



ROSEVILLE NEW CHURCH

**DECEMBER/JANUARY
2024/2025**

“While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar. Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him. But the angel said, “Don’t be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer.”

(Luke 1:11-13)

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.



By “do not be afraid” is meant resuscitation, and then adoration from deepest **humility**.

Apocalypse Revealed 56

The Lord desires a state of **humility** in a person for that person's sake, because the Lord can flow in with heavenly good when that state exists in the person.

Arcana Coelestia 5957

Roseville New Church Newsletter

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Minister's e-mail : revhathompson@gmail.com

On Facebook – Roseville New Church

December/January 2024/2025

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. The channel is currently undergoing its third evolution. In addition to the weekly 5-minute summary of Sunday's message, we are now weekly posting a short 1-minute message, have begun a weekly (Fridays) walk through *Heaven and Hell* and soon should start live-streaming our services. If you haven't already, take a look.



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

HUMILITY

Pride goes before destruction,
and haughtiness before a fall.
(Proverbs 16:18)

As we approach the festive season and the days begin to stretch longer, I find my thoughts drifting back to the warmth of a British summer and the unforgettable students I once guided at



the British Academy Summer School (B.A.S.S.). Each July, B.A.S.S. takes place over two magical weeks at the serene Purley Chase Centre, nestled in the lush hills outside Birmingham. The memories of those days—filled with learning, laughter, and quiet reflection—remain close to my heart.



For nearly six years, I had the joy of teaching a class on the Holy Supper. As the Summer School drew to a close, we'd gather for a beautiful candlelight service, a tradition that students take part in organising. Held outdoors under the evening sky, we'd

form a circle and sing our favorite hymns, surrounded by flickering candlelight in the stillness of an English summer night. During this time, students and staff would come forward to receive a blessing or partake in the Holy Supper, often for the first time—a powerful moment of reflection and unity.

In my class, I would talk with students about the importance of preparing one's heart when approaching the Holy Supper. In our New Church teachings, there is guidance on what it means to “approach the Holy Supper worthily”—not about being worthy, but about the spirit in which we come forward. A significant part of this is humility. One passage beautifully describes it this way: “For when real humility is present in a person, they surrender all power to think or do anything by themselves and abandon themselves completely to the Divine, and in this condition, draw near to the Divine.” (Arcana Coelestia 6866).

This year, our Christmas readings focus on the theme of **humility**. As we prepare our hearts for the coming of the Lord, we'll reflect on how humility shaped the lives of those in the Christmas story and how it can transform our own journey. Each day, we'll meditate on scripture passages that remind us of the power found in gentleness, the strength in serving others, and the grace of setting aside self-interest to embrace God's love.



Thinking back on those Summer School students, I'm reminded that humility isn't something that comes naturally to young people. Yet, as we deepen our knowledge of the Lord and strive to live by that knowledge, we begin to grow in wisdom—and, in doing so, humility can start to take root within us. My hope is that each Christmas, each New Year's reflection, and each time we approach the Holy Supper, we're drawn closer to the Lord by this spirit of true humility.

As our humility deepens, the distance between ourselves and the Divine grows ever smaller.

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Christmas Calendar

Reintroduced last year, we will again be holding a *Candlelight Carol Service*

Sunday evening 22

December at 7:00pm.

We received last year, the reintroduced evening service and sing, not done since

Julian's retirement, will return again this season. Now Howard still admits, he's no Julian, but we do hope you'll turn out to raise your voices in song and cover our little corner of Roseville with the sounds of Christmas.

Christmas Day this year is nowhere near Sunday, so we will be holding a . This change is primarily owing to the calendar which places Christmas Day on a Monday. We will celebrate

a **Christmas Day Service on Wednesday 25**

December at our regular service time, **10:00am.**

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Cornerstones

“The stone which the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.”

Psalms 118:22

This powerful verse, often inscribed on church cornerstones, came to mind recently when Debra approached me carrying

two oddly shaped cases. Her discovery was unexpected: while sorting through old filing cabinets in the Church Hall, she had unearthed artefacts from the history of the Sydney Society of the New Church. Inside the cases were commemorative trowels and a mason's mallet, used during the cornerstone ceremonies for not one, but two previous church buildings of the Sydney Society.



Although the Sydney Society of the New Church, now known as the Roseville New Church, moved to its current location in 1985, its history is still alive through these remarkable pieces. Today, the cornerstone from the society's first church

on Thomas Street, Haymarket (built in 1898), forms part of a bench in our front garden. Meanwhile, the cornerstone from the second church on Clarence Street (built in 1939) is embedded in the wall of our sanctuary foyer—a lasting tribute to our journey.

As you'll read in other articles in this newsletter, the way we experience and express "church" is evolving, perhaps even moving away from traditional forms. This shift has led me to reflect on what truly matters about faith, especially in the life of each individual.

“The stone which the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.”

Psalm 118:22

To deepen our understanding of this verse, it's helpful to consider a related teaching from Matthew:

"Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock."

Matthew 7:24

Here, the Lord emphasises the wisdom of not only hearing His Word but also living by it. Just as a house built on solid rock can withstand storms, so too can a life rooted in Divine Truth endure life's challenges. The "rock" symbolises the Lord's Divine Truth, while the "house" represents the beliefs and principles we embody in our lives. In essence, the beliefs we choose to live by construct a spiritual house or temple that surrounds us.

Consider the familiar phrase, "people in glass houses." While it's rare to live in an actual glass house, many of us metaphorically do so when our beliefs lack a solid foundation. A figurative "glass house" is fragile, vulnerable, and unable to withstand the pressures of life.

Understanding this symbolism helps us unravel the deeper meanings behind the cornerstone. The "rock" or "stone" represents Divine Truth, and the "house" reflects the structure of our beliefs. The "corner" of a building—its cornerstone—is foundational to the stability and integrity of the entire structure. Spiritually, this means that our cornerstone must be the Lord's Word, the Divine Truth upon which everything else rests. Without this cornerstone, our spiritual house cannot stand.



Thomas Street Cornerstone
22 January 1898

The verse also reflects the rejection of Divine Truth by the Jewish Church, which had become a symbolic representation of faith rather than a living embodiment of it. Simultaneously, it points to the Lord Himself, who was rejected when He came into the world.



Clarence Street Cornerstone
7 October 1939

This profound symbolism explains why many churches inscribe Psalm 118:22 on their cornerstones. Yet, carving these words into stone is meaningless unless the same truth is inscribed on our hearts. As our society approaches its 150th

year since incorporation, this reflection on the true cornerstone is more vital than ever.

Just as we have moved on from previous church buildings and may one day move on from our current one, our focus must remain steadfast on the spiritual cornerstone. This cornerstone—the Divine Truth revealed in the Lord’s Second Coming—must be engraved on the hearts of all who see and embrace the true nature of His presence.

For those interested a more detailed explanation can be found in *Apocalypse Explained* #417.12.

Howard

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Swedenborg Centre News

Yay! We now have a new printer which gives us better, faster prints with sharper images, etc. Which means we’re ready to enter the coming year to continue producing small

booklets and newsletters locally. Interesting, that when I was looking into the Kyocera printer brand-name, I discovered that the company was founded by a Japanese Buddhist monk, Kazuo Inamori, who was one of the most highly successful Japanese business owners. Inamori sought to create (several) companies which embodied a spiritual philosophy which facilitated its employees to develop a good heart and an open mind, which he felt was a core part of our spiritual self. He recognised that all living things depend on each other for survival, which inspired his corporate motto “Respect the Divine and Love People”. When I was chatting to Kyocera employees who visited the Swedenborg Centre, they all spoke enthusiastically about their Monday morning corporate team meetings, in which they read something from Inamori’s extensive life-philosophy and leadership-ideals booklets, and then they discuss it with their team to see how they can realise those ideals in their life and express it in their work. This shows that spiritual life does not necessarily have to remain divorced from a good and useful corporate life which can incorporate spiritual values. Inamori spoke out firmly against the primary purpose of capitalist businesses to maximise returns to share-holders, first advocated and articulated in 1970 by economist Milton Friedman as “the social responsibility of business Is to Increase Its profits” while “making as much money as possible while conforming to the basic rules of the society.” Which became known as the shareholder value model that spread so widely to



Kazuo Inamori
稲盛 和夫

countries all over the world, including Japan. Inamori offers a viable alternative which enables business to both prosper and serve as a force for ecological, ethical, social and spiritual good in the world. What emerges is the opposite of the impoverished world of shareholder value maximisation, thanks to Inamori's strong belief in the inter-connectedness of the material and the spiritual, in which he offers a virtuous alternative. The purpose of business for Inamori, is not to make a few owners rich, but to transform people, and let them realise their potential. This is still a radical move offered by a man who with great humility saw a superior path to the one the business world has chosen to follow in recent times. This certainly reminds me of the boyhood advice which Fred Rogers' mother gave him when he encountered scary things in the news, and she would say "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping." Which has me thinking that good happens quietly, while the alternative gets so much attention because it causes all the noise. We must learn to see the quieter angelic side.

CALENDAR NOTES:

The Swedenborg Centre will be **CLOSED** over the Christmas and New Year period starting Monday, 23rd December. The Centre **reopens again** on Tuesday, 7th January after attending the New Church in Australia family retreat in Stanwell Tops. We wish you a joyful and regenerative end of year, and hope that you will see 2025 as a fresh new year in which to achieve a fulfilling life. We hope to see many of you again in 2025, whether online, in person, via email or over the phone.

CALENDAR EVENTS:

All news and activity details can be found along with a “Join Zoom” on the website at swedenborg.com.au as usual. Unless otherwise noted, events are presented live as well as online (‘hybrid’).

December

- Wednesday 4th, 10am read Swedenborg.
- Thursday 5th, 10am Dorine Tolley spiritual movements class (live only in the hall). And at 12:30pm read Dr Maurice Nicoll.
- Friday 6th, noon and 7pm read Dr Groves.
- Saturday 7th, 10am Swedenborg Saturday discussion. And 3pm Joseph Azize’s spiritual movements class (live only in the hall).
- Tuesday 10th, 11am study the Word with Howard.
- Wednesday 11th, 10am read Swedenborg.
- Thursday 12th, 10am Dorine Tolley’s spiritual movements class (live only in the hall).
- Friday 13th, noon and 7pm read Dr Groves.
- Saturday 14th, 7pm talk by Rob Evans based on Dr Groves, while exhibiting the late Michael Wright’s art.
- Wednesday 18th, 10am read Swedenborg.
- Thursday 19th, 10am Dorine Tolley’s spiritual movements class (live only in the hall). And at 12:30pm read Dr Maurice Nicoll.
- Friday 20th, noon and 7pm read Dr Groves.
- Saturday 21st, 10am Swedenborg Saturday discussion. And 3pm Joseph Azize’s spiritual movements class (live only in the hall).

Christmas-New Year Centre Closing

Monday 23rd December to 6th January, the Centre will be closed. This includes the period of Thursday 2nd January to Monday 6th January is the New Church in Australia family retreat at Stanwell Tops, NSW.

January

- Tuesday 7th, Centre re-opens. At 11am study the Word with Howard.
- Wednesday 8th, 10am read Swedenborg.
- Friday 10th, noon and 7pm read Dr Groves.
- Wednesday 15th, 10am read Swedenborg.
- Thursday 16th, 12:30pm read Dr Maurice Nicoll.
- Friday 17th, noon and 7pm read Dr Groves.
- Saturday 18th, 10am Swedenborg Saturday discussion.
- Tuesday 21st, 11am study the Word with Howard.
- Wednesday 22nd, 10am read Swedenborg.
- Friday 24th, noon and 7pm read Dr Groves.
- Wednesday 29th, 10am read Swedenborg.
- Friday 31st, noon and 7pm read Dr Groves.
- Saturday late January or early February (check website for latest info), 7pm talk by Joe, (organised by Rob Evans) on the microscopic world, while exhibiting the late Michael Wright's art.

Thanks for supporting the above initiatives. Wishing each of you a wonderful time. See you at the Centre or online or otherwise.

Joe Vandermeer

* * * * *

Changes are Coming

Dear friends of the Roseville New Church,

At our most recent Church Committee meeting, we made a difficult but necessary decision: starting next year, we will reduce the frequency of our services. This choice reflects challenges many churches face today, not just ours.

As many of you know, church attendance has been on a steady decline worldwide, particularly in Western countries, including Australia. Research shows that people's relationship with church and spiritual engagement has changed, accelerated by the global pandemic. In 2018, when I joined Roseville New Church, we hoped to address this trend locally. Then, as with so many things, the pandemic reshaped our plans and presented new challenges.

During the pandemic, we formed a "Futures Committee" to think strategically about attendance once life returned to normal. In 2022 and 2023, we invested substantially in both digital and print advertising to increase visibility. While we saw some positive responses, these efforts didn't yield the sustained, long-term commitment we'd hoped for. We discussed whether larger financial investments might bring in a solid base of new attendees, but after careful deliberation, we concluded that no amount of funding could guarantee immediate solutions. As stewards of the church's resources, we must use them wisely.

Then came a moment that highlighted our current reality: at our Holy Supper service in September, only one congregation member was present. While my family and the organist were also there, this attendance marked a stark reminder of the situation. A similar low turnout occurred just eight weeks later.

After much thought, we decided to move to twice-monthly services beginning after our 2025 summer break. This decision will be discussed and formalised at our **AGM on 16 February 2025 at 11:30 am**, following our regular Sunday service.

However, it's not all "doom and gloom." The Swedenborg Centre continues to attract individuals interested in engaging with Swedenborg's works and exploring Divine Wisdom. This aspect of our community remains vibrant, and there's a growing online Swedenborgian presence that reaches people in new ways. Given this shift, we anticipate that the Centre and online outreach will become more central to our mission.

In response to these changes, I have also increased my focus on creating online content. Alongside my weekly "Spiritual Shorts" video summaries, I now produce an additional 2-3 videos each week across multiple platforms. These efforts are designed to connect with people where they are—often online—and to provide spiritual support in an increasingly digital age.

The way people engage with spirituality is changing. We may wish it wasn't, and we might feel uncertain about the Lord's purpose in this shift, but it is real. This raises an important question for us all: are we tied to an outdated vision of church, or are we open to cooperating with the Lord's effort to bring us new opportunities for connection? Please join us at our AGM on **16 February** to participate in this important discussion. Together, let's explore how we can best serve and grow within this evolving spiritual landscape.

Howard



Marriage Moats

Christmas Tableaux

Fresh off my Remembrance Sunday message, which centred on the power of “remembrance,” I found that this Marriage Moat from our friend Lori Odhner struck a complementary chord for the Christmas season.

Early in December there is a Christmas play in our small town. John and I, clad in beige stripes and leather boots, with a herd of other singers play the role of shepherds. Our youngest daughters, Hope and Aurelle, are in sparkly white, with a frosting of gold lame, the costume of the multitude of the heavenly host.

The story slips easily off my lips when the minister begins to read. "There were in the same country shepherds, abiding in their fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them."

We are part of the retelling not because the details have changed, but because they are constant. People are not listening so that they can acquire more facts but because the remembrance resonates deeply. *Frankincense. No room. Pondered in her heart.*

We have been participating in Christmas pageants for forty years in four states without changing the script. One time

we had a heavenly host with five little girls whose lineage spanned India, Japan, Mexico and Holland. They danced for joy across the altar and tossed velvet stars. Music linked the brief scenes together like red circles in a paper chain between the green ones.

Part of the power of Christmas is that it is a shared story.

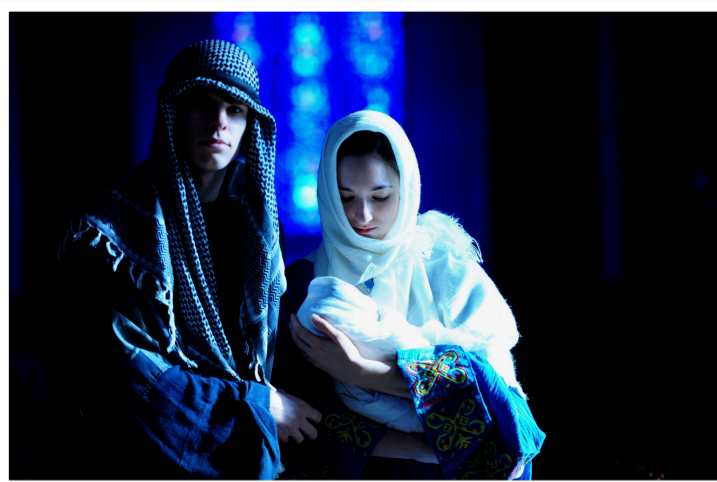
Following the same verses year after year, generation after generation, we build ties with each other. Community grows. It is a story that gives us hope, telling us that in a place where thorns and apathy fester there is a portal for love to come into the world.

There is another script that hasn't changed for ages. It's the story of boy meets girl, and both overcome challenges by finding true love. Generation after generation each says "I do," committing their lives and fortunes to a higher purpose.



Again and again, they venture out to escape the Herod of self-righteousness and find the healing myrrh of compassion. And when the journey reaches its darkest times, they may even hear the whisper of angels—if they are listening—or see a star gently moving to a place where True Innocence lies sleeping in their lives.

Love,
Lori



2024 Christmas Readings

The 2023 Christmas Readings are included with this mailing. Should you be reading this Newsletter online and would like a hardcopy of the readings please send me a message (revhathompson@gmail.com) and I will get



post one to you straight away. In addition several copies will be available at church or in the Swedenborg Centre. Our collection of daily readings (gathered under a different theme each year) are a valuable tool in maintaining the proper balance between externals and internals this Christmas Season.

Final Thought **“Departures”**

Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden. Abraham left Haran. The Children of Israel left Egypt. In the context of Emanuel Swedenborg's writings, the act of "leaving" carries profound spiritual significance. It can symbolise a separation from truth and spiritual good, or a departure from the way of Divine Truth. On the positive side, it can represent deliverance from spiritual captivity—a liberation from the influence of evil and falsity.

Spiritually, "leaving" often signifies a pivotal shift or transformation in one's journey. Whether it involves a separation from truth, a departure from Divine guidance, or a release from spiritual bondage, such changes lead to growth, enlightenment, and a deeper connection with higher spiritual principles.

This month, we reflect on the theme of "departures" for a very personal reason: it marks a significant change for our community. After nearly 15 years in Hurstville, the Beiswenger family—Todd, Jenn, and Zach—will be leaving us. They are moving to Toronto, Canada, where Todd has been called to serve as the Pastor of the Olivet New Church.

In ministry, no one stays forever. In fact, it is rare for ministers to serve a single congregation for more than a few years. To serve for over a decade is noteworthy (the Duckworths being an exceptional outlier in this regard). Todd's ministry in Hurstville has been nothing short of exceptional. His leadership has provided stability and strength during critical times for that church. Beyond



Hurstville, Todd has also served the greater New Church in Australia. He has run camps, visited Perth, participated in pulpit swaps, and offered a strong voice on the NCIA Council of Ministers. His YouTube ministry, *Lord, I'm Trying*, has been groundbreaking,

inspiring many of us to embrace online platforms as valuable tools to reach those hungry for a truly spiritual message.

Jenn's contributions have been equally impactful. She has organised Women's Weekends, supported camp activities, and, in her recent role as a doula, has provided invaluable guidance and care to mothers during pregnancy, childbirth, and early motherhood.

To say the Beiswengers will be missed is an understatement. Their absence will leave a deep void in our community. On a personal note, Debra and I will miss them immensely. Ministry—and being married to a minister—can often be lonely and isolating. Todd and Jenn have ministered to us as much as to their congregation, and for that, we will always be grateful.

While a portion of me is saddened by their departure, I am also reminded of the words of the German poet, Ludwig Jacobowski (1868-1900) from his poem about our best days (Bright Days); “Nicht weinen, weil sie vorüber! / Lacheln, weil sie gewesen!”

**“Don't cry because they're over!
Smile because they were!”**

December

2024

November							January						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1					1	2	3
						2					2	3	4
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	26	27	28	29	30	31	

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 First Sunday of Advent 10:00am Service of Worship Including Holy Supper	2	3	4	5	6	7
8 Second Sunday of Advent 10:00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson	9	10 	11	12	13	14
15 Third Sunday of Advent 10:00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson	16	17	18	19	20	21
22 Fourth Sunday of Advent 7:00pm Special Service Carols by Candlelight	23	24	25	26	27	28
29 10:00am Service of Worship Including Holy Supper Rev. Howard A. Thompson	30 Swedenborg Centre CLOSED REOPEN 07 JANUARY	31 	1 	2	3	4



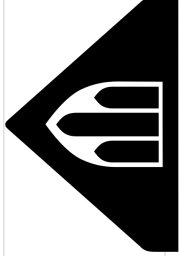
ROSEVILLE
NEW CHURCH

January

2025

December							February						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7							1
8	9	10	11	12	13	14		2	3	4	5	6	7
15	16	17	18	19	20	21		9	10	11	12	13	14
22	23	24	25	26	27	28		16	17	18	19	20	21
29	30	31						23	24	25	26	27	28

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
29 10:00am Service of Worship Including Holy Supper Rev. Howard A. Thompson	30	31		1 NCIA Retreat - Stanwell Tops 2 January - 6 January	2 NCIA Retreat - Stanwell Tops 2 January - 6 January	3 NCIA Retreat - Stanwell Tops 2 January - 6 January
5 NCIA Retreat - Stanwell Tops 2 January - 6 January	6 Swedenborg Centre REOPENS	7	8	9	10	11
12 Summer Break No Service	13	14	15	16	17	18
19 Summer Break No Service	20	21	22	23	24	25
26 Summer Break No Service	27	28	29	30	31	1



ROSEVILLE
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