

# **ROSEVILLE NEW CHURCH**

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**MAY / JUNE  
2026**

A person's very rationality and freedom  
come from the Lord. They are, in fact, the  
Lord's with the person.

*(Divine Providence 90)*

## 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 **twice-monthly service** of worship the **1st and 3rd 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](mailto:info@swedenborg.com.au) Opening hours are Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30pm. More events details at [www.swedenborg.com.au](http://www.swedenborg.com.au) The Centre can also be used to answer enquiries about the New Church, its literature and its teachings.

**Implanted by the Lord is an ability and the power  
in people to mend their habits, under the direction  
of parents and teachers, and afterward by  
themselves when they come into their own right  
and judgment.**

~ Conjugial Love ~

#202

# Roseville New Church Newsletter

Issued by the Sydney Society of the New Church Established in 1875  
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On Facebook – Roseville New Church

## May/June 2026

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- **With Grateful Hearts - A farewell note from Debra!**
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- **May and June Calendars**

### Spiritual Shorts

Our minister, Rev. Howard Thompson, shares weekly videos on his YouTube channel, Spiritual Shorts. Each week the channel currently features a 5-minute Sunday message summary, a 1-minute inspirational reflection, and a deeper exploration of the Doctrine of the Lord. While there may be some disruption from the move Howard plans to continue the work of his channel after his move to a new society in June.



Spiritual Shorts YouTube Channel:  
[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsrICJGeGmrnXVawn\\_Y7UQA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsrICJGeGmrnXVawn_Y7UQA)

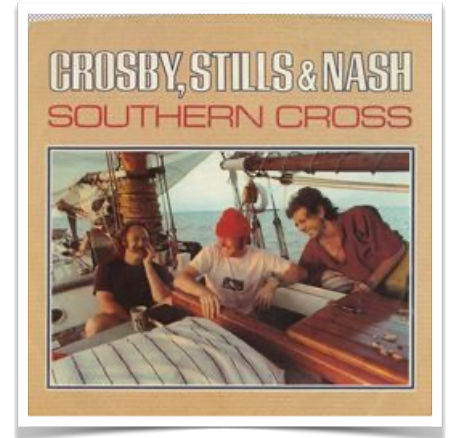
# Providence

Every year older brings with it, for me, a greater awareness of the Lord's hand in Divine Providence. Swedenborg teaches that we are occasionally given to see this activity, but only in hindsight—after the fact.

With my departure from the Sydney Society of the New Church at hand, I am, once again, cognisant of His hand guiding my steps. I want to share with you, as I am wont to do, a few stories that have profoundly driven home the reality of His Providence.

## **A Song and Some Stars**

In my youth and through most of my 20s, I was an avid sailor. I began by sailing small racing boats along the coastal communities of southern New Jersey and later moved to larger vessels in the open Atlantic, traveling from the U.S. East Coast to Bermuda, Canada, and even Ireland. In the early 1980s, when Crosby, Stills & Nash released “Southern Cross,” I was immediately hooked. A popular song about sailing? I was captivated from that unmistakable opening riff.



I couldn't have known then that a song about navigating these southern waters would one day serve as a celestial compass for a sailor from the Atlantic. That realisation arrived one early morning as I descended the steps of the manse, just a few weeks after arriving in Australia. I was still a little disoriented and wondering about the wisdom of answering the call to Sydney. I looked out the large windows on the stair landing into the crystal-clear sky. One cluster of

stars caught my eye; I grabbed my phone and opened a star chart app.

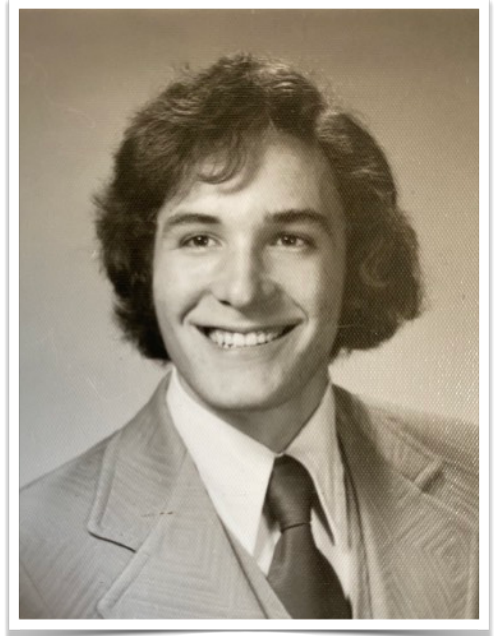


It was the constellation Crux, commonly known as the Southern Cross. All of a sudden, those many plays of that song came back to me, particularly the lyric: “When you see the Southern Cross for the first time / You understand now why you came this way.” In that moment, all hesitation and doubt about coming to Sydney melted away. I was meant to be here—and in true Providential fashion, I could only see the 'why' once I had already arrived.

## **Finding Peace in the Past**

However, Divine Providence is not only found in moments of musical clarity; it is also present in our deepest sorrows. Something else happened in 1982 that had as profound an impact on the course of my life as anything.

At age 24, my older brother Eddie died by suicide. I was only 17, and he was my hero—the person I wanted to be. Anything he did, I wanted to do: He played Lacrosse, I wanted to play Lacrosse. He raced sailboats, I wanted to race sailboats. He joined the U.S. Marine Corps, I wanted to join the U.S. Marine Corps. The list goes on. In the years that followed, if you had asked me, “If you had a magic wand and could change anything, what would it be?” I would have answered: “I’d have Eddie back.”



That remained my answer for over 20 years, until one evening while sitting at the dining table in our house in Colchester, England. My sons, then 8 and 12, were having a typical boyhood conversation when one turned to me and asked, “Dad, what would you change if you had the power to change anything?”



In that moment, I was overwhelmed. I finally "got" it. I understood Divine Providence...and I wept. The loss of my brother had such a dramatic impact on me that it changed the very course of my life. It changed where I would attend university the following year. Had it not occurred, I would not have met my wife at that particular university, I would not have been sitting at that dining table in England, and I certainly would not be pondering that question from my two beloved sons.

Did the Lord want my brother to die? Certainly not. Did He want me to suffer? Again, certainly not. But did it mean I would never experience joy again? Another "certainly not." My life has been blessed with a richness of love and service—first for six years in the U.K. and now for eight years here in Sydney. Jeremiah’s words come to mind:

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”*

(Jeremiah 29:11)

## Returning Where We Started

And now Debra and I are returning to the U.S., the country of our births, where we met, married, and initially raised our children. The Lord's hand is certainly in this move as well. Reflecting on 14 years of service to societies outside of the U.S., we return with a new perspective, one I believe is captured in these words from T.S. Eliot:

“We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.”

We will return “home,” but we have been changed and enriched by our time abroad. This change, I suspect, will allow us to truly know that place for the first time.



## A Difficult Job Well Done

Shortly before we departed for the U.K. in 2012, Bishop Brian Keith (then Assistant Bishop of the General Church) said to me: “I am sending you on a very difficult job. I am sending you to love people and, after not so many years, I will then ask you to leave them. And if you have done your job, that will be very difficult.”

And here we go again—leaving a community we have come to love. It is difficult, but I am at peace. I have a deeper appreciation of the Lord's Divine Providence than at any point in my life, and I know where peace lives:

*“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.” (Arcana Coelestia 8455)*

Howard

\* \* \* \* \*

## **With Grateful Hearts:**

### **I’ll Still Call Australia Home**

Well, I have never been much of a champion of goodbyes, though I have had to do more than my share of them in almost 64 years. I have always preferred a heartfelt “See you sometime,” or the ever-popular, “I’ll see you when I see you.” This goodbye feels rather more difficult, given the distance between us on the planet.

One of my favourite sayings is “Debra made plans and God laughed.” Of all the places on earth I never expected to land, Australia would have been near the top of the list. And yet, it has been quite the ride these past eight years.

Unfortunately, Covid overshadowed four of them. Sad as we were not to be able to see family during that time, we were equally grateful to be here, where we felt we experienced some of the best medical care and public health practices possible.

We have had such wonderful experiences here, from koalas to kookaburras, from beaches to bush. What a beautiful part of the world this is. I am so grateful to have experienced it. Though, to be fair, I would have loved to have seen more of this sunburnt country than just New South Wales and a bite of Queensland.

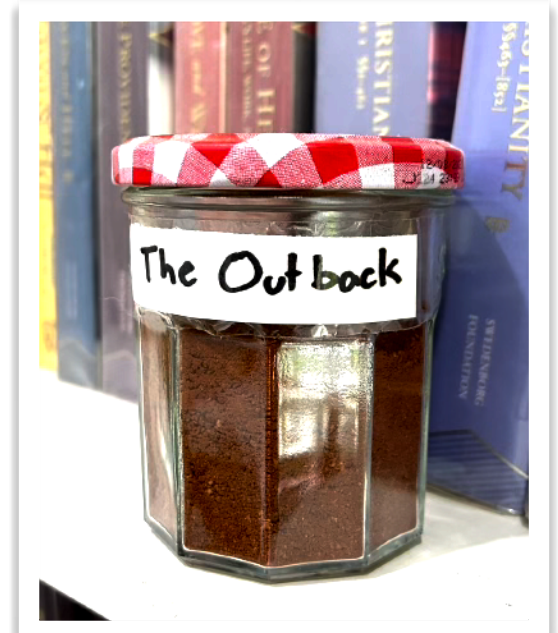


We are giving you our youngest son, Lance. At 21 years of age, we have dragged him across this big blue marble for 14 years and he is now Aussie through and through. He won't be repatriating. Our eldest son, Ben, will be finishing his education at Macquarie

University and likely continuing to give back by teaching somewhere in Australia before continuing his love of teaching and travel. In the end, we think it likely he will return to the US, but life, as noted elsewhere in the newsletter, is governed more by Providence than by our choices. The remainder of our family, our daughter, Chelsea (33), Howard's sister, my mum and 3 sisters will be thrilled to have us back in the States and somewhat nearby.

With all the mixed feelings that come with leaving, we are also deeply appreciative to have become Australian citizens. I have loved the village of Roseville very much. I will miss our daily walk to the gym up and down the Highway, and waving to everyone from the chef at El Karim to the owner of Angel Hair Salon. My Golden Oldie membership at the Roseville Cinema has been sublime. Goodbye, \$11 movies. We will be back for visits in the years to come.

I have also been surprised by just how much American television made



A jar of red earth Ben keeps on his desk, collected on a family holiday into the outback

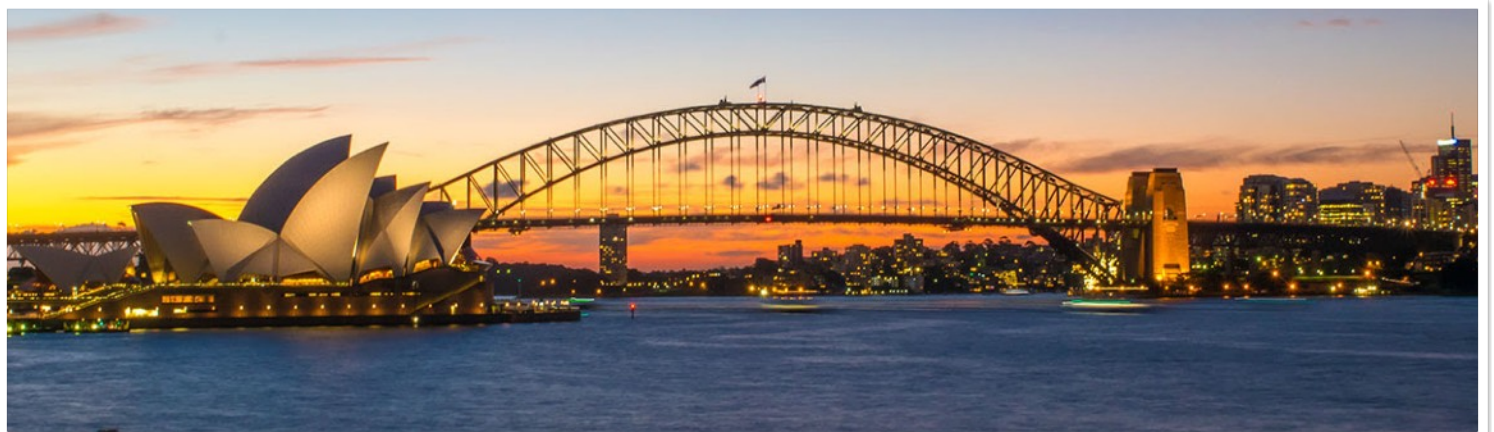


it Down Under. Being a thespian, I am especially chuffed to know that one of my idols and her team performed on the stage of the Sydney Opera House in 1973, just after Queen Elizabeth officially opened it. The Carol Burnett Show closed each week with these

lines: “I’m so glad we had this time together / Just to have a laugh or sing a song / Seems we just get started and before you know it / Comes the time we have to say, so long.” Then Carol would add, “Goodnight, everybody,” and give the traditional tug on her left ear for her grandmother.

One last thought. As Howard said to me on one of the first times we crossed the Harbour Bridge; “we won’t live here forever, but we will never live anywhere quite so beautiful.” So, on that note: a hearty g’day, mates. Thanks for the ride.

Debra



# “As He Died to Make Men Holy...”

## A Post-Easter Reflection

As those who attend our services know, I am not a particularly musical person. By that I mean I am not especially talented when it comes to performance. I do, however, deeply appreciate music, and one of the great joys of my time here in Roseville has been sourcing music for our worship services. A byproduct of spending a good deal of time searching for music on YouTube is that the platform likes to “offer” me videos it thinks I might like.

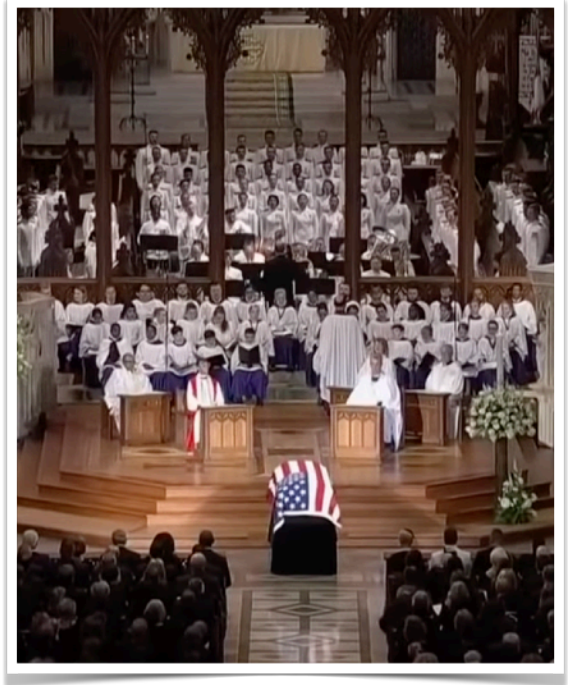
Interestingly, earlier this week, I had not been searching for music at all, but YouTube offered me some anyway: the United States Naval Academy Glee Club singing The Battle Hymn of the Republic at the funeral of U.S. Senator John McCain.



It was a stirring performance. But beyond the music itself, I found myself reflecting on the life of the man being honoured. John McCain was, by any fair measure, an extraordinary man: a career Naval officer, the

son of a Naval Admiral, shot down over Vietnam, more than five years a prisoner of war in the infamous “Hanoi Hilton,” and later the possessor of a long and storied career in the United States Senate. Whatever one thought of his politics, he seemed to epitomise something noble: honour, duty, country.

Watching that service, and seeing people of all political stripes gathered to honour him, stirred in me a longing for a time that now seems far away amid the acrimony of contemporary American politics. It reminded me that there are things more important than winning polls, more important than scoring points, and more important even than winning the visible battles that so often consume our attention.



Perhaps that is part of why the Naval Academy Glee Club was such a fitting vehicle for this moment. A choir consists of many distinct voices, backgrounds, and temperaments, yet all are subordinated to a common purpose so that a single harmony may emerge. In the language of the New Church, one might say that this is a small reflection of the Grand Man: the truth that heaven itself is ordered as one human form, with each person finding peace not in self-assertion, but in use. There is a lesson in that for us. The healing of our common life will not come merely through louder argument, but through the quieter and more difficult work of bringing our own spirits into order under the Lord. And that, in turn, led me back to the hymn itself.

Born out of the struggle to preserve the nascent United States during the Civil War of the 1860s, The Battle Hymn of the Republic has become a popular Christian hymn far beyond America's shores. This is likely because it speaks to something universal: trust in the Lord amid conflict and struggle. For many, its final verse is the most poignant:

*In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,  
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me.  
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,  
While God is marching on.*



As a young man, I was always moved by these words. At one level, I wondered whether I would ever have the opportunity to lay down my life for my friends, as the Lord calls us to do: “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13). There was something in me that imagined this almost entirely in heroic, external terms.

Of course, I am no longer a young man, and I understand better now the words of Paul:

*“When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things”  
(1 Corinthians 13:11).*

Wars are horrible. Necessary sometimes, perhaps, but horrible nonetheless, and often unnecessary. Yet while wars still rage in the world, it is also true that many of us will never be called to a battlefield in the literal sense. This does not mean struggle has disappeared, nor that we live in anything like a heavenly utopia. It does, however, suggest that our understanding of what it means to “lay down one’s life” may need to deepen.

Reflecting on the many sermons I have written over fifteen years in ministry, I think the theme I return to most often is that of the internal warfare each of us ought to be engaged in, but which we frequently neglect in favour of more external battles that, oddly enough, often give us more pleasure. It is easier to rage about the world than to repent of ourselves. It is easier to fight enemies “out there” than to confront the pride, resentment, self-justification, and love of control “in here.”



In this sense, one of the great lessons of the Stoics is profoundly useful: a person must come to grips with what they can control and what they cannot, and focus on what they can. There are terrible things in this world over which we have very little power. The question is not whether we can control them all. We cannot. The question is how we will respond.

This is, I think, part of what the Lord was saying to His disciples when He told them:

*Don't let anyone mislead you, for many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah.' They will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and threats of wars, but don't panic. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won't follow immediately.*

(Matthew 24:4–6)



In other words, terrible things are going to happen. Much of it will lie beyond your control. But you do have some control over how you respond, over what spirit you cultivate, over whether fear, hatred, and self-righteousness will rule you, or whether you will remain steadfast in the Lord.

Fortunately, the Lord gives us, through the teachings of the New Church, a much broader understanding of what a person's life actually is. We see this first in Swedenborg's treatment of the commandment against killing:

“You are not to kill,” in its earthly meaning means not killing people, inflicting on them any fatal wound, or mutilating their bodies. It also means not bringing any deadly evil against their names and reputations, since for many people their reputation and their life go hand in hand. (True Christianity 309)

And there are deeper aspects to who we are, deeper even than our names and reputations. The deepest is the will — that inward love from which our life is formed. Swedenborg notes that a person's very life consists in their will (Arcana Coelestia 9393). That is a striking teaching, and a searching one.

For if my life is fundamentally my will, then to “lay down my life” is not only, or even mainly, about physical death. It is about surrendering that in me which opposes heaven. It is about laying down my own will in the bad sense: my selfishness, my insistence on being right, my desire to

dominate, my delight in nursing grievances, my preference for resentment over charity.

And that brings us, post-Easter, to the heart of the matter.

As we reflect on the Lord's passion, death, and resurrection, we should remember that the whole arc of regeneration is about allowing the old self to die — not physically, but spiritually — so that the true self may live. Easter is not only the celebration of what

happened to the Lord; it is representative of the pattern of what must happen in us.

Something in us must go to the cross. Something in us must be buried. And something new, something made alive by the Lord, must rise.



That is a far more demanding calling than merely having strong opinions about the state of the world. It is also more hopeful, because it places the centre of spiritual life where it truly belongs: not in the battles we cannot control, but in the ones we can no longer afford to avoid.

While it is very unlikely at this stage of life that I will ever be called to military service, in the battles I am called to fight I can indeed lay down my life. I can do so by laying down my proprium, my selfish will, my need to triumph, my love of being proved right. And in that surrender there is the beginning of freedom — not only for others, but for myself.

That may be one of the deepest post-Easter questions we can ask: not whether we would die in one dramatic moment for a noble cause, but whether we are willing, day by day, to

let the Lord bring to an end what is old, selfish, and combative in us, so that what is new, loving, and truly human may live.

That is a battle worth fighting. And that is what it may mean, in the deepest Christian sense, to lay down one's life.

— Howard

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### **Monday's Meditation** **with Kathryn Baker**

Just a reminder that Kathryn Baker has been guiding members of our community in meditation for many years. Recently there has been an upsurge in activity and Kathryn has returned to a regular Monday morning meditation held in the quiet of the church sanctuary.

In today's ever-changing, fast-paced and sometimes overwhelming life, meditation offers a gentle respite—an opportunity to re-centre, quiet the mind and become more aware of the comforting presence of the Divine. Even a short time of stillness can soften anxiety, renew focus, and deepen our capacity to love and serve.

If interested, feel free to join the group any Monday at 10:00am. If you'd like to speak with Kathryn before coming along, feel free to contact her at ph. 0410 166 482.



**Meditation**

## **Minister's Contact Information and Office Hours**

**WITH HOWARD'S DEPARTURE REV. JULIAN  
DUCKWORTH HAS GRACIOUSLY OFFERED TO BE  
AVAILABLE FOR THE PASTORAL NEEDS OF THE  
SOCIETY**

Rev. Julian Duckworth

Email: [julian@duckworth.me](mailto:julian@duckworth.me)

Phone: 0427 938 732



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The Lord is my shepherd, I have all that I need... 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 ~

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# May

2026

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



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
			Swedenborg Readings 10:00am	Dr. Groves 12pm		
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10.00am Service of Worship Including Holy Supper Rev. Howard A. Thompson		Bible Study 11.00	Swedenborg Readings 10:00am	Dr. Groves 12pm		
	11	12	13	14	15	16
			Swedenborg Readings 10:00am	Dr. Groves 12pm		
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson		Bible Study 11.00	Swedenborg Readings 10:00am	Dr. Groves 12pm		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Howard's Farewell Service in Hurstville			Swedenborg Readings 10:00am	Dr. Groves 12pm		

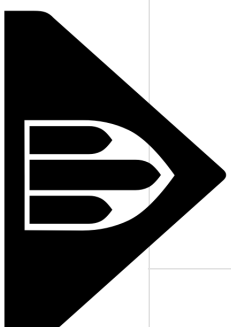


# June

2026

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

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
31 Howard's Last Service in Canberra	1	2	3 Swedenborg Readings 10:00am	4 Dr. Groves 12pm	5	6
7 10.00am Service of Worship Including Holy Supper Rev. Howard A. Thompson	8 	9 Swedenborg Readings 10:00am	10 Swedenborg Readings 10:00am	11 Dr. Groves 12pm	12	13
14	16 Swedenborg Readings 10:00am	17 	19	19	19	20
21 10.00am Lay Service * Tentative *	23	23 Swedenborg Readings 10:00am	25 Dr. Groves 12pm	26	26	27
28	30	30	2	3	3	4



# ROSEVILLE NEW CHURCH

