

NEW CHURCH *Life*

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

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2025



THE GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS

Every aspect of the Christmas story is a gift.

The ultimate gift to us is heaven. (page 438)

See also: A Vision for the General Church:

‘Send Me’ – Seven Years of Willingness (page 453)



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New Church Life

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

436	In This Issue
438	Editorials: <i>The Gifts of Christmas</i> • <i>Was He Unwelcome, Or Were They Simply Poor?</i>
444	Letters to the Editors
453	A Vision for the General Church: Send me – Seven Years of Willingness <i>The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.</i>
459	Isaiah's Prophecy of Salvation A Christmas Sermon by the Rev. Michael D. Gladish
466	Come to the Lord – A Christmas Sermon by the Rev. Malcolm G. Smith
474	From the Bishop's Office: Stillness – <i>The Rt. Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs</i>
476	Divine Light – <i>Alan Pendleton</i>
480	Become Something – Charter Day Address: <i>The Rev. Dr. Thane P. Glenn</i>
485	Spreading the Word and Growing the Church: New Christian Bible Project <i>Steve David</i>
491	<i>Listening to Eternity</i> : A Book by Dr. Aram Yardumian (Reviewed by <i>Bruce Henderson</i>)
496	Life Lines
510	Church News
526	Annual Report of the Secretary of the General Church
530	Directory of the General Church Clergy
548	Index for 2025
561	Announcements

New Church Life is available online back to 2006 at <https://newchurch.org/connect/subscriptions/new.church.life>. All issues can be researched back to 1881 at www.heavenlydoctrines.org.

In This Issue

Editorials (page 438) include:

- *The Gifts of Christmas*: Central to the joy of Christmas is giving gifts to those we love. Every aspect of the Christmas story which we treasure – from Mary and the shepherds to the wise men and John the Baptist – is about special gifts that help to magnify the Lord’s everlasting gift to us: heaven.
- *Was He Unwelcome, or Were They Simply Poor?* Everything about the Lord’s birth on earth is humble and poor. Indeed, He was born into a situation common among the poor people of Bethlehem but this reflects why He came – to heal the poverty of our own spirit and forever enrich us with His love.

Executive Bishop Peter M. Buss Jr., presents: *A Vision for the General Church: “Send Me.” Seven Years of Willingness*. We, as members and friends of the church, are called to be an active part of this vision, doing all that we can to respond with gratitude for all that we are given by the Lord and manifesting it in our lives in service to the church and our neighbors. (Page 453)

In a Christmas sermon, the Rev. Michael G. Gladish discusses the prophecies in Isaiah about the Lord’s coming, especially His “*Prophecy of Salvation*.” In a prayer within the service, he said: “Lord, as we turn to You in this season of Your coming in visible Human form, we pray that our worship may be inspired, and our minds focused on what You have done for us through Your life and the teachings of Your Word.” The salvation prophesied is all about “being rescued from spiritual poverty, grief, misery, the constraints of falsity, and all the heaviness that comes from our self-centered, worldly thoughts and cravings.” (Page 459)

In another Christmas sermon, the Rev. Malcolm G. Smith invites us to “*Come to the Lord*.” This is something to contemplate not only for Christmas but for the New Year as well – making the conscious decision to come to the Lord – each day and every day. He came to us directly when He was born into the world. He comes to us again as the “Spirit of Truth” in the revelation of His

New Church. We must come to Him just as purposefully. We must invite Him in. (Both of these sermons reflect the vision for the church offered by Bishop Buss.) (Page 466)

Writing From the Bishop's Office, the Rt. Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs reflects on the entrancing "*Stillness*" of the Christmas season. "Stillness is something desperately lacking in today's world – and the background noise only intensifies in all the preparations." But the angels came in silence. The Prince of Peace was born in a humble stable. He wants us to be calm, reflective and grateful. (Page 474)

Alan Pendleton offers a thoughtful poem – *Divine Light* – with an analysis noting that "this poem weaves Scripture, theological reflections from Swedenborg's Writings, and celestial imagery into a mix that celebrates the Lord's Divine triumph, His unity with the Father, and His transformative role as the Light of the world." (Page 476)

In his Charter Day address in the Bryn Athyn Cathedral, the Rev. Dr. Thane P. Glenn encouraged the students of Bryn Athyn College and the Academy Secondary Schools to "*Become Something*." "At our best," he said, "New Church education strives to be a good partner in your journey to become something. So, use your heart, your head, your hands. Ask questions. Express doubts. Get creative. Become something." (Page 480)

One of the most successful initiatives in the church in recent years is the New Christian Bible Study project and website headed by Steve David, which is reaching millions of people throughout the world. Steve offers a comprehensive update of their impressive and inspiring reach and accomplishments on many fronts – and in many languages. (Page 485)

Dr. Aram Yardumian, a professor at Bryn Athyn College and world traveler, has written a fascinating book – *Listening to Eternity* – about acclaimed Swedish composer Tommy Haglund, whose life and work has been significantly affected by reading Swedenborg. (Page 491)

Church News (page 510) includes:

- Eleven recipients of this year's Glencairn Award
- A report on the Academy's Charter Day, including Distinguished Alumni and Outstanding Volunteers for Bryn Athyn College and the Academy Secondary Schools
- A search for the next Principal of the Academy Girls School
- Highlights from the September meeting of the General Church Board of Directors, including a preview by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr., of his Vision for the General Church
- A report on the Midwest New Church by the Rev. Calvin Heinrichs
- The 150th anniversary of the Roseville New Church in Sydney, Australia

Editorials

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

THE GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS

Part of the joy of our Christmas celebration is choosing gifts for those we love and exchanging them in the spirit of the Lord's own gifts to us with His birth on earth.

Every aspect of the Christmas story is about gifts – culminating in the ultimate gift that the Lord offers to us: heaven.

The Everlasting Gift

It begins with the prophecy in *Isaiah*:

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

Darkness oppressed the earth with the fall of civilization, and it is no coincidence that Jesus was born at night. He came as a new light to lead us, heralded by the heavenly Star announcing His birth. The world had given way to spiritual darkness, haunted by ignorance, falsity and evil. The hells had become so powerful that the balance between heaven and hell was upset, impacting our human freedom to choose. People had forgotten God because they did not know Him. But there still were many – including the shepherds and the wise men – desperate for a new light to lead them. We follow that same star.

The Gift of Promise

For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end.

For centuries people knew He would come – and waited. Generations passed but hope prevailed. He came, of course, when the time was right for a new church to be born on earth, offering people a visible, knowable God who

had walked and taught among them. That was His everlasting gift to us: His presence in His Word.

That church, found wanting in the Last Judgment, has given way to the New Church descending from God out of heaven – a gift enriched with a crowning spiritual sense to help us understand all that His Word is teaching us in finding our way to heaven.

The Gifts of Humility and Trust

And the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin named Mary. And the angel said unto her: Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women. And the angel said unto her, fear not. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy Word.

Mary did not shrink from her calling and say: “Why me? I’m not ready for this. Can’t you find someone else?” She is hailed through all of history as the ultimate example of submitting to following the Lord and embracing His spiritual truth in her life. She is a model for how we all should respond when the Lord comes to be born in us. She took on a challenging role as a virgin mother because she had absolute trust in Him. She was humble, innocent and willing to be led by the Lord rather than her own will. She is an everlasting example for all who humbly walk the spiritual path that leads to heaven.

The Gift of Innocence

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in their fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And the angel said unto them: Fear not. And the shepherds said one to another, let us go now and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.

The shepherds were told they would find the Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. Swaddling cloths, we are told in the Writings, represent the truth that comes to us when we experience Divine love. The baby Jesus wrapped in swaddling cloths pictures the innocence we all need in approaching Him. The shepherds had that innocence, so they quickly overcame their fears and rushed to worship Him.

Shepherds are spiritual guides who lead us to what is good and true. We need to embrace that innocence to understand the Divine love that is born to nurture us. The shepherds represent the humility we all need in traveling from our fields to Bethlehem -- to see for themselves “this thing which is come to pass” – because faith and free will cannot be compelled. They must be our own choice. Keeping faith on our journey leads us to the Lord.

The Gift of Wisdom

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying: where is He that is born King of the Jews. For we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him.

The wise men following the star had real purpose in searching for the Baby Jesus. They are said to represent the knowledge of the ancient people – those who understood correspondences – and so were able to read signs in the skies and understand that God had come to earth. Their unique gifts – gold, frankincense and myrrh – represent all the qualities of love and goodness that flow from living a life of faith by loving the Lord and the neighbor. These are the gifts we should offer back to the Lord each Christmas from our own hearts, with love and gratitude.

The Gift of Purpose

Now when Herod the king had heard these words, he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called the wise men, he sent them to Bethlehem and said: go and search diligently for the young child and bring me word that I may come and worship Him also.

It is easy to gloss over Herod as part of the Christmas story. He doesn't belong with all the joy of the season, but he is essential to its meaning in our lives. The prophecies about the Messiah were understood as a powerful king coming for the Jews. So, Herod's power was threatened by this tiny baby, and he ordered the death of every male child under the age of two. That is as counter to the Christmas story as anything we can imagine.

But Herod is a reminder that even the joy and promise of Christmas comes with the enduring challenge to all of us – separately and together – to stand against the evil in the world and in our lives. He was a threat to the Lord's mission on earth – a mission He had to confront throughout His life on earth. And that makes his crucifixion and resurrection the ultimate gift of His life on earth: the hope of heaven.

The Gift of Repentance

Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And he shall go before Him in spirit and power, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

The miraculous birth of John the Baptist to Elizabeth and Zacharias came before the birth of the Lord because his mission was to baptize and teach

repentance – that we must first cease to do evil before we can truly do good, to shun sin so that we can fully live lives of loving the Lord and our neighbor.

The Two Great Commandments – on which “hang all the Law and the Prophets” – are simply but purposefully to love the Lord and love our neighbor, with all our heart, soul and mind. Shunning must come first, and that is why the evil Herod and the transformer John are important elements of the Christmas story.

The Gift of Faith

And behold there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, who was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel. And when he took the child Jesus up in his arms, he said: Lord, now let Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation: a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.

Simeon is a favorite in the Christmas story because he is a simple and devout man, waiting patiently through all his service in the temple for the sure salvation of the Lord. Like the humble stable as the birthplace of Jesus, rather than a splendid palace, Simeon is Everyman – the person we would like to be, forever able to live in peace with the Lord’s blessing. Many of the joys of Christmas are that simple and that basic. We can all hope to be like Simeon, content in the gift of the Lord.

The Everlasting Gift

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.

The Lord who came on earth 2,000 years ago still comes to be born in us. That happens when we read the Word, open our lives to connect with Him and be led by Him, and turn to Him with the innocence of the shepherds.

The Lord’s unconditional, loving presence is not something that just lingers from all those years ago but is with us constantly – knocking, teaching, leading and renewing. It is the Lord’s Christmas present to us, every day.

By coming on earth He reopened that pathway to the salvation of heaven. John the Baptist reminds us that first we must shun the hells and their evil, then truly love the Lord and our neighbor through lives of use. And so the loving gifts we present to those we love circle back as gifts to Him. This is the true meaning – and gift – of Christmas.

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

(BMH)

WAS HE UNWELCOME, OR WERE THEY SIMPLY POOR?

The story of the Lord's birth as it is given in Luke is usually portrayed in a way that illustrates these words in *John 1:11*:

"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him."

In the light of this passage, the statement that there was no room for them at the inn suggests that He was not well received, that Mary and Joseph struggled to find a place in Bethlehem.

The Writings do not comment on this point. But they do speak about the circumstances of the Lord's birth, saying:

"A manger" means the doctrine of truth from the Word, because "horses" signify the understanding of the Word; and thus a manger, as a feeding place for horses, signifies the doctrine of truth from the Word. This was done "because there was no place in the inn," an "inn" signifying a place of instruction. (This is the signification of "inn" also in Luke 10:34; 22:11; Mark 14:14; and elsewhere.) Because this was the state with the church at that time, who were then in mere falsities, through the adulteration of the Word, this was signified by "there was no place in the inn;" for if it had pleased the Lord He might have been born in a most splendid palace, and have been laid in a bed adorned with precious stones; but He would thus have been with such as were in no doctrine of truth, and there would have been no heavenly representation." (Apocalypse Explained 706.12)

An "inn" (*diversorium*) stands for a place of instruction, and since the people of the church then had no truths, but only falsities, the Lord could not be born in the inn. Instead, He was laid in a manger, which, as a feeding place for horses, stands for the doctrine of truth from the Word, the perfect place for Him.

This passage then makes the comment that if He had wished He could have been born in a palace surrounded by wealth. But that would not have been suitable because He was actually born into a world suffering in spiritual poverty – so there would have been no heavenly representation.

The implication here is that a major condition of the Lord's birth was that He was born among the poor. This is also a conclusion reached by modern Biblical scholars, who question the idea that the Lord was born in a stable.

These scholars point out that a village like Bethlehem, with an estimated population between 300 and 2,000, would have been unlikely to have an inn. Visitors like Joseph and Mary would have stayed with relatives. Since

Bethlehem was Joseph's "own city" that is, his hometown, it would have been inconceivable that he would not have stayed with family. There is no basis for the idea that Bethlehem was only Joseph's ancestral home, and that he was a stranger there. Instead, it is most likely the place where he grew up, and that is why he went there for the census.

Mary's family was also from that area, as is shown by her visit to Elizabeth only a few months before. Nor is there any reason to think that the birth happened soon after their arrival in Bethlehem. The statement is simply that "*while they were there the days were accomplished for her to be delivered.*" They might have been there for weeks or even months.

The poor villagers of Bethlehem had houses built into the hillside that featured a large open first floor, where the animals were brought in for the night, with an upper room or rooms for guests. This upper room was called, in Greek, a "*kataluma*" which is a word also used to mean an "inn." This room was likely occupied because of the census, or perhaps it was too small to accommodate a childbirth. The Lord was therefore born in the large family room, where the animals were also kept, and He was laid in a manger that would have been there.

The point is that the Lord was born into a situation that was common and undistinguished among the poor people of Bethlehem. The message of His birth, however, is not that He was born in lonely isolation surrounded only by farm animals, seemingly ignored by those He was born to save. Mary and Joseph would have most certainly been surrounded by family and others who attended to the birth, according to their local and family customs.

Although no relatives, other than Elizabeth, are mentioned in the account, the fact that Mary and Joseph remained in Bethlehem for a considerable period of time – described differently in the *Luke* and *Matthew* accounts – indicates that they were at home in Bethlehem and in no hurry to leave.

All of this is not to say that John's words about coming to His own and His own not receiving Him are untrue. This is a major theme of the Gospels. It is understandable that we should also read it into the story of the Lord's birth. The truth is that the precise details of His birth are not recorded and are open to varying interpretations. Biblical scholars may be mistaken.

But the Heavenly Doctrine seems to emphasize humanity's poverty and ignorance in speaking of the story of His birth. His birth in our hearts does not take place as we reject and ignore Him, but as we acknowledge our own spiritual needs and deficiency. The Christmas season is a time of humble celebration and gratitude, a time of showing love to one another, and of gathering with friends and family to remember the reasons and the results of His coming.

(JFS)

Letters to the Editors

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

Faith and Politics

To The Editors:

I write this letter with no small amount of reluctance, mindful of how easily such matters are politicized. Even so, I hope we remember that faith should inform politics – not the other way around.

My concern is the growing appeal of Christian Nationalism in the United States. For years the claim that America was founded as a “Christian nation” lived mostly on the fringes. Now, versions of it are voiced from prominent platforms. I do not question anyone’s patriotism or sincerity. I do ask fellow New Church readers to weigh this movement against principles we hold dear.

Two touchstones from our theology stand out.

First, faith cannot be compelled. Swedenborg’s Writings are insistent: genuine spiritual life is formed in freedom and according to reason; compulsion may change behavior, but it cannot create conscience. Whenever the state decides who is “in” or “out” religiously, the life of religion withers. That warning applies no matter which religion – or which version of Christianity – happens to be dominant.

Second, our public life is meant to be lived “honestly, justly and faithfully.” The measure of our civic participation is not victory for our tribe but the good we do for neighbor and nation – truth spoken in charity, promises kept, work done well, laws applied fairly.

In 2017, while living in the United Kingdom, I was watching television one evening when an episode of the BBC program *Who Do You Think You Are?* caught my attention. The episode followed the widely recognized BBC newsreader Sophie Raworth as she explored her family history. She learned that her four-times great-grandfather had gone to America as a child in the 1790s and returned a few years later. Discovering he had departed from

Birmingham, Sophie met with a local historian who leaned across the table and said something remarkable: “Your ancestor belonged to the most radical church in Britain at the time – the New Jerusalem Church.” That line stayed with me.

I reach back 235 years for a cautionary tale that feels extraordinarily prescient. In Birmingham in 1791, a small New Church society moved from rented rooms to a modest chapel – the New Jerusalem Temple – consecrated on June 19th, 1791. Within weeks, the Priestley Riots erupted – unleashed after a public dinner celebrating events in revolutionary France – “Church-and-King” mobs turned on religious dissenters – non-Anglican Protestants who refused to conform to the Church of England or recognize the monarch as its head.

The riots raged for days: chapels and homes burned; families fled. Among those affected were Sophie Raworth’s ancestors in the Birmingham New Church circle – a reminder that when church and national identity are fused, minorities suffer first. The New Church has worn the “radical” label before; it tends to be pinned on those who prize freedom of conscience.

Some may object: “But Christian Nationalism is Christian – wouldn’t a ‘Christian nation’ be good for us?” Here we must be candid. The Christianity envisioned in such movements typically centers on creeds and control that do not recognize the New Church as within the fold. If civil power is yoked to that vision, it will not protect Swedenborgian conscience; it will police it.

I have felt milder versions of this dynamic in the present day. When I launched a New Church YouTube channel (Spiritual Shorts - <https://www.youtube.com/@spiritualshorts43>), I expected the sharpest critiques from atheists. Instead, the fiercest pushback came from other Christians – especially online – who find our theology threatening. Why? Because we teach things like:

- God doesn’t demand blind belief.
- Hell isn’t a punishment; it is the soul’s rejection of love.
- Salvation isn’t a single prayer; it is a life of charity.
- And truth, without love, becomes dangerous.

These are not fashionable ideas. To some, they sound subversive. Yet they are precisely the ideas that make room for neighbor-love across differences, and for a politics chastened by humility.

I am an American by birth, now serving a New Church society in Sydney, Australia, with prior years in the U.K. That distance has given me a broader view of my home country and of our church. I love both. Precisely because of that love, I hope we resist any merger of altar and flag. The state’s role is to guard civil freedom and justice; the church’s role is to form hearts and minds

in charity and truth. Where those roles collapse into one another, both are diminished.

Let me close where I began. Faith should inform our politics, not the other way around. For New Church people, that means guarding freedom of conscience; seeking the common good “honestly, justly and faithfully”; and refusing the false comfort of enforced religion. We can be grateful for our countries, engaged in public life, and still keep first things first: God is Love, truth serves charity, and spiritual liberty is not the state’s to give – or to take.

Rev. Howard A. Thompson
Roseville (Sydney)
Australia

Evolution and God’s Will

To The Editors:

This is a response to the letter from Heulwen Ridgway (July/ August 2025 *New Church Life*, page 291: *Swedenborg Confirms – No Evolution in Creation of Humans*). Her letter was a discussion about the creation of humans and centered on quotations from a book she had that was made up from two small works through Swedenborg called *The Divine Love* and *The Divine Wisdom*.

I had read these works some time ago in the sixth volume of *Apocalypse Explained*, sort of tacked on near the end. What is in the sixth volume of *Apocalypse Explained* is the same work as the book she has. Her quotes match. Her conclusion about the creation of mankind is that it was a special creation and not just a continuation of evolution, and I agree with this. First, here are a few more quotes from these two works:

Love II: “. . . .add themselves in the womb in forms adapted to the reception of life in their own order and in their own degree, even to the last, which is suited to the modes of the nature of the world.”

Love IV “The Divine life applies itself to the uses themselves in every series and thereby gives life to every form . . . ”

Love VIII: “The entire animal kingdom, too, is full of uses; not an animal, from the little worm to the lion can be found that is not for use.”

Love X: Title: “There are genera and species of affections and varieties of species to infinity; and so of uses”

Love XI: "In a word, they (discrete degrees) are degrees of the formation of one thing from another; . . . All creation was effected through such degrees."

From the work *Divine Wisdom*: (See in *Apocalypse Explained* vol. 6. Section VIII. no. 2, which is quite long for inserting here. It is about the discrete degree between animals and humans. Basically, animals cannot rise above what is natural, mankind can.

To me, these quotes, with words as --every order, every series, every form, all creation – confirm that the evolution of the earth and its inhabitants not only exists but has been guided by and created by the Lord by means of those discrete degrees.

Now some things from history. Science has established the time when the earth was created and how long it has had life on it. At first that life was bacteria. It has grown into other single-celled creatures, then multi-celled and all the way up to us. Most of the living animals are long gone and much of what is left is only bones.

But if you are a paleoanthropologist you study old, human bones (paleo = old, anthropo = human). And in the 1950s scientists found that within living things the rate of decay of one carbon isotope to another had a fixed rate of decay per year, which ceased when the live thing died. This allowed scientists to calculate the age in years of the time of its death.

Since then there have been other ways that can go back further and be more accurate. So since then they have been digging up skeletons and seeing advances in standing upright and walking and the advancement of forming tools for variety, sharpness and ease of use. Into the minds of the scientists there came a realization that these creatures were approaching toward humanity. They called the different groups of these "*Humanins*."

One of the books I read had a picture of 10 different skulls, labeled as 10 groups of such. All of the advancements though were in the body, while the heads stayed pretty much the same "ape like." About 40,000 years ago the Neanderthals were the last of those Hominin groups; all the others were extinct.

During those years the brains of the Hominins had grown some, and the brain cases grew back and up, but stayed narrow. The Neanderthals had brains as big as ours, with ape-like skulls. Then about 30,000 years ago the Neanderthals had also gone extinct. Humans, *Homo Sapiens*, us, were left alone, with new heads, new brains and undoubtedly new souls.

All the body changes may have come along through the normal evolutionary changes that the Lord had set in motion since the time of the bacteria, but in my thinking the last jump was a special one. It gave us a spiritual interior that had never existed before, at least on this earth. The Lord's

end, we are told is a heaven from the human race, and at that time this could begin here. And because what is natural corresponds to what is spiritual the new skull which contains the new brain with its new mind and soul also came into existence.

The old skulls had long heavy jawbones with teeth that leaned out so that the face was tented out at the mouth, and apparently met point to point. The chin was rounded but receding. There was more space between the lips and nose. The nose itself was big and wide, the eye sockets were big and almost round but a little higher than they were wide so that the eyes were farther from the mouth. The forehead was raked back as was the front of the cranium. At the eyebrow line was a heavy bone ridge. The cranium, instead of being like a soccer ball at the rear, looked a little bit like a football. The whole thing from chin to the end of the cranium looked stretched out and leaning back.

If you were looking at a new skull from 40,000 years ago it would look just like the one you might see in a doctor's office. The features are smaller and closer together, the forehead is taller and almost vertical. Above the eyes the cranium gets wider, not narrower. From the side there is a small ridge across the front of the chin, the area around the mouth is a vertical line as is the area around the eyes. And the forehead also, nothing swept back. The teeth are not slanted.

They come together with a slight overbite, and there is no tenting of the mouth. The back of the cranium is a ball. From the front the eye sockets are smaller and squarish, almost flat on top, and the nose hole smaller and thinner. Here is where you notice the widening of the cranium above the eye line

The fact that this becomes universal in the human race when the Neanderthals becomes extinct tells me that the changes made to the soul were that would create a new body while it was in the womb, without any help from outside, tells me that this change was His way of finally bringing an end to the evolution of mankind and giving Him the possibility of angels, which was His will's end.

Joseph S. David
Indianapolis
Indiana

How's That Again?

To The Editors:

The editorial by the Rev. Jeremy Simons (*New Church Life*, July/August, 2024, Pages 223-229, "Derived Doctrine") was eye-opening. Rev. Simons' discussion about the history of the "derived doctrine" concept in the New Church answered a lot of questions, but it also raised some ancillary considerations.

I remember, in the days when doctrinal classes were conducted in the gymnasium of the old Assembly Hall (now the Mitchell Performing Arts Center in Bryn Athyn), Bishop George de Charms gave a series of classes wherein, as I vaguely remember, he seemed to be saying that some people may be granted to experience perceptions of truth not necessarily granted to others, and that he humbly believed that he himself might be able, in his unique position as Bishop, to promulgate doctrine from his personal understanding of all three Testaments. He cited a lot of the Writings by Swedenborg to support this idea, but I don't remember them. Still, my thoughts about "creating doctrine" have left me confused ever since. Just what is doctrine, anyway?

The *Wikipedia Dictionary* says: "*Doctrine (from Latin: doctrina, meaning "teaching, instruction") is a codification of beliefs or a body of teachings or instructions, taught principles or positions, as the essence of teachings in a given branch of knowledge or in a belief system.*"

I have mostly thought that our doctrine must be everything that the Lord has taught and that the church as a whole believes. If that's right, shouldn't all three Testaments therefore constitute our doctrine, maybe like one whole body of good, truth and use?

The testimony of the Lord is true and unchanging (*Arcana Coelestia* 2842):

The Divine is unable to confirm from any other source than Himself, and that which He confirms is unchangeable because it is eternal truth. Whatever Jehovah or the Lord utters is eternal truth, since it comes from the very Being (Esse) itself of truth. But He confirms a thing seemingly with an oath, as He does here and elsewhere in the Word, not because that thing is then more true, but because He addresses Himself to persons who do not accept Divine truth unless it is confirmed in that way.

So, where did the concept of "man-ipated" doctrine come from? Is it accepted by the clergy and laity of the New Church that it is the duty of the clergy to continually refine church "doctrine" as derived, or drawn, from the Word, (the Old and New Testaments) by means of Swedenborg's Third Testament, with the aid of study and Divinely-granted perceptions? Is every sermon preached simply a form of "derived doctrine"? I wonder, is there a subtle difference between "confirming doctrine" and "deriving doctrine"?

Rev. Simons' editorial quotes 11 places in the revelation through Swedenborg where it is stated that doctrine *must be derived (or drawn) from the Word!* But none of these quotes appears to say that it is the duty of "man" to do the derivation or drawing out. That seems to be implied, and it may be so stated elsewhere in the Writings, but it is not clearly stated in these quotes.

Swedenborg was certainly a man of the natural world, but he was especially

prepared by the Lord to serve as the natural/spiritual anchor for the Lord's Second Coming. And anyone who has read any of Swedenborg's Writings knows that his statements of "doctrine" are all backed up by numberless confirming quotations from the literal Word, exactly as required by all 11 of Rev. Simons' selected quotes.

Indeed, even some of the works of Swedenborg are actually called "doctrine," such as *Doctrine of the Lord* and *Doctrine of Life*, and others. It sure looks as though the Writings themselves are Divine Doctrine and, as prepared through Swedenborg's immense scholarship, his Writings are all backed up and copiously confirmed by the literal *Word of the Lord*.

Rev. Simons has pinpointed what may be the beginning of the idea of derived doctrine in the New Church. He has found that in a 1921 article in *New Church Life*, the Rev. E. E. Iungerich's first sentence was: "The Writings are not to be classed as doctrine derived from the Word." That's astonishing! But, he explains: "For they are a Divine revelation, Divine Doctrine, and therefore the Word. Being the Word, they themselves require doctrines to be derived from them and to be formulated by the men of the Church for the sake of understanding them."

That seems to be a somewhat pontificating statement. Is it supported by the Writings or the Word? Isn't he saying that because the Heavenly Doctrines are the "Word" (I think that in itself may be a derived doctrine) the "Heavenly Doctrines" have to be further-doctrinized?

Being in a lucid, printed form that the laity can understand, is it the Lord's intent that Swedenborg's Writings should be further refined by mankind? Maybe so, but presently, as an untrained layman, it is a somewhat confusing concept to me. Anyway, Rev. Iungerich goes on to observe that differences between organizations of the New Church are the result of non-agreement with each other from differences in *derived doctrines*! What a surprise! It is apparent that all of the Christian churches, beyond the Early-Apostolic Church, did lots of man-made doctrinalizing, but has that helped to bring heaven upon earth?

Rev. Simons found that in 1922, Bishop N. D. Pendleton said, in a *New Church Life* article that "derivation of doctrine is a vital function of the Church." The bishop opined that derived doctrines are a sign that the "Holy Spirit" is indeed operating and that there is "spiritual enlightenment" present in the Church. He said: "Thus, the Lord guides the Church. For this reason, the preservation of the soundness and purity of derived doctrine is of serious moment to all, and is a matter of especial concern to those who teach."

Well, in the end, the entire Writings themselves firmly declare to me: "I AM THE LORD THY GOD and THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE MY FACE." Plain-spoken or derived, shouldn't that be the heart of our loving and true doctrine?

Thank you, Rev. Simons, for your careful treatment of a very historically important subject.

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Response from the Rev. Jeremy F. Simons:

Thank you for those thoughts and for giving me the chance to clarify. The point of the editorial was that there is no such thing as “derived doctrine.” The category is one that has been invented due to the pejorative implications of the word “derive” in English, implications that are not present in the Latin original. The actual teachings are merely saying that our doctrine, or our teaching, should be from the Word.

It is a simple idea, the point being nothing more complicated than what we believe and what we teach should be from the Word and not from things that we make up. So, it is true that the Word is doctrine, because it is what we ought to teach and what we ought to believe.

It is also true that things people teach and believe are often not quite in accord with what the Word says, and so it is important to try to make sure that what is taught and believed in the church really are from the Word. The issue, unfortunately, is that sometimes this is a challenge when something that we believe and teach is not stated simply and directly word-for-word in the Word and must therefore be demonstrated and clarified by bringing together multiple teachings. This is why scholars write papers and debate topics that some people care about and others simply find confusing.

As to the point about someone seeing the truth more deeply than we do, this is something that is true in every category of knowledge. A professional in any field is likely to understand the subject matter better than a layperson. That is the purpose of needing qualifications to be a professional. This is complicated when it comes to religion by the fact that a regenerating person will see things more deeply than one who is not regenerating, regardless of education and qualifications. But whereas professional qualifications can be formally recognized, no one can claim to be more regenerate than others or be formally recognized as an authority in religion based on the level of regeneration. Anyone can claim to be enlightened, but enlightened people don’t typically make that claim.

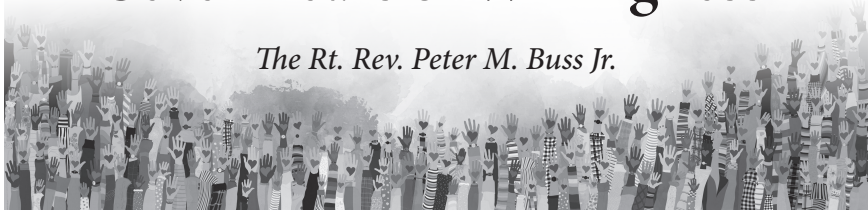
So, there is no such thing as derived doctrine. The things taught and believed in the church may be consistent with what is taught in the Word, or they may be at variance with it. It is a responsibility of the clergy to try to make

sure that what is taught is from the Word, and it is every person's responsibility to decide for themselves whether what they hear and what they believe are actually from the Word or not.

A VISION FOR THE GENERAL CHURCH

“Send Me” Seven Years of Willingness

The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.



Imagine for a moment seven years down the road of life, to the next significant chapter in the book of your life. Where would you like to be? What would make that chapter, your story, more meaningful, more reflective of blessing, more Lord-centered, and more purposeful?

Imagine too, a church filled with people who are all striving the best they can in these directions, who are sincerely grateful for the inspiration, tools and support they receive in this spiritual home. To the extent that people lean into the church in this way, the next chapter in the church's book of life will be vibrant and beautiful, with thousands of people consistently utilizing the worship services and activities of the church as a valued help in their lives.

What would make this vision real, on a personal level and for the church at large? I write to outline the ways we could organize our collective and personal energies under the theme: “*Send Me: Seven Years of Willingness.*”

“Send Me!”

In this context, I draw your attention to the prophet Isaiah, and the voice of the Lord saying in his hearing: “Whom shall I send and who will go for us?” In response this man's immediate answer was: “*Here I am! Send Me.*” (Isaiah 6:8)

I invite you to imagine that you are Isaiah in this story, or that you are in an Isaiah moment. Isn't it true that the Lord is constantly laying before each of us opportunities to serve? He needs us to step forward for the ones we love and the causes we value. In so many ways His voice calls out to us saying: “*Whom shall I send?*” Can we be people who consistently and with intention say: “*Here I am! Send me?*” “*I'll do that.*” “*I'll step forward.*” “*I see that it's my responsibility to care and extend and serve and change.*” “*Help me, Lord, to do Your will.*”

Broadening out a bit, it is interesting to look at the stories in the Lord's Word, noticing how often this theme repeats itself. The Lord called Abraham, Jacob,

Moses, Joshua, David, Deborah and Barak, Jonah, and so many others to serve Him in significant ways. Their responsiveness and cooperation with the Lord, although not always as immediate as with Isaiah, forms the structure of Israel's covenant recorded in the Old Testament.

It is similar when we turn to the New Testament, beginning with Mary who responded to the invitation to be the mother of the Lord Himself by saying: "*Behold*

the maidservant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to Your word." (Luke 1:38) This is also the reason we know the disciples by name: Peter, Andrew, Matthew, Philip, Nathaniel and the rest, who responded to the Lord's call: "This responsiveness was also what led to multitudes of people gathering to hear the Lord's messages. Then there is the closing image in the book of Revelation: "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely." (Revelation 22:17)

"Sent."

In this vein, I draw attention to another story that serves as a wonderful complement to Isaiah's commission, to a time when the Lord called 70 people together and "*sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.*" (Luke 10:1) While we do not know for sure, I like to think of these people as men and women, young and old, of Jewish and other descent. As such they represent you and me and so many other ordinary people who can respond in similar fashion to the Lord's call.

In this particular case, there is significance in the number "seventy." We learn that "seven" represents "what is holy and utterly inviolable." (*Arcana Coelestia* 433) We can think of the many times that seven or its derivatives appears in Scripture: the days of creation, the Sabbath day which is to be kept holy, and seven lampstands – in the Tabernacle and in the vision of the Lord in the first chapter of *Revelation*.

Peter's question to the Lord about forgiveness is relevant here: "*Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?*" (Matthew 18:21) We note the Lord's high-bar response: "*I do not say to you up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.*" (18:22)

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Reflecting on this story, it's much more universally applicable than in the context of forgiveness. It's about love that is poured into the things that matter most to us: our core relationships, our spiritual lives, our desire to be useful, and our willingness to respond to the opportunities the Lord places before us. This is identified in the Heavenly Doctrines as a love that “*knows no limits*” (*Arcana Coelestia* 433), that gives “*always without counting*.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 257:4) Imagine pouring that much energy into what matters most.

Returning to the sending out of the 70, we focus on the task they were given. They were sent to deliver a three-fold message: of peace, of the kingdom of God, and of healing. (See *Luke 10:5-9*) I love the way that “sent” theme shows up in the Christmas story, in the form of Gabriel who was “sent to speak to you and to bring you these glad tidings.” (*Luke 1:19,26*) Beyond Gabriel's message to Zacharias and to Mary is the very fact that he is an “angel,” which literally means “*one who is sent*.” (*Apocalypse Revealed* 344)

We can recall what is also taught about angels, that they “*serve as [the Lord's] ministers, so that they may have an active life, and from this derive happiness*.” (*Arcana Coelestia* 6482) We, too, as angels-in-the-making, are called to serve from the Lord, to be willing to be sent by Him, to respond to His promptings to care and to extend ourselves. It's a beautiful way of describing the goal of our spiritual development.

The Voice of the Lord.

We turn, then, to the other side of the “sent” equation, to the Lord who is doing the sending. We hear the familiar words of Scripture: “*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me*.” (*Revelation 3:20*).

The voice of the Lord is also spoken about in a beautiful way in the story already referenced of sending out the 70. In the version of that “sending” recorded in *Matthew*, we hear that the Lord “*was moved with compassion*” for the multitudes, “*because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd*.” (*Matthew 9:36*) Then comes His voice saying: “*The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest*.” (9:37-38) This same voice, full of that same ardent love, is described as follows in the Heavenly Doctrines:

The Lord, out of Divine love and so out of Divine zeal, [calls] all people who have a spiritual affection for truth and think about heaven, and [summons] them to the New Church and to conjunction with Himself, thus to eternal life. (Apocalypse Revealed 831)

Clearly, the Lord has nothing but our welfare at heart, in the present and

also extending into eternity. From that loving perspective He calls out to us with messages we need to hear, with things that He needs us to do, and with roles He invites us to fill. We respond by striving to be angelic, to be “sent,” to be filled with love that knows no limits, to step forward by saying, “I’ll do that” – “Here I am! Send me.”

What could that look like?

Let me remain for a moment on the personal, rather than organizational, level. Being responsive to the Lord’s voice could mean:

- Focusing proactive attention on our ways of being useful.
- Showing up as the best husband or wife or parent or child we can be.
- Resolving to improve in an area of life through self-examination and repentance.
- Repairing a relationship through the process of reconciliation and forgiveness.
- Determining to put more energy and priority on the spiritual dimensions of life (e.g. more frequent attendance at worship).
- Taking on a significant volunteer project for an organization that matters to us.
- Embracing a heavenly quality of honor, innocence, or otherness.
- Sharing the truths you love with others and identifying the Source.

Most of us would agree that to the extent we are listening and remain responsive in these ways, to the same extent the Lord will be able to lead us and bless us. We will have healthier relationships, we will experience release from some of the habits and hereditary reflexes that have been holding us back, we will experience the joy inherent in giving of our time for the betterment of others, and we will increasingly discover our purpose.

Turning to the level of the church, or to an organizational manifestation of this theme, I draw attention again to the title: “*Send Me – Seven Years of Willingness.*” Imagine for a moment that we are able to sustain collective

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energy and activity within the church over the next seven years, in this chosen direction. Would the Lord be able to bless us with the following reality?

Within seven years, thousands of people will have come to love and treasure the revelation of the Lord's Second Coming, and as a result are responding to the Lord's call saying, "Here I am! Send me." (Isaiah 6:8)

This church is focused on helping people live their faith in ways that bring blessing, with the underlying premise that "you are needed!"

It brings people into the presence of the Lord who sees their capabilities and potential and asks them consistently to step forward. It inspires, equips and supports people to be more angelic for the people and causes that matter most to them.

As a result, the General Church is full of people who show up in needed ways, who have compelling stories of purpose that motivate others to their own ways of "living their faith that bring blessing."

For this description to become reality, the church would need to focus its energies in several important ways.

- It will sponsor a shared conversation about this seven-year window into how we can serve together.
- It will focus attention on the incredible gift of the revelation of the Lord's Second Coming, on the Heavenly Doctrines and its inherently attractive messages that people can't find anywhere else.
- It will invite people to be partners in this collective effort of organizational serving, including pastors, teachers, board members, administrators, members and friends.
- It will develop programs that feed people's desires to step forward in the individual ways listed above.
- It will capture stories and examples of people who are doing exemplary work so that others might have a visual image of what they could aspire to in their own lives.
- It will embrace and celebrate many congregational efforts to manifest this theme.
- It will train people to speak about the things they love in the Word, or what has served as a strong foundation in their lives.
- It will partner with other organizations with similar approaches to the Lord in His Word.

The truth is, the next chapter of your book of life will be written, as will the book of life of the General Church. Where do we want to be in the next few years? I want to see the church filled with people who know they are needed and from love can make a difference, who are living their faith in simple ways and also discovering more enduring, purposeful ways of being a source of blessing at the hands of the Lord.

I want to see all of us in this church listening for the Lord's voice and responding: "Here I am! Send me." With the church energized to feed that desire, and with all of us leaning in, I look forward to discovering what the Lord has in store.

*I want to see the church filled with people who know they are **needed** and from **love** can make a **difference**..*



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Isaiah's Prophecy of Salvation

The Rev. Michael D. Gladish

Lessons: Isaiah 61; Luke 4:14-24; True Christian Religion

In our lesson from Isaiah 61:1-3 we read that the prophet was sent to his people to do five things:

1. to preach good tidings to the poor
2. to heal the brokenhearted
3. to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound
4. to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God
5. and to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness

As we prepare for our celebration of the Advent, it seems useful to focus on what the Lord actually accomplished by coming into our world, which was nothing less than to provide for the salvation of the whole human race. But what does that really mean? These verses from Isaiah offer us a beautiful summary explanation.

We know that the original Hebrew of our text has the name, YHWH, or Jehovah, where we see the word, Lord. The prophet actually said: *"The spirit of Jehovah God is upon me"* because the Lord, as we know Him, had not yet come into the world, and Jehovah is the Hebrew word often translated as "Lord" out of respect for the holiness of the original Hebrew. But the verses prophesy, or predict, this event, and as we heard from Luke, when He began his ministry. Jesus read those words in the synagogue in Nazareth, declaring that they were indeed fulfilled in Him. (*Luke 4:18-21*) So, what does the prophecy say about the Lord's mission?

Each of things Isaiah listed, including the image of "beauty for ashes" and "the oil of joy," associated with comfort and consolation, is deeply symbolic

and deserves our thoughtful attention. Together they provide a good working explanation of the whole process of salvation.

Let's begin with the Lord's preaching *good tidings to the poor*. We know from the Sermon on the Mount (*Matthew 5:3*) that this is not just a reference to worldly poverty, but to "the poor in spirit." We also know from the Heavenly Doctrine that this refers to those who humbly acknowledge their sins and are willing to repent and be reformed. The "good tidings" the Lord proclaimed were that *when* we repent, we can experience His instantaneous mercy and forgiveness.

This is huge, and something we need to learn to appreciate with real conviction. True, we may not (in fact, probably will not) realize instantaneous improvement in our outward lives, but inwardly we can know – for certain – that the Lord is with us and will help us get there. These are the "good tidings" the Lord brings all of us as a result of His work in the world.

Now let's think about His work of *healing the brokenhearted*. This is easy to see in the stories of the New Testament, where the Lord routinely contrasts His forgiveness and mercy with the harsh judgments of the religious leaders of His day.

To the woman caught in adultery, the sick and lame, the sinner humbly praying in the synagogue, and many others, the Lord did not judge or condemn but had a simple message: "*I am the way, the truth and the life.*" In other words: "*Follow Me, and I will lead you to a better life!*" It is the same today, especially when we suffer from spiritual sickness, hardship and pain. We just need to be patient, and careful, and remember to follow the rules. This is how our broken hearts can be healed.

But what about "*proclaiming liberty to the captives*"? Many people in New Testament times had been held captive, not just by harsh rulers, but by harsh teachings about rules and customs that made life really difficult to enjoy freely.

In His teaching the Lord explained what these rules and customs really meant and showed that having a good life is not so hard after all. In fact, it's easy! All we have to do is listen to Him and co-operate with Him. Then we will be able to feel the healing, freeing power of His love. In the end, this is all about making choices, knowing that the Lord will support us if we make the right choices. Still, we can only make those right choices when we know what is right, and what we should be doing.

In our recitation the Lord said: "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*" (*Matthew 5:4*) That mourning is the grief we feel over the things we know are not right in our lives, and it is the fundamental condition necessary for reform, so that we can be comforted. Often when we are in this state we despair of ever feeling free of it, knowing that everything we have ever thought or done is lodged in our memories, contributing to our experience of ourselves.

But remember, too, that liberating teaching repeated several times in the Heavenly Doctrine: “If a person believed, as is the truth, that all good and truth originate from the Lord, and all evil and falsity from hell, he would not appropriate good to himself and account it meritorious, nor would he appropriate evil to himself and account himself responsible for it” (Arcana Coelestia 2606, 3812:2; New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine 2787; Heaven and Hell 302; Divine Providence 320)

The business of repentance and reformation is simply about making choices, knowing that the Lord does not regard us as we were, or as we might be, but as we **are** in our intentions at any given time.

On the point of liberation from captivity, “and the opening of the prison to those who are bound,” remember that to be a captive in the spiritual sense is to be constrained by evils or falsities. Indeed, the Lord said: “Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin,” (John 8:34), but He also said: “If you abide in My Word, you are My disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31-32)

The Lord taught, and still teaches us today, everything we need to know in order to be released from the bondage of bad attitudes and wrong or foolish ideas. In effect, He has shown us how we can be saved from these influences if we will follow His instructions. Actually, we are saved; we are predestined to heaven, but we can't receive that salvation, we can't accept that predestination without co-operating. (Think of a lifeboat being offered to a drowning man, who for whatever reason refuses to get in, or a rope being thrown to someone being swept toward a crashing waterfall who won't grab on to it.) But when we co-operate, our liberation, our predestination is secured.

The next characteristic of salvation listed in Isaiah's prophecy is that He will “proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Jehovah), and the day of vengeance of our God.” So, what is this “acceptable year” and what is this “day of vengeance?” Why Jehovah in one case and God in the other? And how does vengeance of any kind fit with the Lord's infinite love?

Well, “the acceptable year” just means “the year of acceptance,” or “the time of good pleasure,” and it is about any time when people please the Lord by making good choices. And vengeance comes from the word, revenge, which

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means getting even, but the Lord doesn't use that word the way we do. What He means by it is that people get what they deserve. So "the day of vengeance" is anytime people face the consequences of their evil.

Of course, we know that the Lord won't really exact vengeance, but it will seem that way to those whose loves are evil, as they blame the Lord for their problems rather than taking personal responsibility. Besides, in the symbolism of the Word, "God" represents Divine truth, as distinct from good. And we know that truth can be harsh, even damning to anyone who is out of order, whereas "the acceptable year" is said about the Lord, or "Jehovah," whose name represents the goodness of love and mercy.

So, any time the Lord comes to us, He will fulfill in perfect love all of our spiritual aspirations, and in perfect wisdom permit us to experience the consequences of our bad choices, thus preserving our sense of freedom and responsibility.

All of this applies to all of us every day ever since the Lord glorified His human nature, and even more since the detailed revelation for the New Church was published. We have salvation at our fingertips through the pages of the literal and spiritual senses of the Word. Or, if we choose it, we have the judgment of our own bad habits to condemn us. And this will, indeed, *"comfort all who mourn, [and] console those who mourn in Zion."*

Wait, what? Why should anyone's suffering make us feel better? Well, it won't, but think about all the people in the world who don't know the truth, or who are misled by wrong interpretations of the Word. These poor people, like the helpless victims of gangs or international aggression, suffer every day at the hands of their persecutors. And while they may not wish any evil to them on this account, surely they are comforted when the aggression is stopped and those enemies have to face the consequences of their crimes, preventing them from doing any further harm. And so it is for us today.

Speaking of comfort and consolation, we know the Holy Spirit is referred to in John's Gospel as "the Comforter," and in some translations, "the Helper." (*John 14:26*) This is also referred to as "the Spirit of Truth." (*John 16:13*) So, here again, we see the gift of salvation in the help and comfort of knowing what is true, so that we can cooperate with the Lord and receive His blessings.

As Jesus said: *"For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth."* (*John 18:37*) And not only bear witness to it, but fully glorify it, removing all impurities so that we can have a clear understanding of all the laws of order that provide for our peace and well-being – if only we will pay attention.

Now we come to the part of the prophecy that promises to give those who mourn *"beauty for ashes, [and] the oil of joy for mourning."* Here we need to remember the ancient Jewish custom of literally covering themselves – or

even rolling in – dust and ashes as a way of expressing shame or humility. We don't do this sort of thing today, but we all know the feeling of shame and embarrassment about doing something wrong, knowing we don't deserve anything better than dust and ashes. But here's the thing: if we are willing to admit we were wrong, and ask the Lord to help us do better, He can turn the whole situation around, and give us new feelings of peace and real blessing.

So, the ashes of humility can be replaced by the oil of heavenly joy! Not only is oil a natural salve for injuries, it actually represents the goodness of love, which is exactly what provides for and promotes our salvation from all sorts of bitterness, meanness and self-pity. In that context, remember what the angel told Joseph about the Son that would be born of Mary: "*You shall call His name, Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins*" (Matthew 1:21) Not the sins of the Romans, the Greeks, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, or any worldly powers today, but from our own sins when we turn to Him and keep His commandments. (John 14:21-23)

There is an appearance that if we do this, subordinating our own loves to His teachings, we will lose ourselves in the process. But the amazing thing is that the more we do it, the more closely we are conjoined with Him, the wiser and happier we become, and the more we feel like we are masters of ourselves. (Divine Providence 33-44) It surely is one of the miracles of a heavenly life, but it requires our cooperation as we freely choose to participate in the process.

Finally, we have "*the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.*" Here again, recall the Sermon on the Mount, where the Lord blessed the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, the hungry, the thirsty, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and all who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness (or justice). These last, especially, are told to "*rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven.*" (Matthew 5:3-12)

This rejoicing really is the praise referred to in *Isaiah* – praise that springs from acknowledging His Divine providence in every detail of our lives, and being truly thankful for His love and wisdom, no matter what.

And note, our praise of the Lord is referred to as a garment. Why is that? Well, just as a garment is an external thing, covering our bodies for modesty, protection or warmth, so our praise of the Lord is at first an external, intellectual thing, a matter of conscience until our will "catches up" and we really feel the blessings in our circumstances.

Yes, we may say that the Lord knows what He is doing, even if we don't feel it very deeply at first, and even if we have to suffer to learn. But this "garment of praise" can come to reflect a much deeper reality in time, a reality represented by the "*trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that they may be glorified.*"

Trees in the Word symbolize human life, from the roots to the branches, leaves, flowers and fruit. But here's a point to ponder about that reference

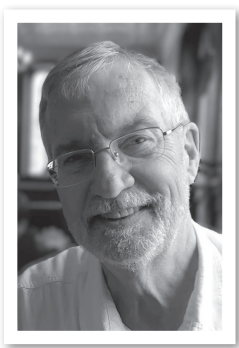
to trees: the Hebrew of that passage does say that it is the Lord who will be glorified by this transformation, which is certainly true, but it is also true that **we** will be glorified, that is, made new, better, brighter, and happier by this work.

The Lord doesn't need our paltry praise to be glorified – or for any other reason. He is glory itself, the sun that shines on the evil and on the good in every circumstance. (*Matthew 5:45*) But His plan, His purpose, His will, is that **we** should experience His glory as if it were our own and so enjoy the blessings of a truly spiritual life. (*Divine Providence 44*)

This is the very definition of salvation – being rescued from spiritual poverty, grief, misery, the constraints of falsity, and all the heaviness that comes from our self-centered, worldly thoughts and cravings. But can we believe it? Can we receive it? The Lord knows we can. It is why He came into the world! It is the power He gave us by subjugating the hells and glorifying His Humanity. And so He urges us to accept this gift with His help in a simple life according to the teachings He has provided in His Word and in His Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church.

*This is the very definition of **salvation** – being rescued from **spiritual poverty, grief, misery, the constraints of falsity, and all the heaviness that comes from our self-centered, worldly thoughts and cravings.***

Amen.



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Prayers included in this service

Lord, as we turn to You in this season of Your coming in visible Human form, we pray that our worship may be inspired and our minds focused on what You have done for us through Your life and the teachings of Your Word.

Please settle our hearts for this brief time of reflection and praise, so that our spirits may be lifted up and our thoughts informed by the powerful messages of prophecy and its fulfillment in the lessons we will consider today.

Bless us and keep us in the sphere of Your wisdom, so that we can feel the wonder of Your love.

Amen.

Lord, Jesus Christ, please help us not only to understand the principles of our salvation, but to believe that we are saved, even now, as we make the simple, daily decisions to cooperate with You.

Help us to remember that our whole history is nothing more or less than preparation for today, and that our whole future is in Your hands, as we learn from our mistakes, and remember Your infinite wisdom and power to sustain us on a path to fulfillment and peace.

Lead us, we pray, teach us, and hold us in the perfect balance between good and evil, so that we can freely choose to turn our backs on hell's temptations and honor Your life-saving commandments in all our public and private lives.

Amen

Come to the Lord

A Christmas Sermon by the Rev. Malcolm G. Smith

*Readings: Isaiah 60:1-7; John 1:1-5, 9-13; Revelation 3:20;
True Christian Religion 89*

Introduction

My family and I used to live in South Africa, and we would sometimes come back to the East Coast of the United States for a visit. When we did that some family members would fly from elsewhere in the States to come and see us.

One time when I thanked them for doing that, I remember one of them saying: “If *you guys* have traveled the majority of the distance between us, then we can go to the effort to travel the remaining distance to meet up with you.” I appreciated them doing that and I’ve tried to follow the same principle of being willing to travel to see people who have done most of the traveling to get to where I am.

I bring this up because we are talking today about coming to the Lord. To put it mildly, the Lord has already done the vast majority of the work – the traveling – to come to connect with us. The question is: are we willing to go to the effort to cover the last bit of ground between us to come to the Lord? And if we are willing, how do we come to the Lord?

The Lord Coming to People and People Coming to the Lord

First, I want to invite you to notice how prevalent the themes of the Lord coming into the world and people coming to the Lord are in the Christmas story.

Stories

- The shepherds, who, after they had been told by the angels what had happened, “*came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.*” (Luke 2:16)
- The wise men who saw His star in the East and came to worship Him. (*Matthew 2:2*)

- Simeon, who “*came by the Spirit into the temple,*” and saw the Lord. (Luke 2:27)
- Anna, who “*coming that instant . . . gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.*” (Luke 2:38)

These stories are very familiar to us, so we might forget how different they are from anything that came before them. If you look in the Old Testament for instances of the Lord coming to people or people coming to the Lord, it is all much more distant. You get to the New Testament, and it suddenly becomes a normal thing for people to come to the Lord – to see Him, to talk with Him, to eat with Him, to touch Him, to be healed by Him, to be blessed by Him. The God of the universe chose to become “God with us” in a new way, and ever since then we have been able to come to our God in a much more direct way.

*The **Lord** has already done (most) of the work – to connect with us. Are we willing to go to the effort to cover the last bit of ground between us to come to the **Lord**? And if so, how do we come to the **Lord**?*

Christmas Carols

There are lots of Christmas carols or hymns that mention the Lord coming or people coming to the Lord that reflect on the significance of His coming: “O Come, O Come, Immanuel,” “O Come, All Ye Faithful,” “O Come, Little Children, O Come, One and All.”

There are also phrases in hymns:

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King. . . .

Glory! For the Lord is come, Jesus makes the world His home.

But the gifts, all gifts excelling, Christ Himself is come.

He came down to earth from heaven, who is God and Lord of all.

O come, let us adore Him.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay close by me forever and love me, I pray.

Come and worship, come and worship, worship ye the Lord our King.

*No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin, where meek souls
will receive Him still, the Lord will enter in.*

So, the Lord coming and people coming to the Lord is a big theme at this time of year, in the season of Advent. When we think about this theme, there is a very important principle that we need to keep in mind: we have to choose to come to the Lord.

We Have to Choose to Come to the Lord

This principle is expressed well in two passages from *True Christian Religion*:

Divine order prescribes that a person should prepare themselves to receive God; and as they prepare themselves, so God enters into them as into His dwelling and home. That preparation is accomplished by acquiring knowledge about God and the spiritual matters which concern the church, thus by means of intelligence and wisdom. For it is a law of order that in so far as a person approaches and comes near to God, which they should do entirely as if of themselves, so far does God approach and come near to them, and conjoin Himself with the person in the person's interiors. (# 89)

No conjunction that is a conjunction is possible unless it is effected reciprocally and mutually. . . . This conjunction is effected by a person's approaching the Lord and the Lord's approaching them, for it is a sure and immutable law, that so far as a person approaches the Lord so far does the Lord approach that person. (# 100)

Here is that same passage in a different translation:

A real partnership is not possible unless it happens mutually and reciprocally. . . . This partnership comes about as we move closer to the Lord and the Lord moves closer to us; for it is a fixed and unchangeable law that the closer we move toward the Lord, the closer the Lord moves toward us. (True Christianity 100)

It is as though the Lord has traveled a million miles to be with us, and He has even built the house that we're living in but rather than barge into our house to be with us, He comes all that way and then stands at the door and knocks.

We have to choose to invite Him in. We have to choose to come to the Lord, to connect with Him, to conjoin with Him. He will never force us to do these things. We have to choose.

Why?

Why is this a law of the universe? Why did the Lord set things up this way?

From a theological and philosophical point of view we can see that if we had no choice in the matter then we would have no free will. It wouldn't really be a relationship; it would be slavery.

We can also think about this in terms of other relationships in our lives. If someone would only hang out with us because we forced them to, that would not feel good or healthy at all. What makes us feel loved and connected with someone is when they *choose* to do things with us and for us: when they *choose* to spend time with us, to listen to us, and to help us with something.

The Lord wants us to choose to be in a relationship with Him and to work to be in a closer relationship. And as much as we choose to try to come closer to the Lord, He will *choose* to come closer to us.

*The Lord wants us to **choose** to be in a relationship with **Him** and to work (at it). And as much as we **choose** to try to come closer to the Lord, He will **choose** to come closer to us.*

The Prodigal Son

This principle is beautifully illustrated in the parable of the prodigal – or wasteful – son. In this parable that the Lord told, a young man goes to a far country and wastes all the inheritance money that his father had given him. He eventually decides to go back to his father, admit that he has sinned, and ask if he can be one of his father's servants.

And, “when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.” (Luke 15:20) Then he called his servants to bring him clothing and to throw a party because his lost son had come home. This is a good picture of how our Heavenly Father feels about us choosing to come to Him, even when we have sinned.

How Do We Come Closer to the Lord?

Now, let's talk about how we come closer to the Lord. One passage says this:

The Lord is constantly present with every human being, the evil as well as the good. No one would be alive if the Lord were not present.

| Only when we let Him in, however – that is, believe in Him and do what He commands – does He come in. (True Christian Religion 774)

There are two parts of this: believing and doing,

Believing

On the believing side, part of the point is that what we believe about the Lord matters and affects our ability to connect with Him. This is true in our other relationships as well. If we are married, what we believe to be true about our spouse can hugely reflect our relationship. The same goes for our relationship with our children, our friends, our co-workers.

In all of these relationships and in our relationship with the Lord, we need to go back to the source to make sure that what we believe about that person is actually accurate. We need to spend time listening to them to understand what they are really like.

Our recitation from *Hosea* chapter six includes this line: “*Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord.*”

Yes, let us do that. One good way to do it is to come to church. Another good way is to read the Word for yourself. You can picture that the door the Lord is knocking at is the cover of the Word. Will you open the door and let Him in?

Sometimes we get more time to read books during the holidays. Reading one of the Gospels – *Matthew, Mark, Luke* or *John* – would probably take between two and three hours to read or listen to as an audio book. Maybe you are gearing up to get back in the habit of reading the Word every day in the new year. That would be good. Reading just one of the Gospels for a start would also be good.

More broadly it seems that each of us could use some private time with the Lord. Growing up, you may not have had much choice whether you went to church or attended chapel or religion class at school. Choosing, for yourself, to spend time with the Lord can be very powerful. That could be through reading His Word; or praying when you first wake up in the morning or when you are going to sleep; or going on a walk by yourself and talking to the Lord, or some other way of choosing to open yourself up to the Lord. You might even ask Him: “Lord, what do I need to do to come closer to You?”

Doing

This gets us into the doing part of inviting the Lord into our lives. And what counts as believing versus doing can get kind of blurry because the one leads

into the other, if you're doing it right. But the point is to be inviting the Lord, not just into your head and thoughts but also into your heart and actions.

In the parable of the sheep and the goats, the King says to the sheep, who represent the good people: *"I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me."* And the sheep asked Him: *"When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?"* And the King replies: *"Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these, My brethren, you did it to me."* (Matthew 25:31-46)

One of the major ways we might become closer to the Lord is by coming closer to His children. Working to have a better relationship with other people is working to have a better relationship with the Lord. If we ask the Lord, "What do I need to do to come closer to You?" it might well be that His answer will have to do with how we are interacting with other people in our lives.

What If We Don't Want to Come to the Lord?

But what if we don't want to come to the Lord?

Relationships are hard. We might want to push the Lord away and tell Him to stay out of our business. And there have been plenty of people who rejected the Lord. We read in *John*, *"He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not take Him in"* (1:10,11).

The Lord told a parable about a certain man who provided a great supper and invited many people, but when he sent his servant to tell the people who were invited to come because everything was ready, they all made excuses for why they would not come. (*Luke 14:15-24*)

We have been invited to the Lord's feast. Are we willing to go, or will we make excuses?

Maybe we don't want to go to be with the Lord because we know we have been doing things we shouldn't be doing. We read. *"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."* (*John 3:19,20*)

Or maybe we just know that going to the Lord would ask more from us than we feel like giving.

The Lord did say to His disciples: *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."* (Matthew 16:24)

Maybe I'm not feeling like

*We have been invited to the **Lord's feast**. Are we **willing** to go, or will we make excuses?*

denying myself and taking up my cross, thank you very much. I've got other things I want to do.

If you're feeling these types of feelings in your lower self, here is something for that lower self to consider: you might get left out of something good.

When we reject the Lord's invitation to come to His supper, we might feel sure that nobody is going to His party and it's going to be lame. But actually, in the parable, lots of people end up going to the party. The man giving the supper wants people to come, so he sends out His servants to invite other people until His house is full. In the reading from *Isaiah 60* we hear about people from all over streaming into Jerusalem to be with Jehovah. All of these people are going to be with the Lord and blessed by Him.

Tell your lower self that people are going to get the good things you could have had if you had gotten up and started moving. And, in reality, being at the Lord's party is going to be much better than your current situation.

In the parable of the prodigal son, when the son was penniless, destitute and wishing he could eat pigs' food, it says that he finally "came to himself." (*Luke 15:17*) What a great phrase! What does it take for you to come to yourself – to come to your senses?

When the son "came to himself," he realized that it was worth the cost to go back to his father. It is worth the cost to go back to our Heavenly Father. We might want to keep Him at more of a distance, but if we can have the courage instead to invite Him into those spaces where we have the most hurt, confusion and pain, it will be better to have Him there with us.

Coming to the Lord is a Moving Target

One final thought about coming to the Lord: if people had wanted to come to where Jesus was, it would have been a moving target. He didn't just stay in Bethlehem or Nazareth or Jerusalem. Once He began His public ministry, He was moving, and He invited people to become His disciples and follow Him as He went.

To come to the Lord is to be going somewhere – to be following someone who is on a mission. As it says in "Once in Royal David's City," *"...and He leads His children on to the place where He is gone."*

The Lord chose to come into this world because He loves people and He wanted to save them and be more closely connected with them; He loves you and He chooses every moment to come as close as He can to you. Will you choose to open the door and work to come closer to Him?

And the spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come." And let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires, let him

COME TO THE LORD

take the water of life freely.

*He who testifies these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly, amen."
"Yes, come, Lord Jesus." (Revelation 22:17, 20)*

Amen



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FROM THE BISHOP'S OFFICE

Stillness...

The Rt. Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs

As we approach Christmas time once again, I am always struck by the scenes of peace and calm in the story of the Lord's birth. Mary with the Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger because there was no room for Him in the inn. Later that same evening, the shepherds abiding in the field keeping watch over their flock by night. Then there were the wise men contemplating the stars in the night sky.

These calm peaceful images in the story should not surprise us considering that it was prophesied the Savior would be called "*the Prince of Peace.*" (Isaiah 9:6) The angels also glorified God saying: "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill among men!*" (Luke 2:14)

These desired states of peace which involve the Lord's coming into our lives often require us to be in a calm, quiet and reflective state beforehand. Remember in the story of Elijah, he couldn't find the Lord in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire, but rather in "*a still small voice.*" (1 Kings 19:12) In stillness, the Lord came to Elijah, and in the storm on the Sea of Galilee the Lord eased His disciples' fears of the turbulent storm by calming the waves and the wind simply by saying: "*Peace, be still.*" (Mark 4:39)

Stillness is something we are desperately lacking in today's world. Since the invention of the internet and the proliferation of social and news media, we live in a world of constant and instantaneous communication. We have derived great benefits from this, but we have also lost much privacy and time for reflection.

Add to this mobile phones, tablets, laptops and suddenly you begin to

realize that we scarcely have a moment alone. Then factor in the rigors of raising children, earning enough money to live on, fluctuating stock markets, terrible wars around the globe, senseless violence, and you often find your mind spinning.

Finally, during the Christmas season, the chaos often increases as we begin shopping for gifts, wrapping presents, going to parties, decorating, etc. It is so easy for us to get driven to distraction by worldly things that we often forget to focus on what is really important. In such hectic settings, we should ask ourselves if we are ever in a still and calm enough state of mind to really notice the importance of the Lord's Advent.

Stillness and calmness are such vital things for us to experience in our lives, but think of a house full of children running wildly about, with the father saying, "Pick up the toys!" and the mother pleading, "Brush your teeth!" Yet the chaos continues, the children completely oblivious to their parents' voices. The sound waves may be bouncing off their eardrums, but they cannot seem to hear it. It is usually at this point that one of the parents will yell, "STOP! TIME OUT! BE QUIET!!" Suddenly the commotion dies down, and then with the children standing at attention, the message can actually be delivered and heard.

It was in the still silence of the night that the angels came and announced the good news of the Lord's birth. There are many ways, both natural and spiritual, to gain periods in your life of silence, stillness and calm: taking long, slow, deep, cleansing breaths; letting go of all that useless emotional baggage you carry around; turning off the TV, shutting down the computer, and detaching from your mobile device.

Most importantly though, is to intentionally carve out time to pray and talk to God, read His Word, meditate on the Divine Wisdom it contains, and reflect on all the marvelous ways that the Lord has rescued His people time and time again.

If we do all these things, we can rest assured that in such a state of quiet and calm reflection, the Lord will implant His Advent into our hearts and minds this Christmas. He will save us from the hells that assail and seek to destroy the peace the Lord wants us to experience.

So, as Christmas approaches this year, let us take special notice of the specific instruction given by the Lord in the Psalms when He said: "*Be still, and know that I am God.*" (Psalm 46:10)

I pray you experience a calm and peaceful Christmas!

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Divine Light

Alan Pendleton

“Do you believe?” He asked into the night,
As shadows vowed to scatter those who fled.
Yet not alone, He bore the Father’s light—
Though all forsake, Love’s covenant would spread.

*“Find peace in Me; though storms of strife may rise,
Take heart! My Word has conquered every fear.”*
Then, toward heaven, He lifted sacred eyes:
“Now glorify Your Son,” His prayer draws near.

Eternal life is knowing You, the Source,
True God, the Christ, who rent the temple veil.
His radiance blazed, a sun with holy force—
Transfigured flesh made mortal vision pale.

A light to pierce the Gentiles’ long despair,
As angels blaze with charity’s pure flame,
The glory of all people’s answered prayers,
So Love transforms our dust in His own name.

The Morning Star now rises in the east,
For in His glory, shadows melt away—
His triumph turns all sorrow into feast.
The dawn of God breaks forth in endless day.

No mortal form constrains Love’s wide embrace;
Perfection wears at last a Human face.



Charles Umlauf - photo Alan Pendleton ©2025

"His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light." -Matthew 17:3

Introduction/Analysis of *Divine Light*

This poem weaves Scripture, theological reflection from Swedenborg's Writings, and celestial imagery into a mix that celebrates the Lord's Divine triumph, His unity with the Father, and His transformative role as the Light of the world. Drawing from Christ's farewell discourse (*John 16:31–17:5*), prophetic calls to worship (*Isaiah 60:1*, *Luke 2:32*), and Swedenborgian insights on Divine glorification (*Secrets of Heaven 4735*), I seek to marry doctrinal depth with poetic invention.

In structure, my poem's form uses two turns to reflect the theological depth of the source material:

First volta (lines 17–20): Christ's victory over the world.

Second volta (lines 21–22): Christ's presence within the world.

The result is a hymn that moves from Gethsemane's shadows (*John 16*) to the Resurrection's dawn (*John 17*), culminating in the eternal truth of Love incarnate.

Key Themes and Imagery:

1. Light Overcomes Darkness:

I open with a dialogue in the “night” of doubt (*John 16:31-32*), juxtaposed against “heaven’s light” that persists even as the disciples scatter. This tension resolves in the closing stanzas: Christ, “*The Morning Star*,” melts night’s “shadows” (*Isaiah 60:1*), symbolizing His victory over sin and death.

2. Divine Glorification and Unity:

Christ’s entreaty – “*Now glorify Your Son*” – anchors the poem’s midpoint (*John 17:1-5*). The imagery of “Transfigured flesh” evokes the unity doctrine of the Divine Human, where perfect Love’s “a sun with holy force” transcends mortal limits (Swedenborg’s “Divine Love in human form”).

3. Universal Revelation:

The “*light to pierce the Gentiles’ long despair*” (*Luke 2:32*) expands Christ’s mission beyond Israel, while “*all people’s answered prayer*” unites humanity under His grace. Swedenborg’s vision of angels as “*charity’s pure flame*” is mirrored in the transformative line: “Love transforms our dust in His own name.”

4. Incarnational Paradox:

The final couplet – “*No mortal form constrains Love’s wide embrace; / Perfection wears at last a Human face*” – captures the revealed mystery of the Incarnation. The glorified Christ is both transcendent (“*Sun of Heaven*”) and immanent, reshaping humanity through Divine Love.

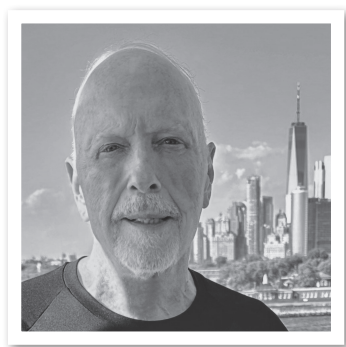
Structure and Rhythm:

- **Iambic Pentameter:** The steady meter reflects resolve amid turmoil, echoing the Lord’s unwavering goal from birth to death to glorification: a heaven from the human race.
- **Volta (Shift):** The turn arrives in the penultimate stanza (“*The dawn of God breaks forth in endless day*”), pivoting from struggle to celestial triumph.

Conclusion:

I hope this poem is more than a retelling. For me, it is an act of worship, distilling the Word's promises into a hymn of hope. By framing the Lord's glorification as a "*radiance*" that "*blazes*," I invite readers to behold the Lord not as a distant deity but as Love incarnate, whose radiance remakes the world. The interplay of light, struggle and renewal mirrors our spiritual journey of regeneration: from scattered doubt to gathered faith, from night's fear to glory's unending sunrise.

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Become Something

Charter Day Address by the Rev. Dr. Thane P. Glenn

October 10, 2025, Bryn Athyn Cathedral

Lessons: Jeremiah 31:3; Luke 10:25-28; Divine Providence 130

On this beautiful October morning, we gather in this magnificent cathedral to celebrate 148 years of New Church education at the schools of the Academy – the Theological School and Bryn Athyn College, the Boys and Girls Schools, and of course the remarkable educational programs at Glencairn Museum and Cairnwood Estate.

When I was invited to give this talk, I thought, well, I'd better come up with a topic that is celebratory, uplifting; it better be a real feel-good address. And my brain said: "Ooh, let's talk about hell!" *Hell? No, what does hell have to do with New Church education?* And my brain: But then, "Yeah, yeah, let's talk about hell!" Okay, hell. Well, so, let's talk about hell.

Did you know that when the Lord Jesus Christ taught about hell, He never actually used the word "hell"? He usually used the word "Gehenna" -- as in, whoever calls his brother a fool is in danger of "Gehenna" fire. (*Matthew 6:22*) What is Gehenna? It turns out that *Gehenna*, or Gehinnom in the original language, was a real place, a place with a past so horrific that Jesus used the name to talk about hell.

Gehinnom or, literally, the valley of Hinnom, was an actual valley just to the south of Jerusalem. It was the place where centuries earlier, the people of Judea, in some kind of desperate attempt to appease other gods of the region, had fallen into the practice of child sacrifice – had burned their children in sacrificial fires.

The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah, the one who reminds us of God's everlasting love, calls out this horrific practice:

"The children of Judah have done evil in My sight," says the Lord. "They have built the high places of Tophet, in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into My heart." (Jeremiah 7:30-31)

| Which I did not command, nor did it ever come into My heart, says the Lord.

In other words, to put it very plainly: *If the version of God you worship demands that you kill children, brother, that ain't God.*

I know, you're maybe thinking: *yawn, nobody worships a god that demands child sacrifice anymore.* Let's think a little more deeply. What innocence do we risk destroying, sacrificing in our lives and why?

If a friend, a family member, an influencer, a leader, or your own inner dialogue demands that you surrender things like humility, the truth, kindness, compassion¹ -- sister, that ain't God. That ain't God at work.

Consider the strange, demanding gods we can bow to in our lives.

Have we, for instance, ever shifted blame off of ourselves by allowing a mistruth to spread about someone else, convinced we had no better choice? That ain't God.

Have we ever voted for our own need to be right at the expense of the pain of those we don't allow ourselves to see and been persuaded that's just the necessary cost? Or maybe even that they deserve it?

As the God of Jeremiah says: *I did not command this, nor did it ever come into My heart.* Brother, that ain't God.

Okay, but what does any of this have to do with New Church education?

Well, it turns out that working on a clearer idea about what is and what isn't really God might just lie at the heart of what New Church education is all about. Stay with me here.

You see, one of the cornerstones of New Church education is a close attention to the levels of meaning in the Bible. The often-rugged literal words, the lofty spiritual sense, the genuine truths that shine like shafts of light here and there in favorite chapter and verses and illuminate the deeper messages within the rest. The teachings for the New Church painstakingly demonstrate that if we study the Bible carefully along these lines, we'll see that God is always, always about love, never about punishment.

So, if the version of God you worship is a little bit into punishment or retribution . . . sister, that ain't God.

Listen to this unequivocal statement from *True Christian Religion* 56:

| . . . how insane people are who think, even more believe, more still teach that God can condemn anyone, curse anyone, throw anyone into hell, predestine anyone's soul to eternal death, avenge wrongs, be

¹Compare the following passages about Gehinnom: *Apocalypse Explained* 504, 578, 1083; *Arcana Coelestia* 1292.

angry against or punish anyone. God cannot even turn away from us, nor look on us with a stern expression.

God cannot even turn away from us, nor look on us with a stern expression.

Because, if we fall into thinking that some part of *God* is vindictive and punishing, then it's that much easier for us to justify holding a vindictive and punishing attitude toward others around us.

So, if a friend, a family member, social media, a leader, or your thoughts demand that you divide the world into us and them, that you hold people who look different or talk or think differently as enemies worthy of revenge, worthy of punishment . . . brother, that ain't God.

And there's more.

If the version of God you worship demands blind loyalty . . . that ain't God. God invites our thought.

At our best, New Church education is likewise an invitation to use your mind, to think and learn, to understand a variety of experiences, to take a creative part in God's plan.

Our reading from the teachings for the New Church earlier this morning tells us how important it is for us to be able to "turn [our convictions] this way and that" – to look at them from all sides (*Divine Providence* 130); those teachings tell us that "doubt . . . [leads] us to ponder over whether [something] is indeed true" (*Arcana Coelestia* 7298); they warn that when we are persuaded too quickly of the truth, "it can no longer be broadened or qualified in any way" (*Ibid*) – it becomes lifeless, useless; and finally they say, "any conviction that is not looked at rationally" robs "us of any perception of the harmony of multiple [voices]." *Divine Providence* 130, compare *Arcana Coelestia* 4197)

God invites our thought.

Listen: when a man asked the Lord God Jesus Christ Himself the most important question anyone had ever asked Him – what was eternal life all about – Jesus responded by asking *him* a questions: *What do you see in the Scriptures? And what is your interpretation?* (Luke 10:25-26)

So, if a friend, a family member, a teacher, a leader, or your inner monologue demands your blind allegiance . . . sister, that ain't God.

*At our best, New Church education is an invitation to use your mind, to **think** and **learn**, to understand a variety of experiences, to take a creative part in **God's plan**.*

God, *Divine Providence* 71-72 teaches us, calls on each of us to act in freedom in accord with our reason. In fact, this call is so important that it is named the first law of His Providence.

What does that tell us? Your job is to use your mind and make choices. Your job is to become the best you that you can become.

Listen to this statement about what God wants from *Secrets of Heaven* 1812. When the Lord God came to earth and fought for the soul of humanity, it says:

He did not fight . . . to become the greatest in heaven, for that is contrary to Divine love. He scarcely did so to become the least. He fought solely so that all others might become something and be saved.

He fought solely so that all others might become something and be saved.

At our best, New Church education strives to be a good partner in your journey to become something.

So, my friend, use your heart, your head, your hands. Ask questions. Express doubts. Get creative. *Become something.*

Look for ways to bring a little more humility, truth, kindness and compassion to the world. Don't go down to that shameful valley where dark, demanding lords wait to devour our better thoughts, our better natures toward one another, our better hopes. *Become something.*

Learn all that you can. Learn from mathematics the contours of clear logic. Study physics and biology to better understand the intricate and amazing ways in which this world and life itself are built. Study history to better understand the environments that have shaped human choices and their consequences for longer than we can readily imagine. Learn from literature and psychology the depth and breadth of human experience. Study writing, technology, the arts to develop a voice and a vision. *Become something.*

Keep learning what God is and what God isn't. Remember, my friends, God is not even able to look on you with a stern expression. So,

At our best, New Church education strives to be a good partner in your journey to become something. So, use your heart, your head, your hands. Ask questions. Express doubts. Get creative. Become something.

use your freedom, your reason, your ability to take action. *Become something.*

I want to close this morning by asking you to think again of that conversation between the Lord Jesus and the man who asked about eternal life. “What is *your* reading?” Jesus wanted to know. And the man went to the great commandments of profound love.

As we grow, as we give expression to our best understanding and our brightest efforts, can we listen for all of the ways that that Divine voice of everlasting love might be responding to each of us: *you have answered rightly: do this and you will live.*

AMEN



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NEW CHRISTIAN BIBLE STUDY PROJECT

Spreading the Word and Growing the Church

Steve David

The state of the project:

- 92 Bible translations
- 600 Writings translations
- The New Christian Chatbot
- The Swedenborg Reader app
- Website in 26 languages
- Hub for 824 Bible stories
- Hub for 402 spiritual topics
- Hub for 5,500 Bible words and their significations
- Hub for 1,368 videos from 12 New Church channels
- 983 chapter summaries
- 2.4 million unique visitors in the past 30 days

We also have the Swedenborg Concordance online, 12 reading plans, a hub for sermons, a hub for all the New Church Vineyard materials for parents and teachers, and the biggest online library of New Church collateral literature – much of which has been cleaned up by a team of editors this year.

It's all good stuff, and the project is going really well. As I was drafting this report, I was thinking back over the different sub-projects we've worked on and reckoning that several hundred people have helped with this project in some way. Some have been paid, and many have just volunteered – and it's been pretty remarkable. It bodes well for the future.

I want to tell you about a few initiatives we're engaged in that we think are going to be really important for the worldwide New Church.

Making New Christian Bible Translations

It's kind of astonishing that this hasn't been more of a "thing" for the New Church already. I recall the Rev. Olaf Hauptmann saying that the New Church is the most Biblical church in 2,000 years. He's right. We should embrace that and offer New Church Bibles.

As far as I can tell, Leonhard Tafel made the first full correspondences-based translation of the Word, in German, published in 1911.

Before that, there had been substantial efforts to translate parts of the Word into English, including (hat tip to the Kempton Project's "Companion Guide"):

- The Four Gospels were translated by the Rev. John Clowes in his commentaries of *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John*, published in 1805, 1826, 1823 and 1819, respectively.
- The Book of *Isaiah* was translated by Rev. Clowes, too, and this manuscript was edited and published by the Rev. John H. Smithson in 1860.
- A translation of the *Book of Psalms* was prepared by the committee on the translation of the Word, of the General Convention of the New Jerusalem, edited by Louis H. Tafel, and published in 1906.
- *Joshua*, *Judges*, *I Samuel*, *II Samuel*, *I Kings* and *II Kings* were also translated by the General Convention, edited by Louis H. Tafel, and published in 1909.
- The General Conference of the New Church in Britain started work on an English translation, with similar guiding principles, in the late 1800s, and – more than 70 years later – published the "*Pentateuch*" translation in 1970.

Then the Kempton Project got going around 2000, and published the Kempton translation in 2020 - the first full Bible translation of the New Church canon in English.

But, for the "most Biblical church" – with a deep knowledge of the Bible's internal sense – it's not enough to have one full German translation and one full English translation.

A confluence of factors gradually drove our NCBS team to the realization that we should, and could, make New Christian Bibles in all the other languages that we're trying to support.

- One factor was that the Kempton translation can now provide a good basis

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the most Biblical
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for translating into other languages.

- Another is that we kept having trouble getting licenses to use any translations at all in languages like Zulu, Macedonian and Albanian, or any modern translations in many other languages.
- A third driving force was Artificial Intelligence. The quality of AI translating has soared dramatically in the last three to four years.
- Fourth, we thought we could engineer a way to use extracted text from translations of *Genesis*, *Exodus* and *Revelation* as a basis for educating a base AI model in how to translate more books in the same style, helping to jump-start translations in Dutch, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Chinese, Montenegrin and other languages where we had *Arcana Coelestia* and *Apocalypse Revealed* translations to work from.
- Finally, we think there are enough New Church translators scattered around the globe to make this a realistic undertaking.

So, we're taking the plunge, trying to create New Christian Bibles in all our target languages. At the beginning of June, we started a crash development project to make a Bible translation system that would combine human and machine translation, with the machine learning – and staying taught – from human corrections! It was kind of crazy, and we burned a lot of midnight oil, but we had it ready in time to show to the General Church's clergy meetings in late June.

We had a few starter Bible translations made, based on the Kempton English translation, with a few *Genesis* chapters of each. One was in French, to show to the French-speaking West Africans. One was in Portuguese, to show to the Brazilians. And one was in Zulu.

Maybe you know the Rev. Bheki Dube, the assistant pastor in the Westville Society in Durban, South Africa, who grew up speaking Zulu. At the end of my demo, on the spur of the moment, I asked Bheki if he would come up and read the first few verses of the very first *New Church Zulu Bible* translation. And he did.

You could have heard a pin drop in that big room full of New Church ministers. I wish everyone in the worldwide New Church could have been there for that moment.

That was in late June. Since then, we've been polishing the system, working with translators so it works the way they need it to. It's coming along nicely.

- Our good friends in Montenegro, Harry and Agime Mukovikj, and their daughter, Donika, are more than halfway through a Montenegrin/Croatian translation.
- Rev. Dan Calvo is on *Genesis* 33, in the first New Christian Bible in Spanish.

- Mineko Frost is starting on a Japanese translation.
- Rebecca Kong is starting one in Chinese.
- Franz Kreuzwegerer helped prepare the text of Leonhard Tafel's 1911 German Bible for us to import, which we just did – and it's very much a New Church translation, and still accessible to modern readers.
- And, we're actively scouting for people to help in many more languages.

I think it's going to work. The New Church will have its own set of translations of the Word that it can use to spread the gospel – in the literal sense – in many languages. And that's important:

In its literal sense the Word is in its fullness, in its holiness, and in its power, because . . . the two prior or interior senses, called spiritual and celestial, are present at the same time in the natural sense, which is the literal sense. (The Doctrine of the New Jerusalem Regarding the Sacred Scripture 37)

The Writings for Everyone

Our Bible translation system is set up to store and learn from a translator's previous corrections. As we built it, we realized that we could pretty readily clone and modify it to make a system that could help people translate the Writings, too. So, we've started on that. Actually, we're well into it. Maybe by the time this article sees print, it will be fully working.

One of the main efforts of the NCBS project has been gathering Writings translations and getting them online and linked up. We have more than 600 texts online now, representing 28 languages, and more are working their way through the queue. That traditional method is not going away, but it may change, and we think we can use all the data we have as a rocket boost for more translation.

This Writings translation system is going to have several important threads:

- We can use existing translations in a language to teach the AI system a translator's preferences. For example, we are using the late Tatsuya Nagashima's translation of 7,000+ passages of *Arcana Coelestia* from Latin to Japanese to make pretty good draft translations of the remaining 3,800 passages. That will dramatically lighten the load. This is hugely helpful, because we have partial *Arcana Coelestia* translations in lots of languages: Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Korean, Croatian, Albanian, Macedonian, Hindi, Malayalam and more. Translating the

Arcana has been a daunting task, but now it will be a little (maybe a lot) less daunting.

- It won't be quite as direct, but the same principle applies to other translations. If we have, for example, a translation of *True Christian Religion* but not *Apocalypse Revealed*, we should be able to provide a big jump start. We're just trying this in Swedish now, with the *Doctrine of the Lord*. We'll know soon how well that's going to work. (Actually, here is the Rev. Göran Appelgren's first reaction, as of yesterday: "Amazing!").
- It's also going to be much easier for translators to start from scratch, using a nice iterative translation interface that provides a lot of helpful reference tools, and gets better as it goes along.

Nota bene: We're still very much supporting traditional translation methods too -- processing and importing text files that flow in from all directions. We recently imported volume 10 (of 12) of *Izimfihlakalo Zezulu* (*Arcana Coelestia*) in Zulu, a new translation of *Conjugal Love* by V. C. Odhner, an updated German translation of *Arcana Coelestia*, "*Himmlische Geheimnisse*", and the New Century Edition team's translation of Volume 9 (of 15) of its *Secrets of Heaven* translation of *Arcana Coelestia*.

Everything Else (Collateral Literature, Media, etc.)

Of course, once we have the wrinkles ironed out of the Writings translation system, we're going to clone and modify it to support the translation of everything else -- topical articles, commentaries, books, sermons, Bible story explanations . . . you name it. We've done a lot of machine-translating already, but not with this iterative ability to edit and have the machine learn.

We should pretty rapidly get to the point where we can use this system throughout the whole body of New Church thought, so it's essentially language independent. That will be good! We will have moved from being an unintentionally Anglo-centric church to being a more worldwide church. That opens up a lot more avenues for people to find these truths, to grow to love them, and to participate in sharing them further.

Zooming Out

OK, so we have lots going on with translation. The "family" of New Christian Bible translations is going to be a great help. But NCBS isn't just about translating. It's about reach, and really, about connecting and helping. We have the Word, the Writings, and collateral literature far more widely available and

better organized than ever before. It's all available on phones and tablets and desktops. It's gathered, linked and searchable. People can ask questions 24/7 and get good answers right away in their own language. We're getting better at making the internal sense evident and inviting.

What else will we need? You might think – with the number of views that New Church video-makers and podcasters get, and the number of visits that NCBS, *newchurch.org*, and other New Church websites get – that our churches would be bulging with new people. We're not seeing that. Not yet.

We think that the next major steps we should take, after these translation projects are cruising along, will be in the arena of visitor engagement. We don't yet know what those steps will actually look like, but we have a healthy list of ideas.

We have a strong base to work from, and good collaborative relationships with the General Church and the other New Church branches, the Swedenborg Foundation, the Heavenly Doctrines Publishing Foundation, and other publishers, and lots of independent thinkers, writers and webmasters.

If we cooperatively focus on how to provide pathways for people, so they decide to move from initial interest to deeper personal study, to dialogue, to group participation, to new forms of usefulness in their lives -- can we figure that out? I think so.

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*You might think – with all this progress – that our churches would be bulging with new people. We're not seeing that. **Not yet.***

Listening to Eternity

*The Music, Spirituality and Creative World
of Composer Tommie Haglund: A Conversation*

A Book by Dr. Aram Yardumian

Reviewed by Bruce Henderson

Aram Yardumian is an associate professor at Bryn Athyn College teaching Anthropology: the scientific study of human behavior, biology and culture. In this book he goes micro – revealing the humanity and scope of acclaimed Swedish composer Tommie Haglund through a series of in-depth, insightful conversations.

Of special note is that Haglund's life and work have been influenced by Swedenborg and enriched by his long friendship with Aram, the Rev. Göran Appelgren and many others in the New Church societies of Sweden. Stories of Theo, Laren and Elizabeth Pitcairn and her "Red Violin" will be of special interest to New Church readers. There is also a touching encounter with British comedian John Cleese of *Monty Python* fame, which connects with Swedenborg. But the book stands on its own as a fascinating insight into the life and mind of a brilliant artist.

This is a careful transcription of many hours of conversation between Tommie and Aram between 2015 and 2018, first published in Swedish, and now English by the Swedenborg Foundation. It notes that Haglund's "life and work have been profoundly shaped by his encounter with Swedenborg's spiritual writings," that his music "reflects a deep engagement with Swedenborgian thought," and that the book also "demonstrates how Swedenborg's influence continues to inspire creative and spiritual work today."

Tommie Haglund visited Bryn Athyn twice but Aram did not meet him the first time in 2005 because he was studying at the University of Texas. Tommie had heard of Theodore Pitcairn and while in France decided with his wife, Elisabet, to find his former countryside estate, Chateau les Pleignes, near Grez-sur-Loing. It was "like trying to find the castle in *Sleeping Beauty*," but they found it, overgrown and uninhabited, feeling as if they were "going into a dream."

Tommie was later invited to the Glencairn Museum in Bryn Athyn to talk about his music. At lunch he found himself seated next to "a man in his mid-sixties – a rather reserved, almost shy fellow," who told him about buying a

violin for his daughter, a concert violinist.

This, of course, was Laren Pitcairn, son of Theo, and father of Elizabeth, who paid \$2 million for the famous “Red Violin.” Elizabeth has proved its worth – and her talent – in concerts at Glencairn and all over the world.

The next day Laren invited Tommie to his home in Bucks County where Elizabeth played for him – and entranced him – then asked if he would be interested in a commission for a violin concerto that she could play and record. This resulted in a CD in 2010.

At this point Aram and Tommie had not met, but Elizabeth sent Aram the CD. He thought it was “terrific and unlike anything I had heard before in modern composition.” He wrote a review for an online journal, and sent a routine fact check to Tommie. They struck up a correspondence that continues and pledged to meet next time Tommie was in Bryn Athyn, which happened in 2014.

Aram writes: “We met and after dinner stayed up talking about his life story. At 3 a.m. I asked if he wanted to do a book and he said yes.” The official interviews began shortly after. His first visit to Tommie’s home in Sweden came the following year and they have met almost once a year since. Aram recorded everything – some 30 hours’ worth – and transcribed it all back home, typing out the manuscript and rearranging it for coherence. It is a masterful accomplishment.

He thought first of asking the Swedenborg Society in London, England, to publish the book. Stephen McNeilly, Executive Director, agreed but suggested it be published first in Sweden. That meant translating the conversations “backwards” into Swedish, kindly undertaken by Göran Appelgren. It was published in Sweden in 2023 and launched in his hometown of Halmstad, coinciding with the annual Haglund Festival, which Aram attended.

He was happy that the Swedenborg Foundation agreed to publish the English version. “Reading through it,” he says, “you will get a sense for Tommie’s engagement with Swedenborg and his works and understand why they thought it suitable for publication.”

He and Tommie continue to talk once a week or so “and he always sends me his new works for my impressions, which I consider an honor.”

And so the conversations continue. Aram says in an Epilogue that he felt almost like he was writing Tommie’s eulogy – but with more to be said, more to be lived.

His life story increasingly is intertwined with Swedenborg. He tells Aram that he wrote a lot of music between 1981-87 but threw most of it away. He was still developing as a composer. He even sought the help of a medium, at age 27. Then he tells of a phone call from an older woman, Soldanella Oyler, a New

Church woman who knew many musicians. They really connected and she told him not to seek out mediums but to read Swedenborg because “you have to understand that you have all the answers within you.” This opened a whole new world to him, affecting his music, his outlook and his life.

This was a turning point. In 1988 he was commissioned to write *Intensio Animi* for the Swedenborg Society in Stockholm as a focus of the Swedenborg Jubilee celebrating the 300th anniversary of his birth. Tommie was amazed at the response. It was a smashing success, with rave reviews, opening many doors for him. Suddenly he was appearing on television as the champion of “new music” – a music his wife Elisabet describes as written “with honesty and heart” – a special kind of depth.

Into this drama steps John Cleese, the lovable British comic. Tommie’s childhood was racked with illness and anxiety – not uncommon with an artistic temperament. Through these struggles, when he was almost ready to give up on himself, he was lifted out of himself by the comedy of *Faulty Towers* and *Monty Python*. He wanted to thank Cleese, who is notoriously private, but through his agent’s wife a meeting was arranged.

Cleese had heard of Tommie’s violin concerto and happened to be in Sweden. Tommie told him the story of his illness and Cleese took a real interest. “I told him I thought his comedy had saved me, saved my life, in a way” – not Cleese himself, but his comedy. When he gave him a CD of the concerto he signed it: “I think you’re the Beethoven of comedy.”

They talked about creativity and anxiety, and Cleese suggested he might find solace in giving lectures about creativity. This is what Tommie was doing in Glencairn. Cleese then promised to listen to the CD that night in his hotel and to tell him what he thought of it. (He liked it very much.) Then he said – and Tommie remembers they both had tears in their eyes – “promise that you’ll take care of yourself. God bless you.”

Part of taking care of himself, he says, is reading Swedenborg. “I look to Swedenborg for answers,” he says. “I have so many questions, and I can live with that in music. But some things in Swedenborg are very hard to understand. I comprehend these mysteries by composing instead of sitting, reading chapter after chapter.”

When Soldanella told him to go to Swedenborg for answers – not mediums – he felt great relief. “I could connect Christianity to this experience with the medium that we have so little knowledge about what’s really going on inside of ourselves. Ironically, Swedenborg himself advises not to contact mediums, and yet that was the gateway to Swedenborg and the rest of my life.”

He was 27 and felt “this is it. This explains so much to me – that we only know a fraction of what is hidden. I needed something: a church, a spiritual substance.” He did not want to be called a New Church Artist – “that would be

too limiting. On the other hand, I certainly don't keep Swedenborg a secret."

"Swedenborg came into my life at the right moment. That gave me new spiritual tools, and at the same time, I found my own musical language." He had several conversations with his new friend, Göran Appelgren, about life after death.

"What we must realize," he concludes, "is that we know so little and that we all have innumerable emotions and subtly elusive sensations within us that cannot be verbalized. My life has consisted of trying to transfer my inner self to sonorous music."

When Aram asks him to sum up the better part of his musical work, he quotes a Swedish poet who said that "everyone has a cathedral inside himself, and in you opens vault after vault, endlessly, you shall never be complete."

Aram has compiled here a fascinating portrait that gets to the essence of Tommie Haglund. It helps that Tommie himself is so verbal and articulate, human and spontaneous about his music, his growth, and the influence of Swedenborg. It is all masterfully directed by Aram, who knows enough to ask the right questions and develop the story.

Much as it may have felt like writing a eulogy for a living man, this book brings his art and his spirit very much to life. Aram very much admires this man for who he is and has become. In an Afterword he writes:

To take yourself apart and put yourself back together as music – the work of self-realization – takes courage. To make one's inner world accessible takes discipline. To trim this experience of its leering excess and numbing ambiguity, to produce a real-time art that possesses the inner world – that's genius. All that really matters is the experience you'll have, if you've yet to have, sitting in a concert hall during *Flaminus Aura* or *La Rosa Profunda*. It almost feels like a séance. I've witnessed members of the audience weeping during the performance, and afterwards they get in line to express themselves to the composer, who always receives them graciously.

As a "eulogy for a living man," he says: "Eulogies that flatter fall short of reality, and Tommie would be the first to admit he doesn't know where it all will lead. Fittingly, thankfully, the doors keep opening, and there is no end in sight."

Just like *Listening to Eternity*.

Contact: aram.yardumian@brynathyn.edu

*Aram Yardumian has written several other books, including **Listen**, **Persepolis** and **The Peopling of the Caucasus**.*

Listening to Eternity is a timely book. Gracefully written, poised and insightful, it offers an intimate and engaging portrait of one of Sweden's hidden secrets. Tommie Haglund is that rare example of a composer who has heard the heavenly choirs and has devoted his life to sharing the experience. (Stephen McNeilly, Swedenborg Society Executive Director)

Just as one must open a book, so must the listener “open the door” and let the emotions Tommie Haglund offers flood the imagination. We are all a part of Nature, and we must embrace this beauty and open one’s mind and eyes to those beautiful moments, not just the bright afternoons and vivid, glowing orange-red sun downs, but also taking time away from the harsh glare of city lights to look at the wonders of the night sky, where it can feel as though one is falling into the seemingly endless firmament. These are things we will find in the music of Tommie Haglund – they are a gift from the composer – we just have to open that door. (John Mills, classical guitarist).

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Life Lines

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

REV. KURT P. NEMITZ: AN INNOCENT ABROAD

In his Resurrection Address for the Rev. Kurt Nemitz, who passed into the spiritual world on October 6 at age 87, the Rev. Michael Gladish reflected on “this dedicated, earnest, enigmatic man we called our friend, and what of his particular qualities may find their place in the economy of heaven.”

When Kurt graduated from the Academy Boys School in 1956 his life was full of promise. After two years at Bryn Athyn College, he earned a degree in Engineering from Lehigh University, where he also took up fencing and became team captain.

Then his life was sadly defined by a motorcycle accident, which left him with a severe concussion. The repercussions impacted his life but not his spirit. In the soul-searching that followed, he decided to go into the ministry and focus on spiritual rather than worldly matters. His usefulness was limited but never his commitment or this enthusiasm.

Mike noted: “Some of the very positive qualities in Kurt’s life were – and will continue to be – his staunch devotion to the Lord and the teachings of the New Church, his gift for language and scholarship, and his commitment to truly spiritual marriage. There was – and is – a kind of innocence about the man, despite a somewhat zealous, argumentative nature, that revealed a tenderness toward what he believed to be good and true, and that showed up in his convictions every day.”

Kurt was indeed “dedicated, earnest and enigmatic” – an innocent abroad in the vicissitudes of life who recognized no boundaries.

He began his ministry with two years in Glenview, then as a traveling pastor, based in Bryn Athyn. He and his wife Melinda (Echols) then spent seven years in Stockholm, where he learned Swedish and German, followed by service in Denver, Colorado, and Bath, Maine. These were not mainstream assignments, but he made the best of them. And when that ran out, he turned to translation in his continued devotion to serving the church.

Then he was rocked by two more tragedies. In 2009, Lindy was killed in

a freak accident walking home from her job as secretary to the Girls School Principal. Three years later their son, Anders – one of six children – died in their native Pittsburgh. Kurt looked forward to being reunited with both in the spiritual world – and we see him beaming.

And he did not stop serving. He got a Master's in Divinity from Harvard and worked on translation for the church and as a consultant for other translators. Mike said: "One of his most recent and special projects was a new English translation of a fascinating book written by Swedenborg before his spiritual eyes were opened, called *The Infinite, the Final Cause of Creation*. This profound, curious, prosaic manuscript is 'in the works' for publication by the Swedenborg Scientific Association."

Mike quoted the 23rd *Psalms* as a text for his Resurrection Address, which encourages us to look for good in every situation – as Kurt did. And, "he took his last breath quietly holding his daughter's hand as she read this Psalm, by his bedside."

That Psalm concludes with, "*You prepare a table before me . . . my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*"

And so, for this good man, "we believe, it was so with Kurt, who is now free – 'free at last' – to enjoy the true felicity of peace and unrestrained service to his Lord, His Church, and his community, in perfect health and youthful, fun-loving vigor."

(BMH)

WAR AND CHRISTMAS

War is the ultimate challenge to the Christmas prayer: "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.*" (Luke 2:14)

Even in war the spirit of Christmas has silenced guns with the power of prayer and offered a glimpse of the hope of peace to soldiers in battle.

There was the famous "Christmas Truce" during the Battle of Ypres just before Christmas in the early days of World War One in 1914. Thousands of French, German and British soldiers spontaneously left their trenches to sing carols and exchange greetings, food and souvenirs. It was an improbable respite but lent some hope – as the cruel, prolonged war resumed the next day – for the ultimate cause of "peace on earth."

There was a similar spiritual experience during the intense Battle of the Bulge in World War Two – where desperate Allied troops eventually broke through into Germany and went on to win the war. That campaign was led by Gen. George Patton, a notoriously profane leader but also a man of resolute faith who believed in the power of prayer.

His U.S. Third Army was stalled and struggling in bitter winter weather – numbing cold, snow and mud. On December 8 the exasperated Patton asked his chief chaplain to distribute a prayer to 250,000 men scattered among 20 divisions. The prayer read simply: “Pray when driving. Pray when fighting. Pray alone. Pray with others. Pray by night and pray by day.”

The Third Army included 500 chaplains, representing 32 denominations, and Patton wanted them up front, where men were fighting and dying. Two days after these prayer cards were distributed, the Germans launched a terrifying barrage that cost the Third Army 19,000 deaths and 50,000 wounded. It was estimated that more unarmed chaplains were lost, proportionately, than any other group.

Brig. Gen. Harry Semmes wrote that Patton relied on his faith more than most commanders, and “always read the Bible, particularly the life of Christ and the wars of the Old Testament. He knew by heart the order of morning prayer of the Episcopal Church. His thoughts, as demonstrated daily to those close to him, repeatedly indicated that his life was dominated by a feeling of dependence on God.” He saw Patton as “an unusual mixture of a profane and highly religious man.”

Gen. Omar Bradley echoed the feeling that Patton was both irreverent and reverent. He “strutted imperiously as a commander, but knelt humbly before his God.”

At the height of the battle in the Ardennes Forrest, Patton wrote: “Destiny sent for me in a hurry when things got tight. Perhaps God saved me in this effort. We can and will win, God helping. Give us Victory, Lord.”

On Dec. 23 the skies suddenly lifted, allowing the Allied Air Force to wreak havoc on German forces and supply lines, turning the tide of this pivotal battle. By January Hitler’s defeat was certain. Winston Churchill called it “the greatest American battle of the war.”

In Patton’s prayer he asked for good weather but also implored God to “crush the oppression and wickedness of our enemies” and establish justice among men. One of his chaplains came across weary, frozen soldiers still clutching their prayer cards, firmly believing that “God stopped the rain in answer to their prayers.”

Patton – in a reflective moment of humility – wrote: “Those who pray do more for the world than those who fight, and if the world goes from bad to worse, it is because there are more battles than prayers.”

(BMH)

A NEW CHURCH ECHO

For the past 25 years or so, the Academy Secondary Schools have hosted a meaningful chapel program on Veterans Day, with Armed Forces veterans in

the Bryn Athyn community invited as special guests.

In those early years there was still a smattering of World War Two vets, who were asked to share their stories. Among them was Denis Cooper, who passed away in 2011. He was in the U.S. Infantry in the Battle of the Bulge, surviving for weeks in the snow and cold of Hultgren Forest. This was one of the most bitter and prolonged battles of the war, which eventually drove the Germans out of France and to defeat in their home country.

Denis always told a story about Christmas Eve, in the midst of crippling fear and misery, when dark skies suddenly parted and he saw a vision of angels proclaiming: *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, goodwill toward men.”* And every year he broke down in tears recalling the miracle. (These “angels” may have been the P-51s making their famous attack when the skies suddenly cleared.)

It was powerful for the students to see a man their grandfathers’ age still so emotionally affected 60 years later. And it was always a moving experience to witness how the Lord can come to be born in the hearts of men, even on a desolate battlefield.

(BMH)

CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS AROUND THE GENERAL CHURCH

People are sometimes surprised to discover that most Christian churches do not hold services on Thanksgiving Day. But the same is not true at Christmas, when most but not all churches hold services Christmas Day or Christmas Eve, and attendance is typically the largest of the year. The same is true in the General Church, and most congregations hold other special events as well.

One example is a unique event held at the Ivyland Church, as described by Pastor Ryan Sandstrom:

Our biggest event and fundraiser is our annual “Songs of Christmas” show. The whole church gets nicely decorated ahead of time. The event begins with a reception with fine spirits, wine and hors d’oeuvres, and lots of people and special guests attend. The show takes place in our chapel, by Don Rose, with a very talented pianist, Jamison Van Horn. Each year Don chooses a theme and fills the show with lots of interesting stories behind pretty much any Christmas song ever made. He includes trivia prizes, captivating slideshows, sing-a-longs, and a variety of impressive musical performances with select musicians. Audiences are captivated throughout the entire evening, and many return each year. As our biggest event of the year it takes a good number of people and time to plan.

The most common special event held in many congregations is the Christmas Tableaux, sometimes called Christmas Pageants. They feature live presentations of scenes from the Christmas story, or sometimes slide shows of artwork made by children or shadow re-enactments projected on a screen. In places like Boulder, Colorado, and London, England, they are preceded or followed by a banquet.

The presentation of Christmas scenes has been a feature of Christian celebrations for centuries and tableaux are mentioned in the very first year of the publication of *New Church Life*. Often the children of the congregation play all the parts, as happens at the Morningstar Chapel in Atlanta. Similarly, the practice of setting up representations of the Christmas story in homes and churches is widespread.

Other near universal events feature Christmas music, such as concerts like the Glencairn Sing in Bryn Athyn, school Christmas programs, or choir presentations of works like Handel's *Messiah*. More commonly churches have evenings or church services featuring the singing of Christmas music and readings from the Christmas story. Many congregations have something similar to the famous British tradition of nine lessons and carols. In some congregations, such as Sarver, Pennsylvania, the event is done in cooperation with other local churches.

At the Olivet Church in Toronto they have a Sons of the Academy (the last active group) Christmas dinner for the men, and a Women's Potluck and Carol sing.

Glenview has a full calendar of events including Tableaux, services of readings and singing, and a special Theta Alpha Christmas class, a Christmas Open House dinner at the pastor's residence, and a late-night Christmas Eve service. At the Morningstar Chapel Pastor Jong-Ui Lee leads a candle-light service on Christmas Eve.

The Rev. David Roth in Boulder Colorado reports:

Early in December we have a Christmas Movie night to watch "It's a Wonderful Life," preceded by the animated version of "How the Grinch Stole Christmas." Everyone brings finger food or desserts to share. The other event that we hold is called The Children's Christmas Fair. This is an event to help local families in need by providing a way for children to choose Christmas gifts for their families. We turn the fellowship hall into a festive Christmas boutique that children can visit and shop (without charge) for gifts for their parents and siblings, and which includes wrapping stations. The children are able to go home full of their own Christmas secrets, with festive packages ready for gift giving. Each year we work with a few local elementary schools to identify families to invite, so that we can give needy children the

enjoyment of being on the giving side of the holiday. The event also includes a raffle for some special items, holiday cookies and bread to enjoy and face painting for the children. Everyone agrees that this is our most special event of the season, being able to provide this opportunity to children and their families to have Christmas feel a little more special.

Bryn Athyn has something similar, called the Star of Wonder program. It is held at the Cathedral and features stations where children make projects like Christmas cards, wreaths, floral arrangements, decorate cookies, or listen to stories. There is an Angel Tree, where people take home paper angels from the tree and come back with presents to put under the tree for families in need. The school also contributes gifts in this way at their Christmas program.

In Sweden the Rev. Göran Appelgren describes similar services of readings and singing and notes that *“the Christmas day service is a very strong tradition in Sweden, and we follow that pattern. Since Swedes have made Christmas Eve the big day for both the main Christmas dinner and for gifts, the Christmas day (morning) service is an interesting contrast. But the old tradition is to have a Christmas Dawn service, a very early service at 5 (!) o’clock in the morning. Nowadays 6 or 7 is more common. For many, many years we have also had a Christmas party at the manse. A must do – when the bodies are vigorous – is to dance around the Christmas tree and sing mostly pagan songs. Well, the Christmas tree itself is pagan, isn’t it?”*

He also reports:

The Christmas season begins joyfully with the first Sunday in Advent, when we sing “Prepare the Way of the Lord.” This is also the most popular church service in Sweden. People decorate their houses, light candles and eat traditional saffron buns, “Lussekatter” and ginger snaps, “pepparkakor.” During Advent we also have the Lucia celebration. It does not relate to Christmas at all but does have a Christian background. It is celebrated on December 13. According to the older Julian calendar that was the darkest day of the year. There are lots of Lucia songs and Lucia celebrations in many churches, in every school, at many workplaces, and in grander venues like the City Hall. Our congregation has never had one. I think it is partly because there are so many other options that we couldn’t compete with.

According to tradition, St. Lucia brought food to imprisoned Christians during the longest night of the year when Christians were persecuted in Roman times, and she came to them with lighted candles on her head.

There are many other events and traditions that are followed around the church. In the southern hemisphere, of course, Christmas comes in mid-

summer, so in places like Hurstville, Australia, and South Africa the day may include time at the beach. In a later issue we may include activities from other places in the church not mentioned here, maybe even from Asia, Africa, India or Latin America.

(JFS)

SHAPING OUR DREAMS



Every society and school in the church has experienced new building projects: the dream, the planning, the construction, then the joy of new space to use. Some are humble, some are grand, all are meaningful.

The Bryn Athyn Society completed a grand project this year – an impressive new school and society building, completed just in time for school opening in September.

The Monday after Bryn Athyn Church School graduation on May 30 teams moved in to level the complex that had served the school and society for more than 60 years – including the General Assembly last year. Work ramped up on the new replacement, already underway – which, in addition to serving the Bryn Athyn Church School, Society and community, will be a gracious setting for wedding and memorial receptions, society events and future assemblies.

Working through weather delays and other challenges, the construction

team brought the project in under budget and ahead of schedule, just in time for school opening.

In the Bryn Athyn Church Annual Report Principal **Kiri Rogers** noted: “One of the most remarkable aspects of the transition was the coordinated effort to ensure that nothing from our old building went to waste. Through a well-organized reuse and donation program, more than 1,800 pieces of furniture and equipment found new homes in schools in Gambia, West Africa, and Honduras. This project not only honored the spirit of stewardship but also extended the reach of Bryn Athyn Church School’s mission.”

The official opening ceremony was on September 20 – a warm reflection of gratitude and accomplishment – for a large and appreciative crowd who had followed the construction all summer and were primed for a look inside. Neither the program nor the tour disappointed.

Pastor Derek Elphick led the opening worship and dedication, with appreciation and gratitude for the many people involved, nicely echoed by the **Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.**

Principal Kiri Rogers thanked many volunteers who had been working on the project for years – from distant dream to grand opening.

Rae Monroe of Melcalfe Architects and **Jason Hannah** of Whiting-Turner spoke on behalf of their firms’ leadership in design and construction, and what a privilege it was for so many workers to construct a building to serve such special, distinctive uses. More than 50 subcontractors were involved in the detailed planning, scheduling and coordinated work shifts – all reflected in the extensive areas on display in the tours.

Jim Adams, who had assumed the role of Owner’s Representative, paid special tribute to his good friends, **Chris Carter** and **Carl Asplundh Jr.**, who led the oversight with careful and dedicated attention until each passed away before the building’s completion. Jim carried on to the end – with virtual daily oversight – and never forgot their friendship and professionalism.

Reed Asplundh spoke as representative of the Asplundh Foundation and the extended Asplundh family whose generosity made the project possible. He warmly remembered the brothers – **Lester, Carl and Griffith** – who not only founded the Asplundh Co., but were always leaders in the family’s commitment to the church, New Church education, and the community. They would be pleased and proud of the way the family – and the commitment – have carried on.

Pastor Elphick announced several areas named for special people that will forever reflect and honor their contributions:

- **The Asplundh Atrium** – the school lobby – in recognition of BACS alumni and company founders, Griffith, Lester and Carl, The Asplundh Foundation and Asplundh families whose incredible generosity and

commitment made this building possible.

- **The Emilie K. Asplundh Music Room** in memory of Emilie's teaching at the elementary school and her love of the musical and performing arts.
- **The James Adams Gymnasium** in recognition of his unwavering dedication and support for New Church education.
- **The Chris Carter Library** in memory of his strong and quiet dedication to, and support of, New Church education.
- **The Carl Hjalmar Asplundh Jr. Assembly Hall** in memory of his steady and consistent vision for building a new school. (This space had been known in the old school/society building as **Heilman Hall**, after long-time Principal Otho Heilman, and a suitable location will continue to honor his memory.)
- **The New Church Religious Studies Room** in memory of former Pastor, the **Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh**.

Already this sprawling complex is alive with students and teachers, society programs and special events. The cause of New Church education and community life that sparked the dream years ago is already delivering and knows no horizon.

As Winston Churchill once said: "We shape our buildings; thereafter, they shape us."

(BMH)

OVERWHELMED BY THE WRITINGS?

Read the Word and believe in the Lord, and you will see the truths which should constitute your faith and life. Everyone whose soul desires it is capable of seeing the truths of the Word in light. (Apocalypse Revealed 224)

We pride ourselves as "a reading church." That means reading the Word and the Writings on our own, and in private classes – as well as attending church – to better understand all that the Lord is teaching us.

We know that reading the threefold Word – the Old and New Testaments and the spiritual revelation in the Writings – gives us connection with the Lord and His angels, even if we are not able to grasp – yet – all that they teach. We are blessed with these teachings but reading them does not come easily and many who try become discouraged. Even the literal sense of the Word can seem dry and irrelevant without spiritual context.

The Writings are an incredible treasure of complex doctrine, but cumbersome translations from Latin make for challenging reading. It is easy

to get lost in the “weeds” of doctrine. How many eyes glaze over at the mention of “the internal of the external,” “discrete degrees,” or “the celestial spiritual of the natural”?

My wife and I were in an *Arcana* class years ago with Bishop Louis King, who made it all come alive with his impressive knowledge and infectious enthusiasm. But he was sympathetic with the challenge for lay men and women plowing through the density of doctrine and gave us permission to skim – not to try to read every word but to read for the essence of what is being said and to look for nuggets of truth. It was a good lesson in reading with affection, humility, respect and faith, even if not comprehending every word. He reminded us that the angels have all of eternity to study and understand the Word – and love nothing better.

The Lord has given the Word to mankind, and also to angels, so that by means of it they may be with Him. Indeed, the Word is the means by which the earth is united to heaven, and heaven to the Lord. (Arcana Coelestia 3476)

It is comforting to know that for all the intricacies and complexity of the Word, it all comes down to two underlying teachings: Love the Lord and love your neighbor – the Two Great Commandments. “*Love to God and love toward the neighbor are the whole of the Word.*” (*True Christian Religion* 287) All of the rest is important, and all of it supports what is fundamental.

Just as we can feel intimidated by the Word and Writings, we can feel overwhelmed by the whole panoply of nature – or entranced by a single flower. We learn constantly about the complexities of creation, from the human body to outer space – and scientists never relent in their quest – but always appreciate the underlying Divine order that holds everything together. This is what the Lord offers in His Word – a fountain that never runs dry. And this is the spiritual frontier for each of us – forever searching and every discovery soul-satisfying.

There is meaning and purpose in every facet of creation, just as there is in every truth of the Word. We see heaven and the Lord in a wildflower, in a sunset, in a baby’s smile, in a lover’s eyes – and in His Word.

You cannot be spiritually reborn without some knowledge of the new or spiritual life, of the true things that you ought to believe and the good things that you ought to do. You cannot learn these things on your own, because on your own you can comprehend things only through your physical senses (which) give you information taken from the material world and yourself, not about heaven and God. Spiritual knowledge comes from revelation. (New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine 177)

So, when we read the Word and the Writings, let us think that the Lord and all of heaven are speaking to us, with more love and patience than we will ever know. It is not Moses speaking, or Matthew, or Swedenborg; it is the Lord. And it is our reading and reflection that opens us to the Lord, the heavens and the angels, all speaking to us in our lives.

We live in and with light – the light of the sun and the light of the Word – but are humbled by all that we do not yet see and comprehend. Yet we have an underlying faith that it all hangs together, with a unified spiritual meaning forever showing us the way.

For with Thee there is the fountain of life; in Thy light we shall see light.
(Psalm 36:4)

(BMH)

GROWING THE CHURCH: HOPE AND TRUST

There is a fascinating update (page 485) from Steve David, Director of the New Christian Bible Study Project. Read it and you will be inspired and encouraged by what this unique outreach is accomplishing throughout the world to “spread the Word and grow the church.”

This initiative, still in its relative infancy, is growing the reach of the Lord’s New Church throughout the world – including translations of the Word and Writings in multiple languages, a New Christian Chatbot that takes advantage of the best of Artificial Intelligence, and the largest library anywhere of New Church collateral literature. In just the 30 days prior to writing this report, the website attracted 2.4 million unique visitors.

Add similar dazzling numbers of connections with *offTheLeftEye* videos of the Swedenborg Foundation, plus the new initiative of General Church Outreach to engage new people through digital outreach, and the church is making inroads throughout the world.

Steve reports that hundreds of people are involved in New Christian Bible Study initiatives – many as volunteers. They are working on creating uniquely New Church Bibles in target languages. And he is confident that “once we have the wrinkles ironed out of the Writings translation system, we’re going to clone and modify it to support the translation of everything else – topical articles, commentaries, books, sermons, Bible story explanations – you name it.”

This is all exciting stuff – promising outreach on all these levels connecting people all over the world with the Writings and the Church. Yes, as Steve points out: “You might think – with the number of views that New Church video-makers and podcasters get, and the number of visits that NCBS, *newchurch.org*, and other New Church websites get – that our churches would be bulging with new people. We’re not seeing that. Not yet.”

Not yet, but just wait. There is zealous optimism in all of these outreach efforts, as with all the evangelization programs undertaken over many years, that just getting the news of the new revelation out into the world would bring in grateful and enthusiastic converts. Surely it all helps – making inroads, connecting people with the truth they seek, giving us all hope – and our efforts must always trust in the Lord’s providence leading the growth of His Church.

We know that growth must be small and deliberate in a world still reeling from the fallout of the Last Judgment. But we must be encouraged by these heartfelt efforts. They are planting the seeds in good ground. And we all can do that, in our own ways. In good time – in His good time – there will be harvest. Meanwhile, we can only be trusting, confident – and grateful.

(BMH)

END TIMES, NEW TIMES

With the world so much in turmoil, old warnings stir. End Times are coming. Prepare for the Rapture.

Without the new revelation from the Lord, Christians labor to decipher the literal sense of the Bible – especially the book of *Revelation*, with all of its haunting, menacing symbols. Many biblical scholars consider this apocalyptic vision an unfathomable mystery, perhaps not even meant to be understood. Unlike the simple stories in the Bible, *Revelation* looms as an abstract painting, inviting interpretation but defying consensus. It reads like doomsday prophecy, usually dystopian, with a literal end of the world, the dead raised up, and God returning to earth as King of a new heaven and a new earth. Hence the threatening “End Times” and liberating “Rapture.”

We are blessed with the revelation of *Revelation* – the internal sense that makes sense of it all, with the crowning utopia of the Holy City New Jerusalem descending from God out of heaven, with all the hope of the Lord’s New Church.

Jesus said to His disciples – and to all of us:

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth. (John 16:12,13)

The Spirit of Truth – the spiritual sense of the Word – is what we are blessed with by the Lord, who also commanded His disciples (and we are all disciples) in the Grand Commission:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit – teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:19,20)

This is a teaching opportunity, to be handled with sensitivity and respect. Christians are not apt to be attracted to a brash claim that the Second Coming has already occurred – and we have the answers! But a gentle leading to understanding of that “Spirit of Truth” and His message can open hearts and ears.

The Writings teach – throughout *Apocalypse Explained* and *Apocalypse Revealed*, and specifically in *Arcana Coelestia* 4535:

Explanation has been given about what the Lord foretold about His Advent, or the Consummation of the Age; and it has been repeatedly shown that by (this) is signified the last time of the church, which is called in the Word the Last Judgment. Those who do not see beyond the literal sense must suppose that the last Judgment is the destruction of the world,

Those who do not see beyond the literal sense must infer that the universal heaven together with this earth will be annihilated, and the dead will then rise again and dwell in a new heaven and upon a new earth. But that the Word is not to be so understood may be seen from many other passages where the heavens and earth are mentioned. They who have any faith in an internal sense can plainly see that by “a new heaven and a new earth” is meant a new church, which shall succeed when the former church passes away, and that the “heaven” is its internal and the “earth” is its external.

This new church is being established in heaven and descending to earth as we learn and love the truth of this new revelation. The promise is always rooted in our freedom to accept it or reject it. We see this church as both “specific” (within the form of the General Church of the New Jerusalem) and “universal” (within the lives and hearts of people all over the world touched by the truth as they see and perceive it).

The whole purpose of the Lord’s Second Coming is to take away our blindness by shining a new light of truth – lighting the way to heaven. Revelation, in its internal sense, invites all of us to be made new by the light of the morning star and the water of life. Then we may be as “*the people who walked in darkness, who have seen a great light.*” (Isaiah 9:2)

This is a light to share. The crowning vision is one of hope and promise – not dark and foreboding “End Times” but the light of a new revelation, a new path, a new heaven. We are blessed with the revelation explaining this “mystery” – that it is nothing to fear, nothing destructive, nothing apocalyptic, but a whole new spiritual reality, manifested in a “new heaven” that is open and inviting to all. And that is a gift to share.

(BMH)



Rediscover the season with Scripture, reflection, and spiritual insight.

The theme of this year's Christmas Readings is *Our Part*: the role each of us plays in the Lord's plan. God is always working to save, but He asks for our cooperation. Each person in the Christmas story had a part to play. So do we.

Every day from December 1–25, receive an email with a reading from the Christmas story, paired with passages from the Heavenly Doctrines and a reflection to help you live with purpose.

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Grow together through weekly group discussions—online or in person. Talk with others about how the Lord is speaking to you through His Word this season. Ask your pastor about a local group or visit newchurch.org/christmasgroups to learn more.



Church News

Compiled by Bruce Henderson

GLENCAIRN AWARDS

In the third year since the Glencairn Award was reinstituted, 11 recipients were named and honored during a Charter Day reception at Glencairn Museum. **Chancellor Peter M. Buss Jr.** announced the recipients with the following commendations:

Jim Adams

Among the many things that Jim has done over his career is serving as Cathedral Director for five-and-a-half years, then 12 years as Managing Director of the Academy Secondary Schools, with a small hiatus, and another ongoing two-plus years in that capacity.

He has been responsible for major commitments in fundraising, and for expansive work on our Academy facilities.

He also has helped with ANC football, even doing odd jobs like organizing storage and creating a trophy case, plus procuring all sorts of things needed to make the schools their best.

Then there are the more substantial projects he has taken on, like managing the building of the new Bryn Athyn Thrift Shop and the new Bryn Athyn Church School and Society Building

Jim is honored especially for so many other things as well, including President of the Bryn Athyn Swim Club, fundraising for basketball courts, a diving board and lifeguard chairs. He also ran community roller skating back in the '70s.

This all boils down to the fact that Jim is a tireless champion of the Academy and New Church in general. For his lifetime of faithful service, we present a Glencairn Award to Jim Adams.

Jill Brickman

At the top of the list of qualifications for this year's Glencairn Award is Jill's integrity and work ethic in all that she does. They are second to none. There isn't a workday or weekend when Jill isn't hard at work on something useful and helpful to Glenview, Illinois, her hometown, the surrounding community, and beyond. Serving others is who she is – both professionally and on a

volunteer basis.

Jill's second qualification is the sizeable list of volunteer organizations and activities she is, or has been, involved in over many years. While her focus has been on the Glenview New Church and School, and the surrounding community, she has also given generously of her time to the Academy, serving on the Board of Trustees as Vice Chair, and continuing to serve on Board committees over many years. She also served on the General Church Board of Directors and on many of its committees.

But what makes Jill particularly special as a volunteer, and what spreads over everything else that she does, is her unwavering devotion to human needs. Jill is possessed of a concern for the welfare of others and a keen sensitivity that shine out from everything she says and does.

As one person put it, when it comes to volunteerism, Jill Brickman is solid gold!

For these many reasons, we present a Glencairn Award to Jill Brickman.

Marvin Clymer

Marvin is not a classroom teacher but his work in the archives and historical preservation plays a critical role in education. His efforts ensure that researchers, students and scholars have access to crucial documents and historical materials that might otherwise have been forgotten.

Marvin's work is centered in Swedenborg Library's Archives, serving the Academy, the General Church and the broader Swedenborgian research community.

He has worked creatively to maintain Swedenborg Library functions in tight economic times, including fund raising, and working beyond his paid hours.

For his tireless service to the Academy and the Church, we present a Glencairn Award to Marvin Clymer

Martha Gyllenhaal

Martha has given many years of dedicated service within the field of New Church education as a beloved professor at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church.

She has been active in research and publication, most recently in an extensive research paper on Irish poet and artist Robert Blake and Swedenborg. She has served as Chair of the Fine Arts Department and in Faculty Council leadership.

Over the decades, Martha has become known for her leadership and mentorship in the field of art. She is deeply committed to the College, often doing much more than her job required. She has served as a wise mentor to students.

For her career-long commitment to the College and to New Church education, and for her contributions through research and publication, we present a Glencairn Award to Martha Gyllenhaal.

Dr. Kristin King

Kristin has served as a beloved professor of English at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church for many years.

She is credited as President with bringing the College back to life during financial crisis. This she did with wisdom and grace, demonstrating skilled leadership, building consensus and trust, and lowering deficits while maintaining excellence.

Throughout her teaching and leadership career, she has been well-respected by fellow staff and her students. Many comment that she expected them to work hard and to believe in themselves. She beautifully brought New Church teachings into her undergrad and graduate courses.

For her career-long service to and love for Bryn Athyn College and the broader Academy, we present a Glencairn Award to Kristin King.

Terry Schnarr

Most people here in Bryn Athyn know Terry as a wonderful organist at Bryn Athyn Cathedral. For many years before retiring, she tirelessly led Cathedral music, including training others on the organ.

She has done the selection of music for services including vespers for countless years. She also took on the massive project of re-doing the Liturgy.

Prior to all this, she is honored for her work in Toronto, where she worked to develop a Contemporary Music Book, and establish a Mother's Network, among other things.

Now, Terry is an active part of the Cascadia New Church group in the northwestern United States, serving on its board.

For her steadfast and lifelong professional and volunteer service to the Church, we present a Glencairn Award to Terry Schnarr.

Julie and Jamie Uber

These two have taken volunteering to a new level.

Let's start with Julie:

Her energy centers on the Pittsburgh New Church and School.

Julie has made endless June 19th gifts, volunteered at the church in the gardens and Sunday School, has served on many committees, and headed many projects.

Julie played a key role in creating the new school focus on dyslexia, which is designed to help people for generations to learn to read. A core concern of hers is maintaining thorough New Church content in this reframed New Church school.

On top of all this, she is a volunteer teacher and has been for decades – never taking as salary for most of her career – and specializing in art.

Then there's Jamie:

He has served too many years to count on the Academy Board of Trustees and currently on the General Church Board of Directors. It's quite possible that he holds the record, or is at least "up there" in terms of people who have served the most. He has also served as Secretary of the Executive Committee in Pittsburgh for decades

He freely offers legal counsel to the organizations he serves. He is currently the Chair of the Legal Advisory Council and chair of Human Resources Committee, and the Nominating Committee. He was instrumental in a major bylaw rewrite for the General Church.

He is also an Eagle Scout and has remained very active within the scouting organization.

Together, Julie and Jamie have been running Jacob's Creek Family Retreat for many years.

For their amazing volunteer service to the Church and love for New Church education, we are happy to present a Glencairn Award to Julie and Jamie Uber.

Gweirydd Williams

Gweirydd is honored for his years of volunteering and many contributions to the Life of the Church and his community, including decades of unwavering, timer-generous support for the British Academy Summer School. Everyone looks forward to seeing him each year. He is noted also for his outreach work to promote the British Church on social media, serving on the Boards of Michael Church London, the British Academy and the General Church Council, offering invaluable input and studied contributions, and for his diligence as a Secondary School Deputy Head.

He is a secondary teacher in the United Kingdom and has a habit of extending himself to substitute teach when anyone needs it.

He is responsible for curriculum and data, and will spend his free time reviewing exams to see where teachers can improve. More recently, he has been using several social media platforms to advertise the church.

For his many contributions to the life of the Church and to his community, we present a Glencairn Award to Gweirydd Williams.

Geoff and Kathy Wyncoll

These two are crucial members of the Colchester Society, and some say it would not exist without their constant volunteering. They are honored for their decades of love, caring, energy and volunteering for the Church in Britain, both of them playing crucial roles in its different organizations.

They have served for years on Colchester's Executive Committee and

Pastor's Council, with Geoff as Society Treasurer and Kathy as Secretary.

Kathy was Secretary and President of the of the Colchester Theta Alpha Chapter and organized the New Church Day gifts for children. She is a Sunday School teacher and Geoff was a Colchester usher.

Geoff also served on the General Church Council in the UK, overseeing funds and strategic planning for the church.

Together they have orchestrated countless church social events and have spent years working on the General Church Council and British Academy Boards. Geoff has served as Council Chair and Kathy as Secretary of the British Academy.

When Colchester New Church building was being sold it was very complicated and for two years they both worked to finalize the sale.

For their lifetime of care and love and energy and volunteerism to the Church, we present a Glencairn Award to Geoff and Kathy Wyncoll.

CHARTER DAY 2025

Highlights of this year's Academy of the New Church Charter Day celebration included:

- A Cathedral address by the **Rev. Dr. Thane P. Glenn**, *Become Something*. (See page 480)
- The Theta Alpha luncheon, featuring a talk by **Hilary Bryntesson**, a lecturer in Physical Education and Health at Bryn Athyn College: *Adolescent Faith in the United States*. This was based on an extensive survey of young people
- Distinguished Alumni and Outstanding Volunteers for Bryn Athyn College and the Academy Secondary Schools (see below)
- Happy class reunions and a Reunion Classes Art Exhibit
- Many social and sporting events, including a double-overtime tie in boys soccer and as last-second touchdown win in football.
- The 31st annual Student Scholarship Golf Outing – played a week after Charter Day – which has raised more than \$830,000 in scholarship funds for the College and Secondary Schools. This year's outing included a record 161 golfers.

Distinguished Alumni

Bryn Athyn College

This award recognizes alumni of the College who have given back to their communities, their alma mater and the church by applying the values and perspective gained from a New Church liberal arts education.

Introducing the awardees **Dr. Marcy Latta**, Chief Academic Officer and Dean of Faculty and Academics, said: “This year’s Distinguished Alumni Award recipients represent the very best of what a Bryn Athyn College education can cultivate. Their stories demonstrate how the values learned here – compassion, service, excellence and faith – continue to guide their journeys long after graduation. Each of them has made remarkable contributions in their respective fields while maintaining deep connections to this community and the principles that unite us.”

DEBORAH (1978) and RICHARD (1981) COOK

Deborah Cook graduated from Bryn Athyn College in 1978 with a degree in Education and has spent more than four decades as a beloved educator across three countries. After beginning her career at Olivet Day School in Toronto, she joined Bryn Athyn Church School in 2001, where she became known for her hands-on teaching approach that engaged all five senses.

A passionate naturalist who studied under Dr. Grant Doering, Debbie created meaningful traditions including Earth Day walks, seed-planting worship services, and Pennypack Woods field trips. Her curriculum consistently wove spiritual truths into everyday learning, whether incorporating Divine Providence into history or enriching worship through music with her skills in piano, recorder and guitar.

Colleague Cara Dibb notes that Debbie’s beliefs have guided every aspect of her service, embodying an educator who nurtures minds, hearts and spirits. Debbie and Richard raised four children, including three sons who attended Bryn Athyn College.

Richard Cook attended Bryn Athyn College part-time in 1979-80 after completing his education in England. He has built a distinguished career as a portrait artist, working in oils on canvas and creating commissioned works for private homes and corporate collections throughout the United States and Canada.

After the devastating loss of his daughter Laura in 1990, Richard’s work transformed. Through his grief, he discovered “a new level of artwork – art that expressed the realm of the spirit.” His spiritual paintings, including “Angel of Light,” were exhibited at General Church gatherings and published in 2001 as a book that has comforted countless bereaved parents.

Richard’s testimony about how Swedenborg’s Writings provided a framework for understanding his loss demonstrates the lasting impact of his connection to the New Church community. His journey exemplifies how personal tragedy, when met with faith and creative expression, can offer hope to others facing similar losses.

AMANDA CALAMITO (2017) Esq., MBA

Amanda Calamito graduated from Bryn Athyn College in 2017 with a BA in Business and was highly engaged in campus life, serving as a Student Ambassador from 2014 to 2017. Following graduation, she earned dual graduate degrees – a JD and MBA – from Quinnipiac University in 2020, a remarkable achievement that positioned her at the intersection of law and business.

Amanda's career has been marked by rapid advancement across multiple sectors. She began at Deloitte's Global Employer Services group, specializing in global tax law and executive compensation, progressing from Tax Consultant I to Senior Tax Consultant within 18 months. She then transitioned to private practice, developing expertise in business formation, mergers and acquisitions, commercial real estate, employment law, and estate planning at firms including Nedder & Associates and Aeton Law Partners.

Amanda serves as Associate Tax Counsel at Timex Group USA, Inc. in Connecticut, where she applies her unique combination of legal expertise and business acumen to complex corporate tax matters. Licensed in both New Jersey and Connecticut, she brings sophisticated legal skills to global organizations.

Amanda remains deeply connected to Bryn Athyn College. In her own words: "I take great pride in the core values I learned during my four years at Bryn Athyn College which I utilize every day. Bryn Athyn shaped me into the successful businesswoman I am today, and I am forever indebted to the valuable life lessons I learned here."

Outstanding Volunteers

Bryn Athyn College

The award was presented to the **Rev. Chuck Blair** and his wife, **Susan Asplundh**, who were unable to attend, for taking on the highly successful Tools4Life summer camp. Chuck and Susan sent the following message, which was read to all attending:

We are honored to be named Outstanding Volunteers by Bryn Athyn College of the New Church for our work with Tools4Life Camp.

Both of us have been involved for much of Tools' 30-year history and are so happy to see the camp continue to serve kids at its new home here at our College.

In times of change and uncertainty we are always reminded by the Lord about keeping "first things" recognizably first. We think that Tools4Life helps foster this idea – that preparing ourselves in this natural world is really all about preparing ourselves for the kingdom of heaven.

This past year we worked with Head Counselors Libby Allen and Luke David (both alumni of the College) to craft the 2025 camp theme: *Finding Your True North*.

At camp the rising high school juniors and seniors and our stellar group of counselors were able to experience living in a college dorm; enjoy an off-campus career day hosted by alumni and community members; help create and participate in a NewChurch LIVE Sunday service; take an afternoon of classes and workshops at Glencairn Museum; learn Etiquette with Esther Yardumian-Smyth followed by a Dinner/Date night – complete with a keynote address about perseverance and resilience.

The list of activities goes on but the real magic was the interaction between campers and counselors. Respect flowed both ways, a spirit of encouragement and empathy was present; at times real conversations about tough situations came up and other times silliness and laughter ensued. That is what we love about Tools4Life – the natural being infilled with the spiritual.

We are truly grateful for the opportunity to contribute to such a meaningful mission and to be part of a community that values spiritual growth, education and service. This recognition inspires us to continue supporting initiatives that help young people navigate life with purpose, faith and resilience.

Thank you for the opportunity to play a small role in fostering the next generation of thoughtful, grounded individuals looking to follow *True North*.

ACADEMY SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The Girls and Boys Schools continued their 33-year tradition of honoring Distinguished Alumni, usually chosen from reunion classes. These women and men are invited to talk to the seniors of the respective schools about how their Academy experience has influenced their lives and careers.

Academy Girls School

Erika Heilman (1985)

Erika attended the Pittsburgh New Church School before graduating from the Academy Girls School. She then completed a Bachelor of Science degree in biology-pre-medical studies at Bucknell University, intending to pursue a career in health care. Straight out of college, however, Erika landed a job in book publishing in New York City and never turned back. She has spent the last few decades working in the industry, first on the



editorial side, then taking on commercial roles.

In 2011 she co-founded her own imprint, Bibliomotion, which was acquired by Taylor & Francis/Informa in 2016. She loves helping authors bring their ideas to life. For the past eight years, she has held positions at the Harvard Business Review Group, most recently as Vice President, Deputy Publisher for the magazine and Publisher of HBR Press.

Erika serves on the Board of The Swedenborg Society (in London) and New Church Live. She has spent the last three decades in New Hampshire, where she has raised her three children, Owen, Lydia and Nora. They love to travel and spend as much time together as allows.

Christina (Kline) Orthwein (1995)

Christina attended the New Church Schools in Bryn Athyn from kindergarten through two years at Bryn Athyn College. During her free time in the Academy Girls School she served as Freshman Social Rep, Sophomore Class President, AKM Pledge Head (back when pledging was still a thing!), Factores President, and was valedictorian for her graduating class in 1995.

Christina earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Ceramics at Tyler School of Art and has been “professionally playing” with clay for 26 years. She has a tile and porcelain jewelry business, and with some recent success as a figure sculptor she has been traveling the country speaking at conferences and teaching workshops.

She and her husband, George Orthwein, have three children, Felix, Linus and Oliver.



Academy Boys School

Reed P. Asplundh (1975)

Reed's journey started at Bryn Athyn Church School, then the Academy Boys School, and a couple of years at Bryn Athyn College. As a senior, he captained two sports teams. He was president of Sigma Delta Pi for two years and was awarded a Sons of the Academy silver medal at graduation.

After studying history at Lehigh University, he returned home to Bryn Athyn. For 25 years, he taught in the elementary school, “hopefully inspiring young minds.” He launched the first ANC Summer Camp and



also coached ANC lacrosse for a time.

His wife, Elaine (Synnestvedt), was named a Distinguished Alumna 10 years ago. She launched nearly every girls interscholastic sports program at the Girls School, which now honors her with the Elaine S. Asplundh Award, counterpart to the Boys School's Stanley F. Ebert award. She aimed to better the school and world through students' own choices.

Together, they raised 10 children. Two sons, Brandon and Ivan, work in the Boys School. Six children joined us through adoption. They also provided foster care for many children on a formal basis, with Elaine leading that effort. Informally, their home became a haven for others in need.

Over time, perhaps 150 kids have lived at their house. Interestingly, his co-Distinguished Alumnus, Sam Sweeney, stayed with them one summer, after one of their kids had requested that he be welcomed to do so.

They hold the record for the longest consecutive streak of having a child in Bryn Athyn Church School – 33 years straight.

For the past 30 years, Reed has worked tirelessly behind the scenes to support Bryn Athyn Schools. The last 20 years focused on financial sustainability – from elementary through high school – so that our descendants, theirs, and future generations can thrive here, embracing this New Church-centered legacy if they choose.

Sam Sweeney (2005)

Sam was a dorm boy in Stuart Hall and Senior Class President. After graduation he went to Arizona State University, then served in the Peace Corps in El Salvador for nearly two years.

He is a broadcast journalist and has worked at NBC and ABC stations for the last 13 years. He currently works at ABC News in Washington, DC, where he focuses most of his time on aviation news.

He also covers major international conflicts and was in Ukraine the night the war started and returned for three additional trips during the war. He was among the first international journalists on the ground in Israel following the October 7, 2023, attack and spent nearly a month reporting from the Gaza border in the days following.

Though not originally from Bryn Athyn, Sam credits this community and the Academy of the New Church for helping to shape the person he has become.



GIRLS SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

The Academy of the New Church Girls School has initiated a search for its next Principal. In an October 14 letter to faculty, staff, alumni, and Academy Board and Corporation members, Managing Director **Jim Adams** said:

In April 2024, the Rt. Rev. Peter Buss Jr. nominated **Erica O. Stine** to the position of Interim Girls School Principal for the 2024-25 school year, which the ANCSS Board Committee and Academy Trustees affirmed. In December of 2024 Erica agreed to accept my offer to remain in the position of Interim Principal for a second year for the 2025-26 school year and this was affirmed by our ANCSS Board Committee and the Academy Trustees.

As we head into the final year of this two-year appointment, as previously announced and promised, we are looking to fill the Girls School Principal position for a three-year term.

At this point the position is being offered to the current ANC Girls School faculty only.

Jim noted that **Erica O. Stine** and **Sarah C. Waelchli** have applied.

The Girls School Principal Search Committee includes:

Jim Adams, co-chair

Brent McCurdy, co-chair, chair of ANCSS Board Committee

Emily G. Hasen, ANC Trustee, parent of Girls School student

Laura Hill, ANC trustee, ANCSS Board Committee, parent of Girls School student

Megan S. Boyesen, Girls School faculty

Bonnie Hodgell, Girls School faculty

Michaela Boyesen, Girls School faculty

Keith Gruber, Boys School faculty representative, dormitory coordinator, parent

The goal is for the committee to complete its work and make an announcement by December 1, 2025, for the Girls School Principal beginning July 1, 2026.

GENERAL CHURCH BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Highlights of the meetings of September 26-27, 2025

President

The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.

Bishop Buss presented the next steps of a vision-oriented messaging campaign centered on the Scripture: “*Here I am, Lord. Send me.*” (Isaiah 6:8) This is based on requested feedback from clergy over recent months. The updated presentation included:

- Theme: You are needed and the Lord is calling you to step forward for the people and causes important to you.
- Doctrinal framework: Sending out the 70; what it means to be angelic; and the Lord’s way of blessing that requires our participation.
- Long-term campaign: The goal will be to make the commitment of saying “send me” visible on a personal and organizational level. In year one, organizational priorities include vision communication, folding in existing programs, and inviting vision partners.

The vision launch will be multi-dimensional, including newsletters, video, travel engagements and a print mailing. (See the vision by Bishop Buss on page 453.)

Vice Presidents

The Rt. Revs. Bradley Heinrichs and David Lindrooth

Bishop Heinrichs drew attention to summer camps, such as Jacob’s Creek and Living Waters, and encouraged attendance.

Bishop Lindrooth shared updates on digital communication efforts, plus pastoral oversight of the General Church in Canada and Europe.

Executive Director

David Frazier

David reported that strong governance, internal controls and accounting practices are being established in West Africa as part of the Global Healthy Congregation project. This is being extended to Tucson, Arizona, and Midwest Missouri, among others.

Recruiting and Developing Priests

The Rev. Scott Frazier

There are two areas of focus here: recruiting students for the Theological School and investing in the professional development of priests.

Karen Stoeller, Head of Human Resources, reported on professional development courses that are offered, including a management “boot camp,” a

survey-based career tool, and a basic business course.

Recruiter **Baird Kistner** reviewed the tools used in recruiting priests, an online minister recruitment “landing page,” and an online clergy directory.

Outreach

Chuck Ebert and the Rev. Pearse Frazier

Pearse shared an example of an Outreach video as part of an ongoing 52-videos-a-year project. He reported on 2025 goals for holiday reading programs, including offering a free children’s Christmas book from General Church Education for new contacts.

Planning has begun on a collaborative communications workshop for pastors on sharing best practices for sermons, articles, videos and more.

Global Healthy Congregations

John Berridge and Jane Enis

Jane shared updates on several congregational health projects: the New Church of Boulder Valley, Colorado; Sunrise Chapel, Tucson, Arizona; Midwest New Church, Missouri; Cascadia New Church; the General Church in United Kingdom, Ghana and Ivory Coast.

The GHC team continues to use and refine revitalization methods, including Hoshin Planning and the Entrepreneurial Operating System, aided by meaningful congregational volunteering and participation.

General Church Education

Tanya Woker, Rebekah Russell, Rachel Glenn, Greg Henderson

Tanya introduced herself as chair and **Shawn Synnestvedt** as vice chair.

Rachel noted the primary program offerings of Religious Educational Programs: family gift mailings, book publication, and the Vineyard website. She previewed the reprinting of a *Revelation* story book, with upgraded image quality.

Rebekah gave an overview of staff and enrollment across the General Church elementary schools this year. Greg reported on recent curricular work and development of educational staff.

Recruiter Baird Kistner discussed two recently completed recruitment mechanisms: an online landing page for anyone interested in becoming a New Church teacher, and another for college students interested in New Church education internships.

Advancement

Greg Clay and Mark Wyncoll

Good news was shared on final contributions numbers for FY25, which were ahead of budget.

Mark shared analysis of trends in religious giving in the United States over the last 40 years, showing a steady decline. Positive results for the General Church stand as significant wins in the context of this downward trend.

Real Estate Finance

David Frazier and Wayne Wadsworth

The Board voted in favor of two resolutions: to sell a portion of the Horigan house property; and to sell the Cincinnati church Building.

Human Resources

Jamie Uber and Karen Stoeller

The General Church in Canada, with the General Church, has created a new joint Human Resources Manager position providing full-time assistance in Canada to support personnel needs.

Val Younan, of Toronto, has been named to this position. She has assisted the General Church on a variety of projects. This appointment formalizes her growing involvement with the General Church and General Church Canada to better serve both organizations. She officially started on October 1 and reports to Karen Stoeller.

Investment

David Frazier

Returns for the New Church Investment Fund have been very good for the past five-year period, averaging 10.8%, against a benchmark of 9.3%, but 3-year and 1-year performance lagged behind the benchmark. Since 2018 we are ahead of the benchmark by 0.8%.

The net effect of the past 14 years is that the NCIF grew by \$66 million, provided about \$80 million to fund General Church operations, and has an average return after payout supporting General Church operations of 4.57%.

MIDWEST NEW CHURCH UPDATE

The Rev. Calvin Heinrichs

A lot has been going on in Missouri. We finished our first year with a resident pastor and have experienced a lot of firsts. We had our first wedding just three days after we started. We had four baptisms in the first year-and-a-half. I like telling people that if you take the data from year one, and the trend holds for growth, we anticipate that in 16 years we will pass Bryn Athyn in membership! Hopefully, we can appreciate the humor in interpreting the data this way. Don't worry, the church out here does not think it fair to assume 20% growth every year.

We recently signed our articles of incorporation, a satisfying milestone which carried a profound sense of significance and excitement. We held a series of classes exploring the history of the Church and the Academy Movement, tracing the years of planning and growth leading to the institution's charter. This instilled a feeling that we are advancing to a new stage with the potential to impact future generations. While much work lies ahead, we are humbled by the Lord's guidance through Providence, inspiring individuals to build something new for the benefit of His Church.

We have had two service trips to support the church efforts here; one from the Kempton New Church, the other from Bryn Athyn College. These were much appreciated and we believe they help build lasting ties that connect the church in Missouri to the rest of the church.

We've been focusing on clarifying the purpose of the church in this region. We know that the New Church is supposed to spread across the world. We believe there should be a New Church in every single state, province and country. Obviously, it takes time, and sometimes we have to admit it won't be in our lifetime. We also know that we are to exercise our prudence and ask ourselves what we can do to serve the Lord's Church on earth.

A presentation at the College highlighted the importance of establishing New Church societies and made a case for joining the Church in Missouri specifically. We discussed the affordability of the area, focusing on low housing costs, reasonable taxes and minimal government regulations. With housing prices roughly one-third to one-half those of other established societies, and taxes as low as one-fifth, we underscored the opportunity for young families to achieve homeownership. Additionally, we emphasized the value of serving the church by building a strong presence in the Heartland.

As Christmas rolls around for the second time with a resident pastor, we are excited to continue traditions established last year and add some new ones. We did a PowerPoint Tableaux service last year and got a choir together to sing

some special music. We are going to experiment with a Christmas choir again as well as a society event to sing Christmas hymns.

If you find yourself looking for a society to settle down in and raise a family in an area that is affordable, please reach out. We would love to help you navigate the hurdles. If you want to get a sense of the area, please come and visit. As they say, Missouri loves company.

ROSEVILLE NEW CHURCH 150th ANNIVERSARY

The Roseville New Church – formally The Sydney Society of the New Church and a congregation of the New Church of Australasia – celebrated its 150th anniversary on October 19.

The Rev. Howard Thompson, pastor, led a Visioning Day celebration that included a special service and luncheon. In a message to the congregation, he said:

While 150 years is certainly something to celebrate, it is also a moment to reflect. The world around us has changed significantly – especially in recent decades – and so has the nature of church life.

To help us navigate the path ahead, the Church Committee has engaged Spark Strategy, a consulting group that specializes in supporting mission-driven and purpose-led congregations across Australia. After conducting a series of interviews with members of our community, the Spark team will facilitate a Visioning Session for the entire congregation and extended church family.

Together we will imagine how our church can not only survive but flourish in the years ahead.

The nearby Hurstville Society of the General Church, under the leadership of the **Rev. HyunJin Yang**, cancelled its regular service on October 19 to join in the Roseville celebration.

Annual Report

of the Secretary of the General Church of the New Jerusalem

Anita Fiske Halterman

Between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025, 50 new members were received into the General Church, and eight members resigned. During the year, the Secretary's Office received notice of the deaths of 41 members.

Membership July 1, 2024	5,371
New Members	50
Resignations	8
Deceased Members	41
Membership June 30, 2025	5,372

GENERAL CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

NEW MEMBERS

CANADA

Crampton, Emily Jean
Lermite, Elizabeth

CÔTE d'IVOIRE

Blon, Isabelle Molaho
Djezou, Elise Ahou
Koffi, Catherine Affoue
Koffi, Edmond Yao
Kouadio, Fidel Kouakou
Kouassi, Barbara Akissi
Nandje, Donadienne Affoue
Zouzou, Mohle

NIGERIA

Igoni, Usokine

SPAIN

Rodríguez, Ángel Delgado

SWEDEN

Borgsten, Bengt Arne Gunnar
Sjödin, Eric

UNITED KINGDOM

Slowikowski, Adam Andrew

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Arizona

Metsoko, Martin
Niamien, Beranger

California

Hoglund-Lopez, Joshua Michael

Illinois

Hendricks, Mekenna Spring Schrock
Hendricks, Sean Tristan

Indiana

Waddell, James Alexander

Massachusetts

O'Neill, Brandon James

Michigan

Brock, Jency Glenn
de Chazal, Luke Adrien
de Chazal, Benjamin Simons

Pennsylvania

Adams, Jeremy Mason
Adams, Benjamin Poole
Alden, Janet Virginia Kelley
Bostock, Jane P.
Calvo Naranjo, Douglas Daniel
Cole, Arwen Elisabeth
Cranch, Eric Stanley
Davis, Dean Christopher
Frazier, Hans Christian
Frazier, Trajan Hill
Genzlinger, Ashlan Taylor
Genzlinger, Laban Gustav
Heilman, Christian Glenn
King, Ingrid Eli
Larsen, Haakon Bjornar
McQueen, Kenneth Peter

Nash, Ian Richard
Pitcairn, Heath Lachlan
Powell, Oliver
Smith, McKenna
Synnestvedt, Konner Day
Tang, Lana Truong
Wyncoll, Maia Marie

Name withheld by request, 2

IN MEMORIAM

Alden, David T., January 20, 2025, of
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 73

Asplundh, Carl Hjalmar, Jr., March 7,
2025, of New Hope, Pennsylvania, 89

Buss, Neil Martin, July 20, 2024, of
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, 81

Chapman, Jacquelynn Brewer, July
31, 2024, of Glenview, Illinois, 73

Closterman, Doris Evans, November
25, 2024, of Huntingdon Valley,
Pennsylvania, 81

Cooper, Leesa Violet Kloc,
February 15, 2025, of New Tripoli,
Pennsylvania, 63

Cronlund, Sue Ellen Derr, July 9,
2024, of Wrightstown, Pennsylvania, 82

Curtis, Carol Ruth McCardell,
November 1, 2024, of Oxford,
Michigan, 78

Doering, (Alan) Dale, September 26,
2024, of Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, 91

Doering, Sonia Synnestvedt,
December 23, 2024, of Bryn Athyn,
Pennsylvania, 90

Echols, Emmy Lou Soderberg,
January 24, 2025, of Bryn Athyn,
Pennsylvania, 90

Fornander, S. M. Rune, November
30, 2024, of Jönköping, Sweden, 92

Gladish, Gabrielle Howard, March
21, 2025, of Lebanon, Ohio, 98

Grubb, (John) Alan, March 3, 2025,
of Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, 80

Gunther, Brian Paul, September 4,
2024, of Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, 63

Gyllenhaal, Marion Louise Down,
March 11, 2025, of Bryn Athyn,
Pennsylvania, 95

Halterman, Doris Acton, June 9,
2025, of Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, 89

Hamm, Doris Bond, March 14, 2025,
of Oakville, Ontario, Canada, 98

Harris, Laura Hill, December 22, 2024,
of Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, 71

Heinrichs, Elizabeth Ann Waters,
April 14, 2025, of Kitchener, Ontario,
Canada, 73

Heinrichs, Carina Nicole, December
24, 2024, of Lake Worth, Florida, 38

Hill, Stanley Douglas, June 14, 2025,

of Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, 97

Hyatt, Aven, September 26, 2024, of
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, 100

King, Alan Cedric, June 6, 2025, of
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, 76

Lindsay, James Pitcairn, October 2,
2024, of Sarver, Pennsylvania, 72

Lynch, Ruth Bostock, November 9,
2024, of Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, 101

McDonough, Michael Croft, January
9, 2025, of Hatboro, Pennsylvania, 65

Moorhead, (Frederick) Lee,
February 18, 2025, of Bryn Athyn,
Pennsylvania, 76

Odhner, Hugo Valdemar,
December 21, 2024, of Bryn Athyn,
Pennsylvania, 91

Omlor, Viola Friesen, February 9,
2025, of Darlington, Pennsylvania, 84

Orchard, Basil Cyril Laurence,
February 19, 2025, of Brampton,
Ontario, Canada, 90

Schnarr, Arthur Willard "Terry"
Jr., February 6, 2025, of Kitchener,
Ontario, Canada, 72

Schnarr, Gretchen Williams, January
21, 2025, of Wheeling, Illinois, 73

Simons, (Samuel) Brian, October 31,
2024, of Trumbull, Connecticut, 87

Smith, Christopher Ronald Jack,
February 11, 2025, of Kempton,
Pennsylvania, 83

Smith, Drey Davis, January 18,
2025, of Camberly, Surrey, United
Kingdom, 93

Smith, Ronald Alan, August 20, 2024,
of Etobicoke, Ontario, Canada, 98

Stewart, Warren Lindsay, October
27, 2024, of Kitchener, Ontario,
Canada, 74

Walker, Cynthia Hyatt, February
17, 2025, of Huntingdon Valley,
Pennsylvania, 83

Welch, Barbara “Bobbi” Ann,
September 17, 2024, of Richboro,
Pennsylvania, 84

Wille, Marylin McQueen, April 4,
2025, of Glenview, Illinois, 95

RESIGNATIONS

Gantz, George Robert
Gantz, Wenda Jungé
Greer, Melodie Haworth
Horigan, Doreen Marie Woods
Horigan, James Patrick
Keal, Solomon John
Sellner, Radford Vinet
Name withheld by request

Directory

GENERAL CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM 2025-2026

OFFICIALS

Bishop: The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.

Assistant Bishops: The Rt. Revs. Bradley D. Heinrichs and David H. Lindrooth

Secretary: Mrs. Anita F. Halterman

GENERAL CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM (A Corporation of Pennsylvania)

OFFICERS OF THE CORPORATION

President: The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.

Vice Presidents: The Rt. Revs. Bradley D. Heinrichs and David H. Lindrooth

Secretary: Mrs. Rene H. Johnson

Executive Director: Mr. David O. Frazier

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE CORPORATION

Annette Baltz, Darren Bau-Madsen, John Berridge, Craig Bostock, Rhett Brown, Erin Busby, Gregory Clay, Jesse Cole, Thomas David, Charles Ebert, Eli Echols, Stephen Elphick, Jared Hasen, Grant Heinrichs, Robert Heinrichs, Murray Heldon, Barbara Horigan, Keith Hyatt, Rene Johnson, Ethan King, Sharon Kunkle, Catherine McQueen, Kelly Niall, Erik Odhner, Torrance Pitcairn, Brynna Carswell Smith, Shawn Synnestvedt, James Uber, Wayne Wadsworth, Tanya Woker

Ex-officio Members: The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.

The Rt. Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs

The Rt. Rev. David H. Lindrooth

Mr. David O. Frazier

BISHOPS

Buss, Peter Martin Jr. Ordained June 6, 1993; 2nd degree June 18, 1995; 3rd degree June 9, 2013. Serves as Executive Bishop of the General Church, General Pastor of the General Church, Chancellor of the Academy of the New Church, President of the General Church in Canada, and President of the General Church International, Incorporated. Address: PO Box 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

Heinrichs, Bradley Daniel. Ordained May 23, 1999; 2nd degree November 19, 2000; 3rd degree January 13, 2019. Serves as Assistant Bishop of the General Church, Vice President of the General Church International, Incorporated, President of the General Church in South Africa, and Head of the General Church Education Department. Address: PO Box 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

Lindrooth, David Hutchinson. Ordained June 10, 1990; 2nd degree April 19, 1992; 3rd degree January 20, 2019. Serves as Assistant Bishop of the General Church, Vice President of the General Church International, Incorporated, and Head of the General Church Outreach Department. Address: PO Box 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

PASTORS

Acton, Elmo Kenneth. Ordained May 28, 2017; 2nd degree December 2, 2019. Serves as Assistant Pastor of the Glenview Society. Address: 74 Park Drive, Glenview, IL 60025

Aggro, Hennock. Ordained July 13, 2008; 2nd degree July 4, 2010. Serves as Assistant Pastor for the Asakraka New Church. Address: The New Church, PO Box AS 10, Asakraka-Kwahu, E/R, Ghana

Agnes, Sylvain Apoh. Ordained May 23, 2004; 2nd degree June 25, 2006. Serves as Regional Pastor of the General Church in West Africa. Address: Grand Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire

Aka, Honoré Amahin. Ordained July 11, 2010; 2nd degree August 12, 2012. Serves as Pastor of the Bouake Group in Côte d'Ivoire. Address: 01 BP 12161, Abidjan 01, Côte d'Ivoire

Akotey, Edward. Ordained July 4, 2010; 2nd degree October 21, 2012. Serves as Pastor of the Nteso Group of the New Church in Nteso, Ghana. Address: PO, Box 4, Nteso-Kwahu, E/R Ghana

Alden, Kenneth James. Ordained June 7, 1980; 2nd degree May 16, 1982. Serves as a translator for the General Church and curriculum consultant for General Church Education. Address: PO Box 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

Allais, Mark Barry. Ordained May 24, 2009; 2nd degree November 21, 2010. Serves as Pastor of Carmel Church in Kitchener. Address: 40 Chapel Hill Drive, Kitchener, ON N2R 1N2, Canada

Amoako, Kwadwo Adu. Ordained July 13, 2008; 2nd degree July 4, 2010. Serves as Pastor of Pankrono-Kumasi New Church in Kumasi, Ghana. Address: PO Box RY 143, Railways, Kumasi-Ashanti, Ghana

Appelgren, Göran Reinhold. Ordained June 7, 1992; 2nd degree July 3, 1994. Serves as Pastor of the Stockholm Society and Visiting Pastor to Copenhagen, Denmark; Regional Pastor for Europe. Address: Tegnérslunden 7, 111 61 Stockholm, Sweden

Assiobo, Yaovi Kouglo Leopold. Ordained April 9, 2017; 2nd degree January 26, 2020. Serves as Pastor, Chapelle le Puits de Jacob, Vogan, Togo. Address: 06 B.P. 61202 Lome 06, Lome, Togo

Atta, Jean Aime. Ordained May 27, 2012; 2nd degree September 21, 2014. Serves as Pastor of The New Church of Phoenix, and Regional Pastor of Cascadia, Boulder, and San Diego. Secretary of the Council of the Clergy. Address: 5631 Shea Boulevard, Scottsdale, AZ 85254

Ayi, Segno-Kodjo. Ordained May 27, 2001; 2nd degree July 20, 2008. Serves as National Pastor for the Church in Togo, and Pastor in Togoville. Address: La Nouvelle Eglise du Togo, B.P. 61202, Lomé, Togo

Bab, Moise O. Ordained August 25, 2013; 2nd degree August 9, 2015. Serves as Pastor of the Yamoussoukro congregation, Côte d'Ivoire. Address: BP 1574 Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire

Barber, Christopher Augustus. Ordained May 26, 2013; 2nd degree October 17, 2014. Serves as an Instructor of Religion in the Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. Address: PO Box 707, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

Beirith, Eduardo. Ordained August 16, 2012; 2nd degree October 16, 2015. Serves as Pastor of the New Church Group in Curitiba, Parana, Brazil. Address: Nestor de Castro 223, Loja 2 Centro, Curitiba, PR 80.020-120, Brazil

Beiswenger, Todd Jeffrey. Ordained May 22, 2011; 2nd degree January 19, 2014. Serves as Pastor of Olivet Church in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Address: 279 Burnhamthorpe Road, Etobicoke, ON M9B 1Z6, Canada

Beugre, Étienne Mogue. Ordained April 2, 2017; 2nd degree August 11, 2019. Serves as Acting Pastor N'dotre Abobo General Church Group, Côte d'Ivoire.

Address: 01 BP 12161 Abidjan 01, Côte d'Ivoire

Blair, Charles Edmund. Ordained May 28, 2006; 2nd degree April 27, 2007. Serves as Pastor of NewChurch Live in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. Address: PO Box 716, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

Borketey-Kwaku, Jacob Borteye. Ordained, May 18, 2003; 2nd degree July 13, 2008. Serves as Pastor of Nungua New Church, Ghana. Address: PO Box TNE 1278, Teshie-Nungua Estates, Accra, Ghana

Buick, Brett Dunbar. Ordained May 31, 2015; 2nd degree November 13, 2016. Serves as Pastor of the Kempton Society. Address: 583 Hawk Mountain Road, Kempton, PA 19529

Buss, Erik James. Ordained June 10, 1990; 2nd degree September 13, 1992. Serves as Pastor of the Oak Arbor Society in Rochester, Michigan, and Regional Pastor of Mitchellville and Ivyland. Address: 945 Oak Arbor Circle West, Rochester, MI 48306

Buss, Jared James. Ordained May 31, 2015; 2nd degree October 23, 2016. Serves as Pastor of the Pittsburgh New Church, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Address: 299 Le Roi Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15208

Cole, Nathan Field. Ordained January 11, 2009; 2nd degree August 22, 2010. Serves as Visiting Pastor to circles and groups within the United States. Address: (Kempton New Church) 583 Hawk Mountain Road, Kempton, PA 19529

Cole, Stephen Dandridge. Ordained June 19, 1977; 2nd degree October 15, 1978. Serves as Assistant Professor of Religion and Philosophy at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church and Theology at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church Theological School. Address: PO Box 717, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

Cowley, Michael Keith. Ordained June 13, 1982; 2nd degree May 13, 1984. Serves as Visiting Pastor to Western Canada and other locations.

Dakouri, Evariste Daligou. Ordained July 11, 2010; 2nd degree August 12, 2012. Serves as National Pastor in Côte d'Ivoire. Address: 21 BP 4352, Abidjan 21, Côte d'Ivoire

Dayoro, Aime Okpo. Ordained August 25, 2013; 2nd degree August 9, 2015. Serves as Pastor of Ayama General Church Group. Address: 01 BP 12161,

Abidjan 01, Côte d'Ivoire

Devassy, Peter Naduvilaveettil. Ordained October 23, 2011; 2nd degree October 25, 2015. Serves as Translator. Address: The New Church, Ompathungal Canal Road, Mattathur, PO, Trissur, Kerala, India

Doukourou, Moise Gogable. Ordained July 11, 2010; 2nd degree August 12, 2012. Serves as Pastor of the Divo New Church congregation.

Dube, Jerome Bhékuyise. Ordained June 5, 2005; 2nd degree November 11, 2007. Serves as Pastor of the Clermont and Westville Societies in South Africa and Regional Vice President of the South African Corporation. Address: Private Box 1164, New Germany 3620, South Africa

Dziekpor, George Genya. Ordained July 13, 2008; 2nd degree July 4, 2010. Serves as Pastor of the Abelenkpe Group in Accra, Ghana, and Administrator and Instructor of the West Africa New Church Theological Institute. Address: PO Box CS 9277, C7, Tema, Ghana

Ebute-Metta, Kuroakegha. Ordained November 11, 2018; 2nd Degree September 11, 2022. Serves as Pastor of Bayelsa State, Nigeria Group, and National Pastor of Nigeria. Address: PO Box 861, Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria, 560001

Elphick, Derek Peter. Ordained June 6, 1993; 2nd degree May 22, 1994. Serves as Pastor of Bryn Athyn Church, Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. Address: PO Box 277, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

Eshun, Ekow Essiedu. Ordained May 27, 2007; 2nd degree July 13, 2008. Serves as Pastor of the Tema, and Madina Circles in Ghana, West Africa, and Principal of the Tema New Church School; National Pastor of Ghana. Address: PO Box CS 9299, Community 7, Tema, Ghana

Floyd, Thomas X. Ordained May 31, 2015; 2nd degree June 16, 2019. Serves as Assistant to the Pastor in Stockholm and is Visiting Pastor in Scandinavia. Address: Bakkegata 8A, Åsgårdstrand 3179, Norway

Frazier, Glenn “Mac” McKinley. Ordained May 28, 2006; 2nd degree June 22, 2008. Serves as Pastor of the Washington New Church, Mitchellville, Maryland, and Regional Pastor of Atlanta and Boynton Beach. Address: 11914 Chantilly Lane, Mitchellville, MD 20721

Frazier, Pearse McCollum. Ordained May 22, 2011; 2nd degree September 30, 2012. Serves as Assistant Director of General Church Outreach. Address: PO Box 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

Frazier, Scott Innes. Ordained May 28, 2006; 2nd degree May 11, 2008. Serves as Dean of Bryn Athyn College of the New Church Theological School, and Regional Pastor of Academy Priests. Address: PO Box 717, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

Genzlinger, Matthew Laird. Ordained May 27, 2001; 2nd degree August 10, 2003. Serves as Chaplain and Instructor at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. Address: PO Box 707, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

Gladish, Nathan Donald. Ordained June 13, 1982; 2nd degree November 6, 1983. Small Group Leadership Coordinator for General Church Outreach. Address: PO Box 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

Glenn, Coleman Starkey. Ordained May 24, 2009; 2nd degree October 3, 2010. Serves as Assistant to the Pastor of Bryn Athyn Church. Address: PO Box 277, Bryn Athyn, PA, 19009

Glenn, Joel Christian. Ordained May 31, 2015; 2nd degree September 25, 2016. Serves as Pastor of New Church Westville and School Pastor of Kainon School in Westville, South Africa. Address: 36 Perth Road, Westville KwaZulu-Natal 3630, South Africa

Glenn, Thane Powell. Ordained May 24, 2009; 2nd degree June 6, 2010. Serves as Associate Professor of Religion and English and Chair of the Religion Department at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. Address: PO Box 717, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

Gunther, Steven Paul. Ordained May 29, 2022; 2nd degree, March 3, 2024. Serves as Assistant to the Pastor of Bryn Athyn Church. Address: PO Box 277, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

Gnagne, Gedeon G. Ordained August 25, 2013; 2nd degree, August 9, 2015. Serves as Pastor of Sikensi, Gomon, and Bakanu Groups. Address: 01 BP 12-161, Abidjan 01, Côte d'Ivoire

Gyamfi, Martin Kofi. Ordained June 9, 1991; 2nd degree August 28, 1994. Serves as full time Regional Pastor for West Africa. Address: The New Church,

PO Box AS 10, Asakraka-Kwahu, E/R, Ghana

Halterman, Barry Childs. Ordained June 5, 1994; 2nd degree September 8, 1996. Teaches and serves as Head of the Religion Department in the Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools and Chaplain for the Secondary Schools. Address: PO Box 707, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

Hauptmann, Olaf. Ordained May 23, 2004; 2nd degree July 30, 2006. Will Serve as Pastor of the New Church of Boston, Sudbury, Massachusetts. Address: P.O. Box 447, Concord, MA 01742

Heinrichs, Calvin Bradley. Ordained May 29, 2022, 2nd degree January 21, 2024. Serves as Pastor of Midwest New Church Circle. Address: 5151 SE Grindstone Road, Cameron, MO 64429

Jin, Yong Jon. Ordained June 5, 1994; 2nd degree June 16, 1996. Serves as Pastor of the Philadelphia Korean New Church, and responsible for outreach to the Korean-speaking community in the United States; Regional Pastor for Asia; Dean of the Korean New Church Theological School. Address: 537 Anne Street, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006

Jung, Young Ho. Ordained April 29, 2012; 2nd degree April 26, 2014. Address: 104 -301 Han Shin Apt, 131 Jeaki-Ro Dongdeamoon-Gu. Seoul, Republic of Korea

Kim, Seoung Gil. Ordained April 29, 2012; 2nd degree April 30, 2016. Serves as Pastor of Kangbuk New Church in Seoul, South Korea. Address: In Su Dong 391-15, Suyu 5-dong, Kangbuk-Gu, Seoul, Republic of Korea 142-884

Kladie, Roger. Ordained June 13, 2009; 2nd degree April 3, 2022. Serves as pastor of group in Mephible, Cote D'Ivoire

Lasme, Mellon René Agnès. Ordained, April 2, 2017; 2nd degree August 11, 2019. Serves as Pastor of Bobbi Church in Côte d'Ivoire, and Instructor in Theology at the New Jerusalem Theological school in Bassam. Address: 01 bp 12161 Abidjan 01, Côte d'Ivoire

Lee, Jong-Ui. Ordained May 31, 1998; 2nd degree June 17, 2001. Serves as Pastor of the Atlanta Society in Alpharetta, Georgia. Address: 2780 Bethany Bend, Alpharetta, GA 30004

Lee, Soon Choel. Ordained April 29, 2012; 2nd degree April 26, 2014. Serves

as National Pastor for South Korea. Address: 1st Floor Seoul New Church, 11 Nokburn-Ro, Eunpyung-Gu, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Loba, Patrick. Ordained April 7, 2019; 2nd degree April 3, 2022. Serves as pastor of the Jackesville Group in Cote D'Ivoire

Lompo, Samuel Oumpougula. Ordained August 25, 2013; 2nd degree August 16, 2015. Serves as National Pastor for Burkina Faso, and Pastor of the New Church of Burkina Faso, Ouagadougou. Address: 11 BP 412 Ouagadougou CMS 11, Burkina Faso

Lumsden, Derrick Alan Mark. Ordained May 25, 2008; 2nd degree May 16, 2010. Serves as Associate Pastor of the Kempton New Church. Address: 583 Hawk Mountain Road, Kempton, PA 19529

Mangoua, Cyprien Kouamé. Ordained July 11, 2010; 2nd degree August 12, 2012. Serves as Pastor of the Cité Verte General Church Group in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, and District Pastor of Abidjan. Address: 01 BP 12161, Abidjan 01, Côte d'Ivoire

Matsumoto, Shiro. Ordained April 30, 2012; 2nd degree April 27, 2014. Serves as National Pastor of Japan. Address: 1-206, Inagedai-House, 7-8, Inagedai-cho, Inage-ward, Chiba-shi, 263-0032 Japan

Mbali, Patrick Vikinduku. Ordained March 3, 2019. 2nd Degree September 22, 2024. Serves as Pastor of the Diepkloof and Assistant Pastor of the Buccleuch congregations in South Africa. Address: 41 Dempster Street, Westwood Gardens, Lindhaven 1724, South Africa

McCardell, Ethan Derek. Ordained May 25, 2003; 2nd degree March 21, 2004. Serves as Pastor of Sunrise Chapel in Tucson, Arizona. Address: 8421 East Wrightstown Road, Tucson, AZ 85715

Mkhize, Sibusiso Protus. Ordained May 25, 2003; 2nd degree November 11, 2007. Serves as Pastor of the Impaphala Society in South Africa; Visiting Pastor to Empangeni. Address: H602 Umgankla Road, Kwa Mashu 4360, South Africa

Odhner, Grant Hugo. Ordained June 7, 1981; 2nd degree, May 9, 1982. Serves as National Pastor for the United Kingdom and Pastor of Michael Church in London, England. Address: 131 Burton Road, Stockwell, London, SW9 6TG, United Kingdom

Odhner, John Llewellyn. Ordained June 7, 1980; 2nd degree November 22, 1981. Serves the Office of Outreach Internet Project. Address: PO Box 277, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

Pendleton, Mark Dandridge. Ordained June 9, 1991; 2nd degree May 29, 1994. Serves as Pastor of the Glenview New Church, President of the Midwestern Academy of the New Church, and Regional Pastor for Oak Arbor, Boston, and New Church LIVE. Address: 74 Park Drive, Glenview, IL 60025

Perry, Charles Mark. Ordained June 9, 1991; 2nd degree June 19, 1993. Serves as Pastor of the San Diego Society in San Diego, California; visits Palo Alto, California. Address: 2701 Meadowlark Drive, San Diego, CA 92123

Roth, David Christopher. Ordained June 9, 1991; 2nd degree October 17, 1993. Serves as Pastor of the New Church of Boulder Valley in Boulder, Colorado, and Regional Pastor for Tucson and Glenview. Address: 1370 Forest Park Circle, Lafayette, CO 80026

Sandstrom, Ryan Matthew. Ordained May 22, 2011; 2nd degree January 13, 2013. Serves as Pastor of Ivyland New Church in Ivyland, Pennsylvania. Address: 851 W. Bristol Road, Ivyland, PA 18974

Schnarr, Grant Ronald. Ordained June 12, 1983; 2nd degree October 7, 1984. Serves as Instructor of Theology at Bryn Athyn College of the New Church. Address: PO Box 717, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

Schorran, Justin Eric. Ordained June 13, 2021; 2nd degree May 7, 2023. Serves as Pastor of Boynton Beach New Church in Boynton Beach, Florida. Address: 10621 El Clair Ranch Road, Boynton Beach, FL 33437

Segbenu, John Kwaku. Ordained July 13, 2008; 2nd degree July 4, 2010. Serves as Pastor of Ningokope New Church. Address: PO Box 325, Madina-Accra, Ghana

Smith, Brian Donald. Ordained May 30, 2010; 2nd degree October 30, 2011. Serves as Assistant Pastor of the Washington New Church and Principal of the Washington New Church School. Address: 11914 Chantilly Lane, Mitchellville, MD 20721

Smith, Jeffrey Owen. Ordained May 26, 2018; 2nd degree August 15, 2021. Serves as Assistant to the Pastor of Bryn Athyn Church. Address: PO Box 277, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

Smith, Lawson Merrell. Ordained June 10, 1979; 2nd degree, February 1, 1981. Serves as Assistant Pastor of the Kempton Society. Address: 583 Hawk Mountain Road, Kempton, PA 19529

Smith, Malcolm Glenn. Ordained May 30, 2010; 2nd degree February 26, 2012. Serves as Assistant Pastor of Bryn Athyn Church, Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. Address: PO Box 277, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009

Stole, Mandla. Ordained March 4, 2018. 2nd degree September 22, 2024. Serves as Pastor of the Alex and Buccleuch Congregations, South Africa, Executive Vice President of the South African Corporation, and Regional Pastor of South Africa with Bheki Dube. Address: 392 E. Bank Avenue, Alexandra 2014, South Africa

Villanueva, Johnny Antônio Zavalaga. Ordained October 28, 2008; 2nd degree August 19, 2012. Serves as Pastor of Campo Grande and Fatima. Address: Rua Caldas 242, Campo Grande, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil 23-081-080

Yang, Dong Y. Ordained April 30, 2016; 2nd degree October 30, 2022. Serves as Pastor of Seoul New Church. Address: A dong 202 ho, 65-13, Songpobaeksong-gil, Ilsanseo-gu, Goyang-si, Gyeonggi-do, Republic of Korea 10212

Yang, HyunJin. Ordained May 29, 2022; 2nd Degree September 22, 2024. Serves as Pastor of the Hurstville New Church. Address: 26 Dudley Street, Penshurst, NSW 2222, Australia

Zattey-Agboga, Godwin. Ordained May 27, 2007; 2nd degree July 13, 2008. Serves as Pastor of New Salem New Church in Ho, Ghana. Address: PO Box HP 396, Ho, Volta-Region, Ghana

Timothy ¹. Ordained May 1, 2013; 2nd degree April 30, 2016. Serves as a New Church Pastor for Chinese speaking population. Address: Contact Rev. Yong Jin

MINISTERS in the First Degree

Ahotosse, Martin Cokou. Ordained April 14, 2019. Serves as Acting Pastor in Hevie, Benin. Address: 03 BP 3850, Cotonou, Benin

¹ Last name is omitted for protection

Calvo, Daniel. Ordained June 1, 2025. Serves as Assistant to the Pastor of the Pittsburgh New Church, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Address: 299 Le Roi Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15208

Choe, Mahn Hoe. Ordained April 29, 2012. Serves as Acting Pastor of Ahnseong Uri New Church in Ahnseong, South Korea. Address: Woorim Apt 105-806 Jinsa-Ri, Kongdo-Eup, Kyeong-ki, Ahnseong-Si 456-713, Republic of Korea

da Silva, Marcos Marques. Ordained July 9, 2023. Serves as Assistant to the Pastor of Campo Grande and Fatima Societies, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Address: Rua Serraria Lote 3 Quadra 2, Campo Grande, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 23-071-010

Jackson, Thomas J. Ordained June 1, 2025. Serves as Assistant to the Pastor of the Oak Arbor Society in Rochester, Michigan. Address: 945 Oak Arbor Circle West, Rochester, MI 48306

Morris, Benedict T. Ordained November 16, 2025. Serves as the Acting Pastor for Monrovia, Liberia.

Nakato, Sachio. Ordained November 6, 2022. Assists in Kyoto, Japan.

Park, Jea S. Ordained April 26, 2014. Serves as Minister to the Ham Pyung Chundranamdo Korea. Address: 658 Sanggok-Ri Haebo-Myun, Hampyung-Gun Chunnam –Do, Republic of Korea

Rodrigues, Daniel. Ordained July 7, 2023. Serves as Assistant to the Pastor of Curitaba Circle, Brazil. Address: Rua Maria da Luz Rocha Belao, 392, Xaxim Neighborhood, Curitaba, Parana, Brazil, 81-710-590

Sie, Gabriel Amari. Ordained April 7, 2019. Serves as Pastor of a group in Abidjan. Address: 09 BP 12161, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

Sjödin, Eric. Ordained June 15, 2025. Serves as Assistant to the Pastor of the Stockholm Society, Stockholm, Sweden. Address: Tegnérlunden 7, 111 61 Stockholm, Sweden

AUTHORIZED CANDIDATES

Hayford, Benjamin Ebo Saah, Ghana

Karikari, Sylvanus Charles, Ghana

N'Drin, Rodrigue, Côte d'Ivoire

**GENERAL CHURCH MINISTER
SERVING A NON-GENERAL CHURCH GROUP**

Thompson, Howard Arthur. Ordained May 22, 2011; 2nd degree June 23, 2013. Serves as Pastor of the Roseville Congregation, the New Church of Australasia. Address: 4 Shirley Road, Roseville, NSW 2069, Australia

RETIRED

Buss, Peter Martin Sr. Ordained June 19, 1964; 2nd degree May 16, 1965; 3rd degree June 1, 1986. Bishop Emeritus of the General Church

Keith, Brian Walter. Ordained June 6, 1976; 2nd degree June 4, 1978; 3rd degree October 17, 2004. Bishop Emeritus of the General Church

Kline, Thomas Leroy. Ordained June 10, 1973; 2nd degree June 15, 1975; 3rd degree November 30, 2003. Bishop Emeritus of the General Church

Alden, Glenn Graham. Ordained June 19, 1974; 2nd degree June 6, 1976

Ampem-Darko, Israel Gyan. Ordained July 13, 2008; 2nd degree July 4, 2010

Asplundh, Kurt Hyland. Ordained June 6, 1993; 2nd degree April 30, 1995. Teaches Theology part time at Bryn Athyn College and sixth-grade Religion at Bryn Athyn Church School

Bau-Madsen, Arne. Ordained June 6, 1976; 2nd degree June 11, 1978

Bown, Christopher Duncan. Ordained June 18, 1978; 2nd degree December 23, 1979. Serves as Visiting Pastor to various groups in the United States

Carswell, Eric Hugh. Ordained June 10, 1979; 2nd degree February 22, 1981

Cooper, James Pendleton. Ordained June 13, 1982; 2nd degree March 4, 1984. Executive Vice President of the General Church in Canada, Visiting and Regional Pastor in Canada, and Chaplain of the Military Services Committee

Darkwah, Simpson Kwabeng. Ordained June 7, 1992; 2nd degree August 28, 1994

Dibb, Andrew Malcolm Thomas. Ordained June 6, 1984; 2nd degree May 18, 1986

Echols, John Clark, Jr. Ordained August 26, 1978; 2nd degree March 30, 1980

Elphick, Frederick Charles. Ordained June 6, 1984; 2nd degree September 23, 1984

Ferrell, Michael Eugene. Ordained June 5, 2005; 2nd degree June 3, 2007

Gladish, Michael David. Ordained June 10, 1973; 2nd degree June 30, 1974. Serves as Regional Pastor of Pittsburgh and Sarver.

Goodenough, Daniel Webster. Ordained June 19, 1965; 2nd degree December 10, 1967

Heilman, Andrew James. Ordained June 18, 1978; 2nd degree March 8, 1981

Heinrichs, Willard Lewis Davenport. Ordained June 19, 1965; 2nd degree January 26, 1969.

Howard, Geoffrey Horace. Ordained June 19, 1961; 2nd degree June 2, 1963
Koudou, Roger. Ordained July 13, 2008; 2nd degree July 11, 2010. Serves as Pastor of Yopougon group, Côte d'Ivoire.

Larsen, Ottar Trosvik. Ordained June 19, 1974; 2nd degree February 16, 1977

McCurdy, George Daniel. Ordained June 25, 1967; Recognized as a Priest of the New Church in the second degree July 5, 1979; received into the priesthood of the General Church June 9, 1980. Serves as Visiting Pastor of the Harleysville Circle in Harleysville, Pennsylvania, and the Cape Cod Group in Massachusetts. Acts as the General Church's Ecclesiastical Endorsing Agent for Military Chaplains, Civilian Chaplains

Nicolier, Alain. Ordained May 31, 1979; 2nd degree September 16, 1984

Nobre, Cristóvão Rabelo. Ordained June 6, 1984; 2nd degree August 25, 1985. Serves as a translator for the General Church

Orthwein, Walter Edward III. Ordained July 22, 1973; Recognized as a priest of the General Church in November, 1976; ordained into the 2nd degree, June 12, 1977

Rogers, Norbert Bruce. Ordained January 12, 1969

Rogers, Prescott Andrew. Ordained January 26, 1986; 2nd degree April 24, 1988. Serves as Pastor of the Charlotte Circle in North Carolina

Rose, Patrick Alan. Ordained June 19, 1975; 2nd degree September 25, 1977

Sakae, Seiich. Ordained April 26, 2014

Sandström, Erik Emanuel. Ordained May 23, 1971; 2nd degree May 21, 1972

Schnarr, Philip Bradley. Ordained June 5, 1996; 2nd degree May 31, 1998

Silverman, Ray. Ordained June 6, 1984; 2nd degree June 19, 1985.

Simons, Jeremy Frederick. Ordained June 13, 1982; 2nd degree July 31, 1983. Serves as Visiting Pastor to the Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, Circle; Spiritual Editor of *New Church Life*

Synnestvedt, Louis. Ordained June 7, 1980; 2nd degree November 8, 1981. Yang, Gyu Dae. Ordained into 2nd degree October 21, 2007.

Ministers in Other Careers

Alden, Mark Edward. Ordained June 10, 1979; 2nd degree May 17, 1981

Barnett, Wendel Ryan. Ordained June 7, 1981; 2nd degree June 20, 1982

Bell, Reuben Paul. Ordained May 25, 1997; 2nd degree April 11, 1999

Chapin, Frederick Merle. Ordained June 15, 1986; 2nd degree October 23, 1988

Childs, Robin Waelchli. Ordained June 6, 1984; 2nd degree June 8, 1986

Cowley, Alan Michael. Ordained May 26, 2013; 2nd degree July 13, 2014

Clifford, William Harrison. Ordained June 6, 1976; 2nd degree October 8, 1978

Fitzpatrick, Daniel. Ordained June 6, 1984

Glenn, Richard. Ordained June 28, 2020

Glenn, Robert Amos. Ordained May 28, 2000; 2nd degree June 2, 2002

Lewin, Alan. Recognized as Priest in the General Church November 19, 2006.
Ordained into the 2nd degree December 2, 2007

Kouame, Henry Joel Kouassi. Ordained July 11, 2010; 2nd degree August 12, 2012

Odhner, Calvin Acton. Ordained May 22, 2011; 2nd degree February 17, 2013

Paek, Sung-Won. Ordained May 27, 2001

Rose, Jonathan Searle. Ordained May 31, 1987; 2nd degree February 23, 1997. Serves as translator for the Swedenborg Foundation

Schorran, Paul Edward. Ordained June 12, 1983

Walsh, Garry Brian. Ordained May 27, 2001; 2nd degree September 8, 2002

Synnestvedt, Judah Edward. Ordained May 26, 2018

Xaba, Langalibalele Abraham (Phila). Ordained August 27, 2006; 2nd degree August 9, 2009

SOCIETIES AND CIRCLES

<i>Society</i>	<i>Pastor or Minister</i>
Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire	Rev. Sylvain Apoh Agnes, Senior Pastor Rev. Moise Bab, Pastor
Accra, Ghana	Rev. George G. Dziekpor, Pastor
Alexandra, Johannesburg South Africa	Rev. Mandla Stole, Pastor
Asakraka, Ghana	Rev. Martin K. Gyamfi, Pastor Rev. Hennock Aggro, Assistant to the Pastor Rev. Israel Ampem-Darko, Assistant to the Pastor
Atlanta, Georgia	Rev. Jong Ui Lee, Pastor
Boulder, Colorado	Rev. David C. Roth, Pastor
Boston, Massachusetts	Rev. Olaf Hauptmann, Pastor
Boynton Beach, Florida	Rev. Justin Schorran, Pastor
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania	Rev. Derek P. Elphick, Pastor Rev. Malcolm G. Smith, Assistant Pastor Rev. Coleman Glenn, Assistant to the Pastor Rev. Steven Gunther, Assistant to the Pastor

Bucdeuch, Johannesburg	Rev. Jeffrey O. Smith, Assistant to the Pastor
South Africa	Rev. Mandla Stole, Pastor
Clermont, Durban	Rev. Patrick Mbali, Assistant Pastor
South Africa	Rev. Jerome Bhekiyuse Dube, Pastor
Colchester, England	Visiting ministers
Dawson Creek, B.C.,	Rev. Michael Cowley Visiting Pastor
Canada	
Detroit, Michigan	Rev. Erik J. Buss, Pastor
(Oak Arbor Church)	Rev. Thomas J. Jackson, Assistant to the Pastor
Diepkloof, Soweto	Rev. Patrick Mbali, Pastor
South Africa	
Freeport, Pennsylvania	Rev. Chris Bown, Visiting Pastor
(Sower's Chapel)	
Glenview, Illinois	Rev. Mark D. Pendleton, Pastor
	Rev. Elmo K. Acton, Assistant Pastor
Hurstville, Australia	Rev. HyunJin Yang, Pastor as of January 1, 2025
Impaphala, South Africa	Rev. S. Protus Mkhize, Pastor
Ivyland, Pennsylvania	Rev. Ryan M. Sandström, Pastor
Kempton, Pennsylvania	Rev. Brett D. Buick, Pastor
	Rev. Lawson M. Smith, Assistant Pastor
	Rev. Derrick A.M. Lumsden, Associate Pastor
Kitchener, Ontario, Canada	Rev. Mark B. Allais, Pastor
(Carmel New Church)	
Kwa Mashu, Durban	Rev. Jerome Bhekiyuse Dube, Visiting Pastor
South Africa	
London, England	Rev. Grant H. Odhner, Pastor
(Michael Church)	
Mitchellville, Maryland	Rev. Glenn 'Mac' Frazier, Pastor
	Rev. Brian D. Smith, Assistant Pastor
NewChurch Live	Rev. Charles E. Blair, Pastor
Ningokope, Ghana	Rev. John K. Segbenu, Pastor
Pankrono-Kumasi, Ghana	Rev. Adu Amoako, Pastor
Phoenix, Arizona	Rev. Jean A. Atta, Pastor
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	Rev. Jared J. Buss, Pastor
	Rev. Daniel Calvo, Assistant to the Pastor
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	Rt. Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs, Visiting Pastor
(Campo Grande, Fatima)	Rev. Johnny A.Z. Villanueva, Pastor
	Rev. Marcos Marques da Silva, Assistant to the Pastor
San Diego, California	Rev. C. Mark Perry, Pastor
Seoul, Korea	Rev. Dong R. Yang, Pastor

Stockholm, Sweden	Rev. Göran R. Appelgren, Pastor Rev. Thomas X. Floyd, Assistant to the Pastor Rev. Erik Sjödin, Assistant to the Pastor
Tema, Ghana	Rev. Ekow E. Eshun, Pastor
Toronto, Ontario, Canada (Olivet Church)	Rev. Todd J. Beiswenger, Pastor beginning January 2025
Tucson, Arizona	Rev. Ethan D. McCardell, Pastor
Westville (Durban) South Africa	Rev. Joel C. Glenn, Pastor Rev. Jerome Bhekuyise Dube, Assistant to the Pastor

<i>Circle</i>	<i>Visiting and/or Resident Pastor or Minister</i>
Cape Town, South Africa	Rev. Joel C. Glenn, Visiting Pastor
Central Pennsylvania	Rev. Jeremy F. Simons, Visiting Pastor
Charlotte, North Carolina	Rev. Prescott A. Rogers, Pastor
Chicago, Illinois	Visiting Pastors
Cité Verte, Abidjan	Rev. Cyprien K. Mangoua, Pastor
Copenhagen, Denmark	Rev. Göran R. Appelgren, Visiting Pastor
Curitiba, Parana, Brazil	Rev. Eduardo Beirith, Pastor Rev. Daniel Rodrigues, Assistant to the Pastor
Dome (Taifa), Ghana	Rev. Israel Ampem-Darko, Pastor
Gesco, Abidjan	Rev. Evariste D. Dakouri, Pastor
The Hague, Netherlands	Rev. Grant H. Odhner, Visiting Pastor
Harleysville, Pennsylvania	Rev. George D. McCurdy, Visiting Pastor
Kansas City, Missouri	Rev. Calvin B. Heinrichs, Pastor
La Crescenta, California	Visiting Pastors
Lake Helen, Florida	Rev. Justin Schorran, Visiting Pastors
New York City/ Northern New Jersey	Rev. Jeremy F. Simons, Visiting Pastor
Palo Alto, California	Rev. C. Mark Perry, Rev. Jean Atta, Visiting Pastors
Perth, Australia	Rev. HyunJin Yang, Visiting Minister
Philadelphia New Church (Korean)	Rev. Yong J. Jin, Pastor
Seattle, Washington (Light for Life New Church)	Rev. Michael K. Cowley, Visiting Pastors
Tokyo, Japan	Rev. Shiro Matsumoto, Pastor
Yopougon, Côte d'Ivoire	Rev. Roger Koudou, Pastor

Regional Pastors:

Rev. Michael Gladish: Pittsburgh, Sarver
 Rev. Erik Buss: Mitchellville, Ivyland
 Rev. Mac Frazier: Atlanta, Boynton Beach, Kansas City

DIRECTORY

Rev. Scott Frazier: Academy Priests

Rev. Mandla Stole with Rev. Bheki Dube: South Africa

Rev. Sylvain Agnes: West Africa

Rev. Jean Atta: Cascadia, Boulder, San Diego

Rev. Mark Pendleton: Oak Arbor, Boston, New Church LIVE

Rev. David Roth: Tucson, Glenview

Rev. Jim Cooper: Canada

Rev. Göran Appelgren: Europe, including Scandinavia and United Kingdom

Rev. John Jin: Asia

Note: In addition to Societies and Circles, there are Groups of General Church members in various geographical areas that receive occasional visits from a priest.

Index

NEW CHURCH LIFE – DECEMBER 2025 – VOL. MMXXV

January/February.....	1-101	July/August.....	281-360
March/April.....	102-192	September/October.....	61-435
May/June.....	193-280	November/December....	436-564

Academy Secondary Schools Commencement Address Gregory D. Henderson <i>Building a Foundation for Life</i>	310
--	-----

Alden, Kenneth J. The Call to Translation in the General Church.....	314
--	-----

Asplundh, Kurt Horigan Sermon: <i>The Responsibility of the New Church</i>	226
---	-----

BAPTISMS

Abou, Guillaume Oba	98
Aduah, Kwame	433
Agnew, Aurel Metch Emess	98
Agnew, Cameron Lindsay.....	561
Alden, Nathaniel Asher.....	561
Aldridge, Robert David.....	98
Allen, Aurora Juliet.....	561
Amaro, Elijah Dominic.....	277
Armitage, Ella Louise	189
Armitage, Shane Sale.	189
Atta, Joy Emily.....	189
Baltazar, Mia	357
Bamba, Myriam Leslie.....	357
Blon, Isabelle Molaho	277
Boyesen, Frida Brynn	98

Brock, Adeline Joy	561
Buduwah Budu, Darian Nana Adwoa.....	561
Clauser, Kacey Brooks.....	433
Cole, Peregrine Benaiah.....	357
Cooper, Jesse Shiloh	561
Cranch, Truett David.....	561
Cratsenberg, Gabriel Winfred.....	433
Crompton, Robert Henry	277
Davis, Dean Christopher.....	277
Dje Bi Dje, Medard.....	357
Djezou, Elise Ahou	277
Dziekpor, Chris Atsu	189
Ezenwa, Chinonye	561
Fennell, Crew James	98
Franzen, Katherine Marie	98
Gboh, Massie	358
Gordon, Calix Andrew.....	189
Gordor, Bless Doe	98
Gordor, Richard	98
Goulehi, Grace-Sarah Gnonsea.....	561
Graham, Nell Pitcairn	561
Hale, Theodore Raymond	561
Heinrichs, Andriel	99
Hoglund-Lopez, Joshua Michael	189
Innocent, Eboseremhen Jayden	562
Irie Lou Balefay, Leticia Peniel	358
Kako, Rayan Elisee.....	189
Kako, Ruth Emeraude	189
King, Harper Elise.....	99
King, Rilian Gardner	433
Koffi, Catherine Affoue	277
Koffi, Edmond Yao.....	277
Koffi, Franck Issac.....	358
Kouadio, Fidel Kouakou	277
Kouadio, Guillaome Yves.....	358
Kouassi, Barbara Akissi.....	277
Leal, Adam	99
Legre, Syntiche Ozoua.....	190
Lewin, Ethan Chase	562
Loko, Andrea	358
Lourens, Angelique.....	190

Lynch, Tillie Elizabeth.....	277
Marsh, Wren Rose.....	99
March, Hunter Willow	99
Mbila, Langelihle Lintle Zayna	278
McCurdy, Mason Bentley	562
McGowan, Madeline	99
Metsoko, Martin.....	99
Mohr, Cody Michael.....	358
Mohr, Karly Elizabeth	358
Molefe, Segomotso Mmathabo	190
Moffat, Karabo Bontle Gladys	190
Ngalwala, Richard Saleh.....	99
Nandje, Donacienne Affoue	278
Niamien, Beranger	190
Niamien, Divine Deborah	190
Nohon Banhi, Richmond.....	358
Odhner, Frieda Mildred	562
Okyere, Esther	562
O'Neil, Brandon James	433
Ore Aya, Christine	358
Oulai Nonh, Grace Victoire.....	358
Oulai Tosseta, Yannich Jr.....	358
Pennink, Creighton Kent	562
Pennink, Jordyn	562
Pennink, Mycah	562
Pennink, Nicole.....	562
Pennink, Shayne.....	562
Quizon, Giovanni Ranches.....	359
Rodriguez, Angel Delgado.....	278
Santiago, Brianna R	358
Schepner, Mallory Fazio.....	190
Schepner, Rory Leanne.....	190
Seri, Priscillia Kiliane	190
Seri, Yahan Gbami	190
Slowikowski, Adam Andrew	278
Smirnov, Parker Oleksadr	562
Smith, Hazel Rae	562
St. Martin, Kennedy R.	562
Steen, Juniper Eden	562
Takeya, Seira	190
Tang, Lana Truong.....	278

INDEX

Tra Bi, Boha Arnaud.....	358
Tracy, Lane Thomas.....	99
Turner, Thomas Mycerinus.....	358
Vandergrift, Beau M.....	358
Van der Merwe, Lorelai Jane Erica	359
Vormawor, Samuel.....	433
Weaver, Hannah Marie.....	433
Wijkander, Keith.....	359
Zouzou, Mohle Stephanie Estelle.....	278

Barber, Christopher A. Address on Swedenborg's <i>Lusthus</i>	405
--	-----

Beiswenger, Todd J. <i>Mike Tyson and the Seven Churches:</i> <i>Lessons in Overcoming</i>	39
--	----

BETROTHALS

McCurdy-Fleming	434
Hauptmann-King.....	278

Boericke, Peter H. Letter: <i>A Call to Update</i> <i>Growth of the Mind</i>	364
--	-----

Buick, Brett D. Sermon: <i>That Serpent of Old</i>	221
---	-----

Buss, Ann G. Clergy Meetings in Europe: <i>Up in the Mountains</i>	388
--	-----

Buss, Erik J. The Lord's Invitation.....	328
---	-----

Buss, Jared J. A Visible God	321
---------------------------------------	-----

Buss, Peter M. Jr. From the Bishop's Office: <i>Our Sole Purpose</i>	34
--	----

<i>Our Sole Purpose</i>	321
<i>Seventy Sent Out</i>	306
Sermon:	
<i>Hold Fast to What You Have</i>	209
A Vision for the General Church:	
<i>Send Me: Seven Years</i>	
<i>of Willingness</i>	453
 Carswell, Eric H.	
Sermon: <i>New Church Education:</i>	
<i>Gift of the Pearl of Great Price</i>	296
 Charter Day Cathedral Address	
Rev. Dr. Thane P. Glenn	
<i>Become Something</i>	480
 CHURCH NEWS	86, 182, 265
	343, 428, 510
 Coffin, Gael P.	
Letter: <i>Essential Questions</i>	
<i>and Suggestions</i>	11
 CONFIRMATIONS	
Bab, Joel Ephraim.....	100
Bab, Ruth Sherry Lyn.....	100
de Chazal, Benjamin Simons.....	100
 David, Joseph	
Letter: <i>Evolution and God's Will</i>	446
 David, Steve	
New Christian Bible Study:	
<i>Spreading the Word and</i>	
<i>Growing the Church</i>	485
 Declarations of Faith	
Thomas J. Jackson	414
Eric Sjödin.....	414

EDITORIALS

The Call.....	3
The Challenge of Charity.....	367
The Church Reborn	196
The Gifts of Christmas.....	438
Easter is When the Church Began	104
The Easter Test.....	106
Fits and Starts.....	200
The Population Explosion and the General Church.....	7
Progress of West Africa	370
Was He Unwelcome or Were They Simply Poor?.....	442
Elphick, Derek P. <i>The Minority Report:</i> <i>A Call for Courage</i>	377
<i>Sermon: I Saw Heaven Opened</i>	215
Enis, Jane Global Healthy Congregations.....	146
Fitzpatrick, Daniel <i>I'm Right, You're Wrong:</i> <i>Managing Dissent in the Church</i>	150
Frazier, Pearse M. Marketing Revelation	392
From the Bishop's Office	
Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr. <i>Our Sole Purpose</i>	34
<i>Seventy Sent Out</i>	306
Rt. Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs <i>Gratitude for the New Church</i>	233
<i>Stillness</i>	474
Rt. Rev. David H. Lindrooth <i>Global Healthy Congregations</i>	146
<i>What is Love?</i>	396
General Church Vision: The Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.	

“Send Me.” Seven Years of Willingness	453
Gladish, Michael D.	
Book Review: <i>The Heavenly Doctrines</i> as <i>Systematic Theology</i>	47
<i>On Being Born Again</i>	236
Christmas Sermon: <i>Isaiah’s</i> <i>Prophecy of Salvation</i>	459
Glendale Parish (history).....	171
Glenn, Coleman S.	
Easter Sermon: <i>Taking Up the Cross</i>	112
Glenn, Thane P.	
Charter Day Address: <i>Become Something</i>	480
Heinrichs, Bradley D.	
Gratitude for the New Church	233
Heinrichs, Calvin B.	
<i>What Should We Call</i> <i>Our Parents as Adults?</i>	166
Henderson, Bruce M.	
Review: <i>Why You Should be Religious</i> by the Rev. N. Bruce Rogers.....	398
Review: <i>Listening to Eternity</i> A Book by Dr. Aram Yardumian.....	491
Henderson, Gregory D.	
ANC Commencement Address: <i>Building a Foundation for Life</i>	310

IN MEMORIAM

Alden, David T	191
Alexander, Don	360
Armitage, Louise Erica.....	191
Asplundh, Carl Hjalmar Jr.	279
Asplundh, Marilyn Parker	563

INDEX

Burke, Rev. William Hanson	563
Carter, Joan Louise Brown	563
Chapman, Jacquelynn Brewer	279
Clifford, Rev. William Harrison III	563
Closterman, Doris Evans	191
Cole, Carolyn (Carly) Rose Andrews	564
Cooper, Jeremy Scott	564
Cooper, Leesa Violet Kloc	191
Cooper, Melissa Conine	279
Curtis, Carol Ruth McCardell	101
Doering, Sonia Synnestvedt	191
Echols, Emmy Lou Soderberg	191
Gladish, Gabrielle Howard	360
Goodenough, Ruth Parker	435
Grubb, (John) Alan	279
Gurney, Marjorie Anne Synnestvedt	191
Gyllenhaal, Marion Louise Down	360
Gyllenhaal, Martha (Marcie) Elizabeth Cavagnaro	360
Halterman, Doris Acton	360
Hamm, Doris Bond	279
Harris, Laura Hill	191
Heilman, Dorothy (Dusty) Kynett	101
Heinrichs, Carina Nicole	191
Heinrichs, Elizabeth Ann Waters	360
Hendricks, Erdman Enoch	564
Hill, Stanley Douglas	435
Huntzinger, Marie Denise Brown	564
Jean-Marie, Denis Arthur	279
Johnson, Susan Lee Schiltgen	279
King, Alan Cedric	360
Lau, Werner Karl	360
Linsday, James Pitcairn	101
Lynch, Ruth Bostock	101
McDonough, Michael Croft	192
Moorhead, (Frederick) Lee	360
Murdock, Roger Stuart	564
Nemitz, Rev. Kurt Paul	564
Odhner, Brenda Kathleen	192
Odhner, Hugo Valdemar	192
Omlor, Viola Friesen	279

Orchard, Basil Cyril Laurence	280
Pederson, Bo	280
Schnarr, Arthur Willard Jr. (Terry)	360
Schnarr, Gretchen Williams	192
Simons, (Samuel) Brian	101
Smith, Rev. Christopher Ronald Jack	192
Smith, Drey Davis	564
Smith, James Spencer	564
Smith, Judith (Jid) Pendleton	435
Soderberg, Justin Gary	360
Synnestvedt, Leo	564
Walker, Cynthia Hyatt	192
Wille, Marylin McQueen	360

Jackson, Thomas J.	
Declaration of Faith	414

Keith, Brian K.	
<i>Orphan Passages</i>	50

Klein, Martin E.	
Letter: <i>Stumbling on the Path</i>	208
Letter: <i>How's That Again?</i>	448

LETTERS

Boericke, Peter H	364
Coffin, Gael P	11
David, Joseph	446
Klein, Martin E	208, 448
Linguist, Richard	13, 207, 366
Pendleton, Alan	204
Ridgway, Barrie	205
Ridgway, Huelwen	109, 291
Rogers, Prescott A	363
Thompson, Howard	444

Laidlaw, Suzy	
Swedenborg's Sweden: 2025	401

LIFE LINES	74, 174, 252, 330, 416, 496
-------------------------	--------------------------------

Lindrooth, David L.

<i>The Power of the Lord's Providence</i>	14
<i>The World on Fire</i>	372
From the Bishop's Office:	
<i>What is Love?</i>	396

Linquist, Richard

Letter: <i>Still Standing and Serving</i>	13
Letter: <i>Trust and Confidence</i>	207
Letter: <i>Taking in Sail</i>	366

MARRIAGES

Adams-Newell	100
Ahotosse-Atcho-Dakpoe	100
Austin-Gleason.....	359
Brown-Cook	359
Bueneman-Gallagher	563
Campan-Cahoon	100
Campbell-Elphick	279
Chaves-Zazulak.....	100
Cole-Sweeney	434
Dunlap-Douglas.....	100
Foord-Vosper.....	279
Fritch-Christman	359
Gomes-Lima	279
Hayes-Gunther	434
King-Shechtman	563
Kruse-Ramirez	359
Lindrooth-Harkopt.....	563
McCleft-Varney	191
McCurdy-Fleming	434
Nash-New	563
Pitcairn-King.....	563
Rogers-Quinlan.....	100
Rohtla-Homont	434
Roth-Kranick.....	563
Roth-Li	434

Morris, Brent

The Joyful Science of Shunology	409
--	-----

ORDINATIONS

First Degree	
Calvo Naranjo, Douglas Daniel.....	357
Jackson, Thomas Jonathan.....	357
Sjôdin, Eric.....	357

Odhner Grant H.	
<i>Not as the World Gives</i>	241

Odhner, John L.	
Easter Sermon:	
<i>The Lord's Last Words</i>	118

Pendleton, Alan	
Letter: <i>Divine Clay</i>	204
<i>Divine Light</i>	476

Pendleton, Willard D.	
<i>The Preservation of the General Church:</i>	
<i>Perpetuation of Academy Uses</i>	19

Ridgway, Barrie	
Letter: <i>Which Came First,</i>	
<i>the Chicken or the Egg?</i>	205

Ridgway, Donald	
Searching for Answers About	
the First Humans on Earth.....	26

Ridgway, Huelwen	
Letter: <i>The Lord's End in View</i>	
<i>and Our Role in It</i>	109
<i>Swedenborg Confirms: No Evolution</i>	
<i>in Creation of Humans</i>	291

Rogers, N. Bruce	
Review of Book:	
<i>Why You Should be Religious</i>	398

Rogers, Prescott A.

- Book Review: *The Heavenly Doctrines*
as Systematic Theology.....47
- Letter: *The Need for Charity*363

Rogers, N. Bruce

- Sermon: *Savior and Redeemer*302
- Book review: *Why You*
Should Be Religious398

Russell, Rebekah

- General Church In-Service:
Blazing a Whole New
Trail in Pittsburgh.45

SERMONS

Rev. Kurt Ho. Asplundh

- The Responsibility of the New Church*226

Rev. Brett D. Buick

- That Serpent of Old*.....221

Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss Jr.

- Hold fast to What You Have*209

Rev. Eric H. Carswell

- New Church Education: The Gift*
of the Pearl of Great Price296

Rev. Michael D. Gladish

- Isaiah's Prophecy of Salvation*459

Rev. Coleman S. Glenn

- Taking Up the Cross*.....112

Rev. Derek P. Elphick

- I Saw Heaven Opened*215

The Minority Report:

- A Call for Courage*.....377

Rt. Rev. David H. Lindrooth

- The Power of the Lord's Providence*.....14

- The World on Fire*.....372

Rev. John L. Odhner

- The Lord's Last Words*118

Rev. N. Bruce Rogers

- Savior and Redeemer*.....302

Rev. Malcolm G. Smith	
<i>Come to the Lord</i>	466
Smith, Malcolm G.	
Sermon: <i>Come to the Lord</i>	466
Simons, Jeremy F.	
General Church Clergy Meetings	
in Bryn Athyn	383
Sjödin, Eric	
Declaration of Faith.....	414
Smith, Christopher Ronald Jack	
Resurrection Service	125
Smith, Lawson	
Resurrection Service for	
Christopher Ronald Jack Smith	125
Synnestvedt, Shawn O.	
<i>Through an Open Door:</i>	
<i>A Path to a Stronger Marriage</i>	133
Thompson, Howard A.	
<i>Twice Hacked: Cybercrime</i>	
<i>and Spiritual Attacks</i>	244
<i>Swedenborg and Stoicism</i>	324
Letter: <i>Faith and Politics</i>	444
Uber, Julie D.	
General Church In-Service:	
<i>Blazing a Whole New</i>	
<i>Trail in Pittsburgh</i>	45
Yardumian, Aram	
Book Review	
<i>Listening to Eternity</i>	491

Announcements

BAPTISMS

Infants are introduced by baptism into the Christian heaven, and angels are there assigned to them to take care of them, by whom they are kept in a state of receiving faith in the Lord. (True Christian Religion 677:5)

Agnew, Cameron Lindsay

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, July 27, 2025, daughter of Brett and Katharine Graham Agnew, Rev. Jeremy F. Simons officiating.

Alden, Nathaniel Asher

At Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania, September 1, 2025, son of Micah and Tania Buss Alden, Rev. Erik J. Buss officiating.

Allen, Aurora Juliet

At Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania, September 21, 2025, daughter of Jonathan and Devon Lagasse Allen, Rev. Charles E. Blair officiating.

Brock, Adeline Joy

At Maysville, Missouri, August 17, 2025, daughter of Gaird and Mikalah Klippenstein Brock, Rev. Calvin B. Heinrichs officiating.

Buduwah Budu, Darian Nana Adwoa

At Kumasi-Ashanti, Ghana, August 24, 2025, daughter of Prince Budu and Esther Okyere, Rev. Kwado Adu Amoako officiating.

Cooper, Jesse Shiloh

At Kempton, Pennsylvania, August 10, 2025, son of Jordan and Rebecca Smith Cooper, Rev. Brett D. Buick officiating.

Cranch, Truett David

At Laurelville, Pennsylvania, July 25, 2025, son of Karl and Jade Deibert Cranch, Rev. Calvin B. Heinrichs officiating.

Ezenwa, Chinonye

At Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria, July 27, 2025, Rev. Ebute-Metta Kuroakegha officiating.

Graham, Nell Pitcairn

At London, United Kingdom, August 18, 2025, daughter of Kenneth Graham and Devon Pendleton, Rev. Grant H. Odhner officiating.

Hale, Theodore Raymond

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, September 18, 2025, son of Jared Hale and Gabriella Godorecci, Rev. Jeffrey O. Smith officiating.

Innocent, Eboseremhen Jayden

At Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria, July 27, 2025, son of Innocent and Eghuan Okosun, Rev. Ebute-Metta Kuroakegha officiating.

Lewin, Ethan Chase

At Lafayette, Colorado, September 7, 2025, Rev. David C. Roth officiating.

McCurdy, Mason Bentley

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, October 5, 2025, son of Shane and Rachel Elphick McCurdy, Rev. Derek P. Elphick officiating.

Odhner, Frieda Mildred

At London, United Kingdom, August 24, 2025, daughter of Lael and Mariko Jamison Odhner, Rev. Grant H. Odhner officiating.

Okwere, Esther

At Kumasi-Ashanti, Ghana, August 24, 2025, Rev. Kwado Adu Amoako officiating.

Pennink, Creighton Kent

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, September 21, 2025, son of Rowan and Nicole Wille Pennink, Rev. Charles E. Blair officiating.

Pennink, Jordyn

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, September 21, 2025, daughter of Rowan and Nicole Wille Pennink, Rev. Charles E. Blair officiating.

Pennink, Mycah

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, September 21, 2025, daughter of Rowan and Nicole Wille Pennink, Rev. Charles E. Blair officiating.

Pennink, Nicole Wille

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, September 21, 2025, Rev. Charles E. Blair officiating.

Pennink, Shayne

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, September 21, 2025, daughter of Rowan and Nicole Wille Pennink, Rev. Charles E. Blair officiating.

Smirnov, Parker Oleksandr

At Boulder, Colorado, May 18, 2025, son of Nikita Smirnov and Sierra Heinrichs, Rev. Willard L.D. Heinrichs officiating.

Smith, Hazel Rae

At Kempton, Pennsylvania, August 31, 2025, daughter of Kenan and Kathleen Smith Smith, Rev. Brett D. Buick officiating.

St. Martine, Kennedy R.

At Allentown, Pennsylvania, September 7, 2025, daughter of Walter and Kristine Mellor St. Martine, Rev. Charles E. Blair officiating.

Steen, Juniper Eden

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, August 30, 2025, daughter of David and Rachel Buss Steen, Rev. Erik J. Buss officiating.

MARRIAGES

The conjugal union of one man with one wife is the precious jewel of human life and the repository of Christian religion. In a word, a person is a living soul as a result of that love. (Conjugal Love 457)

**Bueneman-Gallagher, Benjamin
Joseph Bueneman and Katrina
Rose Gallagher**

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania,
September 13, 2025, Rev. John L.
Odhner officiating.

**King-Shechtman, Sean Roberts
King and Abigail Shechtman**

At New Hope, Pennsylvania, July
26, 2025, Rev. Grant R. Schnarr
officiating.

**Lindrooth-Harkopt, Malachi
Lindrooth and Isabella Sophie
Harkopt**

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania,
August 10, 2025, Rt. Rev. David H.
Lindrooth officiating.

**Nash-New, Jonathan Joshua Nash
and Heidi Winner New**

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania,
October 4, 2025, Rev. Malcolm G.
Smith officiating.

**Pitcairn-King, Clark Darrell
Pitcairn and Susan Schnarr King**

At Pleasant Mount, Pennsylvania,
September 2, 2025, Rt. Rev. David H.
Lindrooth officiating.

**Roth-Kranick, Winston James Roth
and Caroline Kranick**

At Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania,
September 28, 2025, Rev. David C.
Roth officiating.

IN MEMORIAM

A human being is so created that as to his internal he cannot die; for he can believe in God, and can also love God, and thus to be conjoined with God is to live to eternity. (Arcana Coelestia 10591)

Asplundh, Marilyn Parker

October 13, 2025, of Bryn Athyn,
Pennsylvania. 94

Carter, Joan Louise Brown

June 19, 2025, of Hershey,
Pennsylvania. 68

Burke, Rev. William Hanson

August 23, 2013, of Cumming,
Georgia. 95

Clifford, Rev. William Harrison III

October 18, 2025, of Grand Rapids,
Michigan. 80

Cole, Carolyn (Carly) Rose Andrews

July 8, 2025, of Bryn Athyn,
Pennsylvania. 45

Nemitz, Rev. Kurt Paul

October 6, 2025, of Pittsburgh,
Pennsylvania. 87

Cooper, Jeremy Scott

May 3, 2025, of Augusta, Michigan.
57

Smith, Drey Davis

January 18, 2025, of Camberly,
Surrey, United Kingdom. 93

Hendricks, Erdman Enoch

April 10, 2025, of Kitchener,
Ontario, Canada. 93

Smith, James Spencer

October 9, 2025, of Lansdale,
Pennsylvania. 86

Huntzinger, Marie Denise Brown

August 12, 2025, of Doylestown,
Pennsylvania. 73

Synnestvedt, Leo

March 22, 2025, of Meadowbrook,
Pennsylvania. 91

Murdoch, Roger Stuart

July 1, 2025, of Glenview, Illinois. 93

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serve and be served at
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