

Theta Alpha Journal



November 2020

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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

Theta Alpha Journal
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Editor: Helen Kennedy

Cover Artwork

Tree of Life by Gaye Heldon

The vision came to my mind very clearly throughout the painting of it as I had been dwelling on thoughts of the Tree of Life being back in the center of the Garden of Eden. The bands of color in the background brought to mind the discrete degrees in the heavens, whilst the lower half depicts our natural life of progress through temptation and spiritual regeneration.

Line art by Alison Cole (pg. 67, 70, and 74)

CONTACT INFORMATION~

CORRESPONDENCE FOR THE JOURNAL:

Please direct submissions and Letters to the Editor to Helen Kennedy.

For general email correspondence:
hmkennedy98@gmail.com

For mail correspondence:
2959 Sycamore Road
Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006

THE JOURNAL ONLINE:

Facebook Page:
www.Facebook.com/groups/thetaalphajournal

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P. O. Box 154
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President's Message

Janet Krettek

It's been a busy year for Theta Alpha, in spite of the pandemic. Firstly, we are saying a fond farewell to two of our long-standing Executive Committee members. Barbara Charles Doering has played many supportive roles. Though her official title was Secretary, there were a number of years when we didn't have a full committee that she took on much more responsibility. She and her good friend, Carol Bongers Buss, kept the flame of TAI burning because they believe in its mission and didn't want to let it go until they felt it could continue on without them. Carol has been on the Executive Committee for almost 40 years!! She has been our Membership Secretary and Baptismal Project Coordinator for many years, though she has been available to do whatever needed doing. At Charter Day Luncheons you rarely spotted Carol as she was in the kitchen caring for all the details. These ladies have been fabulous mentors to me, helping me through the ranks and guiding me as the teachers they have always been. As I am a "Drag-In" and have not been instructed in New Church decorum, I especially appreciate their gentle counsel. I want to thank them for all their years of dedication and service. May we live up to your expectations!

We have added scholarships to the Girls School and the college. Bryn Athyn College added a Masters of Science in Special Education degree. We found this is needed in our communities and have added two scholarships to support women obtaining graduate education at Bryn Athyn College. Also, to help support students who want a New Church secondary education we have added two scholarships for ANC Girls School.

At our 2019 Charter Day Luncheon, Brita Conroy asked for support for the Pittsburgh New Church School's program in Dyslexia. She used posters and online requests and built such

support that we were able to raise for their program \$ 1,116.00 plus \$500 matched funds from TAI for a total of \$ 1,616.00.

Brita has since stepped down from her position as Secretary. I want to thank Brita for her work on this project as well as all her meticulous care to keep our records straight and timely.

In order to recognize the women who have served Theta Alpha locally, we started a recognition program for Chapter Presidents who have served for 10 or more years. Our first round of pendants was sent out after the 2019 Charter Day Luncheon. Their names are mentioned in the June, 2020 *Journal*, p. 68.

The demographics of our board are changing. Our newest members are young enough to be my daughters. . . and one is! The average age of our board members has decreased by 20 years. This has multiple implications. New ideas, new ways. . . change. This may be uncomfortable. It may be hard. It may be something you don't understand. These fresh ideas will connect us with our future, the young women of the Church.

I ask you to join me in welcoming in the next generation to Theta Alpha: Rosemary Fuller, Sarah Jackson, and Rebecca Jackson Synnestvedt. Send them a note. Write them an email. Give them your ideas, your wisdom, your support as we hand them this precious jewel that is Theta Alpha. It has been known as a pillar of use for over a century. Add your daughter, sister, granddaughter, niece to your membership to Theta Alpha and describe to them your hope for the future.

Please, let us know what you enjoy and what you don't about TAI. Tell us how we can help you strengthen or boost your local chapters. There are still positions open on the Executive Committee: Corresponding Secretary, Baptismal Projects Director, Laws of Life Leader, IT Consultant and Fundraising Chair. Email me if you would care to join us. Let's move forward with the vigor of new life!

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

The article “Teach These Things Diligently To Your Children,” recounts the way Pittsburgh New Church School gained new life through a vital educational mission, addressing the needs of children with dyslexia. The story turns out happily for the school, teachers, staff, students, parents, and the larger community.

Yet the varying perspectives from different authors also show the darker side of the situation. “I have found it amazing and surprisingly difficult to hear people praise us for saving their children from academic ruin; we are just doing our jobs,” says Cynthia Glenn (p. 19). Gabrielle Uber tells us, “The general population includes 10-20% dyslexics, depending on how you define it. It is a monumental failure of our educational system that they come to us in such great need. They also come to us as broken souls with crippling anxiety, learned helplessness and a poor store of knowledge from years of not learning in the classroom” (p. 24).

Here we get a small glimpse of how much children can suffer when their academic needs aren’t met. They can’t analyze what the problem is, much less put it into words that parents and teachers will understand. They may sense that they are “different” from the other students, but not HOW they are different, or what “normal” feels like. They don’t have the power to modify a school setting that doesn’t fit their needs. They may find it impossible to get anyone to take them seriously. Generations of schoolchildren have had their difficulties interpreted as defects of character. They’re “not trying hard enough,” “not paying attention,” “daydreaming the morning away.” And when they express their overwhelming anger, stress, and frustration in the only ways they can, they are seen as misbehaving or malingering. This is not the kind of adversity that builds character.

The Orton-Gillingham method cited in the article is just one of many tools available to address learning differences. Yet many children still go through months and years of unproductive struggle that could be prevented. The reluctance by public schools (often in underfunded districts) to diagnose conditions that require extra resources is mentioned. Well-meaning but inadequate adjustments to the school routine are also described. The picture is disturbingly similar to the way medical science in the US has advanced by leaps and bounds, while access to health care for those who need it most lags far behind.

Medical professionals have the Hippocratic Oath to guide them: first, do no harm. We could use a bit more of that spirit in education. The journey of PNCS offers an inspiring example of the will to help finding a way to overcome obstacles, beginning with the passion of parents and teachers who want the best for their children.

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown a monkey wrench into educational systems all over the world, from pre-K through graduate school. Some people are taking the opportunity to rethink what education can be. Homeschooling has become a more attractive option for families with the resources and inclination for it. But many parents with work commitments and school-age children are finding themselves stretched to the breaking point. Teachers and students also face new and difficult challenges. I have been shocked to read articles about children as young as six or seven spending six hours a day sitting in front of computer screens for virtual schooling. I hope we don't have to find out the hard way how much harm this can cause. I have some ideas about how "pod model" learning might work both in homes and schools, but that's for another time and place.

Sincerely,
Linda Simonetti Odhner
Horsham, PA

How Just, How Learned, How Wise

Coleman Glenn

I once heard loud shouts, which seemed to gurgle up from the lower regions through waters, one toward the left, crying, "O how just!" another toward the right, "O how learned!" and a third from behind, "O how wise!" (True Christian Religion 332)

The seer in the spirit world
Heard three exultant cries
Come burbling up from lands beneath:
"How just! How learn'd! How wise!"

Toward this din he downward climbed
And saw with opened eyes
Three companies each shouting praise,
"How just!" "How learn'd!" "How wise!"

He neared the clique who cried "How just!"
And spied a court of bricks
Where judges sat in robes around
A fire of pitch-soaked sticks.

The judges knew each point of law
That might enrich their friends,
And skillfully they wreathed their writs
To bring about such ends.

Sulfureous phantom shapes lit up
The walls on every side,
And when each judge's verdict came,
"How just!" his friends all cried.

The seer with an angel guide

Next sought the “learned” crew
And found them in a sunken plain
Stamped flat by boot and shoe.

“Each scholar here,” the angel said,
“Has such an open mind
He won’t decide on anything
Or leave one doubt behind.”

“Please let me pose a question,” called
The seer as he waved.
“By what religion must one live
In order to be saved?”

“Let us discuss,” the scholars said,
“But first let us define
‘Religion’ (if such thing exists).
This may take us some time.”

“Some time?” the seer asked. “How long?
A day? A week or three?
“Oh, goodness no,” they said, “We’ll need
At least a century.”

“And in the meantime,” scoffed the seer,
“You’ll live just as you please.”
“Indeed,” they said, “and keep our pure
Epistemologies!”

The scholars tramped in place again
Debating long and loud
And, as it meant they need not change,
“How learned!” cried the crowd.

At last the seer came to those
Who shouted out, “How wise!”
And found a crowd around some men
Constructing clever lies.

“They aren’t lies,” said one of them
When called out from the rest.
“We prove our points with solid facts —
Just put me to the test.”

A nearby skeptic challenged him,
“Then prove a raven’s white.”
“It is! The blackness that you see
Is just a trick of light.

Each fiber of its feathers viewed
Up close is white as snow.
You see? There’s nothing true or false
But thinking makes it so.”

“Then can you prove,” the seer asked,
“That you have lost your mind?”
“I can, but I would rather not,”
The prudent man declined.

The perks of this approach weren’t lost
On those who gathered there,
And so in shouted unison
“How wise!” the crowd declared.

So — when you tingle from acclaim
Or glow in your own eyes,
Be wary of the voice that cries,
“How just, how learn’d, how wise!”

Coleman Glenn is the assistant chaplain and an assistant professor of religion at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. He lives in Huntingdon Valley with his wife Anne Grace and their three children. He can be contacted at coleman.glenn@gmail.com

Spiritual Slavery

Helen Kennedy

(This article is reprinted by permission from New Church Life, originally published in March 1999.)

People are aware of the practice in past centuries of bringing people from Africa as slaves to North America, enmeshing them in a system from which they couldn't free themselves, and under which they suffered egregiously. Many people are not familiar with the fact that, at the same time this was happening, the Muslims in northern Africa practiced a system of enslaving Christians from Europe. It started when the Moors invaded Spain, continued for over a thousand years, and lasted until the 1800s when European colonialism put an end to it. Spain, Portugal, France, Sicily, Sardinia, Greece, Albania, Venice, Austria, Russia, Norway, Sweden, Holland and Belgium all had their people taken on the high seas or by invasions into seaside villages. The hardest hit was Italy, especially Naples, Calabria and Tuscany. From the time of Elizabeth I, in faraway England, Englishmen and women began to be taken, and in the 1700s, Americans on the Atlantic Ocean. Formal petitions were made to the King of England in the 1600s because the English Channel was so unsafe that fishermen couldn't ply their trade. In 1627, 800 people were taken from Iceland. In 1631, all the people from the southern Irish coastal village of Baltimore in County Cork were captured and enslaved. The Irish were particularly harassed because the Muslims favored Irish women for their harem.¹

Miguel Cervantes, author of *Don Quixote*, was captured on the sea in 1575 while traveling back to Spain from Italy with his brother. Vincent de Paul, later saint, wrote a letter to a friend explaining he had been captured by Algerian corsairs, taken to the slave market in Algiers and sold. He was sold at least two more times before escaping with the help of a French renegade who wished to get back in good graces with the

Church. In 1530 while hunting near the seacoast of Italy, Pope Leo X was almost seized by the crew of the ship Kundogli, but he managed to escape by galloping quickly back to Rome. On the Atlantic, in the 1700s the newly appointed governor to the Carolinas was taken while traveling to his post in the Colonies.

In the 1600s, an Englishman enslaved in Algiers sent a harrowing petition to the King saying, "I am made daily to grind a mill as a horse with a chain upon each legge, and as an addition to my misery, I am almost starved with hunger."² St. Patrick, too, in his Confession complained of not being fed or clothed while he was a slave in Ireland in the early 400s AD.

In past times, to donate money for the ransom of Christian slaves was held as the highest charitable act one could do. In 1198 the Trinitarians were founded, and in 1218 the Order of Our Lady of Mercy, the Mercedarians, both to help ransom Christian captives on the Barbary Coast. A parallel with earlier times is St. Patrick who wrote that when missionaries were sent to the Franks, money was also sent to buy back Christians who had been captured by the Franks and made slaves. In northern Africa, the Muslims delighted in forcing Christians into the apostasy of denying their faith in order to become Mohammedan. To be fair, Muslims in the hands of the Inquisition did not have an easy time, to express it mildly. And any Catholic who apostatized, or denied his faith, and then was either ransomed or escaped back to southern Europe had to face the Inquisition which determined the sincerity of his or her turnabout.

In north Africa many Catholic priests and others were martyred rather than deny Christ. Others were ransomed but preferred to stay in Africa to tend the needs of the Christian slaves. In 1591 the Irish bishop of Limerick, Tomas Hibernico, was captured on his way back to Ireland from Rome. Money was raised, but he spent his ransom on a permit allowing him

2 Ibid. p.143.

to travel around the Barbary Coast ministering to the needs of the slaves.³ A Capuchin priest stayed on in captivity and used his ransom to buy a plot of land where Christians could be decently buried instead of just thrown into the sea. The Trinitarians and Mercedarians sent priests into Algiers, Tunis, Morocco, and Tangiers to set up hospitals and chapels to minister to the Christian slaves.

The most unique case of all is a wonderful example of a person clinging to his principles. In 1663 a British ship was taken off the coast of Majorca. The mate, Thomas Lurting, was a Quaker who had enough influence with other crew members to persuade them to offer the attackers no resistance. He wrote that "the crew received them as a man might his friends, and the Muslims were civil to us." One night soon afterwards, when the Muslims were off guard, Lurting and his shipmates regained control of the vessel without striking a blow. Some were for killing the pirates there and then, or at least selling them in Majorca. But the Quaker insisted they be kept below hatches and returned unharmed to their own land. On reaching North Africa Lurting and a couple of friends, taking some of the ship's tools for protection, rowed the Muslims ashore and left them with some provisions and their arms, about fifty miles from Algiers. "And with signs of great kindness they took leave, and jumped out So we parted in great love, and stayed until they got up the hill and they shook their caps at us, and we at them."⁴

It would be nice if the story ended there, but slavery continues to modern times, although much less widespread. In 1958 C. W. Greenidge, Secretary to the Anti-Slavery Society in England, wrote a book describing its persistence in the modern world. In Arabia it takes the form of chattel slavery or outright ownership of another person's body. It is fed by clandestine

3 Ibid. p.123.

4 Ibid. p.75.

trade in humans from Africa and neighboring countries in Asia.⁵ Mr. Greenidge says there is strong evidence that slavery still exists in Ethiopia under the Gabar system. Within this system it is not the body that is owned but the work the person does.⁶ Evidence of vestiges exist in Mauritania, Nigeria, and Ghana. The TV program *60 Minutes* last year [1998] showed a 14-year old girl in Ghana being handed over by her parents to a fetish priest. Her great-grandfather committed a murder and as punishment he was made a slave, and, in each generation thereafter one child has to be given into slavery. It also showed that, with donated funds, a Ghanaian Protestant minister had bought back 32 women from this type of slavery. All totaled, the cost was less than \$1,000. Moving into a different light, many tribal areas of Africa have had long had a system of purchasing wives for money, this being a form of enslavement. Fortunately the current opinion in Africa is now in favor of abolishing anything that tends to make a woman the property of her husband. But in the Cameroons fathers still talk openly about how much money they will get for their daughters. In a better light, one of the West African ministers in the General Church explained that the culture in his country now looks down on anyone who takes more than one wife.

In practices analogous to slavery, debt-bondage remains in India, also in Guatemala, Mexico, and Central America. The selling of children for their work continues in Bolivia and Peru, especially by Indian families who are impoverished. Traces of the Mui Tsai system of selling children five and older for their labor remains in China, Malaysia and Sri Lanka, among places. In the 50s a law was passed in Japan requiring people to register the names of children they had purchased. In 1956, according to police records in Japan, 40,291 people were sold. This practice is now outlawed but has re-surfaced in those

5 C W W Greenidge. *Slavery*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1958, p.201.

6 Ibid. p.91.

Asian countries under the sham title of 'adopted daughter'.⁷

If slavery was an external condition only, it would pass with death. But internal slavery is to be feared most of all because it causes the death of the spirit. In his *Letter to Coroticus*, St. Patrick exclaims that if the Picts of Scotland who captured and enslaved his newly baptized Christians don't repent ". . . they will be slaves in hell."⁸ Pictures of these infernal conditions can be conjured up from descriptions in Dante's *Inferno* where he describes those who "make the soul die when the body dies."⁹ Swedenborg writes that evil spirits in hell regard a human as nothing but a vile slave.¹⁰ We can see it today in people who are addicted to drugs, alcohol, sex, whatever. In addictions we are in the state when good does not lead but evil does. *John* 8:34-36 says, "Everyone committing sin is a slave of sin; but if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." From this we can conclude that a person is in freedom only when he or she is open to the Lord and willing to serve good and true things from what eventually becomes the delight of heaven.

As a person of European descent, it is the captivity of European Christians that startles me. And gives me deeper insights into the ways people descended from Africans captured and held as slaves for generations in the United States and the Caribbean may feel. In all cases, people have been despised, enslaved and trampled on. In the case of the Africans, had they rebelled, where would they run away to? The earliest slaves were brought to a land that was entirely new to them. They had no knowledge of the rivers and terrain, and

7 Ibid. p.114.

8 St. Patrick. *Letter To Coroticus in Ancient Christian Writers Series*. New York: Newman Press, 1953.

9 Dante Alighieri. *The Divine Comedy, Vol. 1, Inferno*. New York, Penguin Books, 1971.

10 Emmanuel Swedenborg. *Spiritual Diary*. London: James Spiers, 1883, note 2924.

no matter what direction they went, they still wouldn't be able to get away. Even if they had, how would they get back to their homes across the ocean?

Even with all this, there is something even scarier haunting me that has recently been surfacing in my mind. It is forcing the innocent to serve evil purposes, and is the main battle raging in the war within me between good and evil. It is confusing my thinking. At those times I don't know what bad is and what good is. I go to do something good, then find an evil purpose suddenly springs out. I want to help in the care of my aunt who has cancer. Then I find secretly I'm hoping she'll leave me money because I'm helping her. Or I'm glad to serve an important position on the school board, but find I fight everyone because I want to re-make all its policies into my image and likeness. I become so confused and feel the evil enslaving my good desire to be helpful. I have to stop and sort through, "Just why am I working on the school board? To be an angel or to be a little tyrant?" How did such heavenly delight of being of service get ruined like that? In *Exodus* 15:9 the evil spirits say, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide. My soul shall be filled with them." The Writings explain "pursue" as the endeavor to subjugate, "overtake" as the actual capturing of, and "divide" as distributing among themselves those who have been reduced to slavery. "My soul shall be filled with them" means that the very delight of the spirits in hell is to inflict evil on others so that they may be reduced to slavery, and afterwards treated cruelly.¹¹

To be treated cruelly by the evil, we don't need to go into the next life because the good of heaven or the evil of hell flow right into this world. Just look at the cruelty of criticism. A friend who needed to speak the truth about something that went against the group was tormented for days beforehand, was full of confusion about how to say it, and afterwards was

11 Emmanuel Swedenborg. *Arcana Coelestia*. London: The Swedenborg Society, 1988, notes 8290-3.

angry at himself for a long time, punishing himself over and over with self-criticism. It got so bad that he thought he may as well kill himself as go against the group. Evil spirits who resist any kind of truth were tempting him into the submission of thinking he was really wrong for saying what was true for him. Clearly the diabolical devils in hell want to reduce him into the slavery of conforming to what other people think, creating difficulties for him, then cruelly punishing him in abusive mental and psychological ways. The Sirens, made up mostly of women who once were over-refined and overly decorous in this world,¹² are diabolically good at enticing people into those forms of cruelty.¹³ They greatly persecute the innocent.¹⁴

This reducing into mental slavery so often is done by gaining dominion over holy things from love of self and of the world.¹⁵ The Word teaches this when it tells us of Babylon in Revelations, chapters 17, 18. The harlot on the scarlet beast whores herself for the sake of prestige, status, commerce, trading and gold. These chapters teach us about the ways we abuse holiness and piety for the sake of dominating and looking good in other people's eyes. Anyone in these states is enslaved to external things. They become wise in external things and foolish in internal things.¹⁶ But what is it that is hurt? What is hurt is the person no longer can be led by the Lord. She or he is out of bounds, beyond the pale, wandering off on their own without looking. When my sister was feeling the strong pull to give up cigarette smoking, a dark place opened in her mind. In it were all kinds of murderous, hateful people.

12 See *Spiritual Diary*, note 3699.

13 Ibid. note 3997.

14 Ibid. note 3206.

15 Emmanuel Swedenborg. *Apocalypse Revealed*. London: The Swedenborg Society, 1970. Note 756.

16 Emmanuel Swedenborg. *Married Love*. Bryn Athyn, PA: General Church of the New Jerusalem, 1995. Note 269:1,3.

As she found herself wandering towards them a Knowingness said to her, “If you go into there, I won’t be able to protect you anymore.” The Lord was giving her the capability right then and there to give up cigarette smoking, but if she did not take it, she would be choosing hell and slavery to them.

Giving up freedom and becoming a vile slave is shown in a similar way. Swedenborg writes that in the next life when a person of his or her own accord and “from freedom drifts towards hell and enters it, they are received at first in a friendly manner, which makes them believe they have come among friends. But this continues for a few hours only. In the meantime they are explored in respect to their astuteness and consequent ability, and when this is done the evil begin to infest them . . . with gradually greater severity and vehemence. This is done by introducing them more interiorly and deeply into hell; for the more interior and deep the hell, the more malignant the spirits. After these infestations they begin to treat the person cruelly by punishments, and this goes on until she or he is reduced to the condition of a slave.”¹⁷

After Jesus saved the woman caught in adultery, he talked to the Pharisees who were hypocrites, deceivers and flatterers, telling them, “You are from beneath, I am from above” (*John* 8:23), beneath being a symbol for our outer self, above for our inner self. Afterwards Jesus said to the people who believed in Him, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free” (*John* 8:32). It was spiritual slavery that Jesus was trying to protect the people from. They did not have to wait until they went into the next life; Jesus was warning them that they were in grave danger right then and there. But if slavery did not exist in the spiritual world, it would not have existed in the natural. In other words, everything a person does in the body flows

17 Emmanuel Swedenborg. *Heaven and Hell*. New York: The Swedenborg Foundation, Inc. 1984, note 574.

in from the spirit.¹⁸ It follows, then, that all human “thinking arises from the spiritual world.”¹⁹ “With the support of their rationality, a person has corrupted the output of the spiritual world within them.”²⁰ So, if something had not gone wrong in that way, slavery and other evils would never have occurred in the natural world. Just what that thing is that went wrong can be seen by a better understanding of the Fall of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. I can’t actually know for sure, but I think it is the story of when slavery in the spiritual world started.

When God expelled Adam from the Garden of Eden, He divested Adam of all intelligence and wisdom in spiritual things, Adam being the earliest people who believed in God. That Adam was made “to till the ground from which he had been taken” means the people became more bodily minded.²¹ Expelled, those people no longer had any will for good or understanding of truth, even to the point of ceasing to be human.²² When the Lord placed the cherubim away from the east, He provided against the possibility of Adam entering into the celestial or highest things from which all intelligence of the spiritual life flows into us. Adam was left in his own insane desires and hellish persuasions of self love. He did not wish to enter back into the Garden of Eden but turned from there on his own toward bodily and earthly interests.²³ The Lord had no choice but to “set the flame of a sword turning this way and that” into the hand of the cherubim (*Genesis* 3:24) to protect

18 Emmanuel Swedenborg. *Married Love*. Bryn Athyn, PA: General Church of the New Jerusalem, 1995, note 310.

19 Emmanuel Swedenborg. *Heaven and Hell*. New York: The Swedenborg Foundation, Inc. 1984, note 108:4.

20 Ibid.

21 Emmanuel Swedenborg. *Arcana Coelestia*. London: The Swedenborg Society, 1988, note 305.

22 Ibid. Note 306.

23 Ibid. Note 305.

the way back into the Garden.

Expelled and incapable of thinking about spiritual things anymore, the descendants of these first people now had no choice but to stay in their natural minds from which all manner of evil started to flow, even murder. They grouped together, for Genesis says Cain started to build a city (4:17). If, like Adam, Cain represents a group, then others must have been killing, too. An afraid Cain says to the Lord, “and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me” (*Genesis* 4: 14).

There is a time when wars started and it is borne out in the archaeological record. While we cannot date Cain, or Adam, we do know that at a certain point the peaceful life of Neolithic people became disturbed. Previously people were building their villages and settlements in areas for their usefulness, i.e., by a lake or stream, but at a certain time the placement of these settlements changed to areas like hilltops and rocks so they could be protected and defended. Riane Eisler writes that by seven thousand years ago there occurred “a pattern of disruption of the old Neolithic cultures in the Near East. Archaeological remains indicate clear signs of stress . . . There is evidence of invasions.”²⁴ She adds, “the beginnings of slavery seem to be closely linked to these armed invasions.”²⁵

While the beginnings of war and slavery happened long before us, they are a metaphor for our own lives. Jacob fighting with his angel (*Genesis* 32:24) is a metaphor for the conflict between our inner and outer selves. Jacob winning tells of our external self gaining control over our internal.²⁶ And fighting does not stop there but continues on until the seventh day of

24 Riane Eisler, *The Chalice & The Blade*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, Div. Harper Collins Publishers, 1988, p.43.

25 Ibid. p.49.

26 Emmanuel Swedenborg. *Arcana Coelestia*. London: The Swedenborg Society, 1988, note 4281:2.

creation when God finishes His work and the Sabbath comes (*Genesis 2:2,3*). At that point conflict ceases and the Lord rests. That day or that state is made holy,²⁷ holiness meaning being led by the Lord.²⁸ Evil spirits withdraw and good spirits approach.²⁹ Jehovah causes a mist to go up from the earth (*Genesis 2:5,6*). The outer part of us starts to comply with and serve our inner spirit. Conflict ceases. Tranquility follows. The inner things of us water the outer ones. "This serenity which is characteristic of peace brings forth the things which are called shrubs. These are the rational concepts and facts that have a celestial-spiritual origin."³⁰ In other words, the mind becomes capable of thinking. "No, I better calm down; I'm getting angry over nothing." "Wait, I'm being really pushy." "No, I won't have that extra dessert." Adam can now name the animals or things of the outer part of his being: anger, persuasiveness, jealousy, envy, love of eating, gaining wealth, etc. They all can be tamed and made to serve the inner part of him. We certainly wouldn't want to live without being capable of anger when necessary, or being able to persuade another, in freedom, of the way we see things. And we cannot live without eating or gaining a certain amount of wealth. But when these things of our outer selves that were made to serve usefulness gain too much strength and overpower our inner selves, blocking out all sense of proportion and ratio, then our inner person, or our spirit, starts to become enslaved.

But with the Sabbath we become free from the slavery of evil and falsity. We are re-created by the rain and watered by the serenity of peace.³¹ The Lord makes an agreement of peace promising for the future, "I will banish the evil wild animal

27 Ibid. note 84.

28 Ibid. note 9229.

29 Ibid. note 87.

30 Ibid. note 91.

31 Ibid. note 93.

(evil desires) from the land, and they will dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. I will make them . . . a blessing, and I will cause the rain to descend in its season . . . They will be with confidence on their land, and they will know that I am Jehovah, that I will break the bars of their yoke, and I will free them from the hand of those that enslave them” (Ezekiel 34:25-27). In this chapter where the Lord is dealing with freeing us from internal slavery, to be clear that He has the ability, the Word reads, “You are My flock, the flock of My pasture; you are human, and I am your God.” (Ezekiel 34:31).

Helen Kennedy writes essays, fiction and poetry. She is currently editor of Theta Alpha Journal and can be contacted at Hmkennedy98@gmail.com.

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.

See following page for guidelines and submission instructions.

Laws of Life Essay Contest Parameters

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, 2021

Templeton/Laws of Life essay contest winners for 2020:

1st place:	Deidre Bongers	\$100
2nd place:	Leah Synnestvedt	\$75
3rd place:	Emma Bryntesson	\$50

Honorable Mentions:

Dylan Blumenthal, Celeste Friend

Surviving Coronavirus Lockdown

Dale Morris, Stonesfield, England: Covid-19 has had two sharply different impacts on my own life. First, it cut short a visit home to Bryn Athyn to see my mom, age 96, and give some respite to my siblings who are caring for her. I arrived on a Wednesday evening in mid-March; on Friday the US President announced that all flights between the US and the UK would be cancelled at midnight on Monday. So by Sunday evening, I was on a plane back to the UK, and the next afternoon the Prime Minister declared an immediate lockdown of the UK. Though really sad to leave a week earlier than planned, I was grateful to have seen Mom for those few days, plus other family and a few friends. And I was hugely relieved to get back to my home in England!

Second: Once back at home, life slowed right down. I retired some years ago so didn't have the worry of work/no work, but normal daily things became very curtailed. The world in my village was really quiet, on the edge of the Cotswold hills surrounded by countryside: no planes overhead, no traffic on the streets. I made an inventory of all the food we had; some interesting meals followed as we used up the contents of cupboards and freezers. The weather in April and May was absolutely gorgeous – unexpectedly dry, warm and sunny for weeks on end. The spring this year was astonishing; the natural world became an acknowledged savior for mental health.

I still don't know anyone in 'my world' who's had Covid-19. Apart from the very real evidence of its horrors broadcast in the media, I could almost think the whole thing is just 'pretend.' But it's not. Flare-ups/spikes keep happening in the UK and around the world. Governments are struggling to cope with its effects on economies and public health, trying different approaches with varying degrees of success. Other important issues have been shunted aside or

marginalized—and that is not good.

Things are easing now, and I'm still my normal cheerful self. But this virus will be with us for who knows how long. I take all the necessary precautions (I'm very nearly in the 'vulnerable' age group) but it's tedious. I try to have faith in the Lord's Providence for everyone, but it's a hard road for many, and may be for me one day.

Dale says: I am one of life's cheerful optimists. I grew up in Bryn Athyn, part of the Cooper-Rose clan. I've lived in the UK for nearly 50 years now, and raised four children in our English village not far from Oxford. My husband is a keen gardener and I like dealing with the produce. Four of our eight grandchildren live within easy reach; I love spending time with them, though I'm concerned about the world they'll inherit. Dale can be contacted at richard.morris@zen.co.uk.

Aurelle Genzlinger, Bryn Athyn, USA: The Coronavirus began its significant impact on my area of the US two days before we were to return from a Spring Break trip in Mexico. I was there with my family: husband and two daughters, aged 12 and 14. We got home to the announcement that most things were closed. We could cautiously go to the grocery store, and school was cancelled for at least the next two weeks. We settled in with excitement from our daughters that they didn't have to go to school, and relative contentedness with the idea of being at home.

Ironically, at a time when most people were being kept from their jobs (and some flat out losing them), I started my season of work just a few days later (I am a gardener for a small landscaping company; I work on my own, with my own tools, outside, so I could safely continue). My husband's job has always been flexible enough to allow us to travel regularly, and it continued easily from home. School eventually started online, and both my girls preferred it to regular school.

Mostly, the Coronavirus has emphasized the amount of luck and privilege that exists in my life. Luck and privilege: my daughters are old enough and cooperative enough to do their school work independently at home; my husband and I were both former teachers of grades 5-12, and have the knowledge and experience to help them with most educational work; my husband and I are both fairly tech savvy; the previous fall we invested in another chromebook — so our daughters each have their own; our jobs were not hampered by staying at home; my husband and I have practice spending four weeks every summer together 24/7, just the two of us — we know how to be together in small spaces for lengths of time and we even like it; we already owned a travel trailer, and were able to take our annual trip across the country to visit and hike in national parks (and our daughters were still able to go to two weeks of camp). From all this I'd like to emphasize how keen my awareness is that other families may not have the money to afford these things.

We have moments of being depressed. We go through times of not enough physical activity, and I see it taking a toll on my daughters. We spend too much time in front of screens. We eat too much, especially sugar. We all gained weight. We cry. I worry about what will happen if the girls don't get back to regular activities soon — school would be a start, but it's not the only thing. I'm not sure I remember how to manage all the activities we used to do. I have trouble remembering things.

We are closer as a family. There are fewer opportunities for socialization, and I find I say "no" more than I used to; not out of fear of the virus, but because I am enjoying being home more than I ever thought I would. My girls are better friends with each other. My husband has completed many at-home projects. Our life is whole, even though we don't feel that way sometimes. We feel like a family now in ways we didn't before.

Aurelle is a 42-year-old wife and mother of two girls, ages 15 and 13. She is a gardener for a small landscaping company, and

a member of the Bryn Athyn Borough Council. Aurelle can be contacted at aurelle@genzlinger.net.

Ersa Parker, Guelph, Canada: Three years ago, our daughter, Holly, in Guelph, Ontario, invited us to come to look into a Seniors' Residence that she had observed and was impressed with. Not only were we impressed by the residence itself, but also the beautiful grounds surrounding it. However, after much thought and conversation with our family we decided that we were not ready to leave our condo in Toronto, the Church, and our family and friends. As we aged we began to reconsider the move again and in January, with three of our kids, we toured it again. We asked the Manager to put our name down for a two bedroom apartment. Once again, we had second thoughts and as time went by with still no decision and the arrival of the pandemic, our Realtor advised that it wasn't a good time to sell. Now we put the idea out of our minds altogether. However, in June, our Realtor called to say the market was good and asked if we wanted to sell.

It's really hard to describe our feelings and weighing the pros and cons of making such a big change in our lives! John turned 88 in June and I turned 89 in July. How could we manage such a move? John spent his whole life in Toronto and I had been there 67 and a half years. How could we leave family and friends and our beloved Olivet Church and go into unknown circumstances? Four of our children live in the USA, one daughter lives in Guelph, another daughter in Toronto, and a son lives 3 hours north of Toronto. Where would it make the most sense to be? What would be the best thing for the whole family? How could we manage a big move? One thing that was helpful in making up our minds was that, due to Covid, we had already been attending church and classes online, and basically had not been able to visit friends for quite awhile. In going to the home we would have all our basic needs taken care of in one place which would free our family of concerns for us. Another plus was that our

daughter, Holly, lives very close to the residence in Guelph as do two of our adult grandchildren.

It is very hard to describe the swirling emotions, and then the practical aspect of having buyers going through our home. Would it sell? Would we get a good price? Would someone else love it as much as we have? After six people viewed our place we got the call that it had sold! Now the “fat was in the fire” and we had to face trying to downsize and sift out what we wouldn’t need anymore! Without the help of our daughters we never would have managed! During that time I shed many tears and kept praying that we were doing the right thing. John managed all the financial aspects while two of our daughters, Holly and Gwenda, helped me to make hard decisions about what to keep and what to give away. Giving up some of my homemaking activities and most of my kitchen things that had served to feed family and friends over the years was very difficult!

The actual move went smoothly but then, because of Covid, we had to stay in our apartment for two weeks which was really hard. Our daughter, Gwenda, was allowed to be in our apartment on moving day, and since then no family will be allowed into our home until Covid restrictions are lifted. We look forward to having our family and friends visit us in person! Meantime, we stay connected through video chats and phone calls.

On the plus side, we are in a beautiful location with a view of a pond and gardens. We have found the staff here both kind and helpful! There are lots of young people working here which makes our days cheerful. We need to be patient because of the pandemic. Everyone wears masks which makes it difficult to get acquainted with the residents. I am sure that will improve as time goes by.

In looking back we realize that the Lord has been looking after us all along. We are grateful for our faith, and the knowledge that in Providence we are here for a reason. We

are thankful for all the ways we have been helped, and my husband and I know that making this move together has blessed us beyond measure as we look to new ways of being useful.

Ersa says: I was born in Bryn Athyn Pa. the youngest child of Rev. Karl R Alden and Ersa Smith Alden. I attended the Elementary School, Academy High School, and part of one year of ANC college. I have been married to my husband, John Parker, for sixty seven and a half years and we have raised two sons and five daughters. We are blessed with 25 grandchildren and twenty-three great-grandchildren. We have been members of the Olivet Church in Toronto for all our married life.

Gwenda Cowley, Toronto, Canada: Like many people I still don't know what to make of it. In the age of information bombarding us, it is interesting to realize that doctors, scientists, governments, don't have all the answers and we are all needing to learn a TON and adjust a LOT to so much.

In many ways, my life has been minimally impacted. In March, we came home early from a spring break trip to Florida, which was disappointing, but the prudent thing to do since the US/Canada border was beginning to close. 14 days of quarantine was not hard . . . friends brought us groceries, my husband and I enjoyed our new-found time together, and I had a stack of jigsaw puzzles I was grateful for the excuse to do. (I completed at least fifteen 1000-piece puzzles). As an introvert, I didn't mind having to stay home. What was hard, was not being able to go check in on others, to make sure they were OK. We made a lot of phone calls and video chats to friends and family. We watched the news a lot and tried to stay informed. I turned my kitchen table into a greenhouse and grew vegetable seeds.

The Olivet Church and School were closed which was very strange and very sad. We live across the street from the building and it was so sad not to see the usual comings and

goings and the happy sounds of children. We missed seeing our congregants. A friend and I began to arrange the flowers for the chancel for the live-streamed church services, and figuring out who they should be delivered to each week. I helped my husband, Michael, record weekly “chapel” talks in our living room for the Olivet kids. I even sang a few times with him. There was a drive-by parade for school children and families to wave to the retiring teachers. The New Church Day gifts were handed out in a drive-by which was different and fun. At least we could see people even if they were in their cars. It was all very strange . . . no school closing ceremony, no New Church Day procession and picnic (although Jared and Justine Buss did a fabulous pageant which was live-streamed!). It all felt very strange. Michael has found it very weird to preach to a video camera while ignoring empty pews, but he is grateful for the technology which has allowed our congregation to feel connected and served spiritually.

I helped my parents move this summer. It was stressful trying to keep them as safe as possible from any chance of exposure to Covid, so I did all their shopping up until they moved in late July. I even went with them for their required Covid test prior to moving. I stayed with them the week prior, was there when the packers came, and then drove them to their new place and helped them unpack. Unfortunately, like so many others, our daughter has had to postpone her October wedding for a year. We were sad to miss the General Church retreat. And I was sad to have Maple Leaf camp for teens cancelled. A lot of sad times for so many!

Mostly, I have counted the many, many blessings in my life . . . all my children and their families are well and accounted for, as well as my siblings’ families. We have technology to stay connected with Church as well as our loved ones via video chat and zooms. But I look forward to the time when we can HUG each other, and see faces. I try to always smile beneath my mandatory mask, hoping the energy goes beyond. I pray for our leadership to make good decisions about the future. And I sure

hope all the kids can get back to the schools they love and need, and that we can return to church!

Gwenda says: For five years now, I have enjoyed living in Toronto, Canada (where I also grew up). My husband, Michael, is the pastor here and I love my involvement with Church uses of various kinds. Hopefully that will return to some kind of normal soon! Gwenda can be contacted at Gwendacowley2@gmail.com.

Guillaume Anato, Benin: Like many other countries in the world, my country with its population of ten million has been affected by coronavirus disease. The first death occurred at the beginning of April. As of August 31, 2020, the cumulative report published by the government of Benin shows 2,145 confirmed cases, 1,738 recoveries, and 40 deaths. So, in six months Covid has killed 40 people. Despite this record, we must thank the Lord for this low number because in Benin malaria kills more than 40 people in six months. With this disease, The World Health Organization (WHO) predicted a disaster for Africa. But the worst has not happened in Benin despite our health system, which is not one of the most efficient. However, we need to keep vigilant about the virus.

At the end of March 2020, the Beninese government ordered the closure of places of worship. Three months later places of worship were authorized to reopen to receive church members. We (Religious leaders) must, however, ensure that people wear masks, wash hands and respect the safety distance during church services. To conclude I will say Covid 19 has not killed many people in Benin (thank God), but it has killed the economy. The church keeps praying to the Lord to free the world from this ugly disease.

Guillaume Kuassivi Anato is the New Church minister in Benin, West Africa. He was ordained in 2010. His wife's name is Stella Viviane (Dhemou), and they have three children: Emmanuela, Samuel and Louange. Guillaume can be contacted

at anatokgui@hotmail.com.

Valerie Jorgenson Younan, Woodbridge, Canada: As with societies the world over, the Toronto area slid into a strange new reality in mid-March. My husband and I were both able to work from home, along with our two teenage boys who did heroically with online schooling. Living and working on top of each other has had its challenges. My husband's job involves multiple phone meetings every day, most of which now take place in the laundry room. My calls and Zoom meetings take place sitting on our bed! We "watch church" through the TV, which is both weird and wonderful. We're masked for any outing and slather on hand sanitizer. We've blazed through a number of Netflix series and we've walked until it's just so boring.

During the first few months of 'lockdown' it got to a point of feeling like a strange balance of "quite normal" and "totally weird" all the time. My emotions were always right below the surface and it didn't take much to get me crying (darned diaper commercials!). Due to the amazing nature of humanity and adaptability, it all feels mostly just normal now. Canada appears to have done a good job of managing the spread of COVID. Schools are opening up, with many layers of protocols. Olivet School is suddenly 'ahead of the curve' with its very small class sizes. In a move unimaginable 12 months ago, we actually had to cap class sizes this year (to allow distancing). We've held off on reopening church as yet, considering a large portion of our congregation is in the older, high-risk category. Our spiritual needs are being met online, for the most part, but we sure miss the communion of friends that in-person togetherness brings.

We continue to look for the positives in this, while diligently adhering to the negatives. The earth is still spinning on its axis and we're all still in the palm of the Lord's hand. Apparently this is still the day that the Lord has made and we can still rejoice and be glad in it.

Valerie and her husband, Kamil, live with their two sons, Ashur and Adam, in Woodbridge, Ont., just north of Toronto, where they are members of the Olivet New Church. Val is an independent HR Practitioner, providing HR services to both the Olivet and Carmel New Churches and Schools in Ontario. Val can be contacted at valerieyounan@rogers.com.

Lara Muth, London, England: In August last year I started a new job as Operations Manager for a science communications charity. They connect the best UK experts and evidence with national science and health journalists *when science hits the headlines*.

So when news arrived of a novel coronavirus and we did our first briefing on the topic at the end of January, there was a palpable sense of excitement in the office at having a really big story to chew on—bigger than novichok, bigger than BSE.¹ I was just in the background, diligently paying the bills.

Because of our access to insider knowledge, we were advised to isolate earlier than the rest of the country and work from home. I took refuge in a friend's flat close by on the edge of The City² – spooky quiet – that square mile of finance and industry in the heart of London. The bell-ringers of St. Botolph's silenced for the duration. Pubs boarded up against civil unrest. Foxes ran free in the deserted streets. Pheasant were reported perambulating on the wharf at HM Tower of

1 Novichok: in 2018 a retired Russian spy and his daughter were poisoned with the nerve agent, Novichok, causing a major incident in the cathedral city of Salisbury. BSE: Britain was deeply affected by BSE in the 80's and 90's (also known as *mad cow disease*). The way science was communicated to the public came under scrutiny.

2 The old original medieval walls encompass an area widely known as 'The City.' It is also often referred to as 'The Square Mile.'

London. And the skies. . . September 11th blue.³

Elsewhere my colleagues were working long shifts, late into the night, scrambling to set up Zooms, struggling against shortages of mobile data and squeezed internet signal, feverishly fighting bad facts and conspiracy theories through endless seven-day weeks.

Having done my day's work paying the payroll, remonstrating with the phone company, preparing the annual accounts, I sat by the *wireless* each night doing cross stitch to the drone of the daily briefing. Somewhere else it was all happening — flooded hospitals, care homes in chaos, the Prime Minister and other cabinet members carried by the virus. Me and mine were fine.

I don't do that job anymore—casualty of my own efficiency. But I know, no matter how exciting or how chaotic, how tragic and confusing it all appears from a distance — somewhere close by someone is going on quietly paying the price.

We must all prepare our own account of these times for the greatest auditor that is God.

Lara Muth has lived in London since 2002. She is a writer and theatre artist working in charity finance. She can be contacted at frisland@hotmail.com.

3 After Sept 11th the skies over Bryn Athyn were azure blue and brilliantly clear, entirely devoid of jet trails because all the air traffic had been shut down in that part of the East Coast corridor — except for the occasional jet sorties flown screaming out of nearby Willow Grove Naval Air Station. Very unsettling. This spring, London felt very similar; the weather was spectacularly fine and all plane traffic had been halted.

Lisa Hyatt Cooper, Bryn Athyn, USA: COVID-19 hasn't created a lot of changes in my life. I've been working at home for years already, and the funding for the work I do is fairly safe. I'm pretty much of a hermit even in normal times. I did have to give up social dancing, my favorite form of exercise, and I badly miss my monthly visit to distant family members. But I haven't gotten sick, nor have my nearest and dearest; my life is still full of meaningful activity; and I'm still able to meet my basic needs.

What the pandemic *has* dealt a blow to is an important effort I've been involved in. Ever since January a good-government group I belong to had been gearing up for a huge rally at our state's Capitol. And for the four years before that the group had been working hard to pass an amendment to the state constitution by this summer, after which the reform we sought would be unachievable for another decade. The rally in support of this reform, unfortunately, was set for March 23. On March 16 a shutdown announced by the governor went into effect.

Legislators friendly to our cause later told our director they felt that we'd had good momentum and that success had been within our reach, if only we could have continued to push hard. Instead we had to go almost completely silent, leaving our legislators alone so they could deal with the serious public health emergency. The moment for reform was lost.

It was personally painful to me to have spent two weeks' worth of what would otherwise have been work time on preparations for the rally, only to see it all go down the drain. But I grieve for my poor suffering state as well, because of the lost chance to better the lives of its citizens.

Still, I know any movement requires the biblical "time and times and half a time" to come to fruition, so I try to trust that Providence has a plan, of which this seeming failure is a part. Meanwhile the energy hundreds of us have devoted to an attempt to make the world a better place must be having a

positive spiritual effect, even if we can't see it.

Lisa Hyatt Cooper is a translator for the New Century Edition of the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. She can be contacted at lisahyattcooper@gmail.com.

Sarah Walker, Perth: We've been lucky here in Perth, Western Australia. We haven't had any community transmission of Covid-19 since April. Being a big mining state and hence important to the Australian export economy, they closed down our borders quickly, very early on and whilst they are still closed to the rest of Australia and the world, life has resumed here almost back to normal. We are still being encouraged to practice social distancing and good hygiene but all community venues have reopened and resumed their usual activities.

We had a brief 3-to 4-week period of home lockdown in April/May. We were still allowed to leave the house for exercise and, since it occurred during a very sunny period with beautiful weather, I found myself taking my children to the beach every day — which is something I don't normally do even in summer. And like most other mothers that I've spoken to since, we found that it was a time of unexpected relief at not having to drive our children to the many different after-school activities. It was a delight seeing more children playing on the street during the day and getting to know neighbours. Since we couldn't go away during the school holidays in April we, like so many other families, camped out on the front lawn for a couple of nights. We watched neighbours sharing drinks between driveways when they normally would be stuck in the commuting traffic home. So whilst it has had its challenges — it has also had its sweet surprises.

Still, we watch what's happening on the world scene with concern and care and also a knowing that it's still a very real possibility that the virus will make its way into our city. But for now, I am taking each day as it arrives and reminding myself

that the Lord always has our heavenly life end in view, despite what the appearances in this life are.

Sarah is currently studying the Diploma of Spiritual Christianity at the Australian New Church College. She loves being part of the spiritual community that has built up around Logopraxis. For her it is a way of truly sharing life together in the Word. She can be contacted at sarah.walker@logopraxis.online.

Mary Margaret Zathey-Agboga, Ghana: Covid-19 has caused the loss of jobs for many people in the country. Workplaces like hotels, restaurants, etc., have been closed down for some time now. This has rendered their staffs jobless without any source of income.

Also, education has greatly been affected. Everything in this aspect has been shifted in the virtual direction. Because of this, students in areas without internet access do not partake in e-learning platforms, making them miss a lot. This is going to cause more burden on the teachers to restart everything they taught before Covid-19 emerged.

Teachers who teach in private schools no longer get their salaries paid. Because there are no students paying fees, from which the salaries are obtained.⁴

The emergence of the coronavirus in late 2019 didn't have a global effect until early 2020 when the spread peaked. In Ghana, the impact was felt almost immediately. Financially, the Ghanaian economy is largely dependent on foreign countries which were affected, and we were an indirect casualty.

Covid-19 brought with it the reason why innovation and progress is needed in our lives. Since January lots of

4 This happened to the teaching staff of the New Church school in Tema, Ghana, pastored by the Rev. Ekow Eshun.

companies have resorted to working from home and using technology to enhance their productivity. Some public institutions instructed their workers to do every non-essential work from home, and only the essential staff should report. It is not a surprise that the public purse has been greatly affected, as things that need human presence to generate their profits are now relegated to indoors. Also, football⁵ matches, concerts and other parties are, for the time being, now held outdoors without any audience. Covid-19 has indeed caused a huge change in the way we do things.

The majority of Ghana's trade includes imported products. Even vegetables are imported from neighboring and distant nations. With the emergence of Covid-19, the president of Ghana declared travel restrictions. This means that business people didn't have the liberty of traveling to countries to purchase their wares and bring them back here. This has caused prices of items to increase because demand has increased and supply decreased. Some exporters have also run at a loss, since perishable items that needed to be exported have either perished or been given out for cheap.

Due to the social distancing rules, passenger cars⁶ were made to reduce the number of people they took. This made some drivers increase their prices and, as expected, there were public outcries.

As time went on the situation started to improve, and now in August things are much better than they were in March to July. I've heard of some people who got the virus, but since they are not willing to talk about it, I am not able to write

5 In Ghana, soccer is called football.

6 In Ghana, the main means of transportation for the public are minibuses (tro-tros) and passenger cars. The drivers of both run regular routes, leaving only when the vehicle is full. They take people to and from work, etc. People often are crowded into the vehicles because the demand is so great.

anything about it.

Mary Margaret has a degree in theology and is a trained pastor in the Assemblies of God Church in Ghana. She is married to Rev. Godwin Zattey-Agboga. She can be contacted at Zattamagav@gmail.com.

Jessica McCardell, London, England: Living overseas, away from family and home country is challenging and can be very lonely at times. It is especially so amid a pandemic. As many know, the UK was hit very hard by the virus and particularly London, a city of almost 9 million. When it was finally decided to lockdown, the virus was already rapidly spreading. Sadly some members of our congregation have lost friends and neighbours to Covid. Many people likely had the virus without knowing and early on symptoms we now associate with Covid were overlooked. One of our sons had a fever for a few days right after schools closed at the end of March. I had a week of the most extreme exhaustion I've ever had, lost all my smell and could only taste hints of salt and sweet. It's still not back completely. My husband, Ethan, had the same tiredness (plus blurred vision) for two weeks, and slight cough with one scary day where he laboured to breathe. Neither of us had a fever. The rest of the kids all showed what are now being considered some of the milder symptoms. Our hospitals were overwhelmed and not far from us they'd built the Nightingale, a temporary hospital for Covid patients. At the time they only had testing for people admitted to the hospital. Healthcare workers who had symptoms were often just told to isolate without being tested themselves. We weren't allowed to venture out of our neighbourhoods. There were strict measures in place and fines if you were found out without a valid reason. Shopping was extremely difficult for our family of 2 adults and 5 teens/kids. We have a small fridge/freezer and it only fits about 2-3 days worth of food for our family. Meaning we shop every day, every 2-3 if we are very careful at playing fridge tetris. Not ideal when

you are having to go out while not feeling well, and with no one around to help. During the height of our cases, the food shortages were severe in our area of London. We didn't qualify for online orders as we aren't high risk, over 65, or essential workers. They began limiting items per shopping trip — not family size. We had to buy creatively to feed our family. Some stores made their own rationed bags of flour and there were weeks where we couldn't find eggs or other essentials like toilet paper, cheese, milk, or meat. Somehow my wonderful mother-in-law found a way to order us non-perishable food items online where we couldn't find a slot to do so. We also had a couple weeks where family members surprised us with take away meals delivered to us. This was especially helpful when we were overwhelmed with sickness and online school.

Online schooling was extremely difficult! The UK ranks 35th in the world for internet speed, so you can imagine what it was like to try to have 5+ people online at once with the internet crashing, or completely not working for a whole day. Our oldest son missed out on his final year of school before university, which was very hard for him, especially because so much of his focus is in science (biology) and it was a very hands-on program. Our second son was in his last year of secondary school (equivalent of sophomore year of high school in US). So he missed prom and his Leaver [Graduation] ceremony. They cancelled the GCSE (the giant test they'd been gearing up to take for years which determines placement in 6th form, University and even jobs). One of our daughters has anxiety, and thankfully the pandemic was not a trigger. However, online school was. I spent so much time trying to help her navigate the workload and not panic. This often meant she'd be working solidly for sometimes over 5 hours because she wanted to finish everything. The workload was intense. We were able to line up a weekly call with a counsellor and the school allowed her to move to a reduced schedule. The rest of the kids managed as best they could. It was not an easy time. UK schools don't get out for Summer

break until mid to late July. So it was quite a long time to not be in the classroom. None of our kids schools had the option of in-person online classes, so it was all set work online. The schools did the best they could, but it was so much all at once and they had no time to prepare.

Somehow we all persevered and worked to find joy amid the chaos. Most days Ethan and I went on our allotted 'once-a-day form of outdoor exercise.' We'd walk around the park behind our house. The kids did at the start of lockdown, but gave that up early on as they got tired of the monotony of walking in a circle trying to socially distance from people. We are lucky to have a small patio garden/yard to sit outside. We created a small Mediterranean-style garden in pots and my son helped me make a vertical pallet planter. We grew a lot from seed. Without any planes overhead and almost no cars, London was so quiet and the air so fresh! We all truly appreciated the little things. The songbirds overhead, the lilac bush blooming in our neighbours yard. It still amazes me that for almost 4 months the kids hardly left the threshold of our house. We did go to the church on Sundays to help Ethan livestream a service, but we were the only ones there. We didn't see anyone we knew until July just before school ended and lockdown restrictions eased.

Amazingly Ethan didn't miss a Sunday, rallying the energy to virtually preach (despite some technical bumps) even the weeks he was sick. Ethan moved his 3 monthly traveling classes online, and made some weekly to help build a sense of community. Almost all members of our church live quite a distance, and many are elderly. In July when lockdown eased and churches could have up to 30 people, a few church members traveled in to help set up the church so we can socially distance and keep the building clean and safe. We've reduced the pews and widened the aisles to allow for safe distances and made a one way system in and out. We still have been streaming the services as many still are unable to join us in person. Despite it all, we do feel the Lord's

blessings amid the chaos of this year. It has helped us to be more patient with one another, to have greater compassion for those who have had it much worse than ourselves, to trust in the Lord's Divine Providence, that all things are being led to an end that is good, even if we can't see it in the moment.

Jessica McCardell is married to Rev. Ethan McCardell who is the pastor of Michael Church in London, England. They, and their 5 kids, have been serving internationally for the past 4 years.

Brenda Rydstrom, Bryn Athyn, US: During the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic Gretchen Glover and I spearheaded an effort: TEAM SEAM. It began with the realization that masks helped to decrease the spread of the virus. Being stitchers, Gretchen and I both started using our skills by making masks. Then Janet Krettek, a doctor at Holy Redeemer Hospital, sent a request to the *Bryn Athyn Emergency Preparedness* page on Facebook. She was in search of Isolation Gowns for the medical teams there. They didn't have enough personal protective gear for their staff and wanted gowns that could be washed and dried. I decided to turn my efforts to making gowns for the Hospital as many people were making masks. After finishing 3 on my own, I realized that trying to meet this need by myself was not practical. That's when I called up Gretchen and enlisted her help in forming TEAM SEAM.

I put out pleas on Facebook for stitchers to help us and for supplies: usable sheets to make the gowns from, elastic for cuffs, bias tape to finish necks with and velcro to close. In a time of extreme strife, the response to these requests was truly heartening. Altogether, 15 people volunteered to sew and others, including some who lived out of town, looked through their stash or ordered new materials online, donating them for our endeavor. We got busy. Gretchen and I took on the job of cutting, so that each stitcher would receive a bag with a cut

gown and all the notions in it to sew, as many as they felt they had time for up to 4 in one load. Most gown kits were picked up and dropped off at Cairnwood Village, where I live, in a no-contact manner so that everyone volunteering would remain safe. We sewed non-stop for several months. We made over 300 gowns for Holy Redeemer Hospital and Luther Woods Care Center. It was wonderful. I was so proud of the amazing group of women who banded together to serve this incredibly useful purpose, each giving their time, energy and skills for the good of hospital workers totally unknown to them. It was proof that hope can overcome fear, good can overcome evil, and that love can overcome hatred.

Being part of TEAM SEAM was amazingly humbling. Everyone who worked with the team truly saw the usefulness of it and worked tirelessly without complaint to do what needed to be done. Even though we all worked at home in a solitary sewing place, we felt the unity of purpose and commitment to the first responders we worked to protect. We sewed a heart on each gown so that workers would know they were made with love. We never saw each other, but we were united. We connected with people out of our normal daily lives in a very special way. The workers sent us pictures of themselves wearing our gowns and smiling [see back inside cover].

Working on TEAM SEAM made us think of the similar efforts of our mothers and grandmothers who worked together in so many different ways to support our military in the field during the World Wars. It was a generational tie with the past and precious because of this. It felt good to be part of the fight like these women. It felt strengthening to fight this faceless, soulless enemy with our hands and a piece of cloth. TEAM SEAM was a life-changing positive effort in a time when our world spun out of control. Both Gretchen and I felt energized and enriched by this effort at the time. It gave all of us on TEAM SEAM a positive goal to focus on and we bonded with each other in ways that we could not have predicted. Now,

Gretchen and I realize that although we had worked together planning and organizing many weddings and plays, we both agree that neither of us had ever felt such an overwhelming sense of rightness, purpose and good surrounding a goal. We are forever grateful for the opportunity to express our better selves in working for the greater good.

Members of TEAM SEAM: Kay Alden, Lori Crockett Benson, Jenny Blair, Donna Zeitz Carswell, Sylvia Cooper, Molly Cronlund, Barbara Doering, Gretchen Glover, Monica Hyatt, Elizabeth Orthwein Lawing, Peggy Merrell, Neena Nash, Susan Fazio Nelson, Gail Genzlinger Neukum, Carol Chamberlain Odhner, Lori Odhner, Naomi Haus Roth, Rebekah Brock Russell, Brenda Rydstrom, Janina Stroh, Michelle Morey Synnestvedt.

Many many thanks to all of you!

Many of our readers' children and grandchildren are attending school online, a great change from attending classes in person. This has caused a lot of difficulties for families and teachers, and we would like to hear from you about your experiences. We want to hear what problems you've had and how you've addressed them. Let us know what has worked and what hasn't.

Adoption

Beth Brock

*This talk was given at the Theta Alpha International Luncheon
October 4, 2019*

The Lord brings families together in many ways and adoption is an important one. At 4 months old I was adopted. I feel incredibly grateful for that. There are many things I would not have experienced if it weren't for my adoption. I would not have had Bob and Betty Anderson as my dear parents. Instead I would have been raised by a woman still struggling to plant her feet. I would not have shared love and laughter with my sister, Martha, and I would not have had the church. I have met my birth mother, Ruth Lea, and although she was quite interested in hearing about Swedenborg (so much so that she even climbed up to look into Swedenborg's summer house window in Sweden), it is likely that I would not have been raised in the church or perhaps any church. Lastly, I would not have married an amazing young man from Australia named Jon or had the family that I cannot live without.

I had always known I was adopted. My parents told me they chose me. I took the liberty to imagine my 'four-month-old' self to be positioned among the lettuce and the cabbage at a grocery store. In my mind, yes, I was a Cabbage Patch kid! I was not too concerned with how I got to the supermarket but that I was "chosen."

My first real awareness that I was "given up" was when I was in kindergarten. A classmate had been teasing me over several days. Finally, and I am not proud of what I said, **but** when he brought it up again, I promptly told him, looking at him straight in the eye (which was rare for me), "Well, my mother knew I would be adopted but your mom was not so sure . . . so she kept you!!" Needless to say, that ended our

conversation. I clearly remember practicing those lines to be ready in case he teased me again!

When I was growing up, I felt different than my organized, tidy, talkative and focused family. I thought it was because I was adopted and often wondered how I could fit in better. However, having six children of my own and seeing how unique each one is, I have since realized it was not because I was adopted.

Fast forward through my life. On June 2, 1995, our family experienced the loss of our baby who was stillborn late in pregnancy. Her name is Kristin. The hardest thing I ever had to do was hand her to the nurse one last time. I vowed right then that I would find my birth mom. I now knew what she had given up to give me a better life and I needed to thank her for that.

A few short months after this my birth mother, living in British Columbia, sent her contact information to the Ontario Adoption Registry “just in case I ever wanted to find her.”

Several years later, after the Children’s Aid Society opened the private adoption records, I found out where I was born and other identifying information that had been filled out by my birth mother. I showed my kids Ruth’s signature and asked them who wrote it. They quickly answered, “That’s your handwriting, Mom.” We shared the same handwriting so I wondered what else we might share?

I sat down to research. There were 25 Ruth Lea Taylors in Canada. I found a barrister (a lawyer) who advocates for women and children and I felt somehow it had to be her. To my surprise I found her — on Facebook of all places! I remember shaking terribly when I sent her a message. Since she was not well-versed in technology (another thing we have in common), Ruth took a year to get back to me. You can imagine the amount of shaking I did when she responded to me! We spoke on the phone, exchanged e-mails and pictures.

She spoke slowly like I do. We look like each other and we have very similar life views.

Then came the letter! Ruth wrote, "Today, fifty years ago, on November 22, 1963, the very day of the assassination of Jack Kennedy, a doctor in Hamilton, Ontario, where I was attending McMaster University, confirmed to me that I was pregnant. I contemplated our future every night. But, as you know well, being a mother is a vocation and it should not be entered into carelessly. You were born on August 13, 1964 at 10:40 pm. Three days later, on my 21st birthday, August 16, 1964, I saw you for the second time — you had black hair and your eyes were closed. Then you scrunched up your face in a look of pure distaste and opened your amazingly blue eyes and looked right at me. We said good-bye."

One day when Ruth and I were talking she told me that during the month after my birth she walked around holding a pillow to fill her empty arms. My heart went out to her for I knew what that was like from losing my own daughter. By my mother I had been unselfishly carried to full term, and after, fostered for four months. Then I was brought home by my parents, December of 1964 and was raised by my dedicated family. Today, I have a sweet relationship with Ruth. So, I feel my life has come full circle.

As with each one of us, the Lord's loving care provides for our needs—every step of the way. I wasn't given up or abandoned . . . just loved by different people. Thank you!

"The love into which a person was created is the love of the neighbor," *Divine Providence* 275.

Beth and her husband Jon have six children, a daughter-in-law, a son-in-law and two grandchildren. Her job as teacher at Pennypack Preschool keeps her busy with gratitude for the precious little ones in her care. She can be contacted at eightbrocks@yahoo.com.

Nothing

Jenn Beiswenger

When I was little, I told my mom, “Mom, when I grow up, I want to be just like you: nothing.” Some people scoff at these words, but I think moms get it; I think moms understand. Those simple words didn’t mean that my mom was a nobody, that I didn’t respect her or that I wanted to grow up just to stay home and watch soaps and eat bonbons all day (goodness knows, my mom didn’t!). I was expressing the desires of my heart: not to be a career woman, but to be a MOM, just like her.

For as long as I can remember, I’ve wanted to bear children and be a mom. I’ve always loved babies. I’ve had other career goals along the way – archeologist, architect, nurse (*baby nurse!*), doctor (*baby doctor!*), graphic designer, midwife – but what it all ever came down to was that I wanted to be a *mom*. You can imagine my EXCITEMENT when my husband and I decided we were ready to start trying to conceive!!!

. . . Then you can perhaps imagine my utter devastation when my period came, month after month after bloomin’ month. [*Who ever expects to deal with **infertility** while growing up?! I sure didn’t.*] We were fortunate to have the means to eventually attempt IVF, and we were gloriously blessed with success on the very first try!! Our son is now 13 years old, and I try to remind myself how so very, very blessed we are to have him.

Following our son’s conception, I was in seventh heaven! I was totally in my element: I loved pregnancy, I loved childbirth, I *loved* the newborn/infancy stage. I **LOVED** mothering a small child! I loved being ‘nothing’. In the ensuing six years, we tried, on and off, with greater and lesser intensity, to conceive a sibling for our son. I did fall pregnant

from one frozen embryo, but miscarried shortly thereafter; besides that . . . nothing. We tried everything under the sun! Herbs, homeopathy, allergy elimination, acupuncture, chiropractic, fertility diet, shamanic healing and past-life regression, for pete's sake, along with another fresh IVF cycle and the glimmers of hope provided by the remaining frozen embryos, all to no avail. When we moved to Australia – I was nearly 40 years old! – we thought we were done, but a friend turned us on to a nutritionist and herbologist specialising in fertility, so we gave it *one more* try (one more series of tries), . . . to no avail. We thought we'd be with her for only about 3 months, but 14 months later, 14 periods later, we just had to pull the plug. We were spent.

While I worked through my grief, there was still a light at the end of my tunnel. It was apparent that I couldn't bear my own children, and we determined that we wouldn't be able to adopt, either, since we wouldn't be able to honour the terms of an open adoption if we ended up — as we likely would — moving back overseas at some point in the future. Instead of these, I would put my passion for babies into truly needy children; we would become foster parents.

It was a shift, going from hoping for our own and growing our permanent family to letting go of that and focusing on temporary care of someone else's child, on giving my heart to a sweet baby and having it wrenched from my arms a few months or years later, but it was a shift and a commitment I was willing to make. We did all the work, got all the references, crossed the t's and dotted the i's, submitted our application and underwent the interview process Who expects to be *DENIED* as foster parents?? I sure didn't. And I didn't agree with the agency's reasons, but nevertheless we had to move on.

So It took me a while to readjust to life, to shift my sights entirely: I had to adjust to a life without the prospect of infants in my care. At 45, I've mostly made peace with it.

I can get tears in my eyes without too much effort, but I don't think about it much any more. I was forced to rediscover myself, to find out what *else* I like besides babies, how *else* I enjoy spending my time besides plotting how we're going to 'get' babies. I've learned that I love cooking nutritious food, I love making JennTangles (Zentangle®-inspired artwork), and I love helping other people – in fact, I've discovered a way to feed that mama-nurturing part of my soul: I volunteer with moms who need support, who are having trouble adjusting to motherhood or who just need an extra pair of hands. I'm getting my baby fix every week!

As it turns out, having one kid has definitely got its perks – just ask him, as he revels in lots more mom- and dad-time and attention than he would otherwise get! Having a single child makes travel much easier, too, and certainly reduces the number of birthday cakes and parties I have to think about each year. I still wish with most of my heart that our son had a sibling, but I've also learned to appreciate our situation as it is, to look for the silver lining, and to make the most of what we've got. We may not have all the kids we'd wanted, but we've apparently got all the kids we need. We are so blessed!

Jenn Jorgenson Beiswenger is living in Hurstville (Sydney), Australia, with her pastor husband, Todd, and their son, Zach. She enjoys parenting, healthy cooking, creating Zentangle-inspired artwork and spiritual growth, and especially, sharing these with others! Jenn can be contacted at jenn@beiswenger.net.

My Adoption Story

Kathleen Cooper Johns

*This talk was given at the Theta Alpha International Luncheon
October 4, 2019.*

“So. . . how did you find the church?” This is one of the last questions my mom, Gaynell Johnston Cooper, asked me before she passed away in July 2006. She endured a slow mental decline caused by many mini-strokes which gave her increasing amounts of dementia. I was sitting with her in the assisted living home and she clearly had no idea who I was. But it didn’t matter, because I knew who she was: the brave woman who decided to adopt a complete stranger. It’s odd how things had come full circle. I entered her life as a stranger and exited as one. But she sure loved me in between.

My mom was what is or, was, called a “Drag-In” to the Church, and never much liked Charter Day. She always felt a bit out of place at all the weekend celebrations because she wasn’t an alumna. She grew up outside of Pittsburgh, and lived next door to Gina Thomas Rose, who married Stanley Rose, if you remember him. Gina and my mom were best friends. When mom was only 17 her father suddenly died. Aunt Gina was away in Bryn Athyn in the girl’s dorm attending the Academy High School. She sent my mom a long letter telling her a lot about life after death and the beautiful New Church beliefs in heaven. My mom had always been searching for what she called “the truth.” Her mother (my grandmother) was a “holy roller,” and as a child my mom watched while people were baptized by being dunked fully clothed in the Venango River. She determined that would never happen to her.

When my grandfather died my mom’s family fell on hard times. As soon as she finished high school, she had to go

to work. At the same time Mom started attending the New Church in Pittsburgh with the Thomases, Aunt Gina's family. She must have been surprised when she found out that she could attend the Academy of the New Church College. Many people helped her realize that dream, and she was so grateful to them. The time was just after World War II and there were a bunch of young handsome soldiers back in town. My Mom and Dad met on the steps of the Civic & Social Club on Alden Road and they fell in love. They were married in the Pittsburgh New Church and began their life together in Bryn Athyn on the third floor of the Cooper home on South Avenue.

Mom was active in the Theta Alpha Guild and other church activities. This included being treasurer for many years for Theta Alpha International. I still remember when little envelopes with dues came in stacks in the mail. She sat in the office opening them and recording the dues and donations from the various members. Very often there were kind notes from people all over the world talking about how much they enjoyed the Journal and appreciated the work that Theta Alpha did. That legacy has come full circle because I have been Theta Alpha treasurer in Washington for many years.

So how DID I find the church? In 1960 my parents, Gaynell & Geoffrey, had 3 children but decided that they would like to have more. It had been six years, so they went to the family doctor, Dr. Andy Doering, and expressed their wish to adopt. Within several weeks they got the news that a baby was available in Pittsburgh. As Providence would have it, I was delivered by a New Church doctor, Steve Heilman. He was the connection. It's also interesting to note that Bob and Karen Johns, parents to many adopted children, had also asked Dr. Andy about adopting at the same time as my parents. Kenneth Johns was born a couple days before me, so they got him and MY parents were next on the list. My husband, Brad, says I was either going to be his cousin or his wife. I WAS DESTINED TO BE A JOHNS.

In 1960 adoption was easier in many ways than it is today. My parents told my older siblings that they were going on a business trip to Pittsburgh, in case my birth parents changed their minds. I was adopted when I was three days old from the very same hospital in Pittsburgh that my mother, Gaynell, had been born in. "Baby Girl Davis" is what they named me. When my parents brought me home my new brother Brian, six years older asked, "What if she's a French baby and she speaks French?" No reason, just a funny kid question. And so began my upbringing and education in the New Church.

My parents made it clear that I was adopted. They never hid it from me, which I think would have been a mistake. I remember playing in the front yard one day with Tracy McQueen and saying very authoritatively, "You know, I'm adopted." And she said, "You are not!" And I said, "Yes, I am." And she asked, "What does adopted mean?" And I replied, "I don't know, BUT I AM!"

I can remember people saying to me you look a lot like your Grandma Cooper, whom I am named after, or like my Aunt Doreen. There were also remarks about me having Cooper traits – loving games, being stubborn — a lot of that is nature vs. nurture. But I will say that Coopers, at least my immediate family, really don't like pets to the extent that I LOVE them. Mom said once that the Johnses SHOULD have adopted me because they were living on a farm. But I never felt different from my siblings or any of my many Cooper cousins.

When I turned 18 my parents gave me all the legal adoption papers. In the 60s adoption was usually closed, unlike today's open adoptions, but I had my mother's name and a little bit of information about her from Dr. Heilman. So every birthday as the years went by, I was always curious about my birth mother. Should I search for her? I was really happy where I was, but it was nagging at me.

I decided it wouldn't hurt to poke around the Internet. You

can find anything on the Internet, right? I began to put my birth mother's name into people search engines. Her name was unique enough that I was able to locate her down to the town and apartment building that she lived in. I sat nervously on this information for many years. It was a can of worms to me. Is this something I want to do or something I don't want to do? I couldn't decide. So I kind of just left it out there and one day searching around the Internet, I found this hometown online bulletin board where she lived. I decided to put a little message on there that said I am searching for Rachellee Rodocker Davis. It sat on that bulletin board discussion site for a long time and then I got an email from a woman who asked: Why do you want to know? So I replied: Does the date 3/26/1960 mean anything? NO, it didn't. Understandably, she was hesitant to give out any further information to a stranger on the internet, so I offered some more info saying that I was searching for my birth mother. This intrigued Julie (that's the name of the woman who knew my birth mother) because she had actually helped a friend find her birth mother with great success a couple of years before.

So we began a conversation. Apparently, Julie's grandfather lived with my birth mother for 31 years so she considered my birth mother to be part of her family although they were not blood related. After a lot of talking, we decided that she would approach Rachellee and ask her directly about me. Julie had never heard anything about my existence because I was quite a bit earlier in Rachellee's life. So she bravely asked Rachellee. She reported back that it was a very uncomfortable exchange. Julie decided she did not want to press it and told me, if you want to, you should contact her.

Again I was torn – was this something I really wanted to do. My own mother, Gaynell, had died by then and I had always worried about hurting her feelings – so that obstacle was gone. I waited until my next birthday so that a letter would arrive about that date, because if I were her (being a mother myself) I would always have wondered every year, on

that date, what had happened to the child I gave up. I sent the letter off. I heard nothing for months and months, so I resigned myself to accept that she didn't want any contact.

Then one afternoon I got a text from Brad saying, I think you want to come home, there's a letter here for you. I knew right away what it was. Rachellee had sent a reply and was willing to start a relationship. Mind blowing!! I really had given up on ever knowing anything about her life. I read her letter over and over and could not believe that it wasn't my handwriting – almost identical cursive. I finally got some medical history which is wonderful to know so I don't have to be faced with those doctor's office forms that adoptees are unable to fill in – although sometimes you don't really want to know about your family's medical issues.

We began a nice correspondence by letter. Rachellee doesn't have a cell phone or computer, so we are doing this the old fashioned way. She sent me a package of interesting trinkets including her own inscribed childhood Bible and pieces of her jewelry. She also sent gifts for our children because now she was a grandma. Both of our kids have been very supportive about establishing this relationship. We planned a trip to meet in February 2018 and the whole family traveled to Pittsburgh to meet with my birth mother – 57 years later. This was the same week that Beth Johns passed away. I lost a mother¹ and gained a mother within a week. A rather emotional time. I was excited but nervous. I tried not to have any expectations. I researched the protocols for an adoptee meeting a birth parent. I tried to hold back on bursting with questions. I plunged into a totally unknown path.

We met at my birth mother's favorite restaurant. Julie, my original contact was there for Rachellee's support. We had worked out beforehand that Brad & I would offer to

1 Beth Johns was Kathy's mother-in-law.

take Rachellee home and if she accepted, then Julie would know that our initial meeting had gone well. It did. We took Rachellee back to her apartment. It was surreal after 57 years to actually be visiting with my birth mother.

Since then we have made the trip to see her four times. Each time I am able to learn a little more about her life. Rachellee is a spunky old lady who has had a fairly tough life, but is resilient and content with where she is and happy to allow me and my family into her life. She gave me this opportunity to know many of you², to learn about the New Church, and most important to me, to go on life's journey with Brad.

“So, how did you find the church?” That question has finally been **fully** answered for me. It found me through the courage of two brave women. One who was willing to give me up and one who was willing to take me home. Thank you, Rachellee and thank you, Mom.

Kathy taught in the Washington New Church School for 27 years and was also principal for the last five of those years. She retired in 2012 and serves on the church and school boards. Kathy and her husband, Brad, have two children and are ecstatic to be new grandparents. Kathy can be contacted at kcjswim@aol.com.

² Kathy is speaking to the women assembled at the luncheon.

The Pond

Amanda Leigh Rogers

Far in the pines I found the pond
wind-pleated under clouding,
folds of light and dark, a fabric
spun of morning.
No one was there but us,
my dog and I loud-stepping
on a century's fallen needles.
I was trying to be soft, like them,
trying to be low and overlooked.
But Zaboo, my white shadow,
saw only me, and knew I alone
in the quiet wild knew his name.
I wanted to wait by the water
until I forgot the names, forgot
to say "moss" to say "wet" to say "green"
and become an eye with no mouth,
an ear with no story.
I was sick of my story,
my stale suffering, my mind
that breeds lies and believes.
I watched the slippery surface
bend and ruffle with a breeze quickening,
when it emerged - the dark head,
large, black fish rising through
from its cold element, one moment
to be seen by sun and me --
then slipped again below.
Had I been a moment later,
or dreaming as I do,
I would have missed this gleaming
mystery, perhaps heard the little blurping
of its vanishing, perhaps glimpsed

the silver circles of what was.
I opened my mouth, I claimed
this birthright. To say the names,
to know myself, to speak the fish,
the pond, the pines until I fall to earth.
I called my dog by name, I turned
and murmured my way home.

Mandy can be reached at jomandy@verizon.net.

Call for Articles!



We need and want to hear from everyone throughout the world in the pages of our long-lived and well-loved *Journal*. Everyone has something absorbing, interesting, thoughtful or humorous to share. Contact information is in the beginning of the *Journal*.

Bryn Athyn College Scholarships Available!

Bryn Athyn Scholarships

Two education scholarships will be offered for the 2020-21 school year. These annual awards are for the purpose of supporting women attending 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 USD (\$700 paid directly to the college at the beginning of each trimester), for up to 2 recipients. One award is for an incoming first-year student, and one award is for a current Bryn Athyn College education student. May be used toward tuition, fees and/or books.

Three scholarships are available to women students of Bryn Athyn College who have a 3.0 or higher GPA and are studying **Religion** (major, minor, or ID) or **MARS program** or are **international** students. There are two (2) \$2,000 and one (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.

Two scholarships are available to women attending Bryn Athyn College earning a Master's Degree with a 3.0 or higher GPA. Each annual award is \$2,000 (paid in installments directly to the college at the beginning of each trimester). These are annual merit-based scholarships that can be used for tuition, college fees, books or supplies.

Applications are due February 1, 2021.

To apply: email ancldaughters@gmail.com; call Sarah Wong at BAC 267-502-6085; or see the Bryn Athyn College website www.brynathyn.edu.

Bryn Athyn College Scholarship Recipients

TAI Education Scholarships (\$2100 and \$2100):

Jade Deibert - \$2100 (entering first year)

Carolyn Erb - \$2100

Theta Alpha International General Scholarship recipients

(Only 2 eligible applicants)

Denali Heinrichs - \$2000

Jordan Brunne - \$2000

TAI Graduate Scholarships

Jessica Baker - \$2000

Sarah Odhner - \$2000

Academy of the New Church Scholarships

Two annual scholarships are now offered for the 2020-2021 school year in the amount of \$2,500 each for up to two young women who exemplify the teachings of the New Church. The scholarship may be used toward tuition, books or fees. These are annual merit- and need- based scholarships and may be applied for yearly.

Applications are due April 15, 2021.

To apply: email anccaughters@gmail.com

Academy of the New Church Scholarship Recipients

ANC Scholarships (\$2500, \$2500):

Katherine Stein and Natasha Carvelho

Theta Alpha Girls' School Awards

Gold: Hope Odhner, Aurelle Odhner, and Nicole McCurdy

Silver: Madison Zagorsky

My Journey From Korea to Cairnwood Village

Bobby Johns

The following is a talk given at Cairnwood Village, a senior apartment building, on May 6, 2019.

I would like to thank you all for coming to hear about my Journey. But before I start, I would like to thank my father who is with us today. For without my father, Bob, and mother, Karen, I would not be here today.

I was born in the Southern part of Korea in 1953. It was toward the end of the Korean War. Unfortunately, my Korean mother was raped in 1952 by some American soldiers in the rice paddies.

My birth mother had a Korean father and a Japanese mother. Therefore, I am one-quarter Korean, one-quarter Japanese, and half American, which I feel is Italian!!! I have a hot temper and love all Italian food and sauces. I could take a DNA test to determine who my ancestors were, but am not interested because of my circumstances.

My mother's family name was Cho, and when I was about to be born my Korean mother's father, my grandfather, wanted to kill me because I had American blood, which would bring shame to their family name. It was a no-no, or taboo. Hence, my mother ran away and gave birth to me. She raised me by herself in a small village outside of Seoul. We had no running water or electricity in the house, although there was a community water well where we could get buckets of water for cooking and washing up. There were no bathrooms in the house. I studied by candlelight at night.

Please don't feel sorry for me; when you don't have it, you don't miss it.

In Korea I went to school with eight other kids that were

Asian-American, just like me. Due to the Korean government's rules and regulations, we could only get an elementary education. I really enjoyed learning the ABCs and basic English, *i.e.*, *Hello, good morning, thank you, I'm sorry, etc.*, as well as *Hey, G.I.*, and *Hershey Bar*.

When I was about 7 or 8 years old, I complained and complained to my mother that I wanted to go to America and continue my studies in high school as well as college.

My birth mother and her brother, my uncle, were my only biological relatives! They found out that there was an adoption agency for Asian-American children called the *Pearl S. Buck Foundation*, which they looked into. Here's a little bit about Pearl Buck. She was the author of *The Good Earth*, which earned her the Nobel Peace Prize. I would recommend the book. She established orphanages all over the world for any Asians, whether Korean, Japanese, or Vietnamese, that had American blood from World War II.

Thank the good Lord and my lucky star, I received a letter from Bob and Karen Johns, who were interested in adopting me as part of their family. That was in the Spring of 1961, when I was 8 years old. Karen Johns would write me a letter about once a month, always with a piece of Spearmint or Wrigley's chewing gum. I couldn't wait to get my next letter. The letters from Karen were interpreted by the *Pearl S. Buck Foundation*. In the letters, Karen sent pictures of their family and pictures of Meadow Ridge, the family place in the country. In with those were ones of the pond with Bennett and Amy, their children, swimming and Bennett catching fish and swimming with his dad. (I wanted him to be the father I never had!)

In 1962, at the age of 9, I got on an airplane with my Korean mother in hand. When the pilot announced that the plane would be taking off soon, I got off with my mother. I was very scared, and I didn't want to leave her. When Bob and Karen went to pick me up at Kennedy Airport, I was a no-

show, and they wanted to know where I was. So they asked Mrs. Park, the chaperone-supervisor of the eight or so other Korean-American kids who had flown from Korea. Mrs. Park had no idea where I was. She was very tired and confused and spoke very little English. Once again, thinking outside the box, Bob and Karen invited Mrs. Park to stay with them in Bryn Athyn in order to find out what had happened to me. To make a long story short, Mrs. Park found out that I had gotten off the plane before take-off. Rather than give up on me, Karen Johns, my mother-to-be, continued to write to me for another full year, with chewing gum in each letter, telling me that they would still like to adopt me and make me part of their family.

In March of 1963, at age 10, I said goodbye to my Korean mother and got on the plane, telling her that I would see her *in 15 years*. (Remember this number!) I landed at JFK Airport and met my new parents, Bob and Karen. Boy, were they tall!

I arrived at 815 Fettersmill Road, my first house in America. We arrived around midnight, and I saw two green Schwinn bicycles against the garage door. One was for Bennett, my new brother, and one was for me, as they had promised me in a letter. That first night I was very scared and missed my Korean mother so much. I stayed in my room and cried myself to sleep.

The next day my father, Bob, saw me go outside to go to the bathroom, so he took me upstairs to a small, dark room. When he turned on a switch, the dark room lit up brightly. Dad showed me how to use the toilet and flush it. Then he went over to a little sink and turned on the hot and cold water where I could wash my hands. I thought I could get used to this accommodation, especially now that I didn't need to go outside to go to the bathroom in the cold weather.

Then I met all my brothers and sisters: Bennett, their only biological child, Amy, who was the first girl to be adopted, then Bronwen, Kenneth, Rachel, Gillian, who is bi-racial, and Alan, who was also from Korea and arrived one day before I

did. I also met both of my mother's parents, Kenneth and Bea Synnestvedt. Alan and I were baptized into the New Church by Rev. Larry Soneson.

Within a couple of days of arriving in the USA, I was enrolled in Third Grade. After school, Alan and I would walk down the hill from our house to my grandparent's house, and watch *The Lone Ranger* on TV. We also learned to read and write. I loved my grandmother, Bea Synnestvedt! She knew how to motivate and challenge me. She had my number. The first money I earned, all of 10 cents, was to spell *Synnestvedt* 10 times in a row without misspelling her last name. It took me awhile, but I did it.

That summer of 1963, my grandmother, Bea, taught me how to swim at their pond in Meadow Ridge. When I could swim around the trickle tube, which was almost at the end of the pond, she said she would give me ONE WHOLE DOLLAR, and when I could beat Grandma Bea at swimming, she would give me ANOTHER WHOLE DOLLAR. I think she let me win, because she did the breast stroke. I miss her a lot!

I have a lot of great memories of Meadow Ridge. Chris Simons, who was our babysitter there, would take the boys hiking into the woods and build tree forts, cook hot dogs and marshmallows over the campfire, and, of course, we went swimming and fishing in the pond. All the kids helped pick apples and blueberries, and Mom (Karen) would bake pies for us.

Bob and Karen thought that they had adopted an 8-year-old boy, but I was 10 years old. They found out my age by taking me to my first visit to the dentist. The dentist told Mom that I had to be at least 10 years old because of the teeth I had. The orphanage/agency in Korea, along with my Korean mother and uncle, thought it would be easier for me to be adopted if I was under 10 years old. So they told Bob and Karen that I was 8, not 10. That was very wrong!

In September of 1963, I was put into 5th grade, skipping 4th grade. I had some great teachers and ministers at the Bryn Athyn School system, and with their help, I graduated from high school in 1971. I went to the Academy of the New Church College for two years, from 1971 to 1973, while living with dad's parents, Granny Edie and Grandpa Hyland Johns. I lived with them so that I could be their driver and take them to Robin Hood Restaurant after Sunday service. What a treat!!! I attended Penn State University from 1973 to 1976 and received a BS degree, majoring in sales and marketing. In 13 years I had completed my education.

Also, I became an American citizen on July 4, 1976.

Remember that when I left Korea in 1963, I told my Korean mother that I would see her again in 15 years! I had two more years to find a good job and bring her to America. That plan didn't work out, because, in the winter of 1975, she came to America by marrying an American soldier. She said she was very ill and wanted to see me once again before she died. BUT, my dream was shattered! How could she take away my goal! I failed my winter term at Penn State. I even considered dropping out of college, but I sucked it up, stopped feeling sorry for myself, and graduated to achieve the dreams and goals that I had set for myself.

I went to Florida for some R&R, rest and relaxation and stayed in Florida until October 1979. I came back to Bryn Athyn and got a job as a manager trainee at Radio Shack. After six months, I got my first job as a manager at a very small-volume store, and eventually managing one of the largest Radio Shacks in Horsham Mall. For over four years, I worked 70-plus hours per week and burned myself out, so I resigned. To earn money, I helped build an ice rink in Bryn Athyn with Corey Glenn, who had been hired by Dirk Jungé.

When the rink was finished, I decided to move to Albany, NY, where my Korean mother was living. Before moving, I spoke with Bob and Karen as to what I wanted to do at this

time in my life. They had no problems with my plans; they just wanted me to know that they loved me and that I was their son.

With Bob and Karen's blessing, I moved to Albany on March 15, 1985, to help my birth mother, who was working in the laundry department at Albany Medical Hospital and saving her money to buy a house. I sold some of my Radio Shack stock, and together we bought the house that she wanted.

I interviewed for lots of jobs in Albany, but was unsuccessful. Therefore, in June, 1985, I wrote a letter to Tom Whalen, the Mayor of Albany, and told him that I was in the Albany area helping my Korean mother and looking for a career opportunity so that I could stay in Albany and possibly vote for him. Within 3 days, I received a letter from the Mayor's Office, inviting me to come in and speak with Paul O'Brien, the Regional Manager of Crowley Foods, Inc., a local dairy company.

I started working at Crowley in July, 1985. My job was to go around to all the grocery stores in New York and pick up out-of-date products such as cottage cheese, yogurt, sour cream, etc., and give the stores credit for unsold products. I was also responsible for cleaning and resetting the dairy case according to the store's Plan-O-Gram.

I met my future wife, Peggy, at one of the dairy case resets. I told my trainer that I would like to get to know her better. He said, Good luck! Peggy was my direct competition, representing Sealtest cottage cheese, sour cream, Breyers ice cream, etc.

I didn't see Peggy again until April or so of 1987, almost two years since I first met her. It was at the Grand Union store late on Friday afternoon, and it was the last store she had to call on. Therefore, I asked her to go out with me and have a cocktail. She said yes!!! While talking and getting to know each other, she said that I was a nice person, but not her type

to get serious with. I asked her what her type was. She said, *Blond hair and blue eyes*, which I was not! I continued seeing Peggy, and every time I saw her, I took her one rose, then two and three, all the way up to one dozen and back down to one rose. In September of 1987, I asked her to marry me. She accepted!!! Not only did she become my wife, but I also eliminated my competition.

In November 1987, Peggy and I were married. My family was there but unfortunately, my father, Bob, could not attend due to a bad back. Peggy and I bought a town house in December 1987 in Albany. She found a new job in a dentist's office and worked as a dental receptionist for 25 years before retiring in 2013.

While working full time, I helped my Korean mother with her grocery shopping, doctor appointments, fixing the house, shoveling snow, and pretty much anything she needed. In return, she would make me some delicious Korean food. She went to Korea to visit her brother and his family every three years or so. In October 2014, she went to Korea for good. Her health was bad, and she wanted to die in Korea. The Lord took her into Heaven on April 9, 2016.

In the second week of September 2004, I received a telephone call from my brother, Kenneth, saying that Mom, Karen, was not in good health, and that I should come and visit her. I drove to Bryn Athyn on Saturday morning and had a wonderful visit with her, not knowing that that would be the last time I would see her alive. I received a telephone call from Dad on October 4, 2004, that the Lord had taken Mom into Heaven.

My Dad was diagnosed with Alzheimer's around 2007 or 2008. Every three months or so Peggy and I drove down to visit him at Cairnwood Village until he moved into eldercare in March 2017.

Peggy and I moved into Cairnwood Village on May 26, 2019. The reason for our move to Bryn Athyn was so that

we could spend more time with my Dad. We take my Dad to church for the adult service and then to Robin Hood Restaurant for lunch almost every Sunday, just as I used to do with my Dad's parents, Granny and Grandpa Johns. Moving to Cairnwood Village allows me to complete my Journey from Korea to Bryn Athyn, then to Albany and back down to Bryn Athyn.

One of my regrets is that I didn't get to spend much quality time with my Mom. It's almost 15 years since the Lord took her into His Kingdom. Now that I live in Bryn Athyn, I visit her at the cemetery once a month to pay my respects, and thank her for adopting and raising me to adulthood. I tell her how much I miss her and apologize for giving her so much gray hair. I was not the easiest child to raise.

Thank you, Peggy, for moving into Cairnwood Village so that we can spend some quality time with my Dad before he is taken into Heaven, where he will be reunited with Karen, whom he misses so much. And so do I! Thank you, Mom and Dad Johns, for giving me this opportunity to fulfill my childhood dream. Also, I would like to say a special thanks to Eleanor Dillard for all she does for my father, especially taking him to choir practice and other singing events.



Requiem For Passion

Sadness the song at the side of the grave, Sung
in remembrance but sung to forget;
Futile the phrases the sinner to save, Folded
in sorry and wrapped in regret.

Tearful the tone of our final farewell, Telling
the tale of our past partnership;
Pity poor passion created a hell,
Paving the path its own death to equip.

Sickly the soul now its cancer cut out, Sore
the incision and bloody the knife;
Knowledge is nothing, lost reason the bout,
Now in the grave lies there death, dies there life.

N. Bruce Rogers, age 20 (1960)

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!

A Hero In Our Midst

Margit Irwin

The Rev. Kurt H. Asplundh was born in Bryn Athyn on July 21, 1933 and passed into the spiritual world on May 2, 2020. He was pastor of the Pittsburgh New Church from 1960 to 1972, and after moving to Bryn Athyn, took over as pastor of the Bryn Athyn Church from 1981 through 1986 before retiring.

Rarely does the topic of heroes enter my conscious mind. As a child I was required to write a composition entitled **MY HERO**. It was an intellectual rather than emotional pursuit. I knew I was expected to pick someone like George Washington or Betsy Ross. Personal heroes didn't figure into it, even if I could have thought of one. Later, as a music teacher, the topic came up again during primary grade Patriotic Programs. We sang, said poems and acted out skits depicting the actions of American heroes such as Paul Revere and Abraham Lincoln. Again, part of my employment, and more intellectual or creative than personal.

And then, recently, Kurt Horigan Asplundh died. He had been a part of my life since my fifth grade year. I cared about him. Of course I was moved by his passing. But I found myself wondering why the flags were not at half mast as I drove through the streets. Why were we not all arranging a time when the community as a whole would stop whatever they were doing and pause for a moment of silence in remembrance? Why was the bishop not sending out some sort of message about this momentous event? Slowly, my conscious mind grasped the fact that Kurt was **My Hero!**

Kurt and Martha Asplundh moved to Pittsburgh when I was starting fifth grade. I, along with my older sister, became their babysitter. Kurt taught us religion at school, and we spent a good portion of our out-of-school time at his house – either

babysitting or helping around the house. Every summer we spent a month with his family at the shore. He was a second father, teacher, counselor and friend. As I grew up he was my example of what a good husband and father was – but even more importantly he showed me what it meant to live with integrity, charity and humility. He lived what he believed openly and without apology. Always leaving others in freedom, he nevertheless never backed down from stating the truth. He was able to accept the flawed human condition with compassion and humor without compromising his values.

An unassuming, unpretentious man, he was a gem in the midst of our church. Gently, compassionately, uncompromising when it came to his religion, he was a pillar of strength for anyone seeking to understand and live the Lord's Word. He will be sorely missed by me. Knowing Kurt, I am confident that the last thing he would want is to have his portrait displayed, or a plaque in his honor, or flags at half mast, or moments of silence, but he is a hero nonetheless!

Born and raised in Pittsburgh, Margit has spent most of her adult life in Bryn Athyn raising a family. She also taught music full time in the elementary school and part time in the college. Now retired she enjoys volunteer work in the community. She can be contacted at margit@irwins.ws.



Book Reviews

Review of *Lolly Willowes*

Meg Eynon

As someone who loves to read, I often look to the internet for “bookspiration.” I am a frequent visitor of The Guardian newspaper’s book section. This year there was a republishing of a book list called *The 100 Best Novels* originally compiled by Robert McCrumb in 2015. This list contained books that are often found in British and American school curriculums. But it also had many books that I was not aware of and I landed on *Lolly Willowes* as my first try of some of these lesser known (to me) titles.

After World War I, because of the massive amount of casualties faced by the British, there was what was known as “Extra Women.” There were more women than men and it was challenging for young women to have husbands and families of their own. These women often became the unpaid work horses who would help with elderly parents or with their siblings in larger families. At the time, in more affluent families, there was not an option to live on one’s own or to seek employment. We had a similar issue in the United States. Women in the United States were however encouraged to be more independent. This issue was addressed by books like *Live Alone* and *Like It or Bubbly on a Budget*, both by Marjorie Hillis. And while Marjorie Hillis gave us a more cosmopolitan approach to our “Extra Women,” *Lolly Willowes* gave us a satirical view of what the world of an unmarried woman looked like and how extreme one had to be to escape domestic tangles.

Lolly Willowes was perfectly happy taking over the running of her family estate when her mother passed away. She was efficient and useful and helped her father in his business endeavors. When her father passed away she suddenly became a problem to be solved for her brothers. One wanted to claim the estate and the other was busy in London making his

career as a lawyer. Lolly becomes the extra woman. As she is shuffled off to London to watch her nieces and nephews she feels as if her life doesn't have true meaning. Her brother arranges a series of men to court Lolly, but she refuses to be intellectually inferior in order to marry. While Lolly isn't wildly unconventional she is a thinker and refuses to hide it. When Lolly's nieces and nephews are grown, she feels she can finally use some of her inheritance to move to the country and enjoy all of the things she had in the past: walking, foraging and reading undisturbed. One of Lolly's nephews visits Lolly in her new setting and decides to move to her new village as well, once again entangling Lolly in a life not her own.

This book was an interesting read. It takes a turn toward the supernatural in the last third of the book to illustrate the extremes a woman during this time period would have to go through to have space to be by herself and outside of a domestic circle. While the turn to the supernatural may not appeal to everyone, it is certainly well explained and part of a well-crafted plot twist that makes an important political point about women who were struggling with this issue at the time.

Should you choose to read *Lolly Willowses* you will also find reference to Swedenborg. As many *Theta Alpha Journal* readers are aware The Swedenborg Society is in the Bloomsbury part of London. Lolly Willowses would like to see it and discover more about Swedenborg but is thwarted by her "conventional" brother. It is always delightful and surprising to me to see Swedenborg so often mentioned in books of this period in such an incidental way. In *Lolly Willowses* it makes me feel certain that in the aftermath of World War I a lot more people were more casually aware of Swedenborg and the New Church than now.

An avid reader, Meg graduated from The Academy of The New Church in 1988. Meg and her husband live in Paoli, Pennsylvania and enjoy gardening together. Meg can be contacted at megeynon@gmail.com.

**Two Sisters Give Reviews On:
A Hopeful Journey by Beatrice Sharp Pitcairn**

A Hopeful Journey by Beatrice Sharp Pitcairn is my latest addition to my book shelf. Bea has given us a gift of the mind and heart. She has a talent for creating a picture with words. While it is her personal story there are echoes from the past that resound for all of our generation. She chronicles the Great Depression and the Second World War.

Bea wrote the book because she feels that the current generation should know about the sweeping changes that have taken place in the last eighty years, in order to make wise choices as they move into the future. She includes observations such as — “You become yourself through dissent not by conformity.” In this time of adversity, this is a welcome read.

Sincerely,
Yvonne Nyenhuis
(Miriam Yvonne Lyman)

My passage through this delightful book containing the “Memoirs of an Only Child” ended all too soon. It was such fun! I came to appreciate Bea as a thoughtful, introspective person surprisingly willing to share in great detail her personal story, allowing us to experience with her the deeply emotional aspects of growing up. Often she refers to black spots and angels which during her progress touch every period of her life.

Throughout the book there are plentiful photographs, quotations from famous authors, and also some creations by Bea herself. A charming example is this poem: (page 145)

“Dreams are fragile,
often come unbidden,

alight for a while,
and then disappear into thin air.
White puff balls
bouncing around in the ocean until they sink.”

Bea writes beautifully, supplies copious details, even including the actual words of some famous songs sung during World War II. As she tells her story, she reflects on an event showing what she learned from it. For example, when the milkman no longer used a horse and wagon to deliver their milk, she wrote: “Every morning I looked out, hoping to see the horse again, but he never came back. I learned about loss.”

The story is well organized, starting with the “Origins” of their families, her mother from England, her dad from Ohio, both having Swedenborgian roots. Part two is fittingly called “We Three Dreamers;” it covers her early years on through junior high. This is followed by “Life in Bryn Athyn.” Finally, an “Epoilogue” shows how successful her “Hopeful Journey” was.

Submitted by,

Evangline Lyman Lindrooth



Websites and Blogs of Readers

The following websites and blogs of church women are worth looking into. To have yours included, send your name and internet site in an email hmkennedy98@gmail.com or a Facebook private message to Helen Kennedy (men also.)

Jenn Beiswenger

Artist, wordsmith, carer: www.beiswenger.net/renjenn

Karla Buick

A directory of artists who create specifically New Church themed art. www.silverbrancharts.com. (“No information is available for this page” will come up. That just means there’s no informational blurb about it. Click on the site anyway; it has a listing of beautiful artwork done by members of the church.)

Chandra Hoffman

Writer: www.chandrahoffman.com

Helen Kennedy

Writer: <http://hmk98.blogspot.com>

Lara Muth

Writer: <https://twitter.com/lyramariner>

Abbey Nash

Writer: www.abbeynash.com

Tiffany Perry

Poetry: naturepoetrysite.wordpress.com

Hilda Rogers

Artist: www.dailypaintworks.com/Artists/hilda-rogers-8286,
<https://hilda5462.wordpress.com>

Wystan Simmons

Blogger <https://embracingchaos.net/>

Chapter Heads 2020-2021

Atlanta, GA

Nicola Echols
nicola.echols@gmail.com

Glenview, IL

Sue Lee
sueflee614@gmail.com

Kitchener, ON Canada

Cailin Hill
cailin.hill@gmail.com

Washington, DC

Carina Heinrichs
President

Chapter Reports

Annual Report for the Atlanta Chapter

We met in February to get together and reignite the community of women in our church. We wanted to do a *Journey* Campaign together and form a group to do community service. We were planning to have a meeting every quarter. Then COVID hit and we have been derailed. We look forward to meeting together to serve the Lord in use and to study the Word together, when it is possible.

Nicola Echols
Atlanta

Annual Report for the Washington Chapter

Our local chapter is the Washington New Church Theta Alpha Guild, which means that we serve not only a variety of uses connected with New Church education, specifically for our society school, but we also carry out uses that serve the church society generally. Guild member volunteers are heads of the following committees: New Church Day Gifts, Housing, Meals on Wheels, Sunshine, Chancel, Gifts, and After-Church Coffee. Our fundraising activities included a raffle and bake sale, Souper Sundays, and the sale of Christmas centerpieces. The Guild was also involved in many events such as the retirement of our Assistant Pastor, Michael Ferrell, several school events, Christmas Tableaux and decorating, and planning for the 50th anniversary of the Washington New Church School. Unfortunately, that last event and many of our regular uses were curtailed by the arrival of the global Covid-19 pandemic. We are planning to celebrate the school's 50th anniversary in either June or September of 2021. Meanwhile, the Washington New Church School soldiers on, opening classes with distance learning until a return to in-person education is safer. An exciting new development is that our high school expanded from a 2-year program to a full, 4-year program last year and the number of students enrolled is growing. Also, the high school art program is now fully available online and is being taken by students locally and around the country. Despite the hardships arising this past year, it is heartening to recognize the Lord's blessings and to know we are always in the arms of His Providence.

Anne Goerwitz Ball
Secretary

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Theta Alpha International Board
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Janet Krettek (Fuller), DO, President
jmkrettekdo@gmail.com

Rosemary Fuller, Vice President
rosemary.fuller7@gmail.com

Melodie Haworth Greer, Treasurer
melodie.greer1@gmail.com

Sarah Jackson, Secretary
sarahbjackson.96@gmail.com

Rebecca Jackson Synnestvedt, Membership Secretary
rebecca.synnestvedt@gmail.com

Rebekah Russell, General Church Education Liaison
rebekah.russell@newchurch.org

Cheryl Buss Cooper, ANC Girls School Liaison
cheryl.cooper@ancss.org

Sarah Jin Wong and Kelly Ballard, College Women's Co-Liaisons
sarah.wong@brynathyn.edu, kelly.ballard@brynathyn.edu

Helen Kennedy, *Journal* Editor
hmkennedy98@gmail.com

Carol Henderson, West African Liaison
bchenderson66@gmail.com



Healthcare workers at Holy Redeemer Hospital in Pennsylvania, wearing the gowns handmade by TEAM SEAM (page 41).



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