

ROSEVILLE NEW CHURCH

MARCH 2024

“For most people, the existence of love is a given, but the nature of love is a mystery...We are wholly unaware that it is our very life.”

(Divine Love & Wisdom #1)

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.



“God can benefit us only indirectly through each other.
For this reason he inspires us with his love.”

True Christianity 457

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

March 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.

* * * * *

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

Report of the Annual General Meeting of the Sydney Society of the New Church (The Roseville New Church)

At the Roseville New Church Annual General Meeting, Rev. Howard A. Thompson reflected on the year's activities and the church's efforts to navigate the challenges of modern society. Drawing inspiration from Genesis 8:21-22, he emphasised the Lord's unwavering commitment to humanity and the continuous endeavour to draw people towards heaven and build His church. The Futures Committee, aimed at increasing public engagement and church participation, employed tactics like letterbox drops and social media advertising, though with modest success in attracting physical visitors. Despite this, the intention behind these efforts was seen as valuable. The minister also shared his insights from studying Stoicism, highlighting the importance of focusing on what is within one's control.

Two sermon series were developed. One focusing on finding satisfaction in life and the other, the story of Joseph. Both were well-received. The church introduced a Candlelight Carol Service during the Christmas season, attracting 20 participants. The Minister's YouTube channel, "Spiritual Shorts," saw a reformatting and increased viewership, especially for a video sharing his personal testimony.



The Committee Report, presented by Graham Hall, outlined the church's activities, including regular services, outreach efforts, and the challenge of declining church participation. The Futures Sub-Committee's efforts to engage the community were noted, along with the ongoing decline of organised religion. The upcoming sesquicentenary in 2025 was mentioned as an opportunity for commemoration and reflection on the church's future. The church's financial situation remains stable, supported by income from the estate of Dr. William Moore, with legal proceedings to distribute the estate's assets ongoing. The church is grateful for the contributions of its members and supporters in various capacities, from spiritual outreach to property maintenance.

In summary, the Roseville New Church faces challenges in increasing participation and engagement in a changing society but remains committed to its spiritual mission. The church is exploring various avenues for outreach and adapting to new forms of communication and community building, with an eye towards its historic milestone in 2025.

Swedenborg Centre Report submitted by Joe Vandermeer: The year has been one of consolidation and building on previous successes. The Centre has seen vibrant interactions with visitors across various backgrounds, indicating a successful engagement despite a general decline in formal religious participation. Efforts have been made to reduce physical book stocks in response to decreased demand, while focusing on digitising and revitalising out-of-print materials for various uses. The Centre has attracted a diverse audience, both local and international, and has been involved in numerous activities including Swedenborg

readings, Bible studies and discussion groups. There has also been a push to provide more materials for overseas interests and representation at the Council of Ministers. Collaborations with sister organisations and the implementation of new tools like a franking machine have streamlined operations. The report expresses gratitude towards the community and financial backers for their support, looking forward to continuing these spiritual activities.

Treasurer's Report presented by Joel Duckworth: The Society's financial summary shows a current year surplus of \$184,336, a decrease from the previous year's surplus. This change reflects adjustments in property valuation practices, moving from triennial to annual valuations for more consistent reporting. Major contributors to the surplus include increased investment property values, consistent income from assets, and effective cashflow management. The Society benefits from income generated through various assets, including fully tenanted properties, investments, and donations, while expenses cover employee benefits, property maintenance, and support to New Church College. The commitment to sound financial management and adaptation of strategies for stability is emphasised, ensuring the Society's ongoing financial health.

* * * * *

AGM Closing Prayer

The following prayer was offered at the close of the meeting and a request was made that it be included in the Newsletter:



Lord, As we draw this Annual General Meeting of the Roseville New Church to a close, we pause to lift our hearts in gratitude and our minds in reflection.

We thank You, Lord, for the precious opportunity to gather together, both in person and through the bonds of technology, united in spirit and purpose under Your divine guidance.

We are deeply grateful for the gift of Your Church, a sanctuary of faith and love, where we can grow closer to You and to each other. Your Church stands as a beacon of light in a world that often wanders in darkness, offering hope, comfort, and a path to spiritual renewal.

Lord, we thank You for the privilege to serve Your Church. This service, whether seen or unseen, is our joyful offering to You, a testament to our love and commitment to Your divine will. As we reflect on the year that has passed and look forward to the year ahead, we humbly ask for Your wisdom. Grant us the insight and discernment needed to serve Your Church in the manner You desire, that our actions may reflect Your love and truth.

We pray that our efforts in the coming year contribute to the ongoing Second Coming of the Lord, as prophesied by Emanuel Swedenborg. May our actions, decisions and service be a living testament to this divine process, helping to usher in a new era of spiritual awakening and understanding.

Guide us, O Lord, that we may walk in Your ways with faith and courage. Strengthen our resolve to act with integrity, love and compassion. Help us to be instruments of Your peace, bringing light to those in darkness, hope to those in despair and love to those in need.

In Your Name we pray.

AMEN!

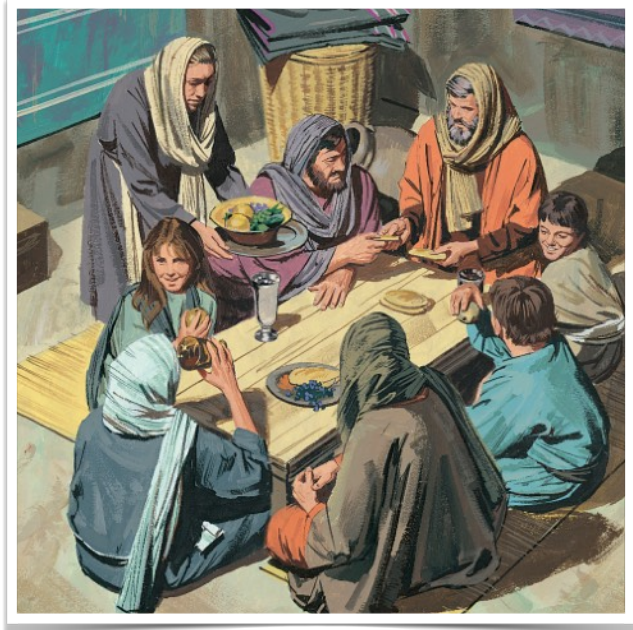
The Holy Supper

“These are your instructions for eating this meal: Be fully dressed, wear your sandals, and carry your walking stick in your hand. Eat the meal with urgency, for this is the Lord’s Passover.”

(Exodus 12:11)

It is not uncommon in popular music for one artist to cover another artist’s song. Every now and again one of these covers becomes more well known than the original. Two good example of this are Whitney Houston’s cover of the Dolly Parton song “I Will Always Love You” and Johnny Cash’s cover of the Nine Inch Nails song “Hurt.” Generations since have thought of each of these songs as the latter artist’s song.

I think of this phenomenon when reflecting on the Holy Supper. When Christians celebrate the Holy Supper their thoughts often turn to the Lord’s Last Supper and the Lord’s instructions to His disciples to “do this in remembrance of me.” To most Christians the Holy Supper was instituted by Jesus. But like



Johnny Cash and “Hurt,” it is probably more appropriate to say that Jesus made the Holy Supper “His own.” I say this because the Holy Supper was instituted during the Jewish celebration of Passover. Passover celebrates the Biblical story of the Israelites’ escape from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12), thousands of years before Jesus came into the World.

Both the Passover and the Holy Supper mark the beginning of a journey. For the Children of Israel that journey was a natural one, the Exodus. For the Lord that journey was a spiritual one, His Glorification.

When instituting the Holy Supper the Lord's words "do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:15) are far more than a simple call to remember. Remembering anyone, the Lord included, is simply meaningless unless we are able to do something useful with that memory. Worship, without its accompanying affect on a person's life is empty. The Lord's words to do this in remembrance of Him is a call to join Him on this spiritual Journey. This Truth appears to be lost on many people today. When we find ourselves focusing on the challenges in our lives we often look to the future believing that "something" will change. That "something" is often the external circumstances of our lives such as



conditions at work, relationship challenges or even economic challenges. It is as if we are waiting for something or someone to magically resolve all of our troubles.

I liken this waiting, to those who look at the Book of Revelation as a literal description of the deliverance to come. The New Church is a restatement and clarification of the Lord's words: "Do this in remembrance of Me." My wife, Debra, often responds to the question "what is different about the New Church?" with the simple statement: "we're just not waiting anymore." Two Thousand years ago the Lord invited us to stop waiting but we did not hear Him. Today we have a New Revelation, the

promise of which is that we can live a heavenly existence here, now, in close contact with the Lord. This journey begins with repentance. It is repentance which the Lord calls us to do when approaching the Holy Supper. It is repentance that begins our spiritual journey. And, it is this spiritual journey that the Lord calls us to make, not once, but again and again. It is this spiritual journey that the Lord calls us to make anytime that we are stuck and feeling overwhelmed by our natural lives.

In looking at the meaning of the Holy Supper as an invitation to make this journey with the Lord I am struck by these words in Matthew:

For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom. (Matthew 26:29)

Certainly the Lord was not waiting for external factors to draw us closer to Him before He would “drink of this fruit.” The Lord was waiting for each of us to begin our spiritual journey. When we approach the Holy Supper with reverence having begun the work of repentance and viewing the Holy Supper as the beginning our our journey; then the Lord is drinking the fruit of the vine new with us. It is why the Doctrine for the New Church tells us that the Lord's Holy Supper is the time when the Lord can be most fully present with us.



The Lord is also far more present with us when we understand and see the Lord in His fullness. We separate God into three when we can only think of Jesus as having instituted the Holy Supper. But as we know, the Lord is one. The Lord (Jehovah) instituted the Passover and the Lord (Jesus) instituted the Holy Supper. May you find an opportunity to celebrate the Holy Supper this Easter and reflect on the Lord in His fullness with His omnipresence and His guiding hand in all your journeys.

Howard

* * * * *

Colour Your Autumn at the Swedenborg Centre

We're heading into autumn, which means day two of that season is "Dr. Seuss Day." Yay! Hint: this colourful story illustrator shares a birthday with Glen Hart and myself (no, not the same birth year)!

Well, since the last newsletter I have had a most relaxing



(Me, heading towards Cradle Mountain)

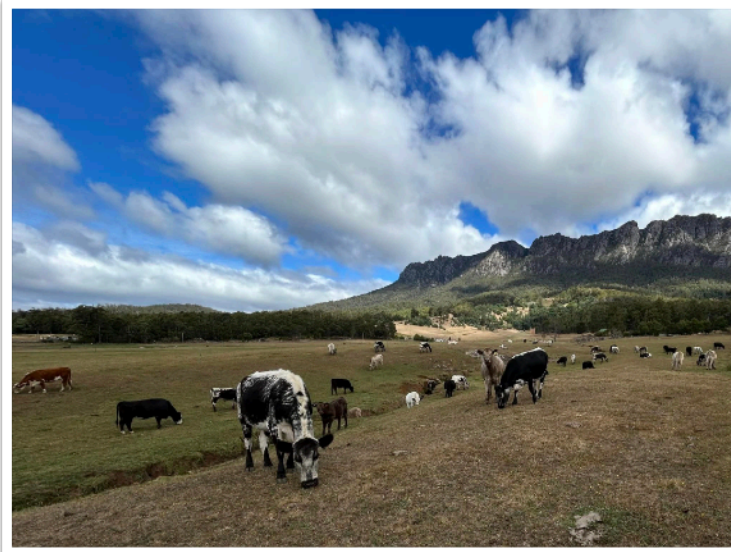
break exploring sunny Tasmania. Yes, my first trip there. Yet sometimes I did wonder if I was back in Holland, since Tassie is the land of cows, of brewing and distilling (gin and whiskey), of quality cheese manufacture, and a region with numerous Dutch immigrants as well as

Dutch tourists. I even saw a windmill!!

Of course even Abel Tasman himself was also from my country of birth, reaching the coast of Tasmania in 1642 as the first known European to step on the shores of Tasmania (named it Van Diemen's Land after his patron, the fellow-countryman Anthony van Diemen). So it was all well before Swedenborg was even conceived. I was reminded by looking into some of its history, that the indigenous Tasmanians, the Palawa, had looked after some of its most beautiful places like Maria Island for 40,000 continuous years, only then to witness it being



Windmill in Oatlands, oldest mill in Australia



Cows, heavenly cows – near a place called Paradise, Tasmania

named by a foreigner (Abel Tasman, who called it after Maria van Diemen, the wife of his patron), followed by periods of use as a failed prison (there were too many escapes), then followed by being inhabited by an overly enthusiastic Italian entrepreneur who ran silk, wine and cement businesses there and in anticipation of great success and expansion put down tram-tracks to join the hotels he was building there with his new jetty. Yet the whole affair failed after several decades, after which a bit of farming activity took place before turning the island over to National Parks to care for. Let's hope our doctrines are looked after as well as

the indigenous people there once looked after their land and resources.

Anyhow, here in Roseville we're back in full swing again with the usual fare of events. The website at www.swedenborg.com.au you'll find a brand new Candela issue to read, with some excellent thought-provoking articles. Also keep your eye on the site for event details, Zoom links, etc. Here is a sample listing:

- **Swedenborg Readings** on 10am every **Wednesday** (we're currently delving into the proprium).
- **Bible Study** with Howard, each fortnight, **Tuesday** at 11am (i.e. on **March 12th and 26th**).
- **Dr Groves Readings** are on **Friday, March 1st and 15th** at noon & 7pm (studying "Quest for Integration", volume 2).
- **Swedenborg Saturday** discussions will be held **March 2nd (Dr. Seuss Day!) and 16th** at 10am.

See see you at the Centre or online where we hope to see lots of autumn colours. Wishing you a deciduous month.

Joe

* * * * *

Palm Sunday Symbolism

Recently, I've been delving into the unique aspects of New Church teachings compared to those of more mainstream Christian denominations. With Easter approaching, it offers a prime opportunity to reflect on uniquely New Church symbolism, especially through the lens of a familiar biblical

narrative—the Easter story as presented in the 21st chapter of the Gospel of Matthew.



The Lord's entry into Jerusalem, greeted by enthusiastic crowds, symbolises more than an historical event. These crowds desired and welcomed His arrival, much like we do today. However, our welcome likely differs greatly from that of Jerusalem's residents 2,000 years ago. In our modern prayers of "Thy kingdom come," we seek to embrace the Lord's truth, allowing it to shape and direct our lives. This act of welcoming signifies our acknowledgment of His Kingship, an inner spiritual kingship, far different than the natural king the Jews of Jesus' day thought they were welcoming.

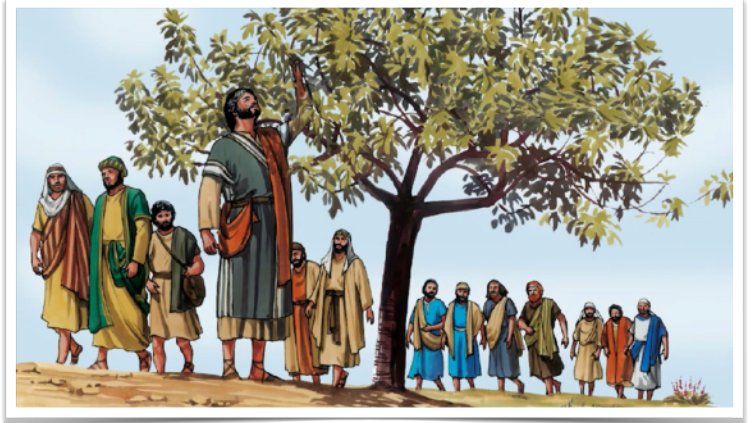
Palm Sunday's celebration is a testament to recognising Him as our sovereign. The practice of kings and judges riding on donkeys, known for their discerning judgment in matters of natural law and justice, is echoed in the Lord's choice of mount—a young donkey, previously unriden, symbolising a fresh perspective on understanding Divine truth. The act of laying garments and branches before Him signifies our willingness to subject our thoughts and understanding to His divine guidance.



The waving of palms and the shouts of "Hosanna" are expressions of faith in the Lord's power to save. Palms symbolise victory and, at their most

profound, represent heartfelt recognition of the Lord's ability to deliver us. This symbolism is echoed in the Book of Revelation (7:9, 10), where a vast multitude, too large to count, stands before the throne and the Lamb. They are dressed in white robes and hold palm branches, proclaiming loudly, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" This imagery illustrates our acceptance of the Lord as our King, our joyful and willing adherence to His teachings, and our celebration of the strength found in His truth.

Contrasting the single, towering stem of the palm, we encounter the low, sprawling branches of the fig tree. The narrative of the withered fig tree, which



comes after Palm Sunday, symbolises the condition of the Jewish Church during Jesus' time. Jesus found a fig tree full of leaves but barren of fruit and cursed it, causing it to wither. This act represents the superficial display of piety and righteousness (symbolised by the leaves) without the core of genuine faith and good actions (the absent fruit).

The demise of the fig tree illustrates the spiritual desolation and the divine verdict on those within the church who fail to live by its doctrines—those who maintain an outward show

of holiness but lack authentic faith and benevolence.



What do the tabernacle and the temple symbolise? Primarily, they represent the church and, more profoundly, the Lord's Divine Humanity, as noted in John

2:19-22 and Revelation 21:3. The traders and money changers that the Lord expelled from the temple, whom He labeled as thieves, symbolise selfish greed—particularly the inclination to exploit sacred things for personal gain. The Lord eradicated all forms of such selfishness within Himself and is committed to purging it from us, as much as we allow.

Following this purification, the blind and the lame sought the Lord in the temple, and children celebrated. Those open to learning (symbolised by the blind) and those seeking strength (represented by the lame) acknowledged the divine



authority in the Lord's Humanity. They saw His daily efforts to purify and elevate it, unlike the proud priests. This episode also highlights how pure, childlike joy is awakened in every heart that embraces these truths.

Howard

* * * * *

A Tale of Two Trees

In the Creation story in Genesis 2:9 we are told of two trees; “In the middle of the garden He placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Anyone with even basic knowledge of the story would be familiar with this. In the teachings for the New Church, Swedenborg explains that these two trees represent two different approaches to the life we have. The tree of life signifies a

connection to the Lord and a focus on spiritual growth and goodness. On the other hand, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil symbolises faith based on sensory evidence and secular knowledge. This later tree represents a sense of autonomy and self-reliance, where individuals may believe they can determine what is good and evil on their own, apart from a connection to the divine.

The story of Palm Sunday and the week that follows is also a tale of two trees, though one you may not have noticed before. Remember that according to Swedenborg, every detail in the Scriptures carries a symbolic meaning related to spiritual life and the inner workings of the human soul. This must also be the case with the palm trees mentioned on Palm Sunday and the fig tree mentioned the following day.

Palm Trees (Matthew 21:1-11)

On Palm Sunday, Jesus's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, where he was welcomed with palm branches, symbolises the Lord's glorification or the completion of His mission on earth, which was to



subjugate the powers of hell and make His Human Divine. In Swedenborg's theology, palms represent victory and the triumph of good over evil. The act of people spreading palm branches before Jesus signifies acknowledgment and celebration of the victory of divine truth, as understood and lived by people who receive it. This event points to the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah, the spiritual king who

comes in the name of the Lord to establish a kingdom of truth and goodness.

The Withered Fig Tree (Matthew 21:18-22)



The story of the withered fig tree, which follows Palm Sunday, is symbolic of the state of the Jewish Church at the time of Jesus. The fig tree, which Jesus found to have leaves but no fruit, and subsequently cursed to wither, represents the outer appearance of religiosity and righteousness without the inner substance of genuine faith and good deeds. The fig tree's withering away symbolises the spiritual barrenness and the judgment upon those who are in the church but do not live according to its teachings — those who have the appearance of godliness but lack true faith and charity. This act demonstrates the rejection of an external worship that lacks internal spiritual life and the consequences of being spiritually unproductive.

The Juxtaposition

The juxtaposition of the celebration with palms on Palm Sunday and the cursing of the fig tree the following day serves to highlight the contrast between the acknowledgment of divine truth and victory over evil (Palm Sunday) and the judgment against superficial faith without good deeds (the withered fig tree). This sequence of events symbolically portrays the essence of the Christian journey: the recognition and acceptance of the Lord and His teachings, followed by a warning against the danger of a

faith that is only superficial and not borne out in actions and a life of charity.

Palm Sunday offers us an opportunity to reflect on the quality of our faith and spiritual life. The celebration with palms reflects a call to embrace and live by divine truth, symbolising a life of victory over spiritual challenges. In contrast, the withered fig tree serves as a caution against the emptiness of a life that professes faith without practicing love and charity, emphasising the need for a genuine spiritual transformation that bears fruit in the form of good deeds and a life led by divine principles.

While Swedenborg doesn't appear to point to a direct connection between the two trees in Genesis and the two trees around Palm Sunday, I think we can make a symbolic connection between the two sets of trees. The Fig tree could represent the pursuit of spiritual knowledge and growth, akin to the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The Palms could symbolise victory over sin and death, reflecting the tree of life and the eternal life offered through the Lord.



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

Since in its proper sense ***morning symbolises the Lord***, his Coming, and so the arrival of his kingdom, it also symbolises the dawn of a new religion (the church being the Lord's kingdom on earth). This dawn occurs both in general and in particular, and even in specific detail: in general when some church is being revived on earth; in particular when an individual is reborn and becomes a new person; in such people the Lord's kingdom then dawns, and each of them becomes a church; in specific detail whenever love and faith have a good effect on this individual, because that is what the Lord's Coming consists in.

As a result, the Lord's resurrection on the third day in the morning (Mark 16:2, 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1) involves all these meanings. It even involves the particular and specific ones, since ***he rises again in the minds of regenerate people daily and in fact from moment to moment.***

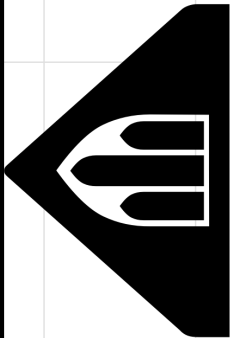
(Secrets of Heaven 2405.8)

March

2024

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

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
25	26	27	28	29	1	2
				Minister's Personal Day		Swedenborg Saturday 10am - 12pm
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10.00am Service of Worship Including Holy Supper Rev. Howard A. Thompson			Swedenborg Readings 10:00am	Minister's Personal Day		
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson		Bible Study 11.00	Swedenborg Readings 10:00am	Minister's Personal Day		Swedenborg Saturday 10am - 12pm
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Harvest Service 10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson			Swedenborg Readings 10:00am	Minister's Personal Day		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Palm Sunday 10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson		Bible Study 11.00			Good Friday Holy Supper 5:30pm	
31						
Easter Sunday 10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson						



ROSEVILLE NEW CHURCH

