



**ROSEVILLE
NEW CHURCH**

**NOVEMBER
2025**



**REFLECTIONS ON LAST
MONTH'S 150TH ANNIVERSARY:
*A LEGACY OF LIGHT***

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 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.

We are born for eternal life and are introduced into it by the church....[The church] leads us to eternal life by means of the true things in its body of teaching. It introduces us to that life through good ways to live.

— True Christianity #415 —

Roseville New Church Newsletter

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On Facebook – Roseville New Church

November 2025

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Spiritual Shorts

Our minister, Rev. Howard Thompson, shares weekly videos on his YouTube channel, Spiritual Shorts. The channel has recently completed its third evolution and is reaching a growing audience well beyond our local community. Each week features a 5-minute Sunday message summary, a 1-minute inspirational reflection, and a deeper exploration of Heaven and Hell. If you haven’t already, take a look!



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



A Sacred Milestone: 150 Years of Faithful Service Celebrated in Roseville

19 October was a beautiful, sunny and not too warm Sunday when the Sydney Society of the New Church gathered in joyful reverence to celebrate its 150th Anniversary—a milestone not just of years, but of spirit, community, and enduring faith. From the moment the doors opened, there was a palpable sense that this day was different: sacred, historic and deeply cherished.

With members, friends and guests filling the sanctuary; the service opened with words of heartfelt welcome. Then came a message that would stir the soul and linger long after the final hymn.

A Church Full of Radicals

The talk our minister gave the society was one he had been reflecting on for months. A call to never forget our roots, to never forget the extraordinary nature of the revelation given the New Church. Titled “The Most Radical Church: A Legacy of Freedom and a Call to Courage,” The talk invited the congregation to reflect not only on the church’s long history, but on the radical nature of its teachings—then and now.

The question was posed: What has sustained this church for 150 years? Without institutional power or financial strength, the answer lies in the compelling vision at the heart of Swedenborgian Christianity—a vision that continues to call people into spiritual freedom, personal transformation, and a life of love and usefulness.



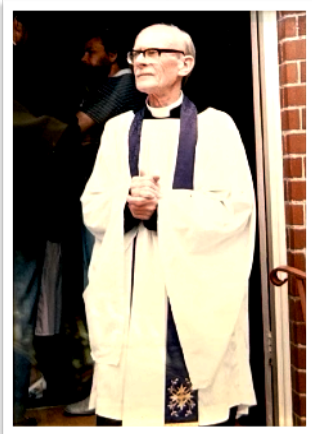
The message explored four core ideas that have made the New Church radical in the truest sense of the word, from the Latin *radix*, meaning “root.” These include a radical God—not a wrathful ruler, but a God of infinite love and wisdom made visible in the Lord Jesus Christ. A radical salvation—not secured by belief alone, but through a life led in service to others. A radical scripture—not just a literal rulebook, but a sacred text with an inner spiritual meaning that guides personal regeneration. And a radical Second Coming—not a future event in the sky, but an ongoing spiritual awakening within the human heart and mind. The congregation was reminded that being part of this church means choosing to live with spiritual intention. It means resisting the “dragons” of fear-based religion, arrogance, and complacency, both in the world and within ourselves. It means embodying the union of love and truth in daily life—through prayer, reflection, repentance, and courageous service.

In short, the church’s legacy is not one of survival, but of transformation. And its future rests in continuing to live these truths with courage, humility, and joy.

Full talk is available here: <https://youtu.be/NJ1wWPM-Ru4>

The Blessing of a Sacred Legacy

In a poignant moment, the congregation gathered to witness the blessing of a newly received Holy Supper service set—though in truth, the vessels were anything but new. Once used in worship by the now-closed Snodlands congregation in the UK, these gleaming silver pieces carry the prayers of a century's worth of faithful use.



Rev. Wilmott

They had been preserved for several years by Rev. Ian Arnold and, through a quiet unfolding of providence, were passed into the care of the Sydney Society. The connection ran deep: Rev. Bernard Wilmott, who served in Snodlands early in his ministry, would later minister in Sydney, linking the two communities across time and space.

As the blessing was spoken aloud—giving thanks for past devotion and committing to present stewardship—there was a stillness in the room. The vessels, once tucked away in quiet English cupboards, now shine again with purpose in the hands of a vibrant, living church.

Greetings from Near and Far

In a touching interlude, Mr. Graham Hall, Society Secretary, read aloud a rich tapestry of greeting messages from across the globe. Warm congratulations poured in from leaders and friends—Rev. David Moffat of the New Church in Australia, former Sydney Society ministers Rev. Ian Arnold,

and Rev. John Teed, the Rt. Rev. Peter Buss Jr. of the General Church, and others, each reflecting on the significance of this anniversary and the bright spirit of the Roseville congregation.

One message from Ruth Duckworth, a beloved former minister's wife, brought smiles and tears as she recounted vivid memories—from Sunday School and nativity plays to candlelit carols in the garden followed by sherry in the manse. Her words were a gentle reminder that the church is not built with bricks but with memories, love and shared purpose.

Each message was a note in a spiritual symphony—a chorus of support, gratitude, and shared faith echoing across continents.

A Prayer and a Blessing

Adding to the sacredness of the moment, Rev. Julian Duckworth offered a heartfelt prayer for the church, lifting up the past, present and future into the hands of the Lord. His words carried the weight of history and the lightness of hope, culminating in a blessing over the upcoming luncheon—a table of fellowship not just for the stomach, but for the soul.

A Living History

After the service, but before we headed down to the hall for lunch, the congregation was treated to a special presentation by renowned historian, adventurer, and producer Dr. Jonathan King. Introduced with deep respect by Rev. Thompson, Dr. King shared the remarkable “David and Goliath” tale of how he orchestrated the First Fleet Re-enactment—Australia's largest live event—against all odds.

What made the moment even more meaningful was the unexpected reunion between Dr. King and a replica box of Swedenborg's Writings, which had been included in the reenactment four decades earlier. Alongside it, he presented to the Society a historic scroll from the Swedenborg Society in London—an artefact rich in symbolism, now restored to its spiritual home.

It was, in every sense, a sacred moment of return—of history made whole.

Our History on Display

As part of our anniversary celebrations, a special collection of archival material has been assembled and will be on display in the church throughout November (see Newsletter cover photo). The exhibit includes rare photographs of early members, portraits and records of past ministers, photo albums from the 1980s, and historic artefacts from earlier church buildings.

This curated display invites us not only to look back with gratitude but to reflect on the living story we are still writing today. All are warmly encouraged to take time after services or during the week to view the collection and reconnect with the threads that continue to weave our community together.

A Toast to the Church

As guests moved from sanctuary to social hall, the festivities continued with a celebratory luncheon that felt both grand and intimate. Mr. Charles Zarb, Chairman of the Sydney Society, raised a toast to the church—a warm, gracious tribute to 150 years of faith and community.

Tables were filled with food and conversation, laughter mingled with reflection, and the atmosphere buzzed with the joy of reunion and thanksgiving.

A Day to Remember, A Future to Embrace

This anniversary celebration was more than a commemoration—it was a reaffirmation. Of freedom. Of faith. Of community. Of a church that may be small in size but is mighty in spirit.

As the afternoon sun filtered through the windows and the final guests lingered over cups of tea and shared memories, it was clear that this was not the end of a chapter but the turning of a page. The story of the Sydney Society continues—with new faces, new ideas, and the same radical love that sparked it all 150 years ago.

May the flame continue to burn bright.

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A Heroic “David & Goliath” Stand: Dr. Jonathan King’s Tall-Ships Re-enactment

Immediately following our 150th Anniversary Special Service, those gathered were privileged to hear from historian, author and adventurer Dr. Jonathan King.

What unfolded was a moving narrative of vision, perseverance, faith and un-likely victory. I’ll do my best to summarise Dr. King’s talk for the benefit of all our readers and supporters who were not able to attend.



The Vision: Inspired by the American Bicentennial



Op Sail '76

Dr. King told how, in the mid-1970s, he found early inspiration in the tall-ships events of the United States Bicentennial celebrations—most notably OpSail '76—and conceived of a similar tribute for the Australian Bicentenary in 1988.

He proposed, in effect, to organise a historic voyage of tall sailing ships, retracing the route of the original First Fleet from Portsmouth in the U.K. to Sydney.

From the moment of conception, it would be a “David-versus-Goliath” project: ambitious, costly, fraught with institutional resistance and scepticism. Relevant to understanding what motivated Dr. King’s efforts in this “fight” is the fact that he is a lineal descendant of Captain Philip Gidley King through the Governor’s son, Rear-Admiral Phillip Parker King.

The Challenge:

Government Headwinds & Financial Hurdles

Dr. King recounted how, early in the planning stages of the First Fleet Re-enactment, he approached the Australian Federal Government, hoping to gain their support for what he envisioned as a spectacular, once-in-a-generation maritime tribute. But instead of embracing the idea, the Bicentenary Authority—the body tasked with overseeing the 1988 celebrations—politely pushed back. They wouldn’t back the project, they said, unless it could be proven commercially viable.



Taking that message at face value, Dr. King responded in earnest. He dissolved the university-backed planning board and, together with a small group of committed colleagues, launched a commercial enterprise to manage the venture. They retooled the project, addressed the financial risks, and prepared to show the government a viable path forward.

But as the months wore on, a darker truth emerged. The government wasn't waiting for a plan—they were quietly developing their own alternative tall-ships event, effectively sidelining King's original vision. It was a crushing blow.

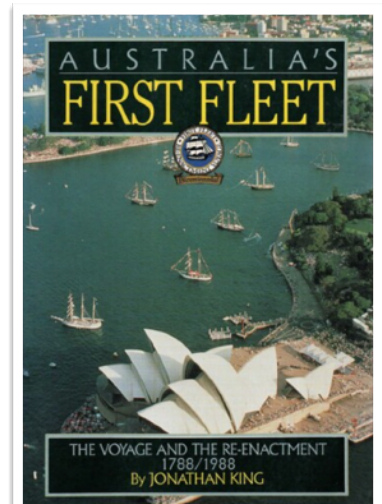
Still, Dr. King refused to walk away. With unwavering resolve, he and his team pressed on. What they faced were not just bureaucratic delays or budget issues, but a gauntlet of enormous logistical and financial challenges:

Finding and chartering square-rigged ships from around the world, securing crews, navigating port permissions and legalities across oceans.

Funding the project cost more than AU \$11 million—an astronomical sum for a privately driven venture at the time.

The fleet needed to set sail from England in 1987, stopping at historical ports of call—Tenerife, Rio de Janeiro, Cape Town, Mauritius, Fremantle—before reaching Sydney in time for 26 January 1988.

Every step forward was a victory over resistance, skepticism, and red tape. “It was like taking on a giant with a sling,” Dr. King



said. “The Goliaths were institutional: government, money, time. But we had our slingshot—faith, vision, and a team of believers who wouldn’t let go.”

The Triumph:

Tall Ships in Sydney Harbour, 26 January 1988



At last, the fleet made landfall on the morning of 26 January 1988. To a harbour full of spectator boats the tall ships sailed into Sydney Harbour, forming one of the largest live-spectator events in Australian history.

Dr. King recounted how the “Parade of Sail” and related events were greeted by millions on the shore and via broadcast. This achievement represented not only a logistical victory but a symbolic one: the realisation of the vision, the “little stone” that overcame the giant.

His book, *Australia’s First Fleet: The Voyage & the Re-enactment 1788/1988*, published in 1987/88, records the story in full.

A Meaningful Presentation to the Society

As if the David and Goliath story wasn’t exciting enough, the highlight for our Society came when Dr. King presented a scroll from the Swedenborg Society, London. The scroll came alongside a replica box containing the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, which had reportedly been included on one of the ships of the original First Fleet.

Our own Joe Vandermeer, Director of the Swedenborg Centre, brought forward the replica box—something Dr. King said he hadn't seen in nearly forty years.

The theological resonance is profound. Swedenborg's central teaching that "Religion is of life, and the life of religion is to do good," has here found a living symbol: a voyage, a re-enactment, a gathering across nations, people and time. The scroll and box remind us that faith, courage and perseverance are not only personal virtues but communal ones—fit for public witness.

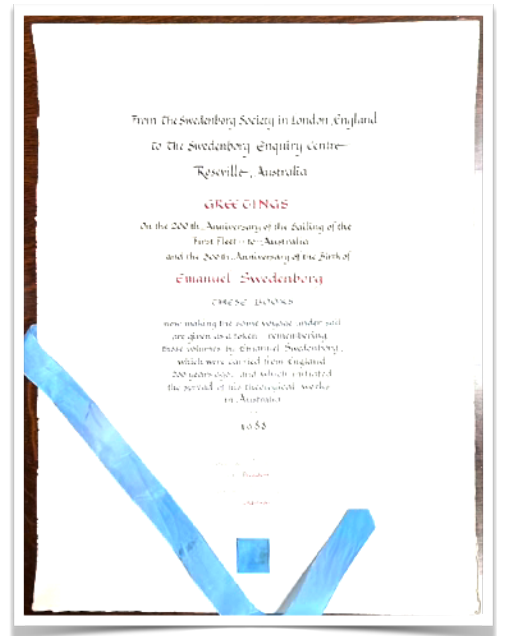
In Conclusion

Dr. King's talk was more than a historical recounting—it was a testimony. It reminded us that the Swedenborgian principle that life in faith must be lived is not merely private but public, not merely theoretical but practical and not merely individual but communal.

As we mark our 150th Anniversary, may we be inspired, like Dr. King, to make our own small stones count: to envision,

to endure, to partner, and to serve. And may the scroll and the replica box remind us that our faith has roots and wings—rooted in divine truth, soaring in life.

With gratitude for his contribution, and for your continued partnership in the



Society, we look forward to another 150 years of doing good, together.

Blessings in service and truth,

Howard

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Visioning the Future of SSNC: A Path Rooted in Purpose and Open to Possibility

As part of our Sesquicentenary celebrations, the Sydney Society of the New Church recently held a special Visioning Session on Saturday, 18 October, guided by the strategic consultancy firm Sparks Strategy. This marked a significant moment in our community life—not just a celebration of 150 years of faith, but a bold step toward discerning how our church can thrive into the future.

In the lead-up to the session, the consultants from Sparks engaged in a series of one-on-one interviews with a diverse group from across our wider SSNC community—members new and long-standing, friends of the church and key stakeholders. These conversations helped shape the session, ensuring that the voices and hopes of our community informed the process from the very beginning.

The 4-hour workshop was facilitated by Ankur Sadhwani (pictured), the lead consultant on the project, and created space for honest, creative,



and hopeful discussion. Together, we reflected deeply on our shared identity, our mission and the evolving needs of our spiritual community.

Rediscovering Our Core Purpose



Early in the session, participants were invited into a reflective process to explore the deeper “why” behind our church community. Through guided discussion and group collaboration, we worked together to articulate a shared sense of purpose—one that honours the heart of Swedenborg’s theology while speaking to the spiritual needs of people today.

This part of the workshop helped surface common values and hopes for the future, providing a strong foundation for further discernment. While the final wording of this purpose will be refined in the report, the session made it clear that there is a deep desire to remain rooted in love, wisdom, and spiritual growth—while making these values tangible in people’s everyday lives.

Balancing Heritage and Change

Another key focus of the workshop was the tension many of us feel between holding on to what is precious in our tradition and adapting to a rapidly changing world. Participants explored this dynamic honestly, reflecting on the opportunities and challenges facing our church in the years ahead.

Rather than landing on quick solutions, the session created space for shared insight and honest questions. It became

clear that moving forward will require both realism and hope—recognising where we are now, and imagining what could be possible if we approach the future with courage, collaboration and faith.

What's Next?

The discussions from the Visioning Session are currently being compiled into a detailed report by Sparks Strategy. This report will be presented to the SSNC Committee in the coming weeks and is intended to provide a thoughtful, realistic framework to support ongoing dialogue and discernment about our future direction.

This is only the beginning of the conversation. But what the Visioning Session made clear is that the future of the Sydney Society of the New Church is not just something to plan—it's something, like our own spiritual lives, to cooperate with the Lord in love, wisdom and action.

Howard

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Christmas Readings **2025**

With the recent celebration of our **150th Anniversary** and several other ongoing projects, it is almost easy to forget that Christmas is just 2 months away. As in years past we will be sending out our Christmas Readings booklet. If you receive the online edition of this Newsletter and would like a printed copy, please email Howard at revhathompson@gmail.com and we will gladly post one to you.

Alternatively, you can **sign up for a daily email** version of the readings at newchurch.org/christmasreadings.

This year's theme, "**Our Part**," invites us to reflect on the role each of us plays in the Lord's work of salvation. While the Lord alone is our Saviour, He lovingly calls us to cooperate with Him—using the hearts, minds and hands He has given us to do good, love others and follow His leading.

The cover art, featuring the shepherds, beautifully captures this message. The shepherds are a powerful example of those in the Christmas story who played their part—responding with haste, spreading the good news, and living in simple, devoted service.



As always, these daily readings—from December 1st through Christmas Day—offer Scriptural reflections and thoughtful prompts to help ground our Christmas season in spiritual purpose. May they inspire each of us to consider the unique part we are called to play this season and beyond.

Christmas Service Schedule

This past year has seen us trial twice-monthly services. This has been, I believe a success on several fronts. First, it has increased attendance at the services we do hold, as well as freeing me to begin to make regular visits to a New Church group in Canberra.

That said, with Christmas coming, we have decided to hold services throughout the Christmas Season and we hope you are able to join us for many of those Sundays. Here is the schedule for the Christmas Season:

- **30 November** - First Sunday of Advent - 10:00am
- **7 December** - Second Sunday of Advent - Including Holy Supper - 10:00am
- **14 December** - Third Sunday of Advent - 10:00am
- **21 December** - Forth Sunday of Advent - 7:00pm - Special Service - Carols by Candlelight
- **28 December** - Final Service of the Year - Including Holy Supper - 10:00am

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Swedenborg Centre News

News!! News... news. Do you know the old joke “How many journalists does it take to change a light bulb?” – to which the journalist reply “We just report the facts, we don’t change them.”

And there you have the problem. I discovered it’s better to be in the business of changing things than reporting it, being the change that I’d like to see in the world.

Things change fast in this world. Therefore these days everything is news. Hardly anybody reads newspapers anymore, as my friend recently said. When he asked his daughter if she had seen his newspaper, she told him that newspapers are so old school and informed him that people only use tablets nowadays. So she then handed him her iPad. That fly didn’t stand a chance!

Anyhow, here is the latest info about the Swedenborg Centre events. And as always, you can find all the details plus event Zoom links on the website at swedenborg.com.au

On Monday, 3rd October at 6:30pm we're screening a free movie at Roseville New Church called "City of Angels" starring Nicolas Cage as an angel who guides people into the afterlife and Meg Ryan as a heart surgeon he falls in love with.

So come and have some popcorn and enjoy the movie just as we do every first Monday of each month.

Our other regular events are (in person at the Centre AND on Zoom):

- Weekly Swedenborg readings every Wednesday at 10am.
- Dr Philip Groves readings at noon every Friday.
- Swedenborg Saturday discussions are at 10am on the first and third Saturday each month (i.e. 1st and 15th of November).
- Howard is conducting Church Services on the first and third Sundays at 10am at the New Church in Roseville (i.e. 2nd and 16th November).
- Study the Word with Howard on Tuesday 4th and 18th November at 11am..

If you're planning to visit the Centre, it's always good to send an email beforehand to joe@swedenborg.com.au as occasional some events are run remotely.

Enjoy these offerings.

Sending you all best wishes.

Joe Vandermeer



Meditation

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 recentre, 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.

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Minister's Contact Information and Office Hours

Rev. Howard A. Thompson
Office Hours: 11:00 am - 4.00 pm
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday

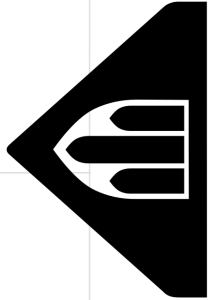
Email: revhathompson@gmail.com
Phone: 0432 357 475

November

2025

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

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
					Insights from Dr. Groves Noon & 7pm	Swedenborg Sat. 10:00am
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
10:00am Service of Worship Including Holy Supper Rev. Howard A. Thompson		Bible Study 11.00	Swedenborg Readings 10:00		Insights from Dr. Groves Noon & 7pm	
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
		"Remembrance Day"	Swedenborg Readings 10:00		Insights from Dr. Groves Noon & 7pm	Swedenborg Sat. 10:00am
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
10:00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson	Church Committee 7.30pm - 9.00pm	Bible Study 11.00	Swedenborg Readings 10:00 SAA Committee 6:30		Insights from Dr. Groves Noon & 7pm	
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Canberra Service			Swedenborg Readings 10:00		Insights from Dr. Groves Noon & 7pm	
1st Sunday Advent Service 10:00am 30						



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