



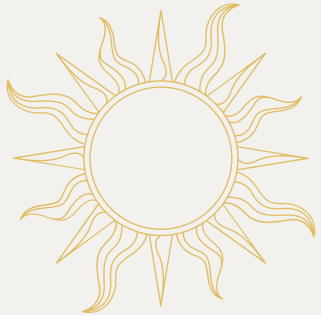
New Church

MARCH 2023

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# BISHOP'S NEWSLETTER

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"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,

The Lord delivered one of His key messages during the darkest time in His life on earth. Pilate, a governor who held the responsibility to determine crucifixion, asked Him: "What have you done?" Jesus answered with a seeming non-sequitur, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).

Heaven is the place to which the Lord is leading. Life continues after death. A goal in life is to live spiritually even in this natural world. The Lord's own crucifixion and resurrection reminds us that life is eternal, having a trajectory well beyond the few years we live here.

The constant aim of the church is to remind us all of our spiritual lives, and to help us to make that choice to prioritize the things of the Lord's kingdom.

One teaching puts it this way: "Everyone can recognize, if they give the matter consideration, that they are living in two kingdoms, the spiritual kingdom and the natural one. They are also able to think one more important than the other, that is, to have one rather than the other in view" (*Arcana Coelestia 4104*).

The opportunity before each of us, then, is to consider what that spiritual prioritization looks like. Is it a focus on pre-Easter readings from the Word? Is it a consideration of what the Lord would want us to do in a decision before us? Is it a focus on spiritual improvement that we have been putting off? Is it a commitment to be considerate and helpful to the people in our lives?

Thank you for being a part of the church, and contributing to the spiritual focus that all of us are called to.

Happy Easter!

Peter

# CONNECT TO SCRIPTURE

"Love [finds expression in useful purpose] through wisdom [and they] take delight in each other, and play with each other... like little children".

- *Married Love* 183

There has been a lot of "adult" talk about the problems we are facing today in the church and throughout the world. How much of the problem is created by us? By those tendencies in us that want to strip everything down to its components, spread all the pieces across the table, and check each part for defects? Or an even simpler instinct we have to break things down into two piles, functional (with me) and not functional (against me). Perhaps, it is our "adult" minds trying to find blame, and dwelling on problems too much, that is the very cause of our unrest and anxieties.

Instead of gathering to perform autopsies together, wouldn't it be more productive to create something together? I get so much more fulfilled and energized when I spend time with people who want to collaborate and invent. The best solution to a problem could exist by working past it. The problem wants you to think that by dwelling on it, it will be fixed, when in reality you may be feeding it. Maybe, we don't want to lead up search parties where we know what we're looking for, but scavenger hunts where we won't know what we'll find until we see it? Or maybe the hunt never ends? The fun is in the doing. And the "fixing" is in the doing good. And most of the time they are the same.

Take a break from being an "adult" about everything and bring some child-like energy to your next task, project, or gathering. Go, take pleasure in building something... with others. Quiet the voice that says "this will never work" or "they're doing it wrong", and turn up the volume on "this could work" or "let's see what happens?"

The Lord took some of the worst behaving people on the planet and created His Word from stories about them. He "scavenged" all the good and true things that communicated with His heavens and used them to build an ever advancing church of love, wisdom, and use.

The quote above comes from angels revealing the source of unending delights that a husband and wife share when experiencing true married love. They explain that it is from love and wisdom, from the Lord, united in useful service that unearth these boundless treasures - treasures that are discovered anywhere there is love and wisdom in use, in anybody, anywhere, anytime. Think of the endless things created by the Lord's love and wisdom and you won't feel like an "adult" anymore.

The other day, a child at our school gave me a picture he had drawn. I said "Thank you so much! Is this a picture of a carrot, I love carrots!" He looked up at me as if I was nuts and replied, "No, Mr. Acton, that is a snake. You're silly." I had a feeling it wasn't a carrot, but I thought it would be fun to be "silly." We looked at his picture a little longer and we both discovered new things in it, that we hadn't noticed initially. He didn't mind a bit that something he had drawn to be a snake could be seen as something different. He had no ownership over his creation. He was happy to stand there and "create" new ways of seeing things with me.

Go out and help the Lord create something good, useful, empowering, and intentionally playful.

- Rev. Elmo K. Acton



The Rev. Elmo K. Acton is Assistant Pastor of the Glenview New Church where he works to bring people to the church and school through serving the community in greater ways. He serves the church with his wife Abbie who works as a professional gardener and helps sub for the school. His first child, McKenna, lives and works in Philadelphia and is excitedly planning for her October wedding. Elmo's two youngest, Morel and Ellouise, are bright and happy elementary school students at the church school. Elmo enjoys playing games, getting to know people, and thinking of new ways to spread the Lord's love and truth.

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## OFFICE OF OUTREACH

Celebrate Easter with **Outreach's Easter Readings** email series, delivering you daily excerpts from the Easter story now through Easter Monday. Sign up [here](#) to receive emails, and [join a discussion group](#) if you want to dive deeper.

Outreach is also excited to share a new season of **Big Spiritual Questions**, the first installment of which will drop at the end of March. In the meantime, you're invited to see our [past videos](#), including "The Meaning of Life," "The Difference Between Good and Evil," and "What Happens When We Die" - all available on our YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/newchurchvideo>.

If you enjoy the videos, click "subscribe" and the notification "bell" to be alerted whenever a new episode releases - and share with your friends!

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## OFFICE OF EDUCATION | GCED

In February GCED hosted the principals from our eight North American elementary schools and from the Academy Secondary Schools for **two days of in-person meetings** to discuss various issues the schools face and updates to the Teacher Career System Handbook.




**Celebrate Holy Week** by watching GCED-produced videos depicting the Biblical events from Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday! Videos feature stories from the Word read aloud and beautiful felt figure imagery made by Gretchen Glover.

- [Jesus Rides into Jerusalem](#)
- [The Last Supper](#)
- [The Crucifixion](#)
- [Jesus Is Risen](#)

**On the horizon:** The New Church Vineyard website is being updated! Keep an eye out for the new site launch.

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## WHAT WE'RE CHEERING FOR | SOCIETY NEWS

- Kainon School, located in Westville, South Africa, celebrated 100 years of offering primary education on March 4, 2023. Bishops Pete Buss and Brad Heinrichs were both in attendance. Brad reports that it was "an inspiring event and a wonderful testament to the powerful impact New Church education has had on a group of people for several generations." 



- The bishops had lively travel schedules this winter:
  - Pete made visits to London, Boulder, Westville, and Cape Town.
  - Dave's engagements were in Seattle, Oak Arbor, Phoenix, and Boulder.
  - Brad visited congregations in Mitchellville, Asakraka, Tema, and Baccleuch.
- Choose from **over a dozen church services** that stream every Sunday, available to you wherever you are. Find [streamed services here](#), or [browse archived sermons and talks](#) ready for your listening at any time.