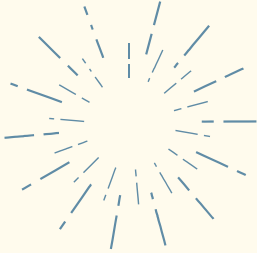




New Church

JANUARY 2023

BISHOP'S NEWSLETTER



"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,

One of the beautiful, grounding truths of the New Church is that the Lord wants to influence our lives for good, so that we experience increasing joy and peace. Many of us resonate with the statement, "Life works better with the Lord in it." We can learn this the easy way, when things are smooth and happy, and also the hard way, when we are experiencing the loneliness and anxiousness that can come from living outside of the Lord's guidance.

This brings to mind a powerful time of commitment for the ancient Israelites, when they declared to Joshua their leader, "We also will serve the Lord, for He is our God" (Joshua 25:18). The context was a challenge posed to them. They had received an inheritance in the Promised Land and life was relatively good. Before he died, Joshua took pains to remind them of what would keep them secure and happy, doing so by making known his own commitment with the famous words, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

The church is here to remind us of our version of this covenant with the Lord. We read in the work *Apocalypse Explained*, "By following the Lord is meant...to acknowledge, to obey, to act, and live from Him and with Him... For the Lord draws after Him those who from freedom will to follow" (no. 864). Here we see an offer from the Lord of greater fulfillment, meaning, purpose, and lasting happiness. Life within the Land of Canaan can symbolically include so many blessings of contentment and togetherness with others.

I invite you to consider your response to all these blessings. What commitment to the Lord are you willing to affirm with your version of the words, "We also will serve the Lord, for He is our God"? The General Church is here to help.

Affectionately,

Pete

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CONNECT TO SCRIPTURE

When we lead a good life and believe that the Lord governs the universe...we can have heavenly freedom conferred on us, and with that freedom peace as well. For we trust solely in the Lord and have no anxious cares about all else. We are quite sure that all things work for our good, blessedness, and happiness forever.

Secrets of Heaven 2892

The last few years have been a particularly anxious time for the world. We've had Covid, intense political dialog and unrest around the world, disagreement about fundamental issues around human rights and what the boundaries of love should be, and now war. On the outside it appears as if the powers of hell are winning, that society is becoming more fractured, and that public discourse is becoming less mature and kind.

The tendency in the face of what feels threatening is to fight back, but sometimes that fight can take the form of matching hate and contempt with hate and contempt. The true fight, the fight that wins, involves an inner battle of opening up to the Lord and to His way of doing things. "You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jer 29:13).

The passage above offers an amazing array of benefits that come when we do what the Lord says and believe He is in charge of the universe. We receive heavenly freedom, peace, and freedom from anxiety. It is this last one that is striking to me right now. I know I would like to have fewer anxious cares because I had a strong, living sense that the Lord was taking care of me. We can all hold that awareness more strongly.

Aside from trying to live a good life according to the Lord's commandments, I believe that the biggest way to invite peace and push away anxiety is to engage more during the day in practices that remind us of the Lord. Maybe you have regular rituals such as saying prayers before bed, reading the Word, or reflecting with gratitude on what is good in your life. Actions like this bring to our consciousness the Lord's presence and lift our minds up to see His power and presence as stronger than what's worrying us. Right now, I am trying to stop multiple times in the day to remember that I am here to serve the Lord and do His will. I know others who offer thanks to Him every day through a gratitude journal. I treasure the time I spend reading the Word each morning with my wife. I invite you to consider finding ways to bring the Lord to conscious awareness in your day. "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33)

~ Rev. Erik Buss (pictured below)



Erik is pastor of Colchester New Church and national pastor for the UK where they are seeking to develop a stronger national presence for the New Church. He has served in Glenview IL, Seattle WA, Westville South Africa, and in Bryn Athyn PA. He and his wife have 5 children and nine grandchildren. In his spare time, he enjoys gardening, travel, spending time with grandchildren, and writing.

OFFICE OF OUTREACH

The Christmas Readings and discussion groups were a success, thanks to all who participated. We are excited to announce that Easter Readings and groups will begin February 22nd and continue through Easter! Please note: Christmas Readings subscribers must sign up for Easter Readings separately. [Learn more and register.](#)



OFFICE OF EDUCATION | GCED

The last Bishop's Newsletter (which you can find [here](#)) acknowledged the service of recently retired General Church educators. We extend gratitude as well to the following educators who moved on to new endeavors after the 2021-2022 school year:

- **Jessica Baker, Olivia Brock, Mary Beth DeGeorge, Jena Frey, Amanda Miller** (Bryn Athyn Church School)
- **Denali Schorran** (Carmel New Church School)
- **Erin Lovitto, Kendra Paraskevopoulos** (Glenview New Church School)
- **Cayley Gademan** (Kainon School)
- **Brenna Sweeney** (Washington New Church School)

Correction to October newsletter: Tabitha Judson transitioned to a full-time position at Kempton New Church School.

WHAT WE'RE CHEERING FOR | SOCIETY NEWS

- Access the 2023 **Daily Readings Calendar** [here](#). According to a 1946 report to the General Assembly published in *New Church Life*, an annual readings calendar has been distributed since 1929. Hugo Lj. Odhner had the following to say of its use: "the spirit of the Church is gained only by a continual return to the Writings as the 'water of life.' And it is to symbolize and encourage this that the 'Calendar of Daily Readings' is issued." You can access archived issues of *New Church Life* [here](#).
- This year the Academy reinstates the **Glencairn Award**, which was originally established in 1955 with the intent of acknowledging community members for outstanding achievements. You can find the form and information required to nominate someone [here](#) (deadline: March 31, 2023).
- Don't forget that there are over a dozen church services that stream every Sunday, available to you wherever you are. Find streamed services [here](#), along with a plethora of **archived sermons and talks** ready for your listening at any time.