

THETA ALPHA JOURNAL



NOVEMBER 2025

Table of Contents

President's Message	3
<i>Janet Krettek</i>	
Editorial	5
<i>Kris Heinrichs Earle</i>	
A Poem That Wrote Itself at the End of a Walk One Day in Lorimer	8
<i>Helen Kennedy</i>	
Interview with Helen Kennedy	9
What Is Higher New Church Education?	13
<i>Scott Frazier</i>	
A Rising Queen	16
<i>Elwyn Heinrichs</i>	
A Loving Community – or – I Love My Life	18
<i>Nina Cooper Dewees</i>	
Transition	29
<i>Jenn Beiswenger</i>	
Making It Rain	35
<i>Chelsea Rose Odhner</i>	
Those Gone to Winter	43
<i>Janna King</i>	
Remembering Rick	44
<i>Chris Simons</i>	
Looking Back: Some Memories of Growing Up on the Old Academy Farm	53
<i>Vera P. Glenn</i>	
A Stirring	59
<i>Helen Kennedy</i>	
Washington Society Theta Alpha Guild (TAG)	62
Laws of Life Contest	63
Scholarships Available	64
Websites and Blogs of Readers	66
Theta Alpha Executive Board	67

Theta Alpha

“Daughters of the Academy”



Named From the Greek:

Θυγατέρες Ακαδημίας

Thugateres Akadémias

Founded in 1904 by graduates of the Academy of the New Church, Theta Alpha exists to provide a forum for women for the advancement and support of New Church education in its many forms, and to support each other in our personal spiritual growth. Membership is open to interested women aged eighteen and older.

Non Nobis Solum ~ Not for Ourselves Alone

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Membership Dues

Please remember that your membership dues support all of Theta Alpha International's programs, including this *Journal*! Membership is open to interested women aged eighteen and older.

Dues are \$25 (US)

You can join any time!

If you are renewing, dues are "due" by July 1st each year.

For new and renewing members, please remit payment to:

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This is a tear-out page to mail in with your dues; just fill in the information on the back and send in with your dues to the following address:

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P.O. Box 154
Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

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I want to be a member of the Theta Alpha International!

☐ I am renewing my membership

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Please fill out this page and enclose a \$25 US check for the annual dues made out to Theta Alpha International and mail to:

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P.O. Box 154
Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

Member Information:

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

☐ I have enclosed \$25 dues for the 2025-2026 year

☐ I am also including an additional donation of \$ _____
to support Theta Alpha International

(\$15 donations are equivalent to paying the \$25 annual dues)

President's Message

Janet Krettek

The scent of Fall is in the air. The time of harvest and sweaters, warm drinks, and appreciation of the summer's chores of planting, weeding, and watering the gardens. Now we gather and store before we sit before the fire to reflect on the year. We will ponder our triumphs and missteps, analyze what to change going forward before we start planning for the next year. But I missed a step, the addition of input from a sister, whether a sister through blood or experience. Having someone to bounce ideas off of, sharing their experiences and wisdom gained, often the hard way. Eleanor Roosevelt said, "Learn from the mistakes of others. You can't live long enough to make them all yourself". This sharing not only adds information on which to base your decisions, but deepens your bonds with that woman, fortifying each. Like a hug, when you give, you also receive.

I see Theta Alpha as part of this sisterhood. We have shared experiences in life that are not necessarily shared by our brethren. By forming these links to one another in the network of Theta Alpha, we are able to boost our energy and creativity, soothe our defeats and sorrows, nurture our passion, and enhance our gumption, not by the sum of its parts, but exponentially. Then, we can prepare for the Spring, our time of action.

We have welcomed new members to the sisterhood of the TAI Executive Board. Kris Earle from Boynton Beach, Florida, has accepted the position of Journal editor. She has recently retired from a career as a world language teacher. Hilary Bryntesson has accepted

the position of Academy of the New Church Liaison. She currently teaches Physical Education, Health, and Religion. She formerly served as Athletic Director and Head of the Physical Education Department, as well as Social Director, and Associate Dean of Students at Bryn Athyn College. Please give them a warm welcome when you see them.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you as TAI President.

Janet M. Krettek, D.O., aka Mrs. Fuller

Janet can be contacted at jmkrettekdo@gmail.com



Call for Articles!

We need and want to hear from everyone throughout the world in the pages of our long-lived and well-loved Journal. Everyone has something absorbing, interesting, thoughtful or humorous to share. Contact information is in the beginning of this *Journal*.

Editorial: Non Nobis Solum—Not for Ourselves Alone

Kris Heinrichs Earle

In 1904 a small group of New Church women formed the Theta Alpha with the guiding principle Non Nobis Solum. Why did they choose these three powerful Latin words? As I say these words slowly, lingering over each syllable, they wrap me up in a warm, encouraging hug and whisper in my ear, “We’re here.” “You’re not on your own.” “Let’s build community.” “Your story is part of a much bigger story: share it.”

Change is always in the air, whether it’s spring in the Southern Hemisphere or fall up north, everything in this world (and the next) undergoes change. Presently the TA Journal is undergoing another transition. Our dear friend and editor, Helen Kennedy, is passing the editor baton to me. Helen has been our committed editor over the last decade (20 issues!). As a writer herself, she has pieced together the written contributions of New Church people from around the globe. The Journal has served as a bond and given us a glimpse into what New Church people are doing internationally as she included articles from Nepal, Ukraine, Japan, Australia, the United States and Canada, and I probably forgot a few. What would our sisters in 1904 think of that? Helen has made small changes to the published journal such as featuring artwork from New Church women to adorn the cover and the pages, yet the Journal has remained faithful to its mission. Thank you, Helen, for guiding our beloved publication over these last ten years. Your gifts and dedication are greatly appreciated. Now we look

forward to your contributions in other forms, for we know you will not stray far.

As Helen and I first discussed the possibility of me taking on this task I felt a mixture of eagerness and incredulity. You see, I am not a writer or an editor. I spent my working life as a French and Spanish teacher who loved working with students, but didn't relish grading and editing students' work. Why would I want to be an editor? But I knew in my heart of hearts that I should give this a try. Why? *Theta Alpha International is one of the few organizations that serves and connects New Church women around the world.*

Non Nobis Solum whispers: "We're here." Theta Alpha International has been active for 121 years! This organization is well established and is composed of a network of committed women who seek to serve each other through our mission: 1. Provide a forum for women for the advancement and support of New Church education in its many forms. 2. Support each other in our personal spiritual growth.

In this issue we delve into the first aspect of the Theta Alpha mission: advancement and support of New Church education in its many forms. In *What is Higher New Church Education?* we see what views on New Church higher education Scott Frazier, Dean of the Bryn Athyn College Theological School, shared during a panel discussion last spring. Additionally a young author, Elwyn Heinrichs, wrote *A Rising Queen*, a loving tribute to her Aunt Carina, a New Church elementary school teacher who recently passed into the spiritual world.

The second aspect of Theta Alpha's mission is to support each other in our personal spiritual growth.

Non Nobis Solum whispers: "You're not on your own." The need for community is stronger than ever as studies over the last decade indicate anxiety levels on the rise internationally. Ideally community is where we are heard, supported, validated and cherished. The TA Journal has served this purpose since 1910. My hope is that as we move forward we carry on this service to the women of the New Church. In *Transition* Jenn Beiswenger explores the process of being reconnected by moving closer to family and friends after happily living for more than a decade in Australia. Chelsea Odhner describes

how she has found deep emotional healing for herself and others in *Making It Rain: Using Swedenborg and Internal Family Systems to Access Inner Healing Resources*.

Non Nobis Solum whispers: “Let’s build community.” As journals and magazines have transformed over the past several decades, so has the Theta Alpha Journal. We have an online format available to our readers, in addition to a Facebook page and an Instagram account. As we go forward we will continue to explore the many formats available to build community. In her 2024 Theta Alpha Luncheon speech *In a Loving Community*, Nina Dewees shares her resolve to make a lifetime practice of looking for the good wherever she finds herself. Nina describes the glimpses of heaven on earth she sees when she remembers to open her eyes to the Lord’s love at work in our lives.

Non Nobis Solum whispers: “Your story is part of a much bigger story: share it.” Please remember that your story is an important thread in the beautiful fabric that is being created by New Church women living their lives in all corners of the world. Don’t be shy, reach out to the Journal to have your story shared. In this issue we’ve included a conversation with Helen Kennedy, as well as a couple of her poems. *Remembering Rick* by Chris Simons is excerpted from a Memorial Day speech he gave in late spring about his brother who died in the Viet Nam war. You will find an emotionally impactful poem *Those Gone to Winter* by Janna King, which we have reprinted in this issue. Vera Glenn has written about growing up in Bryn Athyn in the home where Orchard Artworks was housed for years. We hope to preserve a part of Bryn Athyn history as the home and orchard are no longer there. Finally, the cover artwork is a beautiful photo by Page Monihan.

This issue of the Journal celebrates our mission and our New Church community. We’re here, you’re not alone, let’s continue to build our community and don’t be shy, share your story with us!

Much love,
Kris

Kris can be contact at madameahs@gmail.com

A Poem That Wrote Itself at the End of a Walk One Day in Lorimer

Helen Kennedy

What do I want to tell you about me?
That, like a wildflower, I open only after sensing
 Warmth from you.
I flourish in the light of your attention.
But the leaves of other cares grow over your mind
 And I fade, hoping
 There will be a seed
 To draw you back
 Again
 Another season.

Helen can be contacted at hmkennedy98@gmail.com

Interview with Helen Kennedy

Tell me about being TAJ editor for the past 10 years.

At first I didn't want to be editor, but Gill Mayer talked me into it. I had done a lot of creative writing on my own, but wasn't sure that I would like to be an editor. After thinking about it for a bit, I realized I wanted the Journal to continue because it had been going on for a long time and it has brought a lot of women together in the Church. I didn't want to see it die. It's interesting.

What are the highlights of being editor?

One of the main things that I've enjoyed about this position is getting to know different women as we were involved in the process of editing an article. I've enjoyed the contact with many women from many different places.

What was the hardest part of being editor?

Sometimes I felt like I needed to come up with articles, but the truth is that they were always there, in other words, the articles were just waiting to be found. With the Journal I have had a lot of freedom. I was able to follow whatever my interests were and what I thought would be interesting to people.

How do you think your background prepared you to be editor?

I had spent many decades writing. I was winding down my creative writing and the Journal filled a place in me, it gave me a new interest. There are two reasons why I stepped down from

the position, one my health, and two, I had started running out of ideas.

What are you reading right now?

I have been going through about ten books that my sister Pat left behind after her recent death. She reread some of these books over and over again. Most of these books belong to several series, so I can get more if I like them. One of the series is written by “Miss Read” who wrote a series called *Thrush Green* about two villages: Lulling and Thrush Green. I am enjoying them very much. After not reading fiction for some time, I am now getting back into novels.

How did you find the Writings?

In my forties my husband, kids and I met Peter Rhodes in a kind of round-about way. After several months Peter gave us a book of the Writings, the first volume of *Arcana Coelestia*, I believe. After a brief introduction to Swedenborg my mind was spinning: What is this crazy person talking about? Who is this person? But then after about a month I started to become very interested and I started to meet with David Holm. One of the things I remember vividly from those meetings is learning about correspondences. I was relating how I had some bizarre images/things going through my mind, and David explained that these images had a deeper meaning, and this really made sense. After meeting with David Holm for a while I went to an Inquirers’ class with Doug Taylor. I found it fascinating! There were about 12 people in this class. Not long after that the whole family was baptised by David Holm. The baptism was at the Cathedral and then afterwards there was a reception at Peter and Roxanne Rhodes’ house. Their daughter, Tasha Rhodes and my daughter Kelley met at the reception and are still good friends to this day.

How do you read the Writings currently?

I read the Writings every day. I pick a volume out and read some every day for a month or two. Invariably my interests change to another volume, so I start reading something else and stick with it for another month or so.

What do you feel when you read the Writings?

I love them! Many times I don't know what the meaning is, but often, several hours later, I get some meaning from it. I always feel enlightened.

How have the Writings changed your life?

They have completely changed my life! There are two stages to my life, *before* and *after* finding the Writings.

What are you reading in the writings right now?

I am re-reading the first book of Arcana Coelestia. Also I am reading Messages from Beyond (Voices through the Open Door) again and I love to listen to NDE's (Near Death Experiences) on YouTube, too. There are life lessons that are invariably very meaningful to be found in NDE's.

Are you writing anything at the moment?

I am just finishing writing a book called "In My Meditation" and am about to send it to the printer. It's about people who communicate during meditation time. One time when I was thinking that I was being too imaginative, I got this inflow of feeling that said I was not imaginative enough, meaning that in the next life there's more and more unknown things that will be revealed to us.

How do you feel during these meditations?

It feels like they're communicating to me.

What are the most important things the Writings have taught you?

- Life continues on.
- There is a God who is very interested in us.
- We will be married for eternity.
- All the people I meet will belong to different heavenly societies. From that I have learned that various people can be right at the same time because they are seeing things from the perspective of the heavenly society they are associated with. (This is one of the most important and valuable things I have learned.)
- Correspondences fascinate me, but I am still not able to grasp how these work.
- From our affections (loves) come thought.

Partial list of publications

Grandmothers and Grandfathers

Her Birds of Fancy

Under More Celestial Influences

Along Pond Creek Road

Stories of My Life

Essays

In My Meditation

You can reach Helen at hmkennedy98@gmail.com

What Is Higher New Church Education?

Reflections Inspired by *Divine Love and Wisdom*

Scott Frazier

When asked, “*What is higher New Church education?*” I took a moment to reflect – and decided to approach the question through the lens of a course I teach on Divine Love and Wisdom, a work from the Heavenly Doctrines. From my perspective, New Church higher education can be broadly defined as: **Teaching truth that leads to good.**

That simple phrase captures the essential use of the priesthood in education. But to dig deeper, I turned to the principles laid out in *Divine Love and Wisdom* and considered how they inform my experience as a classroom teacher working with young adults. The book has five parts, and each one offers insight into how we might structure and approach higher education in a New Church context.

1. Vesselhood: The Teacher as a Vessel, Not the Source

The first section of *Divine Love and Wisdom* teaches that we are not the source of anything – we are vessels. Applied to teaching, this changes everything.

As a teacher, I cannot learn the truth *for* my students. I cannot *give* them truth in the purest sense. I can only offer *my understanding* of truth – one vessel to another. And even then, I cannot make them receive it. This humbling principle reminds me: I am not just accommodating material to students – I am accommodating *myself*

to them. That's the baseline of New Church education: humility, limitation, and respect for the student's agency.

2. A Unipolar Universe: Guiding Toward the Real

The second section reveals that the universe is *unipolar* – there is one spiritual sun, one true source of goodness, reality, and happiness. There aren't two poles (like good vs. evil) – there's one center, and everything else is understood in relation to it.

In education, this teaches us that:

- Some ideas are better than others.
- “Real” and “good” aren't binary – they exist on a continuum.

In the classroom, our role is to guide students toward what is *more* true, more real – not through switches we flip, but through gradual progression. We don't impose truth; *we draw students toward it.*

3. Discrete Degrees: Evaluating with Awareness

Part three deals with *discrete degrees* – the layered, hidden complexity of human thought and motivation. This section is particularly useful when considering *assessment*.

Students want, think, and do things – and all those layers are invisible. Often, even they don't fully understand what they want. So when I grade an essay or a presentation, I must remember:

- Performance is a **poor** measure of who a student really is.
- But performance is also the **only** thing I *can* measure.

That tension matters. As educators, we must evaluate students *with care*, knowing that every mark on a rubric is only scratching the surface of a deeper, unknowable reality.

4. Forms and Uses: Keeping Purpose Above Structure

Part four emphasizes the difference between **forms** and **uses**. Forms are structures – curricula, schedules, rubrics. Uses are purposes – the deeper “why” behind the learning.

It's easy to confuse the two. For example, if a quiz stops working effectively, it's tempting to blame the students ("Kids these days!") and cling to the form. But a New Church perspective asks us to prioritize use: *How can I better serve the purpose of education?*

Sometimes this means changing how we test, teach, or even interact. The purpose – student growth toward good – remains constant. The forms must evolve.

5. The Desire to Know: Diagnosing Disengagement

The fifth section is about the interplay of intellect and will – the heart and lungs of the mind. At its core is a striking idea:

**Everyone wants to know. Everyone wants to understand.
Everyone wants to see how things work.**

So when students seem apathetic or disengaged, I don't assume they don't care. Instead, I ask:

- Are there things they *don't know* that block understanding
- Do they *understand differently* than I do?
- Am I failing to *make visible* what they already know and understand?

These questions turn student disengagement into a **diagnostic tool**. They challenge me to adjust – not because I doubt their desire to learn, but because I trust it.

Scott Frazier is Dean of the Bryn Athyn College Theological School after being a professor at the college for the last 27 years. Scott graduated from Bryn Athyn College with an interdisciplinary degree in Latin and Religion and an MA in ancient history from Villanova University. From there he then earned an MDiv degree from the theological school in 2006 and has been teaching ever since. He usually teaches courses on Divine Love and Wisdom and The Last Judgment as well as courses on the Old and New Testaments. He is married to Nicole Hill Frazier from Caryndale, and his children range in age from elementary school to college graduate. Scott can be contacted at scott.frazier@brynathyn.edu

Carina Heinrichs was a beloved elementary teacher at the Mitchellville New Church School. She had an infectious laugh and an energetic love of life. She passed into the Spiritual World on December 24, 2024. She is deeply missed by family and friends, but especially by her nieces and nephews. The following is an imaginative story the seventh grade author wrote for her English class.

A Rising Queen

Elwyn Heinrichs

Aunt Carina: I am a Queen, or at least that's what my nieces and nephews say. Every family reunion they play trumpets and say, "All hail the Queen!" Even though they know God is their king. But recently I've fallen ill, so I say goodbye to my students at school, and goodbye to my geese. I leave Maryland and go to Florida where my whole entire family lives. But, I don't get better, I get worse, and soon it is determined I am to die. "Stay for Christmas," says my niece. "Stay for next summer," says my nephew. "I will. I will," I say. After family dinner they all go home. "I still have time," I say, but I am wrong.

Elwyn: The following morning I rise with eagerness because it is Christmas Eve. In the late afternoon I go to church and then onto another family gathering. When we get there, we hear the news that she, our queen, is gone.

Aunt Carina: I wake up in a beautiful cottage with flowers on the window. I look out the window to see all my geese in the garden, and I hear children's laughter! I go outside and immediately I feel at home. It doesn't look the same, but it feels like home. And then in my garden I see all my family who have departed from the natural world. We talk and we hug until they leave. I start to walk in the woods until I see Him. "Jesus, I feel at home, but

how do I tell my nieces and nephews I am OK?” He smiles. “You may visit them.” “How?” I say. “Go down in the form of a bird.”

Elwyn: And now I can see you in the sky, beautiful, wonderful, flying so high, just like I always wished for you, flying beautifully, wonderfully and amazingly true.

This story is dedicated to my Aunt Carina. May you always stay a beautiful bird.

Elwyn (Ella) Heinrichs is an artist and storyteller. She attends CHEC Palm Beach, a Christian part-time program for homeschoolers. She attends the New Church of Boynton Beach with her mother and father, Rachel and Devon, and two siblings, Julian and Shiloh.



Call for Art Submissions!

As you can see from the beautiful cover art, we are hoping that the *Journal* can present some of the visual art that Swedenborgians around the world are creating.

Please send us images you would like to share with *Journal* readers and feel free to write a few sentences about what you send in! Any styles, from line drawings to paintings or photography are welcome. Contact information is in the beginning of this *Journal*.

A Loving Community – or – I Love My Life

Theta Alpha Luncheon Speech – October 11, 2024

Nina Cooper Dewees

In my role for the church, I have the privilege of helping to create opportunities for loving community to show up – to match people into roles, uses, groups – chances for their loves and talents to shine. These are opportunities to learn from each other, share a kindness and be inspired by one another. They are chances for the Lord’s love to flow through us to serve others.

Now – if you are the kind of person who likes when a speaker says “These are the two things to remember” – pay attention now.

1. There are two sides of the Pay-It-Forward coin and we all get to be on both sides.
2. Love is everywhere.

The Pay-It-Forward Crew Coin Flip

We use a special coin at Pay-It-Forward Crew events. On one side it says “Serve”, and on the other side it says “Be Served”. On **both** sides the fine print says “In God we trust”. It is often hard to remember that there are two equally important sides of the coin: not only giving love, but receiving love - receiving completes the circle. We need both sides of the coin for the love to flow. To **receive** help/love/support can be a chance to let **another** learn and grow, as well as ourselves. It is a blessing for **everyone** to give **and** receive

kindness.

Here is a “both sides of the coin” story from a dear friend of mine. Decades ago, he and his family were supported by this community for months, probably years, during their daughter’s illness and eventual passing into the spiritual world. His family received many meals, generous and loving gestures, mystery yard-rakers, unlimited support in so many ways. And now, twenty-some years later, remembering all that love, he is ready and eager to do the same for others. From my perspective, his whole life is now centered on loving and supporting others.

In my job I’m aware that sometimes we struggle with the sense of not being **useful** enough. **WE** want to take care of others or be active in serving, and it is hard to receive and especially hard to ASK for help. But in the Lord’s timing, it just may be a time for being on the **receiving** end of usefulness: Serve – Be Served. Even when time is short, or we are losing abilities, we CAN receive love; we can listen to others in the throes of their life experience and learning; we can share insights from our perspective, we can pray for others. Only the Lord knows the timing of when we will be on which side of the coin.

Love is Everywhere

I have my own story to share about this:

When my eldest daughter was a teenager she played in a club volleyball league, which involved going to all day tournaments several weekends a season. We arranged that I would take her, being a volleyball enthusiast myself, and my husband would stay home with the other 3 kids.

So Hannah and I got up very early one weekend, headed out to Lancaster for her tournament in a place that claimed to be “THE WORLD’S LARGEST INDOOR SPORTS COMPLEX!” It **was** huge. It had dozens of volleyball courts and dozens of basketball courts, numerous soccer and lacrosse fields, big work out sections with

weight equipment, dance studios, a couple baseball diamonds even, and more.

Unfortunately I was feeling grumpy. It was a gorgeous day outside, I wanted to be home with the rest of my family working in our garden, but instead was here inside this ginormous place; there were thousands of people in this cold and loud complex; I had **all** kinds of judgement about how sports have gotten way out of control in this country (which is weird because much of my career has been in the sports world). Hannah had gone to hang out and warm up with her team, and I was left to pace the endless hallways and balconies of this massive building. I could feel the scowl on my forehead, and the dark cloud hovering over my strolling body.

This is where my spiritual experience began. An idea came to me from above – “Do you really want to spend this entire day under that dark cloud of negativity? Is there another way to approach this day? What if you looked for My love instead? Can you find evidence of My love anywhere, here in the WORLD’S LARGEST INDOOR SPORTS COMPLEX?”

Well – it seemed like a good challenge to take on. And in just moments, I was STUNNED. I kept walking all around the facility, and saw God’s love **absolutely** everywhere.

- A young mom nursing her new baby while watching her older daughter playing soccer
- Grandparents holding hands as they strolled the aisles
- The parking guy’s kind nod to me as he waved his flag to help the next car find somewhere to park
- The teammates giving each other back rubs in between matches
- The thoughtful way the clean, well-stocked and huge bathroom was laid out
- The smiling lady at the refreshment stand
- The huddles of teams around their coaches, getting their final helpful hints before the ref blew the whistle

- The pack of little brothers that found an empty volleyball court and a couple of balls. From my negative perspective they were doing “all the wrong things” by being there on the court in the first place, kicking balls, shoving each other, running madly all over the court — until shifting my perspective, I recognized the total JOY they were experiencing figuring out all the clever things their little bodies and the volleyballs could do together.
- The support and encouragement from coaches and teammates after players make mistakes.
- Young athletes learning to use their bodies to improve themselves and contribute to the team goals
- The explosive cheering during the action-packed play
- Finally – my favorite moment – tiny field hockey girls were warming up with a ball up on the balcony (which only had safety cables for walls, not a solid wall). They were in a circle passing the ball back and forth with their sticks. One of them missed the ball and it was rolling towards the edge of the balcony, to drop over the edge onto some unsuspecting players below. And hockey balls are heavy! A bunch of them rushed squealing to catch the ball before it plummeted, blocking it JUST in time, as they collapsed in a heap of laughing, cheering, celebrating cuteness and relief.

So... The Lord's love was everywhere. I was SURROUNDED by it, IMMERSED in it.

That experience strengthened my resolve to make a lifetime practice of **looking** for the good. It is a way to see heaven on earth. When we have eyes to see it, it can be awe-inspiring to witness the Lord's love everywhere. This love is something I experience through my practice of looking for the good.

“To feel another's joy as joy in oneself, that is loving.” DLW 47

A friend recently shared in a prayer group “It is such a gift when I hear of a need in the community and I have the skills and ability to fill that need!” I THINK THIS IS THE ESSENCE OF LIVING IN COMMUNITY – and **loving** in community. And remember, those needs may be on the GIVING OR RECEIVING end! In my role for Bryn Athyn Church as Support and Engagement Coordinator, I get to witness some of the best illustrations of a loving community. I want to share some specific examples with you:

The Bryn Athyn Church offers a one-on-one caring ministry called Stephen Ministry. This ministry supports folks that are facing difficult times. We care by listening and encouraging, making a safe and confidential space for people who need to talk through what they are dealing with.

Here are a few illustrations of the love in that arena:

- A beloved Stephen Minister was having trouble breathing. She refused to head to the hospital before touching base with her Stephen Ministry care receiver to say she couldn’t see her that day but was thinking of her with love. Hours later that Stephen Minister scooted off to heaven.
- Another Stephen Minister who had several care receivers would call me after her first meeting with a new care receiver to say “I love her already!”
- Recently I had the chance to meet with someone, to just listen to what they were facing – a significant loss, relationship challenges, many layers of COMPLICATED feelings. I kept thinking “Oh man... I wish I could do something to help. It seems impossible. What can be done? How can there be healing?” But I just kept listening, inquiring about feelings, reflecting back what I was hearing, giving her time and space to say what SHE wanted/needed to say. And after our time together, she gave me a hug and off she went. I thought... “Oh well, ya sure can’t help everyone!” And the next week when we ran into each other, she gave me a huge

hug, saying “Thank you for your time last week. That really, really, really helped me.”

Thich Nhat Hanh writes *“Deep listening is the kind of listening that can help relieve the suffering of another person. You can call it compassionate listening. You listen with only one purpose: to help one to empty their heart.”*

I really feel like these kinds of conversations are sacred ground – not that I create that **sacred ground**. I get to come from a place of humility, with the intention of listening and supporting, and the Lord will show up to MAKE it holy ground. I am learning to lean into the truth that the **Lord** will bring growth and healing – I don’t need to give them advice or solve their problem. One of Stephen Ministry’s phrases is: We are the CARE givers, and God is the CURE giver.

ALL of us have the ability to offer that kind of care and compassionate listening to each other.

So... Back to more examples of loving community:

- PAY-IT-FORWARD CREW is another BA Church program – volunteers who love their neighbor by providing practical help when people are facing hard times. We rake, clean, drive, cook, move, etc.
- One of my favorite things is people kindly chatting and getting to know each other as they weed or slice and dice next to each other.
- Roger Lansbury pulling pork for Pay It Forward Crew for hours, taking a break to lie down as he dealt with terminal illness, then back to pull more pork.

» *Roger Lansbury – Roger was a total PIFC supporter – came to cook days, even when he didn’t feel well. He always tried to slip me a \$10 or \$20 to support PIFC uses. I hope and believe that maybe he is still serving with the Pay-It-Forward Crew from his spiritual home.*

Some other volunteer examples:

- I asked a woman, relatively new to our church, if she would be willing to bring some refreshments for Community Worship. She eagerly replied “Yes”, and I had the joy of seeing her walk into the social hall as she proudly brought huge trays of delicious food – a recipe from her native country – to share with all.
- For a while I coordinated the people who do flower arrangements for the chancel for church. When I would send reminder texts, almost always the response was “Yes! I’m on it! I can’t wait!” An example of skill, ability and love plugged into a need.
- For several years a woman, whose husband had passed away, used what she would have spent on Christmas gifts for him and gave donations to folks in need, to help make their Christmas more special.

A couple of examples from the General Church Assembly:

- Singers from all over the world came together to sing *Baba Yetu* (the Swahili version of the Lord’s Prayer) to contribute their voice to praise the Lord, and to be a blessing to others by joining together in song.
- I had the pleasure of serving on the Assembly Planning team with three amazing women who managed what felt like seven billion details. They came to every meeting for an entire year – fresh, prepared, and eager to help, to learn and to share their energy and expertise. To me, that was love. One morning, I arrived at a meeting feeling exhausted and hopeless about a certain aspect of my life. I shared just a little of my struggle with them, and as they listened, I saw tears in their eyes mirroring my own. That, too, felt like love.

Here are some general community examples of love showing up:

- The uncle of an ANC Secondary School soccer player regularly loads up his golf cart with seltzers and sausage sandwiches to offer free to fans at the home soccer games
- From my office window I get to watch the daily Bryn Athyn Church School cute parades –
 - » the parents with the little kids – on their shoulders, in strollers, holding hands with their new walking toddler, going at their pace, or maybe dragging a kid to get to school on time
 - » little kids – preschoolers and kindergarteners with back packs as big as them, the 3rd graders who take a brain break by running to the end of the curb and back, even cool 8th graders are cute!
 - » the worker men for the new school – bright orange t-shirts, yellow-green vests, hard hats, lunch bags and tool boxes, heading to their cars at the end of a work day that started before dawn
- Just yesterday in the faculty lounge, a teacher and I were talking about the nice snacks someone brought by. I suggested that it might give him energy for his next class. He said “not as much energy as I’ll get from the first graders!” I thought that sounded like love.
- The Christmas tree put up annually on the corner of Buck and Tomlinson Roads
- Moms groups that gather to share, learn, listen and support each other in being the best moms we can be.
- Farmer Andy who tends the community gardens on the college campus – he includes motivational thoughts in his weekly email – last week’s was: “Note to self: today, instead of being upset by all the things that are wrong, I will be thankful for all the things that are right.”

It is an honor to me, and so inspiring, to be on some of the front

lines of people loving the Lord by loving their neighbor, and loving their neighbor by loving the Lord. Serving and being served!

I'm going to finish this talk with "a day in the life" of me! These are the actual facts about Friday, September 6 – the actual "love sightings" I witnessed, tasks I got to do to help build community, or moments I experienced of community connection.

As I recount the details of just one "day in the life", maybe you can also see the love that is there. Try to picture what I'm talking about. Maybe you have had similar experiences, or know who or what I am referring to. YOU are part of this same loving community and have similar connections. Perhaps at your table you got to share some stories of the loving you've been a part of in your life. I hope that as you head into this Charter Day weekend, you will experience some of the love that is very likely swarming all around us!

Friday, September 6 – a long series of gifts –

- Walk to work in my new supportive thrift store shoes on a cool, clear, early fall day, seeing kids skipping to school
- The friendly new police chief standing mid-intersection at Buck and Tomlinson Roads, managing the 12 busiest minutes of the day of traffic in BA
- The wife of the police chief waving to me through my office window with her tiny kids scooting along the sidewalk
- Emails coming in from volunteers willing to help with Community Worship
- A phone call from a friend checking to see how I was doing
- Fresh figs from a coworker's tree she brought to share
- Emailing people to invite them to a small group
- Exchanging a wave with a colleague as I walk down the hall to wash my mug
- Gathering updated contact info for reaching out to young adults
- An adorable way that a colleague has of checking if it is ok

to ask me something now, by peeking his head in my office, saying “bother bother?”

- Conversation at work to figure how many programs to print for a beloved community member’s resurrection service (we needed a lot)
- My son swung by to drive me home to grab lunch while sharing the update from the day’s BA College classes
- Walking home from work by way of 4 home ANCSS sporting events
- Soccer-side seltzer & sausage sandwiches
- An opportunity to listen and open my heart to someone’s painful experience
- Walking by a tiny four-year-old who was a whole soccer field’s width away from her mom, venturing into this big world, peeking back to see if her mom was still there watching (which she was)
- I sat with folks that I coached in the 90’s, to watch their children play the same sport; such a great volleyball match with crazy long volleys and a huge crowd, with incredible skill, energy and support from both players and fans
- 15 minutes sharing nourishing leftovers for supper with my hubby
- Went to a house concert – while waiting for the concert to start, chatting with previous volleyball teammates, orchestra member of my daughter’s youth orchestra, a neighbor who taught me yoga; and during the concert
 - » Sitting between my niece with her newborn and the pastor I worked with in San Diego in 1987 and sharing memories with him about my Uncle Frank Rose & Aunt Donny Alfelt
 - » Listening to the angelic voices & rich music of performers who consisted of
 - The goofiest and kindest friend

- A friend singing with the very child whose birth I attended years ago
- The father of the newborn that I was now holding in my arms
- This is a weird example... I spent a few minutes before bed with my son who was watching the Eagles game happening in Brazil. Suddenly the meaning of the Russell and Brian Pitcairn (local brothers) Facebook post spelling out E-A-G-L-E-S at the base of the huge Jesus statue in Rio dawned on me!
- And finally, waking up at 3:30 in the morning with the ideas of what to talk about here today.

It's all just heaven on earth!

I am so grateful for this loving community and each person that is a part of it!

Thank you!

Nina was born and raised in BA – the youngest of 7 kids, in a huge extended family. She and her husband have 4 children. She's taught and coached in BACS, ANCSS, BA College and even the theological school. In general Nina tends towards a glass-half-full attitude and she is thankful for the Lord fashioning a big place in her heart for being a compassionate witness to the hard parts of life – what she considers the “white water” of the stream of Providence. Her two big loves are the Lord's miraculous creations: nature and people. For the past 14 years she has worked for Bryn Athyn Church primarily as the Support and Engagement Coordinator. Contact Nina at nina.dewees@brynathynchurch.org

Borrowed with permission from New Christian Woman blog – July 16, 2025

Transition

Jenn Beiswenger

tran-si-tion

/tran'ziSH(ə)n/

noun: **transition**

the process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another.

verb: **transition**

undergo or cause to undergo a process or period of transition.

Origin

late Middle English (in the sense 'grammatical transitivity'): from Latin transitio(n-), from transire 'go across'.

The process of changing, going across one state to another. Metamorphosis, but for humans? Pretty much.

I recently underwent a massive transition: my family and I moved – not just from one street to another, one town, one state or even one country to another, but from one continent, one hemisphere to another, from Australia to Canada; approximately 13,573.08 kilometers or 8,433.92 miles, as the crow flies. That's a BIG transition! That's so big that our furniture took nearly three months to catch up with us.

Why did we do this? For something better. It wasn't that we

didn't love our previous situation: we certainly did, and we miss it sorely, sometimes. For my husband, it was for a change, a new challenge; for me, it was for family. We've transitioned our lives from Hurstville to Toronto. We can't turn back now, for better and for worse.

As glad as we are to have the new opportunities offered to us by this change of life, it hasn't all been sunshine & rainbows. With this transition has come a lot of pain: the pain of being the 'new kid', the awkwardness, the uncertainty, not to mention all the convoluted hoops we've had to jump through to settle ourselves here – for example, to get a local bank account we needed a local phone number, but to get a local phone number, we needed a local bank account; to get a decent local car, we needed to be able to finance it, but in order to get financing at a non-astronomical rate, we needed to have a local driving record of more than three weeks. Then there were the non-tangible logistical minefields, other aspects of setting up house from scratch, sampling new shops & restaurants & exercise classes to find our new favourites, getting to know our new church family.... not to mention assuring our relocated ten-year-old dog that we weren't deserting him every time we left his sight, or acclimating his sub-tropical self to the local frigid January climate into which he had arrived!

Needless to say, all this has been REALLY TAXING.

Blessedly, our compassionate family members, friends and church organisation have supported us so very generously throughout this ordeal. We've been here six months now, and I continue to have to remember to give *myself* some grace. I am great at making to-do lists and half-decent at executing them, getting stuff done; I have done A LOT of adjusting, a lot of 'stretching'; it's ok if I'm not meeting every single one of my goals, even now. No-one expects me to be perfect – and, if they

do, that's their problem. Lest I forget, this needs to include me: I mustn't be too hard on myself.

A lot has changed for me, for each of my immediate family members; we ourselves have even changed a bit, with all the emotions and mental challenges, and we aren't always able to be the pillars that we've sometimes needed each other to be. We've come a long way, though, and are making forward progress all the time. If we trust that all will be well, as the Lord assures us it will be, we can see the light at the end of the tunnel and continue plodding forward, through the difficulties, to the blessed next phase of our lives.

They who trust in the Lord continually receive good from Him; for whatsoever happens to them, whether it appears to be prosperous or not prosperous, is still good, because it conduces as a means to their eternal happiness. (Arcana Coelestia 8480)

The transition of moving house has had its ups & downs, its challenges and its promises. Such is the inherent nature of transition: oftentimes we leave something that we were comfortable with, we face struggles which feel insurmountable, we doubt ourselves and the process and we feel like giving up – but *when we stick with it*, we overcome, and we reap the rewards of the new state.

As a birth doula, it would be remiss of me not to mention that transition is a hallmark period in a childbearing woman's labour, too.

A mother-to-be with a wanted pregnancy has spent her life up to this point childless or with one fewer child. She was probably (hopefully!) pretty happy with life, generally, but found herself wanting more. She may or may not have gone to great lengths to get pregnant, and then spent nine or so months gestating this child in her womb, growing this baby, eating for two, weathering the ups & downs of pregnancy – the uncertainty, the 'morning'

(possibly all-day, for many months) sickness, the questions & comments & unwanted belly touches from people, the pressure on her various organs, loosening of joints and other associated concerns. Now she labours for anywhere from a few to very many hours, possibly days. She's reached the point when she feels utterly defeated, crying that she can't do it anymore: she wants to throw in the towel, give up. Even the most knowledgeable, confident woman almost inevitably reaches this point of desperation in her labour. She's worked *so* hard, often for such a long time; just in the last few hours alone she's experienced huge amounts of physical discomfort and pain, and now she feels like it is never going to end. She can't stand it anymore.

How long a labouring woman's period of transition lasts and how deep she emotionally dives depends on her birth team & her level of faith in the process. As with moving internationally, her support system & trust that the Lord will see her through to the other side can carry her through. Birth workers know from experience that this despair is actually a great sign: her labour is almost over, birth is near, baby is almost here! We use words of compassion to rally mom's spirits, to encourage her along, remind her of how far she's come, how well she's done and how close she is to her goal. We cheer her on, reminding her that her body and her baby are doing just what they're meant to be doing, she will get through this (no-one in the history of womankind has ever stayed pregnant or labouring forever!): soon she will have her baby in her arms.

In the end, the prize – usually, and subject to divine providence – is a healthy infant and an elated mother. Bub has transitioned from living inside of his or her mom's body to living apart from it, having to face the harsh elements of the world outside the womb and having needs met in ways that are not automatic or instantaneous as they used to be. Mom has made the heroic

journey from woman to mother, or mother of fewer to mother of more. She had probably done a pretty effective job of figuring out how to manage life without this baby, and now she's venturing into uncharted territory, needing to learn how to care for *this* child (possibly in addition to others) and how to care for herself, putting baby at the top of her priority list while hopefully not scuttling her own needs altogether. The process has undoubtedly been very taxing, in some ways, and she may sometimes sorely miss her old life – the quiet, the freedom, the sleep! – but there's no turning back, for better and for worse.

In an ideal scenario, mom has a village to support her along this entire journey, through pregnancy, birth and postpartum: they will help her travel the bumpy road, and help her to gradually get back on her feet. She needs to give herself grace – especially if she doesn't have that support – as she grapples with every new thing, every piece of this new puzzle. No-one should expect perfection from her, least of all herself. It's ok if she isn't meeting every single one of her goals. (There are no prizes for being the quickest out of one's birth bed!) If she can trust that all will be well, she will see the light at the end of the tunnel and continue plodding forward, through the difficulties, hopefully recognising her blessings and enjoying this new state of her life – or keep on plodding until it becomes enjoyable to her.

Life is full of transitions, big and small. Like it or not, no-one and no phase of life is completely immune from transition. It happens. Having a truly compassionate support network on which we can rely and fall back, and trusting in the Lord, the process and His providence are crucial elements to helping us navigate these treacherous waters which inevitably come along.

As time passed, it happened that Cain brought an offering to Yahweh from the fruit of the ground. (Genesis 4:3)

It happened at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ship which he had made, and he sent forth a raven. (Genesis 8:6-7)

It happened the same day, that Yahweh brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies. (Exodus 12:51)

It happened in the morning, that Balak took Balaam, and brought him up into the high places of Baal; and he saw from there the utmost part of the people [of Israel]. (Numbers 22:41)

It happened, when all the people had completely passed over [the Jordan river], that the ark of Yahweh passed over, with the priests, in the presence of the people. (Joshua 4:11)

It happened at evening, that David arose from off his bed, and walked on the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful to look on. (2 Samuel 11:2)

It happened, which is said many times in the Word, has a meaning that involves transition and accordingly a second stage. (Secrets of Heaven 4979)

Jenn has loved babies all her life, childbirth for more than half of it, and finally trained to be a birth & postpartum doula in 2022 while living in Hurstville (Sydney), Australia. She and her family recently moved to Etobicoke (Toronto), Canada, and is slowly finding her feet in the birthing world there. She can be contacted about birthy stuff at doulajennb@inductime.ca.

Making It Rain

Using Swedenborg and Internal Family Systems to Access Inner Healing Resources

Chelsea Rose Odhner

What happens when you combine Swedenborg's teachings with an evidence-based therapeutic approach called Internal Family Systems (IFS)? Amazing things.

What happens when you provide a pathway for Swedenborg's teachings to be applied in practical and concrete ways leading to spiritual growth and freedom? Even more amazing things: the potential to satisfy peoples' hunger for something that genuinely helps.

In the early 1980s, Family Systems researcher Richard Schwartz reached a dead end doing an outcome study of families with bulimic children. As he tells it, the children "didn't know they were healed." Heartbroken over the persistence of his clients' behaviors and his failed attempts to help, he pivoted and started applying Family Systems principles to an individual's inner system.

He began engaging with the system of an individual's multiple parts. He brought curiosity to the roles they played within the system and listened to them. If a client became angry with her own parts, for example, the session would deteriorate. In-

stead, he tried asking the interfering angry part to step back, as if the part were an autonomous individual, and he found that the person's state would shift. He then would invite the client, in this new state, to engage with the part that had reacted angrily. He found that the part's original angry energy would shift to relief and appreciation for being heard. Whenever clients would respond to their parts from this place in themselves that was calm and confident, it would be beneficial to the system.

As he continued to practice, he came to realize that everyone had this essence inside – it showed up in similar ways in everybody. This essence knew how to heal the parts' emotional wounds. When he asked about what part was present when they were in that state, his clients would consistently say some variation of, "That's not a part, that's me." He began calling it Self, with a capital S to distinguish it from the selfhood of individual parts.

IFS showed up on the doorstep of my own trauma healing journey four years ago. The approach allowed me to make inroads in what was previously an impenetrable knot of painful memories and overwhelming thoughts and feelings. I learned how some parts of us take on the pain, emotional overwhelm and inferred meanings of events, while other parts take on roles and positions in our inner world to suppress or mitigate the overwhelm felt by the wounded parts. The extreme roles of these protecting parts have their own consequences that tax the system, so you end up with parts in an intricate web of pressures and polarized tension. This leads to any number of psychological conditions: addictions, anxiety, depression, numbing, dissociation. It was only when I was able to identify and have conversations with each part in the web of my own system that I was able to experience an actual abatement of the crippling symptoms that had become the norm.

More amazing still, IFS gave me a pathway to employ concepts in Swedenborg that I had stored up in myself over a lifetime, but

which had never been able to cross the barriers of my traumatized system and help where it hurt most. The closest I had come was an intellectual framing of my circumstances and a thin but abiding thread of trust. I now know intimately the part of myself who had held onto faith and spirituality with a vice-like grip and, honestly, she kept me on the planet. There is an immeasurable difference between abstractly believing in the existence of divine love and directly experiencing it. Once the framework and actions of IFS were accessible to me, the clouds of Swedenborg's teachings broke into a season of rainfall on the parched earth of my psyche.

The alignment of these two perspectives and their combined impact on my life carry a significance that goes far beyond my own personal story. By pairing Swedenborg's teachings with the principles of IFS, it's possible to support people in accomplishing exactly what Swedenborg says is the goal of creation itself: a direct and reciprocal partnership with the Lord, the divine itself, through one's inner self (*True Christianity* 371).

What IFS has learned is that when a person becomes more Self-led – when their parts become willing to allow that inner essence to be present and to guide them with its qualities of calm, confidence, compassion and curiosity – inner harmony develops; parts are liberated from their extreme roles and are able to release the harmful beliefs and burdened feelings that used to drive them. There is a sense of wholeness, and this new state ripples out into their external environment.

Within the first decade of development, as Richard Schwartz contemplated the enormous implications of what he was discovering, he began to understand IFS as an intrinsically spiritual model. Although Self was experienced by clients from a first person perspective, he could not deny that individuals were tapping into a resource that is transcendent and universal. Swedenborg

perceived this and provided a robust map of the discrete degrees of our minds, writing about the way our inner self receives an inflow of love and wisdom from the divine and how the end state of regeneration is an outer self that is in alignment with the inner self, which in turn is open to the divine's inflowing (see *True Christianity* 364).

Swedenborg goes to great lengths to describe the details and nuances of how this partnership with the divine develops in each of us. Here is a brief sampling of such descriptions from *Secrets of Heaven*:

"The life that flows into us from the Lord comes from his divine love. This love, or the life that radiates from it, flows in and bestows itself on the vessels in our rational and earthly minds. Such vessels in us face away from the life force because of the evil we inherit by birth and the evil we ourselves acquire by committing it. However, so far as it can do so, the inflowing life repositions the vessels to receive itself" (3318:2).

"Our rationality is reborn before our earthly part..., because our earthly part lives entirely in the world and acts as a base on which our thought and will are founded. That is why we sense conflict between our rational, inner self and our earthly, outer self when we are regenerating" (3469:2).

"[Rationality] comes from an inflow of heaven's light from the Lord through our inner self into the spiritual and worldly knowledge in our outer self, lifting us up as a result: 1895, 1899, 1900, 1901, 1902" (New Jerusalem 35, citing Secrets of Heaven)

"The main thing on which the work of regeneration hinges is the effort to bring our earthly self into correspondence with our rational self, not only as a whole but also in particular, and it is through our rationality that the Lord reduces our earthly self

into correspondence. His method is to instill goodness into our rational mind, plant seeds of truth in the soil of that goodness, and then through rational truth reduce the earthly plane to obedience. When it obeys, it corresponds; and the more it corresponds, the more we are reborn” (3286:3).

“Everything in us works the way a single household does, or in other words, the way a single family does. There is the part that functions as the head of the household and the parts that function as servants. The rational mind itself is what oversees everything as the head of the household and organizes the earthly mind by exerting an influence on it. The earthly mind is what carries out and administers orders. The earthly mind is distinct from the reasoning mind and occupies a lower level but also acts with some autonomy” (3020).

There are many more statements like these. Why would Swedenborg put in so much effort to give us this information if we couldn’t make use of it? Rather than see these statements as mystifying descriptions of something out of reach, I see them as an instruction manual for clinical or personal application. Why is it useful to know this? Because we can experience firsthand, with conscious awareness, what Swedenborg describes in these passages. Because we are all designed for consciously navigating our inner world. We are inherently equipped to engage with our psyche in this way. I’ve long held that hunch, and with the tools of IFS, it is demonstrable.

What Swedenborg describes in these passages and others like them plays out spontaneously in IFS sessions. IFS has evolved as a model, listening carefully to what’s real for the client, such that it “turns the lights on” inside. In IFS, they call this mode of inner engagement insight because it involves seeing, sensing and perceiving the inner realities of our parts and then participating in unfolding sequences of events in the inner world that have lasting

positive impact. When I found IFS, I realized I had in my knowledge of Swedenborg's theology access to a hidden textbook! I wanted to find some way to bring together these two paradigms and illuminate the ways in which they speak to each other.

To my total delight, I had the opportunity to do just that. Earlier this year, the Swedenborg Foundation published *Opening the Inner World: Spiritual Healing, Internal Family Systems, and Emanuel Swedenborg*. I brought together Robert Falconer, a senior IFS therapist and global educator who has authored multiple books, including one co-authored with Richard Schwartz (*Many Minds, One Self*), and Jonathan Rose, Swedenborg scholar and translator, to co-create this book with me through recorded conversations that I facilitated. I then edited the content of these conversations to produce the book.

When I met him, Falconer had recently published *The Others Within Us*, which has quickly become a landmark title in the world of IFS. This work explores the further reaches of the IFS model, describing how our systems are not only multiple but also *porous* – that is, open to spiritual influences. When I connected with Falconer, I learned that Wilson Van Dusen, a pioneer in applying Swedenborg's ideas to psychotherapy, has been a major influence for him in his work. Falconer is convinced that all healing is fundamentally spiritual, and believes Swedenborg is uniquely positioned to re-spiritualize Western psychotherapy. Falconer finds an anchor in the philosophy of radical pragmatism or radical empiricism. He says, "If it works, it's real. This stuff works."

Opening the Inner World was released in May 2025. Richard Schwartz generously reviewed it, writing in part: "For those interested in the spiritual side of IFS, Swedenborg points to worlds we have yet to explore." The work is a subject guide, introducing readers to IFS and Swedenborg with a focus on how we can make use of these ideas. But words on a page can only take you

so far. Power comes when you put them into practice.

In August 2025, I had the opportunity to lead the Swedenborg Foundation's first immersive, experiential retreat, called INflow. For three days and two nights, nine people came from two countries and five states to put Swedenborg's teachings into practice within the context of IFS deliberately. The weekend included instruction on Swedenborg's teachings about inflow, levels of the mind, rationality, correspondences and representations, and the process of regeneration. This was paired with guided exercises informed by IFS, including interoception, dialogue with parts, and somatically oriented meditations, as well as time for journaling and sharing, delicious meals, and community connection.

In their own words (shared with permission), participants reflected on their experience saying, "I learned practical ways to access healing. Sounds simple, but this is life changing."

"Chelsea's integration of IFS and Swedenborgian worldviews/approaches to personal growth was a breath of fresh air, deeply insightful, immediately applicable, and profound. I knew (or hoped) something like this was possible; I'm deeply grateful for Chelsea's leadership and passion for this dynamic, important, and exciting interface.... This workshop (and others like it) have enormous potential for healing in our hurting world."

One participant shared that for over ten years of watching the Off The Left Eye YouTube channel she had filled her tank with fuel, and now the INflow weekend gave her what she needed to start driving.

I learned a lot through the experience of facilitating the weekend. It is the most humbling work to show up for people as a part of their healing journeys. I feel like I got to see a miracle unfold before my eyes: the transmutation of ideas into lived experience, and the powerful insights that result. This feels like just the beginning.

Additional INflow retreats are being planned for 2026. These retreats, along with the Swedenborg Foundation's other offerings, are possible thanks to the generosity of our community. If you're curious to learn more, have ideas you'd like to share, or would enjoy a conversation about how you might be part of supporting this work, we'd love to connect. Feel free to reach out to Tim at tim.bilger@swedenborg.com. To hear about upcoming offerings, sign up for the Swedenborg Foundation email list (swedenborg.com/email-signup/ and select "Swedenborg Foundation: News, Events, & Fundraising Updates").

Opening the Inner World: Spiritual Healing, Internal Family Systems, and Emanuel Swedenborg

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Chelsea Rose Odhner is the Vice President of Publishing for the Swedenborg Foundation and coordinates the Foundation's new in-person retreat offerings. As a certified coach, trained Internal Family Systems practitioner, and licensed massage therapist, she brings a unique interdisciplinary approach to understanding human experience. Chelsea is a lifelong Swedenborgian with a background in English and Biology from Bryn Athyn College. Her work spans writing, music, and spiritual content strategy, including her original spiritual music album "Confident Hope." Trained in yoga philosophy and interfaith dialogue, she works to highlight important intersections in the areas of spiritual growth, psychological understanding, and creative expression. Chelsea is dedicated to translating complex spiritual concepts into practical, transformative tools for personal growth. She values supporting individuals to discover self-understanding and true spiritual connection. She lives with her husband and three children in Glenside, PA. Chelsea can be reached at chelsea.odhner@swedenborg.com.

Those Gone to Winter

Janna King

If you left because the wind was absolute
And rudely blew you far across many wrong streets,
And you grew so weary from bracing and opposing!

Or gone off where no one whatsoever can come—
Even if they wished to dig you free
Even if they wished with all their impotent hearts.

Did the grizzled, thickened sky
Turn your very suns to odd and pale domes,
Unwilling or unable to glow, even lightly.

How long has low been, young soul?
Is there silent howling in the trees there.
Is there no crying.

Surely you left with an end in view,
As if there were hope to take hold of—
A far exposure. Somewhere else, entire.

I ask you now, How far are all, and will
You hear the truth of it?
The spring is come. Be home.

Remembering Rick

Excerpted from a Memorial Day Address
May 30, 2025

Chris Simons

This day, Memorial Day, the last Monday in May, we honor all those who serve or have served in our armed forces and especially those who gave their lives in service to their country. Today, I want to honor the memory of my brother, David Richard Simons.

My earliest memory of Rick was playing frontiersmen in the back yard at our home on King Road. I was 5, Rick was 8. Barefoot, dressed in our customary shorts and t-shirts, we found some old manila rope and decided to light the ends on fire at the burning pile, so we could find our way on that bright sunny morning in early fall. In those days everyone had an outdoor fireplace to burn trash and garbage. We were humming “Davy, Davy Crockett...”, swinging our smoldering ropes as we paraded around the yard and across King Road to the empty field next to Clymer’s house. What jolly explorers we were as we walked among the auburn-colored little blue-stem and the clumps of burgundy wineberry stalks. About an hour later, now onto some other adventure, the sound of fire sirens caught our attention, and we scurried onto the front lawn to see fire engines coming down King Road to put out

the field fire across the street. “Now how could that have started?” we asked ourselves innocently. Sometime later, the Glenn house next door caught fire in the middle of the night, and again the firetrucks were howling down our street. But we had nothing to do with it, SCOUTS HONOR!

At about the same time as the fire incident, my family was offered a month-long vacation in the Green Mountains of Vermont. The isolated Victorian two-story was set back off the dirt road, with phoebes nesting on the side porch, hollyhocks and hummingbirds beside the front porch railing and racoons in the trash at night. Rick, Gill and I played cars and house in the dusty margins of the dirt road. With massive logging trucks periodically roaring past us on the road, my mother must have been terrified, but I don’t remember her being overly concerned, and we soon crossed the road to explore in the scented fern banks that led deeper into the woods to a bustling trout stream where we played Poohsticks with Dad, racing our little “boats” through the rocks in the clear mountain brook. There was a sand quarry next to the house, and we three children would often carefully pick our way barefoot through the thistle, broken sticks and rough grasses to play on the 20-foot sandy slope. One day Rick was climbing ahead of me and dislodged a large rock which bounced down the sand bank, landing on top of me and opening a bleeding gash in my head. Foreshadowing his Viet Nam heroics, he grabbed my hand, and with Gill by my side, we raced back to the house through the field of prickles, not caring at all where we stepped. It didn’t take us long because we had inherited our Dad’s sprinting speed and even at that young age we were so fast! I had to see the doctor. He stitched me up and said not to go swimming for a few days.

And Dad had just found a great swimming hole nearby.

For many years the beginning of the school year was marked by the annual Labor Day soap box derby races, right here in Borough Park. A calibrated starting gate was set up right over there at the top of Quarry Road, an attempt to adjust for the curve of the road as it follows the hill below the Cathedral. Race cars were supposed to be built by the elementary aged students, sponsored by the Bryn Athyn Boys Club, a precursor to the Boy Scouts here in Bryn Athyn. There were two divisions, slow wheels and fast wheels. The fastest wheels were passed down through the years, and who got what was a matter of all manner of nepotism. And there was mystical lore about the races that developed over the years. Legend has it, for instance, that Glenn de Charms' racer was so fast that, after taking the turn at the bottom of the hill, it coasted all the way up to Cairncrest.

There were few rules in the early days. You build it, you race it. My classmate Jeremy Synnestvedt had a very fast car. It was widely believed, however, that engineers at his father's business built the car. With a concrete nose and steel wedges lining the interior wall, it nearly broke Gale Smith's back when he misjudged the weight of the streamlined little racer and went to lift it into the transport vehicle. Yes, there were few rules in the early days, and my brother Rick took advantage of the fact. He took an ironing board, laid it flat like a surfboard between 2 two-by-fours. He secured the rear board and used a bolt and washers in the front so the front board could swivel for steering. He attached door pulls at each end of the front board. It had no brakes. I think it had blocks to limit how far the front board could turn. Rick strapped on his helmet from his Blue and Gold football team, lay down on the ironing

board, and grasped the door pulls. With little wind resistance he easily won his class. It's a good thing he was running with the slower wheels, however, and as the rules developed over the years his design was forbidden.

At 5 foot 8 inches and 150 pounds, Rick was a slender but determined athlete. I was a freshman in high school the day the ANC football team took on Central High School in Philadelphia. It was a miserable day, cold, with a misty rain. Rick was a wide receiver. We called them ends in those days. It was late in the game, but Central had only managed one touchdown against us. With little time on the clock, quarterback Glenn de Charms took the snap, moved to his right and then, finding Rick in an out pattern to left, lofted a perfect spiral which Rick gathered in over the shoulder. In a rush of fake left and spin right, suddenly he was streaking down the sideline. Now Simonses are so fast, as I have pointed out before, and Rick was not to be denied as he fought his way to the goal line. We tied Central that day. It is still talked about amongst our veteran alumni.

When I was a Junior in high school, and still not starting on the football team, Rick had some advice for me: drop Wednesday afternoon band and get into the varsity tackling drills. The first wasn't such good advice in retrospect, and the second challenged me to face the likes of 180 lb. Brucie Gladish between the tackling dummies, but it worked, and I became the starting corner linebacker, at 145 lbs.

My grandfather on my mother's side, Frederick Gyllenhaal, loved my brother Rick. He taught him to play chess, and how to collect stamps, and about baseball, particularly how to keep score and about the statistics of the game: batting average, RBIs, homeruns, and the like. I wasn't smart enough for

chess and was not into collecting things, but I loved baseball, and Rick and I spent hours playing catch and pick up ball in the neighborhood. We played on the same team at ANC, me as shortstop and Rick in center field. He was in college then, at a time when they still let college students play on the high school teams. I wasn't that good, but I could hit a little, and, as I said before, Simonses were so fast! In those days the baseball diamond shared space with the football field next to the firehouse. There was a snow fence to mark homeruns, and to my amazement, Rick became a homerun hitter. The big day for the Simons brothers came in a game against Lower Moreland where we faced Nishan Yardumian, at that time a budding phenom pitcher who was being looked at by baseball scouts. I went 2 for 3 and Rick hit a homerun, and the sports headline in the Breeze read "Simons brothers take down Yardumian", or something like that.

Rick and I both lettered in football, basketball and baseball. Unlike me in basketball, Rick could actually dribble and shoot. Teamed up with Ernie Glenn, Bob Glenn, Prescott Rogers, and George Chen, they won the Penn Jersey League Championship. I probably should have been a wrestler like my younger brothers, Jeremy and Jonathon.

Another thing Rick and I had in common was a love for music. Seeing me working on the guitar, he gave me a Johnny Cash album and talked about how, someday, we should write songs together. He would be the lyricist and I would write the music. A regular Gershwin team. Rick was a singer, and I remember seeing his barbershop group, The Cotton Woods, perform on the Glencairn stage, decked out in their maroon blazers, blue shirts, white pants and striped ties. Rick was joined by Gary Glenn, Don Robbins and Rich Nicholson, the

bass and heart of the group.

In 1966 Rick rode his bicycle across the United States. He rode all the way to California with his friend, Don Robbins. In California Rick got a job and bought a little Honda 90 motorcycle. When he decided to enlist, he sent me a letter saying he was going into the service and did not need his motorcycle anymore and was shipping it east to me. I was stunned! Truth be told, I would never have said that Rick and I were close. Yes, we both loved sports and shared many things in that area, but at this time in my life Rick was not cool, and I desperately wanted to be cool. Why couldn't he be cool, I would ask myself, like Peter Rhodes, or like Dale Glenn or Kenny Wren? They were cool and had cool girlfriends. My cousin Brian Simons was cool. Michael Lockhart called Rick, "Simmy-Sam" and I know it was not meant as a friendly nickname. I was embarrassed for my brother. I was embarrassed to be HIS brother. That he thought enough of me to send me this gift of a motorcycle was overwhelming to me. Overnight I became a motorcycle maniac and put up posters of Marlon Brando and Steve McQueen and Harley bikes all over my room. Maybe NOW I could be cool!

So, my brother ended up in Viet Nam. You can read much more about his life and his writings in the book "Promises to Keep", written by my mother Zoe Gyllenhaal Simons, and re-printed by my sister, Gillian Simons Mayer.

On January 5th, 1968, I was living in Childs Hall, where I was an RA for the high school dorm students who were living there while Stuart Hall was being re-built. The students were away for Christmas break, and I was alone in the building. It was a Friday. I was in the bathroom, shaving when my father pushed through the door and blurted out that Rick had

been killed. I remember hearing myself say, "Are you alright, Dad?" I was numb. All I could think of was, "Are you alright, Dad?" Of course he was not alright, but in the New Church we are taught that death is merely a change of state, that the body is gone, but the spirit lives on, why would he not be alright!

Many years later I was in a sharing group and the leader asked us to lie on our backs and think about some unresolved issue in our lives. He asked us to replay the incident or encounter over and over in our minds, creating a mantra. I knew, for me, that the issue of my brother's death, my inability to grieve about it, and my long-going resentments toward him was an unresolved issue, so I started replaying that scene of my father coming through the door, telling me that Rick had been killed and my replying "Are you alright, Dad". At this time in my life, a father of 2, the thought of losing one of my dear ones was unthinkable, and the words "Are you alright, Dad" choked me and I began to weep. I would sob and sob, until I had no more tears. I would re-play the scene in my mind and begin to cry again, like a newspaper that has been lit in the middle, the circle of flames eating away at the center and moving to the sides creating a larger and larger hole. And then suddenly in my vision I was flying above the clouds. The sound of the chopper was in my ear as I saw the jungle below between the clouds. And then we were descending, the chopper bouncing lightly as we found the ground. There was the sound of gunfire, machine gun bursts, and I found myself standing behind a soldier, looking over his shoulder as he took aim at my brother. I did not see him die, but I continued to weep as I lay there on the carpet, replaying the scene in the bathroom, with my father, in Childs Hall, on the

college campus, in Bryn Athyn. Many years later, in reading the book “Necessary Losses” by Judith Viorst, I learned that it was not uncommon for siblings to rejoice as well as grieve at the loss of a brother or sister whom their inner being perceives as a barrier to their parent’s love.

I quote from the citation given to Rick:

By direction of the President, under the Provisions of the Act of Congress, approved 9 July 1918, a Silver Star for Gallantry in Action is awarded to:

Sergeant David R. Simons, RA 199858 699, United States Army, Detachment B-36, Company A, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, Republic of Viet Nam, distinguished himself by gallantry in action while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the republic of Viet Nam: Sergeant Simons distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous action on 4 January 1968 while serving as a member of a special Ambush Patrol. Upon infiltration of War Zone “C” by helicopter the patrol moved one hundred meters to the northwest and established an ambush site along a trail. The Patrol Leader decided to move the patrol after the ambush had been established and as the patrol commenced to move the enemy savagely assaulted the rear. The rear security leader was killed instantly and Sgt. Simons rushed to the rear to check the pressing enemy advance. Sgt. Simons returned a heavy volume of fire while SP4 Ryan also came to the rear. SP4 Ryan was wounded and became pinned down by the relentless fire. In a courageous effort to aid a beleaguered comrade, Sgt. Simons exposed himself to enemy fire. The enemy, noticing this, shifted their fire to Sgt. Simons, which enabled SP4 Ryan to escape. Sgt. Simons received mortal wounds as he risked his life in order

that another might live. Sgt. Simons' gallantry in action was in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflects great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.

Today I am at peace with my brother's memory. He was a bright and diligent student, a talented and dedicated athlete, a young man of impeccable morality, a writer, a dreamer, but also a man of action and a brother worthy of my love, my respect and my admiration.

Chris Simons, a retired music educator, lives in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. You can hear his musical talent in the Bryn Athyn Cathedral Brass and the Pennview Brass Band. At 50 he turned in his motorcycle helmet for a pair of boots and a saddle and people in the area regularly see him riding in the Pennypack on his beloved horse, Betty. He has been married for 55 blissful years to Gail, a beautiful and talented career New Church educator, administrator, and artist. Together they have 2 children, Pamela and Gregory, and 2 grandsons, Jeffery and Fischer.



Join the Conversation!

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

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

Looking Back: Some Memories of Growing Up on the Old Academy Farm

The first in a three-part series

Vera P. Glenn

Introduction

In the fall of 2024, my childhood home, an old farmhouse, was taken down. To keep the house alive in my heart I tried to remember a special incident that had taken place in each room. Memories flooded in—wonderful memories not only of the house, but all aspects of growing up on the farm. Over the next months these became an informally written memoir which I shared with interested friends and family. Enthusiastic readers urged me to put this into print. After a little more shaping and a lot of cuts I submitted the manuscript to the Theta Alpha Journal. Though it was still too long for one issue, the editor accepted it to be printed in installments. And here is the first:

I was baptized Vera Louise by Bishop George de Charms. My parents were David and Edith Powell. I was born January 1, 1936 – a bitter winter: Mama told me it was so cold in the small back bedroom that I was sleeping in bed with them to keep me warm instead of in my lacy bassinet.

I loved living in the old farmhouse with its nooks and crannies, two sets of twisty stairs from attic to cellar, and up and down floor

levels. We lived in one side of the house, and my Powell grandparents, with some of their mostly grown children, lived on the other side. I loved growing up in the Academy Orchard. There was a wonderful big barn, a three-part springhouse, and a carriage shed with a corn crib attached. My Daddy and Grandpa were partners but had different ideas about farming. Grandpa was an old-fashioned farmer who loved working with horses, raising many different kinds of animals and a variety of crops. My Dad wanted to grow an orchard and to replace the horses with a tractor, a truck, and a car.

By the time I was four, the orchards planted in the early '30s were just coming into full bearing. The horses were gone, and the only animals left were the barn cats, kept to catch rats and mice, and the cow.

Early Memories

My very first real memory was of my Grandpa milking the cow. I was watching as the milk squirted into the pail, warm and foamy. The cow would stamp a hind foot every once in a while and swish her tail to chase off flies. When he finished milking, Grandpa pushed back the low stool, stood up, patted the cow on her flank and carried the pail into the passage. The cats were waiting. He poured milk into their empty saucers. They lapped eagerly and delighted me by purring at the same time. Then we were out the barn door, hooking the lower part, and with my hand in Grandpa's we walked toward the house. Light from the westering sun was dazzling our eyes. Grandpa took the pail of milk down to the springhouse to cool off overnight. Then he washed up for supper at the pump on the back porch. As he stepped up into the kitchen he said, "Run along now Vera. It's almost supper time and your mother will be looking out for you."

Some of the milk from the pail went into making butter. One of my fondest memories of Grandmother Powell was being in her kitchen on the other side of the house "helping" her turn rich milk into butter. The wooden churn was unlike any I'd seen in my story books. It stood on her kitchen table and not on the floor. It looked like a fat

drum. There was a lid on top and a crank protruding from its side. The crank rotated the paddles inside the churn; you could hear the milk sloshing around. I got a turn at the crank while Grandmother lifted the lid and peered inside to see if the butter was “coming.” When it formed on the paddles, she lifted them out and scraped the butter off, making it into patties. She asked me if I liked butter milk. I said I didn’t know. I’d never tried it. She poured a little from the churn into a glass, and I took a taste. Like Tigger in *The House at Pooh Corner* tasting ‘haycorns’ I said I didn’t like it, most emphatically and not very politely. She laughed.

Grandpa died in the fall of 1942. He was out in the orchard picking apples and had a stroke or a heart attack. One of the Academy students who was picking near him, ran to the barn for my dad, and he came in the truck and drove him back to the house. The doctor wanted Grandpa to go to the hospital, but he was stubborn and said he’d be fine after he rested for a bit. That evening he insisted on climbing the stairs to bed. It was his last effort. He died about midnight and the dog howled. I was asleep and didn’t hear it, but my dad told me, when I was older, that it was just like the old superstition.

After Grandpa died, my dad sold the cow, said he couldn’t be bothered with it and from then on, we got milk from Schmidts’ Dairy in bottles. In winter, sitting on the doorstep, the milk would freeze; the cream at the top pushing the paper cap up about an inch above the rim of the bottle. In spring the milk tasted of the wild garlic the cows chewed up with grass in the pasture. It was worse than buttermilk!

The story of how we got our dog, Wag, still tickles me. The Lyman girls, who sometimes babysat me, had brought a puppy home in the bicycle basket from a trip up into Bucks County. Their mother said “No.” Before taking it back, however, the girls thought they’d see if they could find a home for it. I fell in love at first sight with the fuzzy, tawny colored puppy. Mama was doubtful, but I begged, and we took it home to see what Daddy would say. Poor Daddy was sick in bed with a fever and too weak to resist his pleading little daughter.

I promised to look after the puppy, but I was young. Mother was the one who usually fed him. I played with him, but the one Wag (as I named him) took to most was my father. He followed him everywhere. If he was tied up, he'd slip the collar, rope and all, off over his head to run after my Dad and the truck through the orchard, or if the truck was parked at the barn he'd crawl under it to lie in the shade. As Dad had told me, Wag didn't stay a cute puppy long, but grew to be a big, rough, untrained dog. We still had barn cats, which Wag tolerated, but he was the Guardian of the farm.

Schmidts' cow pasture was only a flimsy wire fence away from our property line, and his cows would get bored and break through every once in a while. When I was older, I thought it was an adventure to try and chase them back, with Wag dashing ahead barking, and Dad and Mr. Sommers shouting and shooing. In a panic the cows tried to take off through the orchard in different directions, but finally they found the hole in the fence and shambled through, safely back home. Mr. Schmidt would come by with a few strands of barbed wire and patch the hole, and that would hold until the next time.

Besides Eddie Schmidt who delivered milk to our doorstep, and the bakery truck that brought soft white bread and tempted us with sweet things once or twice a week, there was the ice man. He carried the huge blocks of ice in big tongs round to the back porch – dripping they left a water trail in the dust. Grandmother had an ice box on the porch – a wooden chest, lined with some kind of metal. There were several doors, into various compartments. One hot summer day, I was on the back porch when the ice man came whistling round the corner with the ice. He chipped off a bit with his ice pick and gave it to me to suck.

Mother had a modern refrigerator in her kitchen. However, she shared my grandmother's vintage clothes washer that also stood on the back porch. It was a fat metal tub with four legs on castors, a hand wringer on the side and a hose out the bottom to drain the water. The water had to be poured into the tub from the pump close by. If one wanted warm water, it was heated on the stove. I was not

allowed to operate the clothes wringer, but I did help my mother hang the wet clothes on the line in our side yard with wooden pegs. The line was propped up by poles to catch the breeze. Nothing ever smelled as sweet and fresh as towels and sheets dried in the wind and sun.

The Academy Farm

It was my dad who told me the history of the Academy Farm and how the Powell family happened to be here. He had been born on his grandfather's fruit farm, out in Ohio in 1907, but moved with his parents and older sister to a farm in Maryland when he was little more than a toddler. It was his grandfather, S. A. Powell, who got interested in New Church education and wrote to John Pitcairn, the patron of the Academy. In the late 1800s Mr. Pitcairn had bought several farms and had them surveyed into lots, and members of the Church society in Philadelphia began building homes and moving out into the country. The first school building proved to be too small for the influx of students, so in 1901 a new, big, gray stone building, Benade Hall, was erected on land between Huntingdon Pike and Buck Road, and some other buildings were added. Enthusiastic about future growth, the Academy purchased another farm across Buck Road in 1904. The land was to be farmed until needed.

S. A. Powell, visiting his son's family on an isolated farm in Maryland, was appalled to find no school available. He began to work toward getting the Academy to hire his son, Arthur, as a tenant on the Academy farm, and he was successful. In 1914 Arthur and Mary Powell and 6 children, one a new baby, came to Bryn Athyn: Ruth, David, Joseph, Oliver, Hesper, and Benjamin. Two more: Mary and Sarah were born here. Over the years all eight children received a New Church education from the Academy schools, achieving Grandfather S. A. Powell's goal.

When the Powell family arrived on the Academy farm they found a good-sized 3 $\frac{1}{3}$ -story rectangular off-white house, painted stucco over fieldstone walls. The house had been built in two parts, c.1780

and 1806, each roughly square. The new half simply added onto the old with connecting doors cut between, and a staircase to all three levels on each side. At some point two additions were put onto the back of the house: a two-story wooden frame addition and an enclosed summer kitchen with a Dutch oven. There were three wooden porches, two big front doors, one ground level entrance down into the earthen floored cellar, a fireplace and chimney at each end of the house.

The Academy had made two major improvements to the house for the Powells. The first was central heating: a furnace, burning coal, was installed in the basement; it heated water for the clunky radiators that replaced the stoves. And second, indoor plumbing with pipes carrying water to a sink in the kitchen and a bathroom with a flush pull-chain toilet, sink and 6-foot-long claw-footed bathtub. The outhouse among the lilac bushes could be abandoned.

The other up-to-date convenience was a telephone mounted to the wall by the front door. It was a black box with a separate piece to hold up to the ear attached to the side. No dials or buttons, one rang up the operator and asked her to connect to the number wanted. The Powell number, as I recall, was "357".

There was, however, no electricity until 1930. In the evenings, a big kerosene lamp in the center of the dining room table provided light for the children to do their homework and their father to read the evening paper.

Dad said in those days the farm never made any money, barely paid the half of expenses asked by the Academy. It was difficult to get help. As soon as they were old enough the children were pressed into working. My father was driving a team of horses by the time he was twelve. Sometimes the Academy sent boys to work off their detention, but most of them had never worked on a farm and were almost useless. Sometimes the family rented out the back rooms in the house to bring in a little cash.

A Stirring

Helen Kennedy

I am filled
 Now that I am in my city's park
 My small return to nature
 Permitted to survive the onslaught of cement and
 asphalt;
 hidden
 protected
 not allowed to die
 fought for by our own collective need
 to live and breathe.

Somewhere from the deep
 Ancient feeling allow me to remember
 That I once did more than pound a typewriter to
 make letters.

- a trout leaps above the waters of the creek
 I am spontaneous once again!
- a cardinal quickly darts from tree to tree
 I am swift again and sure of my own limbs!
- a turtle slowly climbs a muddy rock
 intently I watch so lowly a creature

What was the spark that made my oldest of
Ancestors forsake his life of nature for the wheel?
Each step from him has slowly led astray
 until I gave this,
 his gift,
 my modern life today.

And what of God?
Did He not see
 the first wrong step of my Most Ancient forebear?
Can He not change the course of my own day
 and give to me that life of yesteryear?

“Return,” I softly hear
 and quickly look from creek to trees
There is no one
But still
I feel a gentle stirring...

Soon I am running, laughing, playing again...

Slowly,
From within
Comes a resolve
Convincing me
I can return
To stay forever!!
“How?? When??” Rush in to crowd!
 and I lose
 my fragile connection with our past.

I sit thinking
until it is time to go again and fulfill my quota
of workdays
only then
will I again
be free
to come and sit by this, my small clean creek,
whose waters loose the bonds of modern gods
and leave me alone enough to feel the pulse of my
own life.

And if', perchance,
The gentle summer's breeze
brings yet another stirring
I will be still
and trace the pathway of its flight
within,
where,
in an ancestral paradise is my forebear
waiting
to share
through the peacefulness of memories
our Earth's innocent, early life.

Helen can be contacted at hmkennedy98@gmail.com

Washington Society Theta Alpha Guild (TAG)

Annual Report 2024-25

New co-presidents Lauralyn Cooper and Sharon Kunkle, along with long-serving treasurer Kathy Johns, led the TAG through 4 business meetings (fall, late fall/holiday, winter and spring/elections), as well as gathering donations for presentation to the Pastoral staff and our dedicated accompanist organists. We provided another year of Souper Sunday sales, an after-service Sunday fundraiser that feeds a wide variety of folks in the congregation with delicious homemade bread and soups! Our wonderful Spring Banquet speakers were Lori and John Odhner, who used their musical talents and anecdotes to help us learn to be better listeners to one another. Ongoing communication helped us send a little sunshine cheer to anyone experiencing loss or health issues. Our new volunteer lead for New Church Day Children's gifts, Gillian Frazier, did a terrific job of organizing gift makers and wrappers so that delighted children could enjoy their gift at the Church's Birthday celebration Sunday.

Laws of Life Essay Contest

All high school sophomore (or 15-16-year old) girls world-wide are eligible to enter this contest. This essay is an opportunity to write about what YOU think is important in life. This is your chance to be heard – to write from the heart about one, or more, of your personal laws of life. Essays are to be in English (you may use Google Translate to translate the essay from another language into English). No name or identification can be on the paper itself to allow impartial judging. Remember to include your name and address on the envelope or email. You can see last year's winning essays printed in our Journal. Winners receive a certificate and a check: 1st Place: \$200 USD, 2nd Place \$150 USD, 3rd Place \$100 USD. Essays are printed in the Journal with writers' permission and as room permits. The essay guidelines are:

“The Laws of Life” are a set of rules, ideals or principles by which one should live:

- What do you value most in life?
- What is important to you?
- What ideals do you hold deep in your heart?

Think about the people and experiences that have helped you form these laws...

Pick a topic to write about:

- a personal experience/lesson learned that affects how you live/view your life now.
- an aphorism or quote that inspires or guides you.

You can use an analogy, a quotation or a story or parable.

No personal romantic relationships!!

Submissions are to be sent to Theta Alpha International PO Box 154, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009, USA, or emailed to membership@thetaalphainternational.org. Must be received by March 1, 2026.

Scholarships Available!!

Bryn Athyn College Scholarships

Two education scholarships will be offered for the 2026-2027 school year. This annual award is for the purpose of supporting women attending Bryn Athyn College of the New Church who desire to become New Church teachers and declare education as a major, minor or Interdisciplinary Degree.

The annual scholarship award amount is \$2,500, paid directly to the college at the beginning of each trimester, for up to 2 recipients. One award is for an incoming first year woman student and another award is for a current Bryn Athyn College woman education student. May be used toward tuition, fees, and/or books. Applications due March 1, 2026.

Three scholarships are available to women students of Bryn Athyn College of the New Church who have a 3.0 GPA and are studying **Religion** (major, minor or ID) or are **international** students. The \$2,500 scholarships are awarded to eligible recipients who exemplify the teachings of the New Church. These are annual merit-based scholarships that can be used for tuition, college fees, books or supplies. Applications due March 1, 2026.

Two scholarships are available to women attending Bryn Athyn College of the New Church earning a Master's Degree and have a GPA of 3.0 or higher. Each annual award is \$2,500, paid directly to the college at the beginning of each trimester. These are annual merit-based scholarships that can be used for

tuition, college fees, books or supplies. Applications are due April 1, 2026.

To apply: email scholarships@thetaalphainternational.org or see BAC website.

ANC Scholarships

Two annual scholarships are now offered for the 2026-2027 school year in the amount of \$2,500 for up to 2 young women who exemplify the teachings of the New Church. The Scholarship may be used toward tuition, books or fees. These are annual merit- and need-based scholarships and may be applied for yearly. Applications are due April 1, 2026.

To apply: email scholarships@thetaalphainternational.org

Scholarship Winners

2025 Bryn Athyn College Scholarship Winners

Educational:

Sophia Irwin \$2500

Leilah Glenn \$2500

MARS:

Jennica Nobre \$2500

2025 Girls' School Theta Alpha Silver Award Recipients

Isabella Marie Furness

Yvonne Paolina Prue

Websites and Blogs of Readers

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

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

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

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

Chandra Hoffman – writer: *chandrahoffman.com*

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

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

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