

ROSEVILLE NEW CHURCH

AUGUST 2023

“So pay attention to how you hear. To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given. But for those who are not listening, even what they think they understand will be taken away from them.”

(Luke 8:18)

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 goal of rebirth is for us to develop a new inner self and therefore a new soul, or spirit, but our inner self cannot be remade or reborn unless our outer self is too. Although we are spirits after death, we take with us into the other life aspects of our outer self: earthly emotions, doctrines, facts—in short, all the contents of our outer, earthly memory.

Secrets of Heaven 3539

Roseville New Church Newsletter

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On Facebook – Roseville New Church

August 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

“Minister’s Reflection”

Earlier this year I undertook the massive project of revamping the Roseville New Church’s website. Though far from a website creator or “webmaster,” I felt that an important aspect of our website is that it be a “living” site. In other words, if the website is not constantly undergoing change and improvement while offering something new for its visitors, then the website is “dead.” The only way my brain could see maintaining this state was to become intimately involved in the website’s creation. One important element of the new site is the weekly blog I have titled “Minister’s Reflections.” With this blog, I am seeking to



offer a weekly reflection on some aspect of the teachings of the New Church. Since the website is accessible to all, each weekly blog is being advertised regionally on social media. I thought our readers would appreciate the opportunity to

read two of the pieces that have attracted the most attention.

Beyond the Veil: Realities of the Spiritual Realm After Death

(Published 25 July 2023)

Fifteen years ago, I came across an interview with Chris Boratenski, an avid ice-climber who miraculously survived a 72-foot fall during one of his climbs. It was an incredible story, but what struck me the most were his thoughts immediately after regaining consciousness. Chris wondered

to himself, "Am I dead?" This contemplation may seem peculiar because if one were truly deceased, would they still be conscious of their thoughts, feelings, and surroundings? What also caught my attention was Chris' lack of surprise at the possibility of thinking, seeing, and feeling even if he were dead.



**SPIRIT BODY THRIVES,
MEMORIES, SENSES REMAIN,
EARTHLY SHELL LEFT BEHIND.**

I was personally "struck" by Chris' reaction, yet not surprised. You see, I firmly believe that there are profound aspects of spiritual reality and life beyond our physical bodies that we instinctively understand. Chris' experience seemed to align with Emanuel Swedenborg's insights in his book, "Heaven and Hell" ([#461](#)),

where he describes what occurs when our bodies perish and our spirits embark on a new journey.

In light of Chris Boratenski's extraordinary encounter and his contemplations after the near-death fall; it becomes evident that there are facets of the spiritual realm and the existence of our spirits after physical death that resonate with our inherent intuitions. Swedenborg's profound understanding of this enigmatic realm offers illuminating insights.

Swedenborg explains that when we transition from the natural world to the spiritual realm after death, we leave our earthly bodies behind while retaining the essence of who we are. Our spiritual bodies closely resemble our physical ones, and we carry with us all our senses, memories, thoughts, emotions, passions, and interests from our life on Earth. It's

as though we've relocated to another physical place, but with an unbroken continuity of our identity.

As "spirit-people," we enjoy a seamless continuation of our inner and outer senses, perceiving the world around us just as we did in our physical existence. Sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell remain intact, enabling us to think, love, and intend as we did before. Although our accumulated knowledge may lie dormant in the spiritual realm, it awaits the divine will to be awakened.

Some may find it challenging to grasp the concept of uninterrupted continuity beyond the physical realm, mainly due to their limited focus on tangible and sensory aspects of life. However, the spiritual world offers a heightened level of perception and discernment, as experienced by the angels in heaven, illuminated by divine truth.


It is essential to note that not all senses are equally sensitive in the spiritual world. Sight and hearing serve as channels for intelligence and wisdom, while the other senses play a lesser role. An excessive indulgence in sensory pleasure could potentially distract from the pursuit of spiritual wisdom, similar to observations made in the material world, where a focus on physical appetites can overshadow spiritual truths.

In conclusion, Swedenborg's depiction of the afterlife paints a captivating picture of an unbroken continuation of our spiritual bodies, encompassing all our senses, memories, and characteristics. Embracing this concept opens the door to a world of heightened perception and profound wisdom. While the subject may appear perplexing to some, the inherent intuitive understanding of a spiritual reality after physical death resonates deeply within us. * * * * *

If God Exists, Where Is My Freedom?

(Published 11 July 2023)

This question probably is the one I am asked most often by people beginning their spiritual journey. Of course, I'm glad that they are asking questions, though this particular question presents somewhat of a false dichotomy. By that, I mean that the question is based on the idea that if God exists, God must be a puppet master, we are His puppets, and the natural world is the stage on which He has us perform.



God dwells in Freedom's Flow,
In thoughts and acts, His presence glow,
Life's dance with the Divine echo.

www.rosevilleneuvechurch.com.au

The question of freedom in relation to the existence of God is profound and complex. However, the presence of God does not diminish human freedom; rather, it provides a foundation upon which freedom can truly flourish.

God is love itself and wisdom itself. This divine love and wisdom permeate the entire

universe, including the human mind and heart. Human freedom, therefore, is not seen as an isolated, independent capacity but rather as a reflection of God's own freedom. In other words, true freedom is not the absence of external constraints but the alignment of one's choices and actions with divine principles.

Genuine freedom arises when a person willingly embraces what is good and true, guided by their innermost desires and intentions. God's providence (His activity in the world) operates in a way that respects and preserves human

freedom, even in the face of apparent limitations or adversity. This Divine Providence is not a deterministic force that controls human actions but rather a guiding influence that seeks to lead individuals towards spiritual growth and enlightenment.

From this perspective, the existence of God does not infringe upon human freedom but rather provides a framework within which freedom can be fully realised. Without a divine presence, freedom becomes arbitrary and disconnected from higher principles. In the absence of a transcendent source of love and wisdom, freedom risks devolving into self-centredness and the pursuit of temporary pleasures that ultimately lead to spiritual emptiness.

In my last post, I referenced Viktor Frankl's words concerning freedom and responsibility. Frankl certainly was tuned into the true nature of God. From God's perspective, freedom is not merely the ability to do as one pleases but the freedom to choose what is good and true, thereby contributing to the well-being of oneself and others. In this view, freedom is intimately tied to moral agency and the pursuit of higher virtues. God's existence, as a source of ultimate goodness and wisdom, provides a moral compass that guides human freedom towards its highest potential.

This understanding of God's operation in the world does not deny the reality of evil or the existence of suffering in the world. We all experience spiritual struggles and the consequences of human choices that deviate from divine principles. God does not wish that these things happen, but in order to maintain our very freedom, He permits these things to happen. God is, however, in the midst of these

challenges, continually at work, offering opportunities for growth and transformation.

Far from being a “puppet master,” the New Church offers a perspective that harmonises the existence of God with human freedom. God's presence does not hinder freedom but rather provides a foundation upon which true freedom can be realised. Human freedom, when aligned with divine principles, allows individuals to grow in goodness and truth, fulfilling their highest potentials. Human freedom is not a license for self-centredness but is a call to embrace moral responsibility and contribute to the well-being of ourselves and others.

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At this point I am approaching 20 posts on this blog. A new blog is posted each Monday. Navigate your way to <https://www.rosevillenewchurch.com.au/blog> and take a look. Feel free to comment or share with friends. Feedback is always welcome, as I am interested in continually improving the site.

Rev. Howard A. Thompson

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!Church Camp/Retreat Returns!

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

Camp will be held from **15 to 20 January 2024** at the Winmalee Christian Conference Centre in Winmalee NSW. The facility is self-contained with air-conditioned rooms and common areas, pool, outdoor facilities and many great bushwalking tracks. It is also walking distance to the closest town.

As it is a smaller setting, **space is limited**. Please register your interest in attending as soon as practical. This can be done

by emailing me directly, until someone steps forward to serve as coordinator of registrations.

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

Your help is necessary and appreciated.

Howard Thompson

(revhathompson@gmail.com)



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Swedenborg Centre July News

Here's a brief reflection on - and calendar update for - SAA and Swedenborg Centre happenings.

We continue exploring Swedenborg's amazing work Divine Providence each Wednesday at 10am which addresses in detail the remarkable plan of the Lord's creation and outlines our role in it and maps an ideal response to it. Swedenborg defines what an ideal life is and our opportunity for obtaining a happy and useful eternal life, while he clearly explains the actual nature of the self. If any of this interests you more, feel free to join in either in person or online (see www.swedenborg.com.au website for Zoom links and last-minute event changes).

We decided to revive the Tree of World Religions on the wall of the Centre to facilitate discussions on where Swedenborg belongs in the landscape of the variety of spiritual beliefs in the world today. See <https://the4ofoundation.org/world-religions-tree.html> (curiously, Swedenborg isn't mentioned on that comprehensive religions map). So far, we explored the views and disciplines of Thomism (the religious philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas) with the help of the works of Monsigneur Dr Paul Glenn - see https://isidore.co/calibre/#library_id=CalibreLibrary&panel=book_list&search=paul%20glenn&sort=timestamp.desc

We also explored Shin Buddhism which has many similarities to Swedenborg, see <http://shinranworks.com/glossary/> (Buddhists such as D. T. Suzuki already noted such overlaps, as seen in his book Swedenborg, Buddha of the North).

We also examined Advaita Vedanta (part of the Hindu religion) which has some wonderfully clear teaching around our inner work, especially from the Bhagavad Gita.

And we looked at some early Sufi (Muslim) and Fourth Way (Gurdjieff) material to see how they define and approach a way of living more spiritually.

Lastly we managed also to talk about the differences between Near Death Experiences (NDEs) and Out Of Body experiences (OBEs).

So it's been a rich smorgasbord of discussions lately.

Feel free to join in by visiting or via online events. And don't forget the bible studies with Howard which always invites many valuable insights around the table (see event calendar below).

The wonderful musical duo **Riley Lee** (world master of the shakuhachi bamboo flute) and **Cliona Molins** (acclaimed harpist) are back for another **concert** at the Roseville New Church on **Sunday 27th August at 2pm** to launch their latest CD. Come and listen to their mesmerising, soothing music in the wonderful church acoustics which the performers love so much. [Click for ticket info and bookings](#). For a poster click image.



Below are the events for August. Please always check the website at swedenborg.com.au for event news, changes, and Zoom links. Note a brief interruption to the regular events schedule while Howard and Joe are in Brisbane (the Centre will remain open, but it's wise to check by phone or email when planning your visit).

Coming events: -

- **Swedenborg Readings** on 10am every **Wednesdays (except August 9th)**.

- **Bible Study** with Howard are each fortnightly **Tuesday** at 11am (i.e. on **August 22nd, but not August 8th**).
- **Dr Groves Readings** are on **Friday August 4th & 18th** at noon & 7pm.
- **Swedenborg Saturday** discussions will be held **August 5th & 19th** at 10am.

See you at the above events or over a cuppa at the Centre other times. May your winter end with the increasing light and warmth.

Joe

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Women's Weekend -- last call!

Our spring women's weekend is coming up soon, and this is the last call for participants!

New Church-minded women from Australia & New Zealand

will be gathering **Sept 8-10** in Stanwell Tops, NSW and via Zoom. There will be sessions about birthwork and shifting with Jacob (à la GC Journey Program), and Chara Daum will guest-speak to us virtually from Bryn Athyn. We'll assemble birth kits, do some jenn-tangling, have a guided 'mindlessness' meditation and enjoy games, walks, worship, meals & down-time with our 'sisters'. If this interests you and you haven't already signed up, please let Jenn know ASAP! (jenn@beiswenger.net) The **deadline for payment is August 25th**, so please let her know sooner than later.

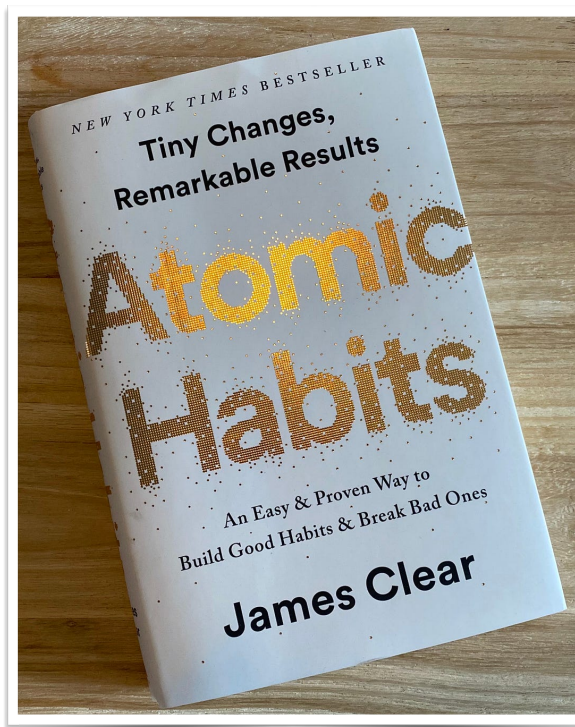
On the subject of assembling birth kits, we've got until **August 10th** to raise the remaining \$284 that we need to purchase the supplies. (*Hopefully, by the time you read this, the gap will be even less or even non-existent!*) If you feel called to support us and this cause, a donation would be greatly appreciated. The online process is quite straightforward: simply go to <https://www.mycause.com.au/p/315835/womens-weekend-sept-810-2023> (or www.mycause.com.au and search for 'womens weekend') and click on the big 'donate' button. For more information about the cause and the birth kits, visit <https://www.bkfa.org.au/>. *Thank you for your consideration!*

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Rev. Howard's Reading List **Book Review**

Several years ago, in the midst of a deep dive into the huge subject of the process and practice of repentance, I came across the following quote from Lao Tzu, a 6th century BCE Chinese philosopher; “Watch your thoughts; they become words. Watch your words; they become actions. Watch your actions; they become habit. Watch your habits; they become character. Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.”

The quote has stayed with me these many years and was readily



accessible when I came across James Clear's 2018 book *Atomic Habits*.

Clear demonstrates how the minutiae of our daily routines, essentially our habits, shape our character and, eventually, our destiny. The book provides a comprehensive framework to understand and modify habits. It details a four-step loop: cue, craving, response, and reward, which are integral to habit formation and change.

Clear emphasises the potency of minor improvements, asserting that a 1% positive shift in behaviour daily can lead to profound transformations over time. He further highlights the importance of environment in habit development, arguing that by making cues for good habits obvious and those for bad habits invisible, we can engineer our surroundings for success.

Central to Clear's philosophy is the notion that habits are intertwined with identity. Rather than focusing on what we want to achieve, we should concentrate on who we wish to become. The idea is to align our actions, or habits, with our self-perception and goals, enabling a shift from goal-centred to identity-centred growth. Therefore, "Atomic Habits" underscores the significance of small, consistent changes in our habits, for they profoundly influence our character and destiny.



Minister's Contact Information and Office Hours

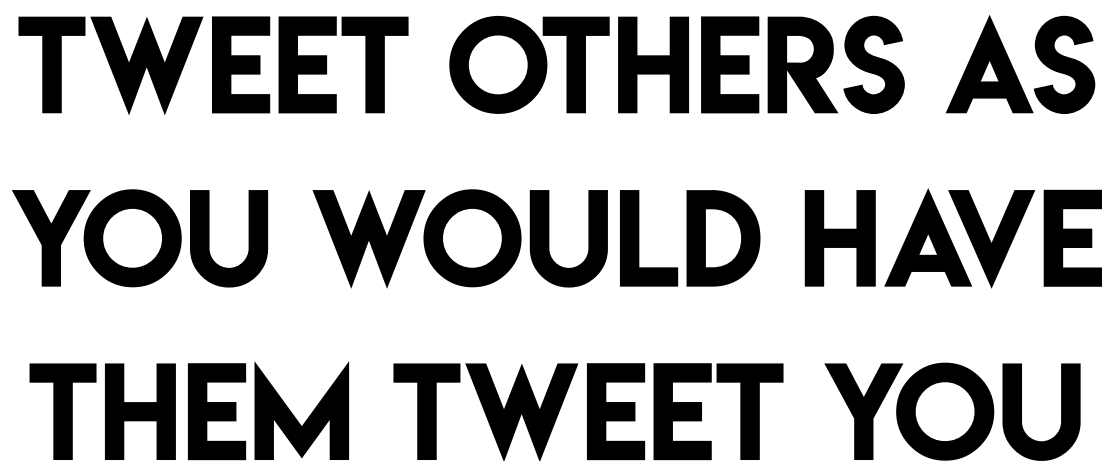
Rev. Howard A. Thompson

Office Hours: 11:00 am - 4.00 pm
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday

Email: revhathompson@gmail.com

Phone: 0432 357 475

Church Sign Humour



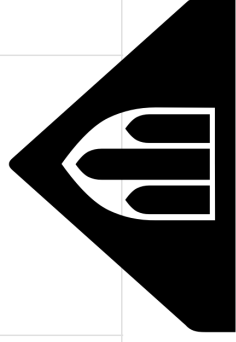
**TWEET OTHERS AS
YOU WOULD HAVE
THEM TWEET YOU**

August

2023

July							September						
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23	24	25	26	27	28	29	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
30	31												

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson					Insights from Dr. Groves Noon & 7pm	Swedenborg Saturday 10.00 - 12.00
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
10.00am Service of Worship Including Holy Supper Rev. Howard A. Thompson	COUNCIL OF MINISTERS FACE-TO-FACE MEETING, NEW CHURCH BRISBANE SOCIETY					
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
10.00am Service of Worship Graham Hall (Lay Reader)				Minister's Personal Day	Insights from Dr. Groves Noon & 7pm	Swedenborg Saturday 10.00 - 12.00
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson		Bible Study 11.00		Minister's Personal Day		
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson	Church Committee 7.30pm - 9.00pm			Minister's Personal Day		



ROSEVILLE NEW CHURCH