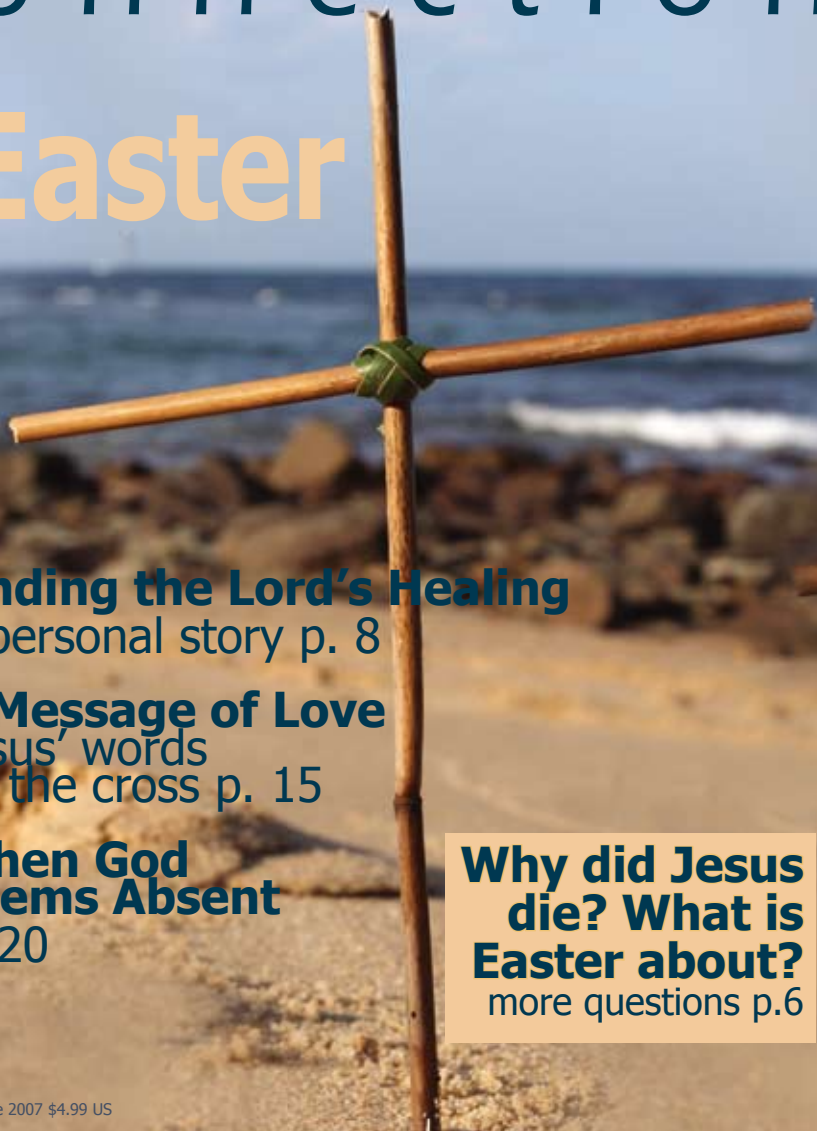


New Church

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Easter



Finding the Lord's Healing

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A Message of Love

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on the cross p. 15

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www.newchurch.org



New Church Teachings



Easter

- 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 Lumsden, Abigail Echols 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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Explore this new compilation from Swedenborg's most popular book, *Heaven and Hell*. Don Rose, editor, selects passages to reflect the sequence of events that occur when an individual arrives in the spiritual world. Available online today at store.newchurch.org.

Welcome

Easter

One of our primary goals at General Church Outreach is to help all people explore and embrace the beautiful teachings of the New Church that are a path to a deep commitment with a loving God.

The theme of this issue is Easter. There are so many questions that come up in this story about the nature of God, the purpose of His time on earth, and the impact of His journey on our lives. We thought it would be useful to dedicate an entire issue to exploring some of these ideas.

One of the most inspiring parts of the Easter Story, for me, is knowing that the Lord knows my struggles and challenges and has already overcome them. Whatever I'm doing, I find great comfort knowing the Lord is with me.

May you feel the Lord's presence as you remember the many things He has done and continues to do for you.

Blessings,
Bronwen Henry, General Church Outreach

Read the Easter Story

Throughout sacred scripture there are references to the Lord's coming and His resurrection. To read specifically about the days leading up to His crucifixion and resurrection, you may consider exploring the following passages:

Matthew 16:21-27, 20:17-28, 21:1-11, 26:1-75, 27:11-66, 28:1-20.
True Christian Religion 787 & 109 (you can read from the Writings for the New Church online at www.heavenlydoctrines.org)



The Lord continues to be present with us through His Word, the Holy Bible.

Perspectives on Knowing God

Readers respond to the questions "How do you have a relationship with the Lord?" or "How do you deepen your commitment to the Lord?"

When I'm feeling distant from the Lord, I turn to serving Him by serving my neighbors. I'm always amazed how performing useful service reconnects us.
Amos Glenn, Pittsburgh, PA

Every morning I read the Word, and spend time in meditation and prayer, which strengthens my relationship with the Lord.
Yong Jin, Philadelphia, PA

I believe one deepens his commitment to the Lord as much as he or she does everything for the sake of the good and happiness of his neighbor. In my opinion, our commitment to the Lord is deeply connected with our commitment to our neighbors. There is no way to reach a life according to the Word apart from our relationship with our neighbors.
Vicente Nobre, Sao Paulo, Brazil

Daily prayers for help and to be a good servant. Daily reading of Old and New Testament and Writings for the New Church. Daily meditation. Daily time focused on praise and gratitude. Daily meetings with others who seek to allow God into their lives. Daily time in nature, recalling that it is a reflection of Him. Try to sense the light and love of God in others.
-Anonymous

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

In the New Church, the name 'Lord' is often used to summarize all facets and qualities of the higher power we worship, the Lord God Jesus Christ.

The union of the Lord with angels takes place according to their acceptance of the quality of love and thoughtfulness from Him. *Arcana Coelestia* 904



Seeking Answers

Questions about the New Church and Easter

Easter

Q What is Easter about?

A The Easter story is a historic story of the end of Jesus' life on earth. It is also a spiritual story, in which Jesus showed His followers that His love was more powerful than the crucifixion that his enemies brought upon Him. He offers all people the power of His love as they seek His spiritual guidance to solve the many challenges encountered in life in this world.

Q What does the New Church teach about Salvation?

A The New Church teaches that all people of all faiths will go to heaven if they believe in one God and live in charity and kindness according to the principles of their religion's persuasion. It is what is in your heart that determines your eternal condition, not what is in your mind only, or the words on your tongue, or the membership card in your wallet. When people arrive in the spiritual world after the death of the physical body, they are not asked, "What is your religion?" but rather, "What is your life?"

Q Does Faith Alone Save?

A New Church teachings explain that "Religion is of Life, and the Life of Religion is to do

good" *Doctrine of Life* 1. True faith is trust and confidence in the Lord which is reflected in one's life. One can find salvation not through works alone or faith alone, but through a life of faith and charity together.

Q Why did Jesus die on the cross?

A Traditional Christianity teaches that the human race had turned away from God and God was angry and ready to destroy the human race, that Jesus interceded and offered the sacrifice of Himself, to die, to appease the wrath of the Father. It teaches that we are saved by acknowledging that Jesus, by dying on the cross, took upon Himself all the sins of the human race, and by a confession of belief in His sacrifice all of our sins are washed away and we are saved—made acceptable to God and able to enter into



Exploring your questions about faith.

heaven. This is why an emphasis on a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is stressed by traditional Christian theology. It is, in their eyes, the way, and the only way, to heaven.

New Christianity teaches that God saved the human race by coming on earth, but He didn't come to die. He came to restore freedom to human beings so we could again be free to choose. Before the Lord came to earth, the influence of hell had risen to such a level that it was essentially choking off the life from God with the human race. It was like a completely cloudy and polluted atmosphere which needed to be purified. The Lord cleared the way by taking on the attacks of the hells with His vulnerable humanity, and by His own strength putting them under lock and key so that they didn't over-extend their influence and cause an imbalance. The final battle was the one on the cross, but it was not the only battle. When Jesus proclaimed on the cross, "It is finished," He was declaring that He had accomplished all the work He came to do against the hells. On Easter morning His body was no longer in the tomb because all that was human was unified with the Divine, and made Divine.

Q If there is only one God, why does Jesus 'pray to the Father' on the cross as if to someone else?

A At times in the New Testament Jesus either speaks or prays to His "Father", the Divine Life within. While Jesus was in the process of uniting the inner divinity with Himself, that interior life was independent enough that He referred to it as a separate being, His "Father". When Jesus was resurrected on Easter, the uniting process was complete, so that the inner divine life was fully present even in the most external parts of Jesus' risen body.

Q Why are there not more symbols of the cross in the New Church?

A Attending New Church congregations around the world, you will notice diversity in imagery used to reflect faith. You may notice fewer images of the cross than you are used to seeing in other churches, because the New Church puts the emphasis on the Risen Lord, not on his suffering on the cross.

Seeking Answers is written by the editorial team and in this issue is supplemented by the website www.bouldernew-church.org

Changing Lives

Easter

In each issue we include stories of lives changed by the teachings of the New Church. In this issue Jane McIntyre shares the story of how she was led from a life without any conscious spirituality to finding the Lord's healing in New Church teachings and community.

I would like to share my story with you, even though parts of it are difficult, because I know that being silent about such things gives evil spirits more power. I think that there is a reason—call it Providence—that has led me from a life without any recognizable form of spirituality, to the New Church, and that there is a reason to be writing this today. I hope that reading it will be of value to you, in the way of reinforcing the reason to cherish and grow what we have in this very special New Church community.

I think of my spiritual journey in a way that one would pack one's bags and move to a new country. You have to take stock and choose only the useful things.

Let me start by describing the old country. It was far from being all bad. I was brought up in a loving home where my parents wanted the best for me and taught me many good things, including a commitment to marriage. There were only three real problems: it seemed to me that their love was conditional on my not letting them down; we never spoke about God; and we never spoke about sex. I did not have a supportive New Church upbringing and the sense of being prepared for life's challenges, and boy do I regret it!

Without a foundation of God's love and acceptance, something happened that I did not know how to handle. When I started high school a man who was a church youth leader and school teacher abused me. This event had enormous and invasive repercussions,



Jane McIntyre, from the Westville New Church in South Africa, with her daughter.

a fact which I understood only many years later. You see, I never spoke about it and just pretended it never happened. Today, 30 years later, I still haven't told my parents. I thought that avoiding issues would make them go away. However, that's not the way it works. Through this experience, I bought into so many false ideas, which I didn't even realize had anything to do with it. I saw God as a vengeful, punishing being, for whom I had not made the grade. Old Testament stories frightened me: I had visions of being left to drown while good people went off in the ark. I lived with mixed up ideas for many years and made some bad choices. At the age of 19, I endured the painful experience of having a baby and giving her up for adoption. I have since learned that this is a common circumstance for people who have previously been abused.

What a mess!

You can imagine that I am grateful to have journeyed out of that country. Meeting Craig was a key

turning point for me, and I now believe that the Lord helped me make a choice of partner that I wasn't sensible enough to have made on my own. I could not have found a husband with more integrity. I can honestly attest

What kind of Christianity is this, that's not judgmental? We had no idea that such a way of thinking existed.

to the healing power of a strong, faithful, supportive marriage, and that's even before our marriage was further strengthened by coming to church. Having children was another miracle that made me wonder if there wasn't really a God, and a loving one at that, after all.

It was when we were looking for the right school environment that I knew I had to find the support for my children that I never had as a kid. Luckily for me, I'd met some good ambassadors for Kainon School and

the New Church—people I'd met in the neighborhood who stood out as good, caring citizens.

I clearly remember the first time I walked into Kainon (New Church) School, and the almost tangible love and care that overwhelmed me. There was no doubt that I wanted to send my kids to Kainon, and I thank the Lord that we managed to get in.

A pivotal moment for us took place during a discussion with new school parents. It was just after 9/11, and someone asked Erik Buss, the pastor and principal of the school, a question along the lines of, "those guys are going to hell, right?" and I remember catching Craig's eye as we waited to see what the preacher man would say. We were expecting the "Muslim Infidel burn in hell" rhetoric. Well, he caught us completely off guard! He gave such a refreshing answer, Craig and I looked at each other: what kind of Christianity is this, that's not judgmental? Wow! This is interesting! We

had no idea that such a way of thinking existed. That triggered my decision to come to church to hear more. I must say, it took several weeks to pluck up the courage to get ready on a Sunday morning and announce to my husband that I was off to church. Church? Yes, church! Craig followed three weeks later, and now the habit of church on a Sunday is one that we can't do without.

A traumatic yet very significant thing happened only two weeks after I started coming to church. I believe it to be Providence that now that I had found the environment to introduce spirituality into my life, I was faced with the challenge of dealing with the falsities I had bought into all those years ago. Twenty-seven years after having been sexually abused, and yet only two weeks after starting to come to church, I walked into a room in our neighborhood and saw the perpetrator. This event opened the floodgates for a long, painful healing process. It's sad that for all those 27 years, I had thought

the abuse must have been my fault.

Now that I realized whose fault it really was, I felt obliged to warn Erik about this person possibly having access to our children, and in the process

I have finally made my peace with the Old Testament, because now I see the Lord through different eyes, and because I now can take it for its deeper meaning rather than at its seemingly brutal face value.

I found a pastor who has been a pillar of support to me. I finally learned to recognize false ideas and false gods for what they are, and to move forward. On this journey, I can never be grateful enough to have had Erik as my steadfast compass to show me true North. He and his wife Ann have become exceptional

friends, who continue to have a major impact on our lives.

It has been really interesting to see the power of new daily habits, from saying a blessing at dinner to reading the Word, and I now know that whatever is worth doing has to become a part of the fabric of living every single day if it is to be done at all. Having had an experience of both spiritual countries—with and without active spirituality—we are consciously choosing the habits that really work for us. I have finally made my peace with the Old Testament, because now I see the Lord through different eyes, and because I now can take it for its deeper meaning rather than at its seemingly brutal face value. Far from being about to leave me behind, the Lord really does love me unconditionally. I understand the power of choosing Love instead of Fear and Guilt. This realization and these new habits have brought about a sense of internal purpose and peace, and a shift in what is really important in life. There

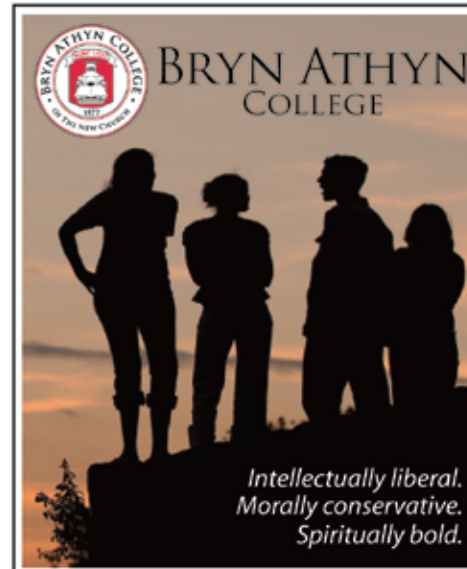
are some unexpected treasures in New Church doctrine, such as true Christian marriage being forever. What a beautiful gift! I would love to share life forever with Craig. I still face some challenges in the Writings that are problematic for me, but for the first time, my life does make sense, and I am aware of the various pieces of the puzzle fitting together. A special piece of that puzzle is still falling into place with the baby girl I gave up for adoption. I'm getting to know Angela as an adult, and hoping to find a way

to be a positive force in her life.

Craig and I are so grateful that we are able to give our kids the one gift we value more than anything else we could do for them, and that is, to send them to Kainon School and to bring them up within a community that lives according to the Lord's values. I know that they will face challenges in their lives, albeit different ones, but I am confident that they are in a better position to handle them than I was.

That's not to say that we

don't still face parenting challenges, especially with the things kids can be exposed to today, be it through the Internet, cellphones or just people with different values. I will do all in my power to protect and prepare my children, and am deeply grateful for the foundation that the New Church has provided. For better or worse, we're here to stay, so thank you to the New Church for being a powerful catalyst in changing our lives. ■



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40 Readings for Easter

Daily hope and inspiration

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil (Matthew 6:13).

I am your savior, and your redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob (Isaiah 49:26).

Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow (Isaiah 1:18).

Great is Your mercy toward me, And You have delivered my soul from the depths of the lowest hell (Psalm 86:13).

Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He will strengthen your heart (Psalm 27:14).

I cried out to You, O Lord; and to the Lord I made supplication (Psalm 30:8).

All the good which is of love, and all the truth which is of faith, flow in through the heavens from the Lord, and they cannot flow in unless the hells are removed (*Arcana Coelestia* 10019:3).

The Lord came into the world that He might save the human race, which otherwise would have perished in eternal death (*New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* 293).

They will deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify Him. And the third day He will rise again (Matthew 20:19).

The whole of the Lord, and the whole of His redemption, are present in the Holy Supper (*True Christian Religion* 716-717).

If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me (Matthew 16:24).

Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many (Matthew 25:21).

Every man who is saved ascends into heaven, but not of himself. He ascends by the Lord's aid. The Lord alone ascended of Himself (*Doctrine of the Lord* 35:11).

Fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and truth, and put away the gods your fathers served (Joshua 24:14).

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28).

The Lord's love for the whole human race was the Lord's life in this world. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2253).

When a person is in temptations, the Lord fights for him, conquers the evil spirits who are infesting him, and after temptation glorifies him, that is, renders him spiritual (*True Christian Religion* 599).

Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven (Mark 10:21).

I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Your word (Psalm 119:101).

Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven (Matthew 10:32).

The Lord came into the world to subjugate the hells and glorify His Human, and that the passion of the cross was the last combat by which He fully conquered the hells and fully glorified His Human (*Doctrine of Life* 34).

Prepare the way of the Lord (Mark 1:3).

The Lord was assaulted by all the hells, against which He continually fought, subjugated and overcame, and this solely from love toward the whole human race (*Arcana Coelestia* 1690:6).

The son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister (Matthew 20:28).

Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! (Revelation 19:1).

True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth (John 4:23).

A person is saved by the removal of the evils and falsities that are from the hells, and by the influx then of the good of love and of the truth of faith from the Lord (*Arcana Coelestia* 10019:3).

You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you serve (Matthew 4:10).

Come, take up the cross, and follow Me (Mark 10:21).

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin (Psalm 51:2).

The Lord from eternity, who is Jehovah, came into the world to subjugate the hells and to glorify His Human; and without this no mortal could have been saved (*True Christian Religion* 2).

All will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:35).

The Lord is present with you, urging and pressing to be received; His first coming, called the dawn, is when you receive Him, which you do when you acknowledge Him as your God, Creator, Redeemer, and Savior (*True Christian Religion* 766).

All those who are in spiritual faith have confidence that they are saved by the Lord, for they believe that the Lord came into the world to give eternal life to those who believe and live according to the precepts which He taught, and that He regenerates them, and renders them fit for heaven, and that He alone does this from pure mercy without the aid of man (*New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* 115).

Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin (John 8:34).

Cease to do evil, learn to do good (Isaiah 1:16-17).

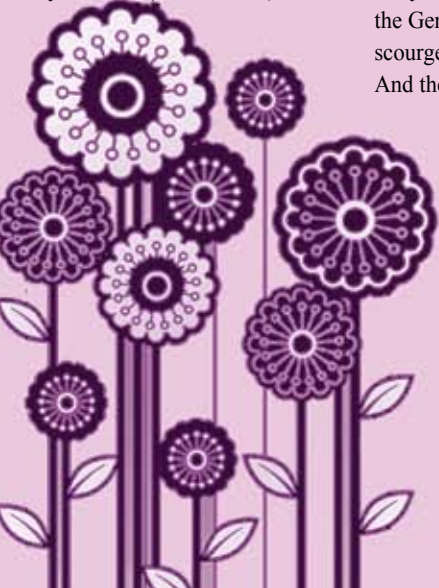
Lord, I pray, send now prosperity (Psalm 118:25).

I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Matthew 9:13).

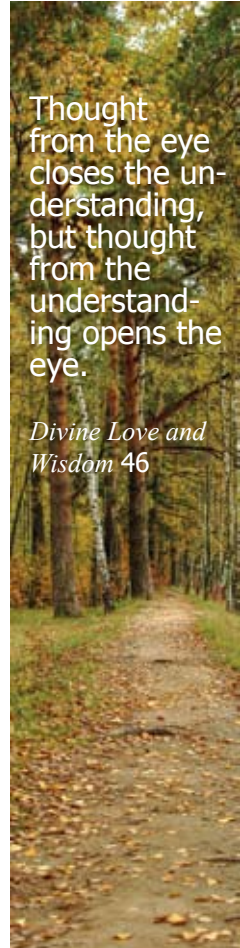
Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors (Matthew 6:12).

For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him (Luke 20:38).

I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Matt 28:18



Belief is an intimate journey, one that may evolve over time or suddenly change. Consider the following Biblical story and questions as you reflect on your faith path.



Thought from the eye closes the understanding, but thought from the understanding opens the eye.

Divine Love and Wisdom 46

Have you heard the phrase “doubting Thomas” and been unsure where it comes from? The term comes from the story in the New Testament, in John 20, in which the disciple Thomas refuses to believe that the Lord, who was crucified, has risen, saying, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails... I will not believe.”

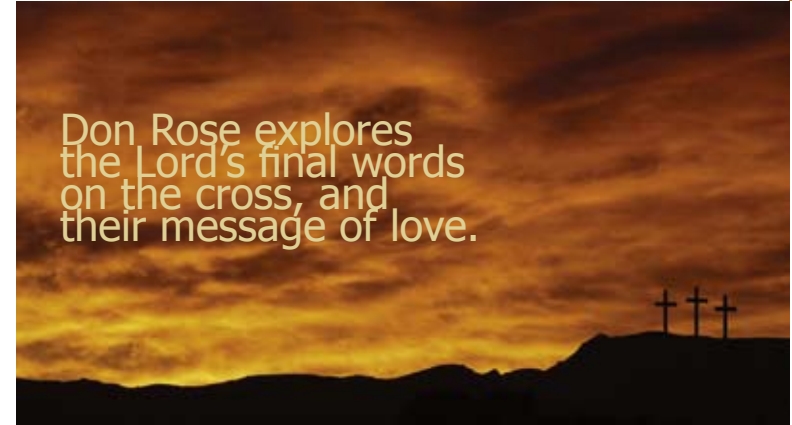
Most people have doubting Thomas times in their own lives, times when their faith is challenged. Think of such a time in your life and reflect on what it took to bring you back to believing. Was it the same thing that you thought it would take?

When the Lord showed Himself to Thomas, He invited him to “Reach your finger here, and look at My hands.... Do not be unbe-

lieving, but believing.” Yet, Thomas, who had doubted and refused to believe, did not really need to touch the Lord. Instead, he immediately replied “My Lord and my God!” What a complete turn-around from disbelief to a recognition of the Lord’s divinity!

Are there times in your life when you have experienced a similar swift change in your faith? Can you think of a moment when a truth, perhaps one you had intellectually known about for a long time, suddenly became real for you? How did this impact your relationship with God? Did your doubt lead to belief? How did that show up in your life? Doubting can lead to belief when we are willing to see the Lord’s divinity in our lives.

Adapted from journaling ideas on www.newchurchvineyard.org.



Don Rose explores the Lord’s final words on the cross, and their message of love.

One of the first things to know about the crucifixion is that it is something the Lord knew would happen. He not only knew it would happen, but He told the disciples several times that it would happen. He told them that He would be taken and treated cruelly and mocked, and finally be put to death, and that He would rise again. This was something the disciples found hard to understand.

Picture them approaching the city of Jerusalem

and being told again what would happen. “Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him” (Mark 10:32).

The Lord fought against and conquered those evil forces from His love of protecting the human race.

He said “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered...and they will...kill Him. And the

third day He will rise again” (Mark 10:33,34).

The disciples were told that He would lay down His life. “No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:18). The thought of His being killed was so terrible to the disciples that they just could not believe that it would happen. And it was even more terrible when it actually did happen and the Lord suffered those things—being mocked, and cruelly treated and nailed to a cross to die.

The feelings that the Lord experienced are far beyond our imagining, because He was not only suffering as to His body. He was being attacked by terrible forces from hell. He fought against and conquered those forces from His love of protecting the human race.

Think most of all of this—of His love for the human race—as you consider some of the things the Lord said while He was on the cross.

Looking at the story in all four Gospels, one finds that the Lord spoke seven times while on the cross (see box below).

Listen to these words and remember His love. The first words were these: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” Isn’t it amazing that His concern at that terrible moment was not for Himself, but for those who were harming Him! The Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church tells

us that “He prayed on the cross for His enemies, and thus for all in the whole world” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1690).

The Lord’s thought was for the whole human race and for each individual, and the next thing He said on the cross was spoken to one man—to one of the thieves who was crucified with Him. The thief had said, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I

say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.” Earlier in His life, He had said, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself” (John 12:32). The Heavenly Doctrine says that the Lord “wills to save everyone and to draw him with mighty power to heaven, that is, to Himself” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1038).

The third thing the Lord said on the cross showed His concern for Mary, who was His mother. We read: “When Jesus therefore, saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, Woman, behold your son! Then He said to the disciple, Behold your mother! And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home” (John 19:26). Another thing the Lord said on the cross was, “I thirst.” Although He was truly thirsty, there was more to it than that. In the past He had told His disciples that His food was

to do the work He came on earth to accomplish: “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34). The Heavenly Doctrine says, “Because He came into the world to save humankind, He said, ‘I thirst’, which means

Isn’t it amazing that the Lord’s concern at that terrible moment (of crucifixion) was not for Himself, but for those who were harming Him!

that from Divine love He willed and desired the salvation of the human race” (*Apocalypse Explained* 386:30). To accomplish the salvation of the human race was the Lord’s one task in His life. It was the cup He came on earth to drink, and the part that was very hard was a bitter cup. It was so bitter that He had prayed that He would not have to drink it: “If it is possible, let this cup pass

from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26:39). But despite the bitterness, the Lord did each and every thing He came on earth to do. And when on the cross He said, “It is finished” (John 19:30), that great work of His was done.

The accomplishment of this great work brought a wonderful peace. That is why when He had risen from the tomb in which His body had been laid, He greeted His disciples with the words, “Peace to you” (see Luke 24:36; John 20:21,26). And in the Heavenly Doctrine, we are told that “when the Lord had united His Human to the Divine Itself, He had peace, for then the combats had ceased, and all things in the heavens and hells had been reduced to order; and thus not only He had peace, but the angels in the heavens and people on earth also had peace and salvation” (*Arcana Coelestia* 10730:2). ■

The Lord Spoke Seven Times on the Cross

Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do (Luke 23:34).

Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise (Luke 23:43).

Woman, behold your son! Behold your mother! (John 19:26,27).

My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:33).

I thirst! (John 19:28).

It is finished! (John 19:30).

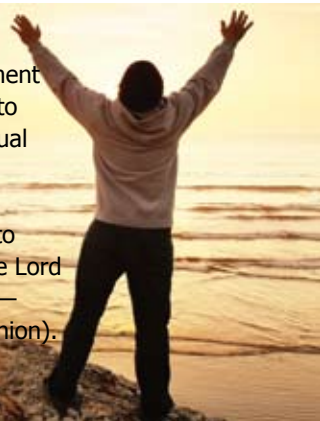
Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit (Luke 23:46).

Faith Commitments

Easter

The New Church honors an environment in which individuals are encouraged to freely take charge of their own spiritual path at their own pace.

There are two sacred commitments to show your faith and dedication to the Lord and a life according to His teachings—baptism and holy supper (or communion).



Baptism

BY DAVID ROTH AND ANNA WOOFENDEN
Baptism is a sign that a person is a follower of the Lord God Jesus Christ, that they are a Christian.

The New Church offers baptism to adults and infants. The New Church teaches that the act of baptism does not transfer faith or “save” you. It is a sign of what a person must do to be regenerated or be born again spiritually (which is a process, not an event).

Water is used because it is a symbol for truth. We

must learn what is true (why water is applied to the forehead) and strive to love what is true (why water is applied to the chest) and this comes about through our efforts to shun negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors we observe in ourselves. The fact that this is difficult and trying is why the water is applied in the symbol of the cross—a sign signifying temptation. If we do this we are a true follower of the Lord, which is what a Christian truly is.

Baptism is a promise made between an indi-

vidual and the Lord. It is often done in public because there is value in recognizing that our efforts to live this way are best achieved with the support of, and accountability found in, a community. Baptism is an introduction into the church, not a confirmation that one believes everything of the church.

If you have already been baptized in another faith/

For more information on baptism and the holy supper, contact your local congregation or email information@newchurch.org.

denomination, and you want to make a commitment to the New Church, it is powerful to be re-baptised as an expression of this commitment. This does not negate your former baptism, but marks your new commitment and faith.

Holy Supper

EXCEPTS FROM NEW CHURCH VINEYARD MAGAZINE
The holy supper (or holy communion) is the sacred ritual of receiving blessed unleavened bread and wine. It is often offered at the end of a worship service, at periodic times throughout the year.

It is taught in the New Church, that one is to prepare for the holy supper. People often choose to take the Holy Supper around Easter time, in remembrance of when the Lord first offered the Holy Supper to his disciples on the evening before his crucifixion.

“The Holy Supper was instituted by the Lord, that by means of it the church may be conjoined with heaven, and thus with the Lord; it is, therefore, the most holy thing of worship. But conjunction with the Lord by the Sacrament of the Holy Supper, is effected solely with

those who are in the good of faith and love to the Lord from the Lord; with others indeed there is the presence of the Lord, but no conjunction with Him” (*Arcana Coelestia* 10519,10522).

There are a variety of ways that we can prepare for the Holy Supper. One way is to engage in self-examination to identify an evil tendency that we need to work on. We can feel free to partake of the Holy Supper when we have prepared in other ways. The key is to come before the Lord with humility and with our minds focused on Him.

To Prepare for Holy Supper

- Identify an action (or a desire to act) as an evil of which you wish to repent.
- Read a portion of the Lord’s Word, thinking about its application to your life.
- Focus on a relationship (interaction), a commitment, or a decision, and ask the Lord’s help.
- Think about the bread and wine as symbols of Divine qualities that you desire in your life.
- Reflect on the Lord’s great love and compassion for the entire human race.
- Do you wish to be in the presence of the Lord, partaking of this spiritual meal?



When God Seems Absent

Easter



There are times in our lives when we walk along and it seems that God is absent. **Ethan McCardell** explores the beautiful ways the Lord works in our lives even when we are not aware of Him.

Jacob woke up and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I wasn’t even aware of it” (Genesis 28:16).

I was reading this the other day and thought, “How many times have I felt the same way Jacob did?” Looking back over my life at challenges which in many ways felt like “game breakers” (when I was going through them), I realize that they turned out to provide exactly the lessons I needed to move forward.

Thinking about preparation for Easter, there’s just as strong a parallel to the story of the disciples. The teachings of the New Church talk about the mindset of the disciples, and why they were chosen in this way:

“The reason why the Lord spoke (to the disciples) in the way He did was so that they would receive those external truths [basic teachings] and through them be introduced into internal

truths [the deeper meaning for our lives]. Inside the external truth which the Lord spoke, internal truth was stored away, which after awhile comes to light. And when these things come to light, the more external truths are dispelled and simply become tools we can use to think about internal ones” (*Arcana Coelestia* 3857).

I thought about the road to Emmaus—when the disciples were walking along with a man

they had met and didn’t know was Jesus walking. They were interacting with God Himself and didn’t quite see it. If they had, and had seen that the whole of their lives was going to convey a spiritual message to all people about how to have a relationship with Him, they would have been overwhelmed and fought against it.

The same is true for us, isn’t it? If I had seen early in my life—while struggling with thoughts about whether I’d ever get married, have friends, overcome issues of disability, or hold down a steady job—that each of these forks in the road served to strengthen (rather than detract from) my relationship to God and other people—I really believe I would have fought against it. Each of these “watershed moments” occurred because I had to make a choice, not because some foretold destiny was thrust on me.

Our faith becomes real when we choose it. If you don’t live it, you don’t really believe it.

I can look back on many of those “big picture moments” in my life now, and sense the current

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of the Lord’s leadership through them. In my mind, this is really what “discipleship” is all about: connecting the true ideas you know to the life you’re living in such a way that, even though you can’t see what the outcome’s going to be yet, in a sense you stop worrying—and trust. Trust that if you’re a willing participant in His plan—as Psalm 27 says, “Then the Lord will take care of me.”

As we approach Easter, I think of this a lot. Were there times the Lord Himself faced doubt about the goal, times He struggled against a desire to fold under the pressure of people’s selfish tendencies? Absolutely. But He didn’t. He trusted in His Divine Mission. He took on our temptations and our challenges as human beings, and He overcame them all, so that we could be free to choose Him again and again.

So the next time we come to a fork in the road that feels overwhelming, let’s take the path where we see “the shadow of the cross”—the one we know we can’t walk alone—and our Helper will be there to lead us from the temporary struggles of life in this world to the eternal peace of heaven. ■

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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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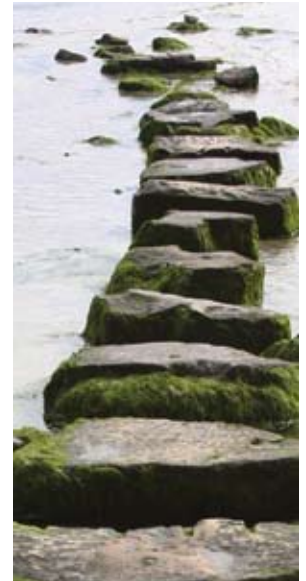
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Did you know?

People from more than 76 countries have inquired online about the New Church and want to learn more.

- **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.



The Lord is not worshiped by merely believing, and by merely loving, but by living according to His commandments, because these persons alone believe in the Lord. *Arcana Coelestia* 10645

Approach the God of the Word, and so the Word, and enter by this gate into the sheep-fold, that is, into the church, and you will be given enlightenment.

Then you will see, as if you stood on a mountain, not only the path most people have gone, but also your own previous steps and wanderings in the dark wood lying below the mountain.

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