

SALVATION: AN ACTIVE PROCESS

**new
church**

connection

www.newchurch.org

**Can God
forgive me?**
p.8

7
**ways to break
bad habits**
p.12

**Is your life ever
beyond repair?**
p.4

**The Lord knows
your path**
p.14



New Church Connection makes the connection between religion and life. Every issue features content that highlights the personal nature of spirituality, providing applicable ideas to support your journey with insights from the New Church (Swedenborgian) faith.

in this issue: SALVATION: AN ACTIVE PROCESS

WELCOME

new church | connection

Connecting you

with a New Christian

spirituality

for everyday life

Divine providence proceeds so secretly that you can see scarcely a trace of it, and yet it is active in the most minute particulars relating to you from infancy to old age in the world, and afterwards to eternity, and in each one of these it is the eternal that is regarded.

—Apocalypse Explained
1135:4

I love the idea that God is working for our salvation without our knowing it is happening (or how He does it). I am comforted to think that if He knows the number of hairs on my head, surely He knows the struggles in my heart and will lead me through them.

The Bible teaches that it is our faith together with a life according to our faith that saves. For me, it would be easier if it was one or the other. Faith alone sounds do-able. I can focus on believing. My actions alone? Okay I'll try to do the right thing. But together? Hmph. That is more of a conundrum. It requires me to let go; to believe and to act as if I can make a positive impact; to walk a new way with confidence in the Lord and the humility to act in the best way I know how.

I accept the opportunity to be present with this paradox. This idea that God alone can save me from my personal hell and that I must earnestly—with all my heart, effort, and will—work as hard as I can to resist evil choices and to do what is good. Perhaps salvation will emerge as one walks holding these two truths with humility and confidence that the Lord has a plan, an awesome plan, and that He wants us to participate in it.

My prayer for you is that in this issue you find some practical ideas to support you in following the Lord and walking in His path. I hope that you are uplifted knowing He knows the way and leads you on it.

With gratitude for the journey,



Bronwen Henry

Bronwen Henry, General Church Outreach

PRODUCTION TEAM

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
David Lindrooth

MANAGING EDITOR AND CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Bronwen Henry
CREATIVE DESIGN
Caroline Kline

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Taryn Frazier

ASSISTANT EDITORS
Abigail Smith
Chelsea Odhner

COPY EDITORS
Rachel Glenn
Bruce Henderson

SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER
Heather Allais

General Church Outreach
A department of the General Church of the New Jerusalem

1100 Cathedral Road
PO Box 743
Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

1-877-411-HOPE (4673)
www.newchurch.org
questions@newchurch.org

For general information call 267-502-4911.

To contribute an article or personal story, or to request this magazine for yourself or a friend, please contact the production team at outreach@newchurch.org for more information.

cover photo by:
ANDY SULLIVAN

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

—Matthew 7:21

What's next?

Look for these upcoming issues:

- * Doubt. Disbelief. Challenges to Faith.
- * What is so new about the New Church?

Changing Lives

4

Jeff felt like he'd come to the end of the road, but it was just the beginning of a new life the Lord had planned for him.

Seeking Answers

8

Am I going to hell? Can God forgive me? The Rev. *Guillaume Anato* offers his thoughts on questions about salvation.

7 Ways to Break Bad Habits

10

The Rev. *John Odhner* describes some simple steps we can take.

The Lord Knows Your Path

18

The Rev. *Ron Schnarr* explores a parable that illustrates how we can form good spiritual habits.

Steps of Life Change

20

Many of us want to change, but often, we don't know where to begin. Here are some ideas from New Church teachings.



His life falling apart around him, Jeff felt as though he'd reached the end of the road. But he found hope when he met the woman who would become his wife and discovered peace in a religion that he'd been searching for all along. In an interview with Chelsea Odhner, Jeff shares his journey to a new life and to the New Church.

Jeff grew up in a home where there was no clear religious conviction; his father was an atheist and his mother an agnostic. Despite the lack of any definite faith, he remembers there being a general spiritual element in the way his family lived—a sort of Christian expectation of kindness to one's neighbor. Jeff had to look elsewhere if he wanted any categorically religious answers to the deep questions of life like "Why are we

here?" and "Where are we going?" In high school he experimented with various Christian churches. He would go to services that his friends were going to. He went to Baptist services with a girlfriend and her family, and he spent some time attending Rick Warren's Saddleback Church.

Although these experiences got him to think more deeply about spiritual life, he never felt satisfied. None of the churches offered answers that made sense to him.

He found the images of the afterlife that he was given particularly unsatisfying. It didn't make sense to him that the afterlife was some vague experience of being, like a bird flitting about in the ether to eternity. "Why doesn't life just continue like it is in this world?" he wondered. That seemed more logical to him.

So rather than devote himself to any specific denomination, he felt satisfied for a time to keep a simple, personal spirituality. He held himself to two main principles: to work hard to be the best person he could, while acknowledging that he would make mistakes, but try not to.

These two principles kept Jeff afloat

through the turbulent times he had ahead of him. His life would be a path forged by a lot of hard work, with not a few difficult decisions and some painful junctures along the way. He attended college and married his college sweetheart. After graduation, he poured himself into work, supporting his wife and two children. Although his work progressed, his marriage came to an end seven years after it began. Hurt and confused, he soon met another woman and married again. When this second marriage ended, he felt he had come to the end of the road.

Jeff began searching for answers once again. The old longing for a satisfying

He wasn't forever lost, and his life wasn't beyond repair.





photo by ANDY SULLIVAN

With this new worldview, he felt safe, sane, and secure.

faith began to hover in his mind. During this time, he gave up his life the way it had been and began to search for a new way to live. The Lord was guiding him, although he wasn't aware of it.

Jeff didn't know what was in store when he went on a business trip over Valentine's Day four years ago. There, he met his future wife, Heather. It wasn't a profound love-at-first-sight experience. They became friends, neither wanting to rush into something more serious.

They stayed in touch and spent the following months dating and developing a relationship. Although they had a well-

established friendship, he and Heather had never discussed religion. One day in the car, though, a question about the nature of the afterlife came up. Feeling more at ease with Heather than he had with anyone in a long time, he told her the ideas he had kept to himself for years: that when people die, they keep on living; that they are human, just as they were on earth; that relationships, like marriage, continue after death. Heather's eyes welled up with tears. He had no idea he was describing the very belief she and her church held dear.

After this, their relationship grew deeper. They talked about everything. As they were living in California at the time, Heather introduced Jeff to the Rev. Mark Perry, pastor of the San Diego New Church. The Perrys became mentors for Heather and Jeff, supporting Jeff's increasing passion for learning about the New Church and the Heavenly Doctrines.

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.... For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

-Matthew 11: 28,30

As he studied the doctrines, he found they answered his long-held questions in a way that made sense to him.

As he grew closer to Heather and felt his spiritual hunger satisfied, Jeff found that part of him was at peace. With this new worldview, he felt safe, sane, and secure. What had long felt hard and heavy became easy and light, as if a weight had been lifted from his shoulders. The more Jeff learned about the religion, the more he wanted to be a part of it. Most comforting of all, he felt a renewed sense of hope for himself. He wasn't forever lost, and his life wasn't beyond repair.

A year and half after meeting, Jeff and Heather became engaged. They met with the Rev. Perry, and he told them about betrothal. Jeff was struck by what he learned, having never heard of betrothal. He decided to be baptized and confirmed on the same day as their betrothal.

Their betrothal was a precious time for Jeff. He learned a lot about love, discipline, and respect. He and Heather knew they both had been working on their individual spiritual lives in the past, but their betrothal brought their spiritual lives together. They felt connected in a new way.

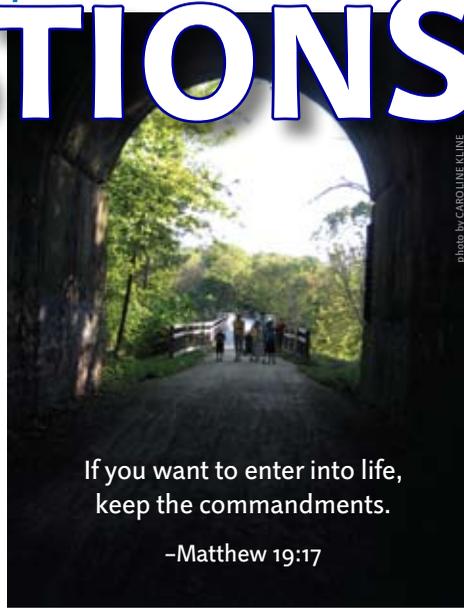
Heather and Jeff are now married and have a one-year-old daughter, Annabelle. They live in Austin, Texas and attend the fledgling New Way Church. Jeff manages a home concierge and services company, CHORE Masters LLC, that he and Heather started. He is also an active participant in the life of New Way Church.

Jeff makes a point to tell as many people as he can about the New Church. Why does he have such passion for growing the church? Jeff says it's because there are so many people who are where he was in life before he found the New Church. It was through finding the religion that he became comfortable with who he was. He has gained new confidence in himself, knowing that life makes sense and that religion is something he can understand. There are so many searchers like him in the world—people who are trying to find answers to the big questions about life. Jeff wants to pass on the gifts he receives as he continues to discover the New Church. ○

Jeff is a member of the New Way Church in Austin, Texas. For more information, visit www.newwayaustin.org

Life is full of QUESTIONS

Sins, forgiveness, heaven and hell? These can be overwhelming, often puzzling concepts. Here, the Rev. Guillaume Anato answers some fundamental questions about salvation.



If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.

—Matthew 19:17

Q AM I GOING TO HELL?

a Your Creator does not want you in hell, but in heaven. Some people think they are going to hell because they have been told that the Lord sends evil people to hell. In reality the Lord, our loving and merciful God, does not send anybody to hell because doing so is contrary to His Divine nature (*Heaven and Hell* 545). However, hell does exist, and the Lord will not prevent you from going there if you choose it. He has given you the freedom to choose good or evil,

heaven or hell. If you continually choose to do evil, you will cast yourself into hell after death (*Heaven and Hell* 547). Thousands of years ago, the Lord said to the Israelites, “I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19). I believe the same message is addressed to us today. The Lord is asking us to choose heaven over hell.

Your Creator does not want you in hell, but in heaven.

Q I HAVE DONE SOME BAD THINGS IN MY LIFE. CAN THE LORD FORGIVE ME?

a There is nothing the Lord is unable to forgive. Remember, when Peter asked the Lord how many times he should forgive his sinful brother, the Lord said to him: “up to seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:22). The Lord taught Peter always to forgive. Why wouldn't He do the same thing? So, yes, the Lord can and will forgive every bad thing you have done in your life if you repent—that is, if you ask for forgiveness of your sins and you amend your ways and your doings.

Q THERE ARE SO MANY RELIGIONS THAT CLAIM A PATH TO SALVATION. WHICH RELIGION IS SAVED?

a The Lord does not discriminate between Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, Voodoo people, etc. All are His creatures and as a loving and merciful God, He wants to save every human being (*Heaven and Hell* 522). The New Church teaches that all human beings born into any religion can be saved, provided they acknowledge God and live according to the Ten Commandments (*Divine Providence* 253). Those who worship the Lord Jesus Christ and live according to His commandments are saved. Still the Lord leads not only Christians but also people from other religions according to their own precepts. He has provided that in every religion there should be precepts similar to those in the Ten Commandments (*Divine Providence* 254:2). So it is how people live their religious life which saves them, not their religion itself.

Q HOW DO MY WORKS AFFECT MY SALVATION?

a Our works affect our salvation in many ways. *Secrets of Heaven* 3934 states that works are what save a person and what condemn him, for the will of a person is in his work. Good works save us, while evil works condemn us. The Lord requires good works from us so that we can be saved: “If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17).

Q WHICH IS MORE IMPORTANT: FAITH OR GOOD WORKS?

a Jesus said in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” From the words in John 3:16, some people may conclude that faith is more important than good works. This is not true. Faith and good works are equally important because they are the two essentials of salvation. A person's faith can be seen in his work. And “good works are the fruit of faith” (*Secrets of Heaven* 1873).

SHARE YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT LIFE.
Email questions@newchurch.org.
Mention “New Church Connection”.



The Rev. Guillaume Anato is the pastor of the New Church group in Cotonou, Benin. For more information, contact him at anatokgui@hotmail.com.

Bad habits are hard to get rid of. We can work at it and work at it and still feel we are failing. The Rev. John Odhner compiled the book *A Light Burden: Easier Ways to Shun Evils* in hopes of dispelling the feeling that it can't be done. In it, he describes 57 constructive things a person can do to combat evil. Seven of these are included here.

7 Ways

to Break Bad Habits

The fact is that the way to heaven is not as difficult as people often suppose. The Lord has no desire to put roadblocks on the path to heaven; in fact, He gives us principles for our lives that will make the process easier. Here are some positive steps we can take to make the fight against evils easier:

1. FOCUS ON TODAY

When Jesus said, "Do not worry about tomorrow.... Sufficient for the day is its own evil" (Matthew 6:34), He was talking not only about our natural life, but about our spiritual life. We cannot shun evils in the past or future. The present is the only part of our life we have power to change.

"He who leads a life of faith does repentance daily.... For from himself man is continually falling, but is continually being raised up by the Lord" (*Secrets of Heaven* 8391).

2. THINK ABOUT HEAVEN

One of our most powerful defenses

against evil is thought about eternal life.

"When the internal sight or the thought is turned toward the world and rests there, the thought in consequence becomes worldly...but when it is turned heavenward it becomes heavenly" (*Heaven and Hell* 532).

We can think of heaven as our goal and also as the source of all the good we do.

3. USE THE WORD

"The combats are carried on by means of truths of faith which are from the Word. The person must fight against evils and falsities from these; if he fights from anything else, he does not conquer, because the Lord is not in anything else" (*Secrets of Heaven* 8962).

The Word makes tremendous power available to us: the power of truth. The key to receiving this power is in the way we read the Word. This means not simply reading and studying, but reading with questions in mind, seeking answers that apply to life, and being

willing to have your ideas changed.

Another factor is prayer: "The Word should be searched with devout prayer to the Lord for enlightenment" (*Secrets of Heaven* 5432:4). It also helps to read frequently, a chapter or two each day. Don't let your mind run dry of the truth.

4. TACKLE ONE EVIL AT A TIME

Trying to get rid of all our evils at once by admitting that we are hopeless does not accomplish anything. Sometimes we may be overwhelmed with the number of evils we see in ourselves. But the Lord's burden is light. He asks us to change one area of our lives at a time. If a person "abstains from any one sin" which he finds in himself, it is enough to get him on the way to heaven (*True Christian Religion* 530).

We can say that if you keep one commandment you have kept them all, "for as soon as one from purpose or confirmation abstains from any evil because it is a sin, he is held by the Lord in the purpose of abstaining from the rest" (*Married Love* 529).

5. GET INVOLVED IN USEFUL TASKS

When Hezekiah was "sick unto death," he was cured by laying a lump of figs over the infection (Isaiah 38). This seems like a strange remedy until we know that figs are a symbol of good works or usefulness. A simple effort

to get busy and accomplish something useful can often bring us out of a spiritual low. Shunning evil enables us to be genuinely useful, and usefulness in turn enables us to shun evil.

"While a person is in some study and business, that is, in some use, his mind is limited and circumscribed as by a circle.... From this as from a house he sees the various evil desires as outside himself, and from sanity of reason within, banishes them." (*Married Love* 249)

6. HOPE

Just as hopelessness is hell's greatest weapon, hope is our greatest defense. The Lord answers every attack of the hells, but that answer comes to us primarily as hope. When a person is attacked by evil spirits, "the Lord keeps him in hope and trust, which are the forces...by which he resists" (*Secrets of Heaven* 6097).

Actually, the reason why the Lord does not give us certain knowledge of the future is that hope is much more powerful than knowledge. When you are desperate, hope. Hope for the good that the Lord can bring from evil. Hope that the Lord can change you.

7. BEGIN NOW

The easiest time to wash the dishes is right after the meal. If they are left until the next morning, the food gets



photo by CALEB KERR

crusty and hard. Eventually, the task becomes quite unpleasant.

Evil is the same way: the sooner you face it, the easier it will be. As soon as you start, the Lord will work with you, lightening your burden.

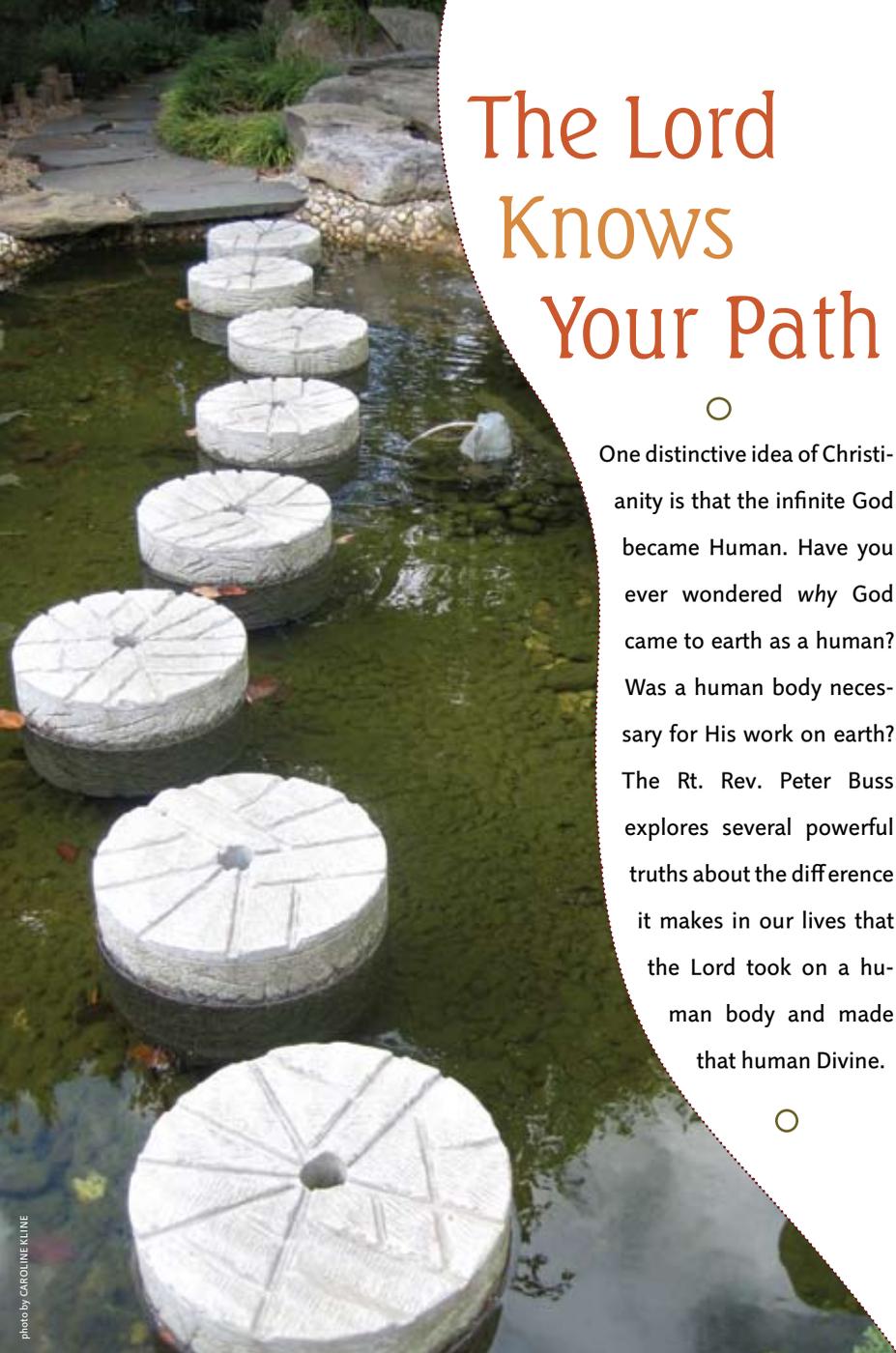
When a person has made a beginning, the Lord brings to life all that is good in him, and causes him not only to see evils to be evils, but also to refrain from willing them, and finally to turn away from them. This is meant by the

Lord's words, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light." ○

.....
A *Light Burden* is available online at the New Church Bookstore, www.store.newchurch.org.



The Rev. John Odhner is the assistant to the pastor in Bryn Athyn, PA. For more information, visit brynathynchurch.org.



The Lord Knows Your Path

○ One distinctive idea of Christianity is that the infinite God became Human. Have you ever wondered why God came to earth as a human? Was a human body necessary for His work on earth? The Rt. Rev. Peter Buss explores several powerful truths about the difference it makes in our lives that the Lord took on a human body and made that human Divine.



The Lord forged the path we can follow to reach happiness and heaven. The Lord's Word is full of beautiful and comforting truths, but sometimes we just don't realize how meaningful they are. We tend to let a lot of the Lord's teachings slide over our consciousness, or even half deny them—not in fact, but in our feelings. Every sentence means something precious to us, and each reading is going to be a new discovery forever.

He who fights from himself against the devil is hugely mistaken...The Lord is the one who fights
-Secrets of Heaven 1813

Let us think about two or three teachings which are a central part of New Church belief in the Lord, but which we may gloss over when we hear them. The Heavenly Doctrines tell us that the Lord overcame evil by His own power on earth: "His own arm brought salvation for Him" (Isaiah 59:16). It tells us that because He did that on earth, He can now do it for us, from that time on. We may not really see the importance of this teaching: that because He overcame the hells two thousand years ago, our battles are easier today, and that we ourselves play no part in a process which seems to us to involve a lot of struggle.

The Lord came on earth and took on a Human nature. It doesn't seem at first that He needed to do that. Why couldn't He have conquered the hells from His omnipotent power? But He did take on a Human like the ones we have, and that human mind allowed the hells to attack

Him. He fought the hells, and each time He fought, He used a truth to combat them. He fought them, one by one, and eventually all of them together. As He won each battle, the Lord gained a new power over evil, and that power, called righteousness, was added to His life until He became altogether righteous.

The Lord did this alone. There was no person to help Him. No angel, even, could help Him. In fact, when He was fighting, it seemed to the Lord that His own Divine power had left Him. The Human was left to itself in temptations, and this is one reason why He called from the cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" So when He won, the victory was His alone.

As the Lord conquered the hells, what happened was that each truth was used to its full capacity in His mind. He gained a complete understanding of the hells that were trying to oppose those truths, and of the heavens that could be opened up by them. Through complete understanding, He now has complete power over the hells. He knows every trick they are trying to play. More wonderful still, He knows every facet of truth, how it counters evil, and how it builds a particular heaven of its own.

What does that mean to us? First, the Lord knows every single state that we can enter into, every trap into which the hells can lead us. He knows it because He

experienced it! There's nothing we can feel that He has not experienced.

Let us understand that properly. The Lord never experienced petty anger in the sense of giving in to it Himself. He never knew unreasoning jealousy, in the way that someone who submits to it does. He knew it better, because He had the hells that inspire such things breathing their spirit into Him, but He would not let them win.

We don't understand an evil by giving in to it. Giving in to it produces a degree of blindness, because we are fooled by its allure. But the person who is tempted by an evil and resists it understands it truly. And the Lord did this with every single evil with all the might of the hells against Him. Of course He won, but that is not the point. The point is that He can communicate to us, in human terms that we can understand, the true nature of evil, and the allure it arouses. And the Lord can communicate the Divine power of His truths to us, so that we can withstand the attacks of evil. He can do this because He too walked that path. He didn't just walk it; He laid it out, and He built it, step by step—a path for each truth, a path for each one of the countless billions who will be born forevermore.

How often do we truly realize this? When we have a feeling or a thought which is truly shameful, do we know that the Lord understands that feeling? Sometimes, we're tempted to turn from the Lord in

shame, thinking He must be disgusted with us. We know that He's merciful, but at times we don't feel we can even talk to Him about some of the things we have thought and done. Yet there's not a feeling whose quality He did not perceive while on earth. He perceived them, not as someone in the throes of them, because such a person is not seeing clearly. But He perceived them as one who affirmed and ennobled the truths which shed light on such things.

And how desperately we need that light when evil thoughts and desires attract us! We stumble along on our own, often thinking our own arms can bring salvation to us. We need the Light of the world, the true Light, to put our feelings

in perspective and let us know that He who understands everything has got the answer to this set of feelings too.

And we need the power that is within the truth that

He is showing us—the power that once conquered all the forces of evil which can ever threaten us.

The Lord did this so completely that this conquest lasts for all time. And we are asked to accept this teaching, if we are to know that power in us. We couldn't fight one hell. If we tried to do it from ourselves, excluding the Lord, we would fail immediately. We are tempted to do this, and the vanity which tempts us is our downfall. Only the Lord has that power. To pretend otherwise is to deny a basic truth of life.

Truth can give us power because of Him who walked as a Man on this earth, and gave to man its defensive armor, and its ability to uplift and deliver. "His own righteousness, it sustained Him. For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak" (Isaiah 59:16,17).

What does this mean in our lives? The Lord is with us with that power. He alone overcame every temptation from all of hell, two thousand years ago. Today, whatever terrible thought or feeling is attacking us, if we turn to Him, the power He gained over the hells is right here, with us. We can fight any temptation, knowing two things. First, He once overcame this temptation and can do it again in us. Second, He did it using exactly the same truths we have in our minds. Those truths have His almighty strength—in our minds, if we want it. This is what He meant when He said, "All power is given to Me, in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:20). All power—nothing can stand before Him. That too is why He said we should trust in Him. "Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other" (Isaiah 45:22). ○

His own arm brought salvation for Him.
—Isaiah 59:16

Look to Me, and be saved,
all you ends of the earth!
For I am God, and there
is no other.
—Isaiah 45:22



The Rt. Rev. Peter Buss is a retired bishop of the General Church. He served eleven years in South Africa and seven years as pastor of the Glenview New Church in Illinois. He lives with his wife, Lisa, in Colorado.

photo by CAROLINE KLUNE

What does it mean to prepare for the coming of the Lord?



Here, Rev. Ron Schnarr explores the parable of the wise and foolish virgins to bring this sometimes lofty concept down to earth. He has some practical suggestions that make sense for our everyday lives. They may be even simpler than you think.

Many of us have figured out a few rituals to get ourselves going in the morning. These little morning rituals, while they may not seem like a big deal, can really make a difference in a person's day. Sometimes though, we neglect those rituals: we roll out of bed late, barely have time to dress, and spend the rest of the day trying to recover from our weak start. In the same way our spiritual lives are dependent on the practices and habits we employ to energize ourselves. Even the best of us have times when we leave our kindness at home because we didn't spiritually prepare. **We read in Matthew 25:**

Love is the spiritual fuel that energizes our day and gives us spiritual light.

"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom."
"Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps."
It is powerful to consider that in this parable, oil symbolizes love. Love is the spiritual fuel that energizes our day and gives us spiritual light. It is the source of our spiritual happiness and the reason we smile when we see another human being. The five wise virgins in this story represent both men and women who have put time and effort into nurturing their spiritual state and so have collected

a supply of spiritual love. The five foolish virgins, on the other hand, represent those who have not given the time or effort needed to nurture their spiritual state and have not collected a supply of spiritual love.

"And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!'"

The Lord, who is the Bridegroom in this parable, shows up in our lives every day in opportunities to be kind and useful to each other. The Lord said later in this same chapter, "inasmuch as you... [showed kindness] to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me." The question is whether we will be ready for Him.

Have you ever said something you regretted to another person or made a stupid decision on the spur of the moment just because you were feeling bad? While it may be nearly impossible to be a happy person when we feel like this, it does not necessarily get us off the hook. Often our spiritual course has been set long before we have a particular opportunity to be useful and kind.

"And while they [the five foolish virgins] went to buy [oil], the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut."

Sadly, often people miss a chance to act kindly because they were unprepared. So here are some questions you can ask to prepare yourself for when the Lord shows up in your life:

- Have you been setting aside time to read the Word?
- Do you know what bad habit or evil you are working on removing in your life?
- Is there anything disorderly going on in your life connected to addiction, deception, lust, or anger?
- Are you working justly, faithfully, and honestly at your job?

These are questions you can ask yourself on a daily basis. You can make the effort to make sure you wake up with enough time to really get your day going right. As you sit in your favorite chair, drink your favorite drink, and soak in the morning light, keep a small spiritual checklist on the table next to you so that you can go over it. Taking care of your spiritual state is not only an important practice; it is key to your salvation. Be sure your lamp is full.

"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming." ○

Have you ever said something you regretted to another person or made a stupid decision on the spur of the moment just because you were feeling bad?



The Rev. Ron Schnarr is the assistant to the pastor at the New Church of Boulder Valley. For more information visit www.ncbv.org or email him at ronnie@bouldernewchurch.org

Steps of Life Change

A process for making conscious and intentional choices

So you want to grow spiritually. Where to begin? New Church teachings describe simple steps toward spiritual growth and life transformation. Use this 5-week series as a format to gather together with some friends, your spouse, your family (or on your own) and start exploring the steps of spiritual growth and encouraging one another along the way. Consider the meaning of each step, and experience the power of applying these ideas in your life today.

Steps of Repentance

- We examine ourselves to see our bad habits.
- We acknowledge our bad habits.
- We confess our bad habits.
- We pray to the Lord, asking for His help and power in shunning bad habits.
- We turn away from our bad habits and begin a new life.



Remember that the LORD accomplishes our salvation, although we must work on changing our lives as if we are doing it ourselves.

photo by BRENT SCHNARR

Download the full online small group content for more readings!

	1. Examination	2. Acknowledgement	3. Confession	4. Prayer	5. New Life
READINGS	The person who explores himself or herself so that he may do the work of repentance, must explore his thoughts and the intentions of his will, and must there explore what he would do if it were permitted him, that is, if he were not afraid of the laws, and of the loss of reputation, honor, and gain. <i>—New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine 164</i>	Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in my word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." <i>—John 8:31-32</i>	The Lord, being mercy itself, forgives everyone his sins, and does not hold even one of them against a person. <i>—True Christianity 539</i>	Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. <i>—Matthew 7:7-8</i>	He who lives the life of charity and faith does the work of repentance daily; he reflects upon the evils which are with him, he acknowledges them, he guards against them, he supplicates the Lord for help. For a person of himself continually lapses, but he is continually raised by the Lord, and led to good. Such is the state of those who are in good. <i>—New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine 163</i>
DISCUSSION	Discuss how to apply the teachings of the readings to your daily life. What questions came up for you on this topic?				
TASK	Without fear or judgment, without concern about measuring up, notice what the Lord brings to your attention. What can you learn or see about yourself?	The Lord loves you right now—as you are. He knows you. All that is asked of you for this task is that you strive to acknowledge this.	Confession is a spoken acknowledgment. Practice sharing your negative attitudes or actions with the Lord, even if it feels strange at first.	Practice momentary prayers throughout the day when you think of it or when you notice yourself engaging in harmful attitudes or actions. Ask the Lord to be in charge of your life.	Try actively substituting truths for your false thoughts. Look for an opportunity to speak a truth you have learned to another person. Look for an opportunity to put it into action.

These ideas are drawn from the teachings of the New Church and are presented here with input and insight from Revs. Thane Glenn and Mark Pendleton. Arranged by Bronwen Henry.

Congregations around the world

The New Church is a new Christianity that provides a clear path to eternal happiness and addresses your questions about God, love, and life after death. The teachings are immediately practical and deeply spiritual. The New Church is based on the teachings of the Bible as illuminated in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

The New Church (General Church of the New Jerusalem) has congregations around the world. All people are welcome to join in worship and participate in the life and community of the church.

FOCUS ON THE NEW CHURCH IN Riounde, Kisii, Kenya

The largest New Church in Kenya is located in a beautiful mountain setting outside of Ogembo. The church is well known in the surrounding community for its new understanding of the Old and New Testaments and its emphasis on living that faith. It includes a thriving school of more than 200 children from pre-school through grade 8. The society plans to open a secondary school in January 2011. The church also supports an orphanage for 52 children in a collaborative effort with The Loving Arms Mission.

Thanks to Kay Alden for information and photos.

Find a New Church Near You...



Please look online or call for more information

www.newchurch.org/contact/locations

tel.1(877)411-HOPE or (267)502-4911

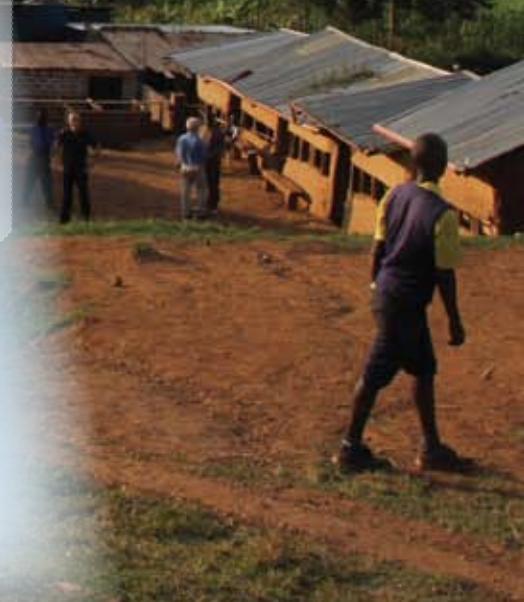
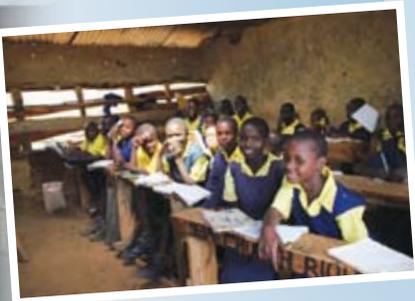
...and Get Connected!

New Church TEACHINGS

The perspectives in this magazine are based on the teachings of the New Church found in the Old and New Testaments and the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

Core teachings of the New Church:

- There is one loving, personal God, and He is the Lord Jesus Christ. His 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 Old and New Testaments have a deeper meaning, revealed in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, which help people lead happy and useful lives to eternity.
- Spiritual growth is a process. Through recognizing our sins, praying, shunning evils, and living a new life, we are transformed and united more closely with God.
- All religions have goodness in them. People of every faith are saved if they live sincerely according to their religion.
- Each of us continues life as a complete person immediately after the death of the body.
- While people are free to choose to live in hell, God wants everyone to live with Him in heaven to eternity.
- Marriage can last forever, for God blesses people with a special love in marriage that goes on after death, even to eternity.



NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. - POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT No. 182
Southampton, PA

new church | **connection**
A Publication of General Church Outreach
PO BOX 743
Bryn Athyn, PA 19009 USA
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

photo by BRENT SCHNARR



Many suppose that they worship the Lord by faith when they believe the things of the doctrine of the church, and that they worship the Lord by love when they love Him. Yet the Lord is not worshiped by merely believing, and by merely loving, but by living according to His commandments.

-Secrets of Heaven 10645:2