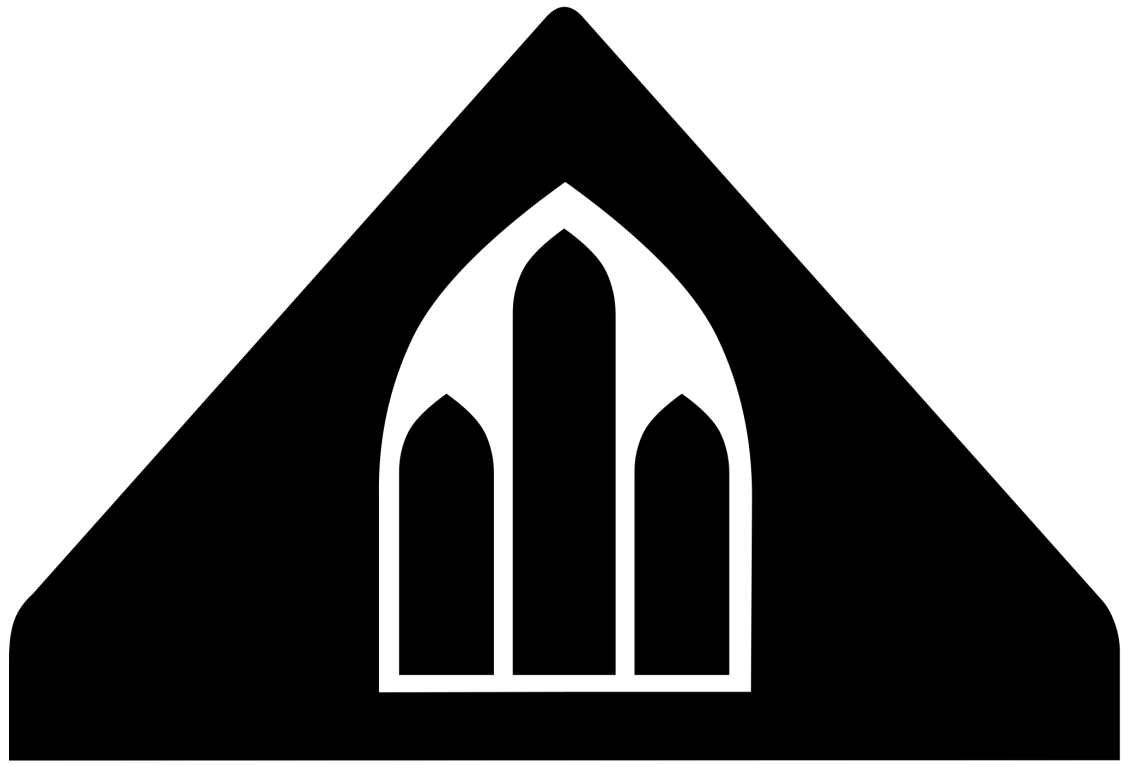




ROSEVILLE NEW CHURCH

**JULY
2023**

“So now I am giving you a new commandment:
Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you
should love each other.”

(John 13:34)

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

See note on page 6 concerning the Angel Service.

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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Church Office phone: (02) 9416 7026
Minister's e-mail : revhathompson@gmail.com
On Facebook – Roseville New Church

July 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 Tall Order

If the last few years have taught me anything, it is just how comfortable it is to be surrounded by people who agree with everything I say and do. This is most pronounced when I am all by myself, then “we” are all in complete agreement. One clear way that this condition shows itself is in the numerous online forums, groups and YouTube channels I engage with or subscribe to. A quick survey of my subscriptions will reveal an affection for sailing, wooden boatbuilding, history, CrossFit and, of course, New Church channels. Certainly on these topics there is little to challenge my comfort, few heated disagreements appear on those channels. But even on the few channels with a more political or cultural focus, there will I find little to conflict with my own biases. In short, I have become very comfortable surrounded by all this agreement. But, is this what the Lord is calling me to? If we read passages from Swedenborg about communities in heaven, it might seem to be that that is the case. That the Lord wants us to live happy, content lives, surrounded by people with shared loves and compatible beliefs. In this way, maybe the internet is like the spiritual world. But, is this what the Lord is calling me to? More precisely, is this what the Lord is calling me to while I am still in this world?

Why am I wrestling with this question now? And why am I inviting you to wrestle with this question with me? The reason springs from a recent note from a fellow clergy



member, a man whose scholarship I have the utmost respect for. He relayed a story of having to enlighten a fellow colleague of the important (I would suggest comfort-shattering importance) difference between the Golden Rule (Leviticus 19:18) and the New Commandment (John 13:34).

Between the contents of the Word, the eighteen published and numerous unpublished works of Emanuel Swedenborg, it is hard to read every word, let alone remember every word and message. This is even so for ordained clergy. We are, each of us, still swayed by our own biases, histories, joys, traumas



and experiences. In other words we will regularly recall passages we read that support whatever ideas we presently have an affection for. Of course, some of these ideas (about faith) are spot on, capturing properly the essence of some element of Divine Truth. But, none of us have it all correct, and I am most certain that I have numerous understandings of faith that have in some way falsified that Divine Truth.

Have you ever “seen” the comfort-shattering importance of the difference between the Golden Rule (Leviticus 19:18) and the New Commandment (John 13:34)?

Leviticus 19:18 reads; “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against a fellow Israelite, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord.” In other words, do unto others or ‘you scratch my back I will scratch yours.’

But in John the Lord takes it up a notch, “So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I

have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples” (John 13:34-35).

I remember my response the first time I truly understood what the Lord was saying here; ‘Really?! The omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent Lord is telling me to do as He has done. How am I to do anything as He has done, let alone Love, since He is love?’

One straight forward answer to this question is expressed in this quote from Fyodor Dostoevsky;

“How are we to love as the Lord loves?”



It is interesting to note that at the time of his death Dostoevsky's library contained several books by and about Swedenborg.

“To love someone is to see them as God intended them.”

If we are to try and emulate how the Lord loves, then we could search the Word for examples of how the Lord loves us. And if we did, we could find many examples that point to the Lord's love for the entire human race. We would also find ample evidence of the Lord's love for each and every individual, regardless of sin, status or faith.

However, there are also many stories within the Word that do not show the Lord to be very loving. In fact, as is the case with the near sacrifice of Isaac by his father Abraham, the Lord appears downright manipulative. He appears to be subjecting Abraham to some type of test to see if he is worthy. Is that what God does? Or is that a better description of what we do when we are less than at our best?

The Word can be confusing, often painting an image of the Lord as anything but loving, compassionate and forgiving. That's how we see it, but is that how the Lord sees the His Word and is that how He sees us; confusing, anything but loving, compassionate or forgiving? The passage below tells us something different about how the Lord sees the Word and, therefore, how the Lord sees us. when the Word is read it ascends into heaven and is presented before the Lord, "not as it is in fact but as the Lord would like it to be."

"That is how the Lord's Word is, especially the prophetic part of the Old Testament. Hardly anything can be seen in the literal meaning besides a disorganised jumble; but when it is read by a person on earth (particularly a little boy or girl), it gradually rises up, turning more beautiful and more pleasing as it goes. In the end, it presents itself to the Lord as a human figure representing the whole of heaven — not as heaven actually is, but as the Lord wishes it to be; in other words, as his likeness." (AC 1871)

People, too, can be confusing but to understand how the Lord loves us and how we can love one another consider that the Lord loves each of us, not as we are in fact, but as the potential perfect image He knows us to be.

Or, as Dostoevsky put it:

"To love someone is to see them as God intended them."

It is so very easy for us to stay in our little silos of agreement, and yet in so many ways the Lord is calling us to be with those outside of our silos (if only slightly). So much talk in faith communities seems to be focused on what disqualifies a person from being part of the community. But the Lord seems to be most clearly calling us to find inside of ourselves a way to love what is inside of another. Calling us

to recognise that we are all a “work in progress.” And, calling us to recognise that we too are a “disorganised jumble,” but one worthy of being loved.

Self-love reigns with a person...when in what we think and do we have no regard for the neighbour, thus no regard for the public, let alone the Lord, only for ourselves, for kith and kin and for those who agree with us. (slightly modified version of AC 7367)

Rev. Howard A. Thompson



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The Angel Service



For several years now, the inside cover of our Newsletter has included the notice “Angel Service - SUSPENDED. Several people have commented that it might be time to remove the notice and I, admittedly, have been reluctant to do so. But, the reality is, that I have had to make the difficult decision that the Angel Service will not

resume. In the last year before COVID it was not uncommon for Debra and me to make up a majority of the attendees at the service. As the Word notes, everything has its time and everything goes through cycles.

For everything there is a season,
a time for every activity under heaven.

A time to be born and a time to die.

A time to plant and a time to harvest.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-2

While the Angel Service has ended we are, of course, always thinking of other ways to serve people and this may include new types of services being born in the future. Certainly the good work of angels continues, as Swedenborg notes in *Secrets of Heaven*; Our very life relies on an open line of communication to the spiritual world and heaven, and ultimately to the Lord. The Lord provides for this via spirits and angels. If spirits and angels were to leave us, we would perish instantly. The angels themselves confess that they have no power but act only at the Lord's behest.

With this decision having been made I have asked Julian to pen his thoughts on the history of the Angel Service.

* * * * *

The Angel Service at the Roseville New Church ran continuously on weekly Saturdays from July 1995 until the outbreak of Covid and lockdowns, so about early 2020. That's about 25 years.

It came about from a suggestion of Siobhan Cruise that a freer type of service openly acknowledging that angels work with us be given a try. Looking back, the 90s were very much an 'angel' focus decade. Neville Jarvis and I gave

several public meetings in NSW towns with over 90 people coming along each meeting to hear about angels and ourselves. I remember seeing an advert in a window in Katoomba where a group of corporate business people offered a weekly lunchtime "angels are with us" session!

Our Angel Service took off with four or five people coming, including myself and Ruth, Siobhan and Jackie Love, the singer. We would get in a circle and just open up on angels with no preparation or agenda whatever. We would bring in personal ideas and even experiences; we regularly sang and we always ended with some gratitude to the spiritual world and to God, some healing energy shared and the Lord's Prayer.

Within six months, others began to come along, I think through invitation and recommendation. We got double figures, sometimes nearly twenty, sometimes just a few. One



feature which took off and lasted was to nearly always start with a round tray of about 150 single word cards, blank side facing up. People were 'led' to pick two cards and then we each shared what we had received and what connections and feelings the two cards brought in. Choosing two cards brings a dynamic whereas one card is much more static.

This opening did several things. It brought everybody in to the service by contributing; it brought people's minds from the world out there into a very spiritual setting, and it made a very effective start. Sometimes the card-sharing would

take over twenty minutes, especially when it was a big group. We sat in a curved semi-circle. I sat facing this but I made it clear I was just part of the group, not the one leading it.

I never remember the group wondering what it should do next. Something always came and without being too mystical, we just trusted the process. Personal experiences, often during the previous week, were always popping up in sharing. After the roughly one hour of the service, we had a cuppa in the vestibule, and round one of the gas fires in winter.

Swedenborg - with his abundance of statements on angels and their presence with us - was brought in but not overly. It wasn't a teaching session. It wasn't a denominational session.

It's probably good to bring in some memories. One service led to rearranging all the chairs to make a very long walkway, almost a labyrinth, which people walked. One service included drawings. People were given about eight things to put in their picture - a mountain, castle, person, bird etc., and then people made a pile of the drawings and we all took one (not ours) and talked about it. One service people decided whether they were mainly a feeler, a thinker or a do-er and we got into groups. One service we chose a musical note and sang it, randomly going down to very soft and then to pretty loud, so that each person got featured, celebrated. And many more, all in the backcloth of angels with us, helping, healing and holding. I don't think we ever repeated things apart from the start cards and the ending with healing and the Lord's Prayer.

I never felt that we were doing anything that we shouldn't, and the regular experience was that we were truly worshipping but in a completely free and unstructured way. They were real occasions - they were good times.

Julian

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Thompson's U.S. Visit

As noted in the last Newsletter, Debra and I, and our boys spent much of May visiting with family and friends in the States. This was our first family visit since 2019. It was a good visit and the perfect length. By that I mean we were all ready to come back to Roseville at the end of our visit.

While there were many wonderful moments to be shared with both long-missed family and friends, the highlight of the visit were the several opportunities we had to celebrate our Daughter Chelsea's engagement to Phoenix Fritch. A late 2024 wedding is planned.



Special thanks to Julian and Todd for taking services in our absence and to Wayne and Joe for helping make certain the services ran smoothly.

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!Church Camp/Retreat Returns!

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



Camp will be held from **15 to 20 January 2024** at the Winmalee Christian Conference Centre in Winmalee NSW.

The facility is self-contained with air-conditioned rooms and common areas, pool, outdoor facilities and many great bushwalking tracks. It

is also walking distance to the closest town.

As it is a smaller setting, **space is limited**. Please register your interest in attending as soon as practical. This can be done by emailing me directly, until someone steps forward to serve as coordinator of registrations.

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

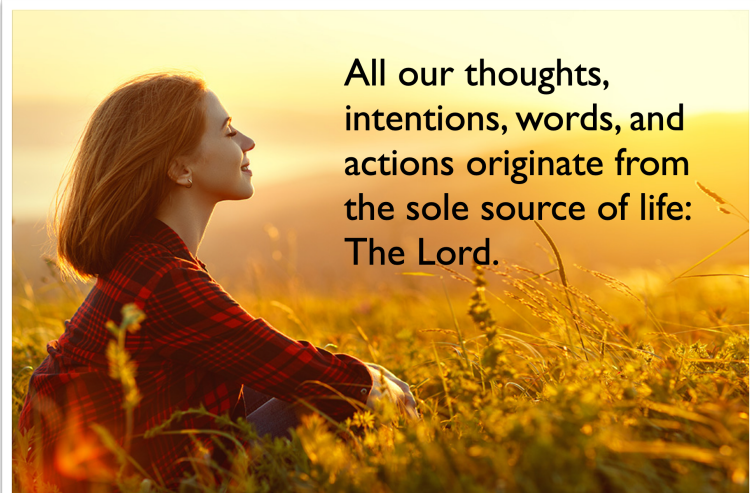
Howard Thompson
(revhathompson@gmail.com)

Swedenborg Centre July News

Feel free to join us on Wednesday mornings at 10am to study Swedenborg's amazing work Divine Providence, in which he reveals - among other things - the following realities and encounters. For the sake of brevity for this newsletter, I have summarised and paraphrased some highlights from 292-320.

Our intelligence seems to be our own, to really belong to us, whether we pursue good or evil. Almost everyone believes that we think and intend of ourselves and therefore also that we talk and act autonomously. How could we believe anything else when the appearance is so convincing, this apparent intending and thinking from our selves does not seem to differ from really being able to think, intend, speak, and act autonomously. Yet really doing so from ourselves is impossible.

The organs of our outer or physical senses are attuned to material objects, and likewise the organic substances of our inner senses or our minds are receptive of spiritual objects. This is our actual state. So what then is our "self"? Our "self" is not some kind of receiver. This "self" is the QUALITY of its RECEPTIVITY. It is not some aspect of life that is actually ours. When we say "the self," everyone understands it to be a being that lives on its own and so thinks and intends on its own. Yet it follows from what has just been said that there



is no such self in us and that there cannot be.

Everything we think and intend - and therefore everything we say and do - flows in from the only source of life, the Lord. Yet that one source of life is not the cause of us thinking things that are evil and false. Our spiritual rational mind is our truly human mind. Our mind or spirit is not sensing things on its own, but sensing them from the Lord. Any other notion is based on appearances, and if they are accepted as true, are based on illusions.

Everything we accept into our volition (our will) becomes part of us. But things we have accepted in thought but not yet in volition are separated and sent away. It is not the Lord who lets evil living into our will and from there into our thought, but it is we ourselves who choose to do that (which the Lord permits).



The Lord enables a person to know and think that they are caught up in hell and evil. The Lord also enables them to think how they can escape from hell; so as to be no longer driven by hell in their thinking but to enter

into heaven and think from the Lord. The Lord also gives a person the freedom to choose. If we were not given such autonomy and freedom we could not be human.

It is a fundamental human (and therefore angelic) characteristic to base our thoughts on the truth; and the truth is that we do not think on our own but that the Lord enables us to think, to all appearances autonomously.

If we accept the truth that everything good and true comes from the Lord and everything evil and false comes from hell,

then we would not claim the goodness as our own and make it self-serving or claim the evil as our own and make ourselves guilty of it. However impossible it seems, it is important to believe, think and accept the truth that everything good and true comes from the Lord and everything evil and false from hell. This truth is regarded as impossible only for those who do not acknowledge the Lord's divine nature and who do not acknowledge that evils are sins.

The way the Lord leads us away from evil (which is not done by ourselves) is this:

- the Lord's wisdom reveals the truth to us, and that truth points out and indicates things to our intelligence so that we can see what is true;
- once we see what is true we obtain a desire for it;
- this desire leads our volition to do these things.

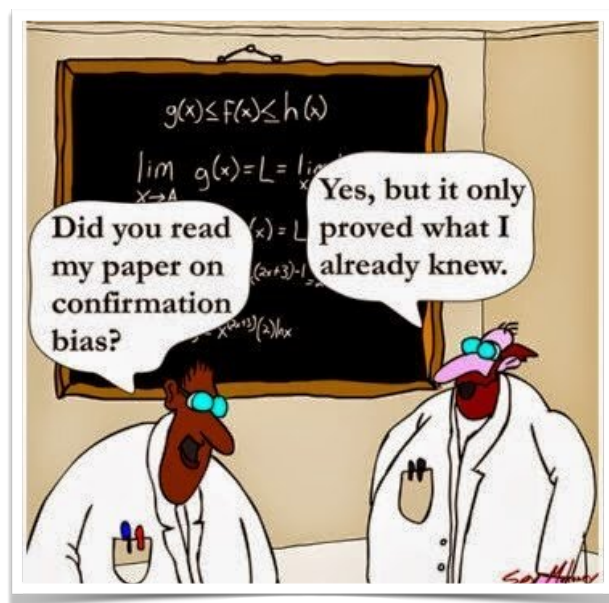
Nothing really comes into us and becomes part of us except what is welcomed by our volition.

The Lord provides that no matter where our thinking is coming from it seems to be happening within us and to be ours. Otherwise, we would not live like humans. We could not be led out of hell and led into heaven - that is, reformed. All our reformation is accomplished by means of truth. In the absence of truth, our will stays dedicated to evils which we justify by false reasons.

Justification can take the form of 'intellectual justification,' in which we find reasons to back up whatever false theology we had already accepted, but at the same time we still live a life of good. The second and worse form is to not only intellectually justify a false theology but to also live

according to it (Swedenborg calls the latter 'volitional justification' because living according to it involves our will). Our state changes as a result of our justifications and the convictions in which they result.

People justify things from their own cleverness. If a person admits only to their own prudence (not admitting the presence of the Lord's wisdom and providence) that person will convince themselves that the way things seem is the way they really are. They accept as truth the appearance that their own prudence is everything, and they regard divine providence as nothing or some generality. To the extent that they justify themselves with illusions, they become materialists to the point that eventually they believe only what they can apprehend with one of their physical senses. They rely primarily on sight because it especially interacts with our thinking. They close off the inner levels of their minds and put a kind of ceiling in the way. From then on, they think underneath this ceiling, as though nothing above it existed. The ancients called sense-centred people like this "serpents of the tree of knowledge." As they become fixed in their opinions, people like this close the deeper levels of their minds all the way to the nose (the nose means our sense of what is true, and that sense is lacking). In heaven's light they seem to have no noses. Strange as it may seem, even though they are so shrewd, they are still more sense-centred and superficial than anyone else. It is because the ancients called sense-centred people "serpents," and



people like this are more deft, shrewd, and clever at debating than others. But our ability to justify whatever we please is not defined as intelligence because to do so is only cleverness (which any of us may have).

To be able to confirm whatever one pleases is not the sign of an intelligent person. To be able to see that the truth is true and that falsities are false, and to confirm it, that is intelligence. A demonstration of this principle can also be read in Swedenborg's experience described in his work *Conjugal Love* (233). In this he visits a spiritual community of such shrewd debaters where one was asked to confirm any proposition as being true and then also its opposite, for example "show that black is white". The debater did this so dexterously and skilfully that the learned around them admired and applauded, while bystanders exclaimed that he was so very wise. When the debater was asked how the two conclusions could both be true, he became indignant, saying that each argument is true because "nothing is true but what a person makes true." (Today, might we just call that approach 'clever marketing'...)

Items for your calendar

See the website swedenborg.com.au for Zoom links to all events or for further details. The schedule for the month is:

- **Fortnightly Bible Study** with Howard on **Tuesday July 11th and 25th at 11am.**
- **Swedenborg Readings** (Divine Providence) are **every Wednesday at 10am.**
- **Dr Groves Readings** at **noon and 7pm on Friday, June 30th and July 14th.** Learn to live life abundantly.

- **Swedenborg Saturdays** start at **10am** on **July 1st and 15th**. Explore Swedenborg ideas.

Have a pleasant month. See you at the Centre or online.

Joe

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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

Modern Times



July

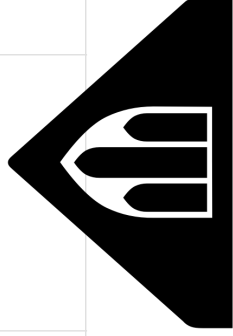
2023

June

August

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4	5	6	7	8	9	10		6	7	8	9	10	11
11	12	13	14	15	16	17		13	14	15	16	17	18
18	19	20	21	22	23	24		20	21	22	23	24	25
25	26	27	28	29	30			27	28	29	30	31	

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
25	26	27	28	29	30	1
					Dr. Groves Readings Noon & 7pm	Swedenborg Saturday 10.00 - 12.00
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
10.00am Service of Worship Including Holy Supper Rev. Howard A. Thompson				Minister's Personal Day		
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson	Bible Study 11.00				Dr. Groves Readings Noon & 7pm	Swedenborg Saturday 10.00 - 12.00
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard Thompson				Minister's Personal Day		
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson	Bible Study 11.00					



ROSEVILLE NEW CHURCH