

ROSEVILLE NEW CHURCH

**MARCH/APRIL
2023**

“We are to love the goodness a person has inside. It is the
goodness itself that is our neighbour.”
(True Christianity 410)

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.

The Angel Service - SUSPENDED

The Angel Service is an informal service that invites participants to reflect on the active role the spiritual world plays in our physical lives. The service involves reflection, discussion, sometimes a brief talk and always concludes with prayer.

The Angel Service is held each month on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays at 5 p.m.

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.

Roseville New Church Newsletter

Issued by the Sydney Society of the New Church Established in 1875
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Minister's e-mail : revhathompson@gmail.com
On Facebook – Roseville New Church

March/April 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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Online Worship Reminder

A reminder that our minister, Rev. Howard Thompson, posts a weekly video on his YouTube channel, Spiritual Shorts. These videos (usually 10-15 minutes long) focus on one key aspect of the week's message and are intended to support home worship with prayer, links to hymns, opening of the Word, lessons and a brief talk.



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

A Lenten Reflection

On Good Friday, 7 April 2023, we will celebrate the Holy Supper. In the Holy Supper we will take in bread and wine, symbolising the way we are to “take in” good and truth from the Lord and make them a part of who we are.

New Church teaching explains that the bread is a symbol of the divine truth that nourishes the mind and the wine is a symbol of the divine love that enlivens the heart. Together, they represent the two essential components of spiritual life and growth. On its surface the Holy Supper is a good reminder of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, but at a deeper level it offers each of us an opportunity to connect with the divine and receive spiritual nourishment.

The period leading up to Holy Week (Palm Sunday through Easter) is commonly known as Lent. Lent marks the 40 days Jesus Christ spent fasting in the desert and enduring temptation by Satan (Matthew 4:1–11, Luke 4:1–13). During Lent, Christians often choose to abstain from certain pleasures and practice fasting as a way of replicating the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made during his 40-day journey in the desert. This personal sacrifice made during Lent is commonly referred to as one's Lenten sacrifice. Many Lent-observing Christians also add a Lenten spiritual discipline such as daily devotional readings and a formal practice of repentance.

Interestingly, the marking of the Lenten Season is not a common practice among members of the New Church. If I were to reflect on the reason for this I would point to Swedenborg's emphasis on an ongoing effort in repentance.



“Those who lead the life of faith repent daily. They pay attention to the evils present with them, acknowledge them, are on their guard against them, and implore the Lord for help. For by himself a person is constantly falling, but the Lord is constantly putting him on his feet again.” (Arcana Coelestia 8391)

Further support for the argument against fasting as a practice comes directly from the words the Lord spoke while in this world, for the Lord said; “It’s not what goes into your mouth that defiles you; you are defiled by the words that come out of your mouth.” (Matthew 15:11)

Of course, I am not suggesting that there is no value in this annual marking of a period of fasting and sacrifice. Certainly, Christians aren’t the only ones who engage in an annual practice of sacrifice or repentance. Many faiths observe an annual period of repentance, which is a time for followers to reflect on their sins and seek forgiveness. Here is a summary of the annual periods of repentance observed in various faiths:

Christianity - Lent: Lent is a period of 40 days (excluding Sundays) leading up to Easter. During Lent, Christians fast,

pray, and engage in acts of self-denial as a way of preparing themselves spiritually for the celebration of Jesus Christ's resurrection.

Judaism - High Holy Days: The High Holy Days, which include Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), are a ten-day period of repentance and reflection in the Jewish faith. During this time, Jews seek forgiveness for their sins and commit to making amends.

Islam - Ramadan: Ramadan is a month-long period of fasting and prayer in the Islamic faith. During Ramadan, Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset, abstaining from food, drink, and other physical pleasures. This is a time for Muslims to focus on their spiritual lives and seek forgiveness for their sins.

Hinduism - Chaturmas: Chaturmas is a four-month period of spiritual discipline in the Hindu faith. During this time, Hindus engage in acts of self-control and devotion, including fasting, prayer, and meditation. This is a time for Hindus to seek purification and forgiveness for their sins.

Buddhism - Vassa: Vassa is a three-month period of meditation and reflection in the Buddhist faith. During Vassa, Buddhist monks and nuns remain in one place and engage in intensive study and meditation. Lay followers may also engage in acts of self-discipline and devotion as a way of seeking spiritual purification and forgiveness for their sins.

Overall, the annual periods of repentance observed in various faiths serve as a reminder of the importance of spiritual reflection and the need for forgiveness and

reconciliation. These periods offer an opportunity for followers to deepen their relationship with God or the divine, and to renew their commitment to living a life of virtue and compassion. Quite frankly, even people of no particular faith practice undergo something similar with their New Years Resolutions. Simply looking at the life they have led, acknowledging the areas where is is not meeting their own standards and seeking to make changes, drop bad habits and adopt new ones.

But for some, and I am not casting spiritual judgment on any individuals, it does seem that the practice or the ritual becomes the end in view, not the repentance and reformation that opens a person to influx from the Lord. It seems that just going through participating in the practice of fasting or abstaining from certain luxuries is enough. This of course would be roundly rejected by Swedenborg since he goes to great lengths to make the point that external worship cut off from internal worship is no worship at all, even noting that by nature it becomes contemptuous (Secrets of Heaven 1089).

It is also interesting to note that, unlike the Lord's instructions "when you pray..." or "do this in remembrance of me," the Lord does not give us instructions to fast or otherwise "sacrifice" in memory of Him. When He was going through temptations Himself the Lord fought with these very words 'People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' (Matthew 4:4)

The Lord, of course, was not saying anything new to His followers, all of whom were very well versed in teaching from the Old Testament, including the following passages:

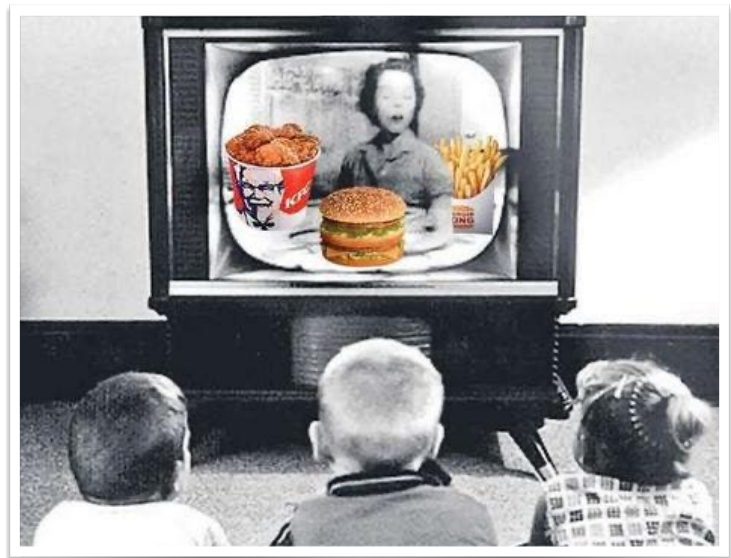
- Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength? Why pay for food that does you no good? Listen to me, and you will eat what is good. You will enjoy the finest food. ~ Isaiah 55:2

And other places the Lord spoke of knowledge and wisdom as spiritual food:

- I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and this bread, which I will offer so the world may live, is my flesh. ~ John 6:51
- All of them ate the same spiritual food, and all of them drank the same spiritual water. For they drank from the spiritual rock that traveled with them, and that rock was Christ. ~ 1 Corinthians 10:3-4

Lastly, Swedenborg describes heavenly and spiritual food as follows: “Heavenly food is every benefit of love and charity received from the Lord. Spiritual food is every true tenet of faith. These two types of food are what an angel lives on.” - Secrets of Heaven 1480

So what value can we, as receivers of the Lord’s teachings of the New Church, see in some of these annual traditions of Lent. How can we increase the likelihood that any external practice or ritual will provide a framework and a structure for containing the growth and development of the spiritual?



I believe that the answer to this question lies in the clear words of the Lord both in the Old and New Testaments and the Writing for the New Church. We can still make a practice of fasting, but what I would like you to consider is this; what ideas from magazines, newspapers, television networks and social media platforms are you consuming multiple times a day? And of these many ideas that are bombarding your senses, which ones are good and nutritious sources of spiritual foods and which are nothing but spiritual junk-food?

Many people find useful these ritualistic practices of fasting and abstinence during Lent. How much deeper could we go in our spiritual journey if we took the simple step of realising that focusing on the physical food is barely a first step, that the real challenge comes when we confront the real damage we have been doing to ourselves on the spiritual plane.

Rev. Howard A. Thompson

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Swedenborg Centre News

March and April temporarily bring us a few minor changes of operation and events while Joe takes some annual leave in India. So from Wednesday 15th March until Tuesday 18th April the Centre will be open only a few days a week until 4pm, typically Tuesdays through Thursdays with the capable Liz Kemmis in charge, except over Easter. I would suggest that if you wish to come for a visit that you ring beforehand on (02)



9416 2812 to confirm that the Centre is open that day — leave your number so that she can call you back to confirm.

Don't forget about Daylight Savings ending in NSW on 2nd April when our clocks are set back one hour at 2am.

The weekly Swedenborg Reading event each Wednesday at 10am will continue to run thanks to Julian Duckworth using Zoom only (no face-to-face). See website at swedenborg.com.au for Zoom links and all other event details. The fortnightly bible study will also still be held during my absence thanks to Howard Thompson, and will be face-to-face only at the Centre (i.e. not on Zoom) on Tuesdays 21st March and 4th April.

All Swedenborg Centre events revert to normal once I return (resuming the 'hybrid' meeting format, i.e. Zoom as well as live attendances for each event), starting with Howard's bible study on Tuesday 18th April. Here is the schedule for the remainder of April, after the 18th (apart from April 25th which is Anzac Day and a public holiday):

- Each Monday at 11am are **Fourth Way Readings with Swedenborg insights**. Explores Gurdjieff's work called All and Everything, which contains a lot of useful spiritual reflections and instructions that both parallel and supplement Swedenborg's writings, material which Swedenborg's writings often casts further light on.

- **Swedenborg Readings** continue each Wednesday at 10am – still exploring Divine Providence.
- **Dr Groves Readings** and **Swedenborg Saturdays** won't start again until May, so keep an eye on the website or next newsletter for details.

We hope that you enjoy these offerings of activities.

Wishing you a reflective and most meaningful Easter.

Joe

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Getting Spiritually Wright

As Easter approaches, many of us turn our attention to repentance. It is a time to reflect on our actions and ask for forgiveness for any wrongdoings. The concept of repentance is not exclusive to Christianity, but it is a central theme in the Christian faith. As Christians, we are called to turn away from sin and return to God. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for "repent" is "shub," which means "to turn back" or "to return." In the New Testament, the Greek word for "repent" is "metanoēō," which means "to change one's mind" or "to think differently." Both words convey the idea of a change in thinking, a rethinking of one's previous ways, and a turning towards God.

As we reflect on the concept of repentance, it is important to remember the words of Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a new heart, O Lord, and renew within me a right spirit." This verse is a reminder that true repentance involves a change of heart and a renewal of the spirit. It is not just about

saying sorry for our actions, but it is also about making a conscious effort to change and improve ourselves.

One way to approach repentance is to rethink our beliefs and assumptions. Sometimes, we hold onto ideas that are not in line with our faith or are based on misconceptions. It is important to re-examine our beliefs and be open to new perspectives. This can lead to a deeper understanding of our faith and a stronger relationship with God.

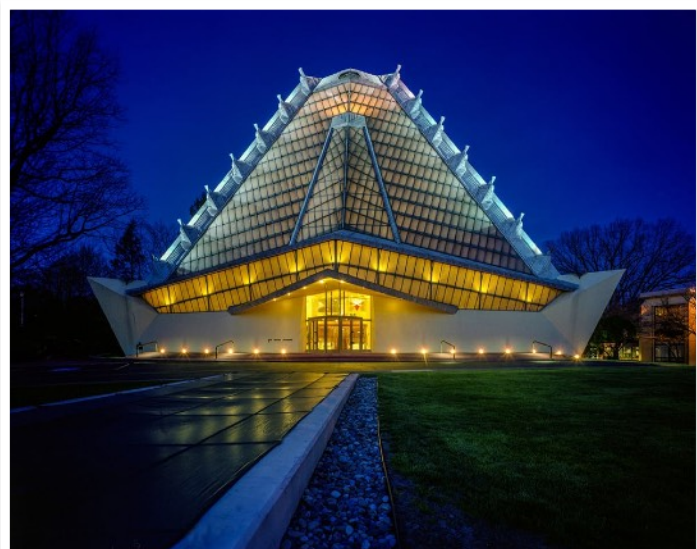
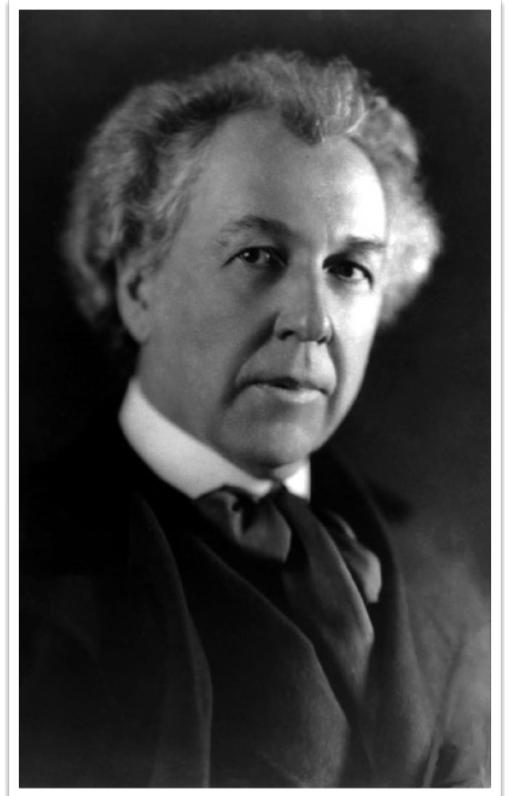
One way that I realised the Lord has led me to “rethink” was triggered by a presentation given by Martin Pennington during our January Virtual Retreat. Martin was discussing John 14, specifically the passage, "In my Father's house are many mansions." For many years, I had heard this passage and pictured a grand, opulent mansion in heaven. During Martin's presentation, however, I realised that the use of the word "mansions" in this context does not make sense. How can God's house be filled with mansions? It may capture the attention of those who see themselves going to heaven because they have “been good” and deserve a “mansion.” It may also capture the attention of those like the disciples who desired to sit on thrones on either side of the Lord. The proper understanding of this passage has nothing to do with mansion or houses, but dwelling places. In other words it is about the nature of God and the fact that there is more than enough room for all of God's children in heaven. This simple rethinking of a commonly misunderstood passage had a profound impact on me.

As I meditated on this idea of rethinking, I was reminded of my own experience with purchasing a home. When my wife and I bought our first house, much of our thinking was around how much house we could afford. I'm certain there were other considerations but the question of how much we

could afford seemed to dominate the conversations with the realtors and mortgage brokers we consulted.

Today, at nearly 60 years old I am more focused on how much house we need, what aspects of a house, would be useful. What truly makes a house, a home. Today I are more focused on having a home that is Spiritually Wright.

This shift in thinking reminded me of the American architect, Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959). Wright is known for his iconic designs, including the Fallingwater house and the Guggenheim Museum and Temple Beth Shalom. Over the years I have developed a particular affection for his series of “Usonian Homes;” typically small, single-story dwellings without a garage or much storage. They are often L-shaped to fit around a garden terrace on unusual and inexpensive sites. They are characterised by native materials; flat roofs and large cantilevered overhangs for



Temple Beth Shalom,
Elkins Park, Pennsylvania

passive solar heating and natural cooling; natural lighting with clerestory windows; and radiant-floor heating. A strong visual connection between the interior and exterior spaces is an important characteristic of all Usonian homes.

What I find most interesting

about Wright's designs is his approach to space. He believed that the room within is the most important aspect of a building. The space within becomes the reality of the building, in much the same way that our inner (spiritual) life should shine



Fallingwater
Mill Run, Pennsylvania

through and manifest as our outer (natural) life. This spiritual approach to architecture is reflected in his commentary on the idea of form follows function. “This idea that ‘Form follows function’ - has been misunderstood. Form and function should be one, joined in a spiritual union.”

Though raised in a family of Unitarians Wright's beliefs cannot be easily classified as belonging to any particular religious tradition. It is clear, however, that he had a deep and complex spirituality that informed his work as an architect.

In many ways, Wright's approach to architecture mirrors the concept of repentance and rethinking. It is about re-examining our assumptions and beliefs and approaching our dwelling place from spiritual principles.



Herbert Jacobs House
Madison, Wisconsin

“How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord.”
(Psalm 84:1)

!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 resurrected (seemed an appropriate word for the March/April Newsletter) New Church Camp/Retreat.

While we are still working out a few details we have booked a small venue just into the Blue Mountains, approximately 90 minutes drive from Sydney. Camp will be held from **15 to 20 January 2024**.

The facility is self-contained, air-conditioned rooms and common areas, pool, outdoor facilities, many great bushwalking tracks and walking distance to closest town.

As this is my first go at organising a camp for the NCIA crew, 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.

Howard Thompson
(revhathompson@gmail.com)



Adelaide Retreat 2020

Abbreviated March/April Calendar

Sunday 19 March - 10:00am - Service

Tuesday 21 March - 11:00am - Bible Study

Sunday 26 March - 10:00am - Service

Palm Sunday 02 April - 10:00am - Service

Tuesday 04 April - 11:00am - Bible Study

Good Friday 07 April - 5:30pm - Holy Supper

Easter Sunday 09 April - 10:00am - Service

Sunday 16 April - 10:00am - Service

Sunday 23 April - 10:00am - Service

Tuesday 25 April - 11:00am - Bible Study

Sunday 30 April - 10:00am - Service



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

April

2023

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

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson				Minister's Personal Day		
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Palm Sunday 10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson	Bible Study 11.00			Minister's Personal Day	Good Friday Holy Supper 5:30pm	
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Easter Sunday 10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson				Minister's Personal Day		
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson				Minister's Personal Day		
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
"ANZAC Sunday" 10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson	Bible Study 11.00			Minister's Personal Day		

ROSEVILLE NEW CHURCH



