

ROSEVILLE NEW CHURCH

**MAY
2024**

“God is our refuge and strength,
always ready to help in times of trouble.
So we will not fear when earthquakes come
and the mountains crumble into the sea.”

(Psalm 46)

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.



Anyone who lives a life of love for others knows everything there is to know about faith.

(Secrets of Heaven 1798)

Roseville New Church Newsletter

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On Facebook – Roseville New Church

May 2024

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

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 underwent a format change in 2023. This new format dispenses with the “ritual” elements used in the previous videos and results weekly episodes of around 5 minutes in length.



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

Stoicism Part II

(The Cardinal Virtues)

Last month, in the first of a series of articles on the subject of Stoicism, I wrote about how a casual conversation with a solicitor—who identified himself as a Stoic—sparked a curiosity in me about the true meaning of Stoicism, a philosophy often misunderstood as mere emotional suppression. This interest led me to explore not only primary texts like Marcus Aurelius’s Meditations and Seneca’s Letters from a Stoic, but also modern interpretations that shed light on Stoicism’s relevance today. Contrary to the common misconception of Stoics as unfeeling, the philosophy teaches the mastery over, rather than the absence of, emotions, advocating for a life guided by reason, virtue and purpose. I discussed how Stoicism aligns with core human experiences and challenges, emphasising the development of an inner strength that allows us to face life's uncertainties with equanimity. By learning to adjust our judgments about external events, Stoicism offers a pathway to maintain tranquility and resilience. Through the teachings of Stoic philosophers and the practice of exercises like premeditatio malorum, which prepares one for potential adversities, Stoicism cultivates a sophisticated form of emotional intelligence that is deeply congruent with the New Church's teachings on spiritual freedom and regeneration.

As a New Church minister I have preached many times on the subject of the Lord’s parables and why it was that He often spoke in parables. One of the simplest explanations is that when addressing difficult matters of personal behaviour, had He spoken directly to people, they would not have been able to hear Him, too overwhelmed by their

internal defence mechanisms. Reading the Stoics, however, I am struck by just how direct they are. Marcus Aurelius is painfully honest with himself in his “Meditations” and Seneca holds no punches on many topics in his many letters to his pupil, Lucilius. For the reader of these Stoics there is little effort required to draw meaning from the pages. Their lessons on how to live life guided by reason, virtue and purpose are right there on every page. The work that is left for the reader is the difficult inner work the Stoics call each of us to do.

The ethical framework of Stoicism rests solidly on the four cardinal virtues, wisdom, courage, justice and temperance. These four virtues are called “cardinal” from the Latin “cardo” (hinge) because all other virtues fall under them and hinge upon them. Stoicism closely aligns with the philosophical tradition established by Plato and Aristotle and were later recognised and built upon by early Christian philosophers such as Aquinas. These virtues represent the qualities that, according to the Stoics, an individual must cultivate to achieve a good and rational life.

According to the Stoic “wisdom” encompasses practical wisdom and the knowledge necessary for living a virtuous and purposeful life. Wisdom involves good judgment, prudent decision-making, and the ability to discern the proper course of action in various situations with rationality and in freedom.



COURAGE



JUSTICE



TEMPERANCE



WISDOM

Essential to the Stoic concept of wisdom is understanding what things are within our control and what are not, and acting accordingly.

In Stoicism, courage is not just physical bravery but also the moral courage to face any form of adversity with resilience. This virtue includes the endurance of pain or hardship without the disruption of inner peace, and the strength to uphold one's convictions even when confronted with popular opposition or personal risk. Perhaps most importantly the Stoic concept of courage includes the courage to face one's own inner demons and failings.

Justice for the Stoics involves the appropriate treatment of other individuals, grounded in fairness, kindness, and benevolence. It emphasises the importance of social responsibilities and the idea that we should act in ways that benefit the common good, reflecting our natural social inclinations and interdependence. Stoicism recognises the natural tendency of humans towards self-interest, which is a fundamental aspect of the human condition. Justice demands the Stoic places limits on self-interest in favour of responsibility.

Building on the recognised human inclination toward self-interest, the Stoic virtue of temperance emphasises self-control and moderation. This virtue meticulously moderates our desires and pleasures, anchoring them firmly within the realms of rationality. It is not merely about curbing one's appetites; rather, it is about cultivating a lifestyle that maintains balance and does not succumb to the extremes of overindulgence or severe asceticism. Temperance, therefore, guides a person to enjoy life's pleasures wisely and sparingly, ensuring that they are not overwhelmed by the pursuit of pleasure or the evasion of discomfort.

As you likely garnered from the interplay of justice and temperance, these cardinal virtues are interdependent, each contributing to the Stoic ideal of a harmonious and rational life. They guide one's behaviour and choices towards what is ethical and away from what is morally indifferent, leading to what the Stoics considered the highest good: living in agreement with nature or reason.

Parallels with New Church Teachings

As you read the above description of each of the cardinal virtues, no doubt your mind went to several New Church teachings that seem to closely parallel these virtues. Of course, Swedenborg's Writings will have one significant difference in that his parallel concepts are all framed within a distinctly New Church theology and the Divinity that underpins it all. Here are the New Church teachings that align with each of the Stoic cardinal virtues:



WISDOM

Divine Wisdom and Human Understanding: Swedenborg's Writings emphasise that all true wisdom comes from the Lord and that humans achieve wisdom through the reception of divine truth. This parallels the Stoic pursuit of practical wisdom, where understanding and applying reason guide a person's actions and contribute to a deeper **Wisdom** (Sophia); a profound understanding of the Divine order (Logos) and a person's place in it. Swedenborg spoke of wisdom as being inseparable from love—true wisdom is applying knowledge in a way that is led by love (charity).



COURAGE

Spiritual Combat (Temptations): In Swedenborg's Writings, spiritual growth often involves "temptations" (spiritual crises), in which individuals combat evil and falsity in themselves. These are essential for spiritual development and require a type of moral

courage very similar to the Stoic cardinal virtue of **Courage** (Andreia); the state of the soul which is unmoved by fear, where one faces and overcomes internal and external adversities.



JUSTICE

Life According to Divine Order:

Swedenborg's Writings teach that living according to Divine order involves acting justly and fairly towards others, reflecting God's order and balance in one's own life. This mirrors the Stoic emphasis on living in sync with the

“**Logos**” — the Divine, organising principle that governs the universe. Swedenborg's concept of justice involves fair treatment of others and working for the common good, resonating with the Stoic commitment to **Justice** (Dikaiosyne). In Stoicism, justice is given a sense of duty, not unlike Swedenborg's entreaty to act “honestly, justly and faithfully,” in all a person does.



TEMPERANCE

Regeneration and Self-Control:

Swedenborg's concept of regeneration involves a person's transformation through the rejection of sinful behaviours and the embracing of spiritual virtues. This transformation requires self-control or temperance, similar to the Stoic virtue, where

passions and desires are moderated by reason. To the Stoic **Temperance** (Sophrosyne) is the knowledge of what

things are worth choosing and what are worth avoiding and what is neither. Contained within this virtue are things like orderliness, propriety, modesty, and self-mastery.

Swedenborg viewed temperance as part of shunning evils as sins and living a life of use, which involves disciplined moderation in all things. It should be noted that neither the Stoics nor Swedenborg would suggest that temperance is to be understood as Asceticism which involves practicing strict self-denial as a measure of personal and spiritual discipline.

Each of these virtues expressed in Swedenborg's Writings is considered essential for spiritual growth and aligns closely with Stoic philosophy, though framed within a context of Christian spirituality and a deep focus on the relationship between God and humanity. Both systems advocate for a life of virtue, reason and ethical self-improvement; offering pathways to spiritual freedom and fulfilment.

Concluding this admittedly rather long piece, I will note that so far I find little that conflicts between New Church theology and Stoic philosophy. Going beyond that, I believe that both can be complementary in supporting a person's desire to be a more useful and contributing member of the Lord's Kingdom both now and to eternity. Next month, in part three of this series I plan to take a look at similarities between Stoic and Spiritual practices.

Howard

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Food Pantry

For many years we have been collecting, in bins just inside the foyer of the church, pantry items which we have donated to the Exodus Foundation, a local food pantry located in Ashfield. In the midst of the pandemic, exodus informed us that they did not have enough volunteers to continue regular collections in our area. Fortunately, we have been able to shift our donation to the Salvation Army location in Chatswood. The Salvos already knew us, as we have been annually donating our fresh fruit and vegetable offerings from our Harvest service and annual Christmas toy drive.

I'm giving you this background because I would very much like to ask for your help. During my most recent delivery to the Salvos, I got to talking with one of the main volunteers. After expressing great appreciation for our small but regular donations she went on to say that the current economic conditions are creating more demand for their services and fewer donations. Between fewer volunteers, fewer donations coming in and greater demand, these organisations are struggling to meet the needs of our communities.

Please, if you can collect any additional canned or dry goods in your weekly shop (even one of two items) and bring them to church, it would be most useful.

Howard



Swedenborg Centre News

Swedenborg provides such unique and amazing insights, especially about a world which is as real as ours, but which has no concern for person, place, time and space. How can we conceive of such a world? How can we prepare to inhabit such a world? The spiritual world is not a place where clocks or rulers are of any use, because what appears as space manifests as an expression of the quality of our state, and time relates to changes that taking place through the successive changes of state in us. Our inner state are the key there.

The outer natural world around us here is a reasonably stable manifestation no matter what our inner states, thoughts and feelings are. But our inner (and next) world we are surrounded by projections of our inner states. And I would not feel too pleased to be surrounded by an environment in which my inner state of anger is projected all



around me, or my selfish motives, my cravings, or some other negative state or shortcoming of mine. Fortunately, our remaining lifetime before we get to enjoy that world allows us a good opportunity to reflect on these states, and reset our orientation towards more positive states of love, such as love for others, love of providing useful services, doing useful things, etc. We can begin doing this by examining ourselves and our states and manifestations, and ask for help from the Lord to have them neutralised in us. The first principle of doing good is to shun the harmful

and negative states in us as something undesirable when seen against the very qualities and nature of the Lord God. When the Word is read and a person's name appears in it, such as Abraham, the heavenly citizens do not think "Ah yes, that fellow Abraham who lived in the Middle East at the dawn of the Iron Age." Instead, they know that Abraham in the Word represents Divine love and mercy, which was the Lord's inner core of goodness itself. And so, upon hearing the name Abraham mentioned, they immediately think: "Ah yes, Divine goodness, the Lord's supreme inner quality" (see Secrets of Heaven #2063). It's not just what we know from the Word that is our spiritual resource here, it is what we make of it, what we do with it in our life, how it affects us inwardly. Am I prepared to change in my beliefs, feelings, actions, knowing that the Lord's inmost quality is such a supreme love, from which infinite mercy is constantly extended towards all of us to sustain and assist us? That is a good way to see and deal with such revelations and opportunities.

Speaking of opportunities, here are our activities in May, which can also be found on the website at www.swedenborg.com.au

None of the activities require attendees to have any prior knowledge, because each week is a new and independent topic, so that you can join the sessions starting any week. If there is anything that needs explanation, that too is dealt with as required on each occasion.

Weekly Swedenborg Readings take place at **10am each Wednesday**. Currently we're studying Samuel Warren's Compendium, and will soon return to the amazing teachings on the Proprium (sense of self).

Fortnightly Tuesday **Bible Studies** with Howard Thompson are on at 11am, so that's (April 30th, and) **May 14th and 28th.**

Dr Groves Readings will be at **noon & 7pm on Fridays, May 3rd, 17th and 31st.** We are working our way through chapter from his book "Quest for Integration" volume 2.

Swedenborg Saturday discussions will be held on **May 4th and 18th** (and then June 1st), always starting at 10am.

Wishing you a happy start to the colourful month of May (I already spotted some beautiful autumn foliage).

Joe

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Thompsons Travels

As noted in the February Newsletter, the General Church of the New Jerusalem, based in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania (U.S.A.) will be holding an Assembly in June. As Howard is "on loan" to the Roseville New Church from this very organization, he and Debra will be attending the Assembly and the Clergy Meetings that precede the event.

This will have a few impacts as far as church operations go; first, the next Newsletter will be a combined June/July edition. Second, services may be led by a lay reader or cancelled. Third, Howard will likely not be able to produce his weekly Spiritual Shorts videos during this time.

More details in the next Newsletter.

Spring Women's Weekend **November 15-17, Hornsby**

We're doing it again! Ladies, mark your diaries: you're cordially invited to join other New Church-minded women across Australia and New Zealand for our spring women's weekend. We'll be gathering **Nov 15-17** at an Airbnb in **Hornsby, NSW and via Zoom**. There will be a nice combination of fun and inspiring sessions on offer, including a guest speaker chiming in from the U.S. and once again assembling birth kits for disadvantaged women in developing countries – plus down-time to visit with our sisters and explore the area (and go for a dip in the on-site pool!?). If this interests you and you haven't already signed up, please let Jenn know (jenn@beiswenger.net). The deadline isn't until October, but the sooner we know who's coming, the sooner we can start planning our weekend -- and the sooner we can all get excited!

On the subject of assembling birth kits, we will need to raise \$1000 to pay for the supplies, as in previous years. Since we're planning this well in advance, there's no urgency yet; watch this space for further details! Thanks in advance for your consideration!

Jenn Beiswenger

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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



Final Thought

“It is a melancholy fact that childhood, so short when compared with the average span of life, should exert such a strong and permanent influence on character that no amount of self-training afterwards can ever completely counter it.”

(Consuelo Vanderbilt-Balsan)

Rev. David Moffat's Visit

May 11-12th

Earlier this year the committee of the New Church in Australia (NCIA) asked Rev. David Moffat, President of the NCIA Council of Ministers, to plan visits to each of the member societies of the NCIA.

It is obvious that all churches are struggling on the current environment and the NCIA believes it important that we continue to look for opportunities to learn from each other and work together in order to remain relevant in a world where people increasingly sees faith and God irrelevant to their daily lives.

David will be visiting with the Church Committee on Saturday and joining us all for worship on Sunday. Please join us and extend a warm welcome to David.

Howard




May

2024

April

June

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| 28 | 29 | 30 | | | | | | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
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| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--|---|-------------------|--------------------------------|----------|--------|--------------------------------|
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson | | Bible Study 11.00 | Swedenborg Readings 10:00am | | | Swedenborg Saturdays - 10am |
| 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 10.00am Service of Worship Including Holy Supper Rev. Howard A. Thompson | | | Swedenborg Readings 10:00am | | | |
| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| Mothers Day 10.00am Service of Worship Rev. David Moffat |  | Bible Study 11.00 | Swedenborg Readings 10:00am | | | Swedenborg Saturdays - 10am |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson | Church Committee 7.30pm - 9.00pm | | Swedenborg Readings 10:00am | | | |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 1 |
| 10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Todd Beiswenger | | Bible Study 11.00 | Swedenborg Readings 10:00am | | | |



