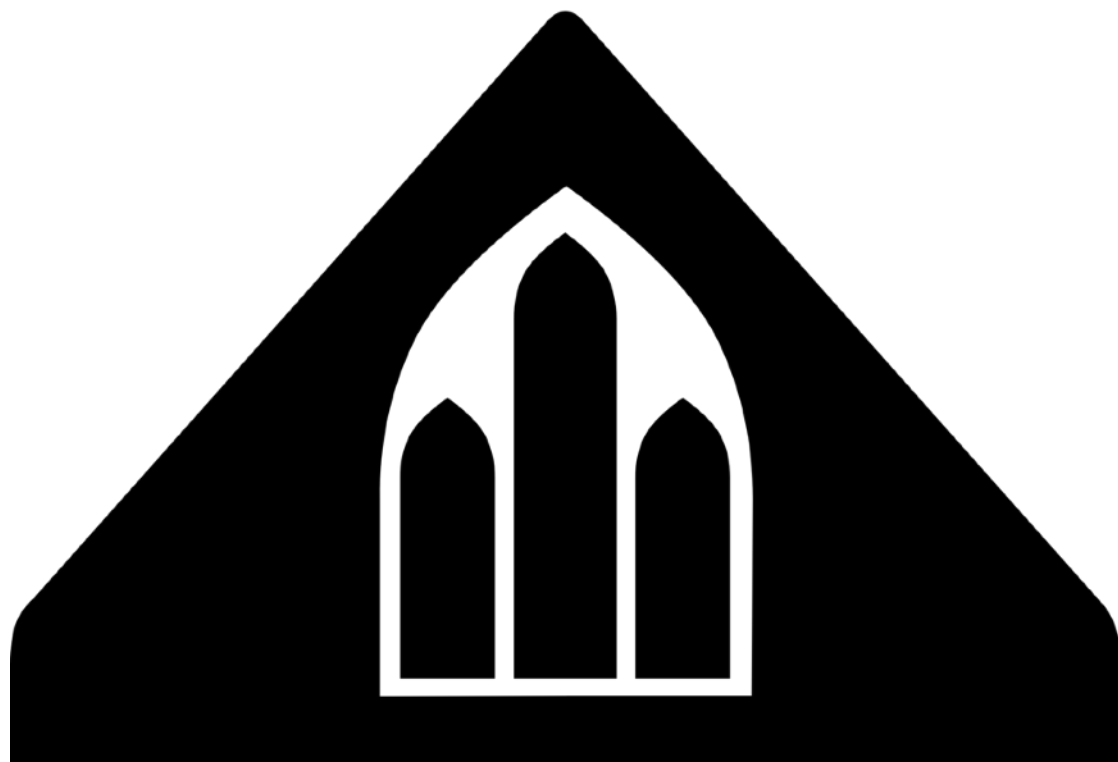




ROSEVILLE NEW CHURCH

**MAY
2025**

"Real joy, which comes from loving to do good things without wanting to be repaid, is the reward that lasts forever."

(The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrines 156)

Directory

Society Minister

Rev. Howard Thompson

Officers

Secretary

Graham Hall

Treasurer

Joel Duckworth

Church Officer

Debra Barratt Thompson

Sunday Service -

The Roseville New Church holds a **twice-monthly service** of worship the **1st and 3rd Sunday at 10:00am**. The first Sunday of each month includes an opportunity to partake of the Holy Supper.

Sunday Social Hour -

After every service we have tea and coffee, an opportunity to meet socially, sometimes more formally.

Calendar - Included

The Swedenborg Centre -

The Centre is generously supported by the Sydney Society of the New Church and provides an independent and relaxing place to meet and discuss a personal approach to finding spiritual meaning. The Centre has a wide range of study materials, Swedenborg's works, and books by supporting authors. The Centre and its director Joe Vandermeer can be reached on phone (02) 9416 2812 or email info@swedenborg.com.au Opening hours are Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30pm. More events details at www.swedenborg.com.au The Centre can also be used to answer enquiries about the New Church, its literature and its teachings.

External worship stirs deeper dimensions, and it maintains the holiness of our external acts so that deeper elements can influence us...We also receive unconsciously the gift of holy states that the Lord preserves for our use in eternal life.

—Secrets of Heaven #1618

Roseville New Church Newsletter

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May 2025 **In This Issue**

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Spiritual Shorts

Our minister, Rev. Howard Thompson, shares weekly videos on his YouTube channel, Spiritual Shorts. The channel has recently completed its third evolution and is reaching a growing audience well beyond our local community. Each week features a 5-minute Sunday message summary, a 1-minute inspirational reflection, and a deeper exploration of Heaven and Hell. If you haven't already, take a look!



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



Two Types of Hacking: **Cybercrime and Spiritual Attacks**

I can say, with reasonable confidence, that the vast majority of our readers are, like me, “digital immigrants.” By this, I mean you likely did not grow up in the era of digital technology and may not feel entirely fluent in its use. You might remember watching the moon landings live on television rather than learning about them in history class. While technology has brought remarkable advancements, it has also introduced complexities and dangers that can feel overwhelming to navigate.

In our increasingly connected world, cybercrime is one of these dangers. Seniors, in particular, are often targets of online schemes, falling victim to phishing scams, ransomware attacks, and other forms of deception. These criminals exploit trust, fear, and inexperience, using cunning tactics to take advantage of vulnerabilities. A phishing email might pose as a trusted bank, urging immediate action to avoid an account lockout. Ransomware might hold your precious memories hostage, demanding payment for their release. Even a text from a supposed family member claiming to be in trouble abroad can catch us off guard, appealing to our instincts to help.

Unfortunately, many seniors have been caught by these scams, losing thousands of dollars and, perhaps more painfully, their sense of security. It's all a web of deceit designed to steal what isn't freely given.

Yet as troubling as cybercrime is, there's another form of hacking we rarely consider—one that targets not our devices, but our very souls. This “spiritual hacking” isn't new, and Emanuel Swedenborg, writing long before the digital age, described it with remarkable clarity. According to Swedenborg, evil spirits seek to exploit our thoughts and desires, subtly working in the shadows to manipulate, confuse, and disrupt our inner harmony. As I've reflected on his writings, I've been struck by how much these spiritual tactics mirror the methods of modern hackers. Both prey on weaknesses, sow discord, and seek to rob us of peace and freedom.

Let's explore this parallel more deeply and discover how we might strengthen our defences—both against cybercrime and the spiritual “hacks” that challenge our faith and integrity.

Phishing: The Bait of Deceptive Temptations

Phishing scams real communication, tricking us into revealing sensitive information. In the same way a phishing scam preys on our trust, evil spirits exploit our doubts and vulnerabilities. Swedenborg reminds us to be vigilant, saying, “Evil spirits inject falsities that appear as



truths, and they do this by influencing the imagination.” We need spiritual discernment, just as we need a skeptical eye for suspicious emails and text messages.

Secrets of Heaven 2754 - [There are spirits who use] innocence as a cover, and mercy, and various positive emotions accompanied by persuasive arguments...They are undetectable and take pains not to be exposed, because they operate in secret. They are also cruel. They cared only about themselves, and even if the whole world had been destroyed for their sake, it would have meant nothing to them.

Secrets of Heaven 1511 - Spirits who are caught up in falsity influence our thinking and thoroughly convince us that falsity is true. We cannot see it any other way, and this results from their aura.

Ransomware: Bondage to Guilt and Fear

Imagine being locked out of your computer and seeing a message demanding money to regain access. This is the cruel tactic of ransomware. Similarly, evil spirits try to hold our souls hostage through cycles of guilt and fear. They amplify our regrets and tell us that we are beyond forgiveness, that we are unworthy of grace.



Swedenborg describes how these spirits use what we love and fear to imprison us, much like a hacker uses our data as leverage. “Evil spirits...focus on what a person loves and fears, holding them captive by these until they yield,” he

writes. But just as we can restore a hacked computer, we can turn to God's love and mercy to free ourselves from spiritual bondage.

Other Planets 72 - To teach me what these spirits do...a spirit of this sort was allowed to come to me...He attached himself to my left side toward the back and began to criticise me for things I had done and thought, things he was drawing out of my memory, and began to put a dark interpretation on them, but was held back by angels.

Key-logging: Exploiting Our Inner Thoughts

Key-logging malware silently records every keystroke, stealing passwords and private information. Evil spirits act like spiritual key-loggers, monitoring our thoughts and identifying our weaknesses. They don't plant all our negative thoughts, but they watch for opportunities to amplify them, turning a passing worry into paralyzing anxiety or a fleeting irritation into lasting resentment.

Heaven and Hell 579 - I have been allowed to find out from experience the nature of the malice of the people referred to as demons. Demons do not flow into people's thoughts but into their affections. They observe them and sniff them out the way dogs sniff out wild animals in the woods. When they notice good affections, they change them instantly into evil ones by using delights in something else to lead them astray in quite amazing fashion. They do this so subtly and with such malign skill that the victim does not notice anything. They take the greatest care to prevent anything from obtruding into thought because this would bring it into the open.

Man-in-the-Middle Attacks: Blocking Divine Connection

In cybersecurity, a “man-in-the-middle” attack occurs when a hacker intercepts communication between two parties, altering or stealing the information. Evil spirits attempt to do the same thing between us and God. They distort the truths that flow into us, making God’s love seem distant or His commands unreasonable.

Have you ever felt a moment of doubt while reading scripture, wondering if God’s promises could really apply to you? That’s the spiritual equivalent of a man-in-the-middle attack.

Secrets of Heaven 2123 - [With] people on earth, who are governed by spirits in contact with [evil spirits]...

Everything good that is coming into the world of spirits from the Lord by way of heaven is instantly being turned into something evil, obscene, and profane there.

Everything true is instantly being turned into something false. So mutual love is converted to hatred, honesty to deceit, and so on, with the result that the spirits there are no longer capable of perceiving anything good or true.

Denial of Service: Overwhelming the Soul

A denial-of-service attack is an overwhelming assault on a computer system (often a website) driving so much traffic its way that it can’t function. Evil spirits overwhelm us with temptations, doubts, and conflicting emotions, making it hard to think clearly or act wisely. They seek to paralyse us spiritually, leaving us feeling helpless.

Secrets of Heaven 705 - False premises and warped reasoning drown [overwhelm] a person, as they did the pre-Flood people.

The Word uses floods of water as a simile and a metaphor for times of both trial and ruin

because these are similar phenomena. During them, evil spirits stream in with their persuasive lies and false assumptions and arouse the same kind of thinking in us. With a person who is regenerating these agitations are trials; with one who is not regenerating, they bring ruination.



These are just a few examples of how both cybercriminals and evil spirits exploit our vulnerabilities—whether through our worldly desires, false ideas about faith, or misunderstandings of the Lord’s love and truth. Their goal is the same: to mislead, manipulate, and ultimately harm us.

Whether dealing with cyberattacks or spiritual assaults, vigilance is essential. We secure our devices with firewalls, antivirus software and a healthy discernment; similarly, we protect our souls with prayer, careful study of the Word, and self-awareness. Swedenborg’s writings remind us that just as hackers exploit technological weaknesses, evil spirits exploit spiritual ones. Both require us to remain alert and rely on the guidance of a higher power.

In this digitally connected age, we are increasingly aware of the need to secure our devices from threats. But let us also remember the importance of securing our hearts and minds,



trusting that God provides us with the tools and strength to withstand any attack. Swedenborg offers us this comforting reassurance from Secrets of Heaven 741:

*“The tests that we undergo are nothing else than battles between the evil spirits and angels who are present with us. The evil spirits summon up every wrong that we have ever done or even considered from childhood on. So they stir up both what is evil and what is false in us and condemn us for it. Nothing gratifies them more; it is the central pleasure of their lives. **But through the angels, the Lord protects us and prevents evil spirits and demons from pushing beyond the furthest limits of our endurance and drowning us.**”*

Take comfort in knowing that even in moments of spiritual attack, the Lord is with us, placing limits on what we endure and surrounding us with angels who guide and protect us. Just as we secure our devices against external threats, we can fortify our souls by leaning on God’s love, mercy, and truth. With His help, we can withstand any trial and emerge stronger in faith and trust.

Howard

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Swedenborg Centre Events—May 2025

I hope you had an enjoyable Easter. Perhaps you're still even on holidays now. This email is to provide a brief calendar update of up-coming events. The calendar highlights are these.

Starting **Monday, 5th May, at 6:30pm** we will be trialling a **NEW event**, namely, a monthly **Spiritual Movie Night at the Roseville New Church** (4 Shirley Road, Roseville NSW). Join us for Popcorn, Jaffas, and Maltesers (sorry, my dentist told me that Fantaes were discontinued), and of course a movie - on the first Monday of each month, showing movie titles based on spiritual themes or based on ideas influenced by Emanuel Swedenborg's writings. Movies such as Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*, *What Dreams May Come*, *As It Is In Heaven*, and many more similar titles.

Tuesday bible study with Howard will be held **6th and 20th May at 11:00am**. This month we are beginning a new format for our Bible study, starting with a multi-month look at the Book of Revelation. Check the website for a zoom link.



Other regular events are scheduled as follows. I encourage you to try attending one or another of these - live if you are local to Roseville, or using Zoom if you live elsewhere. There's no need to remain spiritually isolated these days, as

it's as simple as the click of a "Join Zoom" button from the website at <https://swedenborg.com.au/> (the latest schedule is always available on that site).

- **Swedenborg readings** are on **weekly, Wednesdays at 10am.**

- **Dr Maurice Nicoll** readings are held on **first and third Thursdays** of each month (so on 1st and 15th May) starting at 12:30pm.

- **Dr Philip Groves readings** are on at **noon & 7pm every Friday.**

- **Swedenborg Saturday** discussions are at **10am on the first and third Saturday** each month (next one is 3rd May).

Enjoy these spiritual growth opportunities.

Best wishes and keep smiling.

I look forward to seeing you at an event in the near future.

Joe

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The Carjacking Life

Mindfulness is the practice of being fully present and engaged with the here and now, aware of both your physical and spiritual states. Several months ago, I devoted some time to study and prayer on the subject. Mindfulness stands in contrast to being distracted by past regrets, future anxieties, or scattered by



physical or mental interruptions. Living in the moment with mindfulness doesn't mean you neglect the past or ignore the future. It's about being fully engaged with the current experience, which can lead to greater joy, deeper fulfillment, and an increased connection to what is most essential.

In that season of reflection and focused prayer, it is, perhaps, no coincidence that my YouTube feed "decided" to offer the following video as a distraction: "Woman escapes armed carjacking in Oakland." It was only 45 seconds long. I figured it was worth a click.

The video showed dash cam footage from a woman's car as she drove down a narrow, winding road through the Oakland Hills. A car in front of her slowed and pulled to the side, then suddenly veered across the road, almost blocking her way. As she came to a stop, two masked and armed men leapt from the vehicle and tried to open her doors. But the driver reacted quickly—threading her car between the attackers' vehicle and the edge of the road. She sped off and escaped



unharmed.

Now, the reality of carjackings—particularly in the United States—is not news to me. I've long been aware of their sad frequency. But what struck me in this case was not the event itself. It was my reaction to it. I found myself thinking, "What were they thinking? They'll never get away with it. At best they can joyride for a few days before they're caught." But then something shifted. My recent reflections on

mindfulness came to mind, and I thought: Is this what it is to live in the moment?

That's when I realised: No, this isn't living in the moment. This is living for the moment.

And that, to me, is a powerful spiritual distinction.

Living in the moment is being rooted in purpose. It's being awake to the present as a vessel for something higher. It's listening for what the Lord is doing here, now. Swedenborg describes the angels as living in the present, not because they are detached from time, but because their awareness is always centred on use—on what is loving and wise to do now. In *Heaven and Hell* (163, 167), he notes that angels have no notion of time that accords with the worldly. They do not reflect on the past or the future, but are content with the present, and in it they find eternal happiness.

To live in the moment, then, is to live with eternal things in view. It is to see the present moment as sacred—not because it flatters us, but because it invites us to serve, to grow, to receive.

Living for the moment is something else entirely. It's about grasping. It's about the thrill of the now, detached from consequences or context.

Swedenborg often describes this as a hallmark of the unregenerate will—the *proprium*—which wants what it wants now, regardless of who it harms, or whether it's truly good.

In *Secrets of Heaven* (10742), Swedenborg describes those who "desire to live for themselves and the world alone,"



saying this leads not to joy, but to increasing spiritual darkness. Living for the moment often feels powerful or pleasurable, but it draws us away from eternal realities and into states of isolation.

Of course, most of us are not plotting armed carjackings. But the mindset—that spiritual orientation—is surprisingly common, even among faithful people. Living for the moment is not about the severity of the act; it's about the inward posture of the heart. Here are a few subtle, practical ways that living for the moment can sneak into a spiritual life:

1. Seeking spiritual highs for the sake of the feeling.

It's easy to treat religion like an emotional fix. We pursue prayer, worship, or Scripture not to grow in love and truth, but because they make us feel better.

Swedenborg warns of this in *Heaven and Hell* (535), describing those who do good works only to be seen or rewarded. This is living for the moment in disguise—chasing religious experiences for personal comfort instead of divine purpose.

2. Reacting impulsively in relationships. We all know what it's like to say something sharp in a meeting, or to act out of frustration. It feels good in the moment to prove our point, or to win. But if it's not in service to truth or love, it's the proprium again.

In *The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Teachings* (43), Swedenborg notes that impulses from the selfhood arise swiftly, like sparks. These moments may seem trivial, but they train our spiritual reflexes either toward heaven or away from it.

3. Choosing comfort over inner examination.

Spiritual growth requires self-reflection. But when we avoid that work—choosing distraction, entertainment, or even busyness—we're living for the moment. Swedenborg writes in *Divine Providence* (83) that some believe they are spiritual simply because they believe certain things. But real spiritual life begins when we confront our evils and turn from them.

4. Giving without discernment. Generosity can be another form of living for the moment. When we give impulsively to feel good, or to relieve guilt, without asking whether our giving is actually useful, we're again prioritising momentary feeling over eternal use.

Swedenborg insists in *The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Teachings* (100) that true charity involves wisdom. It's not just about giving, but about giving in a way that serves the neighbour's long-term good.

The common thread here is this: living for the moment prioritises feeling over function, impulse over intention, and gratification over growth. Living in the moment, by contrast, is about being fully present to God's will, awake to the needs of others, and rooted in usefulness.

So perhaps we can reclaim the carjacking story as a kind of spiritual parable. The woman who escaped was alert, discerning, and responsive. She lived in the moment, not for it. The carjackers, on the other hand, were disconnected from consequence, grasping at a fleeting reward, blind to the greater whole. They were living for the moment—and in that, we see a symbol of much subtler states of our own hearts.

The question for us is: what are we doing with this moment? Are we awake to its divine possibilities? Or are we chasing something that will vanish as soon as we have it?

Swedenborg teaches that eternity is not only a duration, but a quality of presence. When we live in the moment with spiritual purpose, the moment becomes a doorway to heaven. When we live for the moment with selfish desire, the moment becomes a trap.



Let us pray for the grace to know the difference—and to choose the road that leads to life.

Howard

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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

NCIA Retreat 2026

Alexandra Park, Sunshine Coast, Queensland



Expression of Interest
NCIA Retreat 2026

Please scan a QR
code to register your
interest or make a
booking.

Bookings are not
confirmed until a
deposit is received.

Thursday 15th to Monday 19th January

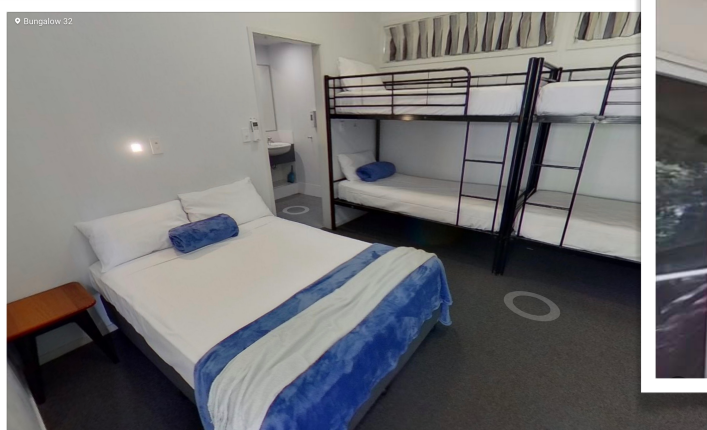
This retreat will be held from Thursday dinner to Monday 10.00am.
Alexandra Park is located at Alexandra Headland within minutes walking
distance to the beach.

The Bungalow accommodation is all air conditioned with ensuite bathroom,
mini fridge, TV and a outside deck. Each room has a double bed, single bunk
beds, or single bed and can sleep 5 or 6 people.

Twin share rooms (private room for two) are available but are limited so book
in quickly.



NCIA Retreat 2026
Booking Form



Example of bungalow rooms

It Couldn't Be More Clear

There are, perhaps, few passages that capture the essence of Swedenborg's theology than this.

Heaven and Hell 528

It Is Not So Hard
to Lead a Heaven-Bound Life
as People Think It Is

Some people believe it is hard to lead the heaven-bound life that is called "spiritual" because they have heard that we need to renounce the world and give up the desires attributed to the body and the flesh and "live spiritually." All they understand by this is spurning worldly interests...going around in constant devout meditation about God, salvation, and eternal life, devoting their lives to prayer, and reading the Word and religious literature. They think this is renouncing the world and living for the spirit and not for the flesh. However, the actual case is quite different...people who renounce the world and live for the spirit in this fashion take on a mournful life for themselves, a life that is not open to heavenly joy... No, if we would accept heaven's life, we need by all means to live in the world and to participate in its duties and affairs. In this way, we accept a spiritual life by means of our moral and civic life; and there is no other way a spiritual life can be formed within us, no other way our spirits can be prepared for heaven.



May

2025

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

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
			Swedenborg Readings 10:00am			Swedenborg Saturdays - 10am
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10.00am Service of Worship Including Holy Supper Rev. Howard A. Thompson	Movie Night 6:30pm	Bible Study 11.00	Swedenborg Readings 10:00am			
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
			Swedenborg Readings 10:00am			Swedenborg Saturdays - 10am
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson	Church Committee 7.30pm - 9.00pm	Bible Study 11.00	Swedenborg Readings 10:00am			
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
			Swedenborg Readings 10:00am			



