

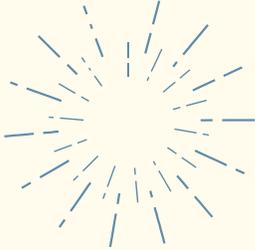


New Church

AUGUST 2022

BISHOP'S NEWSLETTER

General Church vision and community



"Divine Providence is present within the smallest details of all, and people in the stream of providence are being carried along constantly towards happier things, whatever appearance the means may present."

Arcana Coelestia 8478

Friends,

I'd like to turn attention to a simple but important question: what is the church? This phrase is used in a number of contexts: "The church teaches..." or "The church is..." or "I'm going to the church" or "My church offers..." and so on. But what is at the root of a church? Is it a building or location? Is it a set of beliefs? Is it community of believers? Is it a spiritual entity or a natural organization? It's important to be clear on what we are talking about when we use this simple term.

A very helpful teaching comes to us in the work *True Christian Religion*. It begins by defining the church based on what it teaches—on its understanding of the Word (n. 245). That makes sense, since the church is here to help us with collective answers or themes from the Word. That's one reason people turn to a church—to learn from it.

But that very same teaching goes on to clarify that it is not the teaching that really matters in the end. What is key is the faith of the individuals of the church and how they choose to live their lives. This, it says, "establishes and constitutes" the church or makes it what it is. That too makes sense. Ultimately a church is about people striving to worship the Lord and support each other in a way of living that leads to heaven. The church, in its truest form, is the people that make it up and the goodness from the Lord within them.

Several teachings affirm this sense that the church truly lives within actions and goodness from truth – as when *Apocalypse Explained* says that "a church is a church from the teachings there, and from a life according to them" (n. 384). What this means for the General Church is that it is called to not only share truths with people who desire them, but to provide useful resources and avenues for people who want to put those truths into practice in their lives. The core of our organization is a commitment to the living of the faith as much as the teaching about it.

Is the church, then, a building or an organization? Yes, in the sense that these places or entities are the natural context within which important spiritual work takes place. But what really matters is the people of the church—you and how you absorb the messages of the Word to be the church alongside each other.

With affection,

Pete

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CONNECT TO SCRIPTURE

We are blessed this month with a reflection offered by Rev. Jean Atta (pictured right.) In July of 2018 he was called as pastor to the New Church of Phoenix, where he and his wife now raise their three children. Jean continues to serve congregations in California and the Northwestern district of the New Church. Learn how to get involved in Jean's New Church Groups in the Outreach section below.



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Great peace have those who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.
Psalm 119:165

Peace has in it confidence in the Lord, that He directs all things, and provides all things, and that He leads to a good end. When a person is in this faith, he is in peace, for he then fears nothing, and no solicitude about things to come disquiets him. A person comes into this state in proportion as he comes into love to the Lord.
Secrets of Heaven 8455

Are you at peace in your life? Peace is such a heavenly state that the Lord and the angels often greet people with “Peace be with you.” Can you feel the Lord’s peace in your life right now? Do you need peace in your life?

We live in a world with many challenges. Although challenges can make a person strong, they can also cause stress in a person’s life. Are you struggling with your health? Your identity? Your finances? Your relationship? Your plans? In short, how do you find peace in the middle of challenging circumstances? This search is a spiritual equation that most people on earth are trying to resolve. The truth is, sometimes people seek peace in the wrong place. Can one find true peace – spiritual peace apart from the Lord who is called “Prince of Peace”? (See Isaiah 9:6.)

If you do a little research, you will find out that the Bible has a lot to say about peace; in fact, “peace” appears about 329 times in the Bible, with the highest occurrence of about thirty in the Book of Isaiah. Those who pursue true peace must first of all have confidence in the Lord, as prescribed in Secrets of Heaven 8455. A kind of faith that recognizes the Lord as Leader and Provider. When we are in this true faith, then as the Writings say, “no solicitude about things to come disquiets us” (ibid.)

To have confidence in the Lord, let us remember to love the Lord and His Divine Law. For it is the Lord and His Word that sets us free from the desires that take heavenly peace away. This peace is like a spiritual bridge that helps strengthen our relationships with the neighbor.

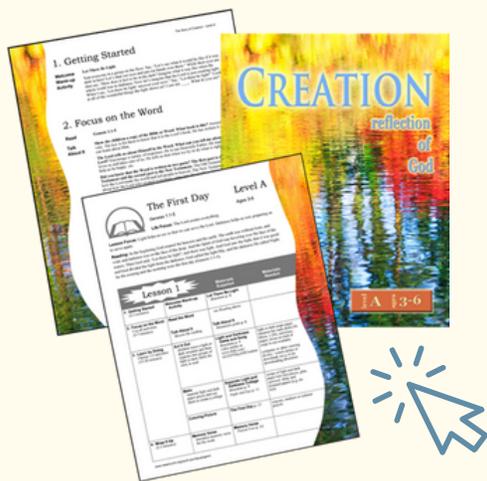
We are reminded in Secrets of Heaven 5662 that "no one can be granted heavenly peace unless he is led by the Lord and abides in the Lord, that is, unless he is in heaven where the Lord is the All in all. For heavenly peace enters in when the desires that spring from self-love and love of the world are removed; for those desires take peace away." As the book of Psalm 119:165 says, “Great peace have those who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.” The Lord also said, “Peace I leave with you.”

May the Lord’s peace be your daily inspiration. May you be a true peacemaker. For the peacemakers will be called children of God. (See Matthew 5:9.) Peace unto our church.

~ Rev. Jean Atta, Pastor, New Church of Phoenix

OFFICE OF OUTREACH

Looking for a way to stay connected to the Word? Join Rev. Jean Atta in one of his two weekly online groups! Check out his weekly [Bible study](#) group or the [Heaven and Hell discussion](#) group, which are always open to new members. These sessions invite you to revitalize your personal reading, as well as find support, community and insights. Reach out to Jean with questions at rev.atta13@gmail.com.



OFFICE OF EDUCATION | GCED

Newly available on newchurchvineyard.org: *Creation: Reflection of God* offers step-by-step lesson materials for three age levels—3-6, 7-10, 11-14. Discussion guides help students see how the story of creation relates to their own lives while a variety of activities lets leaders choose the best combinations for their children. Click icon to the left for an overview of the program, or [here](#) to access lessons on New Church Vineyard.

You can also [SUBSCRIBE](#) to the Vineyard emails to get project suggestions every month! (Don't forget to check your spam folder if your confirmation email doesn't show up.)

WHAT WE'RE CHEERING FOR | SOCIETY NEWS

- A General Church Corporation meeting was held on June 25, 2022. Amendments to the bylaws were passed, and we welcome four new board members this year:
 - Craig Bostock (Tampa Bay, FL)
 - Rhett Brown (Oslo, Norway)
 - Grant Heinrichs (Huntsville, AL)
 - Torrance Pitcairn (Bryn Athyn, PA)
- Corporation members have the opportunity to discuss and vote on fiscal and organizational business at Corporation meetings. Interested in becoming a Corporation member? Take steps [here!](#)
- Reverend Kurt Nemitz reached out to pastors in Uvalde, Texas in May to share a pamphlet called "Children in Heaven: A Comforting Explanation from Emanuel Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell*." It contains excerpts about the lives of children in heaven and serves as a wonderful example of how New Church teachings can serve beyond General Church membership. Kurt received thanks for the caring gesture.
- At the subscriber's request, *New Church Life* is now available in enlarged print. Learn about the three ways you can subscribe [here](#); to opt into the enlarged print subscription, select it under "subscription" on the online form or email Sue Wright at susan.wright@anc-gc.org.