

New Church

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Christmas

Understanding an Old Story in a New Way

Making Sense of the Biblical Story

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- The New Church is based on the Word of God, as revealed in the Old and New Testaments and the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.
- There is one loving, personal God, and He is the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The life of religion is to follow the Ten Commandments, and to act honestly and faithfully in our daily occupations.
- The Word of God (the Bible) has a deeper level of meaning, teaching about the Lord's essential nature and a person's spiritual development.
- Each of us continues life as a complete person immediately after the death of the body.
- God does not judge us, but we judge ourselves by what we love and how we live.
- People of every faith are saved if they live sincerely according to their religion.

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New Church Connection

Exists to inspire, inform, and connect people who are interested in the New Church. Every issue will have background information on the teachings of the New Church; inspirational content from personal testimonies and quotes from the Word; and clear information about the organized New Church (the General Church of the New Jerusalem), how to get connected, and how to get more information. Each issue will have a theme that can help enrich your spiritual journey.

Please contact the production team: David Lindrooth, Bronwen Henry, Eden King, and Midje Kerr at outreach@newchurch.org for more information, to contribute an article or personal story, or to subscribe for yourself or a friend to receive this magazine.

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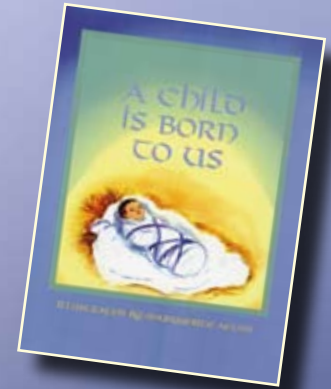
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The theme of this issue is Christmas. This is a beloved story in many cultures. Discover and share its beauty using this children's book *A Child is Born Unto Us* featuring quotations straight from the New Testament. Available online today through store.newchurch.org.



Welcome

Understanding Christmas

The Lord's coming to earth was an action of love. He came to earth with a message of hope, love and forgiveness. What is most special about Christmas time is that we remember to focus on the Lord, to give thanks for His many blessings, and to express our gratitude that He is present in our lives.

In Isaiah 40:3 it says "Prepare a way for the Lord," and in the gospels we are reminded of this prophecy. I believe that as we prepare the way for the Lord in our lives, He prepares the way for us to experience heaven on earth.

In this issue, you will find inspiring messages and insights to support you on your journey to prepare a way for the Lord. The Lord wants each one of us to be connected to Him and to have a positive relationship with Him and with others. It doesn't always feel easy to have a healthy relationship with God or the other people in our lives. In hard times, I think of a quote from Marianne Williamson that says, "Whatever isn't love is actually a call for love." The Lord is calling each of us to show love, forgiveness and hope to our neighbors, both locally and globally.

Christmas is a time to celebrate the Lord's presence in our lives. It is also a time to strive to increase the experience of His presence on this earth. Choose an action you can take today to share the hopeful message of Christmas—a message of love.

Bronwen Henry, General Church Outreach

**"Love is the essence that not only forms all things but also bonds and unites them to each other; love is the force that holds all things in connection."
True Christianity
37**



Prepare a Way for the Lord

Christmas is about honoring and remembering the Lord's birth on earth, and also His birth into our lives. Readers share how they prepare a way for the Lord in their lives:

Being aware of what a frail vessel I am, I try to examine my thoughts, motivation and deeds in order to prepare for the next step which is so beautifully expressed here: "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven" (John 3:27).

Göran Appelgren,
Sweden

The Lord's birth did not eliminate suffering. The source of all suffering is evil life. And evil is from people. As long as people live on earth evil will exist, consequently suffering and pains. He came to offer us a sense of inner peace, and hope to keep up with the challenges throughout our spiritual journey. We experience a state of inner peace when we give up our selfish way of thinking and doing things.

Sylvain Agnes,
Ivory Coast

Whenever I have trouble, I still my heart, and pray that the Lord's loving-kindness dwells in my heart. If it works successfully, it might be the birth or coming of the Lord in my heart at every moment. Asking help from the Lord is my preparing the way for Him.

Shiro Matsumoto,
Japan

One of the most precious teachings for me is that if we reject evils as sins, the Lord's love will flow in to replace them. If an unkind thought or a frightening image pops (often uninvited) into our heads we can simply say "Go away, I want no part in this, I am the Lord's child" and know that good from the Lord will fill the space.

Janey Moore,
South Africa

In thinking about Christmas and the Lord's coming into the world, I am reminded of how I prepare for company coming to my home for a visit. I straighten up, get rid of cobwebs, prepare a special meal, and get myself into a giving mood. That is the least I could do to welcome the Lord into my life! I'd begin by straightening up my thinking, making sure it's positive and true. The cobwebs of old hurts and painful memories must be swept away. I'd spend time preparing a feast of good deeds, loving feelings, and positive words. Lastly, I'd put myself into a calm, reverent mood to be ready to receive my Guest.

Betsy Gladish, USA



Seeking Answers

Questions about the New Church and Christmas

Q Why was God born on earth?

A Jesus Christ's birth and subsequent life on earth was the perfect way to teach people of all ages about the true nature of the Divine. In Jesus Christ we see how Human that Divine life is. In His life and interaction with the sick, the poor and those who betrayed Him, we see how the Divine works with us when we brush up against evil in our lives.

In His resurrection on Easter Morning we see His ultimate power over death and the heavenly kingdom He offers us all. These New Testament stories paint a complete and deeply beautiful picture of how He, as the Human God, interacts with us today, constantly, with all of His life, to bless us and yet all the while completely respecting our ability to freely choose how to live.

Q Why did the wise men bring such odd gifts?

A Because they knew what these gifts meant spiritually. (See article on p.19 for further explanation.)

Q Who was running things when the Lord came on earth?

A God is life itself. When Jesus was born, God still filled the universe,

but He flowed into that Child in a special way that had not happened before. In that Child was the Divine itself, which would grow over time, through trial and victory over the power of hell, until even the human part of Him from His mother, was glorified and became Divine.



Many people, including children, wonder—"Who was running things when the Lord came on earth?"

Q Is a belief in One God necessary to go to heaven?

A In the New Church, when we talk about "belief," we are talking about something done not merely with our minds or our mouths, but also (and more particularly) through the actions of our lives. In the introduction to *True Christian Religion* it says, for instance, "To believe in Him is to have confidence that He saves; and because

only those who live good lives can have such confidence, this too is meant by believing in Him." Since the Lord is the very source of Good Itself, there are many people who have a start at believing in Him without even realizing it. For example, people raised to intellectually believe in a pantheon of divine persons, yet who inwardly put living a useful and charitable life above themselves, are worshipping the Lord. After death, when they are introduced to the truth that there are not many gods, but One, who is Love Itself and Wisdom Itself, it will not be hard for them to see how they had been worshipping Him all along.

Q Is there any way for a person to know for sure that they will go to heaven?

A We can get a sense that we are on the path to heaven when we are doing what is right. The New Church teaches that it is difficult to go to hell. In order to do so, one has to 1) deny God, and 2) pervert or falsify the Truth (Word) at every opportunity. It is easier to live the life of heaven than many

believe. The Lord created us for heaven. It is necessary that when anything we know to be unjust or dishonest presents itself we turn away from it not participate in it and saying: "I will not do that, because it is opposed to the Lord's Commandments". By establishing this habit of thinking, it becomes easier and easier to deal with temptations.

Q What is the New Church perspective on the First and the Second Advents?

A The New Church celebrates the first advent of the Lord's birth on earth at Christmas time. It is also part of New Church beliefs that the Second Advent takes place, not in person, but in the Lord's coming into our understanding in a new way through the revelation transcribed by Emanuel Swedenborg. And the teachings of this Second Advent help us to understand the powerful story of the first advent.

Thank you to David Lindrooth, Grant Schnarr, Mac Frazier and Mark Perry for their collaborative effort on answering these questions.



"Everywhere in the Word (Old and New Testaments) there are internal things which never appear at all in the external things except a very few which the Lord revealed and explained." *Arcana Coelestia* 1

Changing Lives

Understanding Christmas

In each issue we include stories of lives changed by the teachings of the New Church. In this **Changing Lives** article there is special emphasis on the journey to peace and recovery as **Peggy Gallup** (pictured to the right) embraces the New Church.

I grew up a Methodist, in a loving home in Missouri. At age eighteen I entered the University of Missouri, began to drink and activated my disease of alcoholism. Twenty years later, (many controversial facts and events not listed here) I entered recovery. Little did I know that Bill and Lois (Burnham) Wilson would enter my spiritual quest from another route—that of the New Church.



Being essentially human and therefore, flawed, I had been looking pretty much all of my life for a loving, aware “home church” that made sense. I had been

“Believing my sins were washed away just didn’t seem like enough accountability on my part.”

saved several times in a couple churches, but believing my sins were washed away just didn’t seem like enough accountability on my part. I somehow felt like I had stolen cookies from the cookie jar and didn’t have to return them. Not to mention that my heart, body and soul were weeping a lot from the lack of a living God in my world.

Enter, the New Church. I received a flyer in the mail from Erik Buss, Pastor, Cascade New Church. The words were different. There was implied responsibility on my part to seek God, admit my wrongs, make restitution and be useful. Sounded like recovery to me.

Erik Buss told me there was a relationship between Bill and Lois Wilson and the New Church. What?!!! That was six years and nine months ago. That was one wonderful Evangelization weekend in Colorado ago, one incredible General Church Assembly [Event for New Church people from around the world] ago, and a spiritual journey like no other.

These days I receive tapes from New Church Audio. The rich flow of pastoral wisdom and love is amazing. I am speechless to express how moved I am by the Writings and the way that The General Church of the New Jerusalem has made the Word available to us. And the people—oh my word—I have never met so many wonderful people. There is a depth and a peace that is palpable. You have given me a living God, a heaven, a belief and a way to find it.

I am not a trained musician, yet my body, mind and soul are soothed, nurtured, fed and stimulated by witnessing a symphony by a composer, who may be unknown to me. This is my experience of the New Church.

I am not an expert in the Word or New Church language, however, my body, mind and soul are directed toward a home that I have searched for, for many years. I am restored and challenged to go forward, seeking more character building, more peace and more honing in order to be useful. Is there anything more important than that? I don’t think so. More will be revealed if I continue to try to seek the Lord and do His work well. Thank you, Lord, for the New Church.



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Making Sense of Christmas



The Christmas story has levels of meaning. Rev. Jeremy Simons takes a closer look.

The imagery of Christmas is likely to captivate you, whether Christmas itself makes logical sense to you or not. You don't need to understand all the doctrine to want to be home for the holidays, but the holidays may be more satisfying if you see the reason for the season.

A Message of Hope
Christmas is about peace on earth, about freedom from captivity, about healing the broken-hearted. The confidence that this will really happen is what Christian faith is all about. Christmas is not just for children. It is a time for people to appreciate the wisdom and the grace of God.

Levels of Meaning
The New Church teaches the Christmas story as written in the Gospels. According to New Church teaching, every detail of the story is true, and every word is full of meaning.

The bright star shone in the darkness to represent the truth that had come to a dark world. He was laid in a manger because He would spiritually feed the human race. There was no room in the inn because there was no room for God in people's hearts. He was born to a virgin because He was the Son of God, and also because a virgin stands for the pure love that accepts God into every person's heart.

He was born among the poor, because He was to "put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalt the lowly" (Luke 1). This is also why the angels did not appear to rulers but to simple shepherds. A spiritual star appeared to the wise men, not because they were astronomers but because of the ancient wisdom they possessed.

Light in Darkness
Christmas is the celebration of the coming of the Lord Himself into the world, born as a tiny infant, to save the human race. "It is a universal principle of faith that no mortal could have been saved unless the Lord had come into the world. It is a universal principle

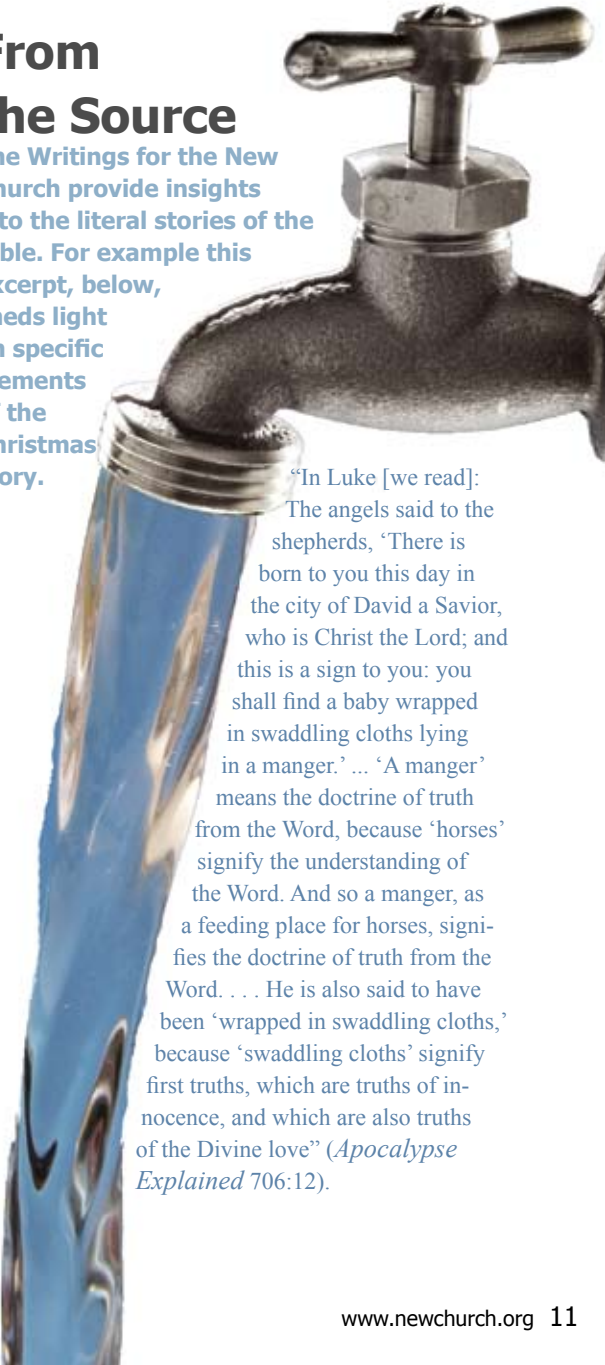
of faith that He came to remove hell from mankind" (*True Christian Religion* 2).

The Lord's birth brought light into the darkness of that time, a spiritual darkness that had been building since the time of the Garden of Eden. He came to dispel that darkness by teaching the truth and by overcoming the forces of evil in spiritual battle. "For at that time the power of hell prevailed over the power of heaven, and the power of evil prevailed over the power of good on earth. Consequently, a total damnation stood threatening at the door" (*True Christian Religion* 3).

The Christmas season is a celebration of ancient wisdom and the promise of peace on earth. May your holiday be filled with God's blessings, and especially that blessing of a light shining in the darkness, amidst the songs of angels. ■

From the Source

The Writings for the New Church provide insights into the literal stories of the Bible. For example this excerpt, below, sheds light on specific elements of the Christmas story.



"In Luke [we read]: The angels said to the shepherds, 'There is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord; and this is a sign to you: you shall find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths lying in a manger.' ... 'A manger' means the doctrine of truth from the Word, because 'horses' signify the understanding of the Word. And so a manger, as a feeding place for horses, signifies the doctrine of truth from the Word. . . . He is also said to have been 'wrapped in swaddling cloths,' because 'swaddling cloths' signify first truths, which are truths of innocence, and which are also truths of the Divine love" (*Apocalypse Explained* 706:12).

25 Readings

for Christmas

Find daily hope and inspiration



God will shine forth. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent.
Psalm 50:2-3

The Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14

The light of heaven is Divine truth, and all things that are in heaven, have existence from the light there. *Apocalypse Explained* 33

The Lord loves everyone, and, from love, desires that His glory, that is, Divine truth, may be in all people. *Apocalypse Explained* 33

Since the Father is within the Lord, and the Father and the Lord are one, and since people must believe in Him, and whoever believes in Him has eternal life, it is evident that the Lord is God. *Arcana Coelestia* 10819

The Lord's presence is unceasing with every human being, both the evil and the good, for without His presence no person lives. *True Christian Religion* 774

The Lord's church on earth is like the heart, from which the human race, even the part outside of the church, has life. *Arcana Coelestia* 637

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant. Luke 1:46-48

Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Isaiah 40:3

Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, God, Mighty, Father of eternity, Prince of peace. Isaiah 9:6

The Lord had two chief ends in view in coming into the world, to distance hell from angels and human beings, and to glorify His Human. *True Christian Religion* 579

The promise was made of the Lord's coming into the world, who should unite the Human to the Divine, and by this union effect in Himself the conjunction of the human race by means of the faith of love and charity. *Arcana Coelestia* 2034:6

All natural truth that has spiritual truth present within it possesses power. *Arcana Coelestia* 4876:9

I will praise you, for you have answered me, and have become my salvation. Psalm 118:21

The Holy Spirit is Divine Truth proceeding from the Lord. *Apocalypse Revealed* 343:3

The Lord was filled repeatedly with an inmost confidence and faith that, because it was pure love out of which He was fighting for the salvation of the whole human race, He could not but be victorious. *Arcana Coelestia* 1812

He was like any other human being, except that He was conceived from Jehovah, yet born of a woman who was a virgin, and that by birth from her He took on all the weaknesses that are common to all. These weaknesses are bodily, and He was to depart from them in order that celestial and spiritual things might be brought into view for Him. *Arcana Coelestia* 1414

In Isaiah, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. You have multiplied the nation" (Isaiah 9:2, 3) specifically refers to the Church of the nations, but in general to all who are without knowledge but lead charitable lives. These are "the nation" because they are members of the Lord's kingdom. *Arcana Coelestia* 1416:5

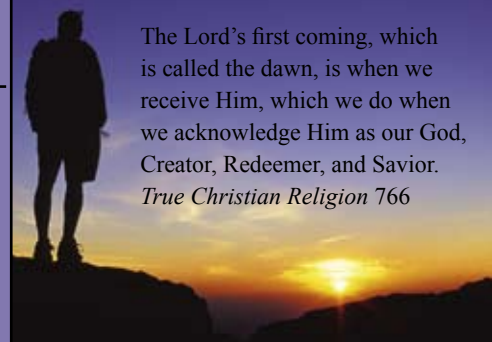
Since, then, it was God who descended, and since He is Order itself, it was necessary, if He was to become a human being actually, that He should be conceived, carried in the womb, born, educated, acquire knowledge gradually, and by this be introduced into intelligence and wisdom. *True Christian Religion* 89

"The glory of the Lord shall be revealed." Isaiah 40:5 "The glory" which will be revealed is the Word on its more internal levels. *Arcana Coelestia* 9926:4

For it is a law of order that in proportion as a person approaches and gets near to God (which he must do wholly as though from himself) so does God approach and get near to the person, and conjoin Himself with the person in the person's interiors. *True Christian Religion* 89

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined. Isaiah 9:2

The Lord was born in Bethlehem because He was born a king, and truth conjoined to good was with Him from birth. *Apocalypse Explained* 449:3



The Lord's first coming, which is called the dawn, is when we receive Him, which we do when we acknowledge Him as our God, Creator, Redeemer, and Savior. *True Christian Religion* 766

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Led Out of Darkness



The shepherds were led out of darkness; **David Lindrooth** shares how this parallels the path each of us can travel to find to the Lord in times of darkness.

Christmas is a time of celebration. It is also a time of strengthening one's relationship with Jesus Christ, born so many years ago, who is God in human form. Part of the beauty and underlying serenity of the Christmas season comes from the recognition that the Lord was born on earth in order to offer His divine blessings of peace and heavenly happiness to all of humanity. Each part of the Christ-

mas story has relevance for our life. Think of the shepherds being visited by an angel and told about the Lord's birth. The shepherds, we read, "were out in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring

you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.'" (Luke 2:8-11)

This historic story is beautiful. It is written with a deeper meaning which sheds light on how we can discover the Lord's presence, even in periods of intense darkness in our spiritual lives. We are taught to think of the 'night' in the story as those times in our lives when we feel we lack the Lord's guidance in our

This historic story is written with a deeper meaning that gives direction to our spiritual lives.

lives. It might be a time when a negative emotion, such as anger, greed or contempt, blinds the sight of our spiritual path. It might be a time when fear or self doubt rule over us. In these times the darkness and confusion

Part of the beauty and underlying serenity of the Christmas season comes from the recognition that the Lord was born on earth in order to offer His divine blessings of peace and heavenly happiness to all of humanity.



cause us to wander off the path that the Lord provides for us. And still we are not alone.

The angel came to the shepherds. These simple herdsmen were skilled at leading, feeding, protecting and caring for their sheep. In fact, the shepherds knew each sheep so well that the sheep were familiar with their names and the shepherds could direct them simply by calling them.

The shepherds were the first to hear of the Lord's birth because the protective relationship that they had with their flock represents the part of us that first recognizes the presence of the Lord

in our lives. The Writings for the New Church teach that a sheep represents a way the Lord blesses us in our lives. It's something good, truly good, that is a gift from Him. It might be in the form of a relationship one has with one's spouse. It might be a talent or skill, such as an artistic ability. The shepherds in the story represent the part of us that cares for these blessings, that protects them and provides for their development. They are also the part of us that seeks to connect our blessings with guiding statements from the Word.

The message here in the advent story is uplifting. When things are dark and confusing, if we follow the life (represented by the shepherds) by looking after goodness that comes from the Lord, living charitably, and using the guidance of truth, we too will come to experience the Lord's birth.

Think of a person overwhelmed with worry. He is awake at night, afraid and unsure what to do. This person, when he begins to act as a spiritual shepherd by reflecting on how he can care for some goodness in his or

then reflect on how we can nurture those blessings with the guidance of the Word, the Lord often seems suddenly present, bringing new clarity to the situation. This can be as powerful as it was that night when

When things are dark and confusing, if we exercise the life represented by the shepherd by looking after the goodness that comes from the Lord and living charitably, we too will come to experience the Lord's birth.

her life and meditating on what guidance the Word provides for that, will be shown how to find the Lord. For example, meditating on a passage, like the one from *Arcana Coelestia* 8455, "Peace has in it confidence in the Lord" might help that person to turn over those anxious thoughts to the Lord and find relief.

It is amazing to me how powerfully this works to dispel dark states of mind. If we identify the gifts that the Lord has entrusted into our care, and

the angel appeared to the shepherds and "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 'Glory to God in the Highest and on earth peace, good will toward men' (Luke 2:13-14). To feel that peace, consider the blessings in your life relative to your concerns. Reflect a moment and ask yourself how the Lord would direct you to care for those blessings. With light from the Word you can be guided to a place of peace. ■



Do you want to learn more about the life of Jesus Christ on earth?

You may be interested in the book, *The Path*, by G.S. Childs that explores the Lord's life.

Available today, at store. newchurch.org or call 267-502-4980

Giving and Receiving

BY ERIC CARSWELL

Do you have trouble being a good receiver of gifts? If we can feel the joy of others as our own it is a sign of our love for them (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 47) and if we love others then their joy in giving to us could be a joy that we feel when we receive a gift from them. Maybe a person who has trouble receiving happily has the bad habit of listening to self-deprecating thoughts, or perhaps she has herself so well trained to focus on giving that she avoids paying attention to the joy she could feel coming from someone else's love. If a person has trouble taking delight in another's expressions of love for him, then how will he sense the Lord's love for him and delight in the gifts He has to offer? What is Christmas all about if we cannot feel peace in knowing that the Lord loves us so much that He chose to come to us, born as a little infant in a simple stable? He was born in order to make Himself accessible to us, born in order to bring us the spiritual freedom that allows us to choose to be wisely loving human beings. The Lord said, "I am come that you might have life and have it more abundantly." Each moment of each day, the Lord comes to us to give us the gift of life.

Change the Focus

This Christmas when you receive a gift and find yourself starting on a chain of thought that discounts its meaning, change your focus, turning your eyes and mind to the joy of the giver.



This is a time of year when many people choose to give gifts to friends and family. Consider the following to make your gift special:

- ★ Personalize your gift
- ★ Make something yourself
- ★ Think of their needs
- ★ Give the gift of time—be there for them
- ★ Include message to encourage them on their spiritual journey
- ★ Give a gift in their name to your church or favorite charity

Mysterious Gifts Unwrapped

The unique gifts of the wise men have lost their meaning to many today. David Roth reminds us what they are all about.

In the Christmas story we see the integrity of Joseph, the innocence of Mary, the responsiveness of the shepherds, and the perseverance of the wise men. We hear the words of the angels to the shepherds: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Personally we may be thinking, "When will I have the integrity, willingness, perseverance, responsiveness and peace described here?" The answer is, when we take aim and set foot on the journey—the most important journey of our existence, our spiritual journey. The Word of God is all about journeys—and ultimately it teaches us about our inner journey from self-centeredness and negative attitudes to possessing positive qualities from the Lord.

One specific journey in the Word is the wise men's journey to visit the infant Messiah. A common question we may have about this journey is, "Why did they bring such unusual gifts? What use did these gifts have to the Lord as a baby?"

The wise men presented the Lord with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh for a reason. Symbolically, these treasures picture what we must offer to the Lord in order to attain spiritual life. The meanings of these gifts are described in the teachings for the New Church.

Gold symbolizes love, or the commitment in our hearts to love the Lord. Loving the Lord means to love others and to approach them with kindness, compassion, hope for their happiness, and a desire to contribute to that happiness. Frankincense symbolizes devoting our thoughts to the Lord, only entertaining thoughts that would be in sync with the attitudes pictured by our gold offering. The final gift, myrrh, symbolizes doing what the Word teaches. It is about our conduct—the way we live. Gifts of only gold and frankincense are not enough. Good intentions and good feelings are nothing if we do not attempt to manifest them in our outward life.

Each of us is on a journey. It is important to know that the Lord is with us on our journey, working to inspire us and lead us to lasting happiness. The more we can offer Him our love, our thoughts, and our life, the better He can lead us to fulfillment and joy.

14 Ways to Celebrate Christmas

In addition to attending your local church's Christmas events, consider doing some of the following to help enrich this special time of year:

Explore the Story

Read the Christmas Story (Luke 1:8-38 and 2:8-20, Matthew 1:1-25 and 2:13-21) together with your spouse, family, or friends. When reading with children, consider acting out a dramatization of the story.

Share Your Love

Take time to share what Christmas means to you with someone.

A nativity or representation helps to illustrate the Christmas story.



A Time to Give

Spend time serving your greater community. Volunteer to serve those in need—the lonely, elderly, the imprisoned, the homeless, the ill.

Visual Reminder

Set up a nativity in your home. This can be a great reminder that the Lord is the most important aspect of Christmas.

Surprise, Surprise

Do something kind and loving for someone without them knowing.



Making the days leading to Christmas special.

Light in Darkness

Hold a candlelight reading from the Lord's Word. Perhaps read together with your small group or family and have each person light a candle after they have read a verse. Witness the beauty of the Lord's light coming into the darkness.

Spread the Cheer

Call a friend you have been out of touch with and let that person know you are thinking of him or her. Send cards to old friends and new friends.

Gifts of Love

Consider not exchanging standard gifts with family, friends and co-workers this year. Instead donate in their names to your local church or favorite charity.

Children in Need

Purchase gifts for people in need, such as children whose parents are imprisoned, or children in war-torn countries. There are many organizations that help make this happen.

Honor Your Church

Your local church works hard to create a loving space for worship, fellowship and discipleship. Consider getting a gift for your Sunday School classrooms or sanctuary.

Nourish the Spirit

Make a meal for a family in need and deliver it with joyful sentiments for the season. Invite people who are alone this year over to your house for Christmas dinner.

Time of Reflection

Create one quiet moment each day leading up to Christmas to read and reflect on the true meaning of the season. Consider using the 25 readings on p.12-13. For children, consider using an advent calendar (available at store.newchurch.org).

Walk the Walk

Read the story of the wise men (Matthew 2:1-12) then go on a walk and think of their journey to see the Lord.



Advent calendars bring daily joy to adults and children in anticipating the birthday of the Lord.

Christmas Morning

Start the day by reading aloud from the Christmas story (perhaps Isaiah 60:1,2,19).

More Activities Online

Many of these activities (and so many more) are outlined in more detail on www.newchurchvineyard.org.

Check it out today! Including projects for children, families and adults.





The New Church (General Church of the New Jerusalem) has congregations on every continent around the world. When you travel to different congregations you will notice that they may emphasize different worship styles. One congregation might have recorded music, another might have drums and guitars, and yet another an organ or choirs. As various as the music and styles of worship may be, you will find people at each congregation inspired and dedicated to the powerful teachings of the New Church. All people are welcome to join in worship and participate in the life and community of the church.

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Find a New Church Near You

The New Church (General Church of the New Jerusalem) has its headquarters in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, USA, and has congregations around the world. Find a congregation near you and get connected today. Look online at www.newchurch.org/locations or call 1.877.411.HOPE (4673) or 267.502.4911 for more information.

Did you know?

The General Church of the New Jerusalem is one of numerous organizations dedicated to the teachings revealed through Emanuel Swedenborg.

- **God is Love** and nothing but what is good can come from God, because His very nature is Love. God came to this world in the form of Jesus Christ, who is the one and only God.
- **The Old and New Testaments** have a deeper meaning, revealed in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, which help people learn how to live happy and useful lives to eternity.
- **All religions have goodness** in them. There are many paths and gates into the heavenly city, New Jerusalem.
- **Heaven is for everyone** who wants to live there. Heaven is where people (angels) love God and others and want to be useful. While people are free to choose to live in hell, God wants everyone to live with Him in heaven to eternity.
- **There will be no "last judgment"** for God does not judge us, but we judge ourselves by what we love and how we live. People who love God and try to live a good life according to what they believe to be true are saved.
- **Marriage can last forever** for God blesses people with a special love in marriage that goes on after death, even to eternity.
- **God's providence is powerful** and unending. God guides each person's spiritual path, from the smallest things up to the biggest things, and His angels are with us every moment.

We cannot become angels, that is, come into heaven, unless we bring something of an angelic character from living in this world.

Divine Providence 60



We can become
one with God
only through love
and loving actions;
love being the essence
of spiritual connection.

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www.newchurch.org

Find information on:

- Local Congregations
- Purchasing Books
- Sermons
- Membership



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