intelligence which is derived directly from the love of God. The first 'river' at the Taj Mahal points to Mecca because in Islam that is where the external manifestation of truth resides – a black meteorite stone from heaven, set in the sacred Kaaba at the central place of Muslim's outer worship and orientation. Islamic tradition holds that the Black Stone fell from heaven (Jannah, meaning "paradise", "garden", "abode of the righteous") to show Adam and Eve where to build an altar,



which became the first temple on Earth. So that orientation is where we still need external reminders But the culmination of the journey is very different because we have a complete faith in (and love for, and constant orientation towards) the wisdom and truth flowing directly from God. The flow from these rivers enlighten the human spirit and inwardly nourish it so that it will grow into its full stature (represented by the Taj building itself. The layout of the Taj complex is based on a description of Jannah by Sufi mystic Ibn Arabi (a 13th century Swedenborg who similarly encountered the Lord and saw the Grand Human and had the vision of correspondences). The crown on the building is an inverted lotus, the symbol for purity, eternity and enlightenment, which in its inversion teaches that these qualities come to our soul from God, from above, from heaven. The original entry to the whole complex was from the south gate which is the furthest from the Taj, and as we go through this gate we leave behind us the busy, noisy, bustling and thriving activity of outer life and outer concerns. Then we find ourselves in a peaceful large outer courtyard, a place of quiet reflection. When we continue we enter through the Great Gate into the paradise gardens of Eden in front of the Taj itself. These gardens are our mind – thoughts and feelings, inner and outer, which need to become organised and orderly, rightly oriented and beautiful as we become more and more inwardly orientated (and align ourselves towards our soul – the Taj itself). It's a magnificent site, worth seeing for yourself if you get a chance. Of course there is much more to say about its symbolism and significance, but space here does not permit going into a lot more detail. After Agra we continued to Dharamshala in mountainous Northern India in the area

where the Tibetan refugees and the Dalai Lama now live. It was indeed a very enjoyable trip.

Back at the Swedenborg Centre, everything has returned to normal. See the website at swedenborg.com.au for any Zoom links to events and all other details. The schedule for the next two months is as follows:

- Each Monday at 11am are ***Fourth Way Readings with Swedenborg insights***. These provide a stimulating basis for a deeper understanding of oneself.
- Tuesdays, fortnightly, at 11am is a ***Bible Study with Howard Thompson***, namely on **May 2nd**, then a break while Howard is in the USA, recommencing on **June 13th and 27th**.
- ***Swedenborg Readings*** continue each Wednesday at 10am – still exploring *Divine Providence*, a wonderful work rich with thought-provoking revelations.
- ***Dr Groves Readings*** will be on at noon and 7pm on the following Fridays: **May 5th and 19th**, as well as **June 2nd, 16th and 30th**. These readings always produce many useful insights to enable us to live life more abundantly.
- ***Swedenborg Saturdays*** will be at 10am on May 6th and 20th, and June 3rd and 17th. Join us for some lively exploration of Swedenborg ideas.

Wishing you an enjoyable few months. Hopefully we'll see some of you at the Centre or online as part of these activities or simply for a visit.

Joe

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June Nineteenth

(Celebrating the Second Coming)

On June 19th we in the New Church will celebrate the Second Coming. We do this because Emanuel Swedenborg, in his work *True Christianity*, noted that the Second Coming occurred in the spiritual world on 19 June 1770. With this date coming up I find myself reflecting on the pitfalls of several widely held Christian ideas about the Second Coming.

Generally speaking and acknowledging that there are some nuanced differences in their theological positions, Catholics and Protestants believe in the Second Coming as a literal, physical return of Jesus Christ to Earth. They believe that this event will occur at some point in the future, although the exact timing is unknown and has been the subject of much debate and speculation within the Christian community. Both also believe that the Second Coming will be preceded by a period of tribulation, during which there will be great turmoil and suffering on Earth, a time of intense spiritual warfare between the forces of good and evil. Finally both subscribe to the belief that an Antichrist will emerge and establish a one-world government and religion, and that there will be widespread persecution of Christians in the days leading up to Christ's return.



The Siege and Destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans Under the Command of Titus, A.D. 70, by David Roberts (1850)

Read that again and just let it sink in.



Do you notice how some part of you responds to those ideas? Maybe some part of you feels excited that if it were to happen this way, you would get to see Jesus in the flesh. Maybe some part of you rests secure in the knowledge that in this

conflict between good and evil you would be on the right side. Or maybe, you look around at the world today and think it must be coming soon because the world is turned upside down and modern society has completely lost the plot.

The belief in a literal Second Coming can lead to a dualistic way of thinking that divides the world into two opposing camps: believers and non-believers. This can create an "us versus them" mentality and a sense of alienation from the broader society. A person who holds these beliefs may see themselves as separate from the rest of society and may even view the breakdown of social order as a necessary step toward the fulfilment of end-time prophecy. With a belief in the Second Coming often comes vivid and frightening apocalyptic imagery, which can reinforce a sense of impending doom and reinforce the belief that the social order is irredeemable. A belief news media of all stripes seems to be all too willing to reinforce. This imagery can



include visions of earthquakes, wars, plagues, and other disasters that will precede the Second Coming. Some believers may even see themselves as agents of God's wrath, tasked with bringing about the destruction of the existing social order in preparation for the return of Christ.

Thankfully, Swedenborg frees a person from any such thinking by revealing the reality of the Second Coming. A reality that speaks not of literal events to occur in the future, but spiritual events that have already occurred and continue to occur within each of us as we seek to live the Lord's Word into our lives.



One question I ask is why is the apocalyptic imagery so appealing to people? One way to look at this that helps us to understand the appeal is an acknowledgement of the human condition. Life is hard.

Even today, when most of us in the western industrialised world have ready access to ample food, clean water, secure homes and opportunities our ancestors could only dream of, life is still hard. It is hard because the spiritual battles we experience are little changed from 50, 100, 1,000 years ago. Given the challenges, the spiritual assaults, we experience, who wouldn't want an easy solution. Who wouldn't be excited by the prospect that someone will come and sort it all out, punishing the evil and rewarding the good? And, of course, who wouldn't count themselves among "the good"?



While the underlying human condition is little changed in 1,000 years, one thing I see that has changed is our level of impatience in our modern world. We have become accustomed to a “just-in-time” way of living. “Just in time delivery” refers to the practice of delivering products or materials to a customer or production line at the exact time they are needed, in the exact quantity required, and in the correct condition. With a few clicks on our computers we can have just about anything we desire delivered to our door, some times the very day we ordered the item. In one respect I see this as making the idea of a literal Second Coming as even more appealing; “let’s make it happen so we can stop all the turmoil and spiritual struggles we experience in our lives.”

“There are no shortcuts to anywhere worth going”
Beverly Sills, Opera Singer

Of course, like so many other aspects of growth in our physical, intellectual and spiritual lives, there really are no short-cuts. I am reminded of the Lord’s words:

“Only an evil, adulterous generation would demand a miraculous sign, but the only sign I will give them is the sign of the prophet Jonah” (Matthew 16:4). By reference to Jonah, the Lord was noting that the only sign for any of us would be the process of spiritual regeneration represented by the Jonah story, which involves facing and overcoming spiritual challenges and temptations in order to reach a higher level of consciousness and understanding. The big fish represented the "hellish" states of mind and heart that each of us must confront and overcome in order to be reborn spiritually.

There truly are no short-cuts, save for what the Lord has given us in the teachings for the New Church. Teachings

that help us to understand that the Second Coming is not a literal event to happen at some unknown point in the future, but that the Second Coming is a spiritual event that that has already occurred and continues to occur within each of us as we continue to live the Lord's Word into our lives. This in turn frees a person to live a heavenly life now and to eternity.

Come to think of it, maybe there is a bit of a short-cut; the revelation given through Emanuel Swedenborg 250 years ago.

Rev. Howard A. Thompson

Abbreviated May/June Calendar

Sunday 07 May - 10:00am - Service Incl. Holy Supper

Sunday 14 May - Mothers Day - **NO SERVICE**

Sunday 21 May - 10:00am - Service - **Julian D.**

Sunday 28 May - **3:00pm** - Service - **Todd B.**

Sunday 04 June - 10:00am - Service Incl. Holy Supper

Sunday 11 June - 10:00am - Service

Monday 13 June - 10:00am - Bible Study

Sunday 18 June - 10:00am - Service
(Special Service Celebrating June 19th)

Sunday 25 June - 10:00am - Service

Tuesday 27 June - 11:00am - Bible Study



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

Pulpit Humour



Final Thought

Sometimes a new perspective can help us rediscover something as if for the first time. This has been the case with some recent additions to our group: Bede, Sylvia, and Kevin. These avid readers and deep thinkers have reintroduced us to the work of Rev. Chauncey Giles, a 19th-century giant in Swedenborg scholarship.

As a sample of his work, I'm sharing a summary of his book, "Perfect Prayer: How Offered: How Answered." This insightful read will undoubtedly transform your approach to prayer, moving beyond "vain repetitions as the heathen do."

In "Perfect Prayer: How Offered: How Answered," Rev. Chauncey Giles delves into the concept of prayer and its effective use in one's spiritual life. He contends that perfect prayer goes beyond mere recitation of words; it requires a genuine connection with the Divine and a yearning to align with God's will.

The book examines various aspects of prayer, such as its purpose, appropriate attitude, and the role of spiritual growth. Giles underscores the importance of humility, trust, and love in prayer, stressing that an open heart and sincere intentions are crucial for effective communication with God.

When it comes to answered prayers, Giles clarifies that they may not always be fulfilled in the way we anticipate. Instead, God responds to prayers in a manner that best serves our spiritual growth and overall well-being. As a result, unanswered prayers can sometimes be hidden blessings.