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## **The New Church Newsletter Hurstville Society JULY 2025**

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### **Was the Spiritual Meaning within Scripture New at All?**

By Rev. HyunJin Yang

The month June is a special time for our church as it is the month where we celebrate for the birth of the New Church which dates back to June 19th, 1770. One of the unique landmarks we celebrate for is the fact that the spiritual meaning of the Word [or Scripture] was revealed through the Writings of the New Church.



It is a time of the year to think about how much it means that we now have the understanding to see the deeper meanings of the Lord's Word and about how they can speak to us about the spiritual side of our life.

On the other hand, the idea of Scripture's spiritual meaning may strike some or many of us as something so uniquely New Church that it may seem alienating or disconnecting us from the rest of the Christian world when it comes to our understanding of Scripture.

But has it come across to you that the idea was not new at all even far before the Writings were written? In fact, it was upheld by some of the most influential Christian thinkers throughout church history such as Origen (185-254 A.D.), Pope Gregory I (540 – 604 A.D.), Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274 A.D.), and others. Some of the earliest attempts to establish the idea can be traced back to the time even before the Lord's advent on earth.

This history is overviewed by William Yarchin (Hendrickson Publisher, 2004) in his book, *History of Biblical Interpretation: A Reader*. I would like to briefly lay out some of his relevant study. Starting with the Jewish interpretation of the Jewish Scripture, it is worth noting of Philo of Alexandria (20 B.C. – 50 A.D.) as to how he approached the Scriptural interpretation. Philo saw that the Jewish Scripture was “truth written in allegory”, and that

“the allegorical meaning of the Torah exists underneath, or side by side with, the literal meaning” (Yarchin 18).

When it came down to the Christianity era, we have seen major Christian thinkers maintain and develop a similar view. They saw that Scripture is written at least partly in allegory, and it has different layers of meanings – moral or spiritual.

For them, not only was Scripture to be read in the literal sense, but also its deeper wisdom or divine truth to be approached through allegorical interpretations. For Origen, “the divine wisdom in Scripture was largely accessible by perceiving it through allegorical interpretation” (Ibid 41). According to Gregory the Great, we were to first attend to the outward, literal sense of the biblical text and from there to work inward to the spiritual sense through allegory, and in that way, we could draw a moral meaning from but beyond the literal sense (Ibid 87). Thomas Aquinas offered a similar view, in the sense that the power of Scripture was in its being able to signify God’s meaning, not by words only. He would call it “the spiritual sense” that is based on the literal meaning of Scripture (Ibid 95).

They may use different terms for ‘Scripture’s spiritual meaning’ and explain things differently. And yet, it appears that they shared a similar view of how to approach and read Scripture. They saw that Scripture had deeper meanings underneath the literal sense, and that ‘God’s meaning’ or ‘the divine wisdom’ were to be sought and found in the allegorical or a spiritual sense of the literal sense.

## **In the Search of the Divine Authorship of Scripture**

We may say that their view of and belief in Scripture's spiritual meaning was ascribed to their faith towards the divine authorship of Scripture. Throughout the history of Christianity, we have seen doubts of and attacks on the divine authorship of Scripture. It is also true today for many when people read in Scripture something merely historical and not relevant in any positive way to people's life and religiosity, people may pose doubts as to why these were written in God's Word and how can we make of it as the Word of God.

Origen was aware of such critics being raised by some or many at his time. And he saw in the opposition to this movement that "the divine wisdom in Scripture was largely accessible by perceiving it through allegorical interpretation, particularly when a literal interpretation would yield a meaning unworthy of God" (Ibid 41).

Another effort to find the divine authorship from the spiritual meaning of Scripture may be found in the view of Thomas Aquinas. While he placed the basis for theology on the literal sense, he saw that "derivative from the literal are the allegorical interpretation, particularly when a literal interpretation would yield a meaning unworthy of God" (Ibid 41).



Another effort to find the divine authorship from the spiritual meaning of Scripture may be found in the view of Thomas Aquinas. While he placed the basis for theology on the literal sense, he saw that “derivative from the literal are the allegorical and moral sense, which God uses to signify deeper dimensions of divine truth” (Ibid 94).

Interestingly and very pointedly, the same is addressed in the Heavenly Doctrine in Doctrine of Sacred Scripture.

The spiritual meaning is what causes the Word to be Divinely inspired and holy in every word. People in the church say that the Word is holy, and this because Jehovah God spoke it. But because its holiness is not apparent from the letter alone, therefore someone who once doubts its holiness on that account, later finds, when he reads the Word, many things in it to confirm himself in that doubt. For he asks himself then, “Is this holy? Is this Divine?”. (n. 18)

This passage goes on to explain a reason why the spiritual meaning of the Word had to be revealed and thus so through the Writings of the New Church.

Therefore, to keep this kind of thinking from flowing in and prevailing among many people, and so causing the conjunction of the Lord with the church where the Word is to perish, it has pleased the Lord now to reveal the spiritual sense, in order to make known in what the holiness in the Word lies. (Ibid; See also TCR 200, 191)



## **What Is New for the New Church?**

Scripture's spiritual meaning in one sense or another was the inseparable piece in the theological discourse that was around as long as Christianity was first established and even prior to that. Also, it seems that these views were held in the efforts to fight off various attacks on the divine authorship of Scripture. In fact, as was predicted in the above passage, it would have been the critical blow for many if the spiritual meaning of the Word were not revealed and its divinity was not shown through in that meaning as "the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30; See also TCR 776:1).

As has been discussed, though briefly, Scripture's spiritual meaning was not an unprecedented idea prior to the Writings' being written, nor should we feel isolated for it. It had been discussed by some of the most respected Christian thinkers, and we may say that the many more people than we might expect can find this idea is.

Although we can't say it for sure because of the limited information and study that this article is based on, and due to the vast study subject that it would have incorporated, we may consider that significant similarities between these views and the New Church understanding of Scripture can be found. And it would be a very interesting study to delve into how close they are to each other.

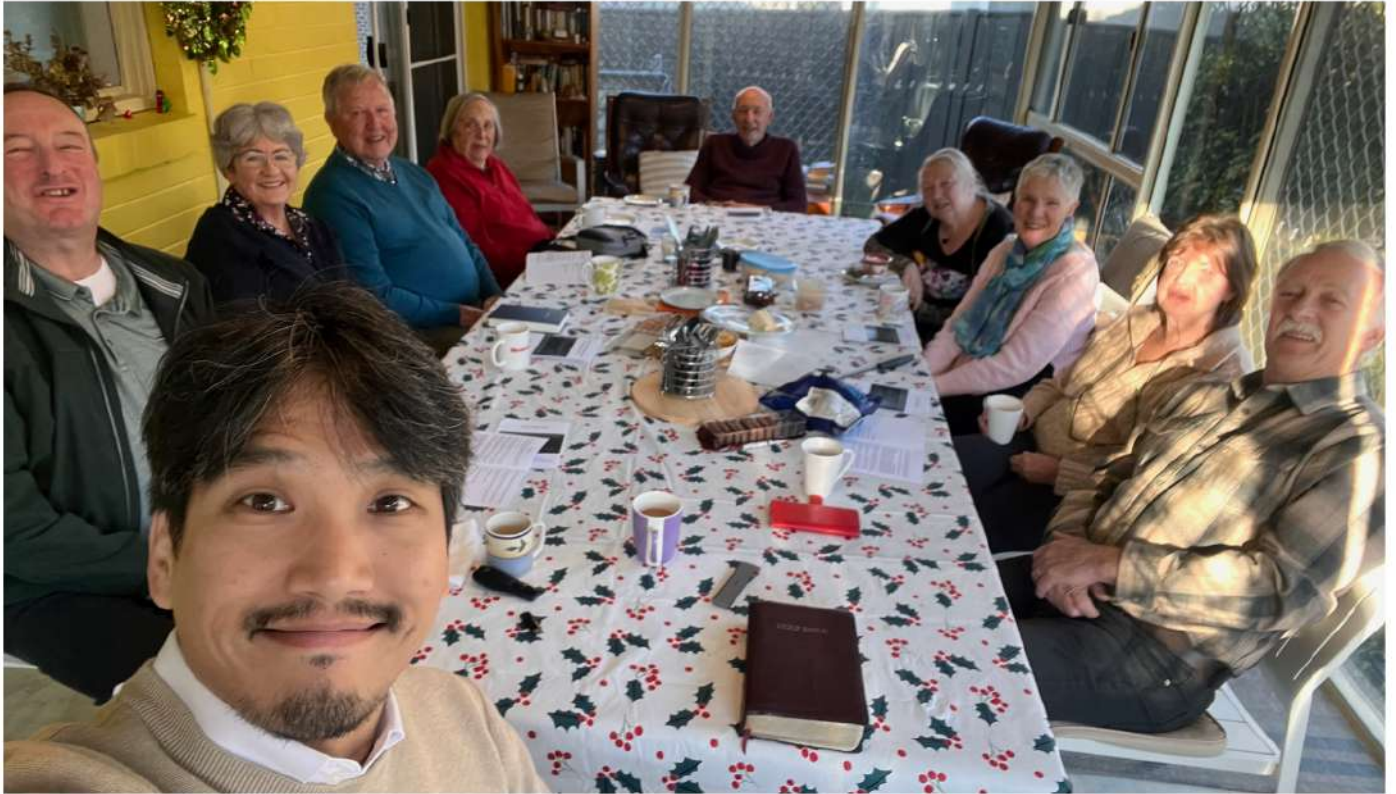
It may be asked, then, what is new for the New Church? Most relevant to our discussion here is that Scripture's spiritual meaning is no longer an idea for speculation or an alternative view, but it has been opened and now available for us. Now in reading the Word we are invited to see and reflect on every word there in the thinking of how they speak to us about our spiritual life. There, we can see the Lord, His love and wisdom for the human race and its salvation, and how He constantly draws us near towards Him, more fully than ever. That is certainly something we can and must celebrate.

## **Canberra Visit (30<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> May)**



It was my second trip to Canberra ever. Rev. Todd Beiswenger, my predecessor, took me to Canberra once in October last year. But this time, I was by myself, and this time my visit was to lead a service and Holy Supper.

Ten of us met at Philip's home, where they've been holding Sunday worship every other week for several years. Those who attended were Philip and Eleanor Richards, June and Peter Webb, Tina Denham, Sylvia Hicks, Heather Apthorpe and her husband John Byrnes, and John Talbot.



We sat around a big table and had a worship service like a regular service. The service was followed by Holy Supper, and it was all done around the table. This setting struck me that all of us were part of it together, rather than I was the only person saying and leading. What I most appreciated about our time was that the talk I shared with them was more conversational in nature, and the chance to get real-time feedback and questions. Of course, I believe this went very well because everyone in the group respected one another and the space. It was great to meet with all of them and get to know the group better. Thank you for your warm welcome and hospitality.

Originally, two visits were planned. Unfortunately, my visit with Heulwen and Barrie Ridgway had to be postponed due to a health-related concern. I look forward to visiting with them, sooner than later!

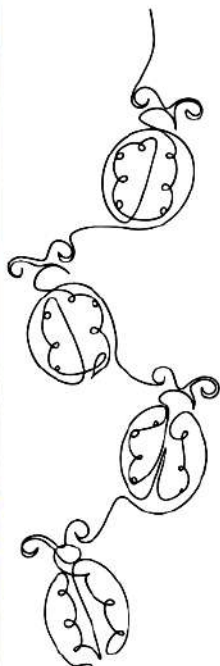
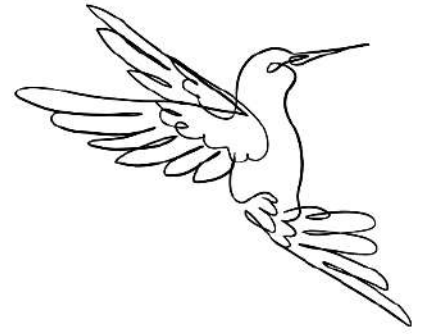


## New Church Day Service (22<sup>nd</sup>)

First off, thank you all who joined the service. I thought the service went well, and we had 27 in attendance. It was especially blessing to have the children. As I reviewed a recorded service afterwards, I learned how much they brightened up the service and the overall atmosphere leading up to our potluck lunch. As was addressed in the children's talk, the greatest gift of the heart they are endowed with is the heart of innocence. It was shown when



Rara called out, 'newspaper' as I held up an image of a bundle of money. What if something purely material by itself could pass over our heads as something not so much essential? That may be what we can hope for part of our life.

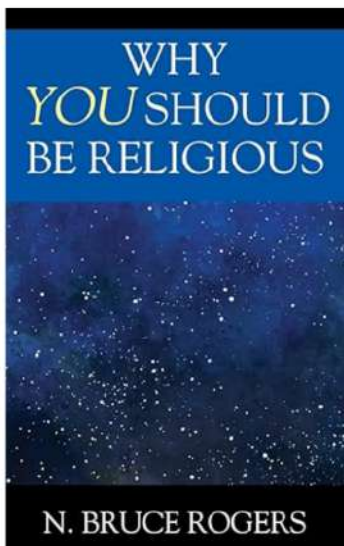




Our New Church Day message, I think, was pointy. The simple reminder was that we need the Lord's guidance in every step of our spiritual life, and our sense-based experience by itself can be much deceiving. This message was partly highlighted by the serpent's deception in the earliest part of Scripture and the dragon's deception in the very last part of it. It is hoped that it has offered us something important to think about the New Church and its teachings about how to be led by the Lord.



**New Church Publications**  
**– Recently Published!**



**Why You Should Be Religious**  
**by Bruce Rogers**

This new book is written by the Rev. N. Bruce Rogers who has been an associate professor of Religion and Latin in Bryn Athyn College and served for many years as a General Church translator

## Book Details

Compelling and well-reasoned. A must-read!

In *Why You Should Be Religious*, the author offers several reasons why religion is important, both to the individual and to society. These include arguments for the existence of God and the miraculous nature of life. He follows this with a list of the various theistic religions existing in the west today, including his preference for Christianity, and the book concludes with the importance of religion to civilization, the final and best reason to be religious.

### About the Author

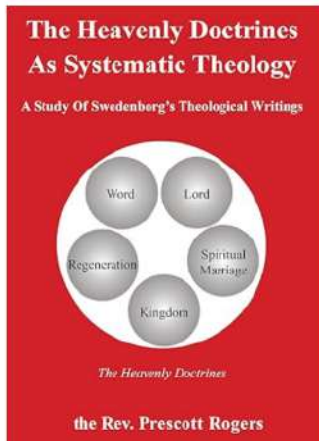
N. Bruce Rogers is a retired academic with a background in physics, psychology, research biochemistry, and sacred languages. He has two master's degrees, one in Classical Studies and one in Christian theology. His academic awards include election to Phi Beta Kappa and a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship. The author and the bride of his youth have three middle-aged sons and six grandchildren. – Outskirts Press

### Purchase Advice



The book is Available for purchase on Amazon!

If you find it a bit expensive on Amazon, you could purchase it as a PDF here: <https://outskirtspress.com/whyyoushouldbereligious>



## **The Heavenly Doctrines As Systematic Theology**

This new book written by the Rev. Prescott Rogers. The following is an announcement from the General Church's bookstore.

The General Church's bookstore, New Church Books, is pleased to have copies of Prescott Rogers' new title *The Heavenly Doctrines As Systematic Theology* for sale. Based on the course he taught for many years at Bryn Athyn College, this book is a study on how all of the major teachings in the Writings of the New Church are integrated into one seamless whole.

For more details, see a review of the book written by the Rev. Michael D. Gladish in the January Issue of *New Church Life*, pp. 47-49.

Purchase at

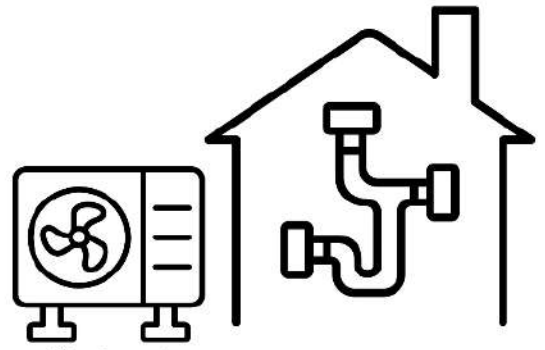
<https://newchurchbooks.com/>

<https://www.amazon.com/>



## Society News

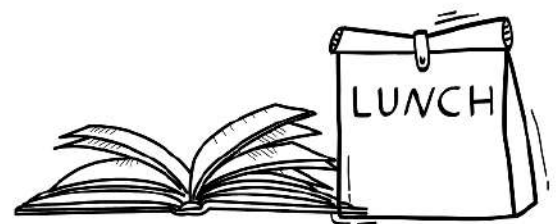
### Baringa and Manse Update



I am happy to report that ducted air-conditioning systems were put in at both Baringa and at the manse on June 19<sup>th</sup>. (Maybe it is the birthday gift!) From the experience so far, we can confidently say that they make a remarkable difference. We don't have to feel the chill, scrambling to turn on heaters and wait for a while for the room to warm up. It is warm and even cozy. We also have relocated the old air-conditioning unit from the manse to the Richard Morse room. The room couldn't be part of the ducted air conditioning system as there was virtually no space above the ceiling to accommodate it. The relocated unit works just fine there. And that means, all of Baringa is now fully air-conditioned except for the kitchen area. The ducted air-conditioning at the manse works just as good!

### What's coming up

#### Doctrinal Class + BYO lunch (10<sup>th</sup>)



Our monthly doctrinal class is held at 11:00 A.M on the second Thursday of each month at Baringa, unless otherwise notified. At this stage, we can't tell what our topic is going to be (unless our class is featured with going over one of the Writings, chapter by chapter or subject by subject). But that's part of the fun. We can treat it like a surprise box!

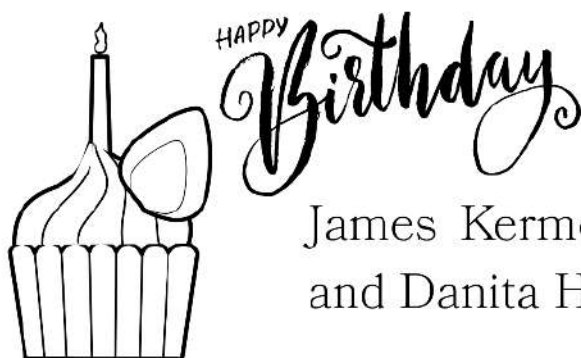
## Pastor's vacation (11<sup>th</sup> -24<sup>th</sup>)



YoungHee and I will be flying on the 11<sup>th</sup> to South Korea for our vacation time. We are looking forward to visiting our country, traveling, and spending some quality time with our family. I will be returning on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, while YoungHee will be staying a bit longer as she is expecting her regular medical check-up there. For now, it is not sure when she will be joining me here in Sydney. Wish us the best!

## Church Service led by the Rev. Howard Thompson (13<sup>th</sup>)

I am pleased to inform us that the Rev. Howard Thompson from the Roseville New Church will lead our Sunday service at Hurstville on the 13<sup>th</sup>, while I am absent. Come and join the service. It is one of the opportunities to be connected with him. He looks forward to coming and offering.



James Kermond (10th), Babbette Horner (14th)  
and Danita Horner (15th)

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Thinking about adding a spiritual practice to your daily routine? We'd like to meet you in your journey.

Receive free daily emails with messages of hope, unbounded love, and spiritual freedom.

New Church theology is based on the Bible and a collection of books written by Emanuel Swedenborg. His work, inspired by God, gives new understanding to the Bible, the afterlife, and the nature of God, ourselves, and the universe.

### **Note for the next Newsletter Issue**

August and September issues of the Newsletter will be combined into one and sent out in the last week of August.

In other words, there won't be a separate August issue to be sent out at the end of July, the biggest reason being that there won't be much space and time for report as July will be almost entirely taken up by my vacation and COM meetings in Brisbane, leaving little space or time for reporting. However, the August calendar should and will be sent out!

- Editor

### **The NCIA Retreat in January 2026 (15th to 19th)**

It is not too late at all to BOOK it! Please take a look at the flyer below about the NCIA Retreat 2026. If you need help in booking or have questions about eligibility and availability of the subsidy, contact Carolyn at [nciaretrear@gmail.com](mailto:nciaretrear@gmail.com)

# NCIA Retreat 2026

Alexandra Park, Sunshine Coast, Queensland



Please scan the QR code to register to make a booking.

Bookings are not confirmed until a deposit is received.



NCIA Retreat 2026  
Booking Form

## 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 an 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.



Example of bungalow rooms

## Prices are per person and include all meals.

Adult Twin share \$720.00	Student (14-17) \$500.00
Pensioner Twin share \$700.00	Student (9-13) \$400.00
Adult Shared \$680.00	Child (5-8) \$350.00
Pensioner Shared \$650.00	Child (3-4) \$200.00
Linen Hire \$36.00 per set	Baby (0-2) Free

Subsidies may be available on request

## Day Visitor costs - per person

**No meals - \$32.00** (only for special diets not able to accommodate)

**All meals - \$100.50** (Breakfast, morning tea, Lunch, Afternoon Tea, Dinner, Supper)

**Morning Tea, Lunch, Afternoon Tea - \$55.60**

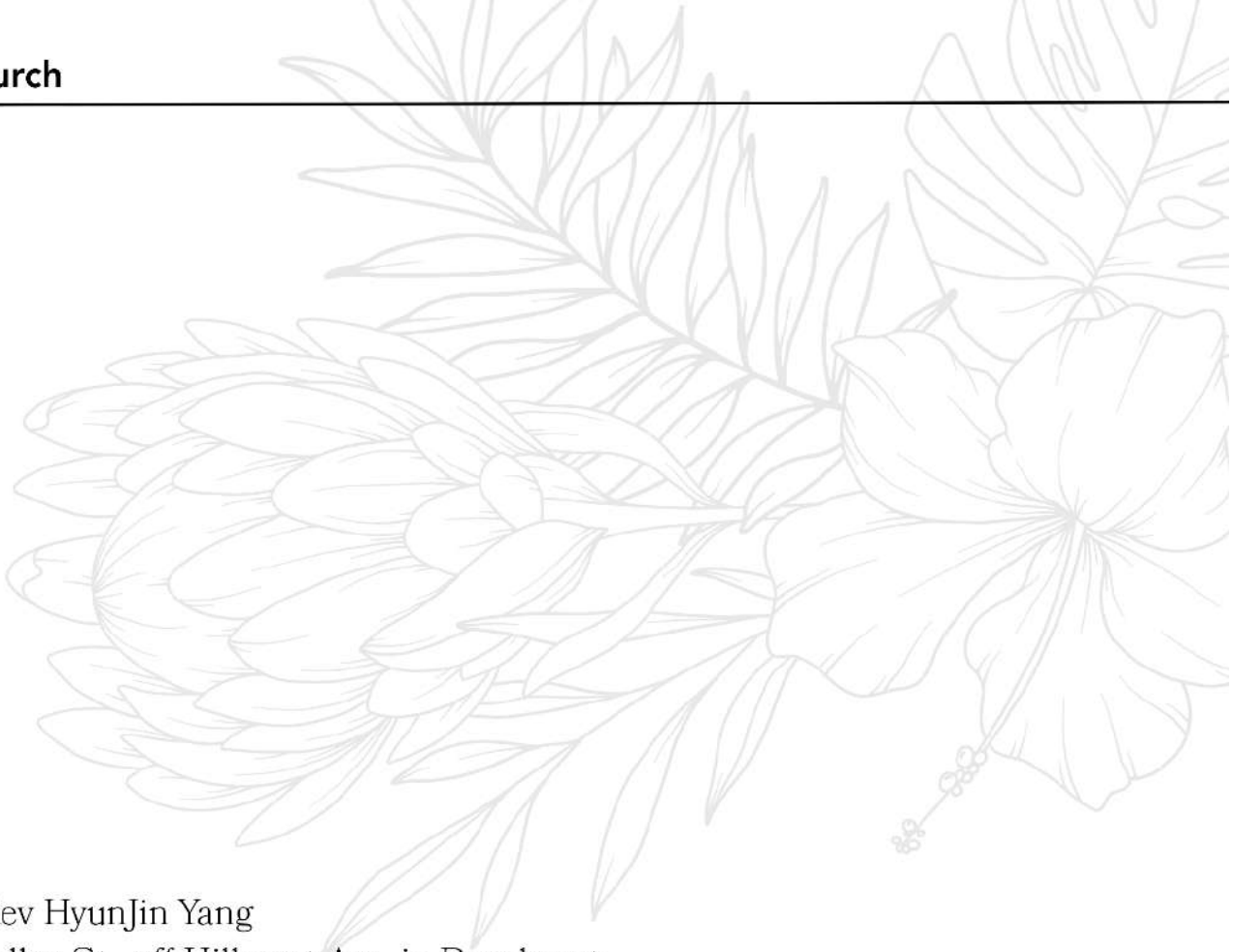
**Main Meal only \$51.25**

### ALEXPARK.COM.AU

Alexandra Park Conference Centre has a website where you can do virtual tours of the rooms, meeting rooms and dining room.

**If you have any questions please direct them to [nciaretrat@gmail.com](mailto:nciaretrat@gmail.com)**





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