

THETA ALPHA JOURNAL



OCTOBER 2023

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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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President's Message

Janet Krettek

Like the blossoms of spring turning into the flowers and fruits of summer, like the nuts and colored leaves of autumn yielding to the slumber of winter, Theta Alpha has its seasons. When Barbara Doering retired as secretary of Theta Alpha, she passed along the archives of minutes. I read through the changes over decades. I am so glad that I did. They gave me a much better perspective. There are ebbs and flows. Times change and we have changed with them. So far, so good. I'm a "drag-in" so to speak. I highly appreciate this organization, and wanted to keep it active for my daughters. I hold the flame gently in my hands until the next generation is ready to keep the flame. That said, we are looking for a few creative women who are inspired to share their time with the committee to determine scholarship recipients, keep Minutes, develop your editing skills, and/or put your party planning skills into the Charter Day Luncheon. Make Theta Alpha your own.

Editorial

Helen Kennedy

The Word teaches us that we are to become an image and likeness of God (*Genesis* 1:26). A likeness seems to be a much more detailed portrayal than image, one that gives a better picture with more realities to it. It seems to have more feelings with it.

Lately I've been thinking that a likeness of the Lord is getting to experience a tiny bit of what the Lord goes through (if that's the correct phrase)—what it's like to actually feel love for everyone, and how it's impossible for me to feel love for everyone all the time. More hard things are to endure people turning away from me, and how that makes me feel when someone doesn't want to be with me, how to be ignored and slandered, and to leave others in complete freedom and be willing to accept the consequences, even if it ruins things (hell).

On the other hand it is to have everyone like you, love you, keep asking you for things, enduring their response when you don't give them what they think they want; to know what's better for others and them not follow your advice. Through examples like this I realize it takes a superhuman person/being to be God. Any one of them can really hurt us badly.

In this Journal a talk by Julia Williams Robinson reminds us that along with our feelings of love for the Lord, we need to work with the Divine as the Lord restructures our lives. One of the ways Julia describes it is as “an active approach to gratitude.”

In *Parallel Passages* Janyne Naill shares with readers some of

her difficulty in reading the Writings. She gives examples of how she simplifies the wording in order to clear her thinking enough to accept the heavenly communication being granted through the passages. It's not unusual for readers to have difficulty with the complex, intricate sentences of the Writings.

For some readers poems are a real treat, and one woman shared how she looks for poems first when she opens the Journal. Of the five poems in this Journal, three are by Sylvia Montgomery Shaw, one of which especially evokes deep feelings about the Lord.

We are graced with two responses by Katya Goodenough Gordon, one about prayer from the April 2023 Journal, and the other about Chara Daum's interesting and lively talk that also was in the last Journal. There are two short vignettes on 'To-Do Lists' which hopefully will generate responses from readers about their problems with, and how they handle, their lists.

I said there were five poems in this issue but only told about three of them. The other two, by Janna King, are about barns. Absorbing and interesting in themselves, they also lead into a number of articles about the razing of the barn that housed the Bryn Athyn Thrift Shop. It was a well-loved and prosperous store, and the building had to be dismantled last May to make way for a new elementary school building. The Barn was something more to its customers and workers, and we hope that, from the articles, readers unfamiliar with it will get a sense of the spirit of caring that the Barn housed. There will be a new thrift shop built, but we wanted to say a warm and sincere good-bye to the building that served so well.

Love to the Lord and Gratitude

Julia Williams Robinson

Julia Robinson is member of the Virginia Street Swedenborgian Church in St. Paul, Minnesota. This talk was given at a lay service on October 23, 2016.

What it means to live a life of charity and love to the neighbor has been easy for me to understand, since I can see my family, friends and colleagues, and can understand their needs and how I might contribute. I know how to go to work with an attitude of service, thinking how I can best give my lecture, help a student write a good critical paper, serve on a committee, work on my scholarship. But what it means to love the Lord has seemed more obscure. I can begin to feel love to the neighbor as I work at my job and try to serve my family's needs, but I have never been sure how it feels to love the Lord.

These ideas were triggered recently, when several people mentioned to me that they were trying to live with more gratefulness in their lives. That resonated with me as I had been thinking of how uncharitable it can be to take a negative attitude toward life. So many people I encounter in my daily life are sad, bitter or angry, which can sometimes be very destructive both toward oneself and toward others as such attitudes often spread ill-will. So, I have tried to see the positive side of situations. But I am now beginning to see that part of the positive attitude comes from seeing life as coming from the Lord and being grateful for what one has. This has helped me to feel that an attitude

of gratitude is one form of loving the Lord, and a form that I can actually feel and live in my daily routine. I think it can be a kind of living prayer to the Lord. When we consciously enact a grateful attitude, we are thanking the Lord for all we are given.

But I wanted to see what Swedenborg's writings say about loving the Lord. Is gratitude mentioned? What are the important aspects of love to the Lord? It turns out that gratitude is not something that is in Pott's Concordance of Swedenborg's work and thankfulness is also barely mentioned. But I found a lot of relevant material in the section on Love to the Lord.

So rather than put what I found only in my own words, I decided that today's talk would be primarily the readings from Swedenborg that I found in my search for what it means to love the Lord.

Perhaps the best summary is the reading from *Divine Love and Wisdom* 237.

Love to the Lord is nothing else than committing to life the precepts of the Word, the sum of which is to flee from evils because they are hellish and devilish, and to do good because it is heavenly and Divine.

But of course the specifics of fleeing from evils and doing good require careful thought. Here is what is said in *Arcana Coelestia* 8856 and 8857 about how regeneration relates to love to the neighbor and to love to the Lord.

When a man is being regenerated, charity is implanted by means of faith, even until it becomes that which rules; and when charity has become this, he has a new life, for it is then continually present in his thought, and continually in his will, nay, in every single thing of them, even when he is meditating about other things, and when he is engaged in business.

The case is the same with love to the Lord. When this love is that which rules, it is present in every single thing of the man's life; as for instance with him who loves his king, or his parent, his love toward them shines forth in their presence from every feature of his face, it is heard in every expression of his speech, and is seen in his every gesture. This is meant by having God continually before the eyes, and by loving Him above all things, with all the soul and with all the heart.

And in *Arcana Coelestia* 8880, we find that the rejection of evil is essential to being able to love the Lord.

. . . for they who love the Lord do not love from themselves but from the Lord; for all good flows in from Him, and those who love desist from evil, because evil stands in the way and rejects the influx of good from the Lord. Wherefore when evil has been removed, good is received, which is continually present from the Lord and endeavoring to enter.

The importance of removing evils from our lives is even more powerfully presented in *Arcana Coelestia* 3147: 5-7:

Unless the things that are of the love of self and of the world have been removed, the internal things which are of love to the Lord and toward the neighbor cannot possibly flow in Good works are evil works unless those things are removed which are of the love of self and of the world; for when works are done before these have been removed, they indeed appear good outwardly, but are inwardly evil; for they are done either for the sake of reputation, gain, one's honor, or recompense, thus they are either self-meritorious or hypocritical; for that which is of the love of self and the world causes the works to be such. But when these evils are removed, the works then become good.

Following the removal of evil,

... celestial love and spiritual love flow in from the Lord into the works and cause them to be love and charity in act; and then the Lord through these loves also purifies the natural or outer man, and disposes it into order, so as to receive correspondently the celestial and spiritual things that flow in.

In other words, unless we remove the evils within us, we cannot do good. Our service to others is tainted with our evil So, loving the Lord requires that we ask him to remove our evils as sins. Thus, an attitude of gratitude to the Lord involves our rejection of the evil within us and asking the Lord to help us, also an attitude of humility.

But another thing I learned is that if the Lord removes our evils so that we come into a true love to the Lord, that will allow us to experience a special state of peace as described in *Arcana Coelestia* 8455:

“The truth of peace” is the very Divine truth in heaven from the Lord, which universally affects all who are there, and makes heaven to be heaven; for 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 man is in this faith, he is in peace, for he then fears nothing, and no solicitude about things to come disquiets him. A man comes into this state in proportion as he comes into love to the Lord

So far therefore as he puts off what is external, so far a state of peace is revealed, and so far he is affected with satisfaction, blessedness, and happiness, the origin of which is from the Lord Himself.

Concerning the state of peace which prevails in heaven . . . peace affects the inmost things of all, the first substances . . . the origins of ideas, consequently the man’s ends of life, with satisfaction and happiness, and thus makes the mind of the man a heaven.

So my idea of feeling love to the Lord as a sense of gratitude was not incorrect, but it did not reflect the challenge of loving the Lord. The gratitude involved in loving the Lord requires humility and active working with the Lord to remove our love of the world and selfishness. It requires our active participation in a life of usefulness not for reputation or gain. To truly live with an attitude of gratitude that permeates our daily life, we cannot simply rely on a feeling of good will, but must work with the Lord to restructure our lives so that we can come to **enact** good will. With the Lord's help, this active approach to gratitude may bring us the kind of peace that will make a person's mind a small heaven; the peace that brings blessedness, and happiness, the origin of which is from the Lord Himself.

How do we actually live a grateful attitude? I had a chance to try this out two years ago when I had applied for the position of Associate Dean of the College of Design. There were two of us competing for the job. My competitor was a woman who had a tremendous amount of experience in administration, including being a vice provost of the University, while I had held much more modest positions such as Director of Graduate Studies and Director of Undergraduate Studies for the School of Architecture. Many people seemed to feel that although she had exceptional qualifications, I had some qualities that made me an equal candidate, such as concrete ideas about how to improve the College, and ideas about how to create collegiality. But in the end, it was not a surprise when she was offered the position rather than me. Nevertheless, I was very disappointed.

So with my newfound interest in gratitude, I decided not to focus on my disappointment, but to be grateful, and take the opportunity to see what I would do instead. I took the time to appreciate what she could contribute as a leader and what I might contribute as an active follower. We had some good discussions

about what needed to be done, and I offered some ideas. And I realized, too, that not having the administrative responsibilities gave me time to focus on my research and make progress on my book. In retrospect, the grateful approach allowed me to avoid being angry with those who had given the position to someone else, or bitter that I was denied an opportunity for leadership. Instead, I was able to move forward with joy and appreciate the different path I was offered.

Julia Williams Robinson, PhD, FAIA, is a registered architect and professor of the same at the University of Minnesota. Her many books and articles reflect an expertise in housing and urban design. Her most recent work on community participation, Investing with North Minneapolis (with students, youth interns and community members), engages an urban Black community in the co-design of their neighborhood. She graduated from the Academy in 1964 and attended what is now Bryn Athyn College.



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 this *Journal*.

When Did You Know?

Sylvia Montgomery Shaw

What were your toys, Lord, when you were
a toddler new to walking?
Did Joseph carve from wood scraps lambs
and camels to your sweet prattling?

When on your back you lay gazing
at clouds swift moving,
did you see yourself in their heights,
on breezes hear angels singing?

When did you first love and sense
yourself in all things?

When Mary held you close, softly
singing you to sleep?
Or when in your hand bloomed
bright red the dying rose?

Sylvia came across the Writings in 1968 as a Freshman in ANC College. A life changer! She raised four children, taught English in various schools including Boston University and Bryn Athyn College, and is happily retired, dividing her time between caring for grandchildren and writing the third novel in her trilogy. She can be reached at montshaw3@gmail.com.

Parallel Passages

Janyne Nail

Sometimes when I read the Word or the Writings, I cannot understand what is being said. Many of the words are beyond my vocabulary or are not often used in everyday speech. Another problem is the use of compound sentences by Swedenborg in the Writings. By the time I reach the end of the sentence, I no longer know what the topic is. When reading the Word, the literal sense hides the true meaning. The result is that I am often very confused.

One of my goals is to write synopses of things I read so that the average person can become acquainted with the beauty of Swedenborg's concepts. This may lead more people to explore our religion.

The following are some examples of how I came to understand passages in *Arcana Coelestia* [*Heavenly Secrets*]. Part of my method is to draw out or edit some of the redundancy Swedenborg uses; another is to write in outline form. This way I can see it clearer in my mind.

Elliott (AC 1701)

The Lord, who had a perception of all things that were taking place, knew very clearly the nature and the origin of the things that were occurring with Himself. For example, if something evil was taking possession of the affections of the External Man or if

something false was taking possession of its cognitions, He inevitably knew the nature and the origin of it. He even knew which evil spirits were activating those things and how they did it, and many other things besides.

Janyne (AC 1701)

The Lord, who had a perception of all things that were taking place, knew very clearly the nature and the origin of the things that were occurring with Himself. He even knew which evil spirits were activating those things and how they did it.

Elliott (AC 1702:2)

The interior man is situated between the internal man and the external man, it being by means of the interior man that the internal man communicates with the external. Without the interior man between them no communication from one to the other is ever possible. The celestial is distinct and separate from the natural, and still more from the bodily; and unless there is something in between through which communication is established, the celestial cannot possibly operate into the natural, still less into the bodily. The interior man is called the rational man, and because that man is situated between the two, it communicates in one direction with the internal man where there is good itself and truth itself, and in the other with the external man where there is evil and falsity.

Janyne (AC 1702:2)

The rational man is situated between the internal man and the external man. It is by means of the rational man that the internal man communicates with the external. Without the rational man between them no communication from one to the other is ever possible. (The exterior man is the sensual man.)

Unless there is something in between through which communication is established, the internal cannot possibly operate into the external.

The rational man is situated between the two—upwards where there is good itself and truth itself, and in the other external direction where there is evil and falsity.

Note: I refer to the ‘interior man’ as the ‘rational man’ because I get confused between ‘interior man’ and ‘internal man’, as these two terms sound similar.

Elliott (AC 1707:4)

Once the internal man perceived within the interior man that the state of the external man was such—that is to say, that it ‘had been taken captive’ meaning that not genuine but apparent goods and truths had taken possession of it, from which goods and truths He fought against so many foes—that internal man flowed in, restored all things to order, and released the external man from the things that infested it.

Janyne (AC 1707:4)

Once the internal man perceives within the rational man that the state of the external man was possessed by the appearances of goods and truths, from which goods and truths He [the Lord] fought against temptations, the internal man flowed in, restored all things to order, and released the external man from things that infested it.

Janyne graduated from the Academy Girls School in 1965 and graduated from Wilkes College with a degree in music education. She now lives in Oregon close to her son. She loves books and has volunteered in several libraries over the years. Her favorite form of relaxation is arts and crafts.

Prayer

Katya Gordon

*The following is in response to Millicent Amoako's
article in the April 2023 Journal.*

I enjoyed hearing Millicent Amoako's thoughts about prayer, and read the editorial request for more prayer stories. I am one of those people who feel like I really have only discovered the value of prayer in the last ten years. All that messaging I used to be blind to, or miss completely! Sometime in the midst of this awakening, I was in my mid-40s. My husband was sailing the Atlantic—a lifelong dream—and I was home in northern Minnesota, homeschooling our two daughters through what would turn out to be one of the longest stretches of “polar vortex” sub-zero air in a decade. For over ten days the temperatures did not go above 0 degrees Fahrenheit (-30 Celsius) day or night. It was January and we were hardy northerners, but it was still hard. Skiing or any outdoor refreshment longer than 10 minutes was out of the question with little fingers and toes in danger. Things start to go wrong at -20. Cars don't start, sump pumps smell funny, doors and locks are prone to snapping.

Two weeks into Mark's four-week absence, our carbon monoxide alarm went off in the middle of the night. I googled it, my laptop screen blaring bluish light in the dark, cold living room. Over and over I read “DO NOT TURN OFF THIS ALARM” so even though I was 95% certain the alarm battery was dying, I called 9-1-1. Half an hour later, an extremely friendly police

officer (and father of a baby) showed up. Gamely he waved the CO gauge throughout the house and in the basement, and kindly put my heart at ease. After he left and our daughters settled down again, I cried from the sheer relief and comfort of having a protective capable man make my house safe.

But I could not sleep. And so I prayed, and asked if there was anything that I could do to make this month easier for me. And the answer I received was so loud, simple, and practical I could hardly believe it. “TURN UP THE HEAT,” someone said. I started. Really? I was picturing more spiritual answers! I am a miser with heat—we have a drafty old house that is not energy-efficient and I am that mom that makes everyone wear sweaters. In this cold snap the frost was creeping up the inner windows, and I’d traded light for heat by pinning wool blankets on all the downstairs windows. It was hard to study at the dining room table, but we did it. But we were all chilled a good portion of the day.

So I did. I went downstairs right then and turned up the heat. And it made things just a little bit easier. And I never forgot it.

I suspect we all have stories like this. I would love to hear them too!

Katya has lived in Two Harbors, MN, on Lake Superior since 2008. Previous to that her family completed their first yearlong voyage living aboard a sailboat. She is an author and reporter, a radio show host, a climate activist, and an active member of the United Church of Two Harbors. Increasingly aware of, and grateful for the ideas instilled from Swedenborg’s Writings during her childhood in Bryn Athyn, Katya is always looking for ways to spread these life-giving truths in her community and beyond.

Meaning of ‘The Church’

In the Spring 2023 Journal Chara Daum used the term “the church.” In a footnote she explained her thinking of what it means. The following is what she said:

I put quotation marks around “the church” because it has so many different definitions -- everything from a building, to a community, to an ecclesiastical organization, to our inner spiritual work, to all human efforts to facilitate a relationship with God, to a whole new understanding of spiritual reality in a new era. I hope you’ll be able to intuit the meaning I’m intending each time, given the context. I sometimes use the term “The Cause,” myself, to refer to an overarching hope to serve the Lord’s purposes in a broader way than just being employed by an earthly organization. - Chara Daum

We are wondering what other readers think of the term. Please write in with your thoughts about what “the church” means, and help us start an interesting discussion!

Ukraine Response

The following is in response to an article in the April 2023 Journal in which some of our readers donated money to help the Dnipro Reading Group in Ukraine.

From Svetlana Manayenkova, July 25, 2023

Dear Goran: Please send our sincere gratitude for the help and support to everyone who helped us with these funds! We are very, very grateful for this support! Thank you for remembering us! We continue to meet every month at the Swedenborg Center, and we never miss any meetings, despite the sirens and bomb threats. We believe that the Lord is protecting us! We also continue to meet via Zoom with the Crimean group. Regarding myself: I don't have a job right now—tourism, as you understand, is non-existent right now. And I completely switched to translations of Swedenborg writings, particularly *Arcana Coelestia*, together with Rustam from the Crimean society. I do the translations, and also check and edit his translations. Translation activity helps me mentally to endure these difficult times. And also at meetings at the Center, I can share with my neighbors those invaluable secrets that are revealed during translation. Sometimes it takes your breath away—what secrets are revealed! We really hope that the war will end soon; we will rebuild the Center, and you will come to visit us! Thank you very much for the articles you have sent! And once again, please send our deepest gratitude to those who show mercy in deeds and help us in such difficult times! Sincerely yours, Svetlana

From Dima Vasiliev July 26, 2023:

Dear Goran! Today Svetlana told me that she received money as a help to the Swedenborg Center, and also sent me . . . an article written by Helen Kennedy. To be honest, I was very pleasantly surprised by both of these After reading it as if from the outside, I realized that it was useful and informative for people on the other side of the ocean to see the situation from the inside without fiction and distortion. We do not strive to tell the whole world about our life and problems and do not ask everyone for help. That is why it is much more pleasant to receive such help completely unexpectedly, realizing that it was sent to us from above.

The Lord disposes the hearts of people to do this. We thank the Lord from the bottom of our hearts for everything He does!

Please convey our sincere gratitude to all the people whose hearts have responded to the call to help us. It's really unexpected, but very touching and pleasant. Our meetings in all groups regularly continue to this day. Rustam and Svetlana continue translating the *Arcana Coelestia*. I am approaching the completion of the final edition of the Compendium.

Response to Chara Daum

Katya Gordon

Chara Daum's talk appeared in the October 2022 Journal

I know Chara Daum and can picture her kind crinkly eyes, her ready laugh, her instant tears, and her EMPHASIS! I hope that those who don't know her can still be doused in her beautiful presence either by reading or listening to her speech transcribed in the last Theta Alpha Journal. The miraculous truth that the Lord is in charge and doing a fine job, and that both our life journeys and our doctrinal journeys will be unique, was a delight to hear from someone who has, as she says, happened to spend years of her life poring over Swedenborg's words.

It is clear to me that when she read or heard the line in Isaiah about the Lord's arm and how it will not be shortened, there was a profound and particular insight, probably from a kindred spirit on the other side, who saw this as just the perfect moment to bring this sentence home. As every sentence in revelation, it contains everything. And it still speaks to her, every time she thinks or hears it!

I suspect we all have moments like those in our lives. I do, and am inspired after reading her speech to share a couple of mine. Like the occasional deeper-than-usual dream, when a moment like that stays with us, that staying with us, in itself, to me means that it came directly from the spiritual world with the intention that it will stay with us for a while.

I have no other explanation for a moment I experienced in college that I still recall acutely. I was at Wesleyan University working on my Senior Thesis, which was a study of the economic relations between the US and Japan that led to World War II. Not the most thrilling topic for most people, I realize!—but it fascinated me. I spent hours poring over the primary sources at the library—mostly communications between the State Departments of Japan and the US. Do economic sanctions “work” was a question I was and am fascinated by. Is it helpful to erect trade wars with other countries, to sanction activities with the refusal to import and export goods? Our country was so determined to stay out of World War II. You could say these sanctions, and the actions of the US State Department, made it worse, or made it better. History has many interpretations and we will never know what could have been.

But the part I remember is delving into Japan’s Emperor Hirohito’s written communications as the end of the war neared, as the nuclear bombs were dropped by the United States onto Hiroshima and then, three days later, on Nagasaki. Imagining the suffering, the horror, the gore!—that was being experienced in his country at the time—brought about, I felt, by his ruthless policies that put human life far below the intense desire for power. Yet when I read his statement to his people, ushering in the surrender, what I heard him saying was “I am so sorry. I did not mean for all this death and suffering to come about. I have been trying to do the best for you, my people, and in this I have failed miserably.” I lay my head down on the table, right there in the library basement, and wept for this man whom I had previously felt was the epitome of power and evil, who had in my mind no chance of redemption. Could it be that he had done his best?

I have since gone back to my memories of those speeches and not found what I saw the first time. Perhaps the documents are

not readily available on the internet, or perhaps it was an obscure letter published somewhere that I cannot find anymore. But in that moment I realized, with the same life-altering clarity that Chara describes with the Lord's unshortened arm, that we cannot judge another or assume we know by external circumstances how the Lord is working with someone. In front of me was proof that the Lord's lens on the happenings of the earth is very different than ours, that "My ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55). That moment has stuck with me for over 30 years! And I'm so grateful that it has.



Join the Conversation!

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

Tell us what you think! Contact information is in the beginning of this *Journal*.

Startling Aristotle and Epicurus

Sylvia Montgomery Shaw

If Aristotle and Epicurus had stepped
through a portal of some kind,
finding themselves seated in
22 D and 22 F, jockeying to gape
through the plane's small window
40,000 feet above the earth,

once they got over their fright and
let wonder surge through them
as they soared high above
cloud-seas, I wonder:

would they have praised human ingenuity,
or God manifesting through human minds?

The Other Season

Janna King

I found him leaning
In the long green shadow of the barn
Rubbing the grime of two full hours
Hard from his shoulders—
Polishing his face in the knot
His plaid shirt made.
He was so tired—
Some other farmer's wife was watching
As I watched
To learn the reason why
He'd pulled up and parked
The green tractor in the shadow of the barn
An hour, at least, too soon.
Too hard to labor always
In the same fields—
Watch the seasons turning
In the turned-over soil.
Spring goes summer. Fall goes winter—
Always something to put out or bring in,
Seed time over and over.
Tired of my encouragement—
That the good big barn
Means room for coming seasons,
Maybe five year loads of hay to store,
He shakes me off with the stamping of his boots—
Loosening the hold the earth has on him—
And says it's time for other things.

Barn Burning

Janna King

Come down to the barn in the snow.
So many boards gone,
Strips of wood and sky,
Teeth missing, icy lisp of the wind.

Don't come for the old times' sake,
For ancient songs in the piled hay,
For prickling, sliding, sneezing,
For amber waves of grain.

Come because it's cold and very quiet now
And if you lean against this splintery post
You'll view the distance through an empty door
You'll see the rise and fall of certain hills,
Hills your son will watch and work upon . . .
But the barn,
But the gray beams,
But the silver boards must go today
In fire.

Janna King has been a teacher, writer, editor, mother and grandmother. She has published poetry, short stories, editorials and academic essays. Her greatest blessing is her family, and the source of all her hope is The New Church. She can be contacted at jannaking50@gmail.com.

The following series of articles is about the Bryn Athyn Thrift Shop, a prosperous store run by a small paid staff along with many volunteers. The Thrift Shop was housed on church property in an old barn, which had to be dismantled to make way for a new school building. Both the shop itself and the barn have been well loved. The shop will continue in a new location about a mile away, but the structure that was part of its identity will be deeply missed. The following articles give a sense of why and how the Thrift Stop is loved by its customers and workers.

The Heart of the Barn

Vera Powell Glenn

The haymows on the upper floor of the Barn were once filled with hay for the workhorses that stamped in their stalls underneath. There was at least one cow for milk and butter, and sometimes a calf in the little box stall under the stair, being weaned from its mother. Always there were cats roaming over the Barn, upstairs and down, looking for mice and having kittens in nests in the hay. Early on there were pigs and chickens and ducks, but they were gone before I came to consciousness.

My very first memory is associated with the Barn. I remember clearly watching my grandfather Powell as he milked the cow. When he was finished, he pushed back the stool, lifted the pail and walked out into the alley way. I followed to watch him tip the pail and pour warm milk into the saucers by the stairs, supper for the cats. Leaving the Barn he carefully closed and latched the bottom part of the door, and we walked hand-in-hand toward the house through a bright glow of the westering sun.

When my grandfather died in 1942, my father sold the cow and focused his attention on growing the orchard, planting more

peach and apple trees, even two rows of Bartlett pears on the hillside. Instead of a farm, it became a fruit orchard. The sign at the end of the gravel driveway read *The Academy Orchards—D. S. Powell*.

I loved growing up in the orchard. My family did not own the land, but I've learned you do not have to legally own something to make it your own. Labor and love do that. My father, David Powell, planted the trees, tended them and watched them grow, blossom and bear fruit. He picked the fruit and stored it in the Barn to be sorted and sold.

People came to the Barn from near and far to buy fruit in its season. The peaches ripened in late summer. It was said, "Mr. Powell's peaches are the best tasting peaches ever—sweet and juicy." In the fall the Barn was redolent with the smell of ripe apples. Their fragrance seemed to pervade the wooden structure and linger even after the Barn was renovated and repurposed as a thrift shop after standing empty for several years.

Nicknamed BATS, because there were bats living in the rafters that had to be gently urged to find other lodgings, the Bryn Athyn Thrift Shop opened in 1993 and quickly became a useful community project. It provided work for volunteers, provided financial support for the Church school, but did more than that, as it recycled all kinds of items with wear still in them that might have been trashed. It gave them new life and new users.

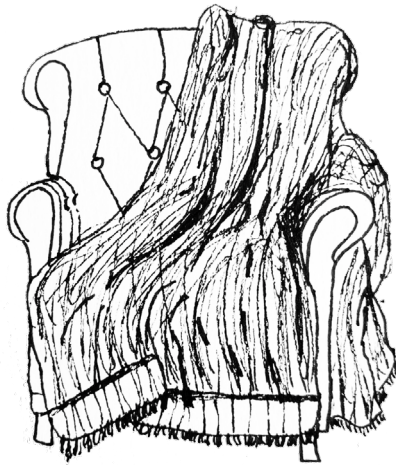
Customers seldom left BATS empty-handed, and those who were too frazzled to shop spoke of going home calmed and refreshed. The workers were cheerful and caring. They took the time to listen and respond to each person's needs. And just being in the friendly atmosphere of the old Barn put people back in touch with a simpler, less stressful way of life.

I believe that a building, like a house or a barn, retains the sphere or spirit of the people who have lived and worked within

its walls. There is an aura that is tangible. Though some are more sensitive to this than others, most people have a general feeling that something meaningful went on in this place—there’s still something in the air.

And yes, something “went on” in the Barn for over a hundred and twenty years: steadfast daily work and reaching out to the community—labor and love. For me, the ‘something in the air’ was the scent of apples.

Vera was born in 1936 and attended the schools in Bryn Athyn. In 1968 she married Bruce Glenn, a widower with five children, and they went on to have two more children. When her husband died in 1992 she took early retirement and found her joy in writing and publishing several books with religious themes: “Dove at the Window,” “Heaven in a Wildflower,” “The Apple Orchards” and, in collaboration with two (old) classmates, “Settlement on the Hill.”



Bryn Athyn Thrift Shop

Managing the Bryn Athyn Thrift Shop (BATS) 2000-2021

Nina Glebe Finkeldey

Nina was asked several questions about her time being the first full-time manager of the thrift store.

Tell us about what it was like when you started.

I felt blessed. I stepped into an organization that I loved that had already done so much good work in a relatively short time, about 7 years. Fay Cooper, Myra Asplundh, and Isie Nelson were the original visionaries, and there were others who took on management over those years. Barbara Packer was the volunteer manager when I started. Audrey Smith had been the treasurer from the get-go, and I'll never forget her perspective and supportive ways as I navigated my early days.

The barn roof and walls had been wrapped with insulation, cement floors poured, shelving painted, and a fleet of dedicated volunteers were elbow-deep in washing and pressing antique linens, re-dressing and coiffing dolls and their hair, revitalizing stuffed animals, hanging clothing, checking games, repairing broken items, picking up furniture, polishing silver and a lot more.

The work ethic was strong. We certainly don't have a corner on that market, but as a church culture, many of us grew up with

the idea of doing one's work honestly, justly, and faithfully, and it has shown up there in spades with the people who serve. BATS has also attracted amazing volunteers from the surrounding communities. It's been a remarkable privilege to have worked with all of these people and to have known the appreciative customers, as well, over all these years.

It was solidly popular from all angles and growing with a sound foundation.

What influenced you to develop the policy of treating people so well?

I value the importance of community. Looking back, I can see how often I enjoyed participating in things that brought people together in a light way, from in and out of Bryn Athyn, from all walks of life. As a child I remember loving the concept of the Grand Human, of all that variety, of all those different uses, all expressed differently but working together. Earth is not Heaven—I'm clear on that. But believing, at least, in the ultimate perfection of the diversity and the healthy interdependence of life is deeply important to me.

On top of that core interest, fueled by the values I grew up with about loving one's neighbor as oneself, I fell in love with a simple book called *The Power of Kindness—The Unexpected Benefits of Leading a Compassionate Life* by Piero Ferruci. It's short and easy. I'd highly recommend it. I had the chapter headings listed and hanging in my office as reminders. They included: Honesty, Warmth, Forgiveness, Contact, Sense of Belonging, Trust, Mindfulness, Empathy, Humility, Patience, Generosity, Respect, Flexibility, Gratitude, Service, and Joy.

In interviews with potential volunteers, I would acknowledge that it might seem obvious but still worth articulating: it was an intention to treat all people with kindness and respect. That didn't mean to have no boundaries—self-respect is an essential piece. If there were situations that were particularly trying (we were, after

all, involved with multitudinous humans), I encouraged the volunteers to come find someone in management before they got too stressed. We were there to support their good efforts as well as caring for the customers.

In general, I wanted anyone who came to BATS in any capacity to feel better when they left there. We weren't perfect at it, of course, but it was a conscious intention to send that message. Life is hard. You never know the burdens someone is carrying, but you can be sure they have them. Kindness and respect go a long way. BATS is a great venue for that as there are constant opportunities to help and interact with people, all day, every day.

The décor of the Shop was really like an old barn. Can you tell us about that?

The décor was various, but I can break it down a little. First of all, we were in love with the barn itself. It was, according to barn experts at the New Jersey Barn Company, an exceptionally large barn for its time and a testament to the prosperity of the farmer who built it in the decades after the Civil War. It was a wonderful example of an almost lost craft, and it survived through the 20th century remarkably intact. He described the extra-long span of the main beam and explained that it would have come from upstate New York and been floated down the Hudson River, then to the Delaware River, and then over land to Bryn Athyn. Nowadays a tree like that can only be found in Northern Canada. I recently drove to the Adirondacks and every time I crossed or drove alongside the Hudson, I thought of that beam floating south to Bryn Athyn

What a back drop! We loved talking about the building, the construction and its history. It was first an animal farm and then a fruit farm in the 1920s. To honor its history, we kept any original artifacts from the farm, displaying the fruit picking ladders and yokes, etc. Then we added things with the same feel. Old barn, old stuff—an easy match. Certainly clamp-on roller skates and a soap

box derby car had to be included.

On another note, we rather fancied ourselves an informal church community museum. Since most of us working there were from the BA area, someone was apt to recognize a donation that would add to the museum wall: a photo of an autogyro hovering over the river near Trenton, a Ruth Gyllenhaal hand-painted print of BA community life, a photo of President Eisenhower at Glencairn, a watercolor of Camp Lamoka, a print of the BA orchestra playing at Glencairn, parts of scenery from a college play, etc.

Then there was recycled art and a myriad of things that just would, for one reason or another, give delight. We liked to delight. Discoveries seemed endless, additions kept coming. Peter Rhodes, a long-time volunteer, particularly loved making recycled art wonders. A favorite of mine was a gutted small television that he placed in front of a window so the viewer could look straight through to the trees and the sky. He labeled it “Reality TV.”

In conclusion . . .

It was time for me to stop for a number of reasons, but BATS always had and still has my heart, big-time. I treasure the years and the connections I had there. I would never underestimate the value of those connections—I wish we and the world had more of them. I came across something recently that was called *Tips for Hard Times*. I thought of BATS, of community, of my home town and surrounding communities.

One of the tips is to form weak bonds:

People with varied social connections—not just individuals with a few close relationships, but those regular interactions with the larger community in which they live—have a distinct survival advantage. Joining groups that allow you to form those weak bonds helps individuals in two ways. It promotes regular social contact with a diverse group of people, which we know is protective In addition, weak bonds provide a source of helpful tidbits of information that strong bonds often don't. The

reason? We often share the same background and types of knowledge with our close friends and family members. People who are more distantly connected to us have access to different banks of information. Susan Pinker, *The Village Effect*

It makes sense to me.

Thank you, BATS, and thank you, *Theta Alpha Journal*, for asking.

Thoughts from BATS Staff & Friends

Brenna Synnestvedt (manager):

BATS, or the Bryn Athyn Thrift Shop, first opened in late 1993 after a group of women including Isie Nelson, Myra Asplundh, Barbara Packer, and Fay Cooper convinced church leadership that establishing a thrift shop would be a worthwhile endeavor, as it would raise money for the church and provide opportunities for people to be of service. It started in a portion of a circa 1900 barn that was owned by the Academy, and had been managed by David Powell, who had an orchard on the property at the time. The barn was located right next to the elementary school.

During the nearly three decades of its existence, BATS expanded to fill every square inch of the barn. It has earned over \$1,000,000 for the school fund. The shop has provided around 700 workers, including community member adults, students, non-church members and recent immigrants, an opportunity to make a difference and to make friends along the way. Our planet also benefits when things are re-used rather than being thrown away.

The BATS process is pretty simple. First people drop off donations of household items, clothing, jewelry, furniture, tools, etc. Next workers handle every item, and pass along to the next stage

of processing all the things that seem sellable. Items are then more closely examined, priced and put out for customers to buy. We recycle all that we can and discard the remaining items.

BATS has been a blessing far beyond the money it has earned for the church. At the very heart of it is genuine human connection. Many friendships have been created, not only among workers but also with customers. Comments from customers (the vast majority of whom are not connected to the church) include, “This is my happy place,” “Coming here is my therapy,” “You all are so kind and friendly,” “I come to this place once a week, and when I go down the driveway I feel like I’m out in the country.”

I believe this last point is the very heart of it. Many of the customers who come don’t have much sense of community in their lives. But when they come to BATS, they are welcomed. They are seen. They are known. One customer told us that he sent his son to Bryn Athyn College because of his experience at BATS. Perhaps there are others who have sent their child to our schools because of similar experiences. Customers who have immigrated from elsewhere in the world have come to the thrift store and been welcomed. When it is evident from listening that a person was born outside the United States I always ask, “In what country were you born?” The number of noted countries is 87.

Who knows how many items have been donated throughout the decades. Let’s just say LOTS. “BATS Magic” is when someone comes in looking for a very specific, perhaps obscure, item and finds it. You know it’s “BATS Magic” when you hear someone saying gleefully, “I can’t believe I found this!”

Non-standard donations that provided a giggle, a gasp or a blush included bizarre costumes such as a partial gorilla suit which a customer used for a family party, money tucked into books or clothing pockets, and X-rated items.

One time a worker found \$1500 in a pocketbook. We notified the police in case someone was looking for it. A few weeks later a

woman with a foreign accent came into the store asking about it. When the worker put the money in her hands she burst into tears. “I didn’t think I’d ever get it back!” The worker told her, “That’s what we’re all about here.” Another time a different worker found \$5,500 in clothing. The police were notified about it, but no one ever came to claim it. After many months it was put into the funds as a donation.

Now BATS is in the process of moving on to a new chapter. The Bryn Athyn Church will be building a wonderful new elementary school on available church land. This has necessitated the temporary closing and dismantling of the BATS/Powell barn. Fortunately, through the generosity of donors, an entirely new BATS barn is to be built nearby (in the field near Buck and Byberry for those readers who know the area). Wooden wallboards, gables and flooring, and also other décor from the old barn will be incorporated into the new. Some new things that are improvements are that the retail space will be all on one floor (making it more customer friendly), the new location will have more street visibility, and it will be climate controlled—the old BATS did not have air conditioning.

Though the transition, including the barn dismantling, has been difficult in ways, there is also reason for happy anticipation. One thing is certain: there will be jubilation when BATS reopens. There will be hugging and tears of joy as people reconnect. Often now, when I am out, a customer of BATS recognizes me and rushes up to talk. So I feel confident when saying that the new space WILL become infused with the same spirit as the old.

Brenna graduated from ANC in 1972 and obtained a degree in anthropology from the George Washington University in 1976. Prior to BATS, among other things, Brenna worked with SE Asian refugees in Thailand, was a Peace Corps volunteer in the Solomon Islands, and lived in Romania for five years where her husband worked for the Peace Corps. She and her husband have two children and a grandson.

Leslee DeWald:

For the past seventeen years I have had the pleasure and privilege of working for the Bryn Athyn Thrift Shop. BATS is the community thrift shop known as a fund raiser for the church and elementary school.

While I assist in managing the shop, as well as determining prices for a lot of the inventory, I also pre-sort and manage all seasonal items. I have enjoyed curating the front room in the shop for the past 17 years!! This room was a feature room which greeted the customers to the right of the shop as they entered.

For the most part, the front room (also known as the parlor) would house all seasonal decor. Spring/ Easter décor (lots of plastic eggs), summer fun stuff (lots of beachy things), Fall/Halloween (one of my favorites) and last but not least, Christmas!! Christmas is a huge production at BATS, and Christmas decor would also be found upstairs in BATS as well. The prettier, more pricier things could be found in the front room along with a wall of Nativity representations, which I particularly enjoyed setting up!

Aside from seasonal set-up it was also a lot of fun doing different themes. A recurring theme was the “Old General Store” with lots of antique-type things with a yesteryear kind of feel. A June bride theme in the month of June was another fun display, as well as a Curiosity shop display, French Country, and a wine theme with a Tuscany feel surrounding it.

But perhaps the best display had to be the Titanic theme that was displayed in 2012 for the 100th anniversary of its sinking. It was a collective effort by both volunteers and staff members gathering things that looked as though it might have been found on the ship, so of course lots of old and wonderful items were gathered and eventually set up and sold to our customers. I knew we all did a great job with this display when a shopper commented, wanting to know if the artifacts we had on display and for sale actually came from the Titanic. I explained that this was just a fun

gathering of articles that were generously donated to honor the 100 year anniversary . . . but what a great compliment!

These years at BATS have been fantastic! In the meantime, we all are looking forward to the next chapter of BATS in its new location! And yes . . . there will be a front room!

Leslee has been married forty years, has a son and a daughter, and three grandchildren. She lives in the neighboring community of Southampton, and studied marketing and distribution.

Laurie Horan:

I began working for BATS as staff seventeen years ago. The thrift shop was less than 10 years in existence at that point. I never was a volunteer there prior to that (we had only lived in BA for four years), but when I saw the ad in the Post looking for workers, I decided to give it a try. Our youngest was in fourth grade, so the part-time work hours required were doable, plus the job is just a short walk down our street and across the field to the barn. Barn? Yes, barn. The thrift shop is (was) in a large 125-year old barn, re-purposed in a unique, whimsical way, both functional (well, mostly) and fun. There's just no other thrift shop like it; our customers commented on this frequently.

I have always prioritized being an at-home mom, so taking on even a part-time job was a stretch for me. But I quickly found that *this* job actually felt more like an extension of being at home. Working for Nina Finkelday as my boss, along with Brenna Synestvedt and the other staff was so, well, homey!

Nina's emphasis on kindness and respect in all our dealings with each other and with the customers always set a welcoming tone in the shop, and that has continued with Brenna as manager and Leslee DeWald as assistant manager. It's a comfortable, pleasant work environment. How many managers, when making up a

work schedule, go out of their way to check with the staff that the schedule is convenient for *the staff*?! And how many managers are perfectly fine with the staff switching around work hours as the need arises? What a boon! The recognition by the BATS managers that our family life trumps our work life is priceless.

Sorting through the contents of other people's stuff is endlessly interesting! Some days it was like Christmas. Some days not so much. My main job as a staff worker was to receive the donations directly from the donors, sort and organize them, place them into standard-sized bins, and haul them to the next processing area. Because of the space constraints in the barn, this work took place outside in a 10' by 20' tent (designed to be a car-port, not a work space). Yes, the work is often physically demanding, and must be done whether it's 108° in the shade or 15° with a wind chill. One definitely learns to dress for the weather! And working outside in a leaky tent has certainly presented challenges: how to keep the donations dry as they arrive during a downpour? How to get a foot of snow off the roof of the tent before it collapses from the weight?? How to maintain one's composure and keep sorting as fast as possible when hurricane force winds are threatening to blow you and your work space off the map?!! (Ask Janna King about that one.) Our lives out in that tent were not dull, that's for sure.

But then there are those exquisite days – especially in the spring or the fall—that make it a joy to be working outside. Spring and fall became my favorite work seasons for that reason; those were the days I was grateful *not* to be cooped up in an office.

Bottom line: I am grateful to have been a member of this wonderful team of workers, and look forward to figuring out the 'what' and 'how' of it in our new space on Buck Road.

Laurie is married to Richard Horan; they have five adult children and two grandchildren. She graduated from the Academy Girls' School in 1974 and from Bryn Athyn College with an associate degree in 1976.

Jane Blair:

Nestled between two giant vertical barn posts is the BATS jewelry department. As part of this department's team of almost a dozen volunteers, many working from home or behind the scenes, I get here Tuesday morning before we open to the public, and I can hear the early bird shoppers gathering behind the curtained entrance. I do some tidying, polishing the glass cases, and decide on some last-minute rearranging of the necklaces by color, enjoying the whimsy of simple, blue plastic beads next to valuable lapis lazuli sparkling with pyrite.

Promptly at 11 AM, a manager opens the door and dozens of customers surge in, aiming for their favorite departments. As usual, several of our regulars head straight to jewelry, and thus begins my three-hour shift, doing what I love most in this small niche of mine: meeting our patrons, getting to know them in all their diversity, and learning how best to serve this ever-changing community of BATS visitors.

Most of my day-to-day life is spent with family and Bryn Athyn church friends, but at our thrift shop I connect with people not only from the local area, but from distant counties, states, and literally from many nations! Sometimes the language barrier makes things difficult, but today I wait on a young Latino husband who rises above that challenge and finds something beautiful for the wife he obviously adores. Another time, a woman facing chemotherapy chooses a ring that reminds her to live in the moment. A mother and four adult daughters, all in beautiful dresses and wearing strands of pearls, begin a special day out together with a browse through this "destination" shop. Their day will conclude with dinner at one of Philadelphia's finest restaurants. A woman my age has become a friend, and we exchange confidences and worries. Four young men from Lower Moreland High School visit us for the first time, incredulous that they've never heard about this place, within walking distance of their school, no less. One

of them asks how he could volunteer here. An elderly gentleman can barely walk, but visits every week to purchase items for his own antiques shop in New Jersey. When he dickers over prices I remind him that his purchase benefits our school children, and he softens. A middle-aged son brings his elderly mother for a weekly visit here. When he comes alone, I learn that she's not well, and we exchange caregiver stories.

There is much discussion about the upcoming move, but here's my take: the "skeleton" of BATS will soon be dismantled, but the essential life systems of this excellent use will continue on, inhabiting its new barn. I look forward to "BATS 2.0!"

Jane spent her first 30 years in Bryn Athyn. After marrying Max Blair, she spent the next 30 in SW Ohio where she and Max raised their two sons. Now Jane is enjoying her final 30, traveling with her husband, loving church life, and participating in some of the many volunteer opportunities that Bryn Athyn offers.

Leo Magazzu, III:

As a thrift shopper, I found the Barn by accident and took to it immediately. A barn, that's the setting for my life. I kept my horse, Hank, at St. Basil's stables on Fox Chase Road, and I've had four horses before him.

In going to the thrift store, before I knew it I was talking with Brenna and Leslee. When they found out I was an electrician, that's when they started asking—roughly twenty years ago. A little bit of work here, a little bit there. I changed light bulbs, fixed receptacles, put lights at the jewelry counter, worked on the breaker panel. Before long I was taking care of the hardware section; every Monday I was there working. Then I got into talking with Peter Rhodes Now I call my home BATS II because of all the stuff I bought. When you walk inside, it's like a museum: old Tiffany-like lamps, horse memorabilia, old barn things, prancing paintings of

horses, landscapes, western memorabilia. Getting 20% discount didn't hurt. Maybe the good thing about BATS closing is that I don't have any more wall space.

Being at the thrift store, I picked up a few of Swedenborg's books and have been reading them. They open up things in my mind that are good. One of these days I'll wander into one of the church services

Leo graduated from Abraham Lincoln High School in Philadelphia in 1971. Single, he has a very close relationship with his sisters and three nephews, and a passionate interest in horses and dogs.

Sherrin Bochneak Bradley:

My love affair with BATS began during the Christmas season of 2008. We had recently moved to the area and I was looking for opportunities to meet people, to be useful, and to fill up some free time. The effort involved in transforming the barn into a Christmas shopping wonderland, practically overnight, sucked me right in and had me hooked from the get-go. The cheerful atmosphere and the productive nature of the work checked all the right boxes for me.

I began volunteering on a weekly basis after that Christmas initiation, and the hours spent with the pleasant staff and friendly volunteers were a highlight of my week. The behind-the-scenes efforts to keep the inventory in the shop topped up was like watching a well-oiled machine at work. The flow depended on many hands at each stage until every item was put out on the floor in a clean and usable condition with a price on it.

At one point there was a need for more help in deciding what the prices of things should be, and I began to train with Leslee, the head pricer. It's a very subjective skill, but it helps to be familiar with the pricing structure at other thrift stores and to practice, practice, practice. Over time this became my main job, and I enjoyed seeing

all the treasures that were gifted to BATS by generous donors. We would marvel at the beautiful jewelry, or fine crystal and china, or even expensive pieces of artwork that people dropped off for us to sell. Most things were ordinary, but often practical, and some things we couldn't even figure out what they were or what their use was. Sometimes it was the customers that came to our rescue and told us what a certain item was and how to use it. I always loved the things that came with notes explaining the provenance of an item and a thank you from the donor expressing their gratitude at having a place where they could pass along their family treasures that were no longer of use to them.

I know I am just one of many people that are missing BATS and the wonderful atmosphere that enveloped the barn. I eagerly await the day when the new building is completed, and we can start trying to recreate the magic that took place in that special barn. Thank you so much to all those that are making that possible!

Sherrin lived in Bryn Athyn, except for a short stint in New Jersey, until marrying in 1983 and accompanying her army husband around the US and Europe for the next 25 years. They relocated to Huntingdon Valley in 2008, and enjoy being the parents of three married children and three wonderful grandchildren.

Alaine York:

The Children's Books section occupied only a small area of BATS, but it has been a popular and well used one! Our Book Lady Team (aka the Book Babes) of Alix Smith, Barbara Buick, and Alaine York enjoyed getting together each Monday morning to go through several boxes of used children's books. We sorted these, rejecting yellowed pages, torn ones, books with crayon scribbles in them, ones that had missing pages or dead batteries in the electronic sounds panel, and a few that were just plain awful and inappro-

priate, etc. We were still left with a LOT of great books. We then priced and shelved them, sorted by age group and category.

The fun part of this job, besides the great group of cheerful staff and volunteers surrounding us at BATS, was the books themselves. It was fun to see some of our own childhood favorites coming through, some new authors and some just very funny ones! As three grandmas, we also enjoyed purchasing some books for grandchildren and friends.

Some weeks we came in to find disheveled and disorganized shelves. No matter! That meant there had been a lot of activity and small people enjoying books, which was the point, after all. If the shelves were noticeably emptied, we rejoiced and filled them up again. All this while renewing old friendships and making new ones – a major feature of volunteering at BATS. Come join us when BATS returns.

Over the years, Alaine spent 3 years as a New Church elementary school teacher, almost 5 years as Theta Alpha Journal editor, and later spent 25 years working in the Theological School, Bishop's Office, and finally as Secretary of the General Church. Alaine and her husband, Ken, have a family of six children and nine grandchildren and now enjoy their life of retirement in Huntingdon Valley.

Linda Odhner:

I started working at BATS with my unschooling daughter in 2006, and after she started college I stayed on as a Monday volunteer until the COVID lockdown in 2020. After getting oriented, I remember starting in the sporting goods department and “Manland,” where the hardware, tools, and construction materials were gathered. From there I progressed to the craft and stationery section, and ended up working with the books, which felt like paradise.

I always loved BATS, the barn itself with its vintage-object decor, the sense of community and creative improvisation, and the

ecological elegance. Our kitchen/dining/craft table was a BATS find, along with more household and clothing items than I can count. I appreciated having a place to donate things, knowing they would be treated with respect and care. Shopping there felt like a treasure hunt—I never knew exactly what I would find. Becoming part of the Monday crew was a great way to meet and get to know people. I used to buy soft pretzels from the Philly Pretzel Factory near our house, and bring them to BATS to share, still warm from the oven. People shared their party leftovers and garden bounty with the BATS volunteers. I took home some lovely tomatoes.

Although I wasn't a Christmas volunteer, in November I would go upstairs (often in search of the GOOD refreshments) where the ladies were sorting and pricing merchandise, and bask in the festive atmosphere, admiring the display of ornaments and other pretty things and wishing I had room for them all at my house.

Linda has been choosing quotes from her favorite stories by women for the "Excerpted Inspirations" blog on Deborah's Tree, the website to support the work of Swedenborgian women.

Dianna Synnestvedt:

Working as a pricer at BATS could be prescribed by a doctor as a dopamine enhancer – things in life that trigger the release of the “feel-good” chemical into the brain are things like:

- Making a new friend
- Being able to talk to that friend for three hours every Friday afternoon
- Helping an earnest man choose jewelry for his wife for Valentine's Day
- Having a manager say “great job!” and “thank you!” – and offering every kind of support

- Feeling safe from unpleasant challenges
- Knowing that you're helping the school in the larger community
- Being amazed and entertained by the things that are donated
- Getting really good deals on just what you need

– And this is just a partial list!

BATS is my feel-good place.

Dianna Echols Synnestvedt is a former art teacher and a children's book illustrator. She lives in Bryn Athyn.

Lori Odhner:

It was my good fortune to help prepare fabric that was donated to BATS. People who had stopped sewing, or had leftovers from a project, were happy to pass it along. As one of the shoppers who happily buy such gems, it was fun to help get it ready. Several women shared the room where such processing happens. Part of the fun was that we all chatted while we wrapped and tagged. It is a triple win, for the folks trying to downsize items they no longer need, for the buyers who go home with good deals, and for the school when Bats makes a profit.

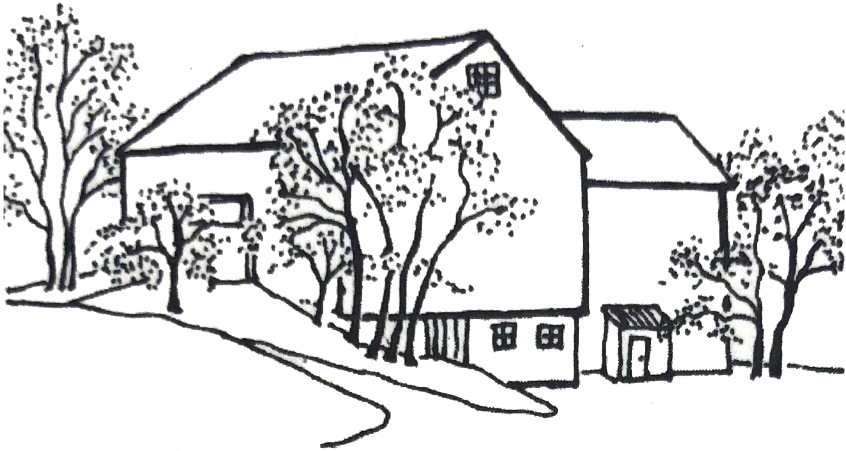
Clayton Walsh:

I joined the BATS team as a volunteer in November 2022. I had some free time, knew it was useful, and also knew that some big changes were on deck and they could use the help. I wanted to be part of the big change, too. Hey, at the very least I could support BACS (Bryn Athyn Church School), and maybe learn how to create cool quirky things like Peter Rhodes does, right?

Growing up on Ashley Road near the Thrift Store until age 12, I

think I have some hard-wired affection for this property, this barn, and this house [the Powell House next to the Barn]. This used to be my playground. With that as a backdrop I have realized over the past 6 months how important this place is for the community, and it's because of the people who work and volunteer, and the love they pour into this whole 'thing.' The efforts here are a wonderful tribute to this spot in Bryn Athyn history that has provided such a great use in several forms over the past 30 or so years. This barn and these wonderful people have served in the truest purposes of New Church teachings. The use is immense, and this will continue even when the 'place' moves. When use grows and love expands, God's presence grows. All change is inevitable. Powell's barn has served its uses well. I am honored to be a part of this transition, and on this team of people, as the love moves forward to a new home and into new hearts.

Clayton loves the Bryn Athyn community and supports it in many ways, one of which is as president of Charity In Action. He is married to Joelene Walsh and they have three children.



Out with the Old

Sylvia Montgomery Shaw

Why when I've so looked forward
to revamping my old kitchen, why when
I've dreamed of sparkling new, more efficient
cabinets, and the carpenters are here with their
saws and hammers, why do I cringe as they carry away
the dismembered cabinets?

Perhaps because they served me loyally for forty-five
years, or because in this my first and only home they
were once a source of pride, I feel unexpected sorrow.
Or is it because they and I are both aging, and like them,
I'll be carried out unceremoniously someday?

Good-bye old friends. Please forgive
my disloyalty, ambition, and vanity.

Then again, perhaps by making way
for the new, I am encouraging the next
generations who will live someday in this
house, to improve, adapt or tear
down in their own quest for
newer, shinier versions
of their imagination.

And we who must give way would do well to reflect on an epitaph both whimsical and true:

“The body of Benjamin Franklin, printer (like the covers of an old book, its content worn out and stript of its lettering and gilding) lies here, food for worms. Yet the work itself shall not be lost, for it will, as he believed, appear once more in a new and more beautiful edition, corrected and amended by its Author.”



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! Contact information is in the beginning of this *Journal*.

To-Do Lists

Jennica Nobre:

These days most of my “To-Do” lists are on my phone in the “Reminders” app. When I think of something I say, “Hey Siri, remind me to . . .” A list forms in the app and I get an alert later on and, on a good day, I do whatever it was. I can check things off the list in the app and they disappear. Right now there are things from over a year ago that I never got to, like fixing the dehumidifier.

Occasionally I make a list on my computer. Most recently it was entitled “Things to do in June.” A couple of times a week I sit down to see what is on it and erase anything I have completed.

Once in a while I still use good old pen and paper. It is nice to have a list that can be stuck on the refrigerator so I will notice it as I bustle around the kitchen. Everyone else in the house can see it too and that can be a useful “heads up” if I am planning to ask for help.

Jenn Beiswenger:

I consider myself a very left-brained person, ordered and methodical, but also with somewhat less-than-stellar memory power, so I make lists of what I need to remember to do. I like the idea of keeping a single, master list, which occasionally happens, but that invariably ends up morphing into multiple lists when I think of things on the run or in the middle of the night, and my master list isn’t handy (but little slips of paper always are!). I cross things off of various lists as I do them, and every once in a while I conglomerate my little lists into the – or a new – big list, once again reducing it to

tidy orderliness . . . which persists until I have more brain flashes at inconvenient times. I've adopted my late grandmother-in-law's saying, that I always have "101 things to do". And yes, some of the items get passed from one list to the next and the next after it The pressing things get done, but those less important ones are lucky if they see the light of day. Surely *one day* I'll get through them all? (Hope springs eternal!)



Helen Kennedy:

My to-do list has morphed into 1½" squares. I got tired of having lists with some things crossed out, that now I write the tasks individually on small pieces of paper, about 1½" square. When each one is done, I get the pleasure of crumpling it. I can stack the papers up so they take up less room, which is enjoyable. More importantly, though, I've learned something. For me each day is a decision of how I'm going to spend my limited time and money on the various things vying for my attention. I call it the politics of personal life. At times choosing among the bickering things creates confusion. Do I work on my computer, grocery

shop, return calls that I should have days ago, do the vacuuming? On and on. The politics comes in when deciding which things I am going to spend my limited amount of time on during the day and evening. And, in some cases, what amount of money?

A kind of reverse thing happened to a few years ago. On days when nothing is pressing (I am retired) I get to vote on which things I want to do—work on my new poem, go out for lunch with a friend, find a new recipe on the web, go for a long walk, or would I rather get groceries for a friend who is sick? I know I can do several of these in a day, but I'm getting slower now as I get older, and there's always so much more to do than I can fit in a day. Deciding among good things can be difficult. When I'm planning my day, which ones get the most votes? Many times the election is too close to call because they all loom so enjoyable to do.

At one point I got to worrying that all these pleasant things might dry up and I'd be left with nothing to do. I mean, I'd come to the end of things I wanted to do and then I'd be bored. And what about forever? Was I going to keep having things to do forever? It's ok if you laugh, but it became a real worry, one I couldn't shake for months. Then one day I got an unexpected impulse to write, and this is what came out:

The nothingness ahead of me was like a vast ocean. I stood on its shore with forever stretching out its empty arms. I would never have enough things to do to fill them. No thoughts strolled on its deserted beach. No bits of life stirred in the tidepools. A slight wind started to blow. Then a thousand desires came gliding into my mind like seabirds landing on the beach, each holding something I would love to do. I could barely stand from being overwhelmed with joy. This time I did not eat from the wrong Tree. I knew I was not the originator of these ideas. I received them into my mind. The Intelligence assured me I was not going to be bored forever.

The Song of the Oak

Janyne Nail

Anna Marie was old and tired. It appeared to her that she had been an outcast and reject by every person who she had touched. Now she was old and frequently in pain. "Life should be easier now that I am coming close to my end," she thought. "But I'm still rejected and disrespected by those around me." And she was sad, so she stayed locked in her room where it was safe.

As she pondered these things, she fell asleep in her rocker. Her heart spoke to her, "Be strong and of great courage. God has given you a difficult life to prepare you for something special. It is waiting for you. Soon you will know what awaits you."

She answered and said, "But God, I am so old and worn out, like a giant oak that has been tossed by many storms. The next wind may be the one which tears my roots from the ground. Take me now and give me some rest."

Her heart said, "The winds blew and shook all your leaves, but baby birds nested safely in your branches. Your acorns fell to the ground as the branches shook, and many animals passed below and fed on your strength.

"Little do you know of all the creatures you have sheltered and fed as you were tossed around by the storms. They all have a piece of you that has stayed in their souls. Do not grieve now. A million stars have seen your great strength and they are looking down on you, singing the song of the sturdy oak tree."

So Anna Marie awoke and she still heard the song of the mighty oak tree in her heart. She knew of all the little things she had done to protect and feed those who had passed her in her life. Those she had touched without really knowing they were there. She still stayed in her safe room in her worn rocking chair. But now when she looked out the window at the shining night stars, she still heard their song and it gave her the strength to weather the future wild storms.

One day she fell with a mighty, great thud. She shook all the forest. The acorns exploded all over the ground. The roots that had held her so tight to the soil now looked towards the sun with vines and leaves hanging down. Anna Marie looked down from the stars in the sky, and she knew in her heart that her job was completed. That strong oak tree would give back to the forest. She wouldn't be forgotten as the wood of her branches turned into soil. Critters who needed shelter would crawl into the pockets created by her shattered and broken timber. Her life would go on in peace on the ground.

Scholarships Available!!

Two education scholarships will be offered for the 2024-2025 school year. This annual award is for the purpose of supporting women attending the Bryn Athyn College of the New Church who desire to become New Church teachers and declare education as a major or minor (or Interdisciplinary Degree.)

The annual scholarship award amount is \$2,100 (\$700 paid directly to the college at the beginning of each trimester), for up to 2 recipients. One award is for an incoming freshman, and one award is for a current Bryn Athyn College of the New Church education student. May be used toward tuition, fees, and/or books. Applications due March 1, 2024.

Three scholarships are available to women students of Bryn Athyn College of the New Church who have a 3.0 GPA and are studying **Religion** (major, minor, ID) or are **international** students. There are (2) \$2,000 and (1) \$1,000 scholarship awarded to eligible recipients who exemplify the teachings of the New Church. These are annual merit based scholarships that can be used for tuition, college fees, books or supplies. Applications due March 1, 2024

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

*Applications are due **April 1, 2024**. To apply: email scholarships@thetaalphainternational.org or see BAC website.*

ANC Scholarships!!

Two annual scholarships are now offered for the 2024-2025 school year in the amount of \$2,500 for up to 2 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 1, 2024**. To apply: email scholarships@thetaalphainternational.org for applications*

Award Winners

The following are the BAC scholarship recipients for 23-24:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| TAI General/Religion | \$2000 - Evelyn B. DeChazal |
| TAI Education (undergrad) | \$2100 - Leilah R. Glenn |
| | \$2100 - Katelyn E. Osterhoudt |
| TAI Graduate (Education and MARS) | |
| | \$2000 - Mary Jane C. Hill |
| | \$2000 - Jennica R. Nobre |

The ANC Scholarship recipients for \$2,500 each:

Isabella Furness and Hilani Wahl

Theta Alpha Girls School Awards

Gold Awards:

Katherine Isabella Stein
Tara Blythe Pitcairn
Sarah Hughes
Meg Matsukawa

Silver Award:

Sohaila Smith

Websites and Blogs of Readers

*If you'd like your blog or website included here,
please send the information to the editor.*

Jenn Beiswenger – artist, wordsmith, carer: *beiswenger.net/renjenn*

Eva Björkström – her lovely gardens can be seen on YouTube by searching her name

Karla Buick – directory of artists who create specifically New Church-themed art: *silverbrancharts.com*

Jim deMaine – a doctor's thoughts and stories from his 32 years of practice: *endoflifeblog.com*

Diana Hasen – author children's books *stevieandharley.com*

Chandra Hoffman – writer: *chandrahoffman.com*

Helen Kennedy – writer: *hmk98.blogspot.com*

Kelly Lucero – Children's book author and storyteller:
KellyLucero.com

Page Morahan — photographer: *psmorahan@gmail.com*

Lara Muth – writer: *twitter.com/lyramariner*

Abbey Nash – writer: *abbeynash.com*

Tiffany Perry – poet: *naturepoetrysite.wordpress.com*

Hilda Rogers – artist: *dailypaintworks.com/Artists/hilda-rogers-8286, hilda5462.wordpress.com*

Kerstin Sandstrom – artist: *kerstinsandstrom.wordpress.com*

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It is not
simply
an
end to
our
struggles
but a
vibrancy
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