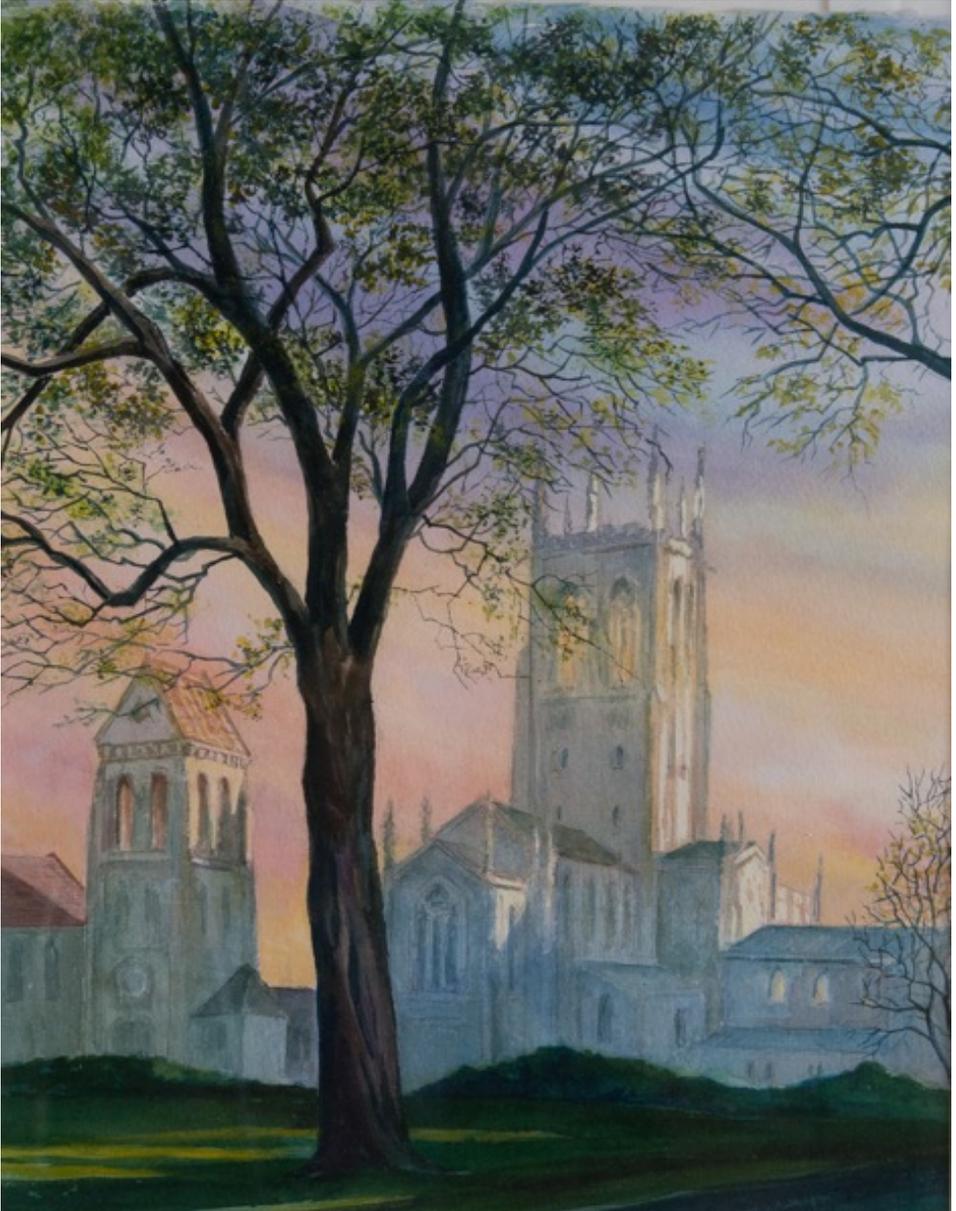


Theta Alpha Journal



November 2015

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Theta Alpha
“Daughters of the Academy”
☺

Named From the Greek :
Θυγατηρεζ Ακαδεμειαζ
Thugateres Akademeias

Founded in 1904 by graduates of the Academy of the New Church, the purpose of Theta Alpha is to provide a forum for women for the advancement and support of New Church education in its many forms and to support each other in our personal spiritual growth. Membership is open to interested women aged eighteen and older.

Non Nobis Solum ~ Not for Ourselves Alone

Theta Alpha Journal
Volume 14
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EDITOR'S NOTE

In this issue we interview artists who paint portraits, landscapes, still-lives, abstract concepts, geometrical patterns, and so on. The artist's craft combines talent and skill. In her interview Wendy Soneson explains, "An artist pulls the beauty of the physical forms together and translates everything into values, edges, shapes, line and color."

Another important component is the use of the imagination. The Writings say the imagination is "the forms and shapes of such things as a person has taken up with the sight of the body" (Secrets of Heaven 3337:2). The passage goes on to explain that we have an interior imagination, one that draws the forms and shapes in with the sight of the mind. I love when something comes into my mind with no rational explanation for it. It propels me forward and makes me want to make it real, in my case through writing. And it also reminds me that I'm not in control.

Someone very famous used his imagination to ride on a beam of light from one planet to another. And he said, "L'imagination est plus importante que le savoir." That's what's on a bookmark that I got in Montreal a long time ago, but it's likely he said it in his native German and it means, "The imagination is more important than knowledge." Along with Einstein and all his imagining and thinking about the world and space, do you think the Lord had to imagine this natural world and us in it before starting to create us? When we do anything that requires the use of our imagination and the exercise of our natural abilities, are we paralleling (in a small way) how the Lord creates?

There is so much the Lord does that reminds me of art in some form or another, most especially in the correspondences that flow from one level to another, for "higher things inflow into lower ones, and there present an image of themselves in general" (SH 3739). Early on in *Secrets of Heaven* Swedenborg wrote, "A beautiful, bright-faced girl appeared to me, moving quickly to the

right, darting slightly upward as she went. She seemed to be in the first blossom of her years, since she was neither a child nor a full adult. Her clothing was black, shiny and attractive. She skipped happily from one patch of light to another this way” (SH 1872).

He then said, “I was told that this is what the inner levels of the Word are like as they begin to rise. The black clothes were the Word in its letter” (Ibid.).

“Later a young woman flew to my right cheek, but I could see her only with my inner eye. I was told that these are the things in the Word’s inner sense that do not reach our consciousness” (Ibid.).

In another place in *Secrets of Heaven* Swedenborg said, “I saw a narrow room, and through an open door there came into view a tall man dressed in white—a very intense white. I wondered who he was” (SH 1126). The spirits told Swedenborg that the man represented those called Noah, or earliest members of the Ancient Church, the church following the Flood. They said those people were represented in this way because they were few in number.

I can easily see any one of these, or all of them, as a painting, but they are living, and have a living meaning for us. I’m not going to go so far as to say they came to Swedenborg through his imagination because I just don’t know. But it seems the development of our imagination in this life contributes to a fuller experience of life in the next world. As children we are born into imagination, but can so easily lose our appreciation of it as adults. Often, our natural mind wants to discard anything it cannot understand. Closing off of the imagination is a way to close off things that have to do with thinking about life in a world after this one, or even learning to recognize that other people are suffering and to have empathy for them in this one. The natural mind is limited, and “does not understand whence come the ideas of the imagination, which . . . are myriads of more interior things, and unless they flowed forth distinctly from an inmost life,

and this from the Lord, nothing distinct in an idea could ever be conceived” (Spiritual Experiences 682).

In its way the various forms of art try to capture this endless flow coming from our inner minds out into life here in this world. Art captures beauty and it captures truth—the truth that we have an inner life the natural mind can’t see or know about on its own. It’s a help to all people, religious or not, and reminds us that there’s more going on, just as our dreams are a reminder that there’s more going on than we could ever figure out.

Membership Dues

Please remember that your membership dues support all of Theta Alpha International’s programs, including this journal!

Dues are \$15 (U.S.)

For new and renewing members,
please either remit payment to:

Theta Alpha International
P.O. Box 154
Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

OR

Pay online at:

<http://newchurch.org/resources/publications/theta-alpha-journal>

*You can join any time!
If you are renewing dues are “due” by July 1st of each year.*

THANKS, THETA ALPHA

The Theta Alpha organization has played an important role in my life. I am now 82 years old and feel it is about time to put my gratitude and thoughts into written words.

In 1952 I was awarded the Theta Alpha honor scholarship for my second year of the Academy of the New Church College which enabled me to obtain my Associate Degree. Being given this scholarship, which included tuition and room and board, was a huge surprise to me as this annual award was traditionally given to a New Church woman studying to be a New Church teacher.

I had spent three years at the Academy high school and one year working toward a BSN (Bachelor of Nursing degree) at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Since this university was affiliated with three Chicago area hospitals, I was told that I would have all my Associate program credits, including sciences, philosophy and religion, accepted if the Academy College became accredited. I could then receive my three year nursing school and BSN degree. (If the Academy had not become accredited, I would have only received half credit for my courses.)

Fortunately for me, the Academy received accreditation just in time for me to enroll in the Northwestern degree program, with the help of the scholarship for my second year. At that time there were very few collegiate degree programs for BSN programs.

With my clinical and teaching nursing experiences, I received my master's degree (Master of Science) in 1985 and after 36 years working in two hospitals, I presented nursing seminars in every U.S. state. I also became a legal expert witness for nursing legal issues which resulted from having 50 publications in nursing journals. My forty-one-year nursing career was fulfilling and rewarding, for which I am very grateful.

Being a member of two New Church societies with Theta Alpha chapters--Glenview and Boynton Beach (now Theta Alpha Guild)

has afforded me opportunities to be part of the useful activities local chapters perform. It has been a delight to see women of Theta Alpha continuing to be strong and useful. Besides all the education programs which this organization assists, the distribution of money for scholarships remains a high priority.

It is a pleasure to see the Theta Alpha Journal resumed and the participation of hard-working members of Theta Alpha International and its chapters. I will always be grateful for the help of Theta Alpha and want to thank you for your dedication to its uses in the past and in the future.

Doris Brickman Millam
Boynton Beach, Florida

What's New with Theta Alpha International? *Scholarships!*

Theta Alpha International is developing new scholarships for Bryn Athyn College. Two education scholarships will be offered for the 2016-17 school year. Students will apply in February 2016.

This is an annual award for the purpose of supporting women attending the Bryn Athyn College of the New Church who desire to become New Church teachers and declare education as a major or minor (or Interdisciplinary Degree.)

The annual scholarship award amount is \$2,100 (\$700 paid directly to the college at the beginning of each trimester), for up to 2 recipients. One award is for an incoming freshman, and one award is for a current Bryn Athyn College education student. It may be used toward tuition and/or books.

Three additional new annual scholarships are being developed for BAC women students in the amounts of (2) \$2,000 and (1) \$1,000, and we hope for them to be available at the same time.

Change

Was. What a small, insignificant word. We use it every day and it never crosses our minds. To everyone else it is just a word; but to me, it means everything. Who is your father? What does he do for a living? My heart breaks. My first instinct is to reply; he is Mauro de Padua and he is the religion teacher and minister in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. This is what crosses my mind when I hear those dreadful questions. The simple questions which no one thinks twice about asking. To me, I am still twelve years old and my father is still alive. So when I get asked those questions, my initial response is to speak of him in the present tense. I speak of him as if he were still here—as if when I go home after school he will be there, sitting on his computer doing his daily Facebook checks. But this is not my life anymore. This is why I have to think about whether to tell people he is Mauro dePadua or he was Mauro de Padua.

My life has changed since I was a mere twelve year old. I was happy with my life. It was my mom, dad and little me. I do not have any siblings so I was close with my parents. My mom is Swedish and my dad is Brazilian so we traveled the world. At a very young age my parents began taking me on their adventures through Europe and South America. My parents taught me Swedish and Portuguese. They taught me the cultures of the world and how to respect the people around me. They showed me that there is more in this world than just the place you grew up in. My life was good, for most of the time. Then in the fall of 2008 we found out my dad had a stage two Hodgkin's Lymphoma. A couple of months later, my uncle in Brazil was shot, went into a coma and died six weeks later. This tragedy, along with my dad fighting his cancer, put a heavy weight on my family's hearts. That Christmas my dad was in the hospital with an infected gallbladder. He made it through surgery and came home late Christmas Eve. After many months of chemotherapy and radiation, my dad was finally cancer free. These were obstacles for my family but we came out the other side stronger than ever. We came out thinking we could survive anything and

nothing worse could happen. As we moved past those tough times, my biggest problems were if my crush liked me back or if swimming times were good enough to go to Districts. My life was steady and I was content. Then, my life took a turn for the worse.

Sunday, October 16, 2011 was the worst day of my life. I had just been at a wedding, dancing the night away with my parents and good friends. I had a peaceful sleep that night only to be awakened early that morning. The sun was not up yet. My mom runs into my room and shakes me awake. She tells me that my dad is not breathing. I quickly get up and run across the hall to my parent's room, tears pouring from my eyes. There are paramedics scrambling around everywhere. They yell at me to get out of the room and shove me out the door. I run back into my room, pacing and crying, not realizing what is going on. Then I see the paramedics carrying my dad on a gurney. I only see him for a second before they go down the stairs and drive away in the ambulance. The image of him with his eyes closed and connected to tubes still haunts me to this day. I go to my friend's house while my mom goes to the hospital. Then comes the phone call. My mom is on the other end and tells me that my father has died. My heart shatters at that very moment. My father who was just dancing with me that very night is now an angel. The shock overtakes me as I begin to process what will be my fatherless life.

The first year without my dad was a blur. I was only thirteen and was still waiting for him to come home. I had not accepted that he was really gone. How could I accept something that seemed so unreal? As I grew older people moved on, but I was still stuck with my grief. Freshman year it really hit me that he was never coming back. Wandering the halls of the school where he used to teach was like walking through quicksand. I walked through the halls with my dad lingering everywhere I went. He should be walking through these halls telling everyone to, "Be good" and to have a "Good evening." Every corner I turned, he was there. The grief that I had kept trying to push away caught up with me. My life went out of control. I did not

know what I wanted anymore. I did not know if I even wanted to live on this Earth anymore. What is this world without my dad? As I continued my lonely life, I started to remember that I was not alone, and leaving this world is not the way to free myself from pain. I could not show weakness to the hardships life had thrown at me. I began going to therapy and getting my life back on track. I learned who my true friends were that awful winter. It was revealed to me that my closest friend was my mom. I do not know how I will ever repay her for everything she has done for me. She showed me true strength and gave me the courage to fight for the life I was given. She showed me that my dad would not want me to join him quite yet.

If you knew my father, you would know that he was not afraid of dying. He always knew there is a greater life after this one. He preached it every day. But it is unfair to the people who were left behind. Why did someone so special to so many people have to leave so soon? Why would God let this sort of thing happen? Why did this happen to me? These are the questions that flood my mind. The thing is, I cannot be selfish. As much as I wish my dad would come back to this earth, that is not God's plan for me. At first I lost all faith in God, but then it occurred to me, "My dad was a minister, therefore he had more faith in God than anyone I knew. So, how could I, his only daughter, lose faith in the God that inspired my father to be the amazing person he was. My dad, who touched the lives of so many people; my dad, the man who can put a smile on anyone's face, who taught me to be kind to everyone I meet. My father always had faith in God; therefore, I will never lose faith.

These events have given me perspective on life. Life is a journey and we each are given a different path. My path has been bumpy and full of unexpected turns. These bumps have slowed me down but I never let them stop me. Having a parent leave this world at a young age changes a person forever. I was forced to change in the blink of an eye. I grew away from friendships and grew away for my old self. "If this had not happened to me I could be like everyone else," I think to myself, but my life was changing and I could not stop it. Losing

someone you love pushes you to a dark place, and it is your choice if you are going to fight against it. I did not want my life to change, but it did and the unfamiliarity of my new life scared me. You cannot stop change from happening. It will happen whether you like it or not, but it is up to you whether you will embrace the life you were given or if you will hide from it. My dad would never want me to quit and stop moving forward because of him. He is still with me every day and I can hear his wise words telling me not to give up. I may not be able to see him but I know he is there.

But to the original question, *is or was?* I have contemplated this to no end. So here is my conclusion. He left as Mauro Santo de Padua, the man who conquered whatever life threw at him with a smile and a cup of coffee. He beat cancer and the death of his brother with poise and grace. He inspired me. I will tell my children that their grandfather is an amazing angel who is looking down on them. I will answer the question with "My father is Mauro de Padua and is a minister and teacher in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania." He will always be my father and I am forever grateful for the years we had together. He may be gone from this world but he is still with me in spirit.

Lysandra dePadua

*This essay, Change by Lysandra dePadua is the
FIRST PLACE WINNER in the 2015
Theta Alpha International "Laws of Life" Essay Contest.*

Laws of Life Essay Contest

All High School Sophomore (or 15-16 year old) Swedenborgian girls world-wide are eligible to enter this contest. This essay is an opportunity to write about what YOU think is important in life. This is your chance to be heard—to write from the heart about one, or more, of your personal laws of life. Essays are to be in English (Google Translate can be used for this purpose). No name or identification can be on the paper itself to allow impartial judging, but have your name and address in the envelope or email.

Winners receive a certificate and a check:

1st Place: \$100 USD, 2nd Place \$75 USD, 3rd Place \$50 USD.

Essays are printed in the *Journal* with writers' permission and as room permits.

The essay guidelines are:

“The Laws of Life” are a set of rules, ideals or principles by which one should live:

What do you value most in life?

What is important to you?

What ideals do you hold deep in your heart?

Tell about the people and experiences that have helped you form these laws.

Pick a topic to write about:

- a personal experience/lesson learned that affects how you live/view your life now.

- a quote or an aphorism that inspires or guides you.

You can use an analogy, a quotation, a story, or a parable.

(No personal romantic relationships!!)

Submissions are to be sent to:

Theta Alpha International, PO Box 511, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009, USA

Or email to: ANCdaughters@gmail.com

Entries must be received by March 1, 2016.

Going After It

“It is only too late if you give up. Don’t give up. Dig deep and go after what you want.” This is what my mom told me via text on December 4th, 2014. It was opening night of “A Seussified Christmas Carol” and I was mid-panic attack. One would assume I was breaking down because of stage fright, but acting on a stage in front of roughly a hundred of people is easy. Instead, I was panicking about my back. I’ll admit this wasn’t the most eloquent for my mom to phrase this but it was effective. Her words were more effective than if she had motivated me to go after what I want. It reflects on a value, not giving up.

Now, I’ll be the first to admit, I am not very good at following through with things. Whether I am making a scrapbook, playing a sport, or working out, I tend to give it my all for a while, get bored, and give up. Then, I move on to the next thing.

Take piano for instance. I took piano for three years and I was pretty good, if I say so myself, but I wanted to quit. I would search desperately for excuses not to go. I’d say things like, “I’m so much worse than the other kids,” “The piano’s boring, I wanna take guitar,” (which I ended up taking for about a month) or, “The teacher is mean to me.” The later excuse is what finally got my parents to let me quit. Now I regret not following through. Who knows, maybe I’d be a piano sensation by now.

My parents and I know I tend to struggle with quitting on what I want, and we all have different approaches to dealing with it. My dad just tells me flat out, “Now, I’ll let you do this, but I don’t want you to quit. You tend to not follow through so well.” My mom likes to say, “We’ll take it one day at a time.” I, on the other hand, tell my parents to give me consequences when I don’t follow through, but usually, they don’t follow through on the consequences. I like to have these guidelines because I found I work well with deadlines. For example, in school, even if you don’t feel like it, or you get bored, if you don’t turn work in

you won't get good grades. Because of the expectation that I'll do my best and not give up, I do my best.

I don't want to come across as someone who quits at everything though, because I am not. There are quite a few areas that I am very good at not giving up on, like friendships.

When I am friends with someone I try to be the best friend I can be, which makes it very hard when the friendship just doesn't work. During 7th and 8th grade I was friends with eight girls and we did everything as a group. But as high school came I drifted apart from them. My anxiety was intense and I truly believed that they didn't like me so I avoided them at all costs. But then I didn't have any friends. All of my old friends hated me or at least I thought they did. I could have quit on friends, and decided to be alone, but instead I dug deep and went after what I wanted, a new friend.

It wasn't my first time being between friends, and each time I had been told by mom what her mom told her, "Look around the room. I bet your next best friend is in there." And sure enough she was.

Yujin Kim was a new girl from Korea. She was very shy but I wanted to be her friend, and I "went after what I wanted." We were best friends until she left for Korea and stayed there. But even then I didn't quit on our friendship. We still talk over Facebook the same way we did when she was here.

My back is another thing I won't give up on. When I was diagnosed with Scoliosis they said it was nothing to be worried about, but that we should check up on it occasionally. When I went back in six months they said I needed a brace. I was heartbroken. I would have to wear a piece of plastic corset for 23 hours a day. A couple months later I went to have it made. They had me lay on this strip of fabric, suspended from what looked like a medieval torture device, while they wrapped plastic strips around me. In that moment I felt inhuman and freakish.

When I got my brace I immediately hated it. It flattened my already small breasts, and squished my butt down. Additionally, it made it hard to breathe and impossible to move. I knew there must be a better way, but the doctor said this was the only proven way to prevent progression.

Well one day by divine providence an advertisement popped up on my news feed for ScolisSmart. I watched the attached video and sent it to my mom. It talked about a program that not only prevented progression but would reduce my curve. We asked the doctor about it and he said it wouldn't work, so we dropped it. But, the more I tried wearing the brace the more I hated it. My anxiety was so extreme I had panic attacks every time I put on the brace. In addition I was consumed in a feeling of hopelessness, but I didn't give up. Instead I went after what I wanted and told my mom that I wanted her to look into ScolisSmart again, despite what my doctor had said, and she did. Two months later we were in Lititz, Pa., working six hours a day to retrain my back. It was a lot of work and I came home every night exhausted but I still had to do all my homework. It was a big commitment, probably one of the biggest ones I've made. Another part of the commitment is I have to do thirty minutes of rehab and twenty minutes in my activity suit every day for half a year. Between school, homework and extra activities it proved hard to find this time. I was especially struggling with the activity suit because it required making time to go for a walk every day. On December 4th I hadn't done the activity suit in a while and my back hurt in a way it hadn't since before I went to ScolisSmart. Soon I was in a panic and it only got worse. I was mad at myself for playing hockey, for not keeping with my activity suit and for being a quitter. I texted my mom in a whirlwind of fear and frustration. I told her I had messed up everything and it was too late to fix my back. That's when she said, "It is only too late if you give up. Don't give up. Dig deep and go after what you want."

That's when I realized I may not have been doing the best job keeping with my rehab but that doesn't mean I should give up. And yes, I may not be the best at following through but that

doesn't mean I shouldn't try, or that I should just quit. Every day is an opportunity to keep continuing on. If I quit there are no good grades, no medals, no friendships, and no Scoliosis free backs. It doesn't matter what you tend to do, what matters is what you will do next. Even if you have quit at everything in your life so far, you can decide not to give up today and to go for what you want. This is what matters. That is what my life has taught me so far, and I am excited to learn more.

Caterina Fuller

This essay, Going After It by Caterina Fuller is the SECOND PLACE WINNER in the 2015 Theta Alpha International "Laws of Life" Essay Contest.

PLEASE NOTE:

The two essays which tied for THIRD PLACE in the 2015 "Laws of Life" Essay Contest will be published in the Spring 2016 Issue of Theta Alpha Journal.

We congratulate all the girls who entered the contest for their hard work and thoughtful essays. Thank you!

Someday

Someday my soul will need to fly
And when I go, will you be there
With open arms and hands assigned
To lead me through that land so fair?

Is it a place where shafts of light
Will pierce the luminescent air?
And will the sky all golden be?
For we are told earth can't compare.

And will we walk in greenest fields
Thus reunited as a pair,
Where gardens of sweet blossoms grow
And all these given to your care?

And when I come this land to see,
This land so lovely, will I wear,
To greet you as I wish to do
A band of starlight in my hair?

Shall we appear as in our youth,
With bodies trim, your curly hair?
And will the music you compose
Be truly beautiful and rare?

And will we surely once again
Walk together as a pair?
Yes, for this I truly dream.
It is my very constant prayer.

Marilyn Richard Synnestvedt

Marilyn was married to Peter Synnestvedt. They spent their married life in Ohio where he taught music, in addition to playing, conducting and composing it. Peter was the son of Raymond and Katherine Synnestvedt.

The River Crossing

"We haven't seen animals in an hour," complained a disappointed girl, who was sitting in the rear of an SUV. Her mom, Brenda, turned around in the passenger seat to look at the three kids. She gave them a hopeful smile.

"They're probably just shying away from the sun, Camryn. It's beginning to get warm outside." Camryn was doubtful but decided to stay quiet and keep looking. As the car drove down the dirt roads in Kruger National Park, the group began to get discouraged. They had seen an amazing event in the game park. Three hippos had crossed the road in front of them to get to the water on the other side. It was very exciting and dangerous too. It would be hard to put the hippos to the shadow of our memories. The sun was inching above the flat landscape, dyeing the African savanna a light pink. No big animals would be out in the scorching sun once it was out.

"We can't give up now! We're in South Africa!" Shaun exclaimed to his kids and wife.

Twist after turn and there was nothing. The land was so beautiful. It was beautiful in a different way than their home in Pennsylvania. Camryn breathed in the smoky air. It always seemed to smell like vanilla, too. At thirteen years old, she had been out of the country quite a few times and was no stranger to new sights, but this was Africa! It was magnificent and majestic beyond belief. Every day since they had been there was an adventure. Her parents always talked of taking her and her brothers, Julien and Evan, to South Africa. They had finally taken that 18 hour plane ride to her dad's birthplace.

In the past week, Kruger had gotten a lot more rain than usual and everything was sparkling with morning dew. They turned a corner in the road and there they saw it. The road was intersected with a stream of water about four meters wide. A bird was standing in the middle of the river, keeping its beady eyes on the metal monster. The family surveyed the scene.

"What now?" asked Julien.

"I guess we should just go back now," Camryn offered.

Shaun got a gleam in his eyes and tried to mentally measure the depth. “We can go through it,” he said. The kids looked at each other and the river. They knew that he was going to go through no matter what they thought.

“Yah!” their mom exclaimed in excitement. “We’re going to cross a river in Africa, kids. She twisted around to look for the video camera. She whipped it out of its case and rolled down the window. Out she was, the whole top of her body was hanging out the window.

Video camera in hand, recording, she said, “We’re crossing a river in Africa. Trusty dad will get us through.”

Camryn thought of the horrible stories she had heard of. Stories of people doing stupid things in Africa and losing their lives for it. She hoped that wouldn’t happen to them.

As the car moved forward, Camryn grabbed her phone to record the river crossing. The window went down in the back and she held her phone up.

“Are all the windows closed?” her mom said jokingly. The front of the car touched the water and they started to lean forward. Into the river the car went. The water rushed loudly in their ears. It was up to the middle of the doors as the engine pushed it on.

Suddenly, GURGLE GURGLE GLUNK! the car lurched forward into the river. The wheels turned uselessly in the water, but they didn’t move. Silence fell over the car as their faces turned to expressions of shock. Brenda put the camera in her lap as Shaun turned the gears of the car in spastic, panicky movements.

“Oh, dad there’s water coming in!” Julien yelled in surprise. This was bad, really bad. There was water leaking in through the door onto the floor of the backseat. The kids were terrified as they pulled their feet up onto the seats to keep dry.

“It’s okay. Put everything in the back,” their mom instructed, trying to sound calm.

They knew that tone of voice. She was worried.

Should I get the kids out?" she asked her husband.

"No, no." he replied, refusing to give up on the car. As the water rose, the engine gave a final stall and died. There they were, stuck in the middle of a river in Africa, with no one to help them.

"Grab anything you can and prepare to get out," Brenda said as she took charge and opened the window of the car. Out she went, into the river which was up to her waist. One by one the kids climbed out the window and onto her back. She carried them to shore and told them to wait there.

Brenda was very worried. There could be hippos and crocodiles in the water or hungry animals on land. She figured if her legs were in the water, the animal would go for her first. It was a horrible, yet smart, precaution. Within five minutes, Brenda and her kids were on the shore waiting for Shaun to exit the car. The water was up to the windows now and when he jumped out, he was chest deep in it. The car was damming the river up.

"You should run to the nearest road," Brenda said to Shaun.

"Let's wait till around eight pm. Someone might come. We should at least stay together," he replied. The kids were falling apart and red biting ants were crawling up their legs if they stopped moving. So, around and around they went in a circle. Their mom told them to talk or sing to keep animals away.

"No animals! Keep away!" the hysterical kids yelled in unison.

"We should have sticks or big stones to use for protection against lions or rhinos," Camryn suggested.

"Good idea. Hold these." She picked up a few large rocks and passed them out. Suddenly, they all saw a pack of baboons up the road. The leader stared them down, anger in its eyes. They are very vicious creatures and if they decided to, a pack could easily kill them. The leader turned to face the family. It held its ground for a little longer. Then it turned around and the pack went into the woods.

The family breathed in relief. They couldn't leave their spot because being near the water was actually safer, but then a car wouldn't be able to see them. Just as they were about to lose all hope completely, a vision of elation appeared. Coming down the road like a

silver angel, was a car. They were saved!

“Help! Help!” They screamed at the car. Brenda yelled and jumped, sprinting at the car. For one terrible second it stopped as if we were warning them to leave. But, Brenda caught them in time. The driver rolled down the window in surprise. She told the couple about what happened and motioned to the car and kids. Camryn leaned against her dad as they walked to the car in complete relief and exhaustion. Their saviors agreed to take them to the nearest camp. In went the stuff and family. Luckily, the old couple was perfect for the job. They were elderly with no kids in a large SUV and they came to visit Kruger every month.

The kids sat on their parents’ laps because there weren’t quite enough seats. They cried and laughed as they told the story in detail. The drivers said that the roads were all closed and they were trying to leave. Brenda was overcome with the sense of what could have happened.

Camryn made to give her mom a hug and looked down at the heavy object in her hand. It was the rock she was going to use, the rhino rock. She knew immediately that rock was coming with them to America. Camryn looked at her brave family and wondered what good this experience would bring. They all had almost given up, but they didn’t, and that’s probably what saved them.

Ten year old Evan hadn’t spoken for a while, but he suddenly said, “Why do you keep telling that story? It already happened!”

Camryn Buss

Note: *Camryn wrote this as a short story for an 8th grade assignment. Her mother confirms that it is all true.*

We Are Mary

There is some wonderful symbolism in the story of the Annunciation (read Luke 1:26-38). In that story Mary is told that she would become pregnant and give birth to the Lord. She is told that God would be *inside* of her, and come forth from her. One of the names that we have for the Lord is "Immanuel" which means "God with us." (see Matthew 1:23; Isaiah 7:14). The Word often describes the Lord being in us, or flowing through us, or that we can be a vessel for the Lord in this world (see John 14:20; 15:4; DLW 358-360; TCR 70, 470, 504.5; AC 3318; AR 883; Life 102). This concept can sometimes be difficult to grasp. How can the Lord be in us, or with us? How can the Lord flow through us? How can we be a vessel for God? It sometimes feels paradoxical: We are *not* God, but we can be *vessels* for God. How is this possible?

This story actually gives a wonderful image for that concept, in the idea of a baby being within a woman. The baby is *not* the woman, but the baby is a part of that woman's life, and can come forth from that woman. Pregnancy provides a wonderful image for how the Lord can come forth from us because of the things we do in this world. Spiritually speaking, we too can be "Mary," the mother of the Lord in this world. "For whoever does the will of God is My. . . mother" (Mark 3:35; see also CL 119).

There is a passage in *True Christianity* which calls to mind the imagery of pregnancy and birth. "*The Lord is present with each and every human being. He exerts insistent pressure on us to receive Him. When we do receive Him, which occurs when we acknowledge Him as our own God, Creator, Redeemer, and Savior, His First Coming occurs [in us]*" (TCR 766). We can be vessels who carry the Lord. We can *spiritually* give birth to the Lord, just as Mary *physically* gave birth to the Lord. This is a strange thing to try to grasp, just as Mary had difficulty grasping how this could be possible. How can I be a vessel for the Lord?

What can I do to bring the Lord into the world?

The story begins with Gabriel coming to Mary. The name Gabriel means “God is my strength” (see Daniel 10:12,19). And that can also be a paradoxical concept to grasp. God is *my* strength. So *whose* strength are we talking about? *My* strength, or *God’s* strength? It’s both. When the Lord comes into our lives, He gives us *His* strength. We take on that strength as our own, even though it’s still the Lord’s strength. He wants us to have His strength. That’s the meaning of “Gabriel.” Gabriel comes to us and says, “You can have the Lord’s strength!”

Then we have the announcement, or “annunciation.” Notice that it’s not called the “request.” Gabriel didn’t come to Mary and say, “We’re looking for someone willing to be the mother of God, would you be interested?” Instead he said, “You *are going to be* the mother of the Lord.” It’s not a request, it’s an announcement. And that’s the way it is for us too. The Lord doesn’t come to us and say, “I’m looking for people who might be interested in becoming angels.” No, we were *born* to become angels. We were born to be vessels for the Lord in this world. It’s a joyful announcement: “Guess what? You were created in the image of God!” Isn’t that amazing, strange, wonderful, paradoxical and profound?

Naturally we can be somewhat troubled by this, just as Mary was. There can be different feelings that come up in our hearts. Sometimes we might experience a fear of being arrogant or proud: “I don’t want to *assume* that I have God’s strength.” Other times we might experience the opposite fear: “I don’t think I’m good enough to be a vessel for the Lord. What could I possibly do to help bring the Lord into this world?” We often feel unworthy to answer the call to make the world a better place. We fear that we are not good enough.

So Gabriel says, “Don’t be afraid!” There’s a wonderful passage in the Heavenly Doctrines which talks about the fear that naturally comes up when we start to get a sense of how profound it is that we can be vessels for the Lord in this world. “[*This fear*]

comes over a person when life from the Lord enters in place of one's own life. One's own life is to look to the Lord from oneself, while life from the Lord is to look to the Lord from the Lord, and yet doing so as though of oneself" (*Apocalypse Revealed* 56). It's hard to grasp. How do we live our lives trying to have the Lord's life flowing through us, while also living it as if it was our own life? It seems paradoxical. But it's somewhat like having a baby inside of you. It's like a mother feeling the activity of her unborn baby's life and saying: "It's not my life, but I feel it inside of me as if it was my own life." So Gabriel says, "Don't be afraid." It's supposed to work like this. We are called to manifest God and His love. When we engage in love for our neighbor, we are bringing the Lord's love into the world. It's not actually our love, but it feels like our own.

At one point Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord" (Luke 1:46). I like to think about the image of a magnifying glass focusing sunlight into a particular point. We can do the same thing with the Lord's love. All of our souls can "magnify" the Lord; bringing the Lord's life and light into this world, in our own unique and different ways. It's amazing, and kind of hard to grasp sometimes. But that's what we were made for. The Lord says "Let your light shine!" (Matthew 5:16). It's actually *His* light. But it says: let *your* light shine, as if it was our light. He wants us to feel that way, because He can bring us joy when we feel His life as our own. We're not supposed to hide that light under a basket just because it simply comes *through* us (see Matthew 5:15-16).

So we are called to bring the Lord into this world, just like Mary. And so it's as if we have a part of our spirit or our soul that is like a womb. It's the place where goodness and truth come together (see AC 4918). And when they come together in our lives, useful things are born; good deeds, kindness, love, justice, charity, wisdom. All these things can come forth from us when we bring the Lord's goodness and truth together in our lives, just like the beginning of life in the womb.

There are other Christian thinkers who have seen that we

are all like Mary: “What good is it if Mary gave birth to the son of God fourteen hundred years ago, if I am not also giving birth to God in my time, in my place. We are all mothers of God, for God is always needing to be born” (Meister Eckhart, 13th century Christian writer). We can all be like Mary, saying: “I’m going to accept the angel’s calling. I’m going to try to bring the Lord into the world.” Another Christian writer poetically said it this way: “Could but your heart become a manger for his birth, God would again become a child upon this earth” (Angelus Silesius, 17th century Christian writer). It wasn’t just Mary that this annunciation was for. It was for all of us.

Now, Mary had some concerns with this announcement. It’s interesting that her first response was essentially: “I don’t think that’s going to work. I know how this sort of thing usually works.” We too can sometimes have the audacity to question the way the Lord tells us that life will work. But her specific response was: “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” (Luke 1:34). In the spiritual sense of the Word, “men” represent our understanding or intellect. So there are times when we might say: “How can I bring the Lord into the world? I don’t *understand* a lot of the truths in the Word—I don’t know a *man*—I don’t have the *intellect* to make this work. How can I be useful if I don’t *understand* all of the Lord’s truth?”

Fortunately Gabriel didn’t respond by saying, “You’re right, that won’t work,” rather he said, “The Holy Spirit *will* come upon you” (Luke 1:35). The Holy Spirit represents the Lord’s *truth* (see TCR 140; Lord 51; Canons 17). Once again, it’s an *announcement* that we were *designed* to be able to understand the Lord’s truth. The Holy Spirit *will* come upon us. We can be inspired by the Lord’s truth, and share it with other people. Maybe you’ve had times when you were talking with someone, and the perfect things came out of your mouth. And you saw on their face that that was exactly what they needed to hear. You might have even said, “I don’t know where that came from. It wasn’t me!” It was the Holy Spirit coming upon you, inspiring you.

Gabriel went on to say “the power of the Highest will

overshadow you" (Luke 1:35). This is referring to the power of the Lord's *goodness* (see AR 373; TCR 88). We are also called to bring the Lord's *goodness* into the world. Maybe you've had times when you were able to *do* something really helpful for someone. You might even look back and think, "How was I able to do that?" That was the power of the Highest overshadowing you. It was the Lord working through you to accomplish goodness in the world.

So what do we need to do that will allow this to happen? I think it's summed up in Mary's final statement: "Behold, the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). I love the humility that is conveyed here. We often picture Mary at this point in the story bowing her head, presenting an image of the kind of humility we need in our lives. Humility is the key to everything. In some ways religion could be boiled down to one word: humility. It's the ability to say, "*I'm* not the greatest; the *Lord* is the greatest. I just want to be a servant to the Lord and other people." When we can have this kind of humility, it opens us up to being a vessel for the Lord, and again the Lord is born in this world.

But it's not a humility that says, *I'm* worthless. It's a humility that says, "*I'm* just going to try to do what the Lord has taught, and believe that the Lord can use me to bring His goodness into other people's lives. It's not about me, it's about the Lord's goodness being born. *And I'm* so grateful to get to be a part of it!" It's like Mary accepting the call to be the mother of the Lord. It's like saying "Yes, I can do my part to bring the Lord into someone else's life." It's like a mother looking with joy at her brand new baby.

So this Christmas, I invite you to think about the idea that we are Mary. Think about ways that you can be a vessel for the Lord. Think about how you can take part in bringing the Lord into the world and into people's lives. That's what the Christmas season is all about. Spiritually His birth in this world continues every day, the more that we choose to take part in it. Remember that the annunciation wasn't just for Mary, it was for all of us.

We can be Mary. And that's really good news! *“Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you. . . . Do not be afraid, for you have found favor with God” (Luke 1:28, 30).*

Solomon Keal

Rev. Solomon Keal is one of the assistant pastors in the Bryn Athyn Church, and the pastor for Laurel Camp. Solomon grew up in Kempton Pennsylvania. He is married to Tirah Echols Keal, and they have five children. He is also a musician who has released five albums of mostly solo piano music. His hobbies include reading, music, sailing, and building models out of Lego.

Monday

From the porch we watched
a heron stalk the tangled edge
of lakeshore. Halfway elegant,
half absurd, the slim bird walked
on wand legs, its long neck
curved in an S to peer
into the shallows. We thought
it sought a frog or fish,
some daily nourishment.
When it stopped, it vanished,
almost. It stood so still it
shifted shape, became
a slender trunk among a lace
Of weeds and trees.
We peered through branches,
glimpsed, then missed,
then glimpsed again its silence.

Who knows how long we sat?
Time lost us and we lost ourselves.
When its wings fell open
and it rose over the water,
we gasped—we rose—
our mouths fell open
as we fed on flight.

Amanda Rogers Petro

Spiritual Reminiscences

It is my hope that in sharing some of my Spiritual Reminiscences they may awaken similar recollections in the readers of TAJ who may also be willing to share their spiritual experiences with us. To me, these experiences not only confirm the reality of the spiritual world, but illustrate that, through the Glorification of Jesus Christ, God is able to be even more present with us in his Divine Human. It is also my hope that sharing these types of experiences may engender a useful discussion on this topic.

The Day I Almost Drowned

When I was a little girl, I almost drowned in the Kitchener swimming pool. I had gone there with some of my young cousins, even though I could not swim! But, dear Peggy Kuhl, an older cousin, volunteered to take the time to teach me. I struggled with the fear of putting my head under the water and after some determined effort managed to “swim” (probably doggy paddling!) to the concrete platform in the middle of the lower end of the pool. Immediately turning around I headed back to the side of the pool where Peggy was cheering me on and jumped out saying, “I can swim, I can swim!” I was elated.

Then I ran down to the deep end where my other cousins were and shouted, “I can swim, I can swim!” To prove it, I jumped into the deep end and began to swim to the concrete platform in the centre of the deep end. Once again, without resting, I turned around, starting to swim back to the side of the pool but, suddenly, found my strength failed me and I began to sink.

I didn't know then I was hypoglycemic and was experiencing a severe blood sugar drop which left me devoid of energy. I remember bobbing up and down and taking in water. Peggy had followed me, no doubt shouting caution, but in my excitement, I had ignored her.

The noise was dinning with so many excited children swimming, splashing and yelling.

The more experienced swimmers were diving off the tall board, as their skill was attracting the attention of the lifeguard. Meanwhile, my cousins were desperately trying to get his attention by shouting, "Someone is drowning; someone is drowning."

By this time, my cousin, Peggy, had bravely jumped in. Swimming under me, she tried to push me to the surface so I could get some air. I was not aware of this as I was panicking, but that is probably why I remember bobbing up and down.

Years later, Peggy revealed to me in a letter, "You kept grabbing my head and pushing me down." She finally had to swim to the side of the pool where she could get others to help. She also confessed in her letter, "I have had nightmares all my life about that experience. I felt so guilty that I had to leave you in order to save myself." While reading this, I was shocked! It made me feel very sad.

Fortunately, Peggy's sister, Judy, and others had run to the other side of the pool to alert the lifeguard. The next thing I knew I was lying on the cement with water being pumped out of me. Before I reached home that afternoon, the news had reached the neighborhood and I was told, "Someone almost drowned at the municipal pool today!" It was a close call.

This preamble flows into what I really want to say. While all this excitement was going on above me, I had reached the point where I felt like a heavy rubber doll. My limbs felt numb and I could no longer struggle. I felt completely relaxed and unafraid.

What I recall about this incident was that my mind was still clear and operating. I remember thinking, "I wonder what heaven is going to be like?" In reflecting on this incident later in life, it was a confirmation that our external body dies, but our spiritual body does not!

A Visit From My Father

My first 'spiritual experience' occurred in 1959, two weeks after my father passed away. I had gone to my room to lie down and rest for a while when, suddenly, I was aware that my father was standing beside my bed. I turned my head toward him. Not startled, I just accepted his presence. "Daddy is here, I wonder what he wants?" ran through my mind. He simply replied: "I have come to tell you that I love you," and with that confirming statement he was gone as quickly as he came. It was a message I needed to know, so I've always considered it a precious gift from God. When he "spoke" it was an internal speaking and an internal hearing. I am sure, had anyone else been in the room, they would neither have seen nor heard him.

What Are You Doing Here?

Years ago, during a visit with "Aunt Shell" as she was affectionately referred to, she related a similar experience. She too was lying down resting sometime after the passing of her husband. All of a sudden, she noticed that he was sitting on the chair beside the bed. Surprised, she remarked, "*What are you doing here?*" I regret I didn't think to ask her if he had answered her query, but it illustrated to me they were spiritually close and connected to one another.

A Trip To Peterborough

A miraculous incident happened to me in the early 80s. My husband, Keith, was suffering from emphysema and other complications. I was working in Real Estate office and felt the need to get away for a few days, so I decided to make a short trip to visit his sister and her husband in Peterborough, about five hours away. It was winter. The day was bright and sunny. The snow was heaped high along the sides of the highway. I felt relaxed and was enjoying the snow-covered, rural scenery. At one point, I noticed what appeared to be water stretching across the road ahead; light snow was wafting gently off the tops of the snow banks and I thought how pretty it looked. Then, what

looked like water, turned out to be “black ice”.

When my car hit the black ice, it literally slid across the highway into the oncoming traffic. I could see two cars traveling at least at 60 miles per hour, the same as I was. I saw them coming straight toward me and tried to turn my steering wheel to the right in order to avoid them but found the wheel had locked. I couldn't move. I was a sitting duck.

I thought to myself, “Well, Paula, this is it. You are going to feel a sharp pain and then your spirit will leave your body and you will be on your way.” (I have discovered that thoughts travel very quickly through our minds when we are in life threatening circumstances). Then I thought, “I can't die. Keith needs me. **Jesus save me.**”

Immediately, a “perceptible bubble” covered my car and I noticed that the “silence” in my car had changed. It was different.

The other two cars had reached me. In writing this, I don't recall so much seeing them reach my car, which was still moving forward; however I was aware that they both passed me on the driver's side, because I heard “swish”—“swish”. Perhaps my eyes were closed? I don't recall closing my eyes, or hearing them honking their horns! There was just a distinct silence. Everything was happening so quickly.

I needed to get away from any further on-coming traffic and turned my wheel to the right. This time, I discovered it had released itself. Although, my hands were on the steering wheel as I barreled across the highway, I didn't feel I was controlling the car, which was still moving at a good clip.

All this took place within minutes. I remember thinking, “Well, the cars didn't get me, but the snow banks will!” I forced my wheel hard to the left managing to avoid direct contact with them. As my car scraped along the snow banks, snow and chunks of ice splashed across my windshield blinding my vision.

I could hear a slight crunching sound on the front right fender.

Still moving at a good clip, my car moved back onto the highway again. I had not had time to check if there was any on-coming traffic behind me! It still felt as if someone else was driving my car. Then I found myself in the right lane, traveling normally toward my destination and back in control of my car.

I said to myself, "Well Paula, you'd better pull over and clear all this ice and snow off the windshield and see what damage has been done, but be careful when you take your hands off the wheel, you will be shaking."

I slowed down, pulled off the highway, turned the engine off and stepped out of my vehicle. I was totally calm. I walked over to the right side of my car to assess the situation. There was just the tiniest bit of damage; nothing to worry about. I brushed off the heavy snow and ice from the front and side windows and tried to clear some of the snow impacted in my wheel. I got back into the car, looked behind me, then moved into the right-hand lane and continued on my way to Peterborough.

It took a few minutes to reflect on what had just happened and to let the realization of it sink in. A few miles down the road, I said aloud, "Jesus, you not only saved me; you also saved the people in those other two cars as well. **THANK YOU, JESUS!**"

What I have thought about many times since was how quickly He responded once I mentally called, "**Jesus, save me.**" His Divine protection just dropped **immediately** over my car. I wonder what would have happened if I had not called upon Him? To me, this is another confirmation that Jesus is God and how close He is to us in His Divine Human.

My Husband's Passing

In 1984, my husband, Keith, passed away in a London, Ontario, hospital where I had a most unusual spiritual experience. We

had been married for only 13 years and eight of them he had been an invalid and on disability.

I had been warned by his doctor that he could go any time, so had many years to prepare for his passing. I had already done a major part of my grieving.

One day while sitting with him in his hospital room, I suddenly realized that he was gone. I went to the window overlooking the tree tops of London (Ontario) and said to myself, "Well Paula, you are now alone."

I went to the nurse's station to make my announcement. Once the doctor officially pronounced him gone, the nurse tried to whisk me away, but I asked to spend a few minutes alone with him. I knew the celestial angels were present with him and I wanted to be there too.

I stood gazing at his handsome face and thinking how peaceful he looked; I even thought he was smiling. Mentally, I was able to picture his loved ones welcoming him to the spiritual world. His old friend, Alan Schnarr, who had predeceased him years before, would be there. I knew his beloved mother, who had died when he was 16, would be there. They had been very close. I thought of his father and his sister, Ruth, too, along with others who had gone on before.

As I was visualizing this spiritual reunion, I became aware that the Lord was pouring what seemed like a huge pitcher of love into the top of my head. The warmth flowed down into my heart, where it radiated like the sun throughout my body to my limbs and my fingertips. It was powerfully perceptible. It was as though sunshine was emulating the Lord's caring love within my whole body. I was conscious of being truly alive; not just existing. I actually felt true joy for the first time in my life.

The remarkable thing is that this "spiritual sunshine" remained with me for three weeks following my husband's passing, during which it gradually subsided.

Having returned home to Owen Sound and completed the business required following Keith's passing, I decided it was time for me to go back to work. I had gone only three blocks, when I heard a voice coming from the right side of the car say, "Paula, I will never leave you alone."

My Lord and My God! Jesus heard my thoughts when I was standing at the window in the hospital room overlooking the trees!

I can affirm that He has never left me alone. I have called upon His help many times since and within twenty-four to forty-eight hours I have the help I need. Sometimes it comes immediately. I always say, "**Thank you Jesus!**"

Paula Roschman Niall

In 1971, Paula married Keith Edward Niall, of Kitchener/Caryndale on Easter Sunday evening in the Bryn Athyn Cathedral. She remembers Keith coming into the Carmel Church when she was a little girl and saying to herself, "There's the man I am going to marry." After marrying, Paula left Bryn Athyn where she had been secretary to the Principal in the Academy Boys' School and moved to Owen Sound and became a Real Estate Broker there. When her husband passed away in 1984, Paula remained in Owen Sound where she had developed a strong interest in the history and genealogy of Owen Sound and Grey County, winning the Ontario Lieutenant Governor's Award for her volunteer work in preserving, protecting and promoting Ontario's rich heritage.

The Compost Heap and the Church

(Excerpts from a talk at Gathering Leaves, a coming together of women from various branches of the New Church. It was held in the Convention camp at Fryeburg, Maine, in 2013.)

The Compost Heap

I have come to believe that a compost heap is beautiful. Decaying leaves. Crumbled eggshells. And yes, even that slime oozing off a banana peel. I love a good compost heap. I cannot say that I've grown to love the odor—that sharp, putrid smell that reminds us of death as part of the life cycle. But I do love a good compost heap, and I do believe that it is beautiful.

I believe dry leaves are beautiful. Dry leaves hold a set of unique colors. Looking out the window over the Saco River today here in Maine, we see that the leaves are beginning to turn. And in the next month, thousands of tourists will come to New England. And what will all these people flock here to see? Dying leaves! Millions of beautifully shaped colored flags proclaiming in unison the changing of the season and the decay of their little corner of the nature-scape.

This sense of cycles is evoked by the Gathering Leaves 2013 theme, “Changing Colors, Changing Lives.” As are the seasons of nature, so are the seasons of our lives, of our communities, and of our churches. I believe that the cycles and the seasons—like any spiritual principle—do not just apply to their literal manifestations. These cycles in the natural world correspond, or mirror a spiritual process, something that is going on internally. Emanuel Swedenborg talks about the idea of the microcosm and the macrocosm, and that any one principle is true on various levels, leading me to believe that not only do the season and life cycles show up inside an individual, but also in collections of individuals. What we know about death and life, birth and resurrection, in a human setting, can also be true within a community, within humanity as a whole, within nature, and in the church.

Intergenerational Conversation

This morning at Gathering Leaves we have an opportunity to engage in intergenerational conversations around the future of our church. My experience is that it takes effort and is often uncomfortable to talk about the church between generations. I walk in many circles, and I often end up in conversations about church with various generations. I've noticed that particularly from the generation that's most prominently represented here—those over fifty-five—I hear these types of questions: "What's happening to the church?" and "What's the future of the church?" And I hear the questions, some tinged with expectations or disappointment, "Where are the young people? Why aren't they taking over?" Or the laments of, "What are we doing wrong?" "Why didn't this work? I raised my kids in the church and now they're not interested." This is a tender and often difficult subject and it can be very personal for all of us. I hear and honor these questions.

I want to reframe the questions. I believe there's great power in how we frame our questions, and I'd like to suggest other options. For example, what about these questions: "What might church look like for different generations?" "What is feeding the spiritual lives of the young people of today?" And the question that is driving my call to ministry, and the reason I'm here today: "What does it mean to be faithful today? What does it look like to be 'church' in this generation?"

Change

This word "change" is not a comfortable word. And it often makes for uncomfortable conversations. But maybe being comfortable is not the point of spiritual life or church or being human. Maybe the church really isn't about what our needs are and having our needs met. Being the church is about following the movement of God and community. Being the church is about being a collective embodiment of the two great commandments—loving God and loving the neighbor.

When the Lord was on earth, he certainly didn't preach comfort or stability, feeling good, or that it's about what we want. That

was not Christ's message, though I often want it to be. But that's not the message the Lord taught or demonstrated with on earth or that we read about in scripture. The Lord preached that we should sell all we have, give to the poor, and follow him. Jesus' call is to take up our mats and walk, to lay down our nets and follow.

It's so tempting, especially perhaps as Swedenborgians with our ideas of the internal sense of the Word, to spiritualize these phrases and to push them away into intellectual concepts to keep ourselves comfortable. But I have come to believe that these are direct teachings—God's call on our lives. I don't know what it means in your life to sell all you have and give to the poor. But there's something in there about sacrificing our own comfort and stability to be part of following God and a community. Following the Lord probably doesn't look like physically putting down fishing nets for most of us, but it might involve letting go of that which has been core to our daily existence, and trusting and following and being changed. Taking up our mats, these things we've learned and know, and actively engaging in the work of our lives of faith even when it's not comfortable or how we've always known life to be.

It's God, then, who seems to be all about change—process, transformation, death, life, letting go, and rebirth. And it's God who says, "I'll be with you through it." Isn't that the beauty of the incarnation? God coming to earth in human form, taking on this life process of being born, living, struggling, having joy, being in community, teaching, serving, dying, and then being resurrected, glorified, and coming again. Is this not the call to us individually, this call to the repentance of spirit, to transformation, to death and rebirth, to change? And if this is the call to us individually, is not this the call to us as a church?

We can see this when we are present to the process of change in the life cycle of an individual. I've heard some beautiful stories this weekend about aging gracefully as people shared about having the courage to let go in a different way in these stages of life. There is a deep wisdom that the generations in their second

half of life hold about aging, and that wisdom is needed in this conversation. If I'm standing here speaking as a "voice for the next generation of the church," it's important for me to honor and say clearly: this is not about the young people wanting everything to change, getting rid of the old, and swooping in with the new. We need dialog and multi-generational listening and hearing where it is that God is calling us to as a church. Because the church is changing and, I believe, we all need to be present to each other and the conversation.

Giant Rummage Sale

I'd like to zoom out for a moment, and think about not just our local churches or denominations or even the churches in our neighborhood, but to look at the greater swaths of movement in this cycle. Phyllis Tickle, a scholar of religious history, wrote a book called *The Great Emergence*. In it she offers a theory that, in the sweep of Christian history, every five hundred years there is a giant rummage sale, where things are thrown up in the air and questioned, and then it settles back down and the church is changed in the process.

Legacy

Personally I can stand in this room and I can think about my ancestors. I think about my great-grandparents, Anita and Louis Dole who were part of the founding of this camp [Fryeburg], my great-grandma who wrote the "Dole Notes", a rich resource in Swedenborgian Bible study. Bill and Louise Woofenden, pillars in the church and this camp. My maternal grandparents, Dave and Shirley Gladish, dedicated their lives to Swedenborgian scholarship and translation. Shirley Gladish, my last living grandparent, worked on the New Century Edition [of the Writings] into her late eighties. And I'm humbled, truly humbled, by this legacy and how my ancestors gave their lives to the church, and were that active fertilizer that we are growing out of.

When we talk about this compost heap, it's not about throwing out the old. That's not the point. The point is: we are each fertilizer for the next generation. So how do we do this

purposefully? Rather than throwing out the old in the trash, can we let it be recycled, composted, and become the nutrients for the next generation?

Both my Woofenden grandparents died recently. They had faded out of active life in the church over the last number of years when their bodies and minds began to slow down. But their commitment and faith to the Swedenborgian church tradition was still central to the ethos of their home.

When I went to visit over the last few years, the way that Grandpa would connect with people was through showing us things around the house and telling the stories. We talked a lot about the paintings on the wall, the little squeaky things that made bird sounds, and inevitably, he'd show me the most recent book from the Swedenborg Foundation. And then he would show me with great pride the bookstand that the Swedenborg Foundation had given him to honor his work with them. Grandma, even when she was struggling to fully communicate, would still have her Greek New Testament out, which she had read her whole life. And every day, at lunch or dinner, depending on the schedule, Grandpa and Grandma would read a chapter from the Bible, slowly working their way from Genesis to Revelation, and back again. They were faithful to their spiritual tradition in their generation.

What does it look like to be faithful in my generation? I am called to be faithful to God and to walk in the Swedenborgian heritage in my generation. And I, and my generation, know that we cannot do it alone. We are able to be the church for our generation, because of the fertilization that has been, is, and will be done by the generations that have come before us.

Intergenerational Support

Things have changed in how each generation relates to church, and with this change, we have an opportunity to re-imagine the metaphors. Involvement in church is not the assumption that it was 50 years ago. As someone who is called to be a leader in the church, I can speak for some and share that it is hard to be a

faith leader in this era. Gone are the days of community respect, assured job security, and predictable employment. In this era, we are charged with re-imagining church, and ministering to a generation that holds no assumption around the need to be part of church, and without the stability of knowing that there will be employment. This work is not easy, and we need each generation to play their part.

We need the coming generations to be proactively trained, equipped, and empowered, and our organizations to consciously make space for new voices. We need our systems to be courageous around change, and cultivate creative and present conversation among all of us. To give voice to the legacy that has been written, and to honor the way that compost can be given for the next generation of leaders. To take the time to ask the generations above and below, “What does it look like to purposefully fertilize?” How can we make choices in a way that makes fertile rich soil for the next generations and for new life to grow?

Anna Woofenden

Note: To read the entire presentation, visit annawoofenden.com September 14th 2013, Fryeburg, Maine. Another website for Anna is (www.gardenchurchsp.org)

Rev. Anna Woofenden is the pastor and founder of The Garden Church in San Pedro California. She received her Masters of Divinity from Earlham School of Religion, a Certificate of Swedenborgian Studies from the Swedenborgian House of Studies, and is an ordained minister in the Swedenborgian Church of North America. Anna graduated with a BA in Religion and Communications from Bryn Athyn College of the New Church and has sixteen years of ministry experience both on a denominational and local level prior to following her call to ordained ministry. Anna has a passion for spirituality, justice, beauty, compassion, and community, and is driven by a calling to re-imagine church.

The Piano

(The Lord works in mysterious ways his wonders to perform. Another story of how Providence is within everything we do turning our every action toward the greatest possible good.)

A long time ago, before our Martin grandchildren (Anna, Leah, Ariel, Sarah & Eli) were born, my husband Jack and I were about to celebrate a big wedding anniversary. Jack wanted to get a special gift for the occasion and settled on a piano but, being totally unmusical and lacking any idea as to how to evaluate an instrument of that sort, he was led to a helpful co-worker at IBM. His co-worker was a musician and pianist and well acquainted with a business in Atlanta that specialized in high-quality used pianos. She accompanied Jack to the warehouse, surveyed the available instruments, then strolled among them, stopping at one and then another to play a short sequence on each one, and then finally sat to play a bit more extensively at a handsome little upright Kawai in the middle of the room. She came back to Jack and said, *“That’s the one!”*

I was happy to finally have a piano in our home. The music brought back many fond childhood memories of listening to my father, Harold Sellner, play at our old homestead on Byberry Road in Huntingdon Valley, PA, where my Grandfather, Professor C. Vinet lived, and where my brother, Jerome and I grew up. Before I was even born, my father used to play the organ for church services when they lived in New York. My Dad was quite versatile with his love for music, math, tennis and other sports, but music was his main love. As a teenager I also loved to “sing-along” when he played the piano, accordion, ukulele and/or banjo.

Needless to say, when our children, Marie and Erik, started their music lessons on this special piano, I felt a two-fold delight. Firstly enjoying the present in listening to them practicing for their own music concerts, and secondly, enjoying melodious memories of the past. It's important to note that this piano was

also used during a variety of occasions in the Atlanta Society—one of which was the annual class, supper and "Christmas Sing," which traditionally was held in our home. After worship, it was always concluded with Bishop Tom Kline (then our Atlanta Pastor) offering a beautiful and inspiring rendition of 'Calm on the Listening Ear of Night'.

As the years passed, Erik and Marie left home to attend high school at the ANC, and then college. At this time Erik found the blessing of his life and married Rachel Genzlinger, and they then had multiple blessings with four beautiful girls, Anna, Leah, Ariel, and Sarah (before Eli's time). One day I mentioned to my husband: "Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could give the Martins the piano, and the girls could take lessons to enhance their appreciation for music? The piano has certainly served its purpose in our home throughout the years with society dinners, classes and Christmas tableaux."

Well, that was all Grandpa Jack had to hear. He put the gears in motion, rented a trailer and hired two strong piano movers to load and strap down the piano so that we could drive it from our home in Georgia to the Martin home in Bryn Athyn. When we drove up for the occasion, it was an exciting time, especially when the piano was finally ready to be pulled, pushed and lifted up the ramp at 522 Newell Drive, and then moved ever so carefully to its special place in the dining room. A day or two later the piano tuner showed up to get it into top shape for the young virtuosos.

One evening the family decided to test the piano out, and at the same time to introduce some classical music to the Martin girls by providing a mini concert given by their cousin, Everett Sellner. Prior to this he had performed many piano recitals at Glencairn and other concert halls, so needless to say, it was thrilling for the whole family to finally get to hear his repertoire. All the pieces he played were strictly by ear. It was also wonderful to watch my granddaughters while they listened intently as their cousin's fingers worked the keyboard with gusto—a truly memorable scene which I will never forget.

Jack and I returned to Atlanta and it was not long after that we heard that Anna, Leah and Ariel were taking piano lessons. On various occasions Rachel prepared wonderful music programs on CDs, where each of the girls performed music duets from things they learned during their lessons. The music was very beautiful. It was moving to hear how proficiently the young girls not only played *the piano* (solo, duets and other combinations) but also sang in perfect harmony.

After Grandpa Jack had a stroke, Rachel directed, produced and sent one of these *Treasured CDs* to Jack. It arrived while he was still in a rehabilitation facility learning to deal with his pain and paralysis. The music became his (and my) most important therapy (mental, emotional and even physical). Nothing else could have brought him more joy at this traumatic and depressing time. I played Rachel and Erik's CD gift to Jack over and over which provided uplifting support to us as well as the other handicapped patients who listened and clapped during and after their therapy.

Then one day something horrendous happened to the Martin family in Bryn Athyn. Their home went up in flames. However, some very powerful angels were present and watching over each and every member of the family. They all survived unharmed, although baby Sarah had to be rescued from her crib, taken through her bedroom window and carried down a ladder. Almost everything in the house was burned, singed or drenched in water and had to be thrown out. There was a lot of heavy soot and water damage when the fireman put out the flames.

Everything surrounding the piano was destroyed. Even the wall clock in the same room with it was completely melted from the heat! Providentially, *the piano* was the only piece of furniture from the whole floor that was saved from the fire. This was particularly astonishing because the fire started in the very next room. Miraculously, the piano remained not only intact, but also totally undamaged. And after the family counted their blessings that no one was harmed, they could not stop marveling about

The Piano and concluded that it must have a special purpose in the lives of the Martin grandchildren—Erik and Rachel's musically gifted children.

This story shows the critical role the Lord's Providence in our lives. The girls were eventually able to keep up with their lessons without too much of a break, and through the years continued to develop the love they have for music. They bring considerable joy and happiness to others during their many concerts performed. By the age of 14 Leah had become an accomplished pianist, playing hymns for church, solo concerts, and taking organ lessons at the Cathedral. She completed the Advanced Bach program for the National Piano Guild. This is a difficult program where she had to memorize 15 advanced Bach pieces and play them and their scales and cadences for a judge. The difficulty of this program is illustrated by the fact that only 12 people in the entire country successfully completed it in 2009. Leah passed with flying colors, with the highest score of all participants! She achieved "national" status, which is the highest level possible. Within each level there are three tiers and Leah made the second tier—just one step away from the highest total mark possible!

We are all very proud and excited for Leah's future. We tear up when hearing her play; and can't help but also get emotional when thinking about the story that led up to all these wonders and how everyone, especially the guardian angels, did their part to protect *the family* and *the piano*.

Raquel Sellner Martin

Update: Leah is now studying organ and piano at Jacob's School of Music in Indiana, and that the rest of the family continues to play the piano and to use their deep love of music to enrich the life of their community.

Raquel Martin and her husband Jack lived in Atlanta for 40 years, there raising two children, Marie & Erik. When the children went to the Academy of the N. C., Raquel began researching natural solutions to

health problems. She found they not only worked but were powerful and safe when used properly; also, maintenance must include three preventive health avenues: Nutritional, Hormonal and Neurological. Her 3 published books are: Preventing and Reversing Arthritis Naturally, and Today's Health Alternative: Back Pain Link to Disease, and The Estrogen Alternative (translated into French, Spanish and Hebrew). She provides an excellent case for better understanding the possibility of intercepting some hereditary tendencies toward diseases. Raquel eventually became a caregiver for 10 years to her hemiplegic husband, and was able to put what she had learned to constant use day and night. She drew constant inspiration from Swedenborg's words, "A person should take every care of his body. . . not for the sake of the body, but in order that the soul in a sound body may act. . . rightly, and may have the body as an organ perfectly obedient to it." (A.C. 5949:2)

Raquel (Sellner) Martin www.healthcare-alternatives.info

The Box in the Attic

I was quite a bit younger than the poet Marte Johnson when I read his “70—and Still Dreaming”, but the poem touched me—more than that, it resonated. It looks back on an old man’s life as he recalls things for which he is thankful. He tells himself to be content with his lasting marriage, beautiful children and grandchildren, the opportunities he’s had to be useful. But oh, how he had wanted to leave his mark, to perform the great deed, write the best seller. He had ‘dreamed great dreams’ that didn’t happen. And though he still has hopes of what might lie ahead, he accepts that, “...Your will, and not mine” be done.

Unlike the poet, I’d been published—an inconsequential mystery/romance, some essays, but the full-length manuscripts on which I’d been working for the past few years hadn’t generated results. These were novels about the life after death, unlike any other writing I’d done. Initially I’d attempted these stories because I thought the unusual background and plotline might intrigue a publisher, but as I wrote, I’d fallen under their spell. These tales about what life might be like when we enter the next world enthralled me; I felt it was something I’d been called to do. But so far it hadn’t been working. The rejection letters kept arriving with my returned manuscripts just as regularly as they had when I’d been writing mysteries. One morning as I walked from the mailbox and opened yet another rejection slip, I remembered the seventy-year old poet’s plaintive lament and thought—what if my novels are never printed? What if I die, an old woman, with these unpublished manuscripts stored in the attic?

The fact that at the time we had no attic didn’t intrude on my vision. I could see it plainly. A daughter or son, a grandson or granddaughter, would find the cardboard box under the eaves and opening it, would discover the manuscripts. Perhaps he or she would read a couple before they were tossed into a recycling bin.

I knew with a sudden, cold clarity, it could happen. Though the thought of the imaginary box in my imaginary attic chilled me, in a sense it also freed me. I'd faced the worst that could happen. The wistful statement of the old man might indeed become mine, but the picture of that dusty, sturdy box filled with unread manuscripts lost its power once I'd accepted the possibility of it happening.

And, interestingly, whether a subsequent rejection was an encouraging letter or a printed slip, or, in the case of agents, an unanswered email query, I never considered just chucking the whole business and taking up cross-stitch. I knew I would go back and revise my story or begin another. The thought of that attic sometimes came to mind, but I was able to acknowledge it and then brush it aside. It was rather like flexing a once wounded wrist to see whether it had truly healed or still gave a twinge of pain. Maybe it gave a twinge, but no more than that. When I was asked to edit the yearbook for our high school reunion, I agreed. I was a writer, wasn't I? And it was fun to see what my classmates had been up to. Quite a bit it turned out. My favorite entry was from someone who said that actually you did have to be a rocket scientist to do his job.

Years went by and I was asked to edit an updated yearbook for another class reunion, this one our 50th. Many of us had retired, though the rocket scientist was still at it, as was the classmate who had become a psychiatrist. The minister had become a bishop, the filmmaker was still making documentaries, and one of my classmates complained of having to meet her publisher's deadlines for her third book, and of being thrown out of her comfort zone by the ensuing TV interviews. My own update said yes, I was still writing, and that though I'd sold some essays and articles, alas, I'd published no more novels.

It wasn't more than a couple of weeks after we returned from the reunion that word came from the Swedenborg Foundation—they wanted to publish *The Arrivals*. I felt a moment of leaping, unbelieving joy. I'd felt something like that particular flashing happiness years before when my first, unremarkable book had

been accepted. Other similar moments would come when my next two novels were accepted by the Foundation, and when news came that another publisher wanted to publish a non-fiction work I'd been working on for years. But that first incredible moment when I realized my story of life in the next world would reach others, both within and without the church, remains with me today.

I gave a little prayer of thanks and then I paused and gave a silent salute to my spiritual kinsman, to the poet whose work I'd read those years ago.

Surely he is now writing—and publishing—in his eternal home.

Naomi Gladish Smith

Naomi Gladish Smith attended Academy schools and taught in the Bryn Athyn elementary school before she married Bob Smith and began raising children. Three of her novels, The Arrivals, The Wanderers, and The Searchers, are based on Swedenborg's experiences in the world of spirits and explore what the afterlife might be like. Naomi's recent book, V as in Victor is a memoir of her father.



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the Journal becomes more interesting.***

INTERVIEWS WITH ARTISTS

Wendy Soneson, Brookline, Mass

The professionalism of art is not understood in our culture. When people come to my classes, I try to have them see the difference between art for therapy and painting as a fine art. Some students resist my teaching them about the language of art because they don't want it to ruin their creative side. He or she may say, "I want to express myself." But there's more to it. An artist pulls the beauty of the physical forms together and translates everything into values, edges, shapes, line and color. So I make it clear in the first class that I'll be teaching the tools of the language of art, for example, in watercolor how the water and paper interact.

Art is a spiritual thing connected with the emotions. As I work, it just comes out, like when I did a painting of my grandfather's tree house in Pennypack woods. It was his first home when he came to America at the age of 16, a century ago. I was born one street away from the creek, and am in the Bryn Athyn area revisiting my connections with it. It's in this area, too, that my grandfather, Donald Rose, put down his roots, and raised his family of twelve children.

Note: *Wendy had a 'Summer Event' in Bryn Athyn a few months ago. For it she did a series of paintings called Pennypack Roots, taught an intensive watercolor course at Bryn Athyn College, held workshops, had an art show and many conversations at Be Well Bakery and Cafe in Huntingdon Valley, as well as other places. This summer was possibly her last visit to the creek as Wendy is moving west. On her website she writes, "I am on an artist journey around the country to end in northern California. The process of painting these works has been an experience in self-reflection and solidifying of my connection to this earth." Wendy's watercolor of her grandfather's treehouse and other paintings in the series, Pennypack Roots, can be seen at www.WendySoneson.com.*

Laurie Curtin, Abington, PA

Capturing a woman in a moment in time—her thinking—to me it is like capturing the Divine Feminine. What makes a woman feminine? All of us: men, women, children are drawn to that feminine softness, that aspect of ourselves. The nurturing of the softness may be why more paintings are done of women. The woman contemplating who she is, what she's longing for—the internal. We see man in his external much easier than we see the mysteries of femininity.

I try to bring the viewer into a painting, so often the person can't easily gloss over my subject. My paintings ask something of you. For example, "What is she (the woman in the painting) looking at?" "What is she thinking?" [Often the subject of one of Laurie's paintings is a woman looking to the side, and not facing the viewer.]

Women have been lost because women have glossed over themselves as mothers and wives, but that is changing. There is nothing more sacred than being able to give birth to another human being, one who can grow and serve the Lord. My life shows it. In my work I've been a doula, helping women when they give birth, and a counselor for nursing mothers.

Women are the gatherers—we gather the food, gather people together for eating, for ceremonies. Women are the glue that holds everything together. In my family we have a circle, a gathering to honor the next generation, to help them know their feminine nature. We meet weekly, seven women and one man. We share our struggles and joys in life with parenting, being spouses, who we are as women. Because we have the male within ourselves, we should not leave it out, so including the male family member is important. In our circle we look into where we are going—what are the consequences of a behavior now and for five years from now. We try to hold each other accountable; we hold the space for the person to step into to be her or his highest self. When we see someone not acting with integrity one of the circle members will ask, "Is this your higher

self showing up?" It's important to know how we are presenting ourselves to others.

I try to pull all that into my painting. We are at the point now when women are reflecting on who they are. I have not delved into the masculine side of it, but I believe that everything relates to the Yin and the Yang, the Divine Masculine and Feminine. When the two can be together, there is true balance.

Laurie's work is available to see at www.redbubble.com. Just type in Laurie Curtin, but be sure not to put an 'a' in her last name. A painting of Laurie's graced the cover of the previous Theta Alpha Journal, Spring 2015.

Hannah Cole, Bryn Athyn, PA

Art is a gateway to get out of myself. It relaxes me. It inspires me. Getting away from perfection is something I had to do, and learn to see the beauty in imperfection. I'm always comparing my art with my violin music. I was raised with criticism about the violin, so there was always self-criticism within me. I had to learn to get away from it and from trying to make money for my art. The violin was and is my art, now painting is, too. Now is the time for it. When I was at my lowest point, and picked up the pen and started drawing again, that was the moment I came alive. It's like I could breathe again.

"What is in this that is drawing my attention and wants to come out?" I'm noticing from the deeper part of me, "What is in me about it? Why am I drawing this?" It's almost like a meditation. Art zones me into my emotions and thoughts, and gives me a feeling of completeness. I feel like I have meditated when I'm finished drawing or painting.

I like doing people's faces, or something abstract, like designs, and then add color to them. I don't draw concrete things. At this point I see what I like and draw it the way I want it whether it looks real or not. I use acrylics because I like the smell of them

better than oils, and they're easy to wash off. I also like using Sharpies, and doing pencil drawings. I'm a sketcher—that is the part I love best.

Heulwen Ridgway, Canberra, Australia

My art days started in early childhood and I still have my box of Crayola crayons, a birthday or Christmas present of decades ago, with only one missing now.

In my childhood, drawing was a major interest and my parents encouraged me with birthday and Christmas gifts of paints, drawing pads and books on how to draw flowers, horses, cartoons and children. With commercial birthday and Christmas cards unavailable in my early days, I drew my own. I found a few recently that my mother had saved and am surprised at how detailed and carefully drawn they are. I must have been patient and had very steady hands which I do not have now.

Through school, I kept up my interest in art but it took the back seat to school work, compulsory sports and piano lessons. When I went to university, two of my supporting subjects in a science degree were Botany and Zoology. Those two courses involved many hours each week over several years of drawing plants and animals. Mainly my hours of drawing were of the intricate plant and animal structures seen through a microscope, and I became very accurate at drawing and filled with wonder at the inner worlds of the animal and vegetable kingdoms.

After my studies ended and I went into full time employment, I always kept up my interest in drawing and painting but my main recreational interest was piano playing. As recreation, playing the piano was the love of my life.

During those years I started getting strange bouts of numbness in one or other limb, and then I would lose the use of that limb for weeks or even months at a time. Then 27 years ago severe numbness struck in all four limbs and much of my torso. Most

things became difficult, many impossible. My piano playing came to an abrupt halt and I have never again been able to play. The medical problem was diagnosed as Multiple Sclerosis but that gave me little comfort and the numbness remained.

My wonderful parents stepped in and helped me cope with changed circumstances. Maybe over the years the numbness has lessened. Or is it that I have just become accustomed to doing things despite lack of much sensation? Although I still find writing difficult, I can do most things and over the last six years have taken up drawing and painting again as a major interest. I find the softer movements with brush or drawing pen easier to control than writing with pen or pencil. However, I have to admit that I ruin some paintings because my hands tend to 'jump'. That is very annoying but I enjoy my successes.

I paint with a group that meets at the Canberra Botanic Gardens monthly, and the Rangers from the Gardens pick flowers, leaves and fruits for us to paint. Often at weekends, three arty friends come to my nursing home to paint with me. As flowers with their leaves and fruits are the easiest subjects for me to obtain, this is generally what I paint, often the native Australian flora which attracts the native birds. I am not professional standard but maybe I can claim to be moderately good at flower painting.

We are told that flowers have a very good correspondence. They abound in beauty in this world and in almost incomprehensible splendour in the next. Hardly surprising, considering the correspondence.

This is a quotation that inspires me: "The person who is being reborn begins like a tree from seed. . . and also like a tree produces leaves, then blossoms, and finally fruit...for the person produces such things as are of intelligence, which in the Word are signified by 'leaves,' then things of wisdom, which are signified by 'blossoms,' and finally things of life, that is, the goods of love and charity in act, which in the Word are signified by 'fruits.' (AC 5115:2).

Kathy Smith, Rockledge, PA

I don't think of art as just drawing and painting, so I have a wider definition of it. I've worked at a lot of centers teaching art and always did more things than just drawing, like paper making and clay. It exposed the students to more than drawing. Right now I don't even sign my name to paintings anymore. I use a pseudonym to separate myself from that part of it. I used to be ambitious about my paintings but I'm not like that anymore.

I am always working on something. Right now I'm illustrating some children's books for Dean Morey along with Jency Latta. It's fun. I do stained glass and mosaics, and sell them on Etsy. My dad and my grandfather made stained glass. I've even sold things to people in other countries, and like to think of little things I made being in other people's homes. Sometimes they tell me why they're buying it, like a woman in Florida who bought a swan for her daughter's quinceanera. She said her daughter was turning 15 and was emerging into someone beautiful, like the swan does when it grows up.

Lisa Knight, Bryn Athyn, PA

I loved to draw ever since I was little; I was one of the many "artistic" kids in the Bryn Athyn school and had lots of good teachers and support: Helen Glenn in grade school and Judy Scalbom Synnestvedt, Nishan Yardumian and Carey Smith in high school. I also really liked our *Interior Design* class with Lauren Brown Andrews—it was applied art and very fun.

In college in Bryn Athyn I took more drawing and painting classes from Nishan Yardumian and also *The Teaching of Art* with Beth Johns. During my second year of college I realized I wanted to go into art full-time and transferred to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Since graduating from there, I've tried to have part-time jobs in order to be able to paint, too. I worked at the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh as secretary to various curators, like those of painting, prints and drawings. A year later, they needed a secretary at Glencairn, as it was changing from a

home to the museum, so I moved back to Bryn Athyn. There I worked as an Administrative Assistant to Martin Pryke, the Director of the Museum, and for Bruce Glenn, Director of Events. After a year or so I was asked to teach art at the high school, so I worked at both Glencairn and the Academy, until marrying Chris Knight and leaving to raise our four children.

In 1996 I returned to teaching at the Academy Secondary Schools for another nine years, and then took a hiatus from teaching to focus on painting. It was wonderful to immerse myself solely in my art, and I showed and sold a number of pieces. I returned to teaching at the Academy in 2011 and now try to balance the stimulation of teaching high school students with my creative work in the studio.

I love the Writings and the connection between Divine spiritual order and ultimate natural order; I'm often inspired by numbers from the Word. I like to think about correspondences, for example, water in a glass vessel, shells, fruit, etc. I love the objects themselves but also the amazing spiritual realities they reflect. Good composition in a painting reflects Divine order. The difference between straight lines and curved can reflect the masculine and the feminine; why does an "S" curve give life? What's the significance underlying the Golden Proportion?

I have drawn or painted portraits, newborn babies, my children and landscapes but like to control what I paint, and people move; light changes, so I've focused a lot on still-lives. I get into the geometric composition of the painting as I arrange the objects. Basically I follow the classical approach: careful observation, trying to be faithful to what I see, drawing from life, and then using oils in an underpainting to get values, and overpainting with color. I have a clean, careful style rather than expressive or impressionistic. But, as in all art, the painting is still influenced by my thoughts and feelings.

One of my lifelong concerns has been about protecting what is holy or precious. I think art has a responsibility to show order and beauty; I want mine to give the feeling that God exists and

He loves us dearly. That's why I treat what I paint with a searching, almost scientific, reverence. Besides what is delightful on the surface of a piece, I also want enough symbolic meaning to give a sense of hope and trust that good exists beyond what we can see.

Jenn Beiswenger, Sydney, Australia

I've long enjoyed doing *arty* things—drawing, lettering, sewing, cross-stitch, collages—but didn't really consider myself an artist; I'm much too left-brained for that. A few years ago a close friend of mine introduced me to 'Zentangle', which looked to me, for all intents and purposes, like glorified doodling. “. . .You mean they have *rules* about how you're supposed to *doodle*? They've *patented* doodling??” I was skeptical. A year or so later, after we'd moved to Australia, she gifted me a beginner's Zentangle set and a tutorial over Skype for my birthday. I was still skeptical, but open to it, and certainly wasn't going to refuse her kind offer! There was no magic moment when it all made sense to me, but over the course of the past 2+ years since that official introduction, I've become well and truly hooked! So much so, in fact, that I might actually now consider myself *an artist*.

Zentangle is about mindful 'doodling', drawing repetitive patterns to create beautiful images. Some patterns are geometrical, based on grids, each square filled with a special design; others are more fluid, with free-flowing flourishes and rounded objects. Some people liken Zentangle to Celtic knotwork. There are 150 “official” tangle patterns out there, as well as countless unofficial ones, which gives people like me a good framework from which to begin our designs. I start by deciding the purpose of my tangle: is it just for fun or, more likely, to benefit someone else in the form of a greeting card or a colouring page? Then I peruse my little cheat-sheets (pages of tangles that I've learned so far) and think about what kind of feel I want the finished product to have. Depending on the recipient or the occasion, I might choose softer or more rigid, more serene or more playful patterns. Sometimes I incorporate as few as 4 patterns, other times up to

25+. As a bonus, I'm often able to work in my penchant for lettering!

Drawing 'ZIAs' (Zentangle-inspired art) takes me to another place, where I don't need to think about what to cook for dinner tonight, whether tomorrow will be a good day to do laundry or if my son's cold is getting any better. It's relaxing and fun, and its 'rules' work well for the left side of my brain. I enjoy the process, and really appreciate being able to give the end product to someone else, to hopefully brighten up his/her day a little. (It kind of justifies doing the art in my mind: I'm not just 'wasting' my time doodling!) I also like to teach Zentangle to others, when they're interested. So far I've taught it to my son's class of 6- to 9-year-olds as well as the 9- to 12-year-olds, and to a group of school and church adults as a fun—and fund-raiser. I look forward to taking it even further, hopefully selling some of my products and teaching this method of relaxation to busy corporate types. Who knows what the future holds?!

Note: If anyone amongst this readership wants to learn more, please visit my Facebook page, www.facebook.com/renjenn!

When asked to interview an artist for this issue featuring them, Janet Krettek jumped at the opportunity to talk with Pauline about her work. She says, "Pauline fascinates me as an artist. Art seems outside of my way of thinking. Here is a woman I love, yet I don't understand. How intriguing she is!"

Pauline Rhodes Boyce

Interview by Janet Krettek

How do you know you are an artist? Is an artist born or developed?

I wasn't one of those kids who was drawing or making stuff all the time. But at some point in my life, maybe in the last 10 years, I realized that I am a happier person, and an easier person to live with, if I take the time to go make something.

What makes me an artist? Well, I am not earning my keep with my artwork. I noticed that when I work it into my habit-life, it comes alive. I am not one of those people who is constantly drawing whatever she sees. When I do work, I get more and more ideas about what I want to do, and it sort of feeds on itself. If I make assignments for myself and stick with them, I end up producing stuff.

Do you have a style or genre that you would call yours?

Mixed media is the best description of what I do. Sometimes I do two-dimensional and sometimes three-dimensional things. I use clay and paper and sometimes found objects. Glue has been an important part of my artwork sometimes. And the two-dimensional pieces I do are often like a collage.

Why do you create?

I am trying to express something that feels true to me. I was an art major in college and was mostly painting and print-making. When I look back on that time, it feels different. I wasn't really awake. I was doing assignments but didn't know what I was trying to do. Later, when I started doing artwork again, I found it

was stuff I really didn't like. It was stuff that at times other people liked, but I didn't really like. For example, coming out of working with puppets for the "Sound of Music" I was sculpting some faces out of clay. In a certain kind of way I liked them, but they weren't what I really wanted to be doing. It was really hard to work my way to what I wanted to be making.

There weren't any rules about what I had to make or whether other people liked it or not. So it felt like the things I did got more and more authentically mine. Now I feel relieved when I make something that feels like it is what I want it to be.

When you try to express something, are you are expressing feeling that it doesn't have a name?

Yes, it doesn't feel very verbal. Sometimes my art feels very self-absorbed because it is about something that is going on inside me. Seeing something on the outside and painting it isn't interesting to me. When I am creating, it feels like I am following something. I don't ever have the thought, "I want to make something that looks like that."

At times I may see some paper and think, "I like that paper," and want to touch it. Then I'll want to do something with it. I'll move the paper around to see if that is the way I want it to be, just playing with it and seeing where it takes me. So I never know what I am working towards. It is the materials I am drawn to at that moment and following what I like when I see them. After I am finished making something, then I can talk about it.

What can you say is beauty?

That is an interesting question because a lot of the artwork I like is not what people would call beautiful. I am drawn to a lot of things that don't feel beautiful, but they resonate with me in my gut, expressing things that are true about being human—what it feels like to walk this human journey, interacting with other people. I care about that being expressed visually.

What I think of in a traditional definition of beauty doesn't draw me to artwork, even though I appreciate beauty in a lot of ways, and in a lot of places. When you look at the artwork I chose to put on the walls of my house, a lot of it I don't think is beautiful. So I don't think of beauty a lot in the context of art. I

think about a feeling in my gut when I see something. THAT, I care about. I'll say 14 times to Cory [my husband] when we are sitting in a beautiful spot, "This is so beautiful!" I love beauty in that sort of way. I can see a painting that is beautiful, that the colors are beautiful, or the scene is really beautiful, but don't have a lot of interest in having it in my house. I like something that resonates in me.

Like music?

Yes.

What would you tell an aspiring artist?

I have a quote on the wall of my studio that I love. Ira Glass is someone who creates radio programs and what he said is "Nobody tells this to people who are beginners. I wish someone had told me. All of us who do creative work, we get into it because we have good taste. But there is this gap. For the first couple of years you make stuff; it's just not that good. It's trying to be good, it has potential, but it's not. But your taste, the thing that got you into the game, is 'still killer.' And your taste is why your work disappoints you. A lot of people never get past this phase; they quit . . . the most important thing you can do is do a lot of work. It's only by going through a volume of work that you will close that gap." I find this really reassuring, that only by continuing to make things that fall short can an artist gradually find their way. I know that I still fall short, but am making my way. That is by trying things, being willing to pay very close attention to what I really want, what I really like, then shutting out the influences of what other people like. At times I give myself permission to go alone to a museum and only see what I really want to look at, for as long or as little as I want. People have to follow what is inside, and if you don't know what it is, you just have to mess around until it shows up.

What do you do with your artwork? Sell it? Keep it? Give it as gifts? Throw it away?

Actually, all of the above. I've given some away. I've had some things in shows and sold them. It feels really weird. There is a funny narrow window when I feel ready to sell something. Then

I don't want to sell it anymore. It feels like I am not in it anymore, like it is old and out of date with my personal timeline.

I created some cellphone covers, including the one I use now, and offered some on Facebook. I have done a few local shows, one with a friend, and had a piece published in 2011 in a booklet for an event called TEDxPhilly "The City." Artists were invited to contribute artwork on the theme of "the City" for the program. Judith Merrill and I both submitted pieces and both of us had them published.

What does your cellphone piece mean to you?

It is actually a part of a larger piece. I was with my family, and we were standing on a subway platform waiting, being our goofy selves. A sign said *Outbound to Wonderland*. I thought I could write 16 different short stories with that. I had no idea what *Wonderland* was referring to. I ended up doing several pieces using *Wonderland* but didn't realize until later that a piece I did in college was titled *Wonderland*. I had completely forgotten about it, even though it was a piece I had been awarded a prize for! It is something about there being so many strange beings in this world. Sometimes I am not sure if *Wonderland* is here or someplace else with many strange beings interacting with each other. I can't articulate it well.

Do you have a lot of humor in your art?

Some pieces, not most of them. It is hard to articulate, but the ironic thing is that there are so many words in my work. I have used text a lot, but it is usually unintelligible, backwards or manipulated. I like the feeling of mystery, like there is something just out of reach that is intelligible, but it is not really understandable. So I use text, but you can't read it. You can tell there is something; you are just not sure what it is saying. My experience of the world is that there is so much out there that is just a little out of reach. I don't really understand it. Many levels of meaning are all layered one on top of the other. It doesn't feel like there is one clear thing.

A lot of people say they don't like to look at art because they are not sure what they are supposed to be thinking or feeling or understanding. They are intimidated and feel they can't have an

opinion. They want the artist to tell them what they are supposed to feel about something. One of my favorite times was when a man bought a favorite piece of mine, and he asked if he could tell me what that piece meant to him. I said, "Yes!" Absolutely. What my work means to the viewer is just as important as what it means to me. They can be completely different things—that is what feels true to me.

Call for Art Submissions!



As you can see from the beautiful cover art, we are hoping that the journal can present some of the visual art that Swedenborgians around the world are creating.

Please send us images you would like to share with Journal readers and feel free to write a few sentences about what you send in!

The Night That We Met

The night that we met, I remember well,
The night that turned into heaven from hell.

I'd twisted my ankle and it was painfully sore,
So I watched the dancers upon the floor,
And longed to get up and dance once more,
But no more dancing for me that fateful night,
As a twisted ankle kept partners from sight.

So there I sat on a chair by the door,
Watching other folks twirling across the floor,
Feeling lonelier than I ever had felt before,
When a voice behind me that was friendly and kind,
Drove thoughts of loneliness far from my mind.

"You and I seem two of a kind,
For I can't dance either, so would you mind
If I share your corner here by the door,
So that we can chat while others take to the floor?"

I turned and saw the face that would change my life,
That before the year ended would make me his wife,
For the angels couldn't have planned it better that night,
For it was tender, true love, at the very first sight.

We talked and we laughed and had more fun I am sure
Than the dancers who twirled around the floor,
And it must have been at least an hour or more,
Before I noticed my companion that wonderful night,
Had not a twisted ankle but a far worse plight,
For he sat in a wheelchair and, while my ankle would mend,
His plight would remain with him right to the end,
But by the time I'd noticed his chair, I'd fallen in love,
And that chair turned out to be a gift from above,
For without it we never would have met that night,
He would never have set my heart alight,
We would never have become a team together,

Helpmates through calm and through stormy weather.

Yes, I remember well the night that we met,
And now as we head towards life's last sunset,
I look back on a union that has been purest gold,
And give thanks for a love that has been riches untold.

Miss Heulwen Ridgway

Note: *This poem was for a competition which invited people with disabilities to write about how they met their marriage partner. Initially the poem was accepted but then rejected when it was discovered that I was unmarried and so the story not factual, although the competition notice had not specified true stories. I thought that was unfair to single people and to any poets who wanted to write from imagination. Later, the name of the winner was announced, together with a note that "although unmarried, the winner was deemed married because living with her partner." I suspected that the note was put in so that I could not complain! After reading that note I was pleased that my poem had been rejected. Since I had a lot of fun writing my poem, I reckoned the writing worthwhile anyway, and now it seems that it is finding new life in 'Theta Alpha Journal.'*

Response to Love/Hate Technology Section in Spring '15 Journal:

Technology is a love-hate relationship! Mostly, I love it: I'm not one of *those* people who lives with my phone in my hand, checking email and Facebook every other minute; however, I'll be the first to admit that I'd be lost without it. I spend a lot of time on my laptop, looking up recipes, home remedies and Zentangle patterns on the internet, reading and writing emails, taking and revising minutes from a meeting. I also love surfing through Facebook to see what the 'rest of the world' is up to and sharing pictures and thoughts of my own, from time to time. That being said, I still love a good ink-on-paper book or magazine, conversations with people face-to-face, drawing with pens on paper and cooking real, 'live' foods in my kitchen; and I'm a stickler when it comes to how much 'screen time' my 9-year-old son is allowed. (I should practice what I preach...) Living down in Australia, though—a billion miles from my family back in North America—I owe a debt of gratitude to the brilliant people who harnessed electricity and developed computers and the internet, without whom I would feel much, *much* further from 'home'.

Jenn Beiswinger



For Our Next Issue's "*READERS RESPOND*":

~ **NOISE~Good/Bad** ~

*We welcome any responses about this
beautiful or troublesome topic!*

The Washington New Church Theta Alpha Guild (TAG)

Ever since we became a chapter of the Theta Alpha a number of years ago, we have called ourselves, in addition, a Guild. This was because it took the place of our Women's Guild, and continued to cover many of the uses served by that guild for many years here. Our stated purpose is to serve as an integral part of the support network for our Church society and School.

For the past two years, Candy Rose Quintero was our president. We were grateful to her for taking this on, on top of teaching Kindergarten full time in our school. This year we welcomed our new president, Becca Synnestvedt Smith. The rest of our executive team for the coming year consists of Janna Doering Zuber, vice president, Kathy Cooper Johns, treasurer, and Mary Sandstrom Cooper, secretary.

We have four open meetings each year, from September through April. This past season our average attendance was nine. We always make every effort to contact all the ladies, younger and older, associated with the church and school, to let them know about upcoming meetings, and areas of concern and effort. Each meeting opens with a short reading from the Word, to remind us of what we are about, in terms of charitably performing uses for others.

Among these uses is fundraising, which we accomplish by means of an annual bake sale and raffle. This past year it also included an auction of a lovely Angel wall hanging, quilted by Ginny deMaine Gladish, which brought in an unprecedented amount, for the beautification of our newly renovated lobby. We also financially support our teachers' professional development efforts; the Healthy Church Match for our society; gifts to new teachers for setting up their classrooms; a Valentine's Day luncheon for our school staff; a Swedenborg's Birthday lunch for the entire school; teachers' coffee, and speakers' honoraria.

This year we tried a new additional fund raiser, with excellent success, with half the proceeds going to the society operating

fund, and the rest to TAG uses. During the winter we put on, once or twice a month, "Souper Sundays", organized by Bonnie Alden Cowley, and modeled after a program initiated by the Pittsburgh society. It involved providing homemade soup and bread, to be sold after Church. We plan to repeat this popular effort this coming winter.

Other activities we assist with include Meals-on-Wheels; lining up committee heads; organizing, making (in many cases) and wrapping gifts for the children, in celebration of New Church Day; collecting welcome baskets for new families; supporting the lonely and needy among us; decorating the Church for the Christmas services, and many other things. We arrange two annual TAG events, with a special speaker at each. In early December, we open the Christmas season with a program and sing, traditionally held at the home of the Phil Zuber. This year's speaker was Rev George McCurdy. Donette Cooper Glenn was the speaker at the TAG Banquet in April.

The most significant event this past year for our society was the extensive remodeling of our church building. A tremendous amount of work was involved in moving out of the building, and then moving back in, and fixing and organizing endless amounts of spaces and "stuff." During the construction our school held classes in a rented facility nearby. We celebrated the Dedication weekend just before Thanksgiving, and our TAG ladies were very much involved in all these activities, as were most of the members of the society.

Now we are gearing up to begin our new season of activities and uses served. We send warm greeting to our Theta Alpha sisters throughout the Church.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Cooper,
Secretary.

Carmel New Church Theta Alpha Guild Annual Report 2014 - 2015

The ladies of Theta Alpha Guild had a fun and rewarding year, with Jan Hill as our President. We alternated our meetings either with a potluck supper or a potluck dessert. Vice President Sally Tait guided our worship services and always had inspirational readings and music.

Our year started with a Rummage Sale as a fundraiser. This is always a lot of hard work but does draw people from the surrounding area. Laura Hill held craft nights in her home where we worked on Christmas Gifts that are given to the children at our Christmas Eve service. Judy Stewart demonstrated her skills at making outdoor Christmas baskets and we all went home inspired with ideas on how to make our own.

Once again we volunteered at Operation Christmas Child where we packed shoe boxes that are donated to children worldwide. We ended to 2014 with our Christmas party with a gift exchange and the singing of Christmas Carols. At this event we collected donations for the Loving Arms Mission in Nepal.

Despite the very cold weather we had in January, we all dressed warmly and went on a sleigh ride. In February we had a movie night where we enjoyed movie snacks while watching "The Hundred Foot Journey."

Laura Hill made a Resurrection Garden depicting the Easter Story, which we sold during a silent auction. To coincide with this we held an Easter Bake Sale. All funds raised will be put towards the purchase of furniture for the entranceway of the church. In May we held a successful Perennial Plant Sale.

We ended our year with a potluck barbecue and elections of officers for 2015-2016. After adjournment we played some "Minute to Win It" games.

We are looking forward to 2015-2016 year with our re-elected President Jan Hill.

Respectfully submitted,
Gloria Lawson Stumpf

Theta Alpha International 2015 Report

Welcome to the first annual report from Theta Alpha International since 2012! Without the *Journal* for the past several years, we were unable to let you know what was happening with our organization, but we've been busy. For a while we struggled to continue the uses of TAI without a president, vice president, or college liaison, and with changing treasurers. However, members of the executive committee stepped up to keep things going by taking turns leading meetings until Melodie Haworth Greer volunteered to be president and Gillian Simons Mayer took over the position of treasurer from Melodie, who had been handling money matters for us. At the annual meeting at Charter Day 2014, they were formally elected to their positions, and Janet Krettek Fuller was elected vice-president. Also at Charter Day, Claire Bostock, a long-time member and corresponding secretary, officially retired from her position. Unfortunately Claire has since passed into the spiritual world, but she will be remembered as a hard worker and a strong supporter of TAI and its uses. We will miss her devotion to New Church education and the feminine and quiet ways she worked for the church. The new corresponding secretary is Kirsten Rydstrom Rogers whose excellent writing skills make her perfect for the job.

Additional members of Theta Alpha International who have retired in the last two years include Sue Cooper Adams--circulation manager, Rachel Glenn--Office of Education liaison (now General Church Education), Kris Earle--member-at-large, and Anika Gladish Kistner--member-at-large. Some of these positions remain open as we consider transitioning to new uses and entering the electronic age more fully.

In spite of challenges, the TAI executive committee has been very busy in the interim, meeting almost monthly instead of bi-monthly. The committee members have worked tirelessly to reorganize TAI with the hope of making it more relevant in today's world. To this end we have discussed possible long and short-term goals for increasing membership, partnering with local

chapters of TA, building a youth program and, of course, maintaining the popular *Journal*. We have also re-written some of the job descriptions to better reflect today's uses, while others are a work in progress as many jobs are still in a state of flux.

Some examples of the changes we've made to date are the following:

1. changing bylaws to open membership to women who are at least 18 years of age who wish to support the purposes of TAI.
2. welcoming young women who are not yet 18 as associate members of TAI.
3. sponsoring a raffle to raise funds for the Kenyan school. (The prize was a wonderful basket containing a variety of books and a small statue of a child reading the Word created by Dawn Barnitz Potts.)
4. introducing two Theta Alpha scholarships available to women studying New Church education at the college level. This will be in addition to the annual funds donated to the high school and college to use at their discretion.

Theta Alpha Journal

Our past *Journal* editor, Angela Rose, resigned from her position in the spring of 2012 to teach full-time at the Bryn Athyn College. Without Angela's capable leadership, the *Journal* went into hibernation while we searched for a new editor. After a long hiatus, Helen Kennedy stepped forward and offered to bring the *Journal* back to life. With her background in writing and her desire to see the *Journal* thrive once again, Helen has been the person to fill this most important role. She oversaw the production of an interesting and informative spring 2015 *Journal*. She has many creative ideas for future issues—such as focusing on New Church women's art—to connect women of all ages around the world. However, to keep the *Journal* alive and vibrant, the *Journal* needs input from you—poems, articles, letters, etc. If you have material that you would like to share with her, please contact her at hmkennedy98@gmail.com.

Baptismal Packages

In 2012, TAI took on the new use of sending out packages to the parents of newly baptized children aged ten and under. The

packages contain a picture of the Lord surrounded by a multi-cultural group of children, a talk by Bishop Peter Buss, Sr. on “Keeping the Promise”, a laminated list of spiritual concepts for little children, a letter to the parents, plus information about TAI and General Church Education (formerly called the Office of Education). Where there are multiple children in the same household receiving the package, different pictures are included for each additional child. In 2014-2015, 199 baptismal packages were sent around the world, thanks to the efforts of the program’s coordinator, Carol Bongers Buss.

Translation Project

Evangeline Lyman Lindrooth, translation head, has recently had to step back from participation in TAI because of various health issues in her family. However, she continues to work on the translation of Level 3 of *Jacob’s Ladder*. Once completed, this will end the project and the translation of Levels 1-4 into French. These popular lessons are currently in use in Benin, Togo, and Côte d’Ivoire and are much appreciated there. This has been a huge and very time consuming project that wouldn’t have been accomplished without Evangeline’s work and leadership. Well done, Evangeline! Thank you.

Senior Event

For a second year, the senior girls’ celebration was a luncheon held in the Academy Dining Hall. On May 22, twenty-four girls and a number of their teachers were treated to quiche, salad and cookies. While they ate, Melodie spoke to the girls about Theta Alpha International and the uses it performs. Then each girl was presented with the Bryn Athyn cookbook—*Here’s to Our Friends*—from the Bryn Athyn Theta Alpha Guild, and a bookmark from Theta Alpha International featuring its logo.

Gift to New Teachers

Every year TAI presents each new full-time teacher in New Church elementary schools, the Academy and the Bryn Athyn College with a check for \$100 to help them with unexpected expenses as they set up their classrooms and prepare for school opening. This year’s recipients from the elementary schools

were: Perry-Jayne Bryon (Kainon), Leona Fritch (Kempton), Hannah David (Washington), and Phil Feerrar (BACS). Secondary School recipients were Dylan Glenn, Mary Williams, and Natasha Kees. Aram Yardumian and Ethan King were the recipients from the Bryn Athyn College.

Laws of Life Essays

The Laws of Life essay contest is sponsored by TAI for sophomore girls at the Academy and for 15 and 16 year old girls worldwide. Unfortunately, without the *Journal* in which to advertise the contest, only Academy girls competed this year. The winners from the Girls School were Lysandra dePadua – 1st prize, Caterina Fuller – 2nd prize, and Clara Roth and Jenny Zheng – 3rd prize.

Theta Alpha Awards

Each year TAI presents awards to graduates of the Girls School in recognition of a positive attitude towards New Church philosophy, contribution to the life of the school and academic achievement. This year gold pendants were presented to Marley Catherine Asplundh, Caroline Chloe Brock, Rosemary Kathleen Mae Fuller, and Madison Marilyn Willie. Gold Theta Alpha pendants were also presented to Caira Bevan Bongers and Sarah Bruell Odhner in recognition of their outstanding work and completion of the Bryn Athyn College's Master of Arts in Religious Studies program.

In 2015-2016, TAI will not only continue to support current uses but also work towards making the organization one that we hope will reflect the changing times and uses. But we can't do it alone. We need your support. If you have ideas, suggestions or a willingness to volunteer your help, please let one of us know. Our contact information can be found in the first few pages of the *Journal*.

Best wishes for a happy and productive 2015-2016.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Charles Doering
Secretary

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