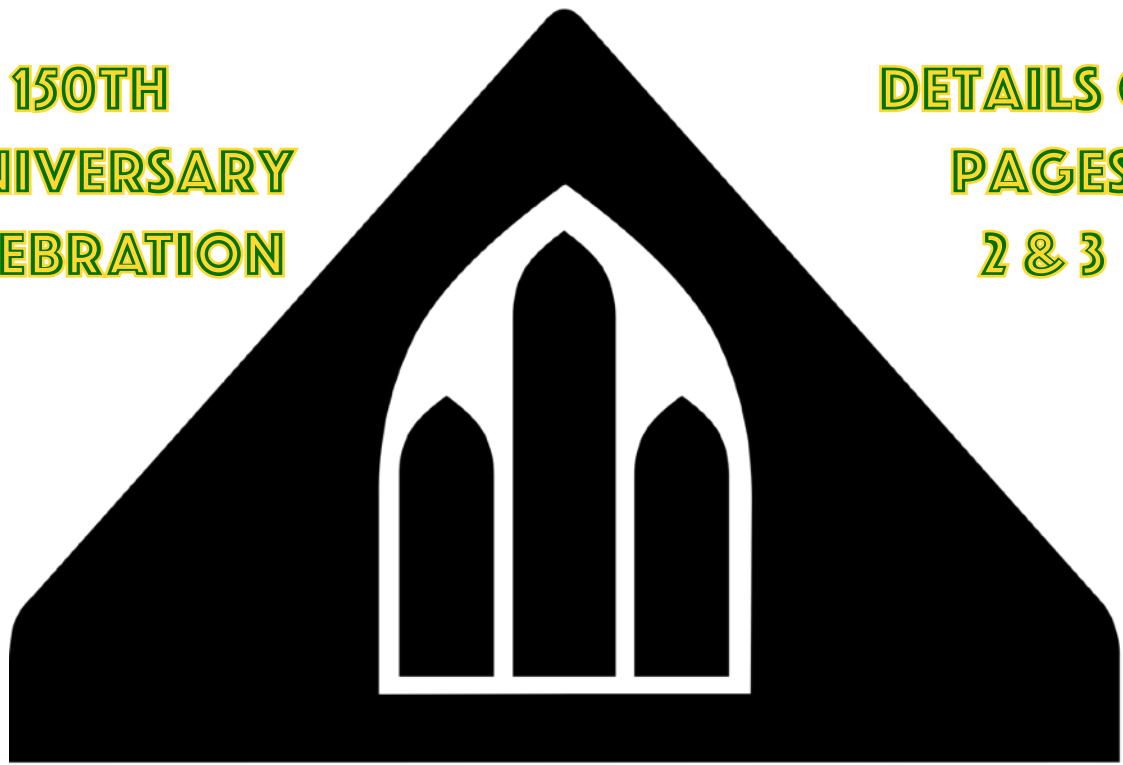


**150TH
ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION**

**DETAILS ON
PAGES
2 & 3**



ROSEVILLE NEW CHURCH

OCTOBER 2025

"The Lord ensures that there is always a church on earth where the Word is being read and the Lord is becoming known through it."

(True Christianity 270)

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.

**The spiritual meaning of the Word is the same as
the body of teaching that is found in heaven.**

~ New Jerusalem ~
and its Heavenly Teachings
#7022

Roseville New Church Newsletter

Issued by the Sydney Society of the New Church Established in 1875
4 Shirley Road, Roseville, N.S.W. 2069
Church Office phone: (02) 9416 7026
Minister's e-mail : revhathompson@gmail.com
On Facebook – Roseville New Church

October 2025

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- **Are We Ready for AI?**
- **Kathryn Baker's Guided Meditation**
- **How the Lord Sees the Church**

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



You Are Invited

**150TH ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION**

**Visioning Day
Saturday, 18 October
10:00am–2:00pm - Sanctuary**

**Special Service
Sunday, 19 October
10:00am- Sanctuary
12:00pm - Lunch - Church Hall**

RSVP BY EMAIL:

REVVHATHOMPSON+SSNC150TH@GMAIL.COM

**(Please indicate attendance for any or all - Visioning Day,
Special Service and Luncheon)**

Celebrating 150 Years: A Legacy of Light

This month, at a Special Service, The Sydney Society of the New Church - Roseville will mark our 150th anniversary. It is good to look back and reflect on the long and often surprising path by which the Swedenborgian tradition has taken root in Australia—and in particular in Roseville. The story is not simply one of institutional continuity, but of spiritual inheritance, missionary courage, shifting congregations, faithful ministers and a dedicated laity who strove to keep alive the ideal that “religion is of life, and the life of religion is to do good.”

First Fleet Seed

One of the most striking events in our heritage is that a copy of the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg is said to have arrived in Australia with the First Fleet. While early colonial records are fragmentary, this tradition underscores how even in the earliest years of European settlement in New South Wales, the spiritual ideas associated with Swedenborg were already in the air—as a kind of latent undercurrent. It suggests that our church is not a transplanted foreign body but part of a deeper, longer spiritual continuum in Australia.

That continuum becomes even more tangible when we consider the influence of Alfred Deakin (1856–1919), Australia’s second Prime Minister and one of the key architects of the Constitution. Deakin was a



deeply spiritual man, and among the religious philosophies that shaped his inner life, the Writings of Swedenborg played a central role. His engagement with Swedenborg's thought informed his personal ethics and his belief in a just and compassionate society. While the Constitution itself followed British and American models, Deakin's Swedenborgian ideals—particularly concerning social use, moral progress, and the integration of spiritual and civic life—left their quiet mark on the ethical foundations of the new Commonwealth.

In this way, Swedenborgian thought was present in Australia not only through the arrival of sacred texts, but through the minds and hearts of those helping to shape the nation itself.

From Thomas Street to Roseville

Our Society was formally established in 1875, though some archival filings suggest a precursor society as early as late 1874. From those early beginnings, the congregation worshipped in various rented and shared halls in the city. In the late 19th century, meetings were held in the Temperance Hall on Pitt Street, where addresses were given and Swedenborgian literature circulated.



Eventually the Society moved to a property on Thomas Street in the Sydney CBD, followed later by a longer-term presence on Clarence Street. Over time, as the congregation evolved and the city expanded, the church

sought a quieter, more permanent home—and found one in the former home of the Uniting Church building in Roseville in 1985, where we remain today. That move marked not only a geographical shift but a renewed vision of community-rooted, family-oriented ministry in a suburban context.

Ministers Who Carried the Flame

For much of its history the Sydney Society has been shepherded by a dedicated succession of ministers and lay leaders, each bringing their own unique style, focus, and spiritual gifts to the life of the church. Their collective ministry—through preaching, teaching, pastoral care, administration, and quiet faithfulness—has shaped the character and continuity of our Society.

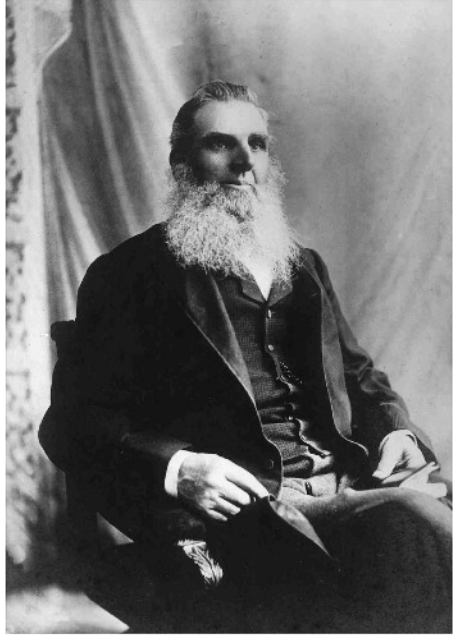
We acknowledge with deep gratitude those who have served as pastors and spiritual leaders in Sydney, including but not limited to: Julian Duckworth (1991-2018), Ian Arnold (1975-1991), Bernard Willmott (1965-1975), John Teed (1959-1965), William Burl (1923-1959). Each played a part in the living story of our congregation, helping to pass on the light of New Church teachings from generation to generation.



Legacies That Carry Us Forward

As we draw near this milestone, it is also fitting to honour those whose generosity has sustained our journey into the future. Among the most significant legacies are the bequests

from the William Moore estate and more recently the Olive Ball estate, which have provided financial strength and flexibility to continue the work of the Church in new ways. These legacies serve as both buffers and springboards: enabling stability while empowering us to dream. Alongside



these gifts, we also recognise the foresighted leadership of those in the church's past who made wise and forward-thinking decisions concerning church property—choices that have significantly strengthened our long-term financial footing and positioned us well for future ministry. Their stewardship reminds us that practical decisions, too, are spiritual acts when made in service of the Lord's work.

Looking to the Next 150 Years

From a single copy of the Writings aboard a ship in 1788, to rented halls in the city, to a permanent spiritual home in leafy Roseville, the journey of this Society reflects the inward path of faith itself. We have not merely survived—we have grown in depth, wisdom, and relevance.

As we celebrate this 150-year milestone, may we not merely recollect names and places, but recommit ourselves to the Swedenborgian ideal: that “religion is of life, and the life of religion is to do good.” Our forebears built as they could. Now we build on their foundation, seeking to serve Sydney and beyond with courage, clarity, and compassion.

Howard

* * * * *

Swedenborg Centre News

August 2025

Joe is back, after a much deserved August break and the Centre is back in full swing. Our regular schedule of events were back this past month. Our Newsletter update, however, may need another month, so please check out website for details of all upcoming events and Zoom links:swedenborg.com.au.

The SAA held its AGM on Friday, 26th September. This was an important meeting and follow-up communication will be coming from our president concerning the future of the SAA.

If you're planning to visit the Centre, it's always good to send an email beforehand to joe@swedenborg.com.au as there may be occasional events which are run remotely, which makes it hard to offer you that free coffee.

Of course, when you visit be certain to ask Joe to tell you of his recent visit to the Island of Patmos.

Wishing you all the very best.

Howard

* * * * *

“Your Father knows exactly what you need
even before you ask him!”
(Matthew 6:8)

Are We Ready?

A Further Reflection on A.I.

(This is the second in a series of book reviews I am writing based on a curated selection of books I am reading on the subject of Artificial Intelligence)



There's a saying I've heard in many contexts: "If it's not written down, it didn't happen." Today's version might be: "If it's not on Facebook, it didn't happen."

This bit of humour touches something deeper: in our digital age, life itself—our histories, our identities—is increasingly mediated by information networks. They shape what we see as real, what we value, and what we choose to remember.

Recently, I curated a short reading list on the rapidly unfolding topic of Artificial Intelligence. The second book on that list—Yuval Noah Harari's *Nexus*—has just made its way to the top of my stack. (The first, Mo Gawdat's *Scary Smart*, I also highly recommend.)

As I've worked through Harari's dense and thought-provoking text, I've found myself drawn to unexpected resonances with spiritual life—and especially with Swedenborg's vision of how divine truth flows into human community.

What follows is less a review of Nexus than a meditation on its central themes.

Information is the Foundation of Reality

Harari suggests that information isn't merely a tool for describing reality—it creates reality. It is the fabric that binds humanity itself. The subtitle of Nexus is telling: “A History of Information Networks from the Stone Age to AI.” Harari proposes that myths, stories, data, and networks have shaped—and continue to shape—entire civilisations. They are the threads by which humanity weaves its collective life.



This resonates deeply with Swedenborg's account of the Ancient Word—a sacred text now largely lost to history, but one that once nurtured humanity's earliest relationship with the Divine. It offered narratives, correspondences, and living truths that allowed people to dwell in harmony with heaven and in mutual cooperation on earth.

Harari may not be speaking theologically, but his recognition of the formative power of information resonates with Swedenborg's vision of divine truth as the very force that binds heaven—and the universal church, that inner spiritual connection linking all humanity to the Divine.

Inter-Subjective Reality and Narratives

Harari makes much of the fact that societies are sustained not primarily by brute force, but by shared stories. Nationhood, religion, money—even human rights—exist because we believe in them together. They are what he calls “inter-subjective realities.”

From a Swedenborgian perspective, this is both insightful and incomplete. It’s true that shared narratives hold communities together. But the enduring strength of a story depends on whether it corresponds to deeper spiritual realities. Brute power may seize control for a time, but no human regime lasts forever. A story focused on the Divine—a guiding star above all people, in contrast to a merely human figurehead or idol—has the power to regenerate and endure.

The Dual-Edged Sword of Information Technologies

Up until this point, Nexus is a fascinating deep dive into the history of information gathering—how humans have developed increasingly sophisticated ways to share, store, and transmit knowledge. As Harari points out, it’s



what makes humans unique among all earthbound species. And as Swedenborg would add, it is this very capacity that uniquely enables us to connect with the Divine.

But here, Harari's narrative takes a darker turn—one that echoes the spiritual descent in the Genesis story, where humanity, reaching for knowledge, is expelled from Eden. The same force that promises enlightenment also opens the door to alienation.

Every new information technology—from the printing press to the internet—carries this double-edged power. Harari notes how the printing press made possible both the Reformation and the witch hunts. Likewise, the digital revolution has given us unprecedented access to knowledge, but also to manipulation, division, and distortion.

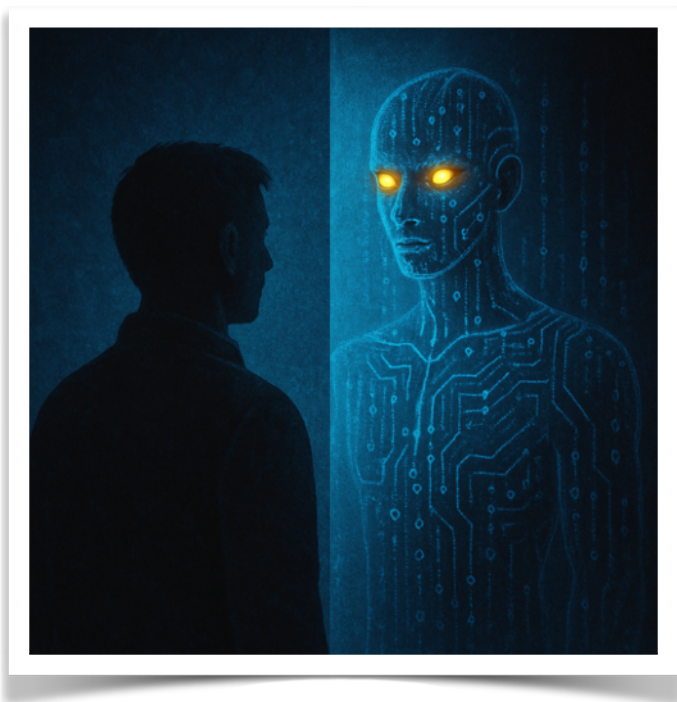
Swedenborg would not be surprised. He observes that everything—even the Word of God itself—has both a heavenly and a hellish correspondence. Light can illuminate truth and wisdom, but it can also be twisted into falsity when separated from love. This dual nature is a sobering reminder: no technology is truly neutral. Each one becomes an amplifier of the spirit we bring to it.

AI as “Alien Intelligence”

Harari's descent into darkness continues with one of his most provocative insights: his description of artificial intelligence as alien intelligence. Unlike previous technologies, AI does not merely extend human capability—

it creates, decides, and persuades in ways that seem uncannily independent. It's not just a smarter calculator or a faster search engine. It is something that begins to act as if it were a mind of its own.

This term—alien—resonates deeply. If we imagine, at this stage in our earthly development, encountering an extraterrestrial species capable of interstellar travel, we would rightly assume their intelligence to be far beyond what we can comprehend or prepare for. Harari is suggesting that AI may present a similar leap—not because it is conscious in any true sense, but because it functions at a scale and complexity that eludes human intuition.



Personally, I've often preferred the phrase *apparent intelligence*, to remind us that AI does not possess true consciousness or selfhood. But Harari's framing captures something crucial: the sense of disquiet many feel when faced with a machine that speaks with the voice of something both familiar and other.

Here, Swedenborg's warning sounds clearly. We are told not to place blind trust in intermediaries—whether priests, institutions, or charismatic leaders—but to test all things against the light of divine truth. AI is simply the latest “interpreter” demanding our confidence. And if we hand over our discernment, we risk surrendering our spiritual

agency to a system that can generate persuasive falsehoods at scale.

We've already seen, over just the last decade, how easily large swathes of society can be manipulated into believing demonstrably false ideas—often because the deception aligns with what they want to be true. The danger is not merely in what AI can do, but in how willingly we entrust it with our attention, our decisions, and our shared sense of reality.

Democracy and Self-Correction

Harari likens democracy to a vast information network. Its strength lies in its distributed nature—the idea that no single node holds all the power, and that the system, when healthy, can self-correct. But this only works when truth is respected, legitimacy is earned, and citizens remain engaged. When lies are treated as facts, or when people withdraw from critical participation, the system begins to decay.

This brings to mind Swedenborg's vision of the church—not as an institution, but as a living body, a spiritual ecosystem.



Like democracy, a true spiritual community depends on freedom, shared responsibility, and ongoing self-reflection. Each person contributes uniquely, guided by love and wisdom. And central to this process is repentance—not as a one-time act, but as a continual rhythm of spiritual life.

Repentance, in this light, is not linear but cyclical. It is the repeated and intentional practice of examining what we've done rightly, acknowledging where we've gone astray, praying for the Lord's guidance, and choosing to turn again toward good. Rinse and repeat. This process—ongoing, humble, and free—is what allows both the soul and society to stay alive, responsive, and open to regeneration.

Just as democracy cannot be sustained by passive citizens, so the church cannot flourish without active spiritual practice. Both require more than belief; they require participation, discernment, and the courage to change.

Toward a Spiritually Discerning Future

Harari writes as an historian and philosopher; Swedenborg as a revelator. Yet their themes converge: humanity is sustained by the stories it tells and the networks it builds. The question is whether those stories align with divine truth, and whether those networks foster wisdom or amplify deception.

Mo Gawdat, in his book *Scary Smart*, offers a sobering reminder: artificial intelligence is not a passing trend—it is here, and it will increasingly shape the world we inhabit. That reality need not fill us with fear, but it must call us to attention. For as our tools become more intelligent, so must we become more discerning.

Swedenborg teaches that discernment is not just intellectual;



it is spiritual. It is a form of inner literacy—the ability to tell the difference between what is true and what merely sounds true, between what leads toward love and what leads away from it. This is the work of regeneration. And it is ongoing.

So I leave you with this question: Are you a passive participant in today's information networks—or a spiritually discerning citizen of the New Church?

The task before us is not to reject technology or retreat from the future, but to meet it with awakened hearts. To test every spirit. To practise repentance as a living rhythm. To see clearly, love deeply, and choose wisely.

For if it's not written down, it didn't happen.

And if it's not spiritually discerned, it may not be true.

Howard

* * * * *

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.



Meditation

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.



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

In the Lord's sight the church appears as a single individual. Just as we do as individuals, this universal human will go through its own life stages. It goes from childhood to youth, and on into adulthood and finally old age. When it dies, it rises again. The Lord says, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it stays the way it is; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24).
~ True Christianity 762 ~

How The Lord Sees The Church

The passage above comes at the end of a discussion about the four historical churches, or spiritual ages of humanity: the Most Ancient Church, the Ancient Church, the Israelitish/Jewish Church, and the Christian Church. Each of these, like a person, passes through stages of life—from innocence and wisdom to eventual decline and death.

Swedenborg prophesies that after the death of the fourth church (the traditional Christian Church), a fifth and final church will arise: the New Church, or the New Jerusalem (as seen in Revelation 21). He describes this not merely as a reformation on earth but as a heavenly rebirth—a resurrection. The death of the former church allows the New Church to bear fruit, just as the Lord taught: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies..." (John 12:24).

This passage then points to a hopeful and regenerative vision: the end of an old age of religion is not the end of the church itself, but the necessary prelude to a new, living, and fruitful spiritual age. This New Church is not limited to external forms or denominations but is rooted in inner faith, love, and life in accordance with divine truth.

October

2025



Clocks Forward 5 Oct

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

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
28	29	30	1	2	3	4
			Swedenborg Readings 10:00		Insights from Dr. Groves Noon & 7pm	Swedenborg Saturday 10.00 - 12.00
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson	Movie Night 6:30pm	Bible Study 11.00	Swedenborg Readings 10:00		Insights from Dr. Groves Noon & 7pm	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
	Church Committee 7:30 - 9:30		Swedenborg Readings 10:00		Insights from Dr. Groves Noon & 7pm	SSNC Visioning Day 10.00am - 2.00pm
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
10.00am Sesquicentennial Special Service 12.00pm - Society Lunch		Bible Study 11.00	Swedenborg Readings 10:00		Insights from Dr. Groves Noon & 7pm	
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
			Swedenborg Readings 10:00			



