

# NEW CHURCH *Life*

A bimonthly magazine devoted to the teachings revealed through Emanuel Swedenborg, as they apply to life.

**JULY/AUGUST 2024**



## **Climbing the Mountain . . .**

### *and coming back down*

*The Assembly swept us up the mountain of the Lord, to learn of His ways. Now we come back down, to walk in His paths and live what we have learned. (Page 222)*



ADVANCEMENT

**A Planned Gift can make  
the *uses* you love flourish!**

---

The General Church and Academy of the New Church have long been blessed by the generosity of members, friends and alumni.

Estate bequests are a simple way to preserve these institutions for future generations.

Consider a simple bequest in your will.

---

Have questions  
or want to discuss other ways of  
support?

Contact Mark H. Wyncoll  
267-502-2423 |  
mark.wyncoll@newchurch.org  
nc.plannedgiving.org

**NEW CHURCH LIFE (USPS 378-180)  
PUBLISHED BIMONTHLY BY THE GENERAL CHURCH  
OF THE NEW JERUSALEM**

Bruce Henderson, Editor | [bruce.henderson@newchurch.org](mailto:bruce.henderson@newchurch.org)

Jeremy Simons, Spiritual Editor | [jeremyfsimons@gmail.com](mailto:jeremyfsimons@gmail.com)

Tess Brown, Layout Designer

**subscription: \$30 to any address. \$15 for new subscriptions**

To order: 267-502-4990 or [susan.wright@anc-gc.org](mailto:susan.wright@anc-gc.org) Postmaster: Send address changes to:

New Church Life, PO Box 708, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009 or e-mail: [datacenter@anc-gc.org](mailto:datacenter@anc-gc.org)

# New Church Life

***A bimonthly magazine devoted to the teachings revealed through Emanuel Swedenborg, as they relate to life.***

220 In This Issue

222 Editorials: *Down From the Mountain • Derived Doctrine*

230 Letter to the Editors

237 The Church: Bringing Heaven to Earth – *The Rev. Michael D. Gladish*

243 An Invitation to the Holy City – *The Rev. Steven P. Gunther*

248 Ethics and Building on the Rock – *The Rev. Christopher A. Barber*

253 From the Bishop's Office: 'Amen' – *The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.*

256 Bryn Athyn College Commencement Address: Success in Life

–How-to Videos for Graduates – *Curtis Childs*

261 Academy Secondary Schools Commencement Address

ANC: Preparation for Life – *Douglas Reuter*

267 The Centenary of the New Church in Colchester, England:

The History by *Anne Glover*; The Celebration by *Ann Buss*;

and a poem from former pastor, the *Rev. Kenneth J. Alden*

272 The Swedenborgian Attorney who Launched the Slavery Trial

of the Century: The Dred Scott Case and Francis Murdoch

276 Life Lines

281 Church News

305 Announcements

New Church Life is available online at <https://newchurch.org/connect/subscriptions/new-church-life/>, with issues archived to 2006. All issues of New Church Life can be searched back to 1881 at [www.heavenlydoctrines.org](http://www.heavenlydoctrines.org)

# In This Issue

Editorials (page 230) include:

- *Down From the Mountain*: Almost 1,000 people answered the call of the General Assembly to “go up to the mountain of the Lord” – to learn of His ways and walk in His paths. The follow up comes in walking those paths – putting all that we have learned into our lives and building the church within ourselves. Three examples in the Word of mountaintop experiences enrich our understanding and are forever relevant to our lives.
- *Derived Doctrine*: This has become almost a pejorative term in the church but has a history and meaning that deserves examination and reflection on how much of what is cited is supported by the Word. We hear a lot of allegations in politics that are confusing. We should not be confused or questioning when talking about the Writings and the Word.

In a sermon, *The Church – Bringing Heaven to Earth* – the Rev. Michael Gladish says: “What makes heaven with a person also makes the church. For as love and faith make heaven, so too love and faith make the church.” This is the very heart of what the church is about: bringing heaven to earth, first in our own lives and then in the lives of others. “We are all born natural and have to become spiritual. It’s a process, a work in progress.” (Page 237)

At his ordination into the second degree of the priesthood, the Rev. Steven Gunther preached a sermon on *An Invitation to the Holy City*. The essentials of this church, “are charity, good works, repentance and life according to Divine laws. All of the volumes of the teachings of the New Church lead back to these four simple things.” (Page 243)

After a college course on the blunders and blessings of history seen through the lens of ethics and values, the Rev. Christopher Barber has begun incorporating all this into his own approach to scholarship, leadership, doctrine and life. “The issue of the day will always change,” he says, “however, our foundational texts of the Word and the Writings remain. It is not enough,

though, to keep copies of these books on our shelves; we must read, interpret and apply these works in order to keep our house built on the rock.” (Page 248)

Writing From the Bishop’s Office, the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. comments on the everyday word, “Amen,” spread throughout the Word, our prayers and our hymns. The simple translation is affirmation: “It is true.” But the word is used many times, in many ways. “The Lord, who is the Amen, speaks the truth to us in His Word.” It is for us to respond with an “Amen” of our own. (Page 253)

Curtis Childs, known throughout the church – and throughout the world – for his inspiring *offTheLeftEye* videos that introduce people to Swedenborg and the church, incorporated his how-to video approach in a commencement address for graduates of Bryn Athyn College. He talked, for instance, about “how to have the whole world excited that you’re graduating,” by simply loving to be useful and choosing to be good people. “Jesus Christ famously said that if we love Him, we should feed His sheep. Let’s go out and do likewise.” (Page 256)

Doug Reuter, Vice Principal of the Academy Boys School, told Secondary Schools graduates how his father changed his life immeasurably for good with a bit of advice when he was 16 about how choosing the Academy would prepare him for the rest of his life. Only looking back now, as we do with the workings of Divine providence, does he realize how that advice changed every element of his life. “This place,” he said, “has given me everything.” (Page 261)

It’s a bittersweet time in the history of the New Church in Colchester, England, which celebrated the centenary of its founding in May and now is up for sale. Anne Glover writes lovingly of its special history over these 100 years. Ann Buss offers both the tears and smiles of the society’s celebration. And former pastor, the Rev. Kenneth Alden, captures all the memories in a wistful poem. (Page 267)

The infamous Dred Scott decision of the United States Supreme Court in 1857 – which held that people of African descent could not be citizens of the United States – helped to precipitate the Civil War. It was a Swedenborgian attorney in St. Louis who launched “the slavery trial of the century” against the verdict – the most important legal battle leading up to the war. The story is gratefully reprinted with permission from *The Messenger* of the Convention Church. (Page 272)

Church News (281) includes:

- Bryn Athyn College commencement and awards
- Academy Secondary Schools commencement and awards
- Academy Board of Trustees meetings from May
- General Church Board of Directors meetings from April
- The Midwest Regional Youth Retreat

# Editorials

*Bruce M. Henderson and the Rev. Jeremy F. Simons*

## DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAIN

Almost 1,000 people have just experienced the General Assembly in Bryn Athyn. Many who could not be there tuned in to Assembly Videos. And all will be able to recapture much of the mood and substance in reports in *New Church Life* and elsewhere. Attendees going back to their homes and societies will be sharing memories and inspirations. This is an experience to be savored and taken into our lives.

The theme of this Assembly was the invitation in *Isaiah 2:3*: “*Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord . . . and He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.*”

There are many images of mountains and hills as sources of wisdom – from the holiness of the Word to cartoons of gurus on mountaintops. This is a calling we all know – from attending an Assembly, going to church on Sunday, and reading the Word quietly on our own. We elevate our minds to the Lord – for inspiration and meaning in our lives,

So now we come to fulfilling the invitation – walking in His paths. That means applying all that we have learned and been inspired by into our lives, as we grow the church within us and model it through our lives.

There are three mountaintop examples in the world to enrich our understanding and application, forever relevant to our church and to each of us:

- Moses on “a hill” overseeing the battle with the Amalekites
- Moses spending 40 days and 40 nights on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments
- The transfiguration of Jesus on “an high mountain”

We can always identify with the Children of Israel. Their battles are our battles, their failings our failings, their escape from slavery our escape, their deliverance our salvation.

When they finally escaped bondage in Egypt, they set out on a journey

that loomed endlessly – never suspecting it would last 40 years – but they felt safe at last. They were simple travelers, not looking for trouble, but found themselves suddenly under attack by the Amalekites. Moses called on Joshua to choose men to fight against them.

We know that everything in the Word relates to our own lives, and that wars there represent the struggle between good and evil in our own minds. So we can find ourselves set upon by Amalekites when we last expect it. In *Secrets of Heaven* 8593:2 we read:

*These hellish demons never attack us openly and never when our resistance is high, only when it looks like we are slipping and about to succumb. Then suddenly they are there to give us a final push.*

The Children of Israel were similarly vulnerable and beset with an attack they hadn't foreseen. All we know of the battle between Joshua's forces and Amalek's army is through the curious role of Moses. When he held his arms up, the Children of Israel prevailed. When his arms grew weary and drooped, the Amalekites gained the upper hand. Moses called for help, and when Aaron and Hur held up his arms the Amalekites were defeated.

Aaron was a priest and Moses' older brother. All that we know of Hur is that he was of the Tribe of Judah – and that he was a layman. It brings to mind an old saying in the church: “priest and layman hand-in-hand” – working together for the good of the church. Just as the Children of Israel found themselves under attack, we may be called to fight or stand up for what is true and right when we least expect it. When Moses raised his arms and looked upward, he was seeking the Lord's support. When he lowered his arms, he was looking to himself and the world, and strength failed him. That is the model. And that is one of the lessons of going up “to the mountain of the Lord” and learning of His ways.

But the Children of Israel kept learning these lessons, then backsliding and constantly needing to be led toward the Promised Land. Such was the drama of the Ten Commandments.

In just the third month of their journey, the pillars of cloud and fire that were leading them brought them to the base of Mount Sinai. Imagine their fear and wonder before a mountain draped with a thick cloud, trembling with lightning and thunder. Summoned by a trumpet, they advanced to the foot of the mountain. Moses went up alone and was not seen for 40 days.

The people had promised to be obedient. But without Moses to keep them focused, they grew impatient and begged Aaron to make them a golden calf -- a false idol they could appeal to for protection. This, of course, is context for the first commandment: “Thou shalt have no other gods before My face.”

When Moses came down the mountain with the Ten Commandments on

two tablets of stone, he was so angry with what he saw that he cast them on the ground, smashing them. But he was allowed to go back up the mountain for another 40 days and nights – 40 symbolizing a time of trial and temptation. He returned with the Ten Commandments restored and his face aglow.

We know that the Ten Commandments “include all the elements of religion that provide for God’s connection to us and our connection to God. Therefore, the Ten Commandments are the holiest thing of all.” (*True Christianity* 283) This is what guides us all as we come down from the mountain and strive to live our faith.

The story of the transfiguration is told in Matthew 17:

*And after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and brought them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light.*

This is the fulfillment of the mountaintop experience. In His transfiguration the Lord caused Himself to be seen in all the glory of the Word. This is the way the disciples came to see Him, and this is where we meet Him in our lives because of the way the internal sense of the Word has been revealed to us.

*Behold He cometh with the clouds of heaven signifies that the Lord will reveal Himself in the literal sense of the Word and will open its spiritual sense in the end of the church . . . when the Last Judgment shall take place. (*Apocalypse Explained* 24)*

This General Assembly was hardly the wilderness endured by the Children of Israel but evoked a similar coming together in humility to be taught by and from the Lord – “from the mountain.”

We see and know the Lord in the Word, especially as it mirrors our own lives and needs. And so we see Him more than ever as “an ever-present help in times of trouble” (*Psalms* 46:1) and forever an inspiration and Savior in our lives.

The Assembly offered all the camaraderie of experiencing “going up the mountain” as a group, but also as a personal challenge. It is exhilarating to make such a trek together, but this is also a journey we make every day in our own lives, and “walking in His paths” becomes a personal commitment. Each of us takes our own hopes and doubts up the mountain, whether with others or alone. With what we have learned, and from the elevated perspective we have gained, may we all be transformed, walking with renewed purpose “in His paths” as we build the church within ourselves and model it in our lives.

(BMH)



## DERIVED DOCTRINE

With election season in full swing, American voters are accustomed to hearing arguments, assertions and allegations of all kinds and from all sides. It is hard to know who to believe, if anyone. Even debates about legality, constitutionality and criminality are fraught with confusion, uncertainty and a lack of fairness.

In the realm of science, or knowledge of the physical world, we have much more confidence about knowing the truth, because its subject matter is theoretically demonstrable, and the truth of it can be tested or observed. Yet the more people know, the more people seem to disagree about many scientific controversies.

The same is true in the realm of religion. The General Church would seem to have a basis for confidence due to its commitment to the principle that whatever the Heavenly Doctrine teaches is considered to be true. But in practice controversies are not so easily settled.

One challenge that comes up is whether or not the Writings actually do state what a scholar claims that they do. Ministers are sometimes accused of saying “*the Writings teach that . . .*” and then following it up with whatever it is that they happen to believe. Some people feel that the clergy puts out their own interpretation as the only genuine one, and there is sometimes skepticism as to whether this is accurate. Although everyone is urged to go to the Doctrines for themselves, and to form their own conclusions, this does not do away with church-wide disagreements.

In this editorial we discuss one of the terms that is often used in these discussions. This is the concept of “derived doctrine.” The term means that the doctrine that is being asserted as true is not explicitly stated in the Heavenly Doctrine. It is rather a conclusion that may or may not be supported by the teachings.

Where did the term “derived doctrine” come from, and what does it mean?

Although the exact words “derived doctrine,” in that order, never occur in the Writings, the Heavenly Doctrine does often refer to “*doctrine derived from the Word.*” For example:

*He made them as dust to His sword, as driven stubble to His bow. (Isaiah 41:2) This refers to the Lord, “sword” standing for truth, “bow” for doctrine derived from Him. (Arcana Coelestia 2686)*

*Truth which is not from Him is not truth; as is also evident from the Word and from the doctrine of faith derived from it. (Ibid. 2904)*

*The “chariots of God” denote those things which are of the Word and of the doctrine thence derived. (Ibid. 3186)*

*The subject here treated of is the Word and the **doctrine thence derived.** (Ibid. 3768)*

*All in the Christian world **derive their doctrine from the Word** as the one and only source. (True Christian Religion 621)*

*It is generally acknowledged that the nature of the Church depends upon its doctrine, and that **doctrine is derived from the Word.** (Ibid. 245)*

*For the New Jerusalem means the new church in respect of the **doctrine it derives from the Word.** (Ibid. 217)*

*The truths of **doctrine of the church derived from the Word** must be the starting-point. (Heaven and Hell 455)*

*The church's doctrine **must be derived from the Word.** (Ibid. 311)*

*Conscience is formed with a man of the Church through the truths of faith from the Word, or from the **doctrine derived from the Word.** (Heavenly Doctrine 131)*

*Every truth of the Church's **doctrine derived from the Word** is in form the good of love. (Apocalypse Revealed 917)*

These and many similar passages state that the church should be guided by doctrine derived from the Word. So how did the term “derived doctrine” become a pejorative term?

In *New Church Life* we can see that the term first came into use in the General Church in the lead-up to the time of the dispute over what was called, among other names, the “Dutch Position.”

The term “*derived doctrine*” does not appear in *New Church Life* until 1921. But the concept of doctrine derived from the Word, which appears in many places in the Writings, is discussed in 1910 in an article by E.E. Iungerich:

*The Writings are not to be classed as doctrine derived from the Word. For they are a Divine Revelation, Divine Doctrine, and therefore the Word. Being the Word, they themselves require doctrines to be derived from them and to be formulated by the men of the Church for the sake of understanding them.*

*The internal history of the New Church since the time the special revelation for it was given, is the history of efforts to derive doctrine from the revealed Writings. The various organizations in the New*

*Church owe their distinction from each other to the non-agreement with each other of the doctrines each has derived from the Writings. ("Afflux of Truth", by E.E. Jungerich, New Church Life 1910)*

The way that this article discusses the concept of doctrine derived from the Word provides a framework for understanding some of the disagreements in the church from that time up to the present. As Jungerich describes it, the disagreements are not about the Word but about doctrine *derived* from the Word.

Following on this line of reasoning, the use of the term "*derived doctrine*" comes in an address by Bishop N.D. Pendleton in 1922:

*The **derivation of doctrine** is a vital function of the Church. When it ceases, the Church dies, even as it did with Israel when the prophets ceased to speak, and with the Christian Church of today. It is a signal proving of the operation of the Holy Spirit. The sign of the presence of that Spirit is spiritual enlightenment. Thus the Lord guides the Church. For this reason, the preservation of the soundness and purity of **derived doctrine** is of serious moment to all, and is a matter of especial concern to those who teach with a view to the life of regenerate good." ("Soundness and Purity of Doctrine" Bishop N.D. Pendleton, New Church Life, 1922)*

The concept here is that there is a body of doctrine taught in the church that is not directly from the Word, but which is derived from it. The bishop is urging vigilance in maintaining the soundness and purity of this doctrine.

In 1931 the Rev. F.W. Elphick points out that the concept of the Writings as the Word is itself a derived doctrine:

*Clearly, the phrase "The Writings are the Word" is the result of deductive reasoning - **derived doctrine**. ("Unity in Variety" by Rev. F. W. Elphick, New Church Life 1931)*

In 1934 the Rt. Rev. N.D. Pendleton criticized the "*Hague Position*" for seeming to place their derived doctrine above the Writings:

*Theirs is, indeed, a new doctrine. I believe in a progressive doctrine of the church, in the sense of **derived doctrine**; but I do not believe in its Divine authority. The Hague seems to place their doctrine above the Writings. ("Discussion of the Bishop's Address" New Church Life 1934)*

After this time, and maybe because of the controversy over this issue, the concept of derived doctrine came to be viewed more and more cautiously, as something that may be mistaken, as in this article:

*Whenever the application itself is not from Divine Revelation, it*

*is the conclusion of the priest, or it is a derived doctrine, or an application of such doctrine in circumstances that may give it an authority to which it is not entitled. (“Practical Subjects and the Application of Doctrine” Rev. F. E. Gyllenhaal, New Church Life 1943)*

This is pretty much the way that this term is used today in the church. We normally think of derived doctrine as ideas that are not specifically taught in so many words but are rather the conclusions that have been reached from things that are taught. They may be correct or incorrect and it is wrong to teach them as if they were the direct teachings.

But is this the right way to see it?

### **Is the concept of “derived doctrine” a quirk of translation?**

The word “derived” is not one that is used as much in the translations of the Writings that have been made since the 1950s. Where older translations say that doctrine is “derived” from the Word, newer ones more often say that it is “drawn” from the Word. The Latin is often simply “*ex Verbo*”, often without the Latin words for “derive” or “draw.” The idea is simply that the Church’s doctrine is to be from the Word. The Latin is typically like this:

*Quod doctrina ecclesiae erit **ex Verbo** (Last Judgment 14) (that the doctrine of the church is to be **from the Word**)*

*Quod doctrina ecclesiae ex sensu litterae **Verbi haurienda sit** (Sacred Scripture 50) (that the doctrine of the church is to be **drawn from the Word’s literal sense**)*

Unfortunately, the word “derive” can have a negative connotation that “draw” does not have. If something is “derived” or “derivative” it suggests that it is second-hand, inauthentic, not genuine, imitative, or unoriginal. “Derived doctrine” is not something that we can have confidence in, and it may seem to stand in contrast to “genuine doctrine.”

It is an unfortunate choice of words because “drawn from the Word” or simply “from the Word” has no such connotation. If “*ex Verbo*” had simply been translated “from the Word” or “drawn from the Word” the entire concept of “derived doctrine” would have had little basis as a category. There would still always be a question as to whether our church’s doctrine from the Word really is from the Word, but we wouldn’t have the somewhat damning category of “derived doctrine” to place it in.

When it comes to the church’s doctrine, the question is whether it is supported by the Word, or whether it has its origin in cultural considerations or in the collective minds of the clergy. So, rather than asking whether what we

teach is *derived doctrine*, we should just be asking whether it is supported by the Word. And whereas “directly stated” versus “derived” offers us an either/or choice, the real question is the *extent* of the support in the Word. Does it have strong support or weak support? Is it merely implied, inferred or suggested, or is there a real basis in multiple passages for believing it?

We do ourselves a disservice by continuing to use the pejorative term “derived doctrine.” Instead we should speak about whether a concept has real support in the Word. Criticizing a position by calling it “derived” tends to dismiss it without considering whether there are passages that support it, even if they do not state it directly. We are fortunate that the Heavenly Doctrine in many places gives us rules about how to do this fairly and accurately, rules that we may describe in a future article.

Regardless, we are blessed in the General Church to be able to refer with confidence to the teachings of the Heavenly Doctrine as the last word when it comes to spiritual questions. Politics are rife with questionable assertions, and even science presents us with seemingly unanswerable questions. But when it comes to religion a humble heart will always find answers in the Word.

(JFS)

# Letter to the Editors

*Letters to the Editors may be sent to:  
Editors of New Church Life  
Box 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009  
or mail Bruce.Henderson@newchurch.org*

## *The Precious Gift of the Word*

To The Editors:

It feels very strange, in this day and age, to have to defend the fact that a woman is a human being, a full person, but that's what this letter is about. It is also in response to the January/February article: *Conjugal Love Study in the Academy Girls School*.

How can it be possible, that any true Christian church would continue to teach that a woman/wife is dependent on a man/husband for salvation? Why *especially*, would the “new” church continue to teach this destructive and dehumanizing appearance of truth?

The Writings teach that “the Church is implanted first in the man and through him in the wife,” (*Conjugal Love 125*), which is to teach that one human being is dependent upon another for salvation. This is blatantly false, and a complete contradiction to its own teaching elsewhere:

*The transcription of one person's good into another person is impossible... because all are born in evil. (Conjugal Love 525)*

*The Lord alone regenerates man, and neither man nor angel contributes thereto. (Heavenly Doctrine 185)*

The Lord alone regenerates every human being. Not just “man” but mankind, all human beings. Females are fully human, fully persons, just as males. We are created the same, born the same and die the same, both spiritually and naturally. How ridiculous it feels to have to assert such a basic thing.

To teach that one human being is dependent on another for salvation is to falsify, invalidate and take away from the Word of God:

*I am the LORD; that is My name! I will not yield My glory to another. (Isaiah 42:8)*

*I, yes I, am the LORD, and there is no Savior but Me. (Isaiah 43:11)*

*I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God but Me. (Isaiah 44:6)*

*There is no other God but Me, a righteous God and Savior; there is none but Me. (Isaiah 45:21)*

*Salvation belongs to the LORD. (Psalm 3:8)*

*No one can by any means redeem another or give God a ransom for him. (Psalm 49:7)*

*In God alone my soul finds rest; my salvation comes from Him. (Psalm 62:1)*

*Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. (Psalm 146:3)*

*(See also Psalm 60:11; Psalm 108:12; Isaiah 2:22)*

These truths are for every human being – male, female, black, white, Jew, gentile – and any other man-made distinction. There is no partiality in God and He is not a respecter of persons. Every human being is saved/regenerated by the mercy of God through faith in the manifestation of God – the Lord Jesus Christ – and this salvation is for the purpose of becoming a godly person, a child of God. To become a child of God is to receive the new life that is “created after God in righteousness and true holiness.” (*Ephesians 4:24*) How can any “Christian” church disagree?

The same destructive appearance of truth is taught in the “old” church by a literal interpretation of (*1 Timothy 2:15*): “But women will be saved through childbearing.” Just as *Conjugal Love 125*, this teaches that a man/husband is necessary for a woman/wife’s salvation, which usurps the Lord as the Only God and Savior and is a destructive and dehumanizing false appearance of truth. (*True Christian Religion 257*)

A woman – just as a man, and as every human being – is dependent on no one but the Lord for salvation, “*For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*” (*1 Timothy 2:5*)

“The church implanted” means regeneration/salvation, and regeneration is of ONE person, not two. Regeneration is of the two lives of one person – spiritual (internal) and natural (external) – which every human being is created and born with. God Himself is both internal and external, the Divine

Itself and the Divine Human, and *all human beings* are created in His image and receive the breath of these two lives. (*Genesis 2:7*)

There are no greater or lesser human beings, but there is a greater and lesser life, a spiritual and natural life, in every human being. The spiritual is greater than the natural, in the same way that the Divine Itself is greater than the Divine Human, (*John 14:28*) The spiritual is greater because it is a “purer substance” than the natural. (*Arcana Coelestia 4659, 2475*) The spiritual life of a person is a higher degree to the natural life, like Being is a higher degree of Manifestation. (*Ibid. 2621*).

It is *not true* that salvation begins in a husband and through him into his wife, but it *is true* that salvation begins in our spiritual life (internal) and through this into our natural life (external).

Regeneration is the “washing of rebirth and renewal” (*Titus 3:5, Ephesians 5:26*) of the whole person, both the spiritual and natural lives of one person. First the inside then the outside of one cup must be washed. (*Matthew 23:26*) First the head then all the way to the feet of one body must be washed. (*John 13:10*)

The Lord sanctified Himself first, so that His body – His purchased possession (*Ephesians 1:14, Acts 20:28*) – could be sanctified through Him (*John 17:19*) New life from the Word of God is given first in the “head” (spiritual life), then in the “body” (natural life). By the “head” is signified things interior, and by the “body” things exterior.” (*AC 7859*)

Regeneration requires the *washing* of both the spiritual and natural lives of one person, and then the *union* (as of marriage) of these two lives, in order to bring forth the fruits/offspring of regeneration, in order for that one person to “bring forth much fruit” for the glory of God. (*John 15:2,5,8,16*)

If it is true as the Writings teach:

- (A) “The union of the Internal and External of the Lord is glorification” and
- (B) “man’s regeneration is an image of the Lord’s glorification.”

Then this must mean:

- (C) the union of the internal and external, or spiritual and natural lives of one person, is regeneration.

A + B = C, otherwise this is another contradictory teaching.

The Writings also teach that “regeneration is an exact replica of a person’s conception, gestation in the womb, birth and training,” (*True Christian Religion 302*), but the reverse must actually be true. Procreation must be an exact replica of regeneration, since spiritual things are causes, and natural things are effects. “Nothing happens in nature that does not have its cause in the spiritual realm.” (*Divine Love and Wisdom 134*) Regeneration must be the cause of procreation.



It is a fixed principle that life comes from the spiritual, (*John 6:63*), and flows into the natural. (*Matthew 12:33-34; 15:19*) The Writings confirm “there is an influx of the spiritual into the natural, and not the reverse.” The functions of our bodies in procreation follow this same fixed principle.

Since regeneration is the union of the internal and external lives of one person, and is the cause and pattern of procreation, this means that the internal-spiritual life is as a male/husband and the external-natural life is as a female/wife.

In the true sense, husband and wife, like head and body, (*Ephesians 5:23*), and inside and outside of the cup – must mean the interior and exterior, or spiritual and natural lives of every human being, since: “in the spiritual sense of the Word there is no idea of person, place or time” (*Arcana Coelestia 1049*) and “every truly spiritual meaning is abstracted from the idea of persons, places and times.” (*Apocalypse Explained 624*)

Regeneration is of the Lord through His Word. Since procreation requires male seed and female womb, then these two principles must also exist in the Word: spiritual seed and spiritual womb, to accomplish regeneration, which is the cause and pattern of procreation.

It’s well-known that the “seed is the Word of God” (*Luke 8:11*), but there must also be gestation and birth through the Word. We are “born again not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God,” (*1 Peter 1:23*) Life, both natural and spiritual, is seed through birth, being through manifestation.

As the pre-born human child in the womb feeds through the body and blood of the mother, so the pre-born child of God feeds through the body and blood of the Word. (*John 6:53*) “The Son of Man is the Lord as to the Word; and it is as the Word that He suffered, judges, comes into the world, redeems, saves, reforms and regenerates.” (*Doctrine of the Lord 23*)

And as the new-born human child is nourished by the milk of the mother, so the new-born child of God is nourished by “the pure spiritual milk” of the Word. (*1 Peter 2:2*)

The fact that manhood has been given the greater gift of direct teaching from the Word through Old Testament priests and prophets, and in the New Testament the Lord Himself and His apostles, that manhood is given the greater responsibility of teaching the Word; the greater physical strength; and that all angels appear in the male human form suggest to me that the spiritual life of every human being is represented by manhood. The Word is written for our spiritual life first and foremost.

The whole creation is said to groan “in the pains of childbirth,” (*Romans 8:22*), and every human being who is being regenerated, travails as in the pains of childbirth to bring forth spiritual fruit into the natural life, (as is so often

spoken of in the Old Testament prophets and (*John 16:21, Romans 7:21-23, etc.*) During regeneration we all struggle in our natural life to bring forth the “fruits of righteousness that come through Jesus Christ.” (*Philippians 1:11*)

The “depths of the earth” in *Psalm 139:15* depict the womb, and natural birth and natural death are both called “mother” in *Ecclesiastes 40:1*. A widow is anyone who lives only for the pleasures of the natural life, which is the description of a person (male or female) who is spiritually dead even while still living in the natural world. (*1 Timothy 5:6*) These and many other things suggest to me that the natural world and our natural, earthly life, is represented by womanhood.

Every human being has both these principles – spiritual and natural – by creation from the Lord. In regeneration, the spiritual life is stronger (willing) (*Matthew 26:41*), and the natural life, though a “weaker vessel,” is a “fellow heir of the gracious gift of life.” (*1 Peter 3:7*)

The Word and Writings teach that both heaven and hell comprise the spiritual world that flows into every human being. Heaven flows in powerfully, with “incomparably great power” (*Ephesians 1:19*), to those who are being regenerated, and hell flows in with little resistance to those who refuse the gift of eternal life.

The teaching that a woman is an inferior human being and is saved in a different way than a man, is from the pride and deception of hell, not the humility and truth of heaven, and it echoes the destructive Gnostic teaching that the Lord is an “inferior Divine being.”

God is not the author of confusion, but it is the strategy of hell to create confusion, division, rebellion, lawlessness and unbelief, and given the conditions of our world, hell is winning.

The Word of God is a precious gift, “more precious than gold, than much fine gold” and to receive it is a very weighty responsibility. I pray that this generation of believers would pass on the precious gift of the Word with the greatest interest, to this upcoming generation of young ones. (*Luke 19:16-17*)

Karen Mazzotti  
Acton, Maine

### *Response from the Rev. Jeremy Simons*

Dear Mrs. Mazzotti,

Thank you for this letter. This is a valid and important concern and deserves a timely answer.

It is certainly true that it is not possible, as you say, “*that any true Christian*

*church would continue to teach that a woman/wife is dependent on a man/husband for salvation.” To do this would be, as you point out, a “destructive and dehumanizing appearance of truth.”*

You get to the heart of the matter when you quote these two passages:

*The transcription of one person’s good into another person is impossible . . . because all are born in evil. (Conjugal Love 525)*

*The Lord alone regenerates man, and neither man nor angel contributes thereto. (Heavenly Doctrine 185)*

This is right. The issue, however, is in your assertion that “*We are created the same, born the same and die the same, both spiritually and naturally.*” This is not true. Everyone is different. What is true is that the Lord’s love and His presence are universally the same everywhere and with all people. His laws apply equally to all people and in all time. The processes by which He regenerates us are the same for everyone. What is different, or what varies, is us.

*Good and truth are flowing in constantly from the Lord with all people, but it is received in varying ways. And as is the nature of that which receives it so does that love become. (Arcana Coelestia 2741)*

The Lord’s life is the same everywhere, but our reception of it varies. It is also received differently by males and females. The infinite variations in the way that different people receive life from the Lord express themselves in the varying roles that we play in each other’s lives. This is as true in the way that we regenerate as it is in anything else, and it is especially true in marriage. Men and women help each other to regenerate, just as we help each other in every other way, and just as all people have roles to play in helping one another.

The important thing to understand is that the help provided to each other by men and women are of equal importance. Exactly equal numbers of men and women are in heaven, since all angels are married. Each contributes equally valuable aspects of what makes us human. *Conjugal Love 63 and 125* tell us that men play a role in what is called “*implanting the church.*” Other passages talk about wives joining themselves to men’s “*wisdom.*” What do these things even mean? They don’t mean that men somehow “save” women, or that women (or men) need to be married to regenerate. They simply mean that good men contribute something valuable to human relationships that women appreciate and benefit from, something that is described by those words.

The injustice, and the opposition to the truths of the Word, would be if there were not something equally valuable that is contributed by women. The real issue here might be that women’s contributions to this equation are not equally recognized or valued. According to the Heavenly Doctrine that

contribution is called “*the very sphere of heaven itself. (Ibid. 54)* from which all joy and happiness flow like “*sweet waters from a gushing spring. (Ibid. 229, 316)*. This is the value of conjugal love:

*The holiness of heaven is based on conjugal love and on innocence. (Arcana Coelestia 828)*

*It should be recognized therefore that by conjugal love all celestial and spiritual love is meant, because truly conjugal love, as has been shown above, is fundamental to all other kinds of love. People therefore in whom that fundamental love is present have all other loves belonging to heaven and the Church present in them; for as has been stated, it descends from the marriage of good and truth in the heavens, the marriage that makes heaven. (Ibid. 9961)*

*To the degree that a person’s conjugal love wanes and is lost, his character approaches that of an animal. The reason is that the more a person is in a state of conjugal love, the more spiritual he is; and the more spiritual he is, the more human he is. (Conjugal Love 230)*

What people don’t realize when they read these passages is that conjugal love is the exclusive domain of women, and men don’t have any of it except what they get from women.

*It is wives who inspire or insinuate the love in their husbands, because not a particle of conjugal love, not even of love for the opposite sex, is seated in men, but only in wives and women. The fact of this was vividly shown me in the spiritual world. (Conjugal Love 161)*

Does this mean that men are dependent on women for salvation? The many qualities unique to women and those unique to men are what make our lives possible and fulfilling. Men and women are equally dependent on each other. It doesn’t make marriage in this world a requirement for regeneration. It does mean that without an appreciation of the unique contributions that both men and women make in every area of life – and in many more ways than are described by the seemingly limiting words “church” and “conjugal” – we will not find heaven in our lives. Men and women are very similar and are capable of almost every role and function of the opposite sex. This does not mean, however, that both our obvious and subtle differences and strengths are unimportant or unnecessary to our regeneration.

Rev. Jeremy F. Simons  
Bryn Athyn  
Pennsylvania

# The Church: Bringing Heaven to Earth

*A Sermon by the Rev. Michael D. Gladish*

*Lessons: Exodus 20:1-7, 12; Mark 2:13-17; Arcana Coelestia 10760-10766*

*Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, “Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”*

*When Jesus heard that, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. . . . I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” (Matthew 9:10-13; Mark 2:15-17)*

**T**he Lord did not establish His church on earth among saints; indeed, He did so among simple fishermen who all, at one point or another when the going got rough, abandoned Him. So, the church today continues to struggle, and we continue to struggle with it. But can we be clear about what this struggle is all about? Can we be clear about the real purpose of the church?

The problem, of course, is that often when we think about it, the first things that come to mind are all the obligations associated with the church, like meetings, contributions, work “parties,” music and ritual we may not enjoy – even doctrinal intimidation. And then there are “those people” – the ones who rub you the wrong way, or ask you nosy questions, or give you the feeling you’re being evaluated – and somehow judged.

Granted, these can all be significant challenges, but please note that apart from the word, *doctrinal*, they could apply to any human organization, whether a business or a team, a fraternity, a service group or even a medical community. In fact, if you substitute the word, *informational*, for doctrinal,

recognizing that specialized knowledge can be intimidating in any field of human endeavor, all these challenges occur quite normally in our relations with others simply because we all have our own ideas, our own personal commitments, and our own tendencies to be defensive or judgmental about others. This is not a church problem, it is a human problem, and it should not cloud our understanding of what the church really is or can be.

The church is or should be defined as the Lord Himself defined it – which is really interesting because at no time in the New Testament does He ever do this; it is only in the doctrines of the New Church that we get a clear, explicit definition. Rather in the *Gospels* we find only three references to the word translated “church,” where it is mentioned but not explained. The *Acts*, the *Epistles* and the book of *Revelation* all reference the church extensively, but again, it’s a given; it’s not explained.

In all these works our main clue to the meaning is the original Greek word, from which we get the Latin, *ecclesia*, and then the Anglicized term, *ecclesiastical*. And what it means is “called out” – not the way we use the expression today, but rather *chosen*, or called from among many to be part of a select group. It especially refers to being called out of a worldly or selfish life into a heavenly or spiritual life.

This is essentially the same concept expressed in the term, “the elect,” which is based on the same compound of Greek words as is “the church.” And again, this term is not explained in the New Testament, so there has been a lot of misunderstanding about it, too – until now. But here’s what we know. The Lord certainly does call, choose and “elect” every one of us out of our selfishness and worldliness to be saved, to go to heaven, to live in real love and wisdom forever. He “does not call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

*So, what is this thing we call “the church”? The basic definition is: “What makes heaven with a person, also makes the church. For as love and faith make heaven, so too love and faith make the church.”*

Still, we very obviously have the freedom to reject this call if we’re not interested.

So, what is this thing we call “the church,” what is its real use, and how does the corporate organization support that use?

The basic definition is found in *The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine*, a tremendous little book that has a summary of all the basic doctrines of the New Church. There we read:

*What makes heaven with a person, also makes the church. For as love and faith*

| *make heaven, so too love and faith make the church. (NJHD 241)*

Backing up a few pages in the same book we find this:

*There are two things which make up the life of a person's spirit: love and faith. Love makes up the life of his will, and faith that of his intellect. The love of good and faith in truth from it make up the life of heaven; and the love of evil and faith in falsity from it make up the life of hell.*

*Love to the Lord and love toward the neighbor make heaven, together with faith, but faith only to the extent that it has life from those loves. Since both those loves and the faith from them are from the Lord, it is plain that the Lord makes heaven. (Ibid. 230-231)*

It follows then that:

*The church is said to be where the Lord is acknowledged and where the Word is known. For the essentials of the church are love and faith in the Lord from the Lord; and the Word teaches how a person must live, in order to receive love and faith from the Lord. (Ibid. 242)*

Note that the emphasis here is entirely on the Lord. The reason love toward the neighbor is also essential is because the Lord loves all of us – even the worst of us – and so if we love Him we will have His love in us, and therefore love those He loves – which is everybody. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2023; see also *John 4:20-21*)

But as the quoted reference shows, in order to achieve this love, we need the Word to teach us about it, and as the book goes on to explain, we also need “doctrine” from the Word to understand it properly. This, then, is what the church is all about. It’s not a social club; it’s not a social service agency; it’s definitely not a business, and it’s not even really an organization – except insofar as the organization supports the love and faith that are its core, just as the human body supports and expresses the life of the mind.

The church as a body of believers is important, but what we do at the church should reflect who we are as a church, and that is all about the Lord – as He is in Himself, and as we find Him in the good qualities of our neighbors.

So, for example, if we accept a responsibility within the organization, whatever that may be, we should do it from a love for the Lord and with a genuine love for those who might be affected. Whether we are working alone,

weeding a garden, say, or painting something, or working with others, our concern should be for the good that can result, not personal recognition, pay-back or even an expectation of social comfort. On the other hand, as the angels find the delight of their lives in serving others, and that delight is always reciprocated by others, it is reasonable to hope that in the church, as in heaven, we will find the mutual support that we need to love the Lord and have faith in Him.

But why would you come to a church to weed a garden, paint or do any other organizational work, anyway? If the purpose of the church is to learn and practice love for the Lord shouldn't everything we do relate to religious education and worship?

Well, yes, in a way. But when we do building maintenance we provide a space for that to happen. When we hold committee meetings, plan a budget or provide a social opportunity at the church what we are really doing is preparing a means for the Lord to work with us, not just as individuals but as a body of members in a specific place, manner and time. We are inviting Him to soften the hard edges of our own personalities and learn good things from our own efforts and our interactions with others.

It's easy to love the Lord in isolation, just as it's easy to love the human race in the abstract. But people challenge us, even when we know they're right. And that can be very important for our spiritual growth! So, in a sense coming to a church event can be an exercise in charity, an opportunity to practice what we say we believe by sticking with it even when we feel out of place. After all, if we can't get used to working together in this world how can we expect to enjoy working together in heaven? Perhaps this is one of the reasons that the word, church, is so ambiguous. On one hand it is a very personal, individual thing; on the other it is an institution and is also referred to that way throughout the heavenly doctrines.

Bearing this in mind, here's another important teaching about references to heaven in the Word:

*When the word, heaven, is used the Church should also be understood, since the Lord's heaven on earth is the Church, and each individual person in whom the Church exists has heaven as well within him; for the Lord is within him, and where the Lord is, so is heaven. Furthermore, the Church makes one with heaven, for they are linked together inseparably and are dependent each on the other. The Word is what joins them together; the Word has the Lord within it, and the Lord is the Word. (John 1:1ff; Arcana Coelestia 10131)*



This is the specific point of all our lessons. We are looking at our connection to heaven and we are seeing that it occurs in the church, and that “heaven and the church are linked together inseparably and are dependent each on the other.” This is powerful stuff and can’t be brushed off lightly. At the same time, it is not so much about an organization as it is about a frame of mind and a willingness to work together within the organization that is dedicated to the love and faith that connects us to the Lord. And let’s be clear: there is no other institution in this world as clearly and directly dedicated to this purpose as the church is.

Government can’t do it; social agencies can’t do it; self-help groups can’t do it, and we can’t do it alone. The church is the only institution on earth where the Lord is or should be front and center – through doctrine, teaching and preaching from the Word, and through the practice – and you know it takes practice – of genuine charity toward our fellow-members in the light of His Word.

So, who did the Lord call to His church? And what sort of people can we expect to find in it? Well, think about it. The Lord said He “did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” That includes each of us, and so the people we should expect to find in the church for the most part are people just like ourselves, that is, flawed and at times difficult to get along with, but, in providence, hopefully, all wanting and trying to accept the Lord’s call to be better. And the thing is, if we want to have a better experience with other people in the church, we have to figure out ways of being better people for them.

Sounds trite, doesn’t it? But really it’s the very heart of what the church is about: bringing heaven to earth, first in our own lives and then, with the Lord’s help, in the lives of those others who are trying to do the same.

The Lord said: “*Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. . . . I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.*” And real repentance takes time. It’s not an event, it’s a process. Of course, this process has a beginning – when we first acknowledge the Lord and so in a spiritual way join the church. But that alone doesn’t make any of us the kind of person we would want others to be for us. In fact, the church as a corporate body could in many ways be likened to a hospital, a place where sick people come to get well – which means that there are a lot of sick people hanging around: sick, but hoping and striving to get better.

And here’s the thing. As flawed and fallible as we are, we can still all support one another – just as the angels in heaven do – both by affirming and by challenging one another, as long as it’s done (and received) in a spirit of genuine charity from the Lord. We read:

Whether you say the Church is present in a person, or heavens present in him, or the kingdom of God present in him, or the Lord

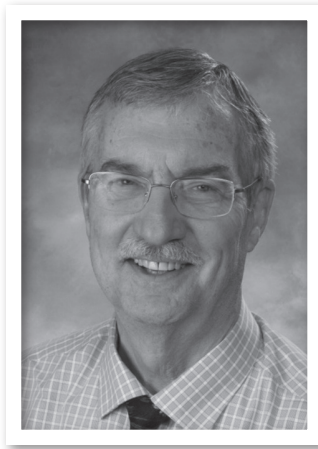
*present in him, it all amounts to the same thing; for the Church is the Lord's heaven on earth, the kingdom of God is heaven and at the same time the Church, and the Lord is the Source, indeed the Sum and Substance of their existence. (Arcana Coelestia 10357)*

*This is what it's all about. We are all born natural, and we have to become spiritual. It's a process, a work in progress.*

This is what it's all about. This is how we are connected to heaven right here in this world. If it's not comfortable, if it's not inspiring, if it doesn't align with our personal interests right now, should we be surprised? We are all born natural, and we have to become spiritual. It's a process, a work in progress.

When we were children, we didn't always want to do what our mothers asked us to do, but in retrospect most of us can see that our mothers were right. So it is with the church, that is, when we in the church support one another in following the Lord. In that case, the church can be a spiritual mother to us, caring, nurturing, comforting and supporting all of us, even as we, individually, provide our share of that same care and nurturing, comfort and support for all our fellow members.

Amen.



The **Rev. Michael D. Gladish** is retired, after serving most recently as pastor of the Washington New Church in Mitchellville, Maryland. He is regional pastor for the Southeastern United States. He and his wife, Virginia (de Maine), live in Bryn Athyn. Contact: [mdgladish@gmail.com](mailto:mdgladish@gmail.com)

# An Invitation to the Holy City

*A Sermon by the Rev. Steven P. Gunther*  
at his Ordination into the Second Degree of the Priesthood  
March 3, 2024 – Oak Arbor Church, Rochester, Michigan

*Lessons: Revelation 21:1-13, 22-27; Apocalypse Revealed 896 (portion);  
Brief Exposition 96*

When a minister is ordained, he commits himself to serving the Lord's Church. We are told in the teachings for the New Church that a priest ought to be guided by a love for the salvation of souls. (*Life* 39) This love is supposed to guide the priesthood because it is the Lord's very goal in creation. (*Divine Providence* 323) He created all of us so that we could enter into His kingdom and have loving relationships with Him and each other. We are also told that the Lord's kingdom in the spiritual world is heaven, but on earth, His kingdom is the church. (*Arcana Coelestia* 2162, 3451, 8900 and elsewhere) With this in mind, it seems useful to reflect on the Lord's Church and His mission of welcoming us all into His kingdom – both in this world and the next.

The 21st chapter of the book of *Revelation* holds some of the most beautiful language in the Word. What can be more powerful than the promise of salvation given in the image of the Holy City descending out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband – or the image of the Lord wiping away every tear from our eyes?

We are told in the Heavenly Doctrine that this chapter is describing the establishment of the New Church. The New Heaven and New Earth represent the Lord's New Church on earth which provides a new pathway to heaven that is open to the entire human race. But why is this given in the image of a city? Why is a city used as a symbol for the New Church being established? For that, I'd like to share a passage from *Apocalypse Revealed* 896 which describes the internal meaning of John seeing a city descending out of heaven:

*The angel's showing to John symbolizes his sight being opened then and a revelation. The great city, the holy Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God symbolizes the Lord's New Church. . . . It was seen in the form of a city because a city symbolizes doctrine,*

*and a church is a church by virtue of its doctrine and its living in accordance with that doctrine. It was also seen as a city in order that its whole character might be described, and this is described by the city's walls, gates, foundations and various dimensions.*

This passage tells us that the New Church is represented as a city because cities represent doctrine. We have all heard this word “doctrine,” but what does it mean? In its most basic sense, doctrine simply means teachings, and the Writings use it in two different ways that are related to each other. One way described in the Writings is that doctrine is a set of teachings that help us interpret the Word. This is how we normally think of doctrine, right? It is the theological teachings of a church that help it draw meaning out of the Bible and understand what it is trying to tell us.

The other way doctrine is used in the Writings describes the way that we draw meaning out of our lives. We all have a system of “doctrine” which really is the set of values and principles that we use to guide ourselves and decide what path we want to walk in any given circumstance. This kind of doctrine can be drawn from the Word, we can make it up ourselves, or we can get it from anywhere else in the world. The goal, though, is for our “life doctrine” to be guided by the “Word doctrine” so that we can be led by the Lord.

Our reading told us that a church is a church by virtue of its doctrine and life in accordance with that doctrine. So, what makes a church a church isn't simply what it believes or teaches but is about how people live as a result of those teachings. This lines up with another key teaching that “All religion is about life, and the life of religion is doing what is good.” (*Doctrine of Life 2*) So all of the beautiful imagery we are given in *Revelation 21* relates back to the doctrine of the New Church; but even more than that it relates to the life which comes from that doctrine.

So, what is the doctrine of the New Church? Whether you were raised in the New Church or not, this might feel like an intimidating question. There are more than 30 volumes of books that make up our doctrine! We might feel there are so many specific teachings that we are afraid we don't fully understand yet, and so we aren't sure we can adequately explain what the doctrine of the New Church is.

Well, I was just ordained into the second degree of the priesthood and I don't know or understand everything that makes up the doctrine of the New Church. We are all still learning! But all of those various details and teachings that might come to mind when we think of “the doctrine of the New Church” all lead back to certain essentials, and they are actually very simple.

A passage from *A Brief Exposition of the Doctrine of the New Church* tells us what the “essentials of the church” are, and very eloquently and simply sum

up our doctrine and what a life according to it looks like:

*The essentials of the Church, which unite themselves with a faith in one God, are charity, good works, repentance and a life according to Divine laws; and since these, together with faith, affect and move man's will and thought, they unite man to the Lord and the Lord to man. (Brief Exposition 96).*

So, the essentials of the church are:

- **Charity** — Genuinely loving our neighbor
- **Good Works** — Doing what is right
- **Repentance** — Being willing to look in the mirror, admit to our shortcomings, and turn away from them
- **A Life in Accordance with Divine Laws** — Obeying the Lord's commandments and following where He leads

All of the volumes of teachings of the New Church lead back to these four simple things. Notice that it doesn't say that the essential of the church is having a perfect understanding of the Word or a church's doctrine. It also doesn't say that the essential of the church is believing everything we are taught without question. Every single one of these essentials has to do with the way that we live our lives, because that is what the Lord's kingdom is really all about.

It's the "life" side of doctrine that really makes up the essentials of the church, but that "life doctrine" needs to be supported, guided and informed by the doctrine that is there to help us understand the Word. This is because it is through the Word that the Lord is able to teach us and show us His path which leads toward a happy, healthy life.

It is important to acknowledge that the worldly organizations we call The New Church aren't the only way for people to arrive at these essentials. The Lord is at work all over the world inspiring people and leading them to a life in accordance with these principles. In fact, we are taught explicitly in *Heaven and Hell* 308 that "the Lord's Church is universal and is with everyone who acknowledges the Divine and lives in charity." So, even though the more theological ideas are what usually come to mind when we think about the

*The essentials of the church are charity, good works, repentance and life according to Divine laws. All of the volumes of teachings of the New Church lead back to these four simple things.*

“doctrine of the New Church,” what really makes it a church is people living their lives from these principles.

But what about all the people that the reading said were outside of the city? If the Lord’s goal in creation is to welcome us all into His kingdom, what are people doing outside of it? Those outside the city represent an unwillingness to live by the Lord’s Divine Laws. For as beautiful as those descriptions of life inside the Holy City are, there are still parts of all of us that prefer life on the outside. We all have times where we like to put ourselves first, to feel superior or more important than others, or to seek after things that we think will make us feel good, rather than things we are taught *are* good from the Word.

The doctrine of the New Church is simple. We need to love our neighbors, do good, be willing to grow, and follow where the Lord leads. This is what it really means to have faith in God, but we don’t always hold ourselves to that standard of faith. It’s important to notice, though, that the Lord doesn’t banish anyone from His city. People are out there because they choose to be there. We all choose to stay outside of His gates in one way or another, but the Lord is always inviting us in.

The Holy City was said to have 12 gates, three each facing east, north, south and west. In the Heavenly Doctrine we are told that this represents the various states from which people approach the Holy City. We all have our own stories and experiences that have led us down different paths, but if we are willing to approach the Lord’s city by choosing for ourselves to follow His commandments and allow His doctrines to guide our lives – regardless of where we came from or what our choices have been before – we are met with the same image: an open gate inviting us into The Lord’s Holy City.

*The Lord doesn’t  
banish anyone from  
His city. People are  
out there because they  
choose to be there.  
We all choose to stay  
outside of His gates in  
one way or another,  
but the Lord is always  
inviting us in.*

The Lord’s New Church isn’t an exclusive club we get to be a part of. There are no guards at the gates making us prove ourselves before they let us in, and there’s no one holding a list to make sure our name is on it before we can enter. The Lord’s Church is an invitation. It’s an invitation to follow where He leads, to enter into His gates, and to live with Him in heavenly peace where He can be our God and we can be His people. The gates are open.

May we all answer the Lord’s call, accept His invitation, and be willing to leave behind our selfish motivations that

AN INVITATION TO THE HOLY CITY

keep us outside so that we may enter freely into His city. When we do this, then God will wipe away every tear from our eyes. There will be no more death, no more sorrow, no more pain, for the former things will have passed away.

*Amen.*



The **Rev. Steven P. Gunther** has been appointed Acting Pastor of the Oak Arbor Church and School in Rochester, Michigan, where he was ordained into the second degree of the ministry. He lives in Rochester with his wife, Rickie Aaliya (Mapp), and their children. Contact: [stevenpgunther@gmail.com](mailto:stevenpgunther@gmail.com)

# Ethics and Building on the Rock

*The Rev. Christopher A. Barber*

When I was a student at Widener University, I took a very impactful course that reviewed some of history's blunders and blessings through the lens of ethics and values. I have since incorporated some of the material from that course into my own religion courses at the Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools. The experience of this class has continued to keep me thinking about my own approach to scholarship, leadership, doctrine and life.

The Doctrines for the New Church clarify for all the world and for all time the nature of true Christianity: primarily the oneness of God and the necessity of the marriage of faith and charity for one's salvation. However, there are many more pages covering a vast array of subjects broader and more varied than these two core ideas.

Some of these topics, like life on other planets and the nature of spiritual substance, feel like distant prospects that today we can muse upon but do not ultimately rise to the level of urgency of comprehension for most people. Other topics, however, have dominated the discourse for many of our church's members in recent years – mostly social in nature: gender and the priesthood, how to appropriately include and serve queer members of our church community, and to a lesser degree race-based matters of justice.

The issue of the day will always change; however, our foundational texts of the Word and the Writings remain. It is not enough, though, to keep copies of these books on our shelves (and increasingly on our phone apps); we must read, interpret and apply these works in order to keep our house built on the rock. Each person inevitably will do this in their own way, based on a lifetime of lessons, experiences, opinions, anxieties and convictions. If there's anything that has stuck with me the most from my experience in my History and Ethics course, it is that we do better when we are mindful of what these influences are, rather than letting them guide us from the shadows of our awareness.

An assignment that continues to serve me in my life is the development of personal and professional codes of ethics. As students, we were expected to articulate clearly the principles on which we made decisions in our personal



lives and professional fields. As I was already ordained and teaching at the Academy at the time of this course, I focused on the real work that I have the privilege of doing for this church and school and developed a list that brought into greater focus my priorities. I found it to be challenging, enlightening and refreshing.

This exercise may have stuck with me on account of the place where ethics resides in the mind, as reported by an angel in *True Christianity* 186:

*With those who love truth because it is truth, theology reaches the highest level, since that is where their heaven is, and they enjoy the same light as angels. Ethics [moralia], however, considered and perceived theoretically are located at the second level, because they communicate with spiritual matters; political affairs lie beneath these at the first level. Facts, however, which are of many kinds and can be classified into genera and species, constitute the door to the higher regions. Those in whom spiritual, ethical, political and factual matters are subordinated to one another in this way have their thoughts and actions controlled by righteousness and judgment. The reason is that the light of truth, which is also the light of heaven, shines down from the highest level on those beneath, just as sunlight passing through the ethers, and so eventually the air, gives light to enable men, animals and fish to see.*

Over the years since I took my History and Ethics course at Widener, I have returned to my codes of ethics and found them to remain meaningful and true to my approach to my personal life as well as my work in the General Church and the Academy. Below I share both my research and teaching ethics as an example of what other members of the church might produce in their own way if they are willing to undertake this exercise for their personal enrichment and accountability.

### **Research Ethics**

- I will defer to Swedenborgian doctrine when Swedenborgian doctrine is clear.
- I will thoughtfully and logically bring relevant Swedenborgian doctrines into dialog with secular research.
- I will use the most current research available unless explicitly examining historical perspectives.

- I will explore and remain cognizant of the history of the understanding of any subject when considering current understanding.
- I will endeavor to stay mindful of my privileges and my biases when conducting research and selecting sources.
- I will declare my relevant privileges and biases when presenting my research conclusions.
- I will remain open to periodic review of my prior conclusions and will revise when necessary.
- I will, unless relying on research involving human subjects, use anecdotal evidence sparingly, and only as illustrations of a concept rather than as evidence in support of a conclusion.
- As a priest in the General Church of the New Jerusalem, I will also abide by the priestly code of ethics outlined in the most recent revision of the *General Church Clergy Handbook*.
- I will present any novel doctrinal conclusions and innovations for review by the Council of the Clergy before I consider presenting them to the broader public.
- I will publish any novel doctrinal conclusions and innovations with discretion, always clearly stating the degree of novelty of the conclusion.
- I will collaborate with experts in related fields when content matter rests outside of my areas of expertise.
- I will cite sources and acknowledge inspirations for any completed project.
- I will recognize in writing those who contributed substantially to my bringing a project to completion or an idea into a lesson.

### **Teaching Ethics**

- I will remain mindful of the varied life experiences of students under my tutelage.

- I will declare when personal bias might impact my presentation of a subject in a significant way.
- I will clearly articulate whether a conclusion in a lesson is doctrinally based, academically based, or a hybrid of doctrinal and secular sources.
- I will strive to encourage and cultivate an atmosphere of free academic inquiry, leaving students in freedom to explore subjects and accept or reject conclusions as meet their rational understanding.
- I will publish any novel doctrinal conclusion and innovation with discretion, always clearly stating the degree of novelty of the conclusion and innovation.
- I will not shy away from presenting perspectives that may differ from my own or those of the majority of any given classroom population if my professional conscience dictates it to be of importance.
- I will strive to inform students of as many reasonable sides as possible when instructing in matters having practical applications so that students might choose for themselves how they will act.
- I will make available source material for any given lesson or curriculum upon request.
- I will recognize in writing those who contributed substantially to my bringing an idea into a lesson.

If we are to have a church membership that is informed and mindfully engaged in the intellectual, spiritual, moral and physical life of the church, I think everyone would do well at least once to consider what constitutes their codes of ethics. Whatever might be revealed, they are fundamental and at play in all situations, whether we name them or not.

I think that in many ways, our ethics are the marching orders of our ruling loves, which pull us like a hidden current in a stream, whether we are aware or not. (*New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine* 56)

*I think that in many ways, our ethics are the marching orders of our ruling loves, which pull us like a hidden current in a stream, whether we are aware or not.*

While it is not possible to know fully what rules us (a mercy, to be sure), we can get a sense of what is silently governing us by examining what gives us pleasure as we go about our days. (*Ibid.* 147)

While my work primarily involves the study and delivery of doctrine in an educational setting, this ethics exercise can be done by anyone for application to any setting. It is my hope that naming our ethics and self-expectations can help us to more deliberately and consistently bring our values as a church into all aspects of our lives, spiritual, professional and interpersonal. At the end of the day, the core values of the New Church remain:

- (1) God is one, in whom is a Divine trinity, and the Lord God the Savior Jesus Christ is that one.
- (2) Saving faith is to believe in Him.
- (3) Evils should not be done, because they are of the devil and from the devil.
- (4) Goods should be done, because they are of God and from God.
- (5) These should be done by man as if by himself; but it should be believed that they are done by the Lord in man and through man.

*The first two are matters of faith, the next two of charity, and the fifth of the conjunction of charity and faith, thus of the conjunction of the Lord and man. (True Christian Religion 3)*

Whatever our personal and professional ethics may be, if they are founded on these key principles of the New Church, then we are building on the rock.



The **Rev. Christopher A. Barber** teaches Religion in the Academy Secondary Schools. He is grateful to Professor Ryan McKee of Widener University for his “excellent teaching and support” in his course. Christopher and his wife, Annika (Fitzpatrick) live at Peeble Hall in Trenton, New Jersey. Contact: [chris.barber@ancss.org](mailto:chris.barber@ancss.org)



FROM THE BISHOP'S OFFICE

## “Amen”

*The Rt. Rev. Peter Buss Jr.*

“Amen.” How many times have we said and heard this little word? It ends most of our prayers. We hear it every Sunday in church at least three or four times. Sometimes we sing it in songs or in the Liturgy portion of our more traditional services.

As you might know, the Hebrew word means “truth” or “it is true.” The Lord used this word, saying, for example in the book of *Revelation*: “*Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He who lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen.*” (*Revelation 1:18*) His last word as recorded in the *Gospel of Matthew* is “Amen”: “*And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.*” (*Matthew 28:20*) He even called Himself by this name, saying: “*These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: I know your works . . .*” (*Revelation 3:14-15*) When the Lord uses this title, He means that He is the Source of truth, and witnesses to the truth. (*Apocalypse Revealed 199*)

Related words in Scripture show how pervasive this concept is. The word “*verily*,” or “*assuredly*” as it is sometimes translated, is the same root word as “*amen*.” We hear the Lord saying in the Gospels:

- “*Verily I say to you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall by no means pass from the law, till all is fulfilled.*” (*Matthew 5:18*)

- “Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.” (Matthew 17:20)
- “Most assuredly [or verily, verily], I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3)
- “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.” (John 8:34)

**The way things are.** In all these passages we hear the Lord, who is the Amen, the truth itself, proclaiming *the way things work*. The law—every detail of it, or every jot and tittle – will be fulfilled. The Word lays it out for us, giving us an accurate picture of spiritual reality.

Therefore, when Jesus says: “*Verily, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven,*” He is stating a fact: If we want to enter heaven, we need to develop a quality of innocence, a willingness to follow the Lord, and depend on Him for our guidance. This is an essential quality for our spiritual lives. It is the way things work in the Lord’s kingdom, for “*all who are in heaven are in innocence.*” (Heaven and Hell 280; cf. no. 278)

In the same way, service, or a willingness to reach out to help other people, is central to the way things work in the Lord’s kingdom. “*Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat.*” (Luke 12:37; cf. Apocalypse Revealed 3) Again, “*Verily, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.*” (Matthew 25:40) “The works of charity,” and the willingness to be of use are the key ingredients that lead to heaven. (See Arcana Coelestia 4191, 4663)

A third example comes in the well-known Scripture about salvation: “*Most assuredly [or verily, verily], I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” (John 3:3) The truth is, we have to change, or allow the Lord to change us, over the course of our lifetimes. We have to be regenerated in order to get to heaven. (True Christian Religion 574)

Again, we read: “*Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.*” (John 8:34) If we do the things the Lord says we should not, there will be consequences – bad things will happen. This is not because God punishes us; it’s just the way things work. And it gets worse the more that evil is seen as allowable, for evil is addictive, and it has a snowball effect in people’s lives.

For all these reasons, we encounter a far-reaching teaching which uses the phrase “eternal verities”: “*Divine Truth is the order itself of His kingdom*

*existing everywhere, all the laws of which are truths, or eternal verities.”* (Arcana Coelestia 1728) If the Lord speaks it, it is the truth. Amen.

**Confirming our faith.** So, what are we to do? One way to take this message to heart is to consider a calling that comes in the book of *Revelation*, where there are two amens in the same verse. We read of a throne room in heaven seen by John on the Isle of Patmos. We hear all the angels around the throne, together with the elders, and the four living creatures, proclaiming: *“Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.”* (Revelation 7:12)

The word Amen, used twice, stands for “the consent of all.” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 375) These are people who willingly and joyfully consent to the fact that the Lord is glorious, wise, deserving of thanksgiving, honorable and powerful. They believe it in the core of their being. They profess it with confidence because they *know* that it is true.

This is the level of faith and confidence that the Lord wants us to have in our lives. It begins with our willingness to believe what the Lord says in His Word – to trust that it must be true because it is from Him. That is the first “Amen.” It grows as we live that truth and see that it works: it sheds life on the issues of our lives, it leads to healthy, long-lasting relationships, it helps us deal with the hard events of life, and it brings happiness. The more the truth becomes reality in our lives, the more we can confirm it as true for ourselves. This is the second “Amen.” (*Ibid.*)

The Lord, who is the Amen, speaks the truth to us in His Word. As people who desire genuine happiness in this life, and salvation in the life to come, we are asked to respond with an “amen” of our own. It can come in the form of a prayer: “Lord, I know that Your Word speaks the truth. Help me to believe it, learn from it, and live according to it. Amen – may it be true for me.” Or we could use the Lord’s own Prayer, which says essentially the same thing: *“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done. Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.”*

Contact: Peter.Buss.Jr@newchurch.org

# Success in Life: How-to Videos for Graduates

*Curtis Childs*

I was thinking of what I could add to today that would be valuable to you, and it occurred to me, having worked making videos on YouTube for as long as I have, that a lot of people come to YouTube for how-to videos. And given that you graduates are setting out on your post-college life, you'll probably be looking up a lot of how-tos for things like how to do a job interview or "my drain is clogged, what's up with that?" I thought what I could do for you is help you multi-task right now, during this ceremony. You can graduate and get a few important tutorials from me at the same time. So here are four how-tos that I think are some of the most important in life:

## **1. How to have the whole world be excited that you're graduating**

As they first announced that it would be me doing this speech and as I first came up here perhaps many of you graduates and parents and family members were thinking: "I have no idea who this guy is. I don't really care what he's going to say, I hope it's pretty short." And I don't hold that against you. It's hard to be excited about someone doing something when you don't know him.

But, even though I don't know many of you graduates personally, I can honestly say that I am excited that you are graduating. Probably. I mean, it depends on what you go on to do. And I don't mean how much financial success you have. There are some people who have graduated college and

*There is a way that  
you can have  
everyone glad that  
you're graduating.  
The only thing you  
have to do is: learn to  
love being useful.*

made a huge amount of money through running a successful Ponzi Scheme. We in the rest of the human race are not very excited about that. In fact, I and the victims of those schemes are thinking: "Man, I wish that person had studied a bit less, maybe flunked out of school and done something different with his life." In hindsight, if we had been at his graduation, we wouldn't have been



applauding him walking across the stage.

But there is a way that you can have everyone glad that you're graduating. Having us all cheering for you is actually much easier. The only thing you have to do, even for people you don't know, to be excited about your graduation is: learn to love being useful. Learn to love your craft, learn to love making a difference.

Think about the impact you will have on people as you do what you do and keep it as your north star. Then whatever occupation you're in, if you're a teacher or an architect or a parent, you will do that work honestly, justly and faithfully because you know it's the right thing to do, and that is the greatest gift you can give to the human race. Can you imagine what the world would be like if we all did that?

Be on Team Human Race, love usefulness. Then we're all your fans.

## **2 How to get along with the human race**

So, while you were in college you probably had to deal with people. There were some students, professors and coworkers who were easy to get along with and saw things similarly to you. Some were more of a challenge to get along with and you had to figure out how to navigate relationships, and even how to coexist with people you disagreed with politically! You had to figure out how to deal with some of the challenges of living around other people. Well, luckily, now that's over! In the grown-up world, everyone gets along with each other easily.

The idea of just playing nice with each other can seem daunting in our big, divided, different world. It seems so complicated; if only there were some kind of instruction manual. Well, guess what? There is an instruction manual for that, and you're *wearing* it. No, don't check the tag on your shirt, I'm talking about the human body. For everything you need to know about how to get along with the human race, just look at yourself. If you do this, you will probably notice that you are made up of a lot of different parts. Very different. Your teeth and your liver are nothing alike. But they're still part of a single whole. And they need each other.

I'm not a biologist, and I know that there are actual biologists and biology students here so I'll try not to embarrass myself by getting the terminology wrong. But as I understand it, none of the parts of the human body think the other parts are stupid. Do I have that right? Like when the eye sees the kneecap, it doesn't say to the other eye: "look at that weird little flat bone. Doesn't even have a retina. Useless." No, the eye knows that if that kneecap wasn't just like it is, in the place that it is, the eye would be staring straight into the ground. Faceplant.

Some parts of the body are rigid, some are flexible, some complex, some focused. It's the interplay of them that makes the body work as well as it does.

Some people are rigid and slow to change, some are restless and always want to try something new. It's a mix. Your neighbors will be a mix, your coworkers will be a mix, the people who post things that delight and infuriate you online are a mix.

Some people like to think a lot, some like to do, some support. Look for whatever they do that can help the company or society and appreciate that.

Some people seem stubborn in their thinking, some seem wishy-washy. Some people want to push toward new things, some people want to preserve old things. Both can be good. We need some people to be rigid and some to be malleable, just like you need tendons and bones to achieve movement.

Don't hate the kneecap for being a kneecap; look for what its use to the greater whole is, look for what it brings to the table that you don't and how you can work with it.

The model and the instructions for how to get along were put there by God in every one of us. As Emanuel Swedenborg put it: "It is a secret not yet known in this world that heaven, taken in a single all-inclusive grasp, reflects a single individual."

### **How to have what even CEOs are looking for**

I was once part of a leadership group that met in Washington, D.C. Just about everyone in that group was either a CEO or a founder. High-powered people. The program for that group had its own leadership philosophy with some great principles in it, so I wasn't trying to inject too much of my Swedenborgian philosophy into the discussion. But eventually some of the people in the group began to be aware of the work I do online and started asking me to talk more about it.

At a retreat near the end of the program, we were out around a campfire and people were saying: "Come on, tell us more about your worldview." Finally, I said, "OK." I thought I would give a quick five-minute overview. I talked for 50 minutes. Because each time I would try to wrap it up, someone else would have a question, people wanted to know more. They were loving it. I had follow-up calls and emails from these important people wanting to learn more, and all I was telling them was what you learned here in your Religion 101 course.

Don't discount the importance of the religion. People at the top, maybe even more so, are still looking for meaning and how to live rightly, and a sense of what it's all for. In my own life I have had some success but that's not where happiness comes from. The teachings are where the happiness comes from.

## How to be invincible

You are not the only one involved in running your life. There is a bigger plan. And you can trust that. Don't believe me? Because I'm just some little religious guy at a graduation telling you things that won't work in the real world? Well, here's a quote: "Again, you can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backward. So, you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something – your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life."

Know who that's from? Steve Jobs, at Stanford's commencement speech. Swedenborg would call that "thing" you can trust "divine providence."

He wrote: "Through His divine providence, God is taking care of everything."

Sounds great! But it can be hard to know how to live like you believe that. Here's the best method that I've found: my grandfather died before I was born. As he was nearing the end, he was very sick so he couldn't talk anymore. He just had a pad of paper beside his hospital bed that he would write on to communicate with people.

My grandmother was distraught. They still had kids at home. She didn't know which would be worse – a long, drawn out end where the kids would see it all and my grandfather would suffer far longer, or his passing quickly and them having less time with him. Finally, my grandmother asked him: "What are we going to do?" He reached for his pad, and quietly replied: "I hope the Lord will use me as is best for everyone."

The secret to life is to say, "I hope the Lord will use me as is best for everyone." That's how to be invincible.

I have found that when I say, "I want to be successful," I become unhappy as soon as that success fades. When I say, "I want to be better," then I am pained when I see someone else who is better than I am. When I say, "My life needs to go this particular way," my fears can torment me endlessly when it doesn't. But when I say, "I hope the Lord will use me as is best for everyone," I find safety, calm, purpose and joy. I wish those same feelings for you.

## Conclusion

So, in the end I do wish you success, but don't get too hung up on it. Sometimes you will feel very successful, sometimes you will feel down and out. But wherever you go, do usefulness. Stay steadfast

*The world is looking  
not just for skill  
and innovation, the  
world is looking  
for goodness.*

in that through the ups and downs of success and eventually, that joy in usefulness, that is what the up is. That's what gives meaning to your life. As it says in *Micah* "What does the Lord require of you? But to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."

The world is looking not just for skill and innovation, the world is looking for *goodness*. But the world is not just looking for goodness; it's looking for skill *and* innovation too. Goodness and skill, love and wisdom. Love without wisdom is nothing, wisdom without love is nothing. Love is not all you need. Go and *be both*.

Then, if you do that, everyone in the world will cheer for you. Even though the world might not know that you're graduating, if they *did* know, and knew the code you would go and live your life by and the impact that will have, they would absolutely be overjoyed that you're graduating. In that way, everyone in the world, and who has yet to come, is here right now in this room cheering for you as you walk across the stage. And I'm with them.

Jesus Christ famously said that if we love Him, we should feed His sheep. Let's go and do likewise. Thank you.



**Curtis Childs** (Bryn Athyn College AA 2006) is an international speaker and "influencer." He is the creator and host of the offTheLeftEye YouTube videos, which have more than 50 million views and more than 600,000 followers across social media. He is the Chief Visionary Officer of the Swedenborg Foundation and Executive Director of NewChurch Live. He lives in Bryn Athyn with his wife, Brooke, and their daughter, Sidney. Contact: [curtischildsg@gmail.com](mailto:curtischildsg@gmail.com)

# ANC: Preparation for Life

*Douglas Reuter*

Every word of this is true. You might not believe me, but every word of this is true.

Several years ago, I stood in line and stared at the glowing menu board of the Feasterville Arby's. A normal trip to Arby's is usually a no-brainer for me: two Beef N' Cheddars, a jamocha shake (no whip), and a couple of packets of Horsey Sauce. And a few napkins – because I'm classy.

That fateful day, though, was different. I wish I could tell you why, but I can't. All I know is something deep and ancient in my soul told me to try something new. So, I looked up at the menu and pondered. As I considered my options, I offered my spot to the couple behind me, and they eagerly accepted.

I was alone in line. Or so I thought.

A gravelly voice behind me said: "I can see you don't know what you want."

I turned around to find the owner of the voice, a short man dressed in old jeans and a brown Carhartt sweatshirt with the hood up. He had the visage of Gimli but the gravitas of Gandalf. To look at him was to know him. This was a man who tanned his own leather. A man who switched seamlessly between metric and imperial tools. A man who knew about rough carpentry, navigating by the stars, and surviving in the wilderness. A man who carved ducks out of wood and displayed them on his mantle.

"Excuse me?" I said.

"I can see you don't know what you want," he repeated. "You want the Meat Mountain." My eyes shot back to the menu board. "It's not up there," he said. "Just tell the cashier you want the Meat Mountain. They have a button for it."

"What is it?" I asked.

"It's six different meats served between two buns." What?! He recognized my skepticism. "Trust me," he said. I would have trusted this man to carry the Ring of Power back to Mordor. I stepped to the cashier and ordered a jamocha shake and one Meat Mountain.

What a rush! I was standing in Arby's, ordering something OFF-MENU. I

turned to thank the man for the recommendation, but he wasn't there. He must have gone to the bathroom. I moved to the end of the counter and waited for those artists to assemble my Meat Mountain. A few minutes later, they handed me my shake and sandwich. The weight of the bag alarmed me. I peeked inside to make sure there was only one sandwich. That beefy behemoth stared back at me. My adrenaline surged. I grabbed several extra packets of Horsey Sauce at the condiment station and waited for my Arby's Angel to reappear.

He never did.

To this day, I have no idea where he came from, where he went, or why he was even there. He was in and out of my life in a moment, but he forever changed the trajectory of it. Slightly.

I stand up here today as a Meat Mountain of a speaker. You see, while I am Owen's father, I am also an alumnus of ANC, a teacher, a coach, an administrator, a class advisor, and a former houseparent.

And I almost wasn't any of those things.

When I was 16, I had a decision to make. I could continue attending the excellent public school in the Chicago suburbs, or I could do what my sister, brothers, parents and grandparents had done. I could pack up and head to ANC. My parents left the decision up to me. They left me with total freedom to choose my path. It was my life, they said. I needed to decide.

I was *leaning* toward staying when my father sensed I didn't *know* what I wanted and said something I have always remembered: "If you stay here, you will be prepared for college. If you go to ANC, you will be prepared for the rest of your life." I was not much of a thinker at that point in my life, but I was smart enough to hear the wisdom in his words.

My wife Carla and I started dating in the fall of my junior year at ANC. We have been together ever since. We have three children. All three attended ANC. Our youngest graduates today. Three for three. This place has given

*My father said something I have always remembered: "If you stay here, you will be prepared for college. If you go to ANC, you will be prepared for the rest of your life."*

me my wife, my children, my use, and my salary which I occasionally spend on Meat Mountains. It's also given me my place in the universe and my understanding of the Divine. This place has given me everything.

Everything.

In *Arcana Coelestia* 3854, Swedenborg writes: "For every smallest moment of a [person's] life involves a series of consequences extending to eternity, each moment being as a new beginning to those which follow." My parents gave me a choice.

I made it. A series of new beginnings formed. And I got everything I could have ever hoped for.

This place is special. It's not perfect. We have our flaws. We are always trying to be better. But it is special. Take a moment to look around you. Look at your classmates. Look at your faculty. Look at your families. Look at your banner. Look at those banners on the wall. That's our history. Yours will be up there next year. Surely, the Lord is in this place. That's why it's so special.

I didn't fully realize how true that was when I was your age. I suspect you don't either, but that's the nature of Divine Providence. We can only see it by looking back. The decision to attend ANC when I was 16, led me to this moment with all of you. I see it plainly now. How do people not believe in miracles? I see hundreds of them in this room, each one with thousands of their own miracles. And so on to eternity.

Before I return to my chair and complete my duties as Senior Class Advisor, permit me one final moment to say I hope you are happy with your decision to attend ANC. I hope you enjoyed your time here. I hope you made meaningful friendships. I hope you found some answers. I hope you formed new questions. I hope you know what you want. Most importantly, I hope you find true what my father said to me – that this place has prepared you for the rest of your life.

Now go live yours with what you have been given.



**Douglas Reuter** (Academy Boys School 1994) has worked in the Academy Boys School for 25 years, where he is assistant principal, teaches English, is Senior Class adviser and head baseball coach. He and his wife, Carla (Cooper) live in Bryn Athyn. Contact: [Doug.Reuter@ancss.org](mailto:Doug.Reuter@ancss.org)

A Lifelong Ambition

# The Centenary of the New Church on Maldon Road, Colchester, England

*Anne (Greenwold) Glover*

*(Reprinted from the May 2024 Newsletter of the New Church in the  
United Kingdom)*

Arthur Henry Appleton was born in Great Braxted, Essex, England, in 1854 and died in Colchester, Essex, 1936, at 81 years of age.

His “promotion” to the next life, following a sudden attack of pneumonia, prompted Colchester Church contemporary Frederick R. Cooper to collate some interesting details about his life. The Rev. Victor Gladish incorporated them into his tribute and this obituary was a valuable starting point for the potted history below, introducing the man who built our church on Maldon Road.

Arthur Appleton came to the town in 1875. He first heard of the New Church around 1881, through his membership of the wonderfully named Band of Hope Mutual Improvement Society. Among his fellow members were George Alexander McQueen and other local readers of the Writings. They were doing a little missionary work and this led Mr. Appleton to attend lectures in the town center being given by the Rev. Joseph Deans, New Church minster at Brightlingsea.

Baptism into the New Church (at that time General Conference) followed in 1888, officiated by the Rev. Charles Griffiths. Arthur Appleton became a member of the General Church of the New Jerusalem in 1897 and in the years to follow he, together with his wife Maria (née Ollington, whom he had married in 1879) gave his active and faithful support to the church, both locally and further afield.

Over the years since 1816, when Robert Hindmarsh gave his controversial public lecture at the Angel Inn in Colchester, New Church friends had met at various locations. A first act of public worship was held in 1823, at a Unitarian chapel in nearby St Helen’s Lane. The chapel has long since been demolished and during the middle part of the century, the church’s presence in the town seems to have fallen away.

A revival came in the latter part of the century, with rooms being hired



for regular services at Shaftesbury Hall. This was where Rev. Deans had held the lectures which first caught Mr. Appleton's interest. A former infant school in Osborne Street and a room at the back of Colchester's Corn Exchange were both were employed at different times. Mention should also be made of the place much loved for classes, meetings and social gatherings, William Gill's photographic studio in Head Street, situated within the historic c1690 building, now known as Rebow House.

As the new century dawned, momentous changes were on the horizon. In 1902, a room next to the Roman wall in Priory Street was secured for the exclusive use of the church and preparations were made for the next fortnightly visit of the Rev. Andrew Czerny, under whose care the group was at that time.

In the spring of that year, the Rev. E.C. Bostock arrived on a special visit from America, bringing conclusion to a turbulent chapter of church history in which a separation from the Conference Church had been decided upon. On May 28, with the permission of Bishop W.F. Pendleton and the unanimous consent of the Colchester members, Mr. Bostock officially organized the group into the first British congregation of the General Church of the New Jerusalem and appointed the following officers: Frederick R. Cooper, Secretary and William Gill, Treasurer, together with Messrs. Arthur Appleton, William Everett and Joseph Bedwell.

The cozy "hall of worship" in Priory Street continued to be the settled home of the church for the next 22 years. But, oh, to have a building of their own! In January 1920 it was decided that the small balance in the Piano Fund should form the nucleus of a Building Fund, in order to make a start toward that end. Two shillings and sixpence were added and during the next several years, through hard work and generosity, the money began to accumulate. Collections were made at festival services. Social events and sales of work added to the funds. Local members made individual contributions and extended (often interest-free) loans to the church, both small and great, each according to their means.

Members in other parts of Britain sent in donations and individuals and even whole congregations contributed from America – everyone wanting to lend their support. As we know, every little bit helps and proof of this is recorded in the Building Fund cash book of the time, which details a few small local fund raisers: Profit from Ice Cream 16/6, Sale of Sweets £2, Sale of Cherries on Building Site 10/- and 2/6 for the Sale of a Bird (make of that what you will!).

It's at this point that I should bring in Mr. Appleton again. He was, by trade (and perhaps we can say, providence) a builder and had formed a company in partnership with Mr. J. Moss. At the time of Arthur Appleton's death in 1936, the papers referred to him as a "well-known Colchester builder" and reported

that he had been “instrumental in building a large portion of both working-class houses and better class properties” in the town.

And so it was that a suitable plot was found on which to build a church. The land on Maldon Road was purchased in instalments beginning in October 1923, with a final payment in April 1924 and at a total cost of £450. Architects’ plans were drawn up and Appleton and Moss Builders were duly employed for the construction.

“Thursday, May the 22nd, 1924, is a date likely to be long remembered in the annals of the Church in Great Britain” says the report in *New Church Life*. “It was the occasion of the laying of the cornerstone of the church building which is being erected by the Colchester Society of the General Church. This is the first New Church Temple to be erected in Colchester . . . [and also] the first New Church building to be erected in Great Britain, directly under the auspices of the General Church.

“Almost a full gathering of the society, including some of the members living at a distance, were present. The Pastor, the Rev. F.E. Gyllenhaal, opened the service by reading some very beautiful passages from the Word and this was followed by readings from the Writings by the Rev. R.J. Tilson. Then came the antiphonal reading of Psalm 24 and suitable prayers. Mr. Tilson gave a short but stirring address on the significance of the ceremony.

“The Pastor then prepared the cement and four young men of the society – Messrs. Alwyne Appleton, Sanfrid Appleton [Arthur’s sons] John Cooper and Norman Motum [my own great uncle] – lifted the stone into position at the southeast corner of the building. The climax of the ceremony followed. It was a most impressive moment when the pastor, his hand resting upon this cornerstone of our church building, pronounced words which summed up our feelings of gratitude, invoked the blessing of the Lord and consecrated the stone to its most important use.”

And now, 100 years later, we are commemorating this momentous event. One hundred years! The building was never intended to remain for so long, but the high price of land and the lack of a suitable alternative plot meant the church never did relocate to a larger site as was originally intended. How fortunate that Mr. Appleton, believing it would not be large enough for future uses, had the foresight to add 10 feet to its footprint, generously contributing his own money to that end. At the time of the dedication of the new building, Colley Pryke and Frederick Cooper noted that Mr. Appleton’s use “found its highest expression and the realization of a lifelong ambition.”

As the use served by our beloved building now draws to a close and we reflect upon a century of church life within its walls, these words, written by Rev. Gladish, surely express the gratitude of us all: “For 20 years Mr. Appleton was Custodian of our society. He was ever desirous that we should possess a

church building of our own and he helped forward the realization of this possession in no small measure. The society is deeply indebted to him for his self-sacrificing labors on its behalf.”

Mr. Appleton, of course, didn't build the church on his own. He is but one of many, many people whose love, sacrifice and passion brought it and our church society into being. But most importantly of all, let us never forget:

*Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. (Psalm 127:1)*

*Mr. Appleton, of course, didn't build the church on his own. He is but one of many, many people whose love, sacrifice and passion brought it and our church society into being.*

Contact **Anne Glover**: [ncnewsletteruk@gmail.com](mailto:ncnewsletteruk@gmail.com)  
(Pull quotes)

## One Hundred Years On

*Ann Buss*

One hundred years ago, on May 22, 1924, a group of Swedenborgians gathered to lay the cornerstone of their new house of worship on Maldon Road in Colchester. This was the first New Church building to be erected in Great Britain, directly under the auspices of the General Church. A few days before the centenary, more than 40 New Church members and friends, many of them descendants of the original group, came together, with others online, to mark the anniversary and to celebrate all the lives touched and served within those walls.

I have never taken part in an event with two such different faces. We were celebrating our church and all she has been for people and at the same time carrying sadness that we have to say goodbye to what we have built. Yes, the sadness is because of the “For Sale” sign outside and the shadow it casts. All of us know that our numbers are too few and our average age too high to allow us to maintain this 1924 building indefinitely. We are exploring how to be part of the Lord's Church in a new way here in Colchester, and in the United Kingdom in general.

Yet it seemed that on the day, celebration and gratitude outstripped regret. We were delighted to welcome everyone to our event. Some drove for hours

*I have never taken part in an event with two such different faces. We were celebrating our church and all she has been for people and at the same time carrying sadness that we have to say goodbye to what we have built. Yet it seemed that on the day, celebration and gratitude outstripped regret.*

to attend, some even flew in. Among our visitors were the Rev. Grant and Sarah Odhner from Michael Church, and representatives from the Oxford and old Surrey groups. When they arrived, they found the smiling faces of old friends, a souvenir worship pamphlet and a social hall filled with memorabilia, banquet tables, flags, balloons and red and white roses.

During the service, the Rev. Erik Buss talked about gratitude and trusting the Lord's leading, even when the path forward is not clear. He highlighted the necessity of grappling with what a church in fact really is, because we celebrate a cornerstone and a bricks-and-mortar building – but what are we truly celebrating? It is the hearts of the people we have served that matter, and the connections made between our God and we humans, that have lasting value.

Erik pressed this idea by asking us to recall that a body of people who are a church, and also any person who is a microcosm of that church, is described in Scripture as a “Bride and Wife of the Lamb.” He made the point that a bride or wife wants to be beautiful for her husband, and that as a church, we must have the same goal.

How is the church at large and the church in our own hearts a beautiful entity? Perhaps we see an old building and worn out earthly things, but the Lord sees inner beauty in hearts that are open to Him and which are trying to know Him. When I looked around during our celebrations I saw that other face – that internal beauty – flashing here and there.

And there was comfort in so many additional forms on that day. Birgitta Amos and Geoff Wyncoll played their guitars for one of the songs and David Glover accompanied us for the others, as we filled the church with our hymn singing. He then made the room vibrate with his organ rendering of Widor's *Toccata*.

There were three walls filled with old photos, all beautifully organized and captioned by Anne Glover. She arranged not only photos for all 11 decades, but letters and school albums and notebooks. I gazed at the walls and found my own grandfather and grandmother and their family of curly-headed children

looking back at me. I saw other black-and-white photos of small children doing their lessons in the church, when it was set up for classes during the week in the old days. I saw little thespians dressed in homemade costumes for school plays that happened each year until the school closed in the 1980s. I saw boys and girls playing rounders behind the building in the area that became our car park in 2005. I smiled over photos of banquets, weddings, dances, games nights and Christmas Tableaux.

As David Glover said, all the people nurtured in this space are like seedlings, many of which have been transplanted and are now blooming in other places. Someone mentioned the quote, "*Behold I make all things new*," and that seemed appropriate.

After church we all gathered for a group photo, and films of past events played on a screen for all to see. We enjoyed a wonderful spread of buffet food, and drinks and speeches, including, *What the Church Means To Me* from Kathy Wyncoll, in which she told of her memories and rang the old school bell.

There were poems written for the occasion, along with greetings, memories and goodbyes from a handful of people, including former pastors, all read by Erik. We sang *Here's to Our Friends*, toasted the Church and clapped for the huge red-and-white cake with one, large sparkler-candle in the middle, which whooshed up in a large flame. Then our society hostess, Birgitta Amos, cut the cake.

During the eating and talking and laughing, I thought about uses rippling out in never-ending waves from where they start. The good things begun here and housed in the Maldon Road church building are not ending, because they are carried forward in the hearts and useful services of those she touched.

It was poignant to sing *Jerusalem* at the close of the church service. So many friends, forebears and relatives were standing nearby, it seemed, to sing the hope-filled hymn with us.

Contact: [annbuss@gmail.com](mailto:annbuss@gmail.com)

**The Colchester New Church on Maldon Road**

for the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone  
by the Rev. Kenneth J. Alden, pastor 1996-2002

Little New Church on Maldon Road  
How well you've served as our Lord's abode!  
You've housed the teaching from His Word.  
Songs of faith in your hall were heard.  
He bid the children come to Him.  
Where He could touch with story or hymn.  
Many were baptized within your walls.  
New Church schooling busied your halls.  
Organ music was played with love.  
Voices were raised to God above.  
"As in heaven, so on earth"  
People came to learn the worth  
Of doctrine for the life we live—  
In which we serve and freely give  
Our faith and love and energy  
In ends that look to eternity.

Your golden window's welcome light  
Lifts our eyes to heaven's height  
To greet Your now descending bride,  
With hope that there we will abide.  
Your window's light on all was shed,  
Who toward the Word the aisle tread  
With harvest fruits or fronds of palm,  
Or Easter flowers with fragrant balm.  
Sacred vows of marriage, too.  
Were spoken 'neath its golden hue.  
Lives well-lived were honored here  
And commended to their Savior dear.  
Tableaux enacted the sacred worth  
In stories of our Savior's birth,  
Read from chancel before the Word  
And met with awe by those who heard.

A hundred years this church has been  
A sign post to things heard and seen  
In heavens above and even hell,  
Where the Lord is King and governs well.  
“The Lord God Jesus Christ doth reign”  
Is the gospel good, the gospel plain,  
On which was founded this worship hall,  
So that more could hear and answer the call  
Of heavenly secrets now revealed—  
The Word’s inner treasures now unsealed—  
About the Lord Himself and the Scriptures, too,  
About the life to come and what angels do,  
About conjugal love in a marriage true,  
Where the Lord conjoins and’s held in view.

Little New Church on Maldon Road  
How well you’ve served as our Lord’s abode!

*With love and best wishes from Ken and Kim  
to the members who will continue to comprise the  
Colchester New Church after the sale of the building  
is complete.*

# **The Swedenborgian Attorney Who Launched The Slavery Trial of the Century: The Dred Scott Case and Francis Butter Murdoch**

*By Dewey Murdick and Jim Lawrence*

(Reprinted with permission from the June *Messenger* of the Convention Church)

American attorney and newspaper publisher Francis Butter Murdoch (1808-1882), who helped organize the first Swedenborgian congregation in St. Louis, also saved Harriet and Dred Scott's slavery freedom case from never happening. Due to their lack of funds, the Scotts had several attorneys drop their case, reports Lea VanderVelde, a professor at the University of Iowa College of Law, in *Mrs. Dred Scott: A Life on Slavery's Frontier* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

Murdoch at the same time that he was organizing the first Swedenborgian church in that city was also the most active attorney filing freedom cases for African Americans. He took the Scotts' case essentially *pro bono*. Here's what we know:

## **Religion Played a Part**

It appears that religion did play some role in the Scotts connecting with Murdoch. Of the two Scotts, Harriet became much more active in a Black Baptist church in St. Louis and had many more social connections beyond that through her work as a laundress. The spiritual leader of her church was the Rev. John Meachum, who worked with his sons in a profitable barrel-making business, through whose profits they would buy slaves so they could work off the debt into freedom.

Meachum believed buying freedom was a better route to liberty than suing or escaping, but nevertheless his church was a hotbed of lawsuit activities, and Harriet was one of several church members who sought their freedom through the work of St. Louis lawyer Francis B. Murdoch. He had already successfully represented at least 16 other plaintiffs in freedom suits. The Scotts, however, had tried several other attorneys who all quit on them because they could pay little to no money.



At this time Murdoch was also busy organizing a new religious group in the region – the Swedenborgians – and hosting discussion meetings at his house. That fledgling group would go on to become the First Society of the New Jerusalem in that city. In J. Thomas Scharf's 1883 book, *History of Saint Louis City and County, from the Earliest Periods to the Present Day including Biographical Sketches of Representative Men* (v. 2, p. 1741), Francis B. Murdoch is listed as a member of the First New Jerusalem Society of St. Louis, the same church that still exists today as Church of the Open Word in the suburb of Creve Coeur under the leadership of Pastor Paul Deming.

Murdoch was known to work without much or any pay because both as an attorney and as a writer he worked fervently for civil rights and dismantling the detestable institution of slavery. It was his special cause, and he is now known by legal historians precisely for his inordinately large number of freedom lawsuit filings – a business approach that ultimately left him destitute enough that he needed to foreclose on all his local interests, leave the area and move to Berrien Springs, Michigan to start over.

However, he is the one who saved the case, pushing through all the proper legal groundwork for the filing and maintaining its standing. He filed one-third of all freedom lawsuits in the federal court of St. Louis up until his financial failure in the summer of 1846. In the historical archives of Berrien Springs, a lot assigned Francis Butter Murdoch was designated for a New Jerusalem church.

Research has uncovered his close connection to the Murdoch clan that was active in the Urbana area, and at the Fryeburg New Church Assembly the Murdoch Cabin was donated by a longtime participant in the summer program, Florence Murdoch, who was Francis Murdoch's niece.

After a few years in Berrien Springs, he moved to San Jose, California, where he would live for the last 36 years of his life, notably, editing and publishing the *San Jose Telegraph*, which is today *The San Jose Mercury News*, San Jose's major daily. He also founded the *San Jose Patriot*, his own daily that ran from 1867 to 1876. While we don't know his religious thoughts after leaving Missouri, we do know he was avid enough about the Swedenborgian movement at the time of taking on Harriet and Dred Scott's case that he was on the ground floor of organizing what is today our church ministry in that city.

### **Murdoch's Scathing Critique of the Dred Scott Decision**

The Dred and Harriet Scott case in St. Louis that Murdoch saved and launched ultimately went to the Supreme Court with another attorney and resulted in the infamous Dred Scott decision issued on March 6, 1857, and penned by the Supreme Court Chief Justice Robin B. Taney in a 7-2 decision. (Justices

McLean and Curtis delivered dissenting opinions.)

Citing several Constitutional and statutory case law, the highest court declared African descent people, whether free or slave, are not and cannot be citizens of the United States within the meaning of the Constitution, and holding citizenship in a free state does not automatically render a person a citizen of the United States.

The next month in the *San Jose Telegraph* in its April 28, 1857, issue, Murdoch decimated the majority opinion point-by-point in a fashion now widely seen as correct. After listing the primary legal arguments made by Taney, Murdoch concludes:

“This decision is adverse to and reverses a whole host of legal decisions not only in the Supreme Court of the United States, but also innumerable decisions made by Courts in the Slave States. It is adverse to the opinions of the great array of great and good men who have controlled this Government in political operation from its foundation to the present time. It, in fact, inaugurates a Revolution, which will be more potent in its consequences than that which ever arms have effected. Henceforth, Republicans, be a minute man. The battle has but begun. Your leaders in the great States are in council. The banner of Freedom is yet borne aloft in the Republican ranks, and accursed be the traitor who ever trails it before the Juggernaut of Slavery.”

This case became the most important legal battle leading up to the Civil War. While the South gloated that its position had become the law of the land, the Dred Scott decision fueled fury among freedom forces and dramatically pushed the country closer toward the outbreak of the American Civil War.

The case demolished the delicate agreement between slave and free states and produced a national rage. Another Midwest attorney, Abraham Lincoln, vehemently protested the Dred Scott ruling and would be running for president. He believed the ruling immorally stripped enslaved people of their humanity and that it validated evil. The Dred Scott case is now seen as the legal line in the sand that marked a point

*This case became the most important legal battle leading up to the Civil War. While the South gloated that its position had become the law of the land, the Dred Scott decision fueled fury among freedom forces and dramatically pushed the country closer toward the outbreak of the American Civil War.*

of no return from a Civil War.

### **Murdoch Has Never Appeared in Swedenborgian Archives... Until Now**

When one of the authors of this article, Dewey Murdick, began communicating with the historians in our church about this Swedenborgian lawyer, Francis Butter Murdoch could not be found in our archives anywhere, either in Berkeley or Urbana. The reason seems clear: Murdoch's activity organizing the first Swedenborgian ministry in St. Louis happened before any records or histories were being done that were kept in that city.

Murdoch, however, did grow up in Bedford, Pennsylvania, where, according to scholar and historian Scott Trego Swank, a flourishing New Church Society was growing in that community during his young years, but there are no records from that earliest Bedford community. His final 36 years in San Jose put him a day's trip by stagecoach to two Swedenborgian churches.

*Dewey Murdick is a local historian in Berrien Springs, Michigan, who began this research project and who has been interacting with several in the Swedenborgian Church of North America involved with the research collections in Berkeley, California, and Urbana, Ohio. The Rev. Dr. James F. Lawrence, PhD, DMin, is Dean Emeritus of the Center for Swedenborgian Studies and Faculty Associate in Spirituality and Director of the Doctor of Ministry degree program at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California.*

# Life Lines

*Bruce M. Henderson and the Rev. Jeremy F. Simons*

## THY WILL BE DONE

The world reeled last October 7 when Hamas terrorists attacked Israel without warning, slaughtering more than 1,200 innocent men, women and children. People everywhere were stunned by the savagery.

Or so we thought. Response was as swift and ugly as the attack itself. That dark day spawned an eruption of hatred and antisemitism – open revolt on college campuses, echoing through the United States and much of the world. But it was aimed at Israel, especially as it sought to defend itself. The raucous end of the school year brought wary relief – and a sense of unease: would the uprisings fade, simmer through the summer, or explode?

The demonstrators are loud and passionate. We are left to wonder where this stark animosity comes from. What unleashed such hatred, apparently festering for years?

Students and agitators chanting “Death to Israel! Death to America!” is free speech. It is also chilling. And it is a choice.

We pray each day: “Thy will be done.” This does not sound like His will being done.

We are all children of God. That includes Israelis and Palestinians – any people hostile to each other. Despite our flaws, the Lord loves all of us and strives always to elevate us into heaven. But He also loves us enough to allow us freedom to choose – between good and evil, whether “Thy will be done” or our own.

His Two Great Commandments are to love Him and love our neighbor. We love Him, He says, simply by “feeding His sheep” – by loving our neighbor, however challenging that may be at times. Love is the model. And that is what’s been missing in all the anger, threats and demands billowing from our campuses.

Love unites. Hate divides. Love is from the Lord. Hate is from hell. Not that long ago lawn signs proudly proclaimed: “Hate has no home here.” What

happened? All of a sudden, hate has found a home – in too many hearts, too many homes, too many college campuses. What should be home and nurturer of the intellect, serving for good in the world, has been corrupted by too many people who should know better.

Dr. Karl Menninger, one of the giants of psychiatry in the last century, wrote of Sigmund Freud's pioneer work in psychoanalysis – getting to the root of man's pathologies, so that they might be better understood and treated:

Freud's great courage led him to look honestly at evil in men's nature. He persisted in his research to the bottom of the jar, and there he found hope. He discerned that love is stronger than hate and that for all its care of malignancy the nature of men can be transformed through the nature and dispersion of love. In this way, the destructiveness can be transcended.

There is always hope. That is at the heart of Divine providence: that the Lord permits only what can be turned to good. And it all starts with prayer:

*Thy will be done.*

(BMH)

## **DELIVER US FROM EVIL**

So, where does all this hate and evil come from? How does such an angry movement erupt so suddenly in the wake of the October 7 attack on Israel? Why did such orchestrated venom sprout so readily from a prejudice nurtured on college campuses?

But we have seen it all before. The Word is full of examples. So is our history. We are supposed to learn from all this – from Sodom and Gomorrah to Hitler and modern terrorism. Why are people so quickly caught up in frenzy? And why do so many cringe, but remain silent? These are morality tales for the ages – and for our time. With them lingers the troubling question: how are we to be delivered from evil that takes such hold of individuals and masses?

Evil may seem a harsh term in this context, especially for young people venting their emotions. But evil is defined in the Writings as simply turning away from the Lord. We know also that what happens on earth is manifestation of what is playing out in the spiritual world. There are the causes, here are the effects. It is the hells that stir up such hatred and animosity. The poison is in hell; the antidote is turning back to the Lord. This darkness of the spirit is distressing. But so is the lack of spiritual counterpoint. Where are the calls to

prayer? Where are the leaders elevating our perspective from base instincts to spiritual calling? From the strident “my will be done” to “Thy will be done”?

We are told in the Word:

Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do well. (Isaiah 1:16,17)

Ceasing to do evil is the lifetime process of regeneration. Our institutions, governments and cultures face the same challenges. History teaches the lessons, but we are slow learners. We need the Word as the true manual to lead us along the path.

Consider just two egregious examples of the power of evil in our troubling history: the Salem witch trials and the horror of the Holocaust.

Witch hunts actually took hold in Scotland and other European countries, between 1590 and 1756, where thousands were accused of witchcraft and thousands executed – not because they were witches but because people had been stirred up enough by the hells to condemn them.

The same hysteria suddenly gripped the quiet village of Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692 and '93 – stirred by a harsh Puritan culture – with people suddenly turning on neighbors as “possessed.” More than 200 were accused – many on whim and rumors. Thirty were found guilty and 20 cruelly executed – by hanging, dunking and “pressing” (gradually crushing under slabs of stones).

Well, that was centuries ago and we have come a long way from such primitive hysteria, right? Actually, no. It just takes on different forms. The same kind of hellish fever echoes in today’s cancel culture – modern witch hunts that get people fired or humiliated for violating the judgmental codes of political correctness.

The Holocaust was massive in scope and horror – more than six million Jews and “undesirables” exterminated by the Nazis. The haunting question lingers: how were millions of Germans – such ordinary people – so swept up in Hitler’s mania to embrace its inhumanity – or condone it with their silence?

I’ll never forget a powerful scene at the conclusion of the 1961 movie classic, *Judgment at Nuremberg* – the story of four senior German judges on trial after the war for crimes against humanity. All are found guilty of atrocities and sentenced to life in prison. Only one (played by Burt Lancaster) shows remorse.

After the trial, he asks to meet with the chief of the military tribunal (Spencer Tracy), whom he has come to respect, and pleads: “You have to understand. We never thought it would come to this.” Tracy says to him with withering insight: “It came to this the first time you sentenced a man to death whom you knew to be innocent.”

That's how it happens. These seasoned judges just rationalized that they "had no choice" as they sent innocents to their death. Evil is that subtle and insidious.

C. S. Lewis, a self-confessed "lapsed atheist," became one of the foremost champions of Christianity in the aftermath of World War Two with insightful books that may or may not have been influenced by reading Swedenborg. He never would say.

*The Great Divorce* is about a bus tour from hell to heaven and a meditation about good and evil, grace and judgment. He writes:

*There are only two types of people in the end: those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those to whom God says, "Thy will be done." All that are in hell, choose it. Without their self-choice there could be no hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. To those who knock it is opened.*

In *The Screwtape Letters* the devil (Screwtape) is mentoring a young novice, Wormwood, in corrupting the soul of an innocent man. Wormwood is discouraged that he is not making enough progress. Screwtape slyly encourages him:

*You will say that these are very small sins; and doubtless, like all you tempters, you are anxious to be able to report spectacular wickedness. But do remember, the only thing that matters is the extent that you separate the man from the Enemy [God]. It does not matter how small the sins are provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing. Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick. Indeed, the safest road to hell is the gradual one – the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.*

Remember the Lord's warning in the Sermon on the Mount about that "safest road":

*Enter ye in at the straight gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction. And many there be that go in thereat.*

*Because straight is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. (Matthew 7:13,14)*

And so we pray:

*"Deliver us from evil."*

(BMH)

## A ROLE OF THE CHURCH?

Should the church – any church – be silent when the influence of hell is raging in the world?

It's a vexing question. In the New Church ministers generally avoid “preaching to active states” – especially when politics and personalities are involved. But what about cultural issues demanding moral clarity? There are sermons in *New Church Life* from both world wars about combatting evil. Several of our ministers spoke out after the 911 terrorism. Where is the line?

Eric Metaxas has written many books on the interface of religion and history – on people like German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who stood up to Hitler – and paid with his life; *Martin Luther, The Man Who Rediscovered God and Changed the World*, and *Amazing Grace – William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery*. He even wrote a book on the role of Divine providence throughout history.

His latest – *Letter to the American Church* – is a desperate plea not to repeat what happened in Germany when Hitler's Naziism was taking hold. The German clergy shrank back from getting involved and speaking out – and became complicit with their silence. Only Bonhoeffer dared to speak – loudly, defiantly, courageously – sounding a warning that was fatally ignored and led to his own assassination.

Metaxas worries that the same fear and hesitancy are infecting the American church, and that we may find ourselves overwhelmed with evil – and too late to halt it. We are not only guaranteed freedom of religion, he says, but “the free exercise thereof.” And we can all identify with his plea that God asks us all to “be the church” – to live our faith, especially when it takes courage to do so.

It is essential to live what we believe, he says, or we don't really believe it. So, if we believe that something is evil but do nothing to oppose it, do we really believe?

This recalls the exiled John on the Isle of Patmos whose eyes were opened to strange visions, and he was commanded to write letters to the seven churches in Asia. Each of these churches represents spiritual qualities and the different ways they saw and responded to God. And each of those letters begins with the words: “I know your works.”

The Lord knows our faith – and whether or not it lives in us. The whole book of *Revelation* is addressed to these churches – actually to the quality of faith within each of us. It calls on us to pay attention to our inner states and how to grow spiritually.

We are asked to heed the warning: *Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the spirit is saying to the churches.*” (*Revelation 2:7*) In the midst of evil



and temptation all around us, this is all about the need for our repentance and regeneration. We know that is the work of a lifetime, and that this is what builds the church within us.

That is the “church” that is called on to act, to take a stand, to be an example – to embody hope. (BMH)

## HEAVEN AND HELL – AND HOPE

We pray “deliver us from evil” because evil is always real and threatening – in our world and in our lives. The hells are all around us – and within us. So, do we really have hope? Yes.

Much of the world seems stuck on literal biblical depictions of eternal fire, brimstone and suffering. This satisfies a longing for justice, but also challenges faith in an all-loving God.

Consequently, some like to hope that hell may be temporary – that spirits there may somehow “graduate” to heaven by amending their ways.

Pope Francis was recently asked what he thinks about hell and said: “It’s a bit difficult to imagine it. What I would say is that it is not a dogma of faith, but my personal thought: I like to think hell is empty. I hope it is.”

That brings to mind a TV pundit who said some years ago: “If Hitler’s in heaven, I’m not going.”

Pope Francis may be surprised to find that hell is home to hordes of evil spirits who have gladly made it their eternal choice – likely including some of the incredibly corrupt and scandalous popes of the Middle Ages.

What we learn from Swedenborg’s *Heaven and Hell*, and other books of the Writings, is that heaven or hell become home to our loves. People in hell are there because that is what they most love; and that love does not change because it is the essence of who they are. We read descriptions in the Writings of some in hell who feel they deserve to be in heaven and are allowed to experience it, but quickly feel suffocated and are desperate to flee “back home.”

Those in hell have not been “sent” there. They are not sentenced to hell as punishment. They freely choose it. Indeed, they love to be there, in hells that range from mild to severe, according to their own choices. It is that foul love on so many levels that so infests our world. But we are also left free to choose our own guiding love – the love of self and the world that leads to hell, or the love of the Lord and the neighbor, which finds its eternal home in heaven.

*Hell is in an evil person and heaven is in a good person. After death everyone comes into that hell or into that heaven with which he has been associated while in the world. (Arcana Coelestia 8918)*

William James, American philosopher and psychologist, who was one of

the leading thinkers of the 19th century, was also the son of Swedenborgian theologian Henry James Sr. William admitted that much of his thinking and writing was influenced by Swedenborg, including this observation:

*The hell to be endured hereafter is no worse than the hell we make for ourselves in this world by habitually fashioning our character in the wrong way.*

With the hells so apparently liberated and pervasive in all aspects of life these days, it's easy to feel overwhelmed and hopeless. But the Lord assures us:

*These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)*

“In Me.” For all those who stand with and in the Lord, and are led by Him in their lives, there is always hope.

These people do not march and demonstrate, spewing hate and shouting demands. They lead quiet lives of love, purpose and example. They are the ones who give us quiet but sure hope.

In the *Arcana* series on *Genesis 18*, in which Abraham asks the Lord if He will spare Sodom for the sake of 50 righteous people – then 45, 40, 30, 20 and 10 – the Lord assures him that He will always save good people.

We all know them. They may be from all different religions – or none. They are just good people, living charitable, meaningful lives. These are the people Swedenborg calls gentiles – those in good without truth.

We are assured that while these people may not be guided by truths from the Word, they can still have remains that are nurtured and protected by the Lord. Together, they give us hope that like Elisha's servant we may come to see that “*they who be with us are more than they who be with them.*” And these “gentiles” can surely be raised up into heaven because of what they love and live. We are taught:

*It is very common for those who have taken up an opinion respecting any truth of faith, to judge of others that they cannot be saved, unless they believe as they do – a judgment which the Lord has forbidden. (Matthew 7:1,2) On the other hand, I have learned from much experience that people of every religion are saved, provided that by a life of charity they have received remains of good and of apparent truth. This is what is meant by its being said that if 10 were found, they should not be destroyed for the 10's sake; by which is signified that they would be saved if there were remains. (Arcana Coelestia 2284)*

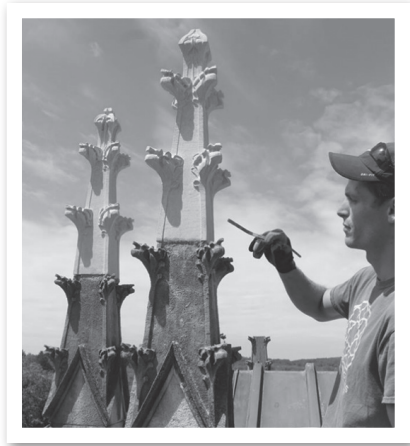
The Lord is ever present, even in the midst of chaos – especially in the midst of chaos. Hope always remains.

(BMH)

## ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

A news note in the July issue *New Church Life* in 1924:

“Visitors to Bryn Athyn will observe the absence of one of the four pinnacles of the tower of the cathedral. It was demolished by a bolt of lightning during a violent thunderstorm which passed over this region at 10:10 p.m. on June 18, and the broken stone fell through the roof of the chancel, doing considerable damage. Two hours earlier, a large congregation was present at the wedding of Mr. Philip C. Pendleton and Miss Doris Glenn, but at the time of the storm were dispersing to their homes after attending the reception at Glenhurst.”



This was an auspicious event on the evening of the start of the Pendletons’ long marriage with their many talented offspring. A piece of the pinnacle can still be seen at the cathedral front desk.

In recent years these beautiful limestone finials have been showing their age and in 2016 master stonemason Jens Langlotz and assistant Grayson Zuber (in photo) began replacing them. The work continues and quite a few have now been carved and put into place, hopefully to last another hundred years.

(JFS)

## THE ONLY QUESTION THAT MATTERS

Anyone of a certain age suffering from cranky knees or an aching back may wonder what poet Robert Browning was smoking when he wrote: “Grow old along with me! The best is yet to be.”

As one friend laments: “I don’t mind getting old. I just didn’t know it was going to hurt!”

It is not just senior citizens who suffer, although few seem to get out of this life without physical challenges.

A chapter on *Suffering: The Crossroads of Faith* in my book *Why Does God Let it Happen?* begins with:

Mothers, philosophers, nurses and theologians all have looked into the eyes of innocent, suffering children with the same anguished question: how could a good and loving God allow this to happen?

It is a question that has haunted theology from Job to the Holocaust – from personal family tragedies to sweeping catastrophes.

It is a theme coursing through the history of art and literature, poetry and drama.

Serious thinkers like Sigmund Freud and C.S. Lewis have probed the mysteries of suffering and come up wanting. Only Emanuel Swedenborg offers real, spiritual answers. They are meaningful because they came to him during years of revelation from God, not from human logic and speculation.

Indeed, Rabbi Harold Kushner, who wrote eloquently on the challenge of reconciling suffering with a loving God in his 1981 bestseller, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, says, “this is the only question that really matters.” Virtually every meaningful conversation he’s ever had with people about religion, he states, revolves around this issue.

He and his wife had a child born with an incurable disease who lived only into his early teens, so the issue became personal and insistent. This wonderful book was the result of his torment and his search.

He rejected the idea that God found him and his wife “special” enough to cope with such a challenge, or that somehow such tragedies are punishment for past sins. That kind of thinking, he said, creates guilt where none belongs and ascribes a quality to God impossibly inconsistent with His Divine nature.

He found no completely satisfying answer but remained confident that it is love only that comes from God – not affliction. And he finds enduring comfort in *Psalms 121*: “I lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help is from the Lord, who made the heavens and the earth.”

But Rabbi Kushner was sent *Why Does God Let it Happen?* by the Swedenborg Foundation and said he finally found the answers he was looking for. He called the book: “The best consideration of God’s role in tragedy that I have ever read.” (He was kind enough to let us use that endorsement on the cover.)

But for all the teachings we have about the Lord's love and providence, that does not easily cut through the reality of piercing pain, feelings of loneliness and uselessness, and the declining abilities that often come in the last stages of life.

There is comfort now in a charming little book by Frank Cunningham: *Vesper Time – The Spiritual Practice of Growing Older*. This is a man who has come to terms with the challenges of aging and coping– and how it is all best reconciled with a spiritual perspective.

He admits to a skeptical faith – still wondering and a bit nervous about what it all means. But he accepts the limitations of aging and copes best by staying positive and feeling “blessed and thankful to God.”

He quotes a friend: “I do not and will not define myself by my illnesses. I am not a cancer victim or survivor. I am a child of God and take that as my identity. I look to see what's ahead, not what's over.”

Cunningham says aging is best seen and experienced as a spiritual experience – a time for reflection and gratitude, even in the midst of pain, failing eyesight, loss of hearing, and fleeting memory. He divides his book into five meaningful sections:

- Memory – all the things that have shaped us
- Intimacy – with God: experiencing God in love and nature
- Diminishment – the challenge of becoming invisible, “useless”
- Gratitude – every day for the love in our life
- Acceptance – of your story, your life, your choices

So, how do we answer, “the only question that matters”? How do we reconcile a loving, all-powerful God with all the suffering and unfairness in the world? We know that the Lord does not cause affliction. That is not His will. He never stops loving us or trying to raise us up into heaven, where we will forever be delivered from pain and illness, suffering and evil. That may not ease the torment of the moment but forever gives us hope.

We owe Robert Browning some perspective too for his apparently glib: “Grow old along with me! The best is yet to be.” This is actually the opening of a 32-stanza poem, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, which begins:

*Grow old along with me!  
The best is yet to be.  
The last of life, for which the first was made:  
Our times are in His hand  
Who saith, “A whole I planned,  
Youth shows but half; trust God! see all, nor be afraid!”*

And then the last stanza:

*So, take and use Thy work:*

*Amend what flaws may lurk,*

*What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!*

*My times be in Thy hand!*

*Perfect the cup as planned!*

*Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!*

(BMH)

# Church News

*Compiled by Bruce Henderson*

## **BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT AND AWARDS**

At the 147th Commencement of Bryn Athyn College of the New Church, 53 students were awarded degrees:

- Five Associate of Arts
- Thirty-two Bachelor of Arts (10 *cum laude*)
- Fifteen Bachelor of Science (six *cum laude*)
- One Master of Arts in Religious Studies

All of the graduates were from the United States, plus one from Canada, and represented seven states: Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, Oregon and Pennsylvania.

**Curtis Childs**, a 2006 Associate of Arts recipient, and host and creator of the globally acclaimed *offTheLeftEye* YouTube videos, was the commencement speaker. He offered an engaging message about: *Success in Life – How-to Videos for Graduates*. (See page 248)

See photos from the commencement on page 301.

### **Graduates and Awards**

#### **Bachelor of Arts** (\* indicates *cum laude*)

**James Allen\***, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Alyssa Asplundh**, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Aronel Brennan**, Horsham, PA

**Michael Carmody**, Voorhees, NJ

**Ivy Clark**, Huntingdon Valley, PA

**Anais Connelly\***, Huntingdon

Valley, PA

**Matthew Contreras**, Poolesville, MD

**Karl Cranch\***, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Marco Cruz**, Holland, PA

**Evelyn de Chazal\***, Rochester, MI

**Teagan Dewees\***, Huntingdon

Valley, PA

**Kaylia Duncan**, Reading, PA

**James Dyson\***, Frederick, MD

**Anthony Falgiatore Jr.**, Atglen, PA

**Blake Halterman\***, Bryn Athyn, PA  
**Joram Heinrichs**, Kitchener, ONT  
**Kearah Henry**, Philadelphia, PA  
**Ciara Kiely\***, Philadelphia, PA  
**David-John May**, Edgewater Park, NJ  
**Mia Micciche\***, Philadelphia, PA  
**Faye Moretti**, Jenkintown, PA  
**Adrian Norris**, Hagerstown, MD  
**Joseph Nugent**, Philadelphia, PA

**Alana O’Grady**, Glenside, PA  
**Joseph O’Neill**, Bensalem, PA  
**Willow Orthwein\***, Bryn Athyn, PA  
**Michael Perkett**, Pittsfield, MA  
**Sabrina Quinn**, Philadelphia, PA  
**Timothy Ragan**, Philadelphia, PA  
**Privish Sadaqat**, Philadelphia, PA  
**Reid Schroeder**, Urbandale, IA  
**Jeremy Yoak**, Philadelphia, PA

**Bachelor of Science** (\* indicates *cum laude*)

**Danielle Andreini\***,  
Levittown, PA  
**Emily Bell**, Willow Grove, PA  
**Amber Dawes**, Philadelphia, PA  
**Jade Deibert\***, Huntingdon  
Valley, PA  
**Ava Fino**, Harding, PA  
**Alexander Hancin**,  
Langhorne, PA  
**Trenton Hiatt\***, Adrian, OR

**Emily Hoff\***, Huntingdon  
Valley, PA  
**Kaitlyn Houck\***, Bensalem, PA  
**Gianna Juiliano**, Philadelphia, PA  
**Katelyn Osterhoudt\***,  
Langhorne, PA  
**Allyson Paul**, Jenkintown, PA  
**Kiyann Peterson**, Ewing, NJ  
**Kayla Poll**, Bensalem, PA  
**Jenna Sasso**, Erie, PA

Valedictorians were **Katelyn Osterhoudt** and **Teagan Dewees**  
**Scholarships and Awards**

Faculty Award

**Evelyn de Chazal**

**Jade Deibert**

**Teagan Dewees**

Gerald Hurst Outstanding Business Graduate Award

**Ciara Kiely**

Religion and Philosophy Department Award

**Evelyn de Chazal**



Arts Department Award

**Evelyn de Chazal**

Biology Award

**Ava Fino**

**Trenton Hiatt**

### **Athletic Awards**

Academic Student Athletes of the Year

**Teagan Dewees** (male)

**Ace Ewers** (female)

Female Student Athletes of the Year

**Kyra Bradley** (soccer, lacrosse)

**Shea Gormley** (soccer, lacrosse)

Male Student Athlete of the Year

**Jamal White** (lacrosse)

## **ACADEMY SECONDARY SCHOOLS GRADUATION AND AWARDS**

At the 147th commencement for the Academy Secondary Schools on June 8, 2024, 59 seniors graduated. These included 27 girls (12 with honors) and 32 boys (12 with honors). In addition to the United States, they hailed from four other countries: China, Cuba, Nigeria and Germany, plus seven states: Delaware, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania.

The commencement speaker was **Doug Reuter**, Vice Principal of the Boys School, who has served for 25 years teaching English, Senior Class advisor and head baseball coach. He quoted simple advice his father had given him at age 16, which turned out to have a positive effect in all areas of his life. (See page 261.)

See graduation photos on page 304.

### **Graduates and Awards**

#### **The Girls School** (\* Indicates With Honors)

**Alfreda Barger\***, Collingdale, PA

**Grace Childs\***, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Maggie Dooley**, Philadelphia, PA

**Brianna Farrington**, Philadelphia, PA

**Arianna Frank**, Levittown, PA

**Bethany Genzlinger**, Bryn Athyn, PA

**Teagan Henderson\***, Huntingdon Valley, PA  
**Ariela Hernandez**, Riverdale, MD  
**Jacinda Hogan**, Bryn Athyn, PA  
**Sophie Hyatt\***, Mitchellville, MD  
**Grace Leavesley**, Philadelphia, PA  
**Tyler Ludwig**, Des Plaines, IL  
**Ariel Martz\***, Huntingdon Valley, PA  
**Star McMackin**, Bryn Athyn, PA  
**Bre Molock**, Abington, PA  
**Téa Richards**, Norristown, PA  
**Julia Rubin**, Glenside, PA

**Kathleen Scanlon\***, Philadelphia, PA  
**Scarlet Smith\***, Bryn Athyn, PA  
**Aurelia Sullivan\***, Huntingdon Valley, PA  
**Zarah Synnestvedt\***, Bryn Athyn, PA  
**Sky Taulane**, Cheltenham, PA  
**Mina Tomlinson**, Stuttgart, Germany  
**Gretchen Varona**, Camaguey, Cuba  
**Xola Wade**, Huntingdon Valley, PA  
**Hilani Wahl\***, Philadelphia, PA  
**Irene Zhu**, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China

The valedictorian was **Aurelia Sullivan**

**The Boys School** (\* Indicates With Honors)

**Faruq Ajibade**, Saki, Nigeria  
**Conner Aquino**, Easton, PA  
**Hunter Aquino\***, Easton, PA  
**Ethan Bongers**, Huntingdon Valley, PA  
**Cole Brown\***, Simsbury, CT  
**Markus Bryntesson**, Bryn Athyn, PA  
**Brady Carver**, Easton, PA  
**Anthony Chiango\***, Washington, NJ  
**Lucas Dewees\***, Bryn Athyn, PA  
**Jamie Evans**, Bryn Athyn, PA  
**Ryan Friesen\***, Huntingdon Valley, PA  
**Benjamin Jackson**, Bryn Athyn, PA  
**Alex Kapustin\***, Warminster, PA  
**Sean Kelly**, Hatboro, PA  
**Skyler Knipprath**, Bryn Athyn, PA  
**Corbin Larsen\***, Bryn Athyn, PA  
**Bahsil Laster**, Philadelphia, PA

**Gareth Mergen\***, Southampton, PA  
**Solomon Nobre\***, Huntingdon Valley, PA  
**Ogonna Obayi**, Jamaica, Queens, NY  
**Colin Pallanta\***, Philadelphia, PA  
**Logan Peppelman**, Bryn Athyn, PA  
**Owen Reuter**, Bryn Athyn, PA  
**Matteo, Rottura\***, Wilmington, DE  
**Carter Sabato**, Abington, PA  
**Grant Swierczynski\***, Hunt. Valley, PA  
**Christian Szalwinski**, Hunt. Valley, PA  
**Dewey Tracey**, Abington, PA  
**Chase Villante**, Philadelphia, PA  
**Nolan Waldon**, Philadelphia, PA  
**Jaiden Walsh**, Warminster, PA  
**Dink Wynder**, Penllyn, PA

The valedictorian was **Alex Kapustin**

**Academic and Athletic Awards**

Honorary Girls School Diplomas

**Jahna L. Henderson**

**Yi Pan**

**Christine T. Callope-Wahl**

Honorary Boys School Diplomas

**Joseph Aquino**

**Troy Anusky**

Theta Alpha Award

**Zarah Synnestvedt** (Gold)

Boys School faculty Awards

**Cole Brown** (Silver)

**Corbin Larsen** (Gold)

**Gareth Mergen** (Gold)

Senior Science Awards

**Kathleen Scanlon**

**Colin Pallanta**

Emilie K. Asplundh Performing Arts Awards

**Padraic Frazier**

**Kent Fuller**

Faculty Commendations

Girls School: **Maggie Dooley, Teagan Henderson, Sophie Hyatt, Ariel Martz,**

**Zarah Synnestvedt, Hilani Wahl**

Boys School: **Conner Aquino, Cole Brown, Anthony Chiango, Ryan Friesen,**

**Corbin Larsen, Solomon Nobre, Colin Pallanta, Logan Peppelman**

Delta Mu Community Service Awards

200+ Hours: **Cole Brown, Rona McMackin**

100+ hours: **Ryan Friesen, Teagan Henderson, Tyler Ludwig, Zarah Synnestvedt, Hilani Wahl**

75+ Hours: **Lucas Dewees, Solomon Nobre**

### **Major Athletic Awards**

#### **Girls School**

Elaine S. Asplundh Award

#### **Zarah Synnestvedt**

Marah P. Boyesen Award

#### **Ellery Johns**

#### **Boys School**

Stanley F. Ebert Award

#### **Aharon Bloshuk**

Payson Lyman Award

#### **Coleman Boyesen**

### **ACADEMY BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

*Highlights of the meetings of May10-11, 2024*

#### **Chancellor**

*The Rt. Rev. Peter. Buss Jr.*

As a part of work on a potential gift for the Academy Secondary Schools, the Chancellor prepared a document, "Statement of Mission Commitment." A Gift Acceptance Committee was formed to evaluate the terms of the gift. It will review the Statement to ensure clarity on its purpose and scope. The Secondary Schools Leadership Review Committee completed its work and recommended retaining the Managing Director and two Principals model.

#### **Vice Chair**

*Charles Lindsay*

Bryn Athyn College and the Secondary Schools have long-standing structural deficits. Herculean work by each reduced projected deficits for FY 25 but did not resolve the reason for recurring deficits. Long-term solutions must be found through strategic plans that reorganize each institution and ensure mission integrity and financial sustainability. Trustees must play a more active role in fund raising.

## **Bryn Athyn College**

The late release by the Department of Education financial aid form greatly delayed the admissions process.

The College Alumni Association has been reinvigorated. A Founders Giving Society has been formed, honoring **John Pitcairn**, for donors giving the College at least \$500. It has 115 members.

**The Rev. Scott Frazier** is to be the new Dean of the Theological School.

The College received a large donation which allowed it to meet the budget parameters set by the Board.

## **Academy Secondary Schools**

Budgetary constraints for FY 25 compelled significant and painful cuts in staffing and programs. Further progress toward a balanced budget in FY 26 will require structural changes. The Academy still believes it is delivering a strong and unique educational experience. A generous gift will result in the Secondary Schools having a balanced budget for this year.

## **Glencairn Museum**

During the strategic planning period of 2019-2024 Glencairn completed more than 250 strategic initiatives. Despite two sustained closures over the past four years (for Covid 19 and renovations), the Museum remained active and engaged with virtual tours, programs and lectures, member trips, loans and loan exhibitions, and work on reinstallations of galleries. With its reopening, loans have been returned, there are incoming loans and work on reinstallation of galleries.

The Museum is preparing a new strategic plan. The process includes a review of its core documents. The Museum continues to provide a variety of services to the Secondary Schools and Bryn Athyn Church School.

## **Treasurer's Report**

The Academy paid off its line-of-credit balance. The new Bryn Athyn Thrift Shop building on the North Campus is progressing.

## **Finance Committee**

Based on FY 24 third quarter to Actual, all institutions are on budget for the year. Proposed budgets for FY 25 for each institution/sector were approved.

In coming months, the College will provide the Board with planned changes should it fall short on enrollment or fundraising goals.

### **Elections**

Trustee **David Fuller** was elected to the Glencairn Museum Board Committee. **Lynn Genzlinger** and **Drew Nehlig** were re-elected to three-year terms on the Cairnwood Board of Governors. **Brent McCurdy, Emily Hasen, Brian Klippenstein, Laura Hill, Brian Henderson, Andrew Davis** and **James Uber** were elected to the Secondary Schools Board Committee.

### **Farewells**

Heartfelt farewells and appreciation were extended to Girls School Principal **Kira Schadegg; James Adams**, as Interim Facilities and Development Director; and outgoing trustees **Susan Asplundh, Colin Cole, Hosanna Odhner** and **Isaac Smith**.

## **GENERAL CHURCH BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

*Highlights from April 2024 Board Meetings*

### **President's Report**

*Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.*

The top five strategic priorities for the General Church were highlighted, in terms of budget allocations for FY25 proposed budgets (totaling approximately \$651,000).

Leadership structures and sustainability models are being studied for Bryn Athyn College and the Academy Secondary Schools.

Preparations for the General Assembly were going well, with more than 950 people registered.

Outgoing Board members thanked for their years of service were **Ned Uber, Wade Buick** and **Stephanie Klippenstein**.

### **Vice Presidents' Reports**

**Rt. Revs. Peter Buss** and **Brad Heinrichs** are restructuring pastoral placements in South Africa to better serve worship needs given limited resources, both financial and human.

**Rt. Rev. David Lindrooth** continues to work on the development review process for the clergy.

### **FY 25 Budget Overview**

*David Frazier*

The General Church is projecting a small surplus in the operating budget. Revenue is up 3% to approximately \$6.7 million, driven by an expected increase in contributions and a modest increase in investment income.

Expenses are also up about 3% to \$6.7 million, due to inflation, plus \$651 allocated to strategic initiatives.

The Capital Budget of \$225,000 includes a small amount for building repairs and conversion of a business course taught to Theological School students to an online study version and made available to current ministers and others.

For the non-operating budget net assets are expected to increase by about \$2.1 million supporting various projects from approximately 120 funds.

### **Global Healthy Congregations Committee**

*The Rt. Rev. David Lindrooth and Jane Enis*

Bishop Lindrooth reported that we are making significant progress in establishing robust systems and processes for reliable financial reporting in West Africa, working closely with licensed accountants and reputable audit firms.

Kansas City, Missouri, will have the first new resident pastor – the **Rev. Calvin Heinrichs** – in the United States since 2010.

Jane reported that we are working with the Boulder, Colorado, and Tucson, Arizona, congregations on pilot renewal projects.

### **Communications**

**Marijke Bau-Madsen** provided updates on communications strategy items, including an active search to fill the Digital Marketing Specialist role plus plans to create a survey system for membership experiences with communications.

### **Theological Resources**

*Rev. Dr. Andrew Dibb*

As part of the project he leads on Recruiting and Developing Priests, he reported on the FY 25 objective to provide more professional development for ministers after ordination.

One third of our active ministry will be eligible for retirement within the

next 10 years, highlighting the need for attracting more men into the ministry.

### **General Church Education**

*Charlotte Gyllenhaal, Greg Henderson and Rachel Glenn*

The GCED team updated the Board on book titles available from the new Vineyard website (<https://newchurchvineyard.org/>), and Rachel shared some of the positive responses to the most recent Family Gift Mailing, which were posted on Facebook. She also gave a progress report on the upcoming *Children's New Testament*, which will be available at the Assembly along with other GCED publications.

Greg presented a plan to grow and develop the next generation of teachers in response to the strategic objective of promoting New Church education as a career and increasing knowledge of New Church education.

He emphasized the budgets available to support all aspects of professional development for eight General Church schools, including offering programs and organizing and tracking credits.

Eight of ten New Church e-Learning courses have been created and posted to the Employee University/Learning Management System.

Greg offered an overview of the types of collaboration between General Church educators, including teacher meetings and reviews, curriculum and leadership team meetings.

### **General Church Outreach**

*The Rev. Pearse Frazier*

There is an increased focus on developing relationships with new people – an important step – and gathering contact information for populating small groups, both online and in person.

Funds have been increased in the Outreach budget to support up to 10 congregations in digital advertisements targeting their immediate areas.

Various tools used to promote growth include NewChurch.org, video content creation, NCAudio.org, festival groups (such as Christmas and Easter), and societal marketing efforts.

### **Human Resources**

*Karen Stoeller*

Plans to ramp up recruiting efforts will be managed by Human Resources, with aims to attract and retain quality New Church ministers and teachers.

Various methods of training and education for these careers include:



- Bryn Athyn College Education degree
- General Church Teacher Certification Program for non-BAC Education graduates
- Bryn Athyn College/Theological School Master of Divinity Degree, including full-time in-person resident classroom program, online full-time remote hybrid program, and part-time remote certificate stepped program

### **Advancement**

Total contributions through March 24 are \$1.2 million, up 2% over prior year. The total number of donors is 680, down slightly. Total number of gifts received was, 1,684, a modest improvement. The Annual Fund was off the target of \$571,000 and planned gifts were better than expected at \$153,000.

### **Board and Committee Structure Review Task Force**

*Jamie Uber*, chair, reported these recommendations for Board consideration:

- Clarify name, role and scope of Theological Resources Committee
- Combine Translation and Theological Resources
- Closer committee alignment by having directors serve on closely related committees
- Reduce frequency of review to four years
- Board size remain at 30

### **MIDWEST REGIONAL YOUTH RETREAT (May 3-5, 2024)**

*Naomi Reid*

Twenty-nine teens and ten adults (ministers and chaperons/drivers) from six locations in the United States and Canada attended the 2024 Spring Youth Weekend, held at the Somerset Beach Campground in Michigan.

The weekend was organized by the team from the Glenview Church Society, led by the **Rev. Elmo Acton**, with chaperones/drivers/cooks (**Phil Parker** and **Brannon Smith**) and five teens from Glenview, Illinois; the **Rev. Jared Buss** and **Burgundy Smith** (chaperone) and eight teens from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; the **Rev. Alan Cowley** with seven teens from Oak Arbor, Michigan; the **Rev. Mark Allais** and **Emma Allais** (chaperone) with five teens from Kitchener, Ontario; **John Reid** (driver) and **Naomi Reid** (chaperone and craft teacher) with three teens from Toronto and one from Buffalo, New York.

Everyone stayed in the Applewood Lodge, with a beautiful lake view,

separate sleeping quarters for men and women, and a large communal worship/dining/visiting area and a central kitchen. The accommodations were so nice that when I described it to my daughter, she referred to our experience as “glamping” (glamour camping). Everyone liked it enough to want to return.

After everyone got settled, we enjoyed pizza and salad for dinner. A huge thank you to Phil Parker and Brannon Smith for food preparation and meals. After dinner, we walked to the field house for ice breakers, including a “Pictionary relay race” and volleyball. Then we headed to the campfire area where we were introduced to the spiritual focus for the weekend, sang songs (led by the Rev. Alan Cowley) and held a worship service by starlight.

While sitting around the campfire, the Rev. Elmo Acton introduced the spiritual focus for the weekend: Unique New Church doctrinal concepts. He said that because the Lord gave the Writings (through Emanuel Swedenborg), we are given a deeper perspective of what angels understand when they read the Lord’s Word in heaven.

Once involved in the New Church, we have the opportunity to share ideas of what is good and true (from the Lord’s perspective) with others. We are then expected to live the ideas we have learned and share them humbly with others.

Some teens asked if they could go for an early morning swim in the lake. Fortunately, there were chaperones willing to get up early to help supervise this fun (cold) activity.

Before retiring for the night, Rev. Acton gave the option of going straight to bed or gathering around the fireplace while he read a “twilight zone” bedtime story, *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*, by Ambrose Bierce. The story related to the spiritual focus of the weekend because it dealt with life after death and how sometimes when people die, they might not realize it right away and continue to act as they would on earth.

On Saturday morning as part of his “Visible God” morning worship, Rev. Cowley told a dramatic story about how he (as a newly hired semi-trailer truck driver) had to learn to trust other truck drivers while driving through thick fog in the mountains with only a short guard rail to keep the convoy from driving over the edge. Everyone had to trust the person in front and also that the convoy leader was responsible and careful. He reminded us that we need to handle our role within the New Church carefully and responsibly while understanding that our actions are important and can have a positive or negative impact on others.

After morning worship, the Rev. Jared Buss talked about the “As of Self” principal from the Writings. The focus was to help us understand the difference between what we can do to help our lives and what the Lord can do to help us, and that we can’t just expect the Lord to do everything for us.

Before lunch, the Rev. Elmo Acton’s doctrinal presentation started with

the meaning of “*Nunc Licet*” – “now it is permitted to understand” the stories from the Word and how they contain spiritual concepts that apply directly to our spiritual growth. He gave many examples of concepts we can understand in a new light and how they differ from the doctrines or beliefs of other faiths.

One example is how the red dragon of the New Testament symbolizes allowing false ideas to lead us to commit evil (selfish) actions. If we understand the symbolism of the red dragon and that this happens when we allow ourselves to believe false ideas (or even twist a truth to support a false belief) to convince ourselves it is true, then act on this false idea to do something selfish, then we can see how dangerous a red dragon is to us spiritually.

The teens then could go canoeing, kayaking, paddle boating, zip lining or hiking. – with chaperones. Then they could make lovely bracelets for their moms (or teachers). Before the camp, John Reid designed and 3D printed multi-colored gift boxes for the bracelets.

After dinner, we went back to the field house for volleyball, dodge ball and board games, then finished with a vespers service and singing. On Sunday morning, we had breakfast, an early church service, packed our belongings and sandwiches for the road as everyone said goodbye and headed home.

Some personal reflections:

- It is an incredible opportunity and an honor to serve the New Church by helping with these regional youth weekends.
- Mothers and fathers are so important in the formation and stability of a young person’s life. The impact and importance of parents should never be underestimated.
- Anyone who has come to appreciate the unique ideas that are foundational to the New Church is fortunate and many have not yet had this opportunity. There is unlimited opportunity for this church to grow and thrive, including through these youth weekends.
- Given the tools to understand how the Bible can apply directly to our spiritual growth is a gift worth learning and sharing. How many people would appreciate these ideas if they found them as adults? I have observed that sometimes people who come into the church as adults sincerely value these ideas because they know what it is like to have lived without them.
- It was wonderful to hear the young people singing in the lodge and around the campfire. Thank you to Alan Cowley for sharing his musical talent and leading the singing that added so much to everyone’s experience.
- The teens who attend these weekends have gained valuable ideas and positive experiences that will be with them for life.

I was left feeling grateful for all the positive discussions and interactions with others and for the many ideas that the ministers shared with the young people and adults. Thank you to General Church in Canada for your continued support of this important use.



Support New Church Audio by subscribing to the Sermon of the Week podcast, available on many platforms where you can share episodes: [sermonoftheweek.libsyn.com](http://sermonoftheweek.libsyn.com).



Listen to current and historical recordings:  
[www.newchurchaudio.org](http://www.newchurchaudio.org)

We offer over 20,000 recordings going back to 1927. Search by book of the Word, speaker, location, date range, topic, etc. Pro tip: browse the Group field to find recordings that are grouped together, such as Doctrine of Life classes, Heaven and Hell classes, Swedenborg Scientific Association talks, Mental Health Symposiums, The Threefold Word classes, and more. Use the keyword search field to look for names that are not listed in the speaker list.

*Recordings are added to the website thanks to volunteers and donations.*

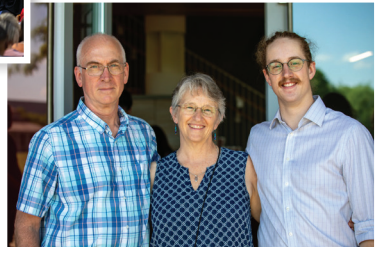
PO Box 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009  
267-502-4981

Email: [newchurchaudio@newchurch.org](mailto:newchurchaudio@newchurch.org)

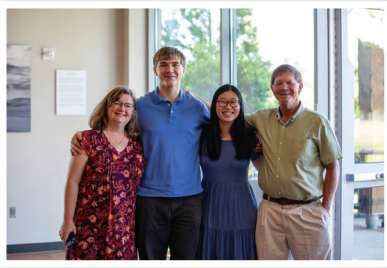
# BRYN ATHYN COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT



Valedictorians Katelyn Osterhoudt and Tegan Dewees



Niles and Nina Dewees with son, Tegan, who graduates cum laude, was a valedictorian and received a Faculty Award.



Brad and Andrea Cranch, with graduates Karl Cranch and Jade Deibert. One week later they became Mr. and Mrs. Karl Cranch.



The graduates



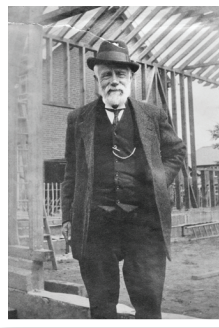
The procession



## THE COLCHESTER CHURCH 100 YEARS AGO



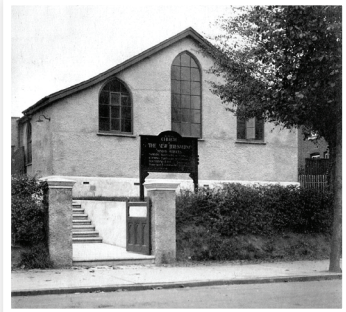
The Cornerstone with its Hebrew inscription:  
The Stone which the builders rejected  
Has become the head of the corner



Arthur Henry Appleton standing in the  
church under construction



May 1924 – The Cornerstone  
(foreground) ready to be laid



An early photograph of the church



The interior of the church at the time  
of the Service of Dedication  
(August 17, 1924)

# 100 YEARS LATER: THE CENTENARY CELEBRATION



The congregation



The banquet hall, ready for the party



The church as it looks today



The cake



The chancel and the Word



# ACADEMY SECONDARY SCHOOLS COMMENCEMENT



Senior Procession



Commencement speaker Doug Reuter



The Class of 2024 Banner



The Senior Song



Happy graduates: Gretchen Varona and Logan Peppelman



Valedictorians: Aurelia Sullivan and Alex Kapustin





# Announcements

## BAPTISMS

*Let the little children come unto Me, and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it. (Mark 10:13-15)*

### **Adobu, Marvis Kofi**

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, March 31, 2024, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

### **Afimie, Azibaibhugomum Janel**

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, March 31, 2024 (born November 11, 2023), daughter of Giamaniba and Jennifer Afimie, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

### **Bailey, Peggy Mary**

At Phoenix, Arizona, June 9, 2024, Rev. Jean A. Atta officiating.

### **Bari-Nua, Meekness Pere-Ebi**

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, March 31, 2024 (born May 14, 2019), son of Promise Bari-Nua and Glory Embeleakpo Benson, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

### **Bebelagha, Amarachi Divine**

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, March 31, 2024, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

### **Danilyuk, Milliana Mae**

At Rochester, Michigan, May 26, 2024 (born August 18, 2023), daughter of Viktor and Ivana Gavran Danilyuk, Rev. Alan M. Cowley officiating.

### **Don, Flora Desiree Marie**

At Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, April 8, 2023, Rev. Patrick Loba officiating. Delayed report.

### **Dunoboh, Gift Wapemie**

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, March 31, 2024, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

### **Eads, Finnian Asher**

At Kempton, Pennsylvania, May 12, 2024 (born April 8, 2024), son of Jared and Natalie Buick Eads, Rev. Calvin B. Heinrichs officiating.

**Ebikibina, Ebimoboere Treasure**

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, March 31, 2024 (born December 16, 2012) daughter of Okoriye Ebikibina and Ekiokpotongha Enetimi, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

**Force-Ere, Ebifemowei Goodluck**

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, March 31, 2024, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

**Friday, Joy Wisdom**

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, March 31, 2024, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

**Gode, Marian Jacqueline**

At Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, April 8, 2023, Rev. Patrick Loba officiating. Delayed report.

**Gueou, Annick**

At Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, April 20, 2024, Rev. Patrick Loba officiating.

**Hartman, Alex Eugene**

At Maysville, Missouri, April 13, 2024, Rev. Brett D. Buick officiating.

**Heinrichs, Theodore Schuyler**

At Kempton, Pennsylvania, May 25, 2024 (born April 1, 2024), son of Schuyler and Sarah LaCroix Heinrichs, Rev. Brett D. Buick officiating.

**Jones, Lilly Ivy**

At Rochester, Michigan, May 11, 2024 (born March 7, 2024), daughter of Richard (Chris) and Gleice Oliveira Jones, Rev. Alan M. Cowley officiating.

**Kouadio, Marceline Kra**

At Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, April 20, 2024, Rev. Patrick Loba officiating.

**Kouame, Clarisse Aya**

At Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, April 20, 2024, Rev. Patrick Loba officiating.

**Kouame, Sarah Affoue**

At Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, April 20, 2024, Rev. Patrick Loba officiating.

**Pere-Ebi, Angella Onitsha**

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, March 31, 2024, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

**Pere-Ebi, Mitchell Tarilayefa**

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, March 31, 2024, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

**Pere-Ebi, Stephen Onitsha**

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, March 31, 2024, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

**Peter, Diepreye Daniel**

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, March 31, 2024, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

**Peter, Joshua Ebitimi**

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, March 31, 2024, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

**Robert, Dominion Enetimi**

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, March 31, 2024, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

**Robert, Greatness Enetimi**

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, March 31, 2024, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

**Robert, Mourice Enetimi**

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, March 31, 2024, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

**Robert, Praise Enetimi Ebiakubowei**

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, March 31, 2024, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

**Sangere, Axelle Ashley Mawa**

At Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, April 20, 2024, Rev. Patrick Loba officiating.

**Schorran, Zuko Heinrichs**

At Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, May 5, 2024 (born April 30, 2024), son of Justin and Denali Heinrichs Schorran, Rt. Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs officiating.

**Sikpi, Helen Tariere**

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, March 31, 2024, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

**Stanley, Amakiri Praise-God**

At Yenagoa, Bayelsa, Nigeria, March 31, 2024, Rev. Kuroakegha Ebute-Metta officiating.

**Temon, Sabine Die Neka**

At Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, April 20, 2024, Rev. Patrick Loba officiating.

**Troxell, Erin Elizabeth**

At Kempton, Pennsylvania, May 29, 2024, Rev. Lawson M. Smith officiating.

**Vanie Bi, Bernard Zah**

At Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, April 8, 2024, Rev. Patrick Loba officiating.

**Vanie Lou, Sandrin Nan**

At Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, April 8, 2024, Rev. Patrick Loba officiating.

## CONFIRMATIONS

*If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. (John 15:7,8)*

**Judson, Theodore Cruz**

At Kempton, Pennsylvania, June 2, 2024, Rev. Brett D. Buick officiating.

**Schorran, Garrett Vaughn**

At Kempton, Pennsylvania, May 29, 2024, Rev. Lawson Smith officiating.

## BETROTHALS

*Thus says the Lord, "I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothal, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness to the Lord, the first fruits of His increase. (Jeremiah 2:2,3)*

**Hartman-Klippenstein, Alex  
Eugene Hartman and Hannah  
Danielle Klippenstein**

At Maysville, Missouri, April 13, 2024, Rev. Brett D. Buick officiating.

**Wyncoll-Brock, Seth John Wyncoll  
and Alair Shanon Brock**

At Kempton, Pennsylvania,  
November 25, 2023, Rev. Malcolm  
G. Smith officiating.

**Schorran-Troxell, Garrett Vaughn  
Schorran and Erin Elizabeth Troxell**

At Kempton, Pennsylvania, May 29, 2024, Rev. Lawson M. Smith officiating.

## MARRIAGES

*Love truly conjugal is from the Lord alone, and exists with those who are in the conjunction of good and truth from the Lord. When two minds are conjoined as to be one mind, there is love between them. (Apocalypse Explained 983)*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Asplundh-Smith, Carl Hjalmar  
Asplundh IV and Savanna  
Marie Smith**

At New Hope, Pennsylvania, June 7,  
2024, Rev. Brett D. Buick officiating.

**Cranch-Deibert, Karl Edward  
Cranch and Jade Xinmin Deibert**

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania,  
June 1, 2024, Rev. Scott I. Frazier  
officiating.

**Odhner-McLaughlin, Brand  
Erikson Jr. and Kayla Ann  
McLaughlin**

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, April  
13, 2024, Rev. Derek P. Elphick  
officiating.

**Wyncoll-Brock, Seth John Wyncoll  
and Alair Shanon Brock**

At Kempton, Pennsylvania, April  
27, 2024, Rev. Malcolm G. Smith  
officiating.

IN MEMORIAM

*Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My  
Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go  
to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come  
again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*

*(John 14:1-3)*

**Blair, Robert Homer**

February 27, 2024, of Valencia,  
Pennsylvania. 98

**Shields, Grace Augusta Hotson**

April 17, 2024, of Dayton,  
Washington. 97

**Bochneak, Greta Echols**

May 20, 2024, of Bryn Athyn,  
Pennsylvania. 88

**Smith, Audrey Merrell**

April 26, 2024, of Bryn Athyn,  
Pennsylvania. 95

**Davis, Russell Glendon III**

March 1, 2024, of Trevoise,  
Pennsylvania. 73

**Smith, June Marie**

April 10, 2024, of Lansdale,  
Pennsylvania. 92

**Rotella, Marcy Mitchell**

April 2, 2024, of Carlisle,  
Pennsylvania. 49

# New Church Life

Published bimonthly by  
the General Church of the New Jerusalem  
Box 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009 U.S.A.  
[www.newchurch.org](http://www.newchurch.org) | [www.newchurchlife.org](http://www.newchurchlife.org)  
**July/August 2024**