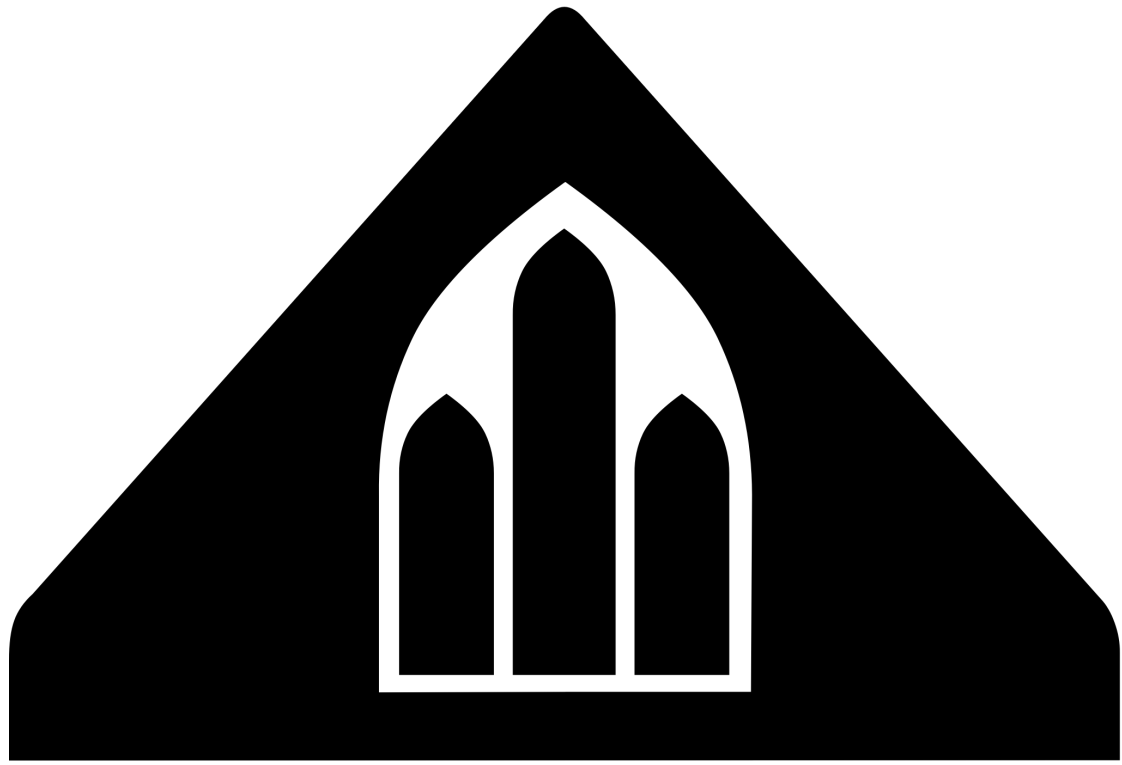




ROSEVILLE NEW CHURCH

SEPTEMBER 2023

“Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue
me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of
the Lord forever.”

(Psalm 23)

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.



The activity engaged in by those in heaven consists in performing useful services - which for them is the enjoyment that good gives - and in gaining, with those services in view, a wise understanding of truths, which for them is the pleasure that truth provides.

Arcana Coelestia 6410

Roseville New Church Newsletter

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4 Shirley Road, Roseville, N.S.W. 2069
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Minister's e-mail : revhathompson@gmail.com

On Facebook – Roseville New Church

September 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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Spiritual Shorts Update

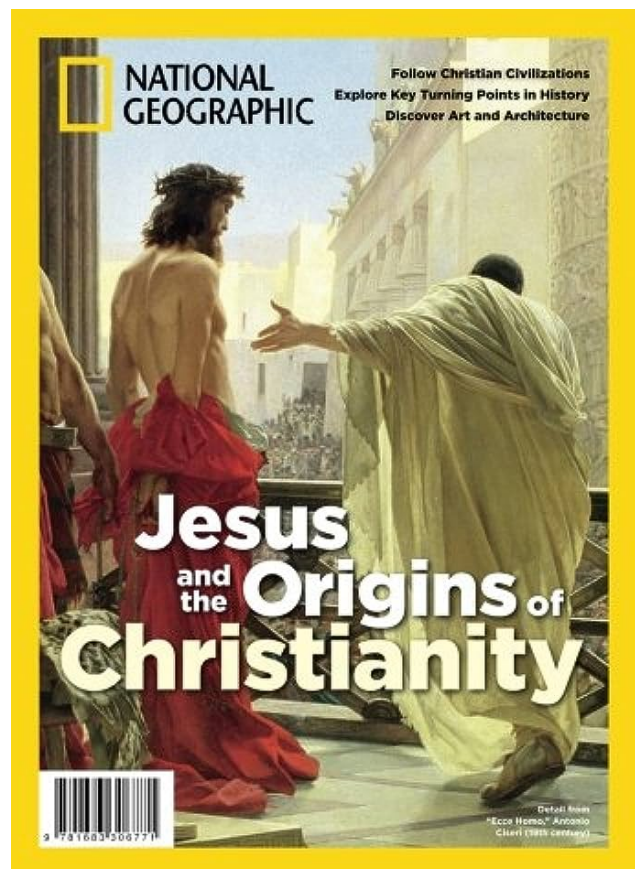
Our minister, Rev. Howard Thompson, posts a weekly video on his YouTube channel, Spiritual Shorts. Begun during the pandemic to support home worship, these videos are currently undergoing a format change. Take a look. The new format will dispense with the “ritual” elements used in the previous videos and should be around 5 minutes in length.



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

Jesus in Print

Several months ago, while pushing my trolley through the aisles of my local Coles, this magazine cover drew my attention: “*Jesus and the Origins of Christianity*.” I must admit that I was a bit surprised, pleasantly so, to see such a bold magazine cover on the shelves. Intrigued, I thought I’d take a copy and give it a read. Unlike the typical National Geographic edition the entire magazine is dedicated to covering the subject. I found it interesting to read of the Lord and His Church, outside of the pages of the Word. If you can get your hands on a copy I would recommend it. If you can’t find it, I am happy to lend my copy. To further pique your interest, I have summarised the opening chapter. Let us hope that I do not get in trouble with the publishers.



Introduction

The multi-part series seeks to explore the origins and evolution of Christianity, tracing its growth from a humble community in Galilee to a major world religion that deeply influenced Western civilisation. Delving into the human dimension of the faith, the series examines the socio-cultural and political changes shaped by Christianity, rather than simply following its institutional history. Key to Christianity's rapid expansion was a unique convergence of

events: the formation of the Roman Empire, King Herod's oppressive rule, and the decline of Rome's state religion. This void led people to explore different faiths, but most remained exclusive. Christianity, in contrast, was all-encompassing, offering salvation to everyone irrespective of their background. The universal appeal of Christianity was further promoted and articulated by Paul of Tarsus, who ensured its teachings reached a global audience.

Chapter 1 - The Life of Jesus

Overview

Galilean Roots

Jesus was born in Lower Galilee, an agricultural region influenced by neighbouring foreign territories. This enclave experienced significant cultural shifts when the Herodian dynasty, backed by Rome and originally from Edom, took control. King Herod's reign, marked by lavish construction in Jerusalem, deeply affected both Judea and Galilee. Notably, he expanded the Jerusalem Temple, later playing a pivotal role in Jesus' life and ministry.

The Miraculous Birth

The Gospels recount Jesus' birth to Mary, a young woman from Nazareth, betrothed to Joseph. Mary's unexpected premarital pregnancy, revealed to her by an angel, initially distressed Joseph. However, divine intervention convinced him to stand by her. Traditional timelines for Jesus' birth conflict with references tying it to King Herod's rule, suggesting Jesus was born before 4 C.E. The offering Mary and Joseph made



at the Temple post-birth indicates their humble socio-economic standing.

Upbringing in Nazareth

Jesus was raised in Nazareth by his parents. While Joseph is often labeled a carpenter, he might have been primarily a farmer, occasionally taking on carpentry tasks. There's speculation that both father and son might have contributed to building Sepphoris, a new capital nearby. Jesus' teachings heavily feature agricultural imagery, likely inspired by observing his father and the surrounding farmland. He also would've been familiar with household activities like bread baking, as evidenced by the structures discovered in Galilee.

Enigmatic Youth

The Gospels are notably reticent about Jesus' boyhood and adolescence. To understand these formative years, scholars have turned to texts like Josephus' writings and the Mishnah. These sources depict Lower Galilee as a blend of traditional Jewish communities, like Nazareth, and larger towns influenced by Greco-Roman culture. Jesus was well-aware of these cultural dynamics, instructing his disciples to focus on Jewish communities and sidestep the Hellenistic influence (Matthew 10:5-6).



Stepping into Ministry

At around 32, Jesus allied with John the Baptist, a prominent critic of the prevalent disregard for Jewish Law. John's message was of repentance, emphasising the arrival of a divinely chosen Messiah. Jesus, agreeing with the

essence, underwent the symbolic act of baptism. His divine selection was reaffirmed when he proclaimed his mission in Capernaum, referencing Isaiah: to bring salvation, release captives, heal the blind, free the oppressed, and announce the divine era (Luke 4:18; Isaiah 61:1).

The Gathering of Apostles

Starting with a few of John's disciples, Jesus' circle grew. Early followers like Andrew, Simon Peter, and Philip recognised him as the "Rabbi" and "Messiah." As he expanded his outreach from Capernaum, Jesus accumulated a core group of 12 main disciples, reminiscent of Israel's 12 tribes. These "apostles" were not just passive followers but active delegates, aiding in logistics, spreading his teachings, and ensuring the smooth operation of his ministry.

The Power of Miracles

Jesus' teachings garnered significant attention, further magnified by his miraculous deeds. From casting out unclean spirits to healing physical ailments, his acts of wonders drew countless hopefuls seeking cures. His miracles symbolised the earthly "Kingdom of God," manifesting as an evolving grassroots movement rather than a cataclysmic upheaval. Such miracles underscored a brighter world where hunger and illness would be no more, and even death could be reversed, as illustrated by the iconic multiplication of loaves and fishes, the healing of a leprous man, and the resurrection of Jairus's daughter.



The Journey and Self-Reflection

Venturing beyond Capernaum, Jesus arrived at Magdala and later travelled further, buoyed by the diverse makeup of his followers, reaching regions like Tyre, Sidon, and the Gentile territory of Decapolis. It was in Caesarea Philippi that he introspected, questioning the efficacy of his ministry. This reflective phase marked the decision to amplify his message in Jerusalem, the heart of Judaism. This ambitious venture was met with trepidation, as highlighted by Mark's depiction of the disciples' apprehension.

Chaos at the Temple

In what is remembered as Palm Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem, only to find the Temple tainted by commerce. His indignation echoed in his critique, comparing the sacred space to "a den of robbers," a probable trigger for his subsequent arrest warrant. During what might have been



the Passover meal, Jesus prophesied his betrayal by one among them - Judas Iscariot. The chapter concludes with the somber moment in Gethsemane, where Jesus was confronted and apprehended by Temple guards, led by the very apostle who betrayed him.

The Trial and Execution

In an unprecedented move, Jesus was taken directly to High Priest Caiaphas instead of the usual Temple prison. Likely realising he couldn't order Jesus' death without the Sanhedrin's full support, Caiaphas escalated the matter to

Roman authority, accusing Jesus of claiming kingship. In front of the Roman prefect, Pontius Pilate, Jesus was mostly silent and was subsequently sentenced to crucifixion on charges of sedition.

The Crucifixion and Aftermath

After the customary scourging, Jesus was crucified at Golgotha. Notably absent were the Apostles, likely in hiding, but present were significant figures like Mary Magdalene. Despite custom dictating that Jesus' body should be moved to a criminals' graveyard, Joseph of Arimathea intervened, placing Jesus' body in a hewn tomb. Due to the approaching Sabbath, the final burial rites couldn't be completed.

The Resurrection and Renewed Mission

Three days later, women, including Mary Magdalene, approached the tomb to anoint Jesus' body but found it empty. A divine figure informed them of Jesus' resurrection. The news rejuvenated the Apostles, who emerged from hiding with a renewed sense of purpose.

Pentecost and the Rise of Early Christianity

During the festival of Shavuot, or Pentecost, Jesus' disciples received divine inspiration, as described in Acts, which empowered them to continue Jesus' mission. Interestingly, the Apostles began speaking in foreign tongues, gaining followers from different regions, including Greek-speaking Jews.

The Resistance Intensifies

The growth of Jesus' movement alarmed the Sadducees, especially given their denial of the afterlife. Soon, Peter and John were arrested but subsequently released due to lack of evidence. However, the movement faced its first martyrdom when Stephen, a follower from the Hellenist group, was

stoned to death on charges of blasphemy. This persecution scattered many of Jesus' followers, who sought refuge in places like Cyprus, Phoenicia, and Damascus, marking the beginning of the spread of early Christianity.

If you enjoyed this and can't get your hands on a copy, I am happy to share mine should you wish to read the entire piece.

* * * * *

!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. In order to secure your spot please register your interest in attending by 10 September.** This can be done by emailing me



directly, until someone steps forward to serve as coordinator of registrations.

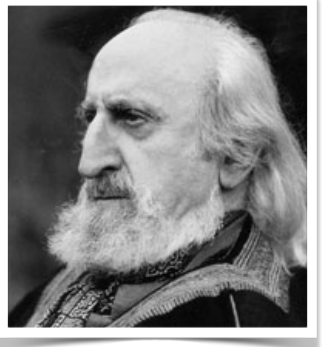
As our church demographics have changed dramatically since our last retreat, there is concern that we will not have sufficient numbers to hold the camp. If we do not, I need to know that now. Registering your interest at this juncture would be very helpful.

Howard Thompson
(revhathompson@gmail.com)

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Swedenborg Centre September News

I am currently enjoying some of the writings of Frithjof Schuon, Swiss artist, author, Sufi and metaphysician. I was reminded of him by a regular visitor to the Centre. Here are some Schuon's quotes in which you will no doubt see and hear reflected Swedenborg's perennial wisdom.



- “Spiritual realisation is theoretically the easiest thing and in practice the most difficult thing there is. It is the easiest because it is enough to think of God. It is the most difficult because human nature is forgetfulness of God.”
- “A classic example of a naive dogma is the Biblical story of creation, followed by that of the first human couple: if we are skeptical, we balk at the childishness of the literal meaning; but if we are intuitive - as every man ought to be - we will be sensitive to the irrefutable truths of the images; we feel that we bear these images within

ourselves, that they have a universal and timeless validity. The same observation applies to myths and even to fairy tales: in describing principles - or situations - concerning the universe, they describe at the same time psychological and spiritual realities of the soul; and in this sense it can be said that the symbolisms of religion or of popular tradition are a part of our common experience, both on the surface and in depth.”

- “Objective intelligence, free will, virtuous soul: these are the three prerogatives that constitute man.”
- “Reason perceives the general and proceeds by logical operations, whereas Intellect perceives the principial - the metaphysical - and proceeds by intuition.”
- “Our thought, or intelligence, is made for the divine Truth, and our heart, or being, is made for the divine Presence.”
- “When God is absent, pride fills the void.”
- “If we must love God, and love him more than ourselves and our neighbour, it is because love exists before us and because we are issued from it; we love by virtue of our very existence.”
- “To love God does not mean to cultivate a sentiment - that is to say, something we enjoy without knowing whether God enjoys it - but to eliminate from the soul what prevents God from entering it.”
- “Beauty, whatever use we may make of it, belongs fundamentally to its Creator, who through it projects into the world of appearances something of His being.”
- “The chief difficulty of the spiritual life is to maintain a simple, qualitative, heavenly position in a complex, quantitative, earthly setting.”

- “Faith is to say ‘yes’ to God. When we says ‘yes’ to God, God says ‘yes’ to us.”
- “Sacred art helps us find our own centre, that kernel whose nature is to love God.”
- “Will for the Good and love of the Beautiful are the necessary concomitants of knowledge of the True, and their repercussions are incalculable.”

To keep an eye on events and activities at the Swedenborg Centre, see the website www.swedenborg.com.au

We have almost finished reading Divine Providence on Wednesdays at 10am which has been a most delightful exploration of Divine Wisdom. After this we will find another amazing work of Swedenborg’s to explore. Feel free to join in, in person or on Zoom. Lots of good discussions have been had during our Swedenborg Saturdays. We also continue to unfold and explore a bible theme with Howard fortnightly on Tuesdays. Dr Groves readings are a wonderful way to appreciate Swedenborg, the natural world, and some Fourth Way teachings – these reading-discussions are held on held on two Fridays per month (two sessions on each day).

Or you can just drop in for a chat and drink at the Centre on other times. Wishing you health and happiness.

Smiles, Joe

* * * * *

The Times They Are A-Changin’

We live in remarkable times. Today, in modern western societies, few of us are restricted by birth or circumstances as we would have been merely a century ago. A hundred



years ago, if your father was a cobbler, you'd likely follow in his footsteps. Back then, individuals often remained close to their birthplace throughout their lives. Now, many in the western world enjoy opportunities their ancestors could only imagine, crafting lives unshackled by social standing or circumstance.

However, this doesn't mean I view the present with naive optimism. There's a price to be paid for our newfound freedom. Elements of the past are sacrificed in our evolving landscape. Among the most notable is our sense of community, especially the bond of inter-generational connectivity. Half a century ago, you would have recognised every face on your street. Now, it is likely you know only a handful. Back then, it was common to have your grandparents as neighbours or, at least, a short walk away. Today, you're fortunate if yours are a four-hour drive distant. Fifty years ago, if a child misbehaved in the neighbourhood, their parents would know before they even got home.

This erosion of intergenerational ties, a byproduct of our nomadic modern life, has profound consequences. Some might argue that digital means, like Zoom calls, can bridge the gap. But I believe that the absence of authentic connections spanning multiple generations carries significant repercussions. For instance:

- **Loss of Family Traditions and Stories:** Past narratives and traditions, typically passed down, risk

fading away. Grandparents, pivotal in transferring familial legacies, might not have the same influence from a distance.

- **Decreased Emotional Support:** Grandparents and grandchildren provide each other unique emotional anchors. Distance can dilute this bond.
- **Missed Care Opportunities:** Grandparents historically played vital caregiving roles. This supportive dynamic dwindles with miles between them.
- **Generational Knowledge Gap:** With remote interactions, invaluable wisdom from the older generation might lose its resonance.

One might dismiss these concerns when viewed within a single family. But imagine a society predominantly comprising such detached families? To understand the larger implications, consider this excerpt from Emanuel Swedenborg's *"Arcana Coelestia (8469)"*:

“The situation with the communities in heaven is that heaven is made up of countless communities that are distinct and separate from one another. All in each community share a common good, which is distinct from the good of other communities. Also, each member of a community possesses a particular kind of good, distinct from the good any other in the community possesses. The different kinds of good that members of a community possess, which are distinct and so various but nevertheless compatible, compose a form called a heavenly form.

Heaven as a whole is made of such forms [of good]. They are called forms when they are



thought of as combinations of good, but communities when they are thought of as combinations of persons. These things were represented by the divisions of the children of Israel into tribes, families, and households.”

To summarise, communities are aggregates of their members. A society rife with generational disconnect may suffer from eroding traditions, reduced mutual support, limited caregiving, and a narrowed perspective of the future. Notably, a child devoid of consistent interactions with grandparents may struggle to envision aging and, in turn, planning ahead.

The challenge isn't to revert to old ways but to reinvent community in our current context. Community transcends physical spaces; it's the essence of shared experiences and mutual understanding. Much like the intricate relationship between our physical bodies and our identities, a thriving community is foundational. So, how do we rebuild this sense of togetherness? How do we foster genuine connections? I'm not as much offering answers as I am inviting reflection on the questions.

Rev. Howard A. Thompson

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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

Church Sign Humour

**THE FACT THAT THERE IS A
HIGHWAY TO HELL AND
ONLY A STAIRWAY TO
HEAVEN SAYS A LOT ABOUT
ANTICIPATED NUMBERS**

September

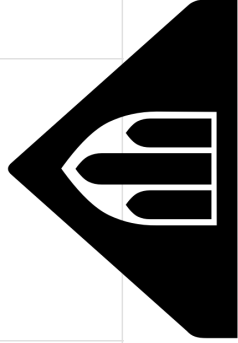
2023

August

October

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

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
	For complete calendar of Swedenborg Centre events visit website: https://swedenborg.com.au				Insights from Dr. Groves Noon & 7pm	Swedenborg Saturday 10.00 - 12.00
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
"Father's Day" 10.00am Service of Worship Including Holy Supper Rev. Howard A. Thompson		Bible Study 11.00				
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson				Minister's Personal Day	Insights from Dr. Groves Noon & 7pm	Swedenborg Saturday 10.00 - 12.00
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
10.00am Service of Worship Guest Minister Rev. Julian Duckworth		Bible Study 11.00			SAA - AGM 7:00 pm	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
10.00am Service of Worship Rev. Howard A. Thompson				Minister's Personal Day		



ROSEVILLE NEW CHURCH

