

Theta Alpha Journal



November 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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President's Report

Janet Krettek

Theta Alpha means a lot to me. This may seem strange from an "O.C." or "Drag-In" who arrived at New Church teachings through marriage. David and I had dates that carried on late into the night talking about religion. Little did I know that there was an organized religion with teachings that I already had in my heart. As my knowledge and understanding grew, I knew I wanted my children to attend ANC. Not only was my family welcomed in to Bryn Athyn, but I was welcomed in to Theta Alpha. Having two daughters, I am committed to maintaining and advancing Theta Alpha International.

Why?

As an early (very early 😊) middle aged woman in a demanding profession with advanced degrees and qualifications and positions, I see that there are women's issues that continue no matter what level one has achieved career-wise. Women have worked so hard to prove themselves, to advance themselves in the world that many times we wear ourselves out. Women now have the full careers we asked for (or not), yet many other responsibilities still fall on our shoulders (and not just those who are married and/or have children!). We can achieve great heights, but we can grow deeper, wiser, more fully, when we have someone we can lean on. Who better to support you than a like-minded sister, someone with similar values and frame of reference? That is what this organization can give. That is what I hope to leave to my daughters and granddaughters.

I've learned a bit my first year as President and I am excited to keep us moving ahead. Your support allows TAI to provide:

- Yearly scholarships to Bryn Athyn College women, 2 Education Major scholarships worth \$2100 each; 2 Religion/International scholarships worth \$2,000 each and 1 for \$1,000.
- Gifts to new full-time teachers
- *Theta Alpha Journal*—2 issues/year
- Awards to top graduating senior girls at ANC and MARS graduates
- Laws of Life essay contests—ANC and international divisions—with cash prizes
- Baptismal gifts for all children under 10 worldwide
- Charter Day Luncheon
- TAI Senior ANC girls' breakfast and chapel
- Support of Marriage Conference
- Support our Society Chapters

Some ideas I am bringing to the committee for consideration are intergenerational memberships to encourage the passing down of wisdom; mentorship programs to help guide our generations along; adding a corner in our Journal to explore our mature years, and increasing our international membership. My vision is that my daughters will have the long-stretching arms of Theta Alpha to turn to when I am not here, to support them through the bumps in the road that will inevitably arise.

I'd greatly appreciate any and all support. Suggestions are welcome.

Janet Krettek, President, Theta Alpha International,
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Dr. Janet Krettek (Fuller) is a holistic, osteopathic, general surgeon, residency director at Holy Redeemer Hospital, and mother of three wonderful children. She is passionate about her gardens, home, family, and her husband, Dr. David Fuller, whilst working to make the world a little better every day.

Elijah

Nadine Rogers

This essay is based on the text from 1 Kings 19:1-18

When I was in college, John Michael Talbot, a singing Catholic married monk, came to campus to do a concert. He was so serene and peaceful, and he was raising money for a great cause—the Mercy Corps, which helps children around the world who are in need of food, shelter, and medical care but live in poverty. At one point in the concert, he talked about the hermitage he had founded. It was for people who wanted to live in a community dedicated to living out a Christian life. They lived in relative simplicity, and they shared communal meals, chores, and worship. Some of the members worked off the premises and contributed financially, others were gardeners or maintenance men or cooks who stayed full time at the hermitage. After a brief description, he said that if anyone felt a longing in their heart, it may be that God was pulling them to come join the hermitage.

I felt simultaneously excited and confused. I did feel a longing. But here I was, a New Church, definitely non-Catholic girl in college studying to go to medical school. Does God call New Church girls to Catholic hermitages? After the concert, I looked at my friend and slightly timidly asked if she had felt that longing. “Not really,” was her answer. “For one, I couldn’t stand living in Arkansas. I’m going to Alaska next year.” But her main feeling was that it just wasn’t what she imagined God had in mind for her. She felt that she was going to be of use somewhere using her loves—that of the North, the wilderness, and animals, and she couldn’t do that living at a hermitage. In fact, she ended up doing exactly what she set out to do—got a masters in wildlife biology, and got a job focused on conservation and education about wildlife. I looked at my career goals, which were very much tied up with and orchestrated by God’s prompting—a story for another time—and saw that I, too, would not be going down what I

was pretty sure was a good path for me if I became a gardener at a Catholic hermitage. So what was going on in me? Why was I entertaining thoughts of hiding my beliefs, giving up a rewarding educational and career opportunity, and moving to a place where I knew no one? And why was a choice so right for John Michael Talbot not right for me?

Luckily, before I packed up for Arkansas, I realized that what I really wanted was a way to hide away. I wanted to hide from the darker realities of society, and I wanted to hide from the temptations of my own soul. Let's face it, it's much easier to not be rude, not be superior, not be self-promoting when there is no one around to irritate us or thwart our plans or budge in line in front of us. Oh sure, there may be a few fellow hermits who are a bit too perky serving up the homemade vegetable soup, but if everyone else is so focused on God and being kind and good, surely it will be easier to keep our own Tasmanian-devil souls muzzled and chained up. The point was, rather than longing for a way of life that felt like God's calling, as it was for John Michael Talbot and those other Little Portion Hermits, I was excited about the prospect of escape, as if surrounding myself with only terribly spiritual people would allow me to avoid all the annoyance and tragedy and disappointment and terror that life is, as well as the annoyance and tragedy and disappointment and terror that my own soul is.

I'm fairly certain this wouldn't have worked out the way I imagined it. First of all, all those terribly spiritual people probably would have irritated me no end. There's nothing like guileless sincerity to bring out the bitter, sarcastic crank in me. But more importantly, God's not the biggest fan of avoidance. There are lots and lots of stories about battles in the Bible and probably an equal number of exhortations to "be not afraid." But fleeing stories? Not so many, and they don't tend to end well. Think of Jonah sitting in the swill of a fish's stomach after trying to run away rather than do his duty to preach to Nineveh. Take a look at those spies that were sent from the Sinai peninsula camp to see what the Promised Land was like.

When they came back and said the giants who lived there were too scary and they would rather not go try to take the land, the result was God said “OK, but that means wandering around for 40 years in the wilderness until you all die, and let’s hope the next generation thinks differently.”

We can also look at the story of Elijah. He has just had a great victory, where Jehovah God proved dramatically to the Israelites that He was real, but Baal wasn’t a real god. The prophets of Baal have been slaughtered. Then God fills Elijah with supernatural power so that he outruns a chariot, and a drought that has lasted for years finally breaks at the will of God. You would imagine that Elijah would be riding high on the power of God, would be feeling trust and confidence in the Worker of all these miracles. But the success of God’s plan on Mt. Carmel seems to have been instantly forgotten when Jezebel sends a message to him indicating her desire for him to be permanently out of her hair. Now Jezebel is a scary and powerful woman. But come on! You just outran a chariot, for Pete’s sake! What happened to your faith, man? Well, the truth is, we all have our Jezebels. Those things that just seem too big, too scary, too awful for even God to tame. We may believe with every intellectual neuron in our brain that God is all powerful, all wise, all loving, and completely on our side, guiding us in the right direction. A guarantee of success, so long as we agree to follow the plan. However, intellectual belief, no matter how majestically and nobly it sings out into the night, is almost always drowned out by the caterwauling emotions of terror and dread in the dark.

These dreads are different for different people. For some it is fears of things outside ourselves—things so huge and dangerous we can’t accept at gut level that God is still actually in control of things. Gun violence. War. Creepy big brother governments that feed off the suffering of other nations. Rape. Genocide. I’ve got a lot of these. Each time I learn of some underhanded political move to keep a few people rich at the expense of countless lives of poor Africans or Middle Eastern people, I have a wave of horror along with a desire for

oblivion. I just don't think I can cope with being alive if this is what the world is like. All my faith in God's love and wisdom fails in the face of these Jezebel facets of life, and I want to go hide out in the desert.

But I suspect that even more effective in crushing faith are those Jezebels within us. If you are anything like me, you have some kind of horrible inner politician that is constantly finagling for more power and really doesn't care who it steps on to get it. As horrifying as that real life dictator or president may be, it's far worse to find that the evil queen is living inside you. It is almost unbearable to know that we are not only capable of acts of hatred, but we have actually committed them, try as we may to wrap them up in justifications. We have used words we knew would wound, have shown contempt when someone begged for compassion, have been cold and distant when someone reached out to us, wielded power over weaker, more helpless people. These are things we don't want to see, and yet we know they are there. How could God cure this disease? How could God win this battle? How could God love this hopeless sinner? We run for the wilderness. Escape Jezebel. Hide away.

God sends clear signs to Elijah that checking out is not on His agenda. Even as Elijah flees, God is giving overwhelming evidence that He is alive, attentive, and powerful. Yet Elijah is prepared to ignore the fact that angels from heaven have arrived at precisely the place on earth where he is hiding and have provided food during a famine. How often do we fail to attribute the very things God sends to keep us alive to His hand? The friend that drops by just when we are about to drown our sorrows in a whole pint of Ben and Jerry's ice cream or a few too many glasses of wine. The job that keeps our mind occupied on something other than how we are tired of being alive. The kids that need help with getting meals or doing homework or brushing teeth or, well, just about everything so I know that checking out is not actually an option if I have even a modicum of care for them. These are our angels, messengers indicating that cloistering

ourselves off is not what God has in mind for us, feeding us, keeping us going until our confrontation with God.

God meets with Elijah in the wilderness of his despair, and asks, "What are you doing here?" Elijah replies that all is hopeless, all is a mess, all is unredeemable. You might think that at this juncture God would soothe Elijah. "There, there, it's all good. Come into this private Eden I've made for you." Not even close! God lets Elijah witness even more disasters—a wind that tears mountains apart, an earthquake, and a fire. And it is quite obvious to Elijah that these are not Divine messages from God. They are real disasters. God was not in the wind, earthquake, or fire. Then God says again, "What are you doing here?" Elijah, perhaps a little less convinced that his reply is what God is trying to get him to say, repeats that all is doomed.

God doesn't give him platitudes, doesn't say "From here on out it will be smooth sailing." No "Buck up, little camper." No, He says, "Get to work." He does tell Elijah it isn't quite as bad as he thinks, not because Elijah's done such a fantastic job up until now, not because Elijah is about to perform some victory miracles, but because God has been working all along, has preserved goodness in the land, and has a plan for how things will move forward. But His main message isn't, "It's all going to be fine." It's, "I have work for you to do." This, I think, is the point.

Whether the demons that loom so large are those without or those within, hiding out in the desert can never be the possible solution to getting rid of them. And while we may feel hopeless about how this extermination is to take place, God is not hopeless. God is love, and love "always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (1 Corinthians 13:7). He hasn't given up on the team, of which we are a member, and so He tells us to get up and get back in the game.

Jesus is quite confident about this game plan. Nowhere does He say "I'm taking my guys and getting back on the bus."

The other team looks way bigger than us.” Over and over He sends His disciples out, knowing they are not always going to be well received. They may be persecuted. “No matter, “ He says. “Shake the dust off your feet and move on.” He heads towards the darkest, most dangerous regions of our hearts, Jerusalem, while the disciples drag their feet and try to warn Him about just how awful it is there, but He goes anyway. And then there’s that marvelous, though frightening prayer He prays for us in Gethsemane: “My prayer is not that You take them out of the world, but that You protect them from the evil one” (John 17:15). It doesn’t get more direct than that. He prays this at the time He knows things are about to get horribly, unimaginably worse for the disciples. He knows He is about to be killed and they will feel abandoned and anchorless, impossibly lonely and impossibly scared, but He is very insistent that He does not want them to hole up in some barricaded room hiding out. He tells them to get up and go to Galilee, which literally means “the circuit,” and wait for Him there. The circuit, our everyday, monotonous lives, our everyday struggles. Just like He told Elijah to go get on with the work he needs to do. Just like He tells us. Don’t go to the hermitage. Get on with life.

The Writings tell us a monastic life is not conducive to spiritual progress for the majority of us. I don’t think God is condemning those who have chosen a cloistered life. The work that must be done, both the inner work of facing our evils, and the outer work of trying to care for our world and its citizens, must be done wherever we choose to live. Temptation is the means for cleansing our souls; hiding from our own selves is not a method that will lead to the purifying we desire.

There is a difference between fleeing from a known danger, and removing ourselves from responsibilities and opportunities for good in order to avoid our own failings. For example, a mother who knows that she gets irritable and snaps at her children when her blood sugar drops low during homework hour can purposely avoid that situation by making sure she has eaten, or, alternatively, has enlisted her spouse to do homework duty. That is far different from entertaining ideas

that she should never have had children, fantasizing about moving off to a cabin by herself, or burying herself in other occupations to avoid interaction with the children.

An alcoholic can't live at a rehab for the rest of his or her life, but it is certainly acceptable to avoid bars and liquor shops. Removing ourselves from risk of certain, real, known dangers is different than blocking ourselves off from having to examine our souls or face what is within us. For me it is often a fear of some nebulous unknown darkness in my heart that makes me want to hide away, rather than actually face specific problems head on. I need to see my evils to do something about them.

We have also basically been given only one instruction—love each other. Sequestering ourselves off doesn't give us much of an opportunity to put that into practice. We may think our best shot at not hurting others lies in keeping ourselves in quarantine, but we have been told we are not to bury our talents of silver, not to hide our light under a basket. As feeble as our light may be, as much as it may occasionally flare up and scorch something, it is supposed to be put on a lampstand. This is the command for all of us, the perky soup server in the hermitage, our scary political leaders, and even our worn-out-doom-predicting selves. So if we, this motley lot that most certainly doesn't see eye to eye on all issues, are not allowed to go hide in our rooms and wait out the rest of our individual lives, how can we possibly brave the world? How can we go get to work knowing we are most likely going to be burned, or even more horrifying, burn someone else? We must be steeped in a culture of forgiveness. But that's a chapter for another day.

Nadine Rogers, MD, is a psychiatrist living in Kathmandu, Nepal with her husband Rajendra Budhathoki where they are the parents in the New Life Children's Home, a home for orphans and at-risk children. She can be contacted at: nrogersmd@gmail.com

Contemplating God in the Land of Lotus

Joel Brown

*Small things
God dwells in
Unnoticed things
He remembers
Untouched things
He opens
We spend our lives
Racing for a laurel crown
Glory in the streets
Ticker tape and confetti
In the air
All that glitters
That we can hold
We do not even notice
That God dwells among us
A flower on the window sill
A kind word
A smile
A hand holding
A day without rain
Bird song on the wind
All that mercy
We miss daily, yearly
Until blind, deaf, and broken
We beg God to save us
And there He is
As He always has been
Dwelling in small things
A kindness too deep for words
A peace too deep for this world
A gift full of life
Living*

Joel can be contacted at joelbrown@hotmail.com

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

excerpted by Angela Rose

From 2.9 Learning and the Affections

Appealing to the affections of each developmental stage

That which is of most use to a child—real use—at any stage of mental growth is that which most fully enriches the reception of heavenly influences of those angels that are present at that stage. This is the real use—not learning to take delight in something that truly belongs to adults.

The ideal of education should be, first, to appeal to the good affections that are normal to a child at each age due to influx from the angels who are present; and, second, to have children, as it were, discover these affections for themselves, feel them in themselves as if they were their own, and thus struggle to retain them and return to them whenever they come into selfish delights. This means that we recognize education as a process of immediate living, not something that is just getting children ready to live after they grow up. They have to live now, and as they live, so will they grow. It must be a kind of living now that is appropriate to children and not a kind of living that we impose on them that belongs to adult years. That is the important thing.

Human beings are so formed that they must grow from infancy to childhood to youth in order to attain adulthood. Why? Because each step in this development makes a necessary contribution, something of vital importance and eternal value that the Lord foresees and is providing for.

Infancy, childhood, and youth are marked by certain characteristics that are universal to the human race. There may be infinite variety among different nationalities and races and individuals; one may advance more rapidly along

the road than another. One may linger here and hasten there. There may be millions of differences of disposition and temperament, circumstances and environment. But in spite of all these differences, there is a marvelous uniformity that marks each step of growth the world over. Just observe children in different parts of the world, children of different races, children of utterly different backgrounds, of education and environment, and see how similar they are. They play the same way, do the same kind of things. It is astonishing!

Each step of mental development is providing something of lasting value. The Lord foresees the future and in every way He lays the foundation for those future things during all the years of immaturity. In His sight nothing is trivial or inconsequential. Every least thing that is characteristic of infants, of childhood and youth, is important for us to know, necessary for us to understand if we are to cooperate with the Lord.

2.10 The Work of a Teacher

In every stage of our educational work we have to see the contribution of every subject on the curriculum. Why do we teach this and not that? Unless everything we teach is helping to accomplish the fundamental aim and purpose of that age, what is the use of it?

In modern education, to a very large extent, the purpose is to pass examinations to get to the next grade, to meet the requirements of the high school, and from the high school to meet the requirements of the college, and every subject is determined accordingly. This isn't sufficient.

Suppose there is something wrong with what the high school requires, and what the college requires, in relation to the things that are really essential for the child to have at the time. Suppose in order to meet the requirements of the high school or college we have to do something for little children

that is not the best for them at their age, which is very often the case. Many educators have revolted against this tyranny of the high school over a lower school, imposing goals that are not in accord with the real best interests of children.

Studying curriculum

If we are not going to follow that path, then we must have some other goal which is really based on something that we clearly see and understand. To do this we have to study each subject on the curriculum and determine why it is there, why it should be taught at a certain age, what its relation is to the other things we are teaching, what is the specific contribution that this subject can make that the other subjects cannot. That is not a simple matter, I assure you. It is not easy to reach such conclusions and have them clearly defined in our own mind. Yet only in the degree that we do this, will we be able to develop a rational system of education and not just follow custom or what other people have done.

We have to arrange a curriculum year by year, month to month, week to week, day to day. We have to meet the states of children as they arise. We should study the human mind to know its characteristics at every stage of mental growth, and to know the relation of one stage to the next, especially those universal things in which all children are alike. There are affections, interests, delights which naturally belong to each age which are inherent in the age itself. If we understand these and their use in later life, then we can come as near as is humanly possible to an understanding of what is the essential to be taught at each stage and thus how we can best cooperate with what the Lord is doing.

It is along these lines that we have been struggling in our New Church schools. The differences that we find in our curriculum, particularly in the curriculum of the Elementary School as it has been worked out, represent a first attempt to go in that direction, and to understand what we are doing

from the point of view of following the indications in the teachings for the New Church.

Seeking to understand individual children

Now supposing we have done all that, then we come face to face with a class of children, and at once we have to interpret all that with reference to the particular children we have before us. We shift our attention to attempt to understand particular children and to see how this philosophy of education is to be applied to these children—not to any others—but these particular ones. Unless we can reach the heart of the children in front of us, unless we can touch their loves and affections, all our philosophizing will be wide of the mark. It won't accomplish its purpose. We might have a class that is very carefully prepared for all children, and it would not reach the particular ones we have at all.

When I speak about studying the qualities that are common to all children, it is not in the least with the intention of minimizing the importance of understanding the varieties. We can't in any other way understand the varieties. When we come to study our own children that are right in front of us, and seek to understand their change in states, the affections that actually stir them, the interests that can be appealed to—that is when we come to discover a child's purpose.

Now you may think this is impossible, and often it is or seems to be impossible. The truth is that it is so complex we can't assure ourselves that we will do it. We can try to do it, and with help and guidance from the teachings for the New Church we can approximate it from time to time, but the states of children are too complex for us to analyze. We cannot see deeply enough into their little minds to exactly see the affections that are stirring them. We will often be mistaken in what we attempt to appeal to in them, and the result is that the real guidance of their education is kept by the Lord in His own hands. While we are trying to do our best, the Lord frequently

does something else with the child, and in the child, than what we had intended. What He does is infinitely better for the child than what we can do, but that is no reason for us to get discouraged. Let's be satisfied that it has to be so, and that the real guidance of the child's life shall be in the Lord's hands and not in ours. But let's try by all means to exert our influence in the right direction, to cooperate with the Lord. That is the ideal of education as I see it.

Angela can be contacted at angela.rose@brynathyn.edu

Responses to DeCharms Philosophy

The following are responses to the excerpts of DeCharms Philosophy of Education.

Greg Henderson: Experience tells me that if you get a room of people talking about New Church education the idea of developmental states will inevitably come up. This is certainly true each year when I meet with the new parents at the Bryn Athyn Church School and ask them why they have chosen a New Church education for their children. It is also true when I hear teachers discuss the best ways to meet the needs of their students. We see the importance of each of these states as intrinsic and not, as Benade put it, as "something that is just getting children ready to live after they grow up." This is seen in many of our pedagogical and curricular decisions. And yet when you look at many of our New Church school's mission statements, including BACS's, you are met with quotes like, "to prepare for life," "to become useful citizens of this world," "useful life in this world and the next," "citizens of the Lord's heavenly kingdom." These statements seem to be looking just about as far past a child's present state as possible.

The missions of our schools are not wrong, however, far from it. What could be a better end for an education to aspire to

than to set its students on a path that would lead to heaven? Benade himself in another lecture defined education both as “preparation for heaven” and as “preparation for the process of regeneration in adult age” (Benade 2/10/42). The key is, however, to keep one eye on this distant goal and the other keenly focused on the current state of the student.

We read in the news today about an apparent shift in the way children have come to be seen. Researchers point to a change in media target audiences, demographics sought after by advertisers, and parenting approaches, and begin to accuse society of disregarding childhood and treating children as little adults. To do this is to do great harm to our young people. Every stage of development “is necessary [and is] something of vital importance and of eternal value to the individual.” (Benade 3/10/42). We know that in order to reach academic ends we must teach the foundations along the way. Addition must come before multiplication and multiplication before exponents; arithmetic before algebra and algebra before calculus; but it is equally important to remember the same progression exists for those things not taught in a textbook.

Each day I am lucky enough to visit classrooms taught by teachers who truly understand the state of their students. This can be seen in the degree they tailor the content, the way they draw their class into the lessons and the interactions they have with their students. We recognize that the best way to reach students is to meet them where they are. A good teacher is one that understands what motivates his or her students, what challenges them, what they need and what they love, at this exact stage in their lives.

And so, while we as New Church educators hold focus on a future end which will not be realized even in our students’ natural lifetimes we are just as aware of the present moment. There is wonderment in each stage of a student’s life. Let’s celebrate it and use it to build the foundation of the student’s education rather than dismiss it in a hurried attempt to get on to the next one.

Greg Henderson attended New Church schools from preschool through college. After teaching 8th grade for seventeen years, he is currently serving as principal at the Bryn Athyn Church School. He can be reached at greg.henderson@bacs.org.

Gail Simons: Striving to meet the needs of the students on every level of their lives – physical, mental, and spiritual – is the sublime challenge of being a New Church educator. To this day our teachers work together to create up-to-date curriculum that still follows the precepts put forth so beautifully and wisely by DeCharms. As he says, “To do this we have to study each subject on the curriculum and determine why it is there, why it should be taught at a certain age, what its relation is to the other things we are teaching, what is the specific contribution that this subject can make that the other subjects cannot. That is not a simple matter....”

By teaching to the affections as an opening and support of the academic content the teacher can more fully partner with the Lord, who is leading each of us toward heaven. Finding the best ways to do this is another challenge! As DeCharms says, “In His sight nothing is trivial or inconsequential. Every least thing that is characteristic of infants, of childhood and youth, is important for us to know, necessary for us to understand if we are to cooperate with the Lord.”

A challenge – yes – but one so worth taking. We set high goals for ourselves as New Church teachers when we say we are teaching toward heaven. It takes work and lots of personal reflection. But on the days when we get it right, there is heaven in our classrooms!

Gail Simons was a classroom teacher and school administrator for over 30 years. She continues to be devoted to New Church education and its uses. As a retiree, she is pursuing her love of art and its value in our lives, with a particular focus on creating beaded jewelry designs that inspire. She can be contacted at GailSimons49@gmail.com.

Let the Little Children Come Unto Me . . .

Kathy Schrock

Let the little children come unto Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. —Luke 18:16

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. —Luke 12: 32

These are the two recitations I have used to start off a school year. One is welcoming and reflects the first grade theme of the Lord as our Heavenly Father. The other is reassuring and fits well with the second grade theme of the Lord as our Shepherd. They both speak of the Lord's love for His children and bring comfort to a first or second grade child, well, really to us all.

There is another reason I love them so. They lift my focus Heavenward. It is the Lord's intention that each one of these little ones should be a part of His Heavenly Kingdom. Knowing this helps me to remember in the day to day work that they are His. The Lord is doing the real leading. Only He can see what each child needs and, as Bishop DeCharms wrote, “. . . the real guidance of their education is kept by the Lord in His own hands. While we are trying to do our best, the Lord frequently does something else with the child, and in the child, than what we had intended” (2.9 Learning and the Affections from “The Philosophy of New Church Education”).

So, how do we best serve children along a path that the Lord knows, but we cannot see? DeCharms says that which is of the most use to a child is twofold. First, we are to appeal to the good affections that will move a child (which come from the influx from angels that are with him in his present stage of development). We know from the Heavenly Doctrines the importance of teaching to the affections if true learning is to take place (Secrets of Heaven 3066). The second part is to allow the children to feel these affections as their own, so they

may be of use in helping them when facing the struggle to turn from selfish delights. Here are some thoughts on the first part.

What does it mean to teach to the affections? It is different from catering to a child's desires. I believe it has to do with nourishing a child on the plane of the mind that is currently active. For infants, this delight is found in exercising the senses. For first and second graders, sense impressions still serve to open the way, but it is the imaginative plane where the angels touch them most. When learning about nomad shepherds, the smell, sight and taste of Middle Eastern food may delight the senses, but being given an Arabic or Hebrew name (which reflects each child's individual quality), dressing up in an aba (robe) and head cloth, and traveling on a hunt for an oasis allowed the children to thrive in their imaginations. Led with a spirit of cooperation and care for their fellow nomad, the activity hopefully brought greater delight with deeper learning. One little fellow, who was a single child at the time, lit up after seeing all the boys wearing similar abas, then beamed, "We are a band of brothers!"

The ability to form imaginative pictures and concentrate on ideas relies on sense impressions gathered in infancy. The ability to think rationally as an adult relies on the imaginative plane being nourished.

What are some ways to do this, to nourish the imaginative plane? What can be done to help the students form a picture in their minds as they begin their work? There must be myriads of ways, but I will offer a few that have worked for me.

Story: How did the Lord teach when He was on earth? One of the main ways was through stories. Telling a story to introduce a new concept or lesson can draw the children into a place where they are open and eager to receive. Their minds and affections are engaged. A story could be the greater part of the lesson (The story of a little drop of water and his journey, when introducing the water cycle) or it could be just

a few words to offer an image for a new concept. "Once there was a little number muncher who LOVED to munch numbers. He always opened his mouth wide to the greater number. Always." As this was demonstrated on the board with the greater and lesser signs (< >) the children pictured a giant mouth ready to eat up the number. They caught on quickly and some even drew teeth inside their muncher. They gained a solid grasp of this symbol and continued to refer to it as the number muncher years later (according to their high school math teacher). When telling a story there is nothing standing between you and the child; not a page, not a screen, not a book. Preparing a story to tell from the heart takes more time than reading it from a page, but the wonder in their eyes makes it worth the work.

Poetry and Choral Work: During our daily morning circle the children recited verses together in chorus. Some helped with math patterns such as skip counting or doubles, some were used to introduce a language arts lesson for spelling, reading or writing. Others provided an image for a social studies or science lesson, reflected the seasons and festivals, or were learned for our play. They could be serious or silly, but all offered an image and held movement. When the imaginative pictures were true (see box on page 23), because they lived in the teacher, the movement was purposeful and held the children together beautifully. An anxious child, who could barely speak above a whisper when on her own in front of an audience, felt safe with the group and experienced new delight in speaking in front of an audience. An outspoken student who often sought center stage experienced the harmony of working together in a group. A sensitive lad, who often shielded himself with negativity, was moved by the beauty of Tennyson's "Eagle," and recited it with utmost sincerity.

Art: When the children painted with watercolor, a little story was often told about the colors. "One day, yellow came out and filled the world with warmth. Blue was shy

Editor's Question: When would the imaginative pictures not be true in some way?

What I was trying to communicate was the importance of a teacher digesting the material fully before presenting it. I know when I have only half learned a poem and have to check a line from a card in my pocket, the sphere is broken, and the children are not longer held in an inspired place. They feel this and an unraveling can begin. Or when I have not had the time to drink in a lesson and go from memory because other life matters came up and took away prep time (which happens to all of us), the lesson may not work as well. Though sometimes it does, and that is a gift from above. People asked me why, after 20 some years of teaching the same ages, did I spend so much time on prep? Didn't I know it by now? I felt the need to make it fresh each time, for a specific group of children. The spiritual world is real and more present than we recognize in our day-to-day work. I felt that making the time to drink in a lesson fully, with a specific group of children in mind, helped it be true in a deeper way. (My dear husband supported me in this by helping greatly with food shopping and meals, for which I am ever grateful.)

and watched from the edges. When yellow welcomed blue to come a little closer green grass started to grow. Then blue climbed a tree with green leaves. Cheery red helped fruit to grow. . . ." Before we have finished the children discover we have painted the third day of creation.

A little verse or story provided an image for beeswax modeling, crayon work and form drawing. "Straight is the sunbeam that shines from above, round are the arms that surround you with love" provided a picture for a carefully drawn vertical line with two symmetrical curves nearby, one on either side. The image of a head, two arms and two feet

stretched out as one jumps for joy was used to mark the points inside a circle for a form drawing¹ of a five-pointed star.

Letting the children watch a picture come to life while being drawn by the teacher on the chalkboard (or on a large pad of paper) fueled the children's imaginations before beginning their own illustrations. Children who at first thought they could not draw were found to be the experts the following year, encouraging and offering tips to the younger children.

Music, Movement and Rhythm: Singing was woven throughout our day, as we sang to the Lord at worship, to our country after the Pledge, with each other at morning circle and as a closing at the end of our day. We sang our recitations and blessings. Singing also helped to move the students through transitions more easily. Music speaks to the affections and can be used to lead children. One passage in *Conjugal Love* 17 speaks of angels in Heaven awakening to song. The pillar of cloud which led the children of Israel was an angelic choir, in which was the LORD (Secrets of Heaven 8195).

Movement and rhythm were also key to each child's well being and ability to learn with affection. Not just circle

1 Form Drawings are exercises using straight and curved lines, symmetry, and geometric patterns which involve careful deliberate movement. They train the eye and hand to work together and develop other writing readiness skills. They help to develop senses of movement and balance, a feeling for left and right, and proper proportion. Though the correspondence of straight and curved is never mentioned, the work feeds the children. Our weekly drawings were often done on Mondays when the children came in from busy weekend activities and needed help centering. When, inside their form drawing of a star the children spontaneously drew an angel, a lamb, a rainbow, the open Word, a silver sword or the Lord, Heaven was near.

dances and rhythm games, but the whole of our day needed to be considered, so there was movement between periods of concentration. Much could be said about learning through movement, but it is beyond the scope of this piece.

These are just a few examples of means to appeal to a child's affections, and many a teacher could provide other wonderful examples. But I believe of even greater importance is the inner work of a teacher.

The teacher's own spiritual work and the effort to digest the material well before offering it affects the sphere in the classroom and the children's ability to learn.

Here are some practices that are worth aiming for:

- Keeping the connection open with the Heavens by reading and meditating on the Word, and making time for humble prayer as part of preparing for the next day.
- Trying to see the children through angel's eyes. The Lord has given each child an eternal use that only He knows. What is my part in the unfolding, helping a child find and walk the path? First, not to block, hinder or do harm. Then listen. The Lord and all the Heavens are waiting to help. Often, after prayer at night, there is new light in the morning. The angels have worked things out and there is a shift or new opening.
- Consider what we need to learn. What is the Lord teaching me here? We think we are here to teach the children, but there were times when it seemed useful to consider what the children have to teach me. What am I to be learning from this student? The most challenging students stretched me beyond where I thought I could go, and in the end seemed to form the deepest bonds. They helped me grow.
- The use of pedagogical stories. These are stories told to help children move through a difficult time, change behaviors, or allay fears. The story is chosen or created for a child, but they are not aware during the telling of it. This

helps a child want to change because their heart has been touched. Because they feel compassion, they see things in a new way.

- Teach so the mind is led to seek deeper things (DeCharms). The child will see only the natural idea of what is being offered, but the angels with the child will delight in what is spiritually there. The more deeply the teacher sees and holds dear the truth within, the more its presentation can be in harmony with Heaven's order. The children will sense with wonder the treasure within.
- Having digested the material well, so that it is living in you, see and offer what is true. Then the story will be worthy, the verse loved, the gesture in a movement will enliven, the artwork will be inspired, and the song will find a place in the children's hearts.

Both inner work and outer preparation are needed when leading children, and yet it is the Lord who really opens each child's mind, leading the child, and all of us, on secret paths. New Church education is in its infancy (perhaps even in the womb), but I like to think the Lord is smiling on our efforts.

The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law (Deuteronomy 29:29).

Kathy recently retired this June from 23 years of teaching first and second grades at the Kempton New Church School. She is happily married to her woodworker husband, Roger, who helped her raise their seven children. She is looking forward to spending time with family and being a grandmother (to twelve, with two more on the way), and wonders what new ways will arise to serve the Lord. She can be contacted at feedmylambs7@gmail.com

Beauty (A Sonnet)

N. Bruce Rogers, age 21 (1961)

Beauty has always plagued me with unrest;
Artfully innocent, all unaware,
Requiring not agitated despair
But increasing, as if at my request.
And who am I to know what may suggest
Roguish smiles or dimpled cheeks, or to care
About impudent eyes which boldly dare
Corrupt peace of mind and calm thoughts infest.
However, the pleasure and strange delight
About playing the game with loveliness,
Raising the senses to gamble with chance,
Leaves no choice but to pursue in my plight,
Even foolishly; for I must confess
Some interest in Beauty and her glance.

The Rev. N. Bruce Rogers is a retired General minister, teacher and translator. He is married to the former Kirsten (Kit) Rydstrom. He can be contacted at nbrogers1@verizon.net.

A Welcome Member of Our Staff

Allow me to introduce myself: my name is Michelle Chapin, and I'm thrilled to be helping with the layout of the *Theta Alpha Journal* publications! I've grown up in various General Church congregations (Baltimore, Phoenix, Charlotte, and Mitchellville) and currently work on the General Church Outreach team, at the Academy of the New Church as an Assistant Housemother in the girls' dorm, and also laying out *New Church Life* magazine. When I'm not serving these uses, I love singing and playing ukulele, and organizing an outdoor concert series to help share my love of music with others in my community.

Rules of Life

a request from Ruth Goodenough

Remember Swedenborg's "Rules of Life"?

I once had a beautifully lettered, framed copy on my wall. But it is long gone.

Since then I have learned that these "rules" may not actually have been authored by Swedenborg, but even so they are a very helpful and succinct guide to good living. Committed to memory, they are a handy reference. (Speculation about their origin can be found by Googling "Emanuel Swedenborg's Rules of Life".)

I would love to have an embroidery or cross-stitch pattern for them, and perhaps others would too. Is there a talented and willing person out there who would be interested in creating such a pattern? Perhaps copies could be sold at the Cathedral Bookstore.

For those who are unfamiliar with these Rules of Life, here they are:

- Diligently to read and meditate on the Word of God.
- To be content with the dispensations of Providence.
- To observe a propriety of behavior, and to keep the conscience clear.
- To obey what is ordered; to attend faithfully to one's office and other duties, and in addition, to make oneself useful to society in general.

Ruth can be contacted at ruth.goodenough@frontier.com.

Meditations on Heavenly Communities

Helen Kennedy

One of the amazing things the Writings teach us is about the vast number of heavenly communities that exist. The following meditative fictions explore that reality, and show possible ways the closeness of heavenly societies influence us in our day to day life.

Matheny: His heavenly society consists of strong-willed people who, while living on earth, were buried alive under the weight of evils they nurtured in their hearts. During that time they became familiar with the pits and chasms of their hells and how willingly they threw themselves in. Through the process of regeneration the Lord erased their desire for their particular hell and the emotional map of how to get there. This was accomplished by each one experiencing the suffering they caused other people. Each learned that there is a Being who they can't see or hear or touch or smell who is in complete control of their lives, and who they had to learn to trust. The humility gained by this reformed their strong minds, bringing them to an immediate willingness to serve heavenly causes. Their love now reaches out even to the worst evil, wanting to lessen the torment and suffering of every individual in hell that they can. This love for good vibrates from their essence—they have become like tuning forks for the Lord, sending out waves of compassion to souls most unwilling to accept it.

The hell opposite to this society is filled with spirits whose evil is so strong that they lust to dominate and control others, and so they are constantly embroiled in fighting. Their love to escalate violence makes them continue in hostilities to the point of insanity. Their will for evil is so strong they even fight with those on their side. The workers in Matheny's heavenly society do not necessarily bring peace to the infernal regions, but their presence among the evil is

arresting, calling a halt to their endless aggrandizements, accusations and hostilities, at least for a time.

Matheny's heavenly society corresponds to the nerve fibers, or axons, in the middle of the spine that make up the sympathetic nervous system. This system prepares a person's body for physical and mental activity by making the heart beat faster and stronger, and opening the airways to breathe more easily. When a person is faced with danger, this system immediately sends out electrical impulses that create the flight or fight reaction and shuts down all functions not critical for survival.

On earth Matheny was a nobleman in the Jura region of eastern France in the foothills of the Alps in the 1100s. With his wife, Ponce d'Voiron, he had three sons and four daughters.

Pre-Adamite: Ay lives in an area appearing distant from the rest of heaven. His function is little understood. His speech characterizes his life—slow and vague, and can be heard only during the night. Ay has little of life in his words or himself, and is conscious only of external realities, but there are a few inner qualities in the outer ones.

He and his associates are extremely helpful with people of present times whose outer facets are separated from their inner ones. Because of his strength he has been capable of enduring the painful torment of twisting and folding that the outer mind goes through to untwist, then realign with the flow of spiritual truth into it. His will to resist evil is adamant, so hard that it sparkles diamond-like in the darkness and cold caused by habitual and determined evils.

The Pre-Adamite and his fellows are often placed as guards for people with no resistance to evil, helping prevent

them from being carried off. Their spirited willfulness often inspires the first steps needed to resist and become free of impulses, addictions and violence.

His heavenly community corresponds to hair in the genital areas.

On earth Ay lived in central Africa in 154,000 BC. He and his mate had many children; more than half lived past their first year.

Lisa is not given to easy smiling but rather to sincerity in her speech. Her calm demeanor is a miscue, for the energy in her voice and the vibrant shining of her eyes bespeak a much more active mind within than is demonstrated on the surface. This caution helps maintain a moderating effect over the problems others have, dissipating their intensity and helping the person avoid extremes. She does not offer feigned compassion.

Her intense interest is in uncovering misleading sensations and thoughts that on the surface appear soothing and rational. Her presence creates an aura of protection against the currents of irrationality slowly moving under the false reasoning. When influenced by this clearer light, the person quickly recognizes the underlying deceit caused by evil spirits. Closer examination shows how they were drawing the person nearer to hell with its eternal consequences.

Lisa and others in her heavenly community find their greatest joy in guiding others through their shallow thinking. In the better light from their heaven, the person is able to safely escape the shoals. After making their way into deeper waters again, he or she is returned to the inner sensations and enjoyment that come from thinking more deeply and thoroughly.

The opposite of this heavenly society is a hell of deceitful beings. From them spring impressions and fantasies intended to mislead. An example is by giving relaxed, soothing sensations like those of a warm bath, and misleading a person into thinking he or she is in heaven and among the blessed. This conceit makes the deceived person content in his or her thinking, no longer having the humility to know when they are being tempted.

Those in Lisa's community have a sincere love of the Lord's creative abilities, and the order and inflow of life from him into the heavens and the earths fills them with awe. They abhor messiness of any kind and spend quite a bit of time straightening their mental life and keeping it in an orderly condition.

Lisa's heavenly society relates to the hypodermis on the chest. This deeper, third layer of the skin contains special connecting tissues that attach the outer layers to the underlying muscles, bones and organs. The firmness of the hypodermis holds the three layers steady and is an anchor against the outer layer which is easily influenced by external stimuli.

Lisa lived on earth in Maryland during the second half of the 1900s. She died at 32, leaving three children, two girls and one boy, to be raised by her husband.

Maria spent most of her life on earth being ignored by her mother. Left alone for hours on end in her crib, she never had another human being that she received feelings from. And the few times she cried, no one responded. She had never bonded with anyone on earth. Alone always inside, no one pitied her, talked with her, shared a feeling with her. Even though at times she saw someone looking at her, the person

just seemed like something big. At times that big something moved its mouth while looking directly at Maria, but it held no meaning for her. In all, though, Maria was content.

Nothing seemed to come in; nothing went out from her. Yet one day she became aware of something – a big thing looked at her and Maria felt something warm. The “something warm” stayed after the big thing went away. Maria wanted it to come back. She cried tears for it and flailed her little arms into exhaustion because she wanted more of it. The newness of the something had lifted a curtain. It was her first drawing towards a being outside of her, a nurse who came to check her, then returned an hour later to take her because Maria’s mother was going to a sanitarium. Since Maria was only nineteen pounds at the age of two and a half, she was given to a special woman for care, a woman who was delighted with Maria, cuddled her for hours while slowly trying to feed her, and made Maria welcomed in her life. Love came late in Maria’s life, though, and her failure to thrive was too set into her bodily system. She couldn’t make the transition to eating solid food regularly because of problems in swallowing from neglect and severe autism. As Maria’s life faded, the wonderful woman reluctantly released her to the angel waiting to take her. Maria grew up in heaven under the watchful eyes of the Lord, never really aware that she had ever been in any other world. The little girl ran happily into the playground to play with the other small children in heaven who she recognized. They had played with her in her imagination during the long days she had spent in her crib.

After growing up, Maria was free to travel to various societies, meet people very different from herself, and see some of the many wonders in heaven. Eventually she joined a community relating to the inner nostrils. The states there are quite subtle, able to immediately perceive the fine sweetness that is the odor of truth joined with its good. This innocence is unimpeded by any grosser, more outward things.

The innocence of Maria's heavenly society is able to hold off any attack of the hells. This is especially helpful to a person in danger of losing her way because the true heavenly path looks dull and boring. Many flowering paths appear, and in the sensual light she is being invited into, she is unable to detect the subtle tang of the impure flowers. Evil magicians are surrounding her. They distract her by completely blocking any awareness of a world with better things in it. They cast a veil over her that charms her by taking away kind thoughts of others and delighting her with the saccharine of considering only herself in all things. But the innocence of Maria's heaven appeals to a child-like part of her, one nursed and protected by the Lord, and brought into use in these moments. Angels play with this inner child by stimulating her with the delights of heavenly objects, and eventually tease her away from the obsessive magic. They move her inmost parts from the undelight of thinking only of herself and cast over her the charming pleasure of interest in others.

Though she never remembered anything about it, Maria was born in Pittsburgh, PA, and her mother, severely depressed, lived out her life in the hospital she was taken to. Maria met her mother much later when the woman came into the spiritual world. It was a wonderful reunion of two who embraced for the very first time.

(The following is a talk given at the New Church in Australia Assembly May 2018.)

Love Wants to Be Sent Back Out Again

Sarah Walker Ralls

The external is merely something that provides an outward form in which the internal can exist and lead a life in accord with what flows into it from the Lord.

—Secrets of Heaven 6284

The church, where the Word is read and the Lord is known by it, is like the heart and lungs in that man; and it is these two founts of life in the human body which allow all the other limbs and organs to remain in existence and live.

—De Verbo 17

I'd like to preface this by saying that I see this as a reminder from the Lord on where our first focus should always lie. In no way should this be taken to disregard all the hard work and effort that goes into making the organization run smoothly as it stands today.

About 3 weeks ago I was suddenly awake at 4 am and found that what I'm about to share with you now was just there in my mind . . . at my fingertips, ready to type. I feel that it was very specifically given to me by the Lord to share with you.

I was born into the New Church. Recently I worked out that I'm at least the 6th generation of New Church families. Since my mid teens I've felt a strong sense of responsibility towards the Church and the care of her and its future. But for most of my 20s and 30s I watched on in dismay and sadness as it became smaller and smaller and smaller. In our Perth society I'm pretty much the only one left of the

original Sunday School group of about 30 children. And this wasn't just happening in Perth. I witnessed the same when I lived in the UK and the USA and within Australia in general. So up until recently I had kind of given up or at least put it on the back burner. I'd fallen into a state of numbness. I just didn't know what to do. I didn't know how to begin. I didn't know what was required of me and felt I had nothing to offer. This was also indicative of what my relationship with the Lord had become, too. That changed for me once I started engaging with the Logopraxis approach and community—but I'll come back to that later.

I'm just going to pull back a bit and explain where I've come from. I trained as an Occupational Therapist and worked for about 10 years or so initially in mental health, in acute and community settings and then in brain injury rehab with young adults, from the range of people in a vegetative state all the way through to living in the community (and "young adults" are classified as anyone under the age of 65 years!). When my son, Finn, was 10 months old I took him to a music and movement class called "Music Together" in San Francisco, where we were living at the time. I instantly fell in love with the program and so when we moved back to Perth I decided to ditch my health career and start up my own center here. It wasn't well known in Australia at the time—there was only one other center in Melbourne, so it was a real grass roots program for me to set up. I started with 6 families and now 6 years later, I have about 150 families and 2 teachers. There's potential for a lot more growth but I'm happy with the workload at the moment so I've chosen not to expand it.

My most powerful and effective course of advertising has been word of mouth. When families come to class and experience the joy and connection of being in a musical community, see the program and how it inspires them to use the music and ideas in their daily lives, and how it affects their children and family life, they naturally want to share it with

others. And so they do! They tell their friends, they tell their family, they encourage friends to come to the program and some even actively discourage their friends in going to other programs. Some even get online and make comments on parenting forums completely unsolicited by me. But as they share it, it's always the joy in their face and their authentic enthusiasm—however that presents in them because its different for everyone—this always shines through. And that's what sells it when they speak about it.

I think of it as “love attracts love.” When we experience love—when we experience the Lord, we naturally want to share this with others. Love by its very nature longs to be sent back out again. It wants to be expressed and put to use.

Now it may seem counterintuitive to pull back and individually look within as a means of growing our collective, external church organization, but we each need to have that passionate love, and experience of the Lord in our lives—that just can't be contained and longs to be sent back out again!

In the last year or so I've found myself shamelessly sharing my experience with others. A good example of this was during Easter this year. I took my children along to a Sunday morning Easter service at our local Anglican church. The sermon the minister gave was on cosmology, and the nature of modern day science-thinking on this subject. It explained how this connects with what the Bible has said all along about the nature of love. And I just couldn't help myself! I went up to her at the end and shook her hand (as they do in Anglican churches on the way out), and told her how much I had connected with what she said. I explained how it connected so much with what Swedenborg said about the nature of love as the organic substance of life. She looked at me, leaned in and said, “You've just answered a prayer. I've been wanting to explore this idea more and I

didn't know where to look next." After I'd repeated the name "Swedenborg" at least five times, she went and got a piece of paper and made me write it down for her. Now I don't know if that will eventuate to anything for her but she connected with me because of my authenticity—my joy and lived experience of it spoke to her. It wasn't planned. I didn't know what I was going to say, I just knew that I was compelled to speak. The Lord moved in me and spoke.

A wise person recently pointed out to me that if we focus on the internals, then the externals will eventually take care of themselves. I don't mean that we should stop what we're doing, or necessarily change what we're doing as an organization, but if we make it our focus everyday, to come to the Word and let it move us and connect within us, and let Him guide us and direct us . . . then how we approach the externals is going to change. It has to.

Logopraxis was what helped me to make this change—to have this focus. Logopraxis emphasizes bringing the Word into your life. We are asked to read the Text with a focus on application rather than understanding. That way you can not just understand a truth, but also see how it actually applies in your life, and therefore come to know that truth. This was a significant concept for me. But more importantly it was the connection with others and a connection with a spiritual community. Every two weeks we come back to our life group and share how we have experienced these truths, the Word, the Lord, working in us. We hear and witness each others' accounts and are fed and sustained by these. They offer us new understandings and perspectives. And these goods and truth that we share—they ARE the Lord and He is what connects us together as a community, and He is what connects us together as a church.

We know that wherever the Word is read and truly cherished (as in lived and put into practice), then there is

the church. We know that in the Grand Human the church represents the heart and lungs. They aren't a large part of the body like the skin and blood vessels, but they are a vital part. I suspect that this will always be reflected in our numbers within the organization, too, and that it will always be small in proportion to the general population. BUT they are vital and it's vital that they are healthy because the body can't survive without the heart and lungs. The heart and lungs are what allow the rest of the body to remain in existence and live.

As I said earlier, I took this as a good a reminder from the Lord. Each of us needs to find a way of coming to the Word every day and letting Him connect with us and move us and guide us. And then we need to share this experience with each other. And if we can do these two things—then we will have a healthy church. And then the externals will fall into place. They will naturally form as and when the Lord needs them to.

After I'd written this down, I spent the next few weeks coming across quotes that affirmed all this for me. These are two that jumped off the page.

The expression "Church" is used in everyday language to describe a congregation in general, but each member of the congregations must be a church if that greater church is to exist.
—Secrets of Heaven 4292

The Lord speaks to a member of the church in no other way than through the Word.
—Secrets of Heaven 10290

Through a booklet on the New Church in Australia and a vague family tree, Sarah Walker has traced her ancestry through six generations to the Adcock and Noar families. Both were said to be confirmed New Church families when they joined the Melbourne Society.

G.C. Adcock is reported to be a newcomer from Britain by 1855 when he is on record as the first Leader of the Melbourne Society. G.C. most likely came from Derby where a man named W. J. Adcock (most likely his father) was the Leader.

Elizabeth Noar arrived from Manchester in 1849, accompanied by her two sons Henry and Alfred. In 1868 Alfred Noar married Isabel Adcock, the niece of G. C., and had 10 children. One of their descendants, Mr. S.W. Hart, was the first Leader of the Perth New Church Society.

Sarah can be contacted at musictogetherwithsarah@gmail.com.

If anyone is interested in learning about Logopraxis, the website is <http://spiritandlife.net/church/>

Call for Collaborators: The Women's Companion to Conjugal Love

Roslyn Taylor and Julie Conaron are collaboratively writing a Women's Companion to the book "Conjugal Love." They have invited Swedenborgian/New Church women from around the world to contribute their responses as they read together through the book over the next two years. Collaborators in the project don't have to read the entire book and respond to every paragraph. Responses to specific numbers or phrases are very welcome! If you want to be part of this venture please contact Roslyn (hrtaylor@temple.edu) or Julie (julieconaron@hotmail.com) with your email address so they can share the Google Doc with you. Feel free to share this invitation with any Swedenborgian/New Church women you know.

Laws of Life Essay Contest

All High School Sophomore (or 15-16 year old) Swedenborgian girls world-wide are eligible to entire 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 please include 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?

Think 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 or 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, 2019

Congratulations to these winners of the Laws of Life Essay Contest 2018

1st	Carling Brock	Self-Construction
2nd	Madison Zagorski	The Life of the Party
3rd	Isabelle Kline	That Blind Summer

Honorable mention

4th	Dannie Yihan Xue	Trust is Lost with One Lie
5th	Nicole McCurdy	When Life Gives You Lemons Make a Lemon Cake

Non-Academy winners of the Laws of Life essay contest 2018

1st	Maren Cole	Am I Enough?
2nd	Evi deChazal	All We Have is Now
3rd	Reyana Heinrichs	Many of the Things

(The following essay won first prize in the Laws of Life essay contest 2018)

Self-Construction

Carling Brock

Growing up, my religion had a substantial influence on my ideas about life and the way it should be lived. I cannot say that I remember all the little lessons I was supposed to learn, but there was one passage I recall that focused on building your house for when you pass on to the next life, hopefully to heaven. I did not understand the spiritual aspect of it and assumed I would have to physically build one for me to live in when I got there. I was simply too young to grasp these concepts in their fullness and could only hold onto the

concrete stories that were told to me. I did not understand that this teaching meant that I should use the life that I have been given to create meaningful foundations and build my thoughts and personality on top of it.

The foundation of this house of life should be made out of what is most valuable to the Creator. This is the most crucial part. Without a sturdy base, everything else will crumble and be rendered useless. What makes up my foundation is love and trust. There have been a few people in my life who I disliked immediately, even though I did not know them well enough to make that decision in the first place. After I was forced to associate with some of them by having classes with them I actually got to know them well enough to realize I was wrong. It was easy for me to base my opinions on people solely on their first impression and rumors I had heard about them before we had even met. A few of these girls are my friends now and it is bizarre to remember my original opinions about them. These experiences showed me that I should be more aware of what I think and that I should not be so harsh right off the bat. In the long run, it probably would have been easier to create loving relationships if I had tried to love, not hate, the person from the start. Another critical ingredient in my foundation is trust. Sometimes it is difficult to trust others, especially if trust has been shattered before. If I did not have my family and friends to rely on, I know that I would be a drastically different person, which is inconceivable.

It is impractical to have a fully functional house if you only have the foundation, so the next thing that is mandatory is the main structure of the building. The structure is the second most important part of the house and must be supported by a firm foundation. My personal structure would be constructed out of honesty. There are two ways in which honesty is vital in my day-to-day life. First of all, I have to be honest with other people, especially those I care about.

Honesty and trust are strongly related and I do not feel like I can have one without the other. If I want to be trusted, then I know that I have to be as honest as possible in most situations. Second of all, I must be honest with myself. Occasionally, I find it difficult to keep myself in reality and not have unrealistic fantasies. Being hopeful is a good thing, but if it goes too far then I could easily be let down and disappointed. There needs to be an equal balance between the amount of hope and the amount of bluntness in life. Overall, honesty is a powerful attribute that has had more positive outcomes than negative outcomes in my life.

The foundation and the structure of the house are important, but the house still needs to be furnished and decorated with fundamentals. My metaphorical décor would be made out of positivity, looking for the good things in bad situations, and even something as basic as staying calm during heated arguments. Constant negativity can be toxic to someone's self-perception and life, so attempting to stay positive can avoid that circumstance in the first place. These little ideas may not seem that important but they can genuinely turn a simple house into an extravagant home that is truly welcoming.

No home can be complete without a foundation, structure or personal attributes, just like no life can be complete without moral concepts and opinions that make who they are. Not every house is exactly the same and neither are people and what is valuable to them. Houses are constantly remodeled or updated, but often the foundation of the house is consistent and won't be changed. Once again, this can be related to human beings. This is another reason why it is important to have well made moral principles. It would be hard to completely uproot a concrete foundation from the ground, so it is vital to make sure it is sound enough to withstand the continual change that life throws its way.

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!



JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

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

Tell us what you think!



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

Carmel New Church Theta Alpha Guild Annual Report 2017 - 2018

The ladies of the Carmel New Church Theta Alpha Guild continued to meet monthly during the school year. Our Co-Presidents, Jan Hill and Sally Tait, continued to guide us thoughtfully and effectively. Each month we held a worship service, followed by a business meeting and then an activity or event.

We held our first meeting of the year in September where we planned for the year including where meetings would be held and by whom, what uses TAG would be performing, and how we might fundraise.

In October, we enjoyed a presentation by Jan Hill on her recent trip to China which she entitled "Glorious China and the Yangtze River." The fascinating presentation was full of photos and traditional Chinese refreshments were served.

In November, we enjoyed an enlightening talk by Kelly Niall, a Physician Assistant who works in primary care, entitled "Osteoporosis: Too Fit Too Fracture."

During the month of December we held our annual Christmas party which is always a hit with tasty treats, fun games, a gift swap and caroling.

In January the ladies of TAG were pampered a bit with a facial and wax treatment. Our new community member, Adrianna Ruiz demonstrated several of the products from her salon (Serenity Skin Care Studio Inc.) in her home.

Keeping with our winter tradition, February was movie night. We watched "Do You Believe?"

Spring proved busy as usual. We held an Easter bake sale and clothing drive as fundraisers. In March we held a business meeting followed by a social hour instead of our usual program or presentation.

In April, Jan Hill entertained us again with a presentation of her most recent adventure – a trip to Egypt. We enjoyed her presentation complete with slideshow which she entitled “Egypt – Land of the Pharaohs.” Children and adults alike had a fun time at our Family Fun Night.

In May we held our annual end of year barbecue. At this meeting we also completed our nominations for new TAG Executive and Committee members.

Respectfully submitted,
Cailin Hill, Secretary

Pittsburgh Theta Alpha Guild

The Theta Alpha Guild in the Pittsburgh Society continues to meet. During their August meeting, a group of enthusiastic members created a list of events they’re looking forward to planning and executing. Barbara Glenn, their president for the past 12 years, is anticipating being able to step back and let a new president take charge of TAG. In addition, the Pittsburgh Society is in the midst of implementing changes in their school. We hope to hear from them at the end of the year with a report on how the changes went.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Glenn, President and Secretary

Washington New Church Theta Alpha Guild

This past year our chapter hosted, sponsored, or supported a wide variety of church and school uses and events. Here are just a few examples. In the fall of 2017, we assisted with refreshments for both our school's Back-to-School Night, and an afternoon of parent-teacher conferences. We also deep cleaned the society kitchen, held our annual bake sale and raffle, and contributed to the Healthy Church Match. The winter saw our annual Christmas centerpiece sale and "Souper Sundays" (sales of soup and bread) as fundraisers. We also were involved with the Christmas program and sing, Christmas decorating of the church, and helping with other church and society Christmas events. Care packages were made and delivered to society students attending Bryn Athyn schools, and handmade "we care" cards were sent to young adults in our area. The delicious Theta Alpha Guild banquet in the spring was followed by a panel discussion with four women from our congregation who spoke about their fascinating careers and then answered questions posed by Becca Synnestvedt Smith and members of the audience.

This upcoming year is a transition year, in which the executive committee will share and carry out the duties of the president. This year's officers are: Wystan Gladish Simons, Vice- President; Kathleen Cooper Johns, Treasurer; and Anne Goerwitz Ball, Secretary. Our warm gratitude goes to last year's executive committee and to the many ladies who tirelessly work to serve church and society uses.

Respectfully submitted,
Anne Goerwitz Ball, Secretary

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2018-19 Executive Committee Board**

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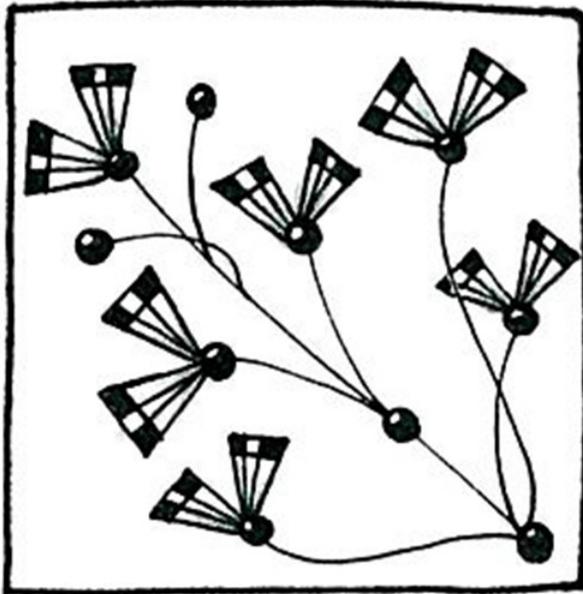
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