



ROSEVILLE NEW CHURCH

OCTOBER 2023

“Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”

(Matthew 11:28-30)

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.



The blessedness that heavenly affections possess is that which [our] soul or spirit possesses, flowing in by an interior route and reaching through to the body, where it is received to the extent that the delights springing from the loves that belong to the natural and the senses do not stand in the way.

Arcana Coelestia 6408

Roseville New Church Newsletter

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On Facebook – Roseville New Church

October 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

Woke Like A Patriarch

Are You Woke? Oh, I Hope So!

(Let me explain)

If you are engaged in the political battles that constantly rage or if, like me, you are a student of the dynamics of the political battlefield, you are most likely familiar with the term “woke.” If you are not familiar with the term then I can guarantee that you are far more spiritually healthy than I am.

Originally rooted in African American Vernacular English, the term has come to describe a heightened awareness of social injustices, particularly those related to race, gender, and class. In the broader cultural context, being "woke" means being aware of, and actively attentive to, important facts and issues, especially related to social justice and inequality.



Over time, "woke" has become a broader umbrella term encompassing awareness and acknowledgement of a variety of social and political issues beyond just race, such as LGBTQ+ rights, feminism, environmental issues, and more.



However, like many terms tied to socio-political movements, "woke" has also been subject to co-optation, commercialisation, and sometimes, derision. Critics argue that it has been overused or misused, often referred to as "performative wokeness," where individuals or

corporations publicly express progressive views primarily for self-promotion or profit rather than genuine advocacy. Conversely, some conservatives use "woke" pejoratively to criticise what they see as excessive political correctness or perceived left-leaning cultural shifts.

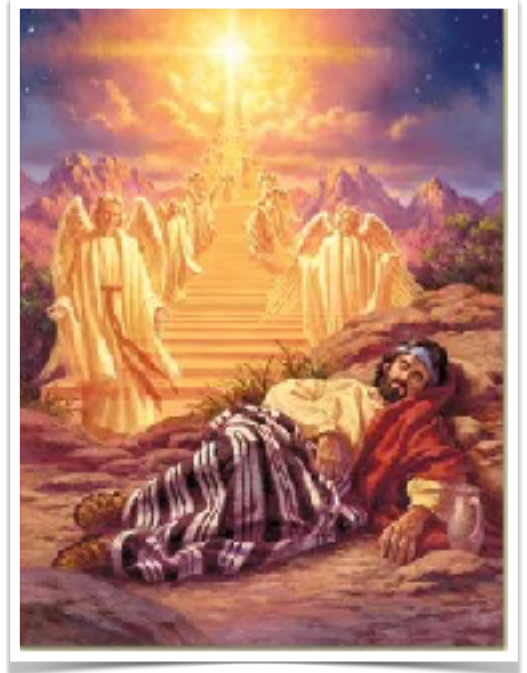
In short, while "woke" originally described a genuine awareness and commitment to social justice issues, its meaning has expanded and become more nuanced, reflecting both genuine advocacy and, in some cases, skepticism or cynicism about the sincerity of that advocacy. As conversations around these topics have intensified, "woke" has found itself at the center, illustrative of the larger cultural wars being played out in the public sphere.

Personally, I'm tired of hearing the term. Whether it's from my politically engaged friends complaining about "wokeness" and the damage it is doing to society or from the political talking heads on my newsfeed. My way of dealing with the conflict I see around me, is to reflect on what is really important and how have symbols and words been coopted to steer people away from their true import and distract people from what we should be focusing on.

And so, several weeks ago, I heard the term "woke" (pejoratively) one too many times. That point got me to thinking. Is being "woke" really a bad thing? I mean, were there any "woke" people in the Bible? What a great question, let's find out.

According to the dictionary I consulted, "woke" is the past tense of "wake" which means "to emerge from sleep." Now search the Bible for examples of people who "emerged from sleep" and you will find numerous examples, not the least of which was Jacob: Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and

said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn’t even aware of it!” (Genesis 28:16) Of this specific passage Swedenborg, in his work *Secrets of Heaven* (3715), says the following: “Jacob woke from his sleep symbolises enlightenment. This can be seen from the symbolism of sleep, which means a dim state, compared to consciousness, which is a bright state. So in a spiritual sense, waking from sleep means being enlightened.”



Wow! I want to be enlightened, don’t you? So, why has “woke” become such a cultural lightning rod? It has only become a cultural lightning rod for those who enjoy engaging in the culture wars. I get it, culture wars are fun, they give us a great rush when we engage in them, a culture war high. That high comes from the sweet taste of righteousness...correction...That high comes from the sweet taste of self-righteousness. And if you are feeling self-righteous you are about as far away from emerging from sleep as you are far away from the Lord. To be clear, I’m not condemning the “left” or the “right,” I’m cautioning all those who engage in the culture wars and believe that effort can add one moment to their life.



“Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

“Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. But when

your eye is unhealthy, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is!

“No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.”
(Matthew 6:21-24)

So, where is your treasure? Where are the desires of your heart? Are they focused on the Lord or are they focused on the world?

In the Gospel of John, during His prayer for His disciples before His crucifixion, Jesus said, "I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. They do not belong to this world any more than I do." (John 17:14-16)



The Apostle Paul wrote about living in the world but not conforming to its patterns. For example, in Romans, he advises, "Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect." (Romans 12:2)

Now, on their surface the words “not of this world” might suggest separation from the cares of the world, separation from other people, isolation, a simple life, even vows of poverty. In the symbolic language of the Bible, however,

“not of this world” simply means not embracing the evil and falsity the world offers. “Not of this world” means looking within yourself and seeing where evil and falsity have taken root. Seeing where evil and falsity have taken root within ourselves requires some serious spiritual work; the work of repentance.

The work of repentance is not done casually, not done in the few minutes before going into church and certainly not done if we continue the same behaviour again...and again...and again. When we focus all of our efforts on the problems of the world, we risk avoiding the deeper issues.

From Abraham to Lazarus many major figures in the Word are said to have slept and or awoken from sleep. Of this, Swedenborg explains that sleep often symbolises a state of spiritual obscurity or unconsciousness. Waking from sleep, therefore, can symbolise spiritual awakening or enlightenment, a transition from ignorance or unawareness to understanding and awareness of spiritual truths.

Let's return to the story of Jacob, my personal favourite “awakening” in the Word. Jacob was ambitious, cunning, and opportunistic, securing his brother's birthright and deceiving his father for a blessing. After Jacob awoke (Gen. 28:16), a transformed Jacob recognised God's presence, becoming more spiritually aware, eventually striving with God, earning the name Israel, and maturing into a patriarch of the Twelve Tribes. Jacob's waking up



“As [Jacob] approached his brother, he bowed to the ground seven times before him.”

Genesis 33:3

represents a realisation or acknowledgment of spiritual truth. Our own “waking” can mark an acknowledgment of spiritual truth as well.

The next time you hear the term “woke” I invite you to think to yourself; “I hope I’m woke, woke like a Patriarch.” It just may help you to put culture wars in their proper context and focus on what the Lord is calling you to acknowledge.

“Surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn’t even aware of it!” (Genesis 28:16).

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!Church Camp/Retreat News!

CANCELLED

Church Retreat 2024

CANCELLED

As noted in our last Newsletter, our church demographics have changed dramatically since our last retreat. As such, there was concern that we would not have sufficient numbers to hold the camp. I asked for a show of interest in attending the camp in the hopes that we would come close.

Unfortunately, we were nearly 40% short of the absolute minimum participation that would have made the retreat viable. And that, only with a substantial NCIA subsidy.

Thank you for all those who responded to my call to express their interest in attending.

Rest assured that conversations are taking place around what retreats will look like going forward. Check out the Spring Women’s Weekend report on page 13 for one likely way forward. Anyone desiring to have a conversation around this topic with me is welcome to call, email or stop in for a coffee.

Howard Thompson

(revhathompson@gmail.com)

Swedenborg Centre News

Here is a list of events coming up. As usual, all events and activities at the Swedenborg Centre are listed on the website at www.swedenborg.com.au There you will also find the recent Candela newsletter to read.

It was very pleasant to see the Roseville New Church filled with 70 people for a heavenly musical feast with Riley Lee and Cliona Molins a few Sundays ago. Riley Lee made some interesting remarks about a recent TV interview with cellist Yoyo Ma. Here is what I heard (perhaps not the exact words, but close to what seemed to be said): “Our identity is usually associated by others with what we do – e.g. I’m a banker or a cellist – and yet we ARE so much more than what we do. What I do – making music - expresses a part of who I am, but only a part.” And “If we interact (e.g. on stage) in a way that will be forgotten tomorrow, what is the use? We should do our interaction in such a way that our presence is remembered, changes lives and brings about change.” And so on... Here are a few memorable snapshots:



On September 22nd we recently held the 30th AGM for the Swedenborg Association of Australia, which is certainly a milestone since its beginnings in North Ryde. Over the three decades much has changed, and it is pleasing that the organisation has survived all that. Obviously there is still a need for an organisation to help people to connect their rapidly changing existential modern lives with meaningful perennial spiritual teachings as articulated by Swedenborg. The Swedenborg Centre is pleased to be part of those conversations and to be able to support those kind of activities and interactions with people.

In the past few weeks we have begun reading Swedenborg's book "New Jerusalem" (on Wednesdays at 10am), which is almost like a succinct marketing brochure for the key teachings, simply stated, drawn from Swedenborg's extensive writings. Subjects often come in pairs, such as "good and truth", "will and understanding", "inner and outer self". So many things come in pair in nature, in our lives, and in scripture, such as "empty and void," spiritual and celestial, heart and lungs, sun and moon, heat and light. Some pairs oppose each other (heaven and hell), while others are complementary (like will and understanding). It's all very fascinating and useful. Come along in person or on Zoom and benefit from the readings, joint discoveries and discussion.

Don't forget to put your clocks forward by an hour when Daylight Saving starts soon on the first October weekend on Sunday 1st which is a long weekend.

Coming events: -

- **Swedenborg Readings** on 10am every **Wednesdays**

- **Bible Study** with Howard, each fortnightly, **Tuesday** at 11am (i.e. on **October 3rd, 17th and 31st**).
- **Dr Groves Readings** are on **Friday October 6th and 20th** at noon & 7pm.
- **Swedenborg Saturday** discussions will be held **October 17th and 23rd** at 10am.

See you at an event or at the Centre. Have a wonderful spring month.

Smiles, Joe

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What Happens When People Stop Attending Church

While it's a deeply personal choice and undoubtedly true that any individual can lead a rich spiritual life regardless of their regular church attendance, there's an overarching societal narrative to consider when masses have distanced themselves from organised religious practices. As more people are coming of age without any foundational faith practice in their family of origin, the ripple effects on the community as a whole can be profound.

It is from this premise that I was interested to read a recent article in *The Atlantic*, a conservative-leaning American magazine focused on politics, foreign affairs, business and the economy, culture and the arts. The article was titled: **“What Really Happens When Americans Stop Going to Church.”** While it is a long article and I would not want to reprint it here without permission, I encourage you to seek it out online. I will also, however, give you my summary of the points made, acknowledging that what has been happening in America over the past decade is unique

to that nation. While the circumstances are unique, the broader question of what is lost when church is no longer a part of the fabric of society remains and, I believe, is worth reflecting on.



What Really Happens When Americans Stop Going to Church

Summary of an article by Daniel K. Williams that appeared in *The Atlantic*.

Recent trends show that many Americans are leaving the church, but contrary to common expectations, this isn't leading to a more secular or liberal nation. Historically, when church attendance dropped in areas like Northern Europe or the traditionally Catholic Northeast US, these regions adopted more liberal, secular pluralisms. However, in the southern Bible Belt and the rural Midwest, a decline in church attendance has intensified Christian nationalism and right-wing ideologies.

Surprisingly, many Christian nationalists seldom attend church. Data from a PRRI survey indicates only 54% of Christian nationalists attend church regularly. Similarly, "The Great Dechurching" by Jim Davis and Michael Graham reveals that many who exit the church continue to uphold evangelical Christian beliefs and remain staunchly Republican.

Churches, historically seen as polarising, actually have a depolarising influence, promoting harmony among members with differing political views. Leaving the church community might strip away these moderating influences, allowing political extremism to flourish. Interestingly, when people stop attending church, they often retain their Christian beliefs and transfer their passion into the political sphere.

“Churches, historically seen as polarising, actually have a depolarising influence, promoting harmony among members with differing political views.”

Regionally, while historically Catholic areas like Massachusetts and Rhode Island maintain Democratic inclinations despite decreasing church attendance, areas with strong evangelical backgrounds like the South and rural Midwest continue to bolster culture wars and individual autonomy.

Various reasons account for declining church attendance, from dissatisfaction with church practices to the challenges of modern life, like Sunday work commitments. The "great dechurching" has major political implications. With church denominations no longer acting as a centrist political force, a chasm is growing between the post-Christian urban North and the post-churched Christian nationalists of the rural South. The decline in churchgoing doesn't mean the demise of Christianity but rather its distortion, with profound political ramifications.

Rev. Howard A. Thompson

Spring Women's Weekend

Once again, our trusty group of seasoned New Church-minded ladies – plus a smattering of newbies – gathered for a delightful spring women's weekend, this September. Once again, we enjoyed spending time together, learning, playing, helping and praying over the course of our two-day retreat at The Tops Christian Conference Centre in Stanwell Tops, just south of Sydney. Although there were only six bodies in attendance, this time, our numbers were well complemented by another half-dozen or more virtual attendees for many of the activities. Session topics included 'Reaching For the (Spiritual) Stars', 'Birth Work' and 'Shifting with Jacob' – plus we assembled another lot of birth kits for childbearing women in developing countries!

These weekends are really starting to grow on us, so much so that we're already looking at dates for 2024. If you're a woman who is at all interested, and hasn't already been getting emails from me, please drop me line (directly to jenn@beiswenger.net) and let me know – we always enjoy welcoming new sisters to our midst, and are eagerly looking forward to what 2024 has in store!

Jenn Beiswenger



Marriage Moats

Spotify: Modern Day Jukebox

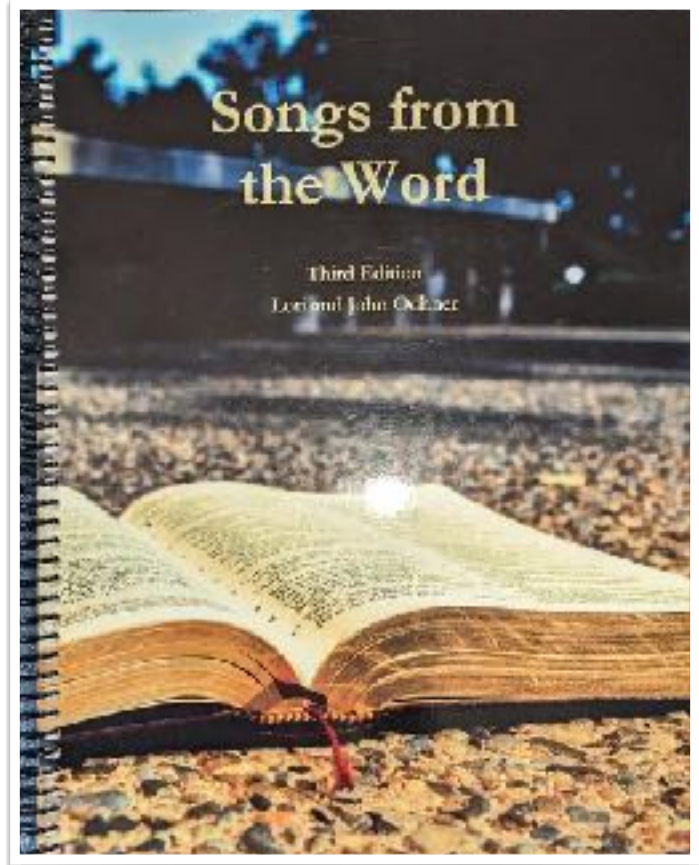
When I first began spinning songs fifty years ago, I had not the merest aspirations for their longevity. They were just ways to give scripture a chance to live in people's throats. Having a cache of two hundred compiled, the passages come easily when I need them.

Our son and his wife have put effort into transporting those tunes to the magical and invisible platform called Spotify. Having grown up with physical music makers like records, tapes, and CDs I am still at a loss for where the notes lay their little heads. Then another son spelled it out for me.

"Mom, they are in a jukebox somewhere. A warehouse of computers has a file with your name on it, and if someone asks to hear them, they can."

There is no clunk of a quarter in the slot, but we get to choose what we want to hear. The intangible music somehow finds a home in a brick and mortar building. I get it. Kind of.

The appeal of our songs is not dependent on the melodies, though they help. It is the power within the stories about a Good Samaritan, or Joseph's Coat.



Somehow it sounds like how we can access those qualities that God is offering. If I want a few minutes of compassion, I pick that selection, and it flies through the air and arrives in my lap.

And it doesn't even cost a quarter.

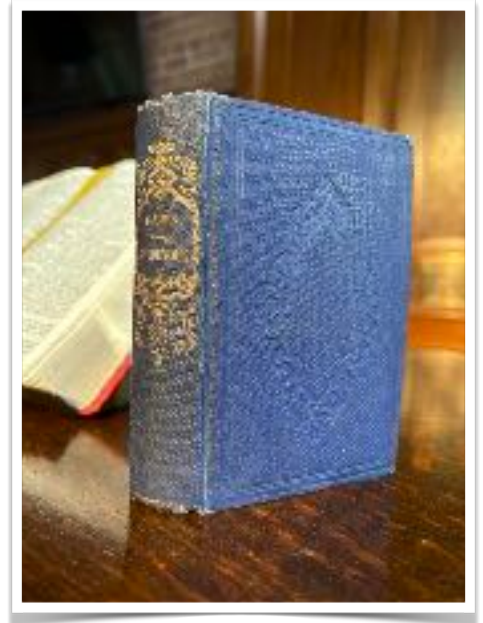
Love,

Lori

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Gems from Swedenborg (A Side Project)

Several years ago, while perusing the shelves of an antiques shop, a dear friend of mine happened upon a very small book that caught his attention. Though not a New Churchman, he nonetheless was very familiar with the name Swedenborg from our many conversations. The next time we were together he gifted me this little book; *Gems from Swedenborg*.



Published in the 1850's, *Gems* is a collection of passages by the Rev. T.O. Prescott, that he describes as “interesting and valuable in context, but “also in a separate form.”



Reading through roughly 250 entries it struck me that it would be interesting to update the collection in a unique way. Over the last several months I have been working through *Gems*, taking each subject and its referenced passages from the Swedenborg's Writings and distilling the subject down to a 100+/- word

summary. This is not a translation but a representation of the ideas expressed by the associated passages.

I am approximately halfway through the 250 entries and thought it time to see what other people think of the exercise. Following is the very first entry.

Heaven's Reality (GFWS - Pg 47)

Summary Title: "The Enduring Joy of Purposeful Action in Heaven: A Swedenborgian Perspective"

The 100 Description: Heavenly happiness is not derived from idleness, but from active engagement in good deeds and the pursuit of truth. The joy and pleasure from such activities are lasting and uplifting, unlike the fleeting satisfaction from inactivity. This activity revolves around performing useful services, deriving joy from goodness, and seeking wisdom in truths, which bestows true pleasure.

ABOVE BASED ON Arcana Coelestia 6410



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

If only Dracula had read Swedenborg.

“In the Word faith is also called “night”
from its receiving its light from charity,
as the moon does from the sun.”

Arcana Coelestia 862



SCIENCE SAVES LIVES.

October

2023



Clocks Go Forward 1 Oct

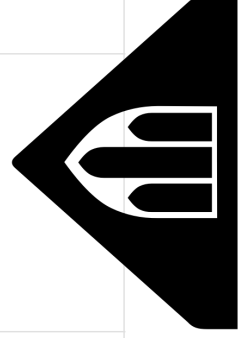
September

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10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	

November

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				15	16	17	18
				22	23	24	25
				29	30		

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.00am Service of Worship Including Holy Supper Rev. Howard A. Thompson	"Labour Day"	Bible Study 11.00	Swedenborg Readings 10:00	Swedenborg Readings 10:00	Minister's Personal Day	Insights from Dr. Groves Noon & 7pm	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson		Swedenborg Readings 10:00	Swedenborg Readings 10:00	Minister's Personal Day		Swedenborg Saturday 10.00 - 12.00	
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	
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22	23	24	25	26	27	28	
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson			Swedenborg Readings 10:00	Swedenborg Readings 10:00	Minister's Personal Day	Swedenborg Saturday 10.00 - 12.00	
29	30	31	1	2	3	4	
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson		Bible Study 11.00					



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