

January 2018 News & Notes

January Calendar

The Australian New Church family camp will take place during the first week of January, up north of Brisbane. The pastor and his family will take a few days of family vacation afterward, returning home on Thursday, Jan 11.

Sunday morning **worship services will not take place on Sunday, Dec 31 nor Jan 7**; they will resume at the usual 10am on Sunday, Jan 14, and through the rest of January will be 'family' style, meaning that the message will be for all ages, not divided into kids' talk & Sunday School + adult sermon, and therefore no Sunday school.

After the service on Sunday, Jan 21, we'll be heading down to the National Park for a nice walk in nature! -Specific destination tbd; Karloo Pools is a distinct possibility, as is a walk to the beach. Bring a picnic lunch, plenty of water and comfortable walking shoes (and your swimmers for Karloo Pools, if you like!), if you want to come along. Details to follow in a weekly update closer to the date.

Mango fundraiser update:

Thank you, and congratulations! As a result of our successful - and delicious! - mango fundraiser, we raised nearly \$650, which has been evenly split between Mexico earthquake & hurricane Irma relief efforts!! Well done, for a first go by our little church. Not only have we done a little to help those who are in need, but we've received a lot of very positive feedback regarding the quality of mangoes that were sold.

Next Spiritual Growth Program: Practicing Forgiveness

Authentic forgiveness stems from a deep faith that we are enough, that love is abundant, and that even though we have been wronged, we don't have to spend our emotional energy trying to have that "debt" paid back to us. This kind of trust doesn't come easily! It takes practice to train our minds to learn to let go of what's not important, so we can make room for things that really matter. That's what Practicing Forgiveness is here to offer – a place for people to come together and focus on ways to learn to accept, forgive and love each other.

Releasing our resentments toward others requires attention, prayer and often community support – three essential components of a small group program. Our goal with this year's Journey Program involves bringing communities together around the common desire to learn to love and forgive one another. In order to do this, we have based this program on various stories Jesus tells about forgiveness, pairing each Bible story with a powerful story of forgiveness from the Forgiveness Project. Each of the five-weeks of the program has an opportunity to gather and discuss the topic with others in a small group. There are also daily readings of the Practicing Forgiveness workbook, participants are encouraged to practice some element of forgiveness, and see its application to their lives, in addition to various offerings of meditations, activities, and sermons.

We'll use our usual Monday evening (7:30-8:30pm) class time for this purpose, and, if there is enough interest, we will have another, separate small group meeting after church (11:15am-12:15pm). Anyone wishing to join by telephone is invited to join the Sunday group. ***Please let Todd or Jenn know by Jan 24 if you wish to participate in this group***; if not enough interest is expressed, Monday will be the only small group option. There will again be program workbooks available for purchase, at the cost of \$20 for a colour, spiral-bound copy or \$10 for a black & white photocopied copy: ***please let Todd or Jenn know by Jan 24 if/how many/which version you wish to purchase***. (Todd: todd@beiswenger.net, 0435 256 993; Jenn: jenn@beiswenger.net, 0411 719 754)

Letters to the Editor

Dear Todd,

You end your December 2017 Newsletter item by saying that if anyone has a better theory to what is happening in the world today (particularly re. same-sex marriage), you would be happy to hear it. I can only think that perhaps these things are part of the death throes of the former Christian Church. But on the issue of SSM and related matters, here are some of my thoughts.

I think you are saying that SSM people and their supporters are coming from a position of love, albeit natural, not spiritual, love. I am of the view that the people who engage in same-sex relationships are acting from self-love, which is an evil love. [*Editors note: I'm saying that SSM supporters are coming from a natural love, and I agree that homosexuality itself is an evil love*] Also, that SSM people and the many who support SSM from a sense that everyone is entitled to marry the person they love, are acting from a misguided sense of fairness or kindness, and are actually supporting evil, although possibly from ignorance. How far ignorance excuses SSM's and supporters, I am not sure.

My greatest fear is for all young children but particularly New Church children in non-New Church schools, who from tomorrow (Dec. 9th, 2017) can be taught that SSM is equal with conventional marriage between a man and a woman. They have already been hearing about the acceptability of "fluid gender" under the Safe Schools programme. Outside of the New Church there has never been any knowledge of the true differences in male and female minds, and that without the contribution of both genders, no union of minds is possible in a marriage. So heterosexual marriage alone can lead to a union of minds and fit people for an eternal marriage. Nor is there any understanding that gender is not set by the body but by the soul, which is prior, and which then creates for itself a body. Thus SSM, lacking the male/female interaction, cannot lead to an eternal marriage, and "gender fluidity" cannot change the gender as it cannot change the soul.

I think that the angels will weep for this day when Australia has joined many other western countries in legalising so great an aberration of marriage as SSM.

What now, I wonder, is the role of the New Church, particularly in the Western World, in providing the only possible true counter to the evils inherent in SSM and "gender fluidity", while staying within the laws of each country? How far will new laws intrude on the teachings and practices of the New Church? How far can instruction in a New Church home that is then taken to school by a child, be upheld by a mind that is not yet rational if contrary views are taught? And what protection is there for that child at school if those home-taught truths are expressed?

Considering changing world attitudes, I believe that such questions are the most critical questions for the New Church in this age.

Sincerely,
Heulwen Ridgway
Canberra.

Dear Todd,

I was reminded of the destructive nature of the locusts from the bottomless pit in Revelation 9, in particular the hair of the woman verse 8 which symbolizes the affectional appeal based on externals. "By 'hair' in the Word is signified the ultimate of a person's life, which is the sensual... This is what appears to them as if in the affection of truth, when yet they are in the affection of untruth, for they believe that to be true.(AR 434)" Then there is Smyrna - willing good but in falsities. The Writings have so much about spiritual causes and their manifestations.

Fraternally,

Dick Keyworth