

Theta Alpha Journal



April 2018

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Theta Alpha
"Daughters of the Academy"



Named From the Greek:
Θυγατερες Ακαδημιας
Thugateres Akadémias

Founded in 1904 by graduates of the Academy of the New Church, Theta Alpha exists 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

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Editor: Helen Kennedy
2959 Sycamore Road
Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006
hmkennedy98@gmail.com

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CONTACT INFORMATION~

CORRESPONDENCE FOR THE JOURNAL:

Please direct submissions and letters to the Editor to Helen Kennedy at the addresses on the title page.

For general email correspondence:
thetaalphajournal@gmail.com

THE JOURNAL ONLINE:

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CORRESPONDENCE FOR THETA ALPHA INTERNATIONAL:

P. O. Box 154
Bryn Athyn, PA 19009-0154

www.Facebook.com/Theta-Alpha-International

Editorial

Helen Kennedy

Welcome to the April 2018 edition of the Journal. In this issue we have another excerpt from Bishop de Charms' "Philosophy of New Church Education." He tells of the importance of teaching Bible stories to children "because children are only able to visualize things concretely." He then goes on to explain why.

A number of readers have said that when they get the Journal, the first things they look for are poems. I'm happy to say there are four in this issue, each one communicating the tender thoughts of the writer.

The first poem is "Goodbye, Moses," by Nadine Rogers, an unusual look at the childhood of this important man. "When Will There Be Time" by Peg Mergen, takes us poetically through the busy life of a wife and mother. It prefaces the essay "Biography of an Artist" by Peggy Merrell, who takes us along on the path of her life. Joel Brown's poem "Living Abroad" yields a look at how, even though he's travelled to many places in the world, his "roots are firmly planted in American soil." In Kris Earle's poem "Courage" we are drawn into the need for that virtue in teaching. Camryn Buss' essay "The Bright Side of Life" uncovers a difficulty faced by a high school sophomore and the resolution of it. "The Kempton New Church School" tells of the school's expansion, and says that the pastors, faculty and staff "feel very grateful for the opportunity to educate children from a New Church perspective."

A trip back in time lets us revisit 1983 through part of an article written by Shareen Blair. In it she explains how she was led away from historical faith and into a growing awareness that the Lord was speaking to her personally

through the Word. An excerpt from Ray Silverman's memorial address for Shareen gives two examples of her new insights.

The many articles on Logopraxis show that the people practicing it are entering new states of spiritual awareness. They do this by a systematic reading of the Word and the Writings, which is opening their minds to the truth that the Lord is the Word. Though using the Logopraxis method is only one gate to the New Jerusalem, it is interesting and heartwarming to be drawn through that gate for a while with them. Deepening of our spiritual awareness makes me think of something I recently read in the "Swedenborg Epic," a biography of the revelator's life. The following passage shows his developing awareness of heavenly states:

"Nothing better illustrates the change that had taken place in Swedenborg's mind at this time than his change of terminology. Some of the expressions—and to some extent even the ideas—employed in his previous works were taken from orthodox theology and embody the dogmas of the Lutheran Church in which he had been raised. Throughout these intermediate works are found phrases which seem to indicate a belief in three Persons in the Godhead and the doctrine of vicarious atonement."¹ This shows how important it is to let go of our historical faith and be taught anew by the Lord.

Along the lines of developing higher states of consciousness, a question that resurfaces occasionally is, "When are we prepared enough to be in heaven?" In the Writings, "regeneration" is the name for this process. But what is the difference between regenerating and being regenerate? In Secrets of Heaven passage 935 we read about "the person who is being regenerated" and also about the person once she "has been regenerated." The same book also states that

1 Sigstedt, Cyriel. *The Swedenborg Epic*. New York: Bookman Associates, 1952. 217.

regeneration “is taking place from earliest childhood through to the final phase of life, and after that forever in the next life” (5354:3). This latter passage shows clearly that we never are completely regenerated, so it’s valid to wonder at what point we are ready enough to enter heaven and live there to eternity.

Obviously, no one has the answer. And the Writings never explicitly tell us. It’s a good sign, though, when our conscience bothers us, because evil spirits are never troubled by a conscience (see SH 977). Another insight may be that, although we can’t actually ‘know’ that we are on the path to heaven, when we look back at wrong things we did five years ago and don’t do them anymore, it’s a good sign.

The last two verses in the Gospel of Mark read: “After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it” (Mark 16: 19, 20).

In the three verses just before, the same Gospel gives us some important insights into what some of those signs are: “And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well” (Mark 16:18).

When I was first reading the Writings in the late 70s, Rev. David Holm gave me some interesting meanings for these signs:

Drive out demons—being freed from falsities and evils that beset us.

Speak in new tongues—talk in the new language of charity

and love.

Pick up snakes with your hands—sensual things won't trouble you.

Drink in deadly poisons—be exposed to things of the world, etc., and not be hurt by them.

Place hands on sick people and they will get well—I can't remember how David Holm explained this, but *Apocalypse Explained* 706:14 says that it means “to be restored to health from spiritual diseases, which are called iniquities and sins.”

All these things show how the Lord is working to protect us and lead us in ways known only to Him. The same passage in *Apocalypse Explained* adds “Although these were miracles, they are called signs because they testified of the Divine power of the Lord who performed them” (Ibid.)

Nothing of this explicitly explains when we are have been regenerated enough to be in heaven, but it does show ways we become more and more prepared for it during our lifetime. And trusting in the Lord about when we are prepared for heaven—this goes along with our learning to trust Him in everything else in our lives.

Membership Dues

Please remember that your membership dues support all of Theta Alpha International's programs, including this *Journal*!

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Goodbye, Moses

Nadine Rogers

Goodbye, Moses

You are leaving, and I am old.

This is no jaunt to the riverside

Curiosity compelling you to the mud and thatch houses

Where the brick makers live.

Your round eyes peering at the lonely mothers

Pounding spices in quiet kitchens

Where echoes of newborn cries haunt them still.

Only mothers there—

Fathers, urged on by their own haunting from different
cries

And the scars on their backs that followed,

Left before sunrise, long before

The servants interrupted your dreaming

And you lifted your head from your soft pillow.

Again and again you returned to that child-hungry
place—

Skinny tutors and busy housemaids are easy to outrun—

Just to stare at those silent mothers

Making flatbreads, weaving mats,

So spellbound by such simplicity

My brown-haired boy with river eyes.

Evenings you'd return and lean into me,

Your hot body trying to press into my flesh

All that your tongue was too slow to say.

"Forget that, forget that," I would whisper

"I'm here, Mother's here. No need to worry.

Tomorrow we will take dates and honey,

And float on the river in the finest boat

And watch the ibises scatter before us."

Those evening reunions were sweet and piercing

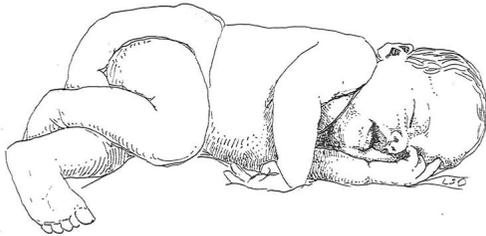
More poignant for me as less needed by you

My serious boy too soon grown a man,

And one evening, maybe known to the stars but not to
me
You outgrew comfort and came no more.
For decades I hoarded memories—
Soft baby fingers pointing at the moon
Elbows and knees pummeling as you clambered to my
lap
Lashes dropped against sun-burnished cheeks
Your hand on my arm as you lay curled beside me.
Did that other mother devour memories like a starving
man, too?
Did she memorize you with every reed she bent into a
tiny boat?
Did she invoke her god's protection as she slathered the
pitch?
"More! More! There must be no gaps!"
How did she force her hand to obey?
Her most severe command, the final push?
Such courage and pain as a young girl never imagines,
Playing in the river with her companions.
And when you returned, strong and wild
Maybe you found me a different woman.
Few traces remain of a carefree princess
Who would pinch your cheeks and toss you trinkets,
Trying to make you carefree, too.
Maybe I am altered, but some things cannot change—
The mother love in ceaseless prayer,
The ancient prayer that you will make it home.
The mother love rising in exploding joy
Each time your foot crosses the threshold.
And now you are leaving, and I am old.
I will not see you again, I know.
Go find your new home, my boy,
I must soon find mine.
You are so brave, my son,
Standing before that stubborn ruler,
Standing for justice, demanding freedom,

Eyes burning from some fiery vision.
Where did you get it, that core of courage?
Was it the last gift from your first mother
Willing her own boldness into your bones
As she pushed the raft of life into the water?
How did she let go?
How do I?
But I remember a time when I was brave, too.
And I also defied a rage-filled king,
And I stood strong and said, "This one will go free."

Nadine can be contacted at nrogersmd@gmail.com.



Excerpt from “The Philosophy of New Church Education” by George de Charms

excerpted by Angela Rose

2.4 Religious Education for Children

Just what is it that we in the New Church are attempting to do? We are attempting to direct a child’s environment in such a way that his or her mind may be disposed to the reception of Divine Love and Wisdom.

The distinctive characteristic of religious education is that its material must be drawn from Divine Revelation. Knowledge concerning God, the life to come, and the laws of a human being’s spiritual life cannot be derived from any observation of nature. No scientific experiments will reveal them. Only the Word of God can give us knowledge of spiritual things. The Word is like a world recast in a form that reflects and mirrors the Kingdom of Heaven. It is so formed that spiritual truth may shine through and reach our understanding.

Nature was the First Word of God

The whole world of nature was created by God for the sake of the human being’s spiritual life—to contribute to the human being’s understanding of God and spiritual things. To ancient people, nature was a theater representative of the Kingdom of Heaven. Nature itself was the first Word of God to human beings. But that book of nature that spoke immediately of spiritual and Divine things to ancient people has become a closed book. Human beings have turned away from spiritual things and focused on the things of earth, so that they are unable to penetrate the secrets of nature to the point of seeing their spiritual import. This is why a written Word had to be given; a written Word in which the things of nature and of human life were reordered in a form that might still reveal spiritual truth when nature itself had become opaque to

human beings.

Bible Stories

The literal teachings of the Bible describe historic places, times, people and events, and to children they are similar to the stories they learn in history and geography and all their other studies. But with this difference: Bible stories tell about the Lord, and they are regarded as holy. The fact that these stories tell about the Lord in ways that even children can understand opens the way to spiritual faith and understanding. The fact that they are recognized as holy opens the way for the affection and love of spiritual things to be touched and moved by influx from heaven.

When we are talking to children about heaven, about the Lord, about life after death, about all qualities of human virtue—we call that religion. It is religion to the children, but their whole idea of it is at once brought down to something concrete, something of this world, something of time and place and person. They are unable to grasp what is truly spiritual yet. But what happens is this: when children learn the stories of the Word there is an influx from heaven to their minds which stirs a delight. The angels who are with them do understand the spiritual implications of all these things. They are delighted with them and they impart a delight to the children. The children don't know where this delight comes from. They think it is inherent in the stories of the Word. They feel delight, and that delight is the seed from which conscience grows.

Religious Teaching Must Be Concrete

Because children are only able to visualize things concretely, religious teaching must be concrete. It is a great mistake to attempt to impart to them abstract spiritual ideas. You always fail because they are not able to visualize them. That is why the Word has been given in such imagery, in stories that children can understand and grasp, but stories that

contain a spiritual meaning. It is a mistake to teach children the doctrines for the New Church and think we are giving them a New Church education by teaching them that water corresponds to truth and a mountain corresponds to love.

Religious education consists in meeting children on the plane at which they are living; meet them there and provide the specific things which will prepare them for the reception of what is spiritual and heavenly. That is the purpose of religious education.

The above is a continuation of a series of excerpts Angela is providing for the Journal. If interested, see the November 2017 Journal, p. 7. Angela can be contacted at angela.rose@brynathyn.edu.



JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

We would love to publish selected responses to articles, poems and stories in the Journal.

Tell us what you think!



The Word is Alive!

It is inspiring when a person finds a way to have a living connection with the Word. The following is an excerpt from an article by Shareen Blair showing the way she opened to the Word. She then was able to reach out to others in a comforting way with the things she learned. Following it is an excerpt from her memorial service which gives examples of the things Shareen was learning.

Excerpt from “Doctrine”

Shareen Blair

We are often admonished to think for ourselves. Our entire General Church educational system is intended to help us think for ourselves from Divine Revelation. Do we actually encourage and support each other in this effort? Do I encourage my friends to think for themselves even when I don't understand their own resources, needs, and background? How often am I positive that I would think and act differently in their circumstances?

On the other hand, am I inclined to feel that if I reach a conclusion or a solution different from that of my parents, husband, pastor, close friend, or the vocal majority of my church community, then I'm likely wrong? Am I afraid to really think for myself? Am I afraid to let others around me think for themselves?

The Lord Himself stands at my door and knocks. Do I open the door to His voice? Or do I kid myself about old familiar voices belonging to a parent, teacher, or an influential minister from my earlier days? I have spent too much of my life thinking I was following the Lord when in reality I was following someone else's interpretation of the Lord's guidance. Actually it was not even their interpretation; it was what I

happened to absorb from someone else's view.

I know what the Writings teach about historical faith. My new thinking about accommodation started me on a path of recognition—a growing awareness of how I can gradually surmount a borrowed faith and nourish a genuine faith based on direct confidence in the Lord. I ask myself: If I need someone else's permission and approval before pursuing a train of thought, a particular solution, or a course of action, am I not limiting myself to Divine Influx accommodated to someone else?

Why do I need someone else's permission to search for my own enlightenment? Why do I crave approval for my ideas and decisions? As an adult I have only to accept the freedom the Lord offers to me.

So often I've been fearful of thinking for myself, anxious about making truly independent decisions, indecisive about mapping my own course. The Journey is much easier when I remember that no matter how faulty and limited my present thinking is, no matter what mistakes I initiate, regardless of my repeated stumbling, the Lord can always turn my efforts to eventual good.

As I began to acknowledge that my own life is supposed to look different from anyone else's, many things changed. Astonishingly, I find it is no longer so important to find people who agree with me. Gone is the desperation to find other people with final answers to my difficulties. Sure, I still love to find agreement and approval. At the same time, I know that is not where my growth is. The Lord is my real Shepherd.

My life is the Lord's gift to me. When I live it in the greatest possible freedom, then I hear His voice and open the door to Him. This, in turn, increases my feelings of confidence

in Him. Confidence in a direct relation with the Lord strengthens my awareness that He does have a unique purpose for my life, and my life becomes a gift to others as well. Then I feel even more free to search along my individual path. I can seek input from many other people and still know that the Lord is accommodating His love and wisdom to my life in a way that is truly individual.

This accommodation can find me right where I am, in exactly my own individual circumstances—today. This is where I find the Lord.

Excerpted from Theta Alpha Journal Fall 1983 pp. 16-17.

Excerpt from Memorial Address for Shareen Blair, September 10, 2016

Ray Silverman

The Lord speaks to us through the Word. Throughout both the published and unpublished works [of the Writings], two themes occur and reoccur like a major theme in a great symphony: the Lord speaks to us through His Word and the Lord gives us eternal life through His Word. In brief, our whole spiritual life depends on hearing the Word of the Lord and letting His words sink deeply into our spirits. . . .

“The Lord speaks with the person of the church in no other way than through the Word” (SH 10290:2). It is no wonder then that the gospel according to John begins with the words, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. And the Word was God” (John 1:1). Whenever we are devoutly reading or listening to the Word, we can be sure that God is speaking to us.

This being the case, it is incumbent upon us to find a way to hear the Lord speaking to us through His Word. Not just that, but we must also find a way of hearing Him speaking directly to us about our own lives. In other words, whenever the Word is speaking about Abraham, or Joseph, or Mary, the Lord is speaking to each of us—to the Abraham in us, to the Joseph in us, to the Mary in us. His message is always personal, immediate and direct.

In order to emphasize this important idea, Shareen’s meditations frequently use the words “I” and “you” instead of “we” and “them.” She does this to highlight the idea that the Lord is always speaking through the Word to each person, individually, giving that person a direct, personal message. Here are two examples:

Original passage: "He will guide our feet into the way of peace." (Luke 1:79)

Shareen's version: I will guide your feet into the way of peace.

Original passage: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. (Rev. 3:20)

Shareen's version: Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and dine with you, and you with Me.

Ray Silverman can be contacted at ray.silverman@brynathyn.edu.

Call for Art Submissions!



As you can see from the beautiful cover art and line drawings, 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!

Logopraxis

Logopraxis is a term coined from the Greek words “Logos” and “praxis,” and means to practice the Word. It was developed by Reverend David Millar of the Australian New Church. In its most obvious form it’s a method for approaching the Word. On another level Logopraxis is a framework for building community. The community is based on each individual’s willingness to share with others what they discover from the Word and use in their lives. The following, written by practitioners of this approach, are responses to the question of how Logopraxis has been helpful in their lives.

Margit Irwin, Bryn Athyn, PA: Three years ago if someone asked me if I belonged to a Logopraxis group I probably would have replied that it was the sort of thing I would be uncomfortable with. Being a conservative type who has been uncomfortable whenever in a “care and share” group of any kind, Logopraxis was not something I was looking for. However, a chance conversation with a classmate convinced me that it was worth at least trying it out. After all (and this was the clincher) it really wasn’t about me per se, but a chance to bring my religion into better focus. I am eternally grateful for that chance conversation!

Logopraxis groups usually meet once every two weeks. During the two weeks leading up to a meeting we read a short portion of a book of the Writings or the Bible with an eye towards what jumps out at us. We are then encouraged to use that part as a means for a focus for us during those weeks. We might zero in on our focus with starters like: be aware of, make a conscious effort to, reflect on, observe shifts of state when this truth is remembered, etc.

Suddenly, my life IS my religion, rather than religion being a part of my life. Making the daily effort to be aware of a truth that stood out for me in any given two weeks has been such a blessing. Working daily on better understanding Him

and living with His will in mind rather than mine has been a wonderful experience. Noting the many times I fail to live up to His wishes for me has helped me to try harder. The Lord's presence with me is now felt much more strongly. I have become aware of His truths and how much I need his constant help in order to draw closer to Him and what he wants for all of humanity.

The meetings themselves give space for reflection and for sharing what has transpired for us in the two weeks intervening. The intent is to help each other grow in our knowledge of the Lord and what he is trying to teach us. Our failures are as important, if not more so, than our "aha" moments. Our task is to make every effort to take personality out of the equation as we make our submissions for each week. The intent is not to direct or guide but continually turn back to and be guided by the Word of God, and to be supportive of that intent in our group members.

My greatest wish would be that more people could experience this practice of daily worship. I have reaped the blessings of being kinder, less judgmental, amazingly more hopeful and willing to work on my many shortcomings. There are miles yet to go, but I now live with the confidence that the Lord is always there to show me, through His Word, what steps I need to take as I stumble along the road towards His kingdom!

Margit can be contacted at margit@irwins.ws.

Siri Y. Hurst, Huntingdon Valley, PA: How Logopraxis is helpful in my life. It might sound a bit dramatic to say that Logopraxis has significantly changed my life for the better, but it has, and here's how. Before starting Logopraxis I used to read the Word (Writings) on an intellectual level and sometimes apply what I learned to life, usually during adversity.

Now that I read the Word using the Logopraxis concept that everything, but EVERYTHING, applies to me and my state,

the Word becomes alive. While I was raised to think this way, I did not have the Logopraxis tools to formulate a task from the reading and bring that into my daily life. And what is wonderful, I regularly meet with others who are on the same path and hear how they are applying truths in their life. It is a gift we give each other.

Logopraxis takes work. However, it is like climbing a mountain from which to view the natural life from something higher. This “seeing” of the natural life, especially the proprium, can help free us from it, or help us not identify with it. “The seeing is the freeing.” For me, this often brings a state of interior peace.

Logopraxis is not just an intellectual process but experiential. It is experiencing the Lord as the Word.

Siri can be contacted at sirihurst@gmail.com.

Gretchen Sandstrom, Bloomfield, Connecticut: Harald and I joined Logopraxis in February, 2016. I am just finishing two years in this program. I still feel like a newcomer. But I’m very happy to have found a new-to-me way of coming to my religion.

My upbringing in Pittsburgh, PA was New Church from the beginning. I went to New Church elementary school. I had two years of public high school and then went to Bryn Athyn for the other two years and four years of college. I learned the stories of the Word, about DLW and CL, always storing up cognitions and trying to remember representations. The *Theta Alpha Journal’s* regular feature “Let’s Apply” was one of my first explorations of *using* the teachings, beyond the obvious shunning evils as sins and aiming for *Conjugal Love*.

Our Logopraxis group leader, Rev. David Millar, reminds us to read the Word/Writings for *application*, *devotion*, and *worship*. The discovery that a whole movement was based on searching for what the Lord is telling *me* to *do* was very exciting

and a little scary. The Gospel of John says: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” So seeing the Lord as the Word—including the Writings—means what I read there is the Lord speaking directly to *me*. Even offering instructions!

For example, *Arcana Coelestia* 4249 says: “Indeed temptation has its origin in angels’ maintenance of the person in goods and truths, while evil spirits maintain him in evils and falsities.” And 4249:2 says: “Whatever a person thinks and what he wills, that is all his thoughts and all his affections, originate either in hell or in heaven.” This is scary while also providing a feeling of relief. My thoughts and affections don’t really come from *me*. They come either from angels or from devils. What I *can* do is choose which ideas to retain or act on. When the devils are present, notice this and try to choose another behavior, from the angels. Then the Lord can restore things to order.

Having our face-to-face Google Hangout group meeting is a huge benefit. Hearing what other members heard from the Lord broadens the value of the reading. It’s a real support system. We all see how the Lord “spoke” to or is inspiring each one of us individually! And being able to hear David Millar’s summing up and answers to questions is such a privilege.

Gretchen can be contacted at gsand02@comcast.net.

Dianna Synnestvedt, Bryn Athyn, PA: My spiritual practice has grown deeper since I became part of the Logopraxis community. I love the guidance and support I get from my fellow practitioners, and the structure that the method gives. I find I have more peace in my life as I am able to see my *proprium* for what it is, and try to apply principles in the Word to the life of my mind. One of the important things I have learned through practice is to be aware of levels of meaning when I am pondering a situation.

The structure of the method teaches me to find principles in the Word to live by, and the structure of the life group sessions allows the communities to share the activity of the Word in our lives with each other.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Dianna can be contacted at desynnestvedt@gmail.com.

Kirsten Schoenberger, Shelton, Connecticut: I was introduced to Logopraxis eight or so years ago. I heard that it was an approach to the building of a spiritual practice supported by a group of others engaged in the same work. We “met” via the exchange of emails. Today I am in an online group where we see and hear each other via the computer screen. Two people live in Australia and four in the USA. We meet every two weeks.

Perhaps because I like tasks with specific instructions, I was drawn to the format of the Logopraxis cycle. At the start of the cycle I read from a book of Sacred Scripture, pay attention to the portion that catches my attention, [and] pinpoint a spiritual principle seen there. Then I focus on how this principle functions in the realm of my mind until the group meets again. We come together to report on what we observed in our thoughts and affections during the previous two weeks. Each member of the group is fed by the experiences of the others. It is not a discussion. **What we bring is an offering to the group. It feels holy and reverent. I feel the Lord in our midst.**

The structured approach offers me a way to live my life from the Word. I was amazed that even after 13 years of New Church education and many years of actively participating in a church group, I hadn’t consciously taken in the idea that, “The Lord IS the Word!” Not that “The Lord is IN the Word.” Not that “The Lord INSPIRED the Word.” THE LORD IS THE WORD. I’ll never forget how deeply that moment affected me.

From then on when I read the Word I try to be open to the fact that the Lord is seeing me; doing His work within me. Right here. Right now.

Of course when the light of the Truths of the Word shine in, the proprium is exposed. It is not a pleasant thing. It sometimes feels like staring down into the fiery pit. When I see by the light of the Word, the Word Itself begins Its process of salvation in me. I can find comfort in the fact that since I have seen it, I can shun it. As we say in Logopraxis, "The freeing is in the seeing."

One thing that I have learned in Logopraxis is that the Word shows me what I need to work on. I may think I know for myself what to work on to improve myself. But Who knows me the most intimately? The Lord presents me with important stuff to work on.

Logopraxis is not for everyone. I'm sure the Lord leads his people in the process of regeneration in many different ways. He led me to Logopraxis.

Kirsten can be contacted at ttail49@hotmail.com.

Gray Glenn, Kempton, PA: What difference do I perceive from doing Logopraxis?

It has re-organized my thinking. I think differently than I used to, therefore, I respond differently to what life throws my way. Because of doing Logopraxis over a length of time, it has become easy to distinguish thoughts and affections from the Lord because the experience of them is now so separate from other thoughts and feelings. Because of this, I can't take what is not from the Lord (just about everything) as seriously (for as long) as I used to. In turn, this opens the way to see more from what *is* the Lord.

The Lord leaves us free to live in our blindness, but doing Logopraxis can help us experience (in specific ways) how in our

blindness we are not free.

How would I compare Logopraxis and Shareen Blair's ministry?

Both Logopraxis and Shareen's technique involve setting up conditions to open the possibility of experiencing inner awareness from the Word. In Logopraxis the individual creates for him or herself new conditions every two weeks. Creating those conditions involves a meditative phase, an intellectual phase and a practical phase. The practical phase involves observing what happens under those pre-determined conditions. It is something an individual does regularly, on-going, to invite conscious participation in how the Lord reveals the proprium for what it is.

Shareen's technique involves a thoughtful *second party*. It is the second party who implements a meditative and intellectual phase on behalf of someone else, then does the practical work of creating a physical environment in which to give another person an experience. Shareen's technique is a gift to someone else. Logopraxis is a living prayer to be gifted by the Holy Spirit.

Shareen's technique is very personal; I'd say its fruits have to do with adding toward the recipient's "fullness of remains." The Heavenly Doctrines reveal that no one is allowed into states of combat (or temptation) until there is a fullness of remains, that is, until there is adequate accumulated *states* of good and truth. Good therapy often involves opening the way to help grow this store.

Logopraxis also offers states of good and truth, but its structure invites combat which Shareen's structure does not. To manage in Logopraxis, it helps to cultivate a perspective beyond the personal.

Logopraxis focuses on salvation as a process, as the only activity of the Divine. Logopraxis offers help to people who want to become aware of the process itself of salvation.

Shareen's technique is concerned with what might be termed "soul healing." Soul healing is an absolutely necessary step toward an adequate wholeness which must precede the combat of spiritual warfare. It is very important here to remember that *regeneration is not a linear development*. There are wheels within wheels in its process. That is something which doing Logopraxis makes very evident.

Both Logopraxis and Shareen's treatments can be a means of becoming more aware of how the Word works. But Logopraxis includes a good dose of self-imposed mental work. Receiving Shareen's treatment is mental rest. Both offer the potential for experiences which confirm the Divinity of the Living Word, but the confirmation is in different centers of the human being.

Gray can be contacted at pingie@ptd.net.

Hal Rosner, Philadelphia, PA: I've been in the Logopraxis community for about five years. I heard Reverend David Millar of the Australian New Church College give a presentation at the Swedenborgian Colloquium in 2012, and his talk deeply resonated with me. In the months that followed I was able to join a group organized by Gray Glenn. "LP" as it is often referenced by its followers, is my church. It is where I worship, commune with like-minded souls, and experience the Lord's presence through a commitment to spiritual practice.

At the Colloquium David spoke of declining church memberships and congregants becoming passive or perhaps even co-dependent in their relationship with traditional organizational models. In my life I experienced such complacency or even ambivalence in my own study of the Word. It seemed I was subsisting on a couple of favorite numbers from the Writings, to be applied to myriad woes in the context of my repentance journey. To complicate matters, my social circle of friends and relatives tended to be rabid nay-sayers, skeptics, and evangelical atheists.

The YouTube video of David's talk is an excellent introduction to LP. The website SpiritandLife.net engages users at all levels so that participants are to be found worldwide. My group, which meets face-to-face every two weeks, had been through *Heaven and Hell*, also *Divine Love and Wisdom*. We are now halfway through *Divine Providence*.

LP is a "disruptive innovation" much like Uber and Lyft upending the taxi industry, Amazon for retail shopping, and Spotify for purchasing music. The term typically refers to innovations that disrupt and displace existing markets. In this case, it is governing church institutions that may feel the impact.

I'm "all in" with the LP process, engaged with systematic weekly readings, also formulation and application of a task or spiritual focus. Daily. Weekly. I no longer read the Writings to analyze content, but instead lean in closely so that the Lord, the Word, reads me. This reversal of the traditional dynamic has resurrected and rejuvenated my spiritual life.

In LP there is a strong sense that participants are taking responsibility for their spiritual growth and development. The ongoing commitment is to self-examination and repentance. The personal reflection that comes through practicing the truth builds a sense of community. LP as a process is often not pretty and often can be quite messy as the proprium is stripped of frivolous posturing, and taken to task for holding on to bad behavior. It is the application of spiritual truths that leads to a certain amount of liberation and freedom, and the powerful experience of the Lord in one's life. All those ancient stories and all those volumes of the Writings provide the foundation and gateway, but knowledge has to be lived and put to use.

Hal can be contacted at hmrosner@gmail.com.

Sarah Walker, Perth: I grew up in the New Church in Australia and was raised into the belief that the spiritual world was just as

present and real as this world. There never was any question in my mind that it wasn't. In my 20's and early 30's I lived in the UK and the USA. I experienced exactly what I'd felt at home. I was part of a New Church community in each of these places but I didn't feel spiritually connected to them. I slowly become disillusioned and disheartened at the diminishing size of the church culture and population, and to what seemed to me to be the corresponding lack of connection with the Lord in my own life. I longed for that connection but had no idea how to start and eventually fell into a dormant state of waiting.

Then about two years ago I was at a national New Church camp and had attended a session run by Rev. David Millar. I don't remember Logopraxis being mentioned but the premise behind it was certainly present. The idea of reading with conscious attention to what the Lord is saying to us. The idea that the Lord IS the Word. And if I truly believed that—then why wasn't I reading it anymore? The idea is that the Word reads us (not that we read it), and that it brings our states to our attention if we are willing to hear and see.

So . . . I was inspired to pick up the Sacred Scriptures that night with these ideas in mind. And something in me shifted and jolted me awake. Over the next month or so it brought me to a point where I was compelled—almost even given no choice—but to move forward and act. I had to begin. And Logopraxis was where I started.

Once I began to learn the skill of reading with conscious attention—I did start to hear and see the Lord more. But it didn't stay limited to the text of *Arcana Celestia*, which is what we were reading at the time. It transferred. The Sacred Scriptures suddenly seemed like a living entity. My Logopraxis life group became an opportunity for me to hear and see and love the Lord. My interactions with others in my life were opportunities. My dreams started to shed light on my states and even guide me to truths I needed to learn. I couldn't see a tree anymore without thinking of perceptions or hear a bird without feeling ideas or look at the sunrise without a deep love rising in me for Him. I

found connections opening up everywhere.

And I felt spiritually connected to a community: the idea that the Word, the Lord, is what unites us; the idea that if we share our experience of it with others, and not just our intellectual understanding—but our lived experience of the Word working in our life—then this gives us a glimpse of what heaven is; the idea of what a spiritual community is; the idea that if we practice self-examination and repentance not just for ourselves, but for others and for the community, then what we learn feeds them too.

This is a small summary of my experience of Logopraxis and it still continues to change every day, or rather my relationship with the Lord changes and deepens every day. We all have our unique role to play in the Grand Human and so we all experience the Lord differently. Therefore the practice of the process will be slightly different in each of us. (And it is just a process, until you apply it to your inner life and live it.) It is the sharing of goods and truths that link us together—it is the Lord in our midst.

Sarah can be contacted at musictogetherwithsarah@gmail.com.

Alanna Rose, Plainfield, NY: I heard about Logopraxis after writing an article for the Theta Alpha Journal questioning why there were no esoteric chapters of the New Church, or Swedenborgian theology. What I received in response was a letter from Gray Glenn stating roughly, ‘It does exist! It’s called Logopraxis.’ I began listening to David Millar’s sermons online and was really inspired by his ability to connect obscure pieces of the Old Testament with internal states I was experiencing—basically his ability to bring the Word to life inside of me. I joined a Logopraxis group online after being cautioned that it was unusual for someone under 50 to join and that it was often unpleasant. How could I resist?!?

Working personally with sacred texts (the Bible, the Writings) in the context of David Millar’s understanding of Logopraxis has

vivified concepts I have of myself, the Word (the Lord) and the human condition. It has drawn on basic truths I learned within a New Church context and electrified them. It has elevated my respect for the Word (the Lord) and brightened my sense of His presence as the Word 'in me.' Working with David Millar has righteously crushed my natural concept of 'morality' as a goal in itself. (Moral superiority is my lower self trying to merit salvation—an impossibility as salvation is in essence the Lord, and not something the proprium is even interested in.) Logopraxis exposes the proprium and its action within me and the degree of resistance the proprium has to the Lord's influence. It's given me more compassion for my fellow travelers (all of humanity) by showing me how miserable the states of the proprium really are to endure and how vigorously it strives to dominate my experience. The esoteric aspect I spoke of earlier is the mysterious way the Lord works inside of me. My understanding will certainly expand in the future as I practice, but what I gather now is that we cannot even see the proprium without revelation. When I see my lower self and its inclinations 'I' am seeing from the Lord. My efforts to see are important, but seeing is actually only the Lord's. So where am 'I' anyway? I might add that this work is exceedingly slow going. Any false hope that I will 'graduate' or 'arrive' is exposed as the illusion it is. The Logopraxis process is a personal endeavor offering an eternal deepening that I can engage in (or resist) for as long as the Lord lives (forever). Thank goodness we have all day, so to speak.

Alanna can be contacted at rose.alanna@gmail.com.

To learn more about Logopraxis visit the website: spiritandlife.net/church. The search engine will provide a number of options. Click on "The Upper Room." After doing that, in the banner, roll the cursor over "Logopraxis." A drop down box will come up. On the drop down list click on "LP articles index." There are many to choose from. If interested, under "LP 101: Getting Started" is a Theta Alpha interview on Logopraxis with Reverend Millar from 2011.

Living Abroad

Joel Brown

Foreign countries	I miss the names
Always make me appreciate	Of states, even places
The little things	I never lived
I have left behind:	Arkansas and Kansas
Sidewalks that work	I miss how American
Taco Bell and Twinkies	Indian words have survived
(I wish I was kidding	too
But I'm not)	Tallahassee and Susquehanna
Freedom of speech	Like tears on the cheek
And the right to assemble	Of the land the Washita
Signs in English	Running like a coyote
Well, in English that	In the endless winter
Makes sense	I miss the hope you
"Beware of head"	Sometimes see
And "Don't molest the grass"	On faces black and white
Are lost in translation I guess	And brown when they
I miss certain smells	Discover that slavery
Certain trees	Never ended for anyone
Because I love new trees	And yet you can free your
Doesn't change this	soul
My roots are planted deeply	More than anything
In American soil	I miss the people I love
I miss dumb jokes	How you think they'll
Jokes I can make	Be here forever
Jokes I can understand	And they never are
I miss eyes that find me	How you don't always
Ordinary, the gentle	Appreciate them
Acceptance of being ignored	Cherish them
Because you are normal	Tell them you love them
Normal clothes, normal eyes	And how a world away
It is a luxury you do not	You know we have a collective
Even know you possess	Heart that beats together
Until you lose it	That keeps us alive

Joel can be contacted through private messaging on Facebook.

When Will There Be Time

Peg Mergen

When will there be time?
When will I emerge from under the pile of the last load
of dishes?
Yet another meal prepared, eaten, turned into clean up
material,
After finally dusting the light fixture whose dust has
been calling me for two months,
After the intimate time with my husband, listening,
feeling, being close,
After time with my children, just being there, sharing a
drive as they discover the road,
After deliciously pulling those beckoning weeds,
After reading: the Word, inspirational works, nursing
journals, the book about Mandela,
After all those hours and hours of work for pay,
Nursing: with awesome patients, the computer.
After quiet walks, reflection, singing, running,
After those occasional walks and talks with women that
I mostly don't make time for,
After those important conversations that we haven't
gotten to yet:
Money, vacation, what to do about the house.

After this, ...
Then I will write the poems, I will dance the dances,
and I will say
Hello to my creative me.

Peg Mergen is a home care nurse who is easing into retirement. In addition, she is busy with enjoying nature, husband and home projects, family and friends, activism and volunteer work. She wrote this poem during her 'writing period' spurred by a midlife crisis at age 40. Peg can be contacted at pegmergen@verizon.net.

Biography of an Artist

Peggy Merrell

I accepted the challenge when asked to hang some of my paintings for a show in the Swedenborg Library, but was also asked to give a short talk at the beginning of the opening day. The following is the story of me slowly becoming an artist.

I was a child of the Depression—the seventh of eight children—and one of my earliest memories is of wanting to draw pictures when I was about five years old. Because money was hard to come by at the time, there was no paper in the house, so my mother cut up a brown paper grocery bag for me to draw and color on. There weren't any fancy art supplies either, only an occasional coloring book that I got for Christmas.

When I was in fourth grade my cousin gave me a blank notebook for my birthday and I proceeded to fill it with my early drawings, copying pictures from coloring books, comics and advertisements that appealed to me. In our small church school in Kitchener there were few art supplies, also, and, of course, no art teacher. But we usually had an art class on Friday afternoons. I loved those afternoons. I have one strong memory from fifth or sixth grade when our teacher had brought in some apple blossoms to copy. All the students loved drawing and painting them, and we felt pretty good about how they turned out. I had painted a blue background (being a realist), but one of the other classmates had painted a green background. The teacher pointed out that the green made the pink apple blossoms show up better. I'm sure she was trying to teach us the rule that opposite colors on the color wheel make colors stand out, but of course I was crushed. I thought my painting was just as good as his. But

still, I did spend many happy hours drawing in class. Usually I finished my desk work faster than the two boys in my class, and so was allowed to get pictures from a filing cabinet that I could copy. I think my teacher kept it full just for my benefit.

For a parents' night we had our artwork posted around the room. One of the older women in the society praised my work and told me I had a well known artist in my heredity—she thought definitely I was meant to be an artist—it was in my blood. It took me a long time to find out who that person was. His name was Carl Ahrens. He was a nephew of my great-grandfather on my mother's side. He seems to have been a bit of a rascal and not talked about.

As the poverty of the Depression years eased a little and I was old enough to have paper of my own, my mother encouraged my drawing by giving me a drawer in the kitchen to keep pencils and paper and a small board to work on. I remember sitting on the back porch in the summer drawing my doll. I had made a period costume for my doll that worked out well and it was fun to draw. But many of my drawings didn't turn out as well as I would have liked, and early on the feeling of "not good enough" settled in.

In high school we had no formal art teachers, either. I did have a notebook in which I drew fashion drawings of beautiful ladies in lovely dresses, but I had problems with faces and proportions, and rarely felt satisfied. But I still had the urge to draw. When I went to Bryn Athyn for my senior year, somehow I was put in charge of the Deka Sigma Dance decorations even though I had no experience with them. We did a New York skyline. I wasn't very knowledgeable about New York, either, but it was interesting. In college the next year I had more fun because we did a circus theme.

In the second year of marriage my husband, Bob, and I lived in New Jersey and were rather isolated from any

church society. I drew pictures of my baby, Willard, but he didn't hold still very long. I set up a table in the spare room and while baby slept I tried painting with oils, following some instructions in a book. I actually reached the point of producing some nice still lifes and copies of pictures from *National Geographic*. That is, until the baby grew big enough to reach my table of supplies. He was a busy little boy and liked to climb on everything. I put my paints away and didn't paint with oils again. When another baby was on the way we moved to Bryn Athyn. Grandma Merrell, my husband's mother, moved in with us and life got busy. My creative energy went into sewing and gardening.

More children came along and we moved to Detroit and California. The longing to paint lay buried. When we moved back to Bryn Athyn our lives were still busy—our youngest child, who had been a six-month-old baby when we left, was now a junior in high school, and the five older children were having trouble finishing school and finding jobs. I tried a drawing class at Abington Art Center but it seemed too difficult, or the teacher wasn't very good, and my life was still too full of children and problems.

One time when we went back to Detroit to visit friends, Karen and Jack Elder, Karen showed me her drawing table. It was a slant table, or a drafting table, and when I saw it I knew I had to have one of them. I asked for it for Christmas. Before this I had been trying to draw flower fairies and such things by sitting in my comfortable lounge chair with a pad of paper on my lap but it wasn't working. I knew I had the perfect space for an art table in our bedroom and after receiving it, I started drawing more. A stationery store named Ollard's sold art books and colored pencils that I bought one item at a time. Remember, I was a Depression baby and was careful with my pennies. Gradually my collection grew. A love for drawing with colored pencils grew within me, too, even though it was tedious to get strong colors. To get good coverage with

colored pencils I had to go over and over my work, and sometimes add another color on top to get the effect that I wanted.

In my late sixties a number of things came together in my life. The first one was that a book called *The Artist's Way* became popular. My women's group started to read it, and I loved it. The second was that my sister-in-law, Marge Rose, started a painting group in the basement of Cairnwood Village, an apartment building for retired people in Bryn Athyn. One of the things we did was to tack up cheap paper on the wall and, using poster paints, paint wild pictures of splashes of color and mandalas to express feelings and have fun. It was my kindergarten stage in being an artist—the kind of playing with color that I had never done in my life. But after a while I started wanting to do more realistic painting, and started copying calendar pictures and other things. But my old “not good enough” began showing up again. Painting with poster paint and cheap paper and old brushes wasn't a good setup for more careful work. The third thing that helped was that I also took an *Artist's Way* workshop about this time and really did the work, finally developing the courage to take a watercolor class at Abington Art Center.

The following is one of the tasks that the author, Julia Cameron, had in her book, and is an example of doing the work. It was called *Blurts* which are the kind of statements made when a person tries to state a positive affirmation, but it doesn't feel true. At the time I had written the following in my Journal. The way it works is that a person needs to keep restating the affirmation to come up with more blurts.

I am a channel for God's creativity, and my work comes to good.

Who do you think you are that God would work through you?

I am a channel for God's creativity, and my work comes to good.

God does have to work through people but wouldn't I feel more inspired?

I am a channel for God's creativity, and my work comes to good.

My work just sits around and I'm not sure what good it is doing.

I am a channel for God's creativity, and my work comes to good.

The channel doesn't flow fast enough and I am stuck and sidetracked.

I am a channel for God's creativity, and my work comes to good.

I need to unblock the channel by doing the work.

In this way I came to a realization that I needed to put the effort into doing the work rather than whining and complaining that I wasn't there yet. One of Julia's Rules of the Road is to place this sign in your workplace: "Great Creator, I will take care of the quantity. You take care of the quality."

Another of my Blurts was that I am too old to become a real artist. To counteract that negative thought, I read a passage from Psalm 92:12-15.

The righteous flourish like the palm tree, and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

They are planted in the house of the Lord. They flourish in the courts of our God.

They shall bring forth fruit in old age. They are ever full, to show that the Lord is upright: He is my rock, and there

is no unrighteousness in Him.

Once I started taking lessons at Abington Art Center I fell in love with watercolors. I spent money on good paper, good paints and good brushes and always went prepared to paint. If I was going to spend all that money on myself, I wasn't going to waste it. I went with butterflies in my stomach, sure that the teacher would laugh at my work, but quickly found out that there were other beginners, too. There were some really good artists as well, but now they inspired me instead of intimidating me. One day I discovered people looking over my shoulder and admiring my work. Amazing! The teacher was good and gave us interesting homework to do. He scared me because he could be critical, but I'm grateful that he knew what he was doing. A later teacher was not so good.

Having fun with painting was a gift in my life. As three of my children developed Muscular Dystrophy and needed more and more care, being able to do watercolor painting was a great outlet for me. I could start and stop with ease if my children needed me. If I'd been working with oil paints, my paints would have dried out before I could get back to them. With watercolor paints, just a dab of water could get my paints going again.

Once, when I was in a small group and still feeling "not good enough," I talked about a painting I was working on. The leader could see that my face lit up. She asked, "What would success look like?" I told her, "Perhaps if I actually sold a painting." Well, I guess I am a success. I could even say that I am an artist because I've lost count of how many paintings I have sold. The old feeling still sneaks in now and then, and I still want to paint like all the Great Painters. But I am grateful for the gift that it has been in my life. And maybe the next one will be the masterpiece.

Courage

Kris Heinrichs Earle

My year is about to begin,
Yet I am not ready,
That is the way it has to be,
I will never be good enough,
Smart enough,
Funny enough,
Ready enough,
I fear
The endurance required
For this learning battleground is more
Than I now have,
I can't fake it anymore,
Even more than the lack of stamina
My imperfections and shortcomings
Cut my wind short,
The accustomed teacher tasks require
More air, deeper breaths, more time,
The armor that I once wore
That served me well,
Is now too heavy,
And no longer protects me;
I am uncovered and weak,
The agony of entering the battleground again,
Without my age-worn weapons
Many to be discarded as they are
Useless,
The onslaught of young beings,
With their individual interests,
Or lack thereof,
With their abilities,
Or lack thereof,
With their emotions,

Insecurities, anxieties, loves, infatuations, hatreds,
resentments,
So much humanity packed in a classroom,
With incessant bells, signaling the starting
Of a battle,
Or is it a race? Or both?
How can I plan a course that is
Engaging,
Enlightening,
Pushes my charges to reach
The objectives, the performance, the proficiency, the
skills?
This is not a battle for the weak-of-heart,
It is a battle that requires a plan
More detailed and complicated
More inclusive and empowering
Than I have the ability to devise.
As the battle looms so close
On the calendar
I tremble as I cannot stall it,
Avoidance is not an option,
I will put on my back-to-school outfit
Pretending to know what will happen,
But not having a clue,
It is not the
Subject,
Observations,
Standards,
Rubrics,
Duties,
Colleagues,
That pose any threat,
It is those beautiful,
Impressionable,
Full-of-promise,
Young beings

Drowning me with concern for
What will they become?
How will I serve their needs?
Their paths are so difficult now
With iPhones, media, constant pressure
TO BE SOMETHING
Often different than who they are,
SSSHHHH!
Calm the voice that says this is too much
For it is not,
I am gently reminded
That I have
What is needed,
An open heart,
A willing mind,
AND love for those who enter through
That door.

Note from Kris: This poem is especially fitting on the tail of the school shooting so close to home in Florida. Several years ago a mother of one of my more difficult students wrote me "love, love, love always wins" and this has been a strong support through heartache.

Kris can be contacted at madameahs@gmail.com.

The Bright Side of Life

Camryn Buss

I sat fuming in my chair during chapel one day. Everything was absolutely terrible, and the world had definitely decided I was not allowed to be happy. Not only were there tests to take and homework assignments to finish but my extracurriculars felt like chains looped around my waist pulling me forcefully away from any and all free time. This sort of morning had become dreadfully normal and it should not have been a day that changed the rest of my life, but for some inexplicable reason, something important happened. As the minister preached about our own choice to embrace joy and how we could only ever control ourselves, I suddenly had an epiphany; I am given the choice to be happy with the life I build for myself. No one is forcing me to be grumpy. No one made me join the tennis team and the play. This is my life and I need to find acceptance in all aspects of it. In my experience, if you can find acceptance in your life decisions, whatever happiness means to you, will follow.

If you were to view your life as a film, how often would you say you're in a state of happiness? What would you consider happiness? Is true happiness success or friendships? Is joy found in acceptance of oneself or appreciating what you already have? Take a moment to think about this idea. Personally, as I critically reflected on my own journey, I was completely disgusted by my ratio of joy to sadness.

I realized that I spend too much time griping about all of the conflicts and commitments I was involved in. I get so worked up by all of the different things happening at once, I forget that everything was my choice and I frequently neglect to enjoy myself. I discovered that, to me, happiness is an attitude towards everything, whether it be small, trivial things or big, vital things. I believe my own happiness can be found

daily, and I am working on honing this skill. This type of self-reflection is important so that we can improve on our current selves and do better in the future. By saying this motto, I bring myself back to the present and remember that the reactions and experiences I have will make up the story of my life.

We need to realize that we can only control ourselves. I can't force anyone to do anything or change their opinions to match mine. Similarly, there are too many overwhelming problems in this world to take on at once. As hard as it may be to take a step back from situations and focus on improving your own viewpoint, it is an important step to exploring what happiness means to you. You could drive yourself absolutely mad taking the weight of the world on your shoulders or blaming your strife on others. By focusing this attention on how to twist the situation to reflect a more positive view, we will ultimately do the most good because we have found mental peace. A successful actress, Marilu Henner, once said, "Being in control of your life and having realistic expectations about your day-to-day challenges are the keys to stress management, which is perhaps the most important ingredient to living a happy, healthy and rewarding life." After all, the best possible outcome is only a success if we are in a mental state to accept it. Therefore, we can only control ourselves and our view on life.

Lastly, not only is it beneficial to yourself to have a positive outlook on the world, but happiness is also contagious. Yes, this means you can catch a smile just like a cold! According to a study conducted by the British Medical Journal, your chance of happiness is drastically increased by being around happy people. If we choose to be joyful and positive human beings, others around us will channel our vibes and spread the love. This mass spread of cheer starts with you. By simply choosing to accept the day you have presented for yourself, fulfillment will follow for you and for others. Personally, I want to remedy my own plague of

grumpiness and stress, so I consciously try to flash a smile as I walk down the hallway to chase those blues away. After a while, it begins to work and I feel a comforting heat spread throughout my body, and that isn't even the most wonderful part! I tend to receive smiles in return and perhaps even a comment about how that person was having a bad day and needed a friendly smile! This movement of happiness can extend throughout the community of people in your life, and a simple smile can change the day.

As I walk out of chapel, I feel the most spectacular sensation of lightness and warmth. With this newfound enlightening knowledge, I suddenly feel so free. I can't help but to smile and laugh. I pounce on a nearby friend and embrace her in a tight hug. She turns to me and reflects my elated expression which only adds to the completeness of that moment.

Ever since that day, I live by the idea that acceptance in my decisions will improve the quality of my life and hopefully lead to happiness. Life is not eternal. We have a finite number of moments to spend as we may. If nothing else, I am completely in charge of the reactions I have towards this life, so I am sure going to try to direct every second in the direction of a smile.

Note: This essay placed first in the "Laws of Life" essay contest for sophomore girls in the spring of 2017.

Scholarships Available!

Theta Alpha International Education Scholarship

Two education scholarships will be offered for the 2019-2020 school year. This annual award is 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 of the New Church education student. These funds may be used toward tuition, fees, and/or books.

Theta Alpha International Scholarship

Three scholarships are available to women students of Bryn Athyn College of the New Church who have a 3.0 GPA or higher and are studying Religion (major, minor, ID) or enrolled in the MARS program, or are international students. There are (2) \$2,000 and (1) \$1,000 scholarships awarded to eligible recipients who exemplify the teachings of the New Church. These are annual merit-based scholarships that can be used for tuition, college fees, books or supplies.

Applications are due **February 1, 2019**. To apply: email ancdaughters@gmail.com or call Sarah Wong at BAC 267-502-6085 or see BAC website.

2018-2019 Scholarship Winners

For religious/international studies: Anne Grace Glenn, Jordan Brunne, Denali Heinrichs

For education studies: Brenna Sweeney, Rachel Elphick

Kempton New Church School

Dale Smith, M.Ed.

The Kempton New Church School in Kempton, Pennsylvania, was formed by parents in 1979 with a group of 10 students meeting in the basement of a local church. The next year, a church member donated part of a barn which was converted into classrooms by parents. As time went on, another barn was connected and expanded to create more space as the student body grew. Today, the Kempton New Church School is blessed with an enrollment of nearly 80 students from kindergarten through 12th grade. As of the 2017/18 academic year, there are 50 students in the primary grades (K-6), 15 students in the middle school (7-8), and 13 students in the high school (9-12). The church and school are located on a beautiful piece of land with spectacular views of mountains and farmland. Our classrooms and communal spaces in the school and church buildings are being utilized fully, and the society is currently contemplating a possible building expansion project. The expansion would add more classrooms, teacher offices, and storage space.

Like other New Church schools, the Kempton school is led by an amazing group of faculty, pastors, and staff, who are dedicated to providing an education that is rooted in the Word and the truths of the Lord's Second Coming. First and foremost, we aim to teach children the two great commandments, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God in thy whole heart, and in thy whole soul, and in thy whole thought. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matthew 22:37). We hope to help children develop into good neighbors who know and care about what is important, into people who can be useful and happy members of society both in this life and in the world to come.

The school team strives to cultivate an environment where innocence in children is protected and preserved, as this is one of the most precious qualities of childhood. We love New Church teachings about marriage, and hope that all our students may eventually experience the many blessings of marriage, in the spiritual world if not in this world.

As parents have the primary responsibility for raising their children, we encourage and rely greatly on parental participation, striving to support parents in fulfilling the promises of baptism. The school is blessed in that the children who attend come from homes that are committed to the New Church and in preserving a New Church sphere. We greatly value all the volunteer service that is so generously offered by the church community, and couldn't run the school without the support.

Last year (2016/17) the Kempton New Church school held its first high school commencement. On June 8, 2017, three students walked the stage in Kempton, as we expanded our long time K-10th grade offering to cover the last two years of high school as well. This development carries on the Kempton Society's already rich history of education at the senior high school level, which was primarily accomplished through its ASPIRE initiative, a parent-led hybrid homeschool program. Now KNCS itself offers students a high school diploma, which bears the following inscription: "Nothing is more important to man than to know what is true (*Arcana Coelestia* 794)."

Some faculty in Kempton are providing distance-learning opportunities to students from afar via Google Classroom and Google Hangout. The ability to provide New Church education to remote students is very exciting, and is something we continue to assess and strive to improve.

Being a small school, we have unique opportunities for collaboration across different ages. Our first and second

graders get together with the seventh and eighth graders on a weekly basis during a class called Learning Partners. The older and younger students often form special friendships as they bond over projects, games, and activities. Earlier this fall, the ninth and tenth graders got together with the first and second graders for a writing activity. Both the teachers and students were glowing about it for the rest of the day. Opportunities like these have helped build a positive sense of community within the school.

On behalf of the pastors, faculty, and staff, I will close by saying that we all feel very grateful for the opportunity to educate children from a New Church perspective, in an inspiring setting with daily reminders of the beauty of the Lord's creation. I hope you enjoyed hearing about the Kempton Church School!

Dale Smith is the assistant principal of the Kempton New Church School. He can be contacted at dale.smith@knks.org.



Theta Alpha International Charter Day Luncheon and Annual Meeting

Oct. 20, 2017

Janet Krettek welcomed members, invited them to get their lunches, and led a blessing. The ANC dance team delighted the room with a performance.

Meeting Notes:

At the time of voting for officers for the coming year, there were no challengers to the proposed panel: Janet Krettek, president; Carla Reuter, vice president; Melodie Greer, treasurer; Brita Conroy, secretary. A voice vote was taken and the panel was confirmed.

Melodie Greer read a final statement as president, endorsing Janet as the new president. She also noted the reinstatement of the Theta Alpha Journal with Helen Kennedy as editor. Melodie acknowledged Patrick Mayer as an organized and effective (outgoing) treasurer, and thanked Gillian Mayer for serving as his liaison to executive committee meetings. After mentioning that membership is lower than we would wish for, Melodie explained the various methods in place for paying membership dues.

Treasurer's report:

The scholarship moneys are now included in the treasurer's report. After Melodie explained major changes in the journal costs, mailings, etc., the report and budget were accepted by a voice vote. One facet of the budget is that TAI donated \$14,200 to the Academy of the New Church development office and the money was gratefully received by Kaylene Glenn.

Copies of last year's annual meeting minutes were made available in the room. There were no questions or corrections.

The minutes were accepted by a voice vote. Janet gave gifts to Gillian and to Melodie in recognition of their service. Lisa Hyatt Cooper read a dedication to all the Theta Alpha members who had passed away in the previous year and read the names of the 26 women. This was followed by a moment of silence.

For the program, excerpts of creative writing were read to the assembly by Gayal "Tykah" Echols. The panel of writers included Estelle Rogers, Abbie Nash, and Merry Farmer. In addition two illustrators, Sylvia Odhner and Jency Latta, presented their artwork. This was followed by an interesting Q & A session with the panel of women writers and illustrators.

Following the presentation, Janet closed the meeting and encouraged future participation in Theta Alpha International.

Compiled by Janet Krettek. She can be contacted at jmkrettekdo@gmail.com.



Theta Alpha International Profit & Loss Budget vs. Actual July 2016 through June 2017

	16-17 Budget	16-17 Actual	17-18 Budget
Ordinary Income/Expense			
Income			
43400 · Direct Public Support	10,000.00	6,881.22	8,000.00
43470 · General Fund Contribution	10,000.00	6,881.22	8,000.00
Total 43400 · Direct Public Support	10,000.00	6,881.22	8,000.00
45000 · Investments			
45040 · Bank Interest - Money Market	10,000.00	5.86	6.00
45050 · Interest/Dividends - NCIF	10,000.00	5,151.28	7,000.00
Total 45000 · Investments	10,000.00	5,157.14	7,006.00
46400 · Other Types of Income			
46425 · Scholarship - ANC Fund	10,000.00	8,000.00	11,000.00
Total 46400 · Other Types of Income	10,000.00	8,000.00	11,000.00
47200 · Program Income			
47230 · Membership Dues	3,800.00	1,725.00	2,000.00
Total 47200 · Program Income	3,800.00	1,725.00	2,000.00
49000 · Special Events Income			
49030 · Luncheon ticket sales	1,000.00	1,125.00	1,200.00
Total 49000 · Special Events Income	1,000.00	1,125.00	1,200.00
Total Income	34,800.00	22,888.36	29,200.00

Expense				
60300 · Awards and Grants				
60310 · Scholarship - TAI	4,200.00	4,200.00	4,200.00	4,200.00
60315 · Scholarship - ANC Fund	10,000.00	8,000.00	11,000.00	11,000.00
60320 · Cash Awards and Grants	1,500.00	825.00	800.00	800.00
60330 · Noncash Awards and Grants	1,000.00	1,447.75	1,500.00	1,500.00
60340 · Specific Assist to Individuals	300.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total 60300 · Awards and Grants	17,000.00	14,472.75	17,500.00	17,500.00
65000 · Operations				
65020 · Postage, Mailing Service		96.00	100.00	100.00
65030 · Printing and Copying		300.11	300.00	300.00
65060 · PayPal Fee		62.92	100.00	100.00
Total 65000 · Operations		459.03	500.00	500.00
65100 · Other Types of expenses				
65090 · Journal Expense	18,000.00	13,345.01	9,000.00	9,000.00
65120 · Luncheon Expense	1,000.00	1,186.38	1,200.00	1,200.00
65130 · Baptism Project	300.00	515.33	500.00	500.00
65170 · Miscellaneous	500.00	226.19	500.00	500.00
Total 65100 · Other Types of expenses	19,800.00	15,272.91	11,200.00	11,200.00
Total Expense	36,800.00	30,204.69	29,200.00	29,200.00
Net Ordinary Income	-2,000.00	-7,316.33	0.00	0.00
Other Income/Expense				
Other Income				
70600 · Unrealized Gains and Losses		10,364.15	3,500.00	3,500.00
Total Other Income		10,364.15	3,500.00	3,500.00
Net Other Income		10,364.15	3,500.00	3,500.00
Net Income	-2,000.00	3,047.82		

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS — 2017-2018

Janet Krettek (Fuller)

President

2075 Papermill Road, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006
jmkrettekdo@gmail.com

Carla Reuter

Vice President

PO Box 277, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009
creuter77@gmail.com

Brita Synnestvedt Conroy

Secretary

2959 Sycamore Road, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006
brita.conroy@bacs-gc.org

Melodie Haworth Greer

Treasurer

P.O. Box 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009
melodie.greer@newchurch.org

Carol Bongers Buss

Membership Secretary

P.O. Box 511, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009
carol.buss@newchurch.org

Kristen Rydstrom Rogers

Corresponding Secretary (on hiatus)

Beth Adams

Corresponding Secretary (on hiatus)

3300 Buck Road, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006
beth.adams@bacs.org

Sarah Bruell Odhner

General Church Education Liaison

3245 Papermill Road, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006

sarah.odhner@newchurch.org

Erica Cantley

ANC Girls School Liaison

P.O. Box 707, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

erica.cantley@ancss.org

Sarah Jin Wong

College Women's Liaison

sarah.wong@brynathyn.edu

Helen Kennedy

***Journal* Editor**

2959 Sycamore Road, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006

hmkenedy98@comcast.net

Evangeline Lyman Lindrooth

Translation Head

2924 Orchard Lane, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006

elindrooth@comcast.net

Carol Ebert Henderson

Member-at-Large

3023 Sycamore road, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006

bchenderson66@gmail.com

Barbara Charles Doering

Member-at-Large

450 Newell Drive, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006

bcdoering@yahoo.com

CHAPTER PRESIDENTS 2017-2018

Atlanta, GA

Nicola Echols
nicola.echols@gmail.com

Boynton Beach, FL

Janet M. Karallas
mcclarrenj@aol.com

Buccleuch, RSA

Verna Brown
kvbrown@mweb.co.za

Glenview, IL

Sue Lee
sueflee614@gmail.com

Kitchener, ON Canada

Jan Hill and Sally Tait
jshill5373@gmail.com

Phoenix, AZ

Ersa Alden Briggs
ersa9998@gmail.com

Pittsburgh, PA

Barbara E. Glenn
barbara.glenn46@gmail.com

Washington, DC

Becca Synnestvedt Smith
beccalek@yahoo.com

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