

THETA ALPHA JOURNAL



APRIL 2026

*Additional artwork by
Gillian Bedford*

*See Artist's Statement
on page 21*



Theta Alpha

“Daughters of the Academy”



Named From the Greek:
Θυγατερες Ακαδημιας
Thugateres Akadémias

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

Non Nobis Solum ~ Not for Ourselves Alone

Theta Alpha Journal
Volume 20
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Please remember that your membership dues support all of Theta Alpha International's programs, including this *Journal!* Membership is open to interested women aged eighteen and older.

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President's Message

Janet Krettek

Support...

It is something we all need, even when we prefer to do things on our own. The Lord calls us to love one another. We are commissioned to help each other. In youth, some are fooled into believing they are achieving on their own. Yet when we take an honest look backward, we see how many people stood quietly in the background, offering the support we needed.

Theta Alpha International has long served as that quiet support for many. Through educational materials, religious instruction, encouragement through contests, meals, awards, and financial assistance to teachers, schools, and students, TAI has strengthened our community. This *Journal* has given women—and occasionally men who might not otherwise have had a platform—a voice. It has educated, raised awareness, expressed concerns, offered encouragement, inspired reflection, and even delighted our senses with beauty.

Come join me in supporting the mission of Theta Alpha, offering whatever time, talents, or resources you are able to share. If you need ideas, email me! My children tell me I am full of... ideas.

Love,
Janet

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

Janet can be contacted at jmkrettekdo@gmail.com

Editorial

Kris Heinrichs Earle

Dear readers,

What a beautiful time of year it is wherever you are on the globe! It is a time of transition, whether you are in springtime in the Northern Hemisphere or autumn in the Southern. It is a time when our thoughts and feelings marvel at the shifts taking place before our eyes. Some of us may also find ourselves feeling not quite ready for the changes. Mentally and emotionally we may be playing hide and seek with these passages of time, even as the words from our childhood game ring out, “Ready or not, here I come!” Thankfully we are not on our own. The Lord and His angels are constantly with us, feeding us spiritually, *even though we may not be aware of it.*

*Do not cast me away from Your presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And uphold me by Your generous Spirit. (Psalm 51:11-12)*

The Writings give us beautiful teachings about the Lord’s “generous spirit.” We are the recipients of His continual “influx”—translated in the *New Century Edition* as “inflow.” Personally I love both translations for this Divine concept. Swedenborg writes: “Here is what spiritual inflow is like: There is an inflow from the Lord’s divinity into every angel, every spirit, and every person on earth. That is how he governs everyone, not only in a comprehensive way but also in the smallest details. He flows in directly from himself and indirectly through the spiritual world too.” (*Secrets of Heaven* 6053)

This spiritual influx is a free gift for the taking! In this edition of our *Journal* the Lord's inflow is clearly present throughout the written and artistic contributions from our Theta Alpha community.

In *Every Step of the Way* Karen Alfelt Childs describes the spiritual process of moving from an earthly state of mind to a spiritual one. She discusses how uncomfortable this journey can be for us, but thankfully we have the assurance that the Lord is with us throughout these times of transition.

Doris Milam wants us to know, "Though the world feels chaotic, I believe that goodness will prevail and that people will continue turning toward the Lord." Last December I interviewed Doris in her home so she could express how grateful she is to Theta Alpha for a scholarship she received while in college in the 1950's. In *My Gratitude to Theta Alpha* Doris says that at the age of ninety-three she sees how this scholarship profoundly changed the course of her life.

In February I met Annie Drake at an event hosted by the Swedenborg Foundation in Vero Beach, Florida. After speaking with her, I invited her to write about how she discovered the Writings as an adult. In *Seek and Ye Shall Find—The Lord's Answer to My Prayer*, we witness how Divine Providence guided Annie from her early life in Chile to a moment of spiritual awakening when she felt the Lord answer her fervent prayer. She sought His guidance and embarked on a new path of discovery while reading *Afterlife: A Guided Tour of Heaven and Its Wonders*, a work that includes an introduction by Donald Rose.

Professional artist Gillian Bedford describes how her work with trilliums has helped ground her during times of transition. She writes, "Though I have felt uprooted at various times throughout my moves across the country, it has been the natural world that continually welcomes me into new places." In considering her work, we see how art can become a source of stability and

peace—offering a sense of grounding during periods of physical and emotional change as one settles into new surroundings.

In *A Kingdom of Uses* Katya Gordon lovingly describes how each of her family members came together at the time of her mother's death and memorial service. She tells about the "feeling of awe in how seamlessly it all worked out." Katya says that her family knew their mother, Ruth Goodenough, would only want them to do what they really wanted to do and nothing more. She brings us along to experience her family's heartfelt preparations and individual contributions to honor Ruth's life on earth. Additionally you will find a memorial to Ruth, who as a younger woman made important contributions to Theta Alpha International and the *Journal*. Following her memorial is a reprinting of a short article *An Experiment* written by Ruth in 1972.

Recently I felt called to ask my friend, Susan Asplundh, to set us on the path to creating a memorial to her mother, a strong leader in Theta Alpha. In Marilyn Asplundh's memorial we are reminded of her dedication as she served as treasurer, vice president and president. Marilyn possessed many gifts, but perhaps one of her most beautiful was making meaningful connections with women in the church from around the globe.

At the annual Charter Day luncheon in October, Hilary Bryntensson spoke about *Adolescent Religion in the US and at the Academy of the New Church*. One of the important contributions to an individual's faith journey comes from the home. "It is well-known...that children take from their parents' tendencies toward the kind of love and life their parents have." (*Conjugal Love* 202) A family's religious focus remains foundational in child and adolescent life. We also read how ANC significantly supports spiritual growth while respecting an individual's adolescent development.

We are treated to part two of Vera Glenn's memories of growing up on the Powell farm in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. In this second part Vera describes her life as she enters her elementary

school years. Her description of this time period is precious and she portrays her family, friends and surroundings so clearly.

In the previous fall *Journal*, Chris Simons wrote about his relationship with his brother, Rick, who died as a soldier in Viet Nam. It is an honor to include Bruce Rogers' own personal memories of Rick Simons. I am very thankful he wanted us to include what came to his mind when he read Chris' article. Please do not hesitate to reach out as Bruce Rogers did. We all have a unique perspective worthy to share with others. Let's keep these conversations going!

In this edition of the *Journal* we celebrate the stream of Providence. Each article illustrates beautiful changes that occur in the hearts and minds of those who contributed. The Lord's divine flow of love and wisdom builds us as angels-in-the-making and binds us as a community. Let us continue to share our stories of how He works in our lives both through times of struggle and times of gratitude.

Much love,
Kris

Kris can be contact at madameahs@gmail.com



Call for Articles!

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

Every Step of the Way

Karin Alfelt Childs

*Originally published as an email blog for **Off The Left Eye**, a Swedenborg Foundation project and YouTube channel. Reprinted with permission of the author.*

And Moses said to the people' symbolizes being lifted out of the state of despair by divine truth. . . . 'Don't be afraid' means not to despair. (Secrets of Heaven 8170-8172)

The path of spiritual growth is not an easy one. Operating from a lower-ego, earthly perspective is full of stress and confusion, but there's a kind of comfort in its miserable familiarity.

This is reflected in the Biblical Exodus story. The Israelites cried out to God to save them from the miseries of enslavement in Egypt. And yet when they encountered the challenges of leaving that life behind, they often longed to go back.

In the journey of moving from an earthly to a spiritual state of mind, we have to deal with uncertainty. We don't yet know how we'll be sustained if we don't have our former "fixes" and assumptions and default reactions. The journey takes a combination of trust and action that can feel baffling. And yet, the Lord sustains us through it all.

Water is a recurring symbol in the Exodus story. Swedenborg learned that water can be a symbol of either truth or falsity, which is why water can either be life-giving or life-threatening.

When the Israelites were first being pursued by Pharaoh and his army, they approached a huge obstacle which was the Red Sea. They felt trapped and doomed. They cried out in anger and protest

to Moses and to God, complaining that this escape from Egypt had led them into an even worse situation.

The intimidating body of water represents a sea of falsity. When trying to escape from destructive mental and emotional patterns, aren't there a flood of inner false messages trying to convince us that this was a bad idea, or that it's not possible?

And yet, the Lord has the power to walk us through those destructive lies. In the story, Moses tells the people: to not be afraid; to stand still; and to see the way that Jehovah would deliver them from this crisis.

Interestingly, then Jehovah says seemingly conflicting things to Moses. First, he says, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward." (Exodus 14:15) And then he tells Moses to stretch his rod over the Red Sea and divide it, so that the Israelites could walk through the sea on dry land.

What a combination of messages! Don't just cry out for help. Go forward! And yet, know that it's only the LORD who can solve the problem. Swedenborg addresses these messages.

'Stand firm and see Jehovah's salvation' symbolizes being saved by the Lord alone without contributing in any way. . . . The people are being told here to believe that they are saved by the Lord alone without contributing at all because this is the main requirement for faith during times of crisis. If we believe we can resist by our own strength when we are being tested, we succumb. (Secrets of Heaven 8172)

People who are being tested often slacken their hands, resorting exclusively to prayers, which they pour forth ardently. They do not realize that prayer does no good then and that they need instead to fight the falsity and evil the hells introduce. The weapons for the battle are religious truths, which do help, because they strengthen goodness and truth in its opposition to falsity and evil. What is more, we must fight as if we were

on our own during our struggles and trials, while still acknowledging and believing that it is the Lord who acts. If we do not fight as if we were on our own, we do not adopt as our

own the goodness and truth that flow in from the Lord through heaven. If we do fight as if we were on our own, believing nonetheless that it is the Lord who acts, we do make goodness and truth our own. This provides us with a new selfhood, called heavenly autonomy, which is a new will. (Secrets of Heaven 8179)

...the Lord will not pull us out of an uncomfortable process because that very process is what will make us able to enter heaven and its happiness.

Those words, “Why do you cry to Me?”, which seem callous in the literal text, hold a deeply compassionate message that the Lord will not pull us out of an uncomfortable process because that very process is what will make us able to enter heaven and its happiness.

People who engage in no other definite activity than prayer when they are being tried do not know that they would not be ready for heaven—and consequently could not be saved—if their crisis were interrupted before being brought all the way to its conclusion. . . . The Lord seeks the final goal, which is our salvation. He alone knows what the end is; we do not; and he does not act on prayers rebelling against the salvation he has in view. For people who conquer in times of trial, the truth of this is reinforced. (Secrets of Heaven 8179)

And the Lord can and will miraculously walk us through that flood of falsity in safety.

‘And the waters were a wall to them on their right and on their

left' means that they were kept from falsity on every side. . . . When the Lord holds us in what is good and true, falsity and evil move to the sides and stand there like a wall, because they are incapable of entering an environment that contains goodness and truth. (Secrets of Heaven 8206)

These dangerous waters were rendered safe. Later in the story, when the Israelites thought they would die from a lack of life-giving water, God provided water in ways that were totally unexpected. Bitter, undrinkable water was made sweet after Moses threw a tree into it. (When truth seems distasteful, God sweetens it by leading us to simple goodness in life.) When there was no water, Moses struck a rock and water came pouring out. (When we need new truth but don't know where to find it, we need to keep asking God to lead us there, and new truth will come out of that faith.)

The path of spiritual growth is not an easy one. But the Lord is with us every step of the way, providing everything we need at every moment, and he is leading us to spiritual freedom and heavenly joy.

Karin Alfelt Childs grew up in Bryn Athyn. After marrying Jon Childs in 1982, they spent 40 years in the midwest working, volunteering and raising a family. Karin has been working for the Swedenborg Foundation on the Off The Left Eye team since 2013, responding to online comments and questions and researching for the videos. She continues to do that in her and Jon's new home in Huntingdon Valley, PA.

My Gratitude to Theta Alpha

Doris Brickman Milam

My name is Doris Brickman Milam, and at ninety-two years old, I finally have the chance to express something I have wanted to say for most of my life: a heartfelt, enduring thank you to Theta Alpha.

Because of my visual and physical limitations, I am deeply grateful that my friend and fellow church member, Kris Earle, has come to help me record this story. It means so much to finally put into words how profoundly Theta Alpha shaped my life.

Early Years and a Calling to Nursing

I spent several wonderful years at the Academy of the New Church—three years of high school and my first year of college at what was then called the Academy of the New Church College. From the seventh grade on, I knew without question that I wanted to become a nurse. My college studies were focused on that path, and I intended to continue on.

However, after completing my first year of college, the timing was difficult financially. My father was supporting his own parents and could not afford the cost of a second year for me after which I would earn an Associate Degree. At the same time, I had already traveled to Northwestern University for an interview for their new Bachelor of Science in Nursing program. In 1950, this was still uncommon—bachelor's degrees in nursing were just emerging. Northwestern oversaw several hospitals in that area, and Evanston Hospital, near Glenview, was the facility I chose.

The admissions team told me immediately that they had accept-

ed previous coursework from Academy students because they had seen such excellent performance from them in the past. They were ready to take me—but I still needed a second year of college to become eligible for the BSN program.

I did not know how I could afford it.

The Scholarship That Changed Everything

At the end of my freshman year in college, as tradition dictated, the school hosted an assembly where honors and awards were announced. Everyone always wondered who would receive the Theta Alpha Scholarship—the biggest award of all. It was an honor scholarship, and one did not apply for it in those days; it was given. It was traditionally awarded to students planning to become New Church teachers, so I never imagined it would go to someone studying nursing.

But that day, to my astonishment, the final announcement declared that the full Theta Alpha Scholarship was awarded to me.

I was shocked. They knew I intended to go into nursing, not teaching. Yet they believed in me, and that belief changed the course of my entire life.

The scholarship covered tuition, room, and board, allowing me to complete my second year of college in Bryn Athyn. That year made me fully eligible for the BSN program at Northwestern and set me on a professional path that shaped everything to come.

I have always felt that Theta Alpha quite literally opened the door to my future.

Launching a Career in a Growing Profession

At Northwestern, I was one of only two students in my graduating class of thirty who had chosen the relatively new bachelor's track. Years later, I met many nurses in their thirties and forties who were returning to school at night and on weekends to earn the degree I had been able to pursue straight through. Nursing

was rapidly becoming more academically professionalized, and I was there at the beginning of that change.

My scholarship allowed me to place my full attention on demanding subjects—like chemistry—and to participate fully in dormitory life as a nursing student. Later, the profession transitioned entirely to college-based programs, and I am proud to have been part of that evolution.

That education became the stepping stone that eventually enabled me to earn a master's degree, which furthered my career and opened opportunities in teaching and leadership.

A Lifetime of Service and Learning

I worked for 36 years in hospital settings, including two major hospitals, and spent a great deal of time teaching nurses, paramedics, and bedside staff. Over the years, I developed specialties in infusion therapy and arterial procedures.

I began publishing articles—not for money (there is very little money in publishing nursing articles!), but to share knowledge and help others. Over time, I published 35 professional articles in nursing journals.

Those publications led to invitations from an education company to provide national nursing seminars, and eventually I accepted. I retired from clinical nursing and spent five years traveling every other week, giving full-day seminars in every state of the U.S., including Hawaii and Alaska.

At the same time, I received requests to work as an expert legal consultant for malpractice cases involving IV-related injuries. I had never planned on such work, but it came to me through my writing and speaking. Often, the only question law firms wanted to confirm was whether I had a master's degree—they wanted those initials after my name. I used to joke silently that the degree could have been in basket-weaving, as long as the letters were there! But the work was meaningful, intellectually stimulating, and deeply rewarding.

None of these opportunities would have existed without the education I received—and I would not have been able to pursue that education without Theta Alpha.

Family, Loss, and Resilience

I married at 28 and lived in Glenview, Illinois, a warm and loving church society. I was the proud mother of two children: my son, Gary, and my daughter, Kathy. Gary attended the church school and very much enjoyed his childhood in our community making many lifelong friends. My daughter was a caring child who loved helping with Friday suppers and church activities; she would have been a wonderful New Church woman. A tragedy struck when Kathy, at just nine years old, was hit by a car and killed. It was devastating beyond words.

Continuing my professional life—first part-time and later full-time—helped me survive that dark period. My work kept me useful and gave me purpose. My husband, though a good man, was not New Church, and he struggled with the loss in his own way. The New Church community in Glenview became an anchor for me through those years.

Later Years and Lasting Blessings

After my seminar years, I eventually moved to Florida, where my identical twin sister—my lifelong closest companion—also settled. In Boynton Beach we found an active and vibrant New Church community, though today it is smaller as people have aged or moved away. Still, I have been blessed to live in two loving church communities.

As I approach ninety-three, physically and visually handicapped, I find myself with more quiet time—time for prayer, reflection, and trust in the Lord's providence. Though the world feels chaotic, I believe that goodness will prevail and that people will continue turning toward the Lord. I am grateful for the work of the Sweden-

borg Foundation and hopeful for the future.

Growing old is challenging. There is much the heart still wants to do that the body cannot. But I look forward to the heavenly life the Lord has promised, to continue usefulness, and to see loved ones again. I feel blessed to have been raised in the New Church and to have lived according to its doctrines, both by example and by education.

My Enduring Thanks

I want to end where this story began: with gratitude.

If it were not for Theta Alpha, my life would have been profoundly different. Their generous full scholarship gave me the opportunity to become the best version of myself professionally, personally, and spiritually. My career, my education, my service—all of it was made possible by that gift.

Thank you, Theta Alpha, for believing in me.

Thank you for giving me a future.

And thank you, Kris, for helping me finally share this story.

Doris continues to live independently in Boynton Beach, Florida. She welcomes phone contact and can be reached at (561) 735-4951.

Editor's note: *This article is based on an in-person interview with Doris Milam. In December Doris called me and wanted to tell her story about how Theta Alpha changed the course of her life. I used my phone to record the interview with Doris, then copied the transcript of the interview, pasted it into ChatGPT and asked ChatGPT to create an article. A few minor corrections were made to what was generated by AI. Doris is thrilled with the result as am I that her story will be read by our Theta Alpha community.*

Seek and Ye Shall Find— The Lord’s Answer to My Prayer

Annie Drake

I was baptized as an infant in Santiago, Chile, in the Roman Catholic Church. I don’t remember that baptism, and I don’t remember going to church after that, either. Growing up, God was simply a given; we knew He existed.

My family and I migrated to the United States in 1970. It was just us. I was six years old. Five years later, my mother lost her husband, and my two brothers and I lost our father to lung and brain cancer. Dad was the strong hand in the family; Mom was the beautiful, loving flower. Suddenly she was a widow in a new country with three headstrong kids on the threshold of their teenage years.

I’ll fast-forward through the challenges that followed: the confusion, the anger, the much-too-early drug use, the drifting in a sea of the lost and lonely. I had just turned 16 and worked evenings at a restaurant. One fateful night, after finishing my shift, I sat at the breakfast bar for my meal. A very young, naturally beautiful woman sat next to me. She had worked there only two days; I’d never spoken to her. We ate in silence until she turned to me with a gentle smile and asked, “What do you know about Jesus Christ?”

It was a question. I couldn’t just turn away. Had she started by preaching, I might have brushed her off and said, “No thank you, please don’t interfere with my darkness.” But she asked, and I felt compelled to answer. What did I know about Jesus Christ? I dug up what I remembered from a children’s Bible I’d read years earlier, bits taught at home, and scenes from the movie musical *Jesus Christ Superstar*. My simple answer: He was the Son of God and was

crucified for our sins. That's what I had.

It led to a long conversation about Him, which led to her invitation to a Bible study, which led to me buying my first adult Bible (KJV), which led to me stopping all drug and alcohol use, which led to me leaving behind the people who were bad influences in

my life. That same year I met my future husband. It was the first time I noticed God's hand in my life.

I married at eighteen and had my first child at twenty, my second at twenty-two. Regarding religion, I raised my son and daughter much the way I had been raised: God was real, but faith and religion stayed in the background. I believed (incorrectly) that we were saved by grace. I had confessed Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior many times — I figured I'd better do it more than once to lock in eternal salvation. We enrolled the kids in Awana (*"Approved Workmen Are Not Ashamed"* (2 Timothy 2:15) – an international, Bible-centered children and youth ministry focused on evangelism and discipleship) for a year so they could learn what we couldn't teach them. We tried church a couple of times, but it never felt like home. Still, our children believed in God, and that was a good start.

Life continued with its roller coaster of circumstances, its pains, and its joys. My children were teenagers when my husband and I divorced. There was a lot of pain to go around during those years. I thought myself strong, and if I could convince those around me I was strong, then I could take on anything. I was managing okay,

Had she started by preaching, I might have brushed her off and said, "No thank you, please don't interfere with my darkness." But she asked, and I felt compelled to answer. What did I know about Jesus Christ?

God remained where I had always kept Him – somewhere in the background. Then came another fateful day: I almost lost my eighteen-year-old daughter in a severe auto accident that took her best friend's life.

and by outward appearances, I was more than okay. God remained where I had always kept Him — somewhere in the background.

Then came another fateful day: I almost lost my eighteen-year-old daughter in a severe auto accident that took her best friend's life. I saw one miracle after another through that incident. What were the chances

that the vehicle driving behind her car that night was an off-duty police officer? What were the chances he immediately knew a helicopter, not an ambulance, was needed? What were the chances another good friend, who had been following behind them, was on the scene, repeatedly screaming my daughter's name as she was dying — causing her to stop walking toward a light and turn around? What were the chances it was only a fifteen-minute helicopter ride to a top-tier trauma hospital? What were the chances the best trauma surgeon was on call that night? And what were the chances that, as I sat in the waiting room not knowing if I would ever see her again, I felt calm and peace? She survived.

During and after the accident, God became a bigger part of my life. I still didn't go to church, and I still rarely read the Bible, but I knew He was closer than I had thought. I had seen His hand again.

Then came the greatest miracle: the Lord sent me Emanuel Swedenborg.

That journey began a decade before I discovered him. During a very stressful time, I got down on my knees on the floor and

prayed — hard, with tears in my eyes, from the depths of my heart. The prayer went something like this:

“Dear God. I know I don’t deserve anything, but I know You’re there. I just don’t know where exactly, or how to reach You. Most of the time it feels as if You are too far away. I know almost nothing about You, but I want to know You. God, please help me find You because I don’t know how. What should I do? What church should I go to? What books should I read, what Bible version? How often should I pray? Please, God, show me. Please let me know You!”

It wasn’t two weeks later that my mother — an avid reader who often passed novels to me — handed me a book on quantum mechanics called *The Divine Matrix*. I had no idea it connected to my prayer, but it put me on a life-changing path of discovery — one that began with science, not religion. That book led to others like it, then to deep interest in life after death and near-death experiences. I read Raymond Moody and many personal accounts.

Then one day in April 2018, I opened an unread book on my Kindle: *Afterlife: A Guided Tour of Heaven and Its Wonders*. I’d downloaded it thinking it was about a near-death experience, so for \$4.96 I bought it without reading the synopsis.

The book began with an introduction by Donald Rose and a preface by Emanuel Swedenborg. I was disappointed — this wasn’t what I wanted. Who was this man from centuries ago? But I felt compelled to keep reading. I figured I’d try one chapter and move on if it didn’t speak to me.

It was in three parts, several chapters each. I don’t know exactly when it happened — somewhere in the first part — but I came to a true, profound understanding that my life would never be the same!

I had to put the book down. I was overwhelmed. Chills ran through my body. My eyes welled with tears. I couldn’t believe what had just happened. The light had turned on. The vague path of shadows now showed clarity. I knew this was real. I knew the Lord had answered my long-forgotten prayer — He’d been answering it

all along. His providence had prepared me for the information now in my hands.

I had to stand up. I started pacing inside my house, trying to release the powerful energy flowing through me. There it was: not all the answers, but a path. A beautiful, rocky path. I knew without doubt this was the path I was to take. I didn't question it, not even for a moment. The Lord made it clear that although He had always had me, I had now found Him.

April 2018 to now:

I was certain I'd uncovered a great secret in discovering Swedenborg — perhaps only a few knew about him. But online research brought joy and surprise: There were many people, churches, organizations, websites, YouTube videos, and family generations of Swedenborgians.

I found the Swedenborg Foundation, bought more of his works, and it led me to *Off The Left Eye* — my human connection. I adored Jonathan, Curtis, Chara, Karin, Chelsea; they became part of my life. I started watching *Spirit & Life* Bible studies with Jonathan Rose — a wonderful man of God and great teacher. I am so grateful to him, and all of them.

That path also connected me to another wonderful man of God and New Church teacher and minister, David Millar in Australia, and through him, my current practice of Logopraxis (Logos meaning Word, Praxis meaning to practice).

I will never again forget that the Lord answers prayers. Seek and ye shall find... always.

Annie Drake lives in Estero, Florida, where she has called home for all but the first six years of her life (split between East and West Coast of South Florida). She serves as General Manager at a family-owned ready-mix concrete plant in Fort Myers. A mother of two and grandmother to three boys (ages 7 to 18), she finds deep joy in family and in the quiet work of daily life. Annie has been actively engaged in the New Church through Logopraxis, and other opportunities. Since discovering Swedenborg, she has visited Bryn Athyn three times and continues to seek the Lord's guidance in all things. You can reach Annie at annied35@yahoo.com

Artist Statement

Gillian Gladish Bedford

When I first moved to Minnesota seven years ago, I grounded myself by painting trillium. I first encountered these white-flowered, early spring blooms in Lake Itasca State Park, where I painted plein air. As I now open myself to a new landscape in West Virginia, it is my familiar friend trillium that has helped me settle.

In my first winter here, I found inspiration working in my studio from Eliot Porter's Appalachian photographs featuring yellow and white trillium. Seen in this new light and terrain, the plant has introduced a new palette and sense of movement into my work. Even so, at times the trillium in my paintings echoes the form of a water lily or carries the memory of crocuses from my childhood home in Northeast Philadelphia.

Though I have felt uprooted at various times throughout my moves across the country, it has been the natural world that continually welcomes me into new places. Trillium—with its three-petaled blooms emerging in early spring—is often associated with balance, harmony, and the interconnectedness of all life. Through this work, I have come to recognize joy, pain, and blessing as inseparable parts of living.

These paintings are a reminder to hold the past, present, and future with grace—to allow for the fluid shifts of life's seasons and, like trillium, to find the fortitude to remain present.

Though Appalachia and Minnesota are very different environments, it is the trillium found in both places that makes this landscape feel like home.

Gillian Bedford is a professional artist who earned her BFA from Tyler School of Art. She is known for her landscape paintings created both in her studio and en plein air. She has presented numerous solo exhibitions, including shows in the Philadelphia area, as well as at Art Resources Gallery in Minneapolis, MN; MacRostie Gallery in Grand Rapids, MN; and Watermark Art Center in Bemidji, MN, among others.

Her recent group exhibitions include shows in Morgantown and Fairmont, West Virginia. Gillian has also taught adult painting classes in Bemidji at Watermark Art Center, Northern Artists, and Headwaters School of Music and Design. She most recently taught children at Emerge WV and currently teaches at the Fairmont State University Academy for the Arts. This year, she has also led co-curricular painting experiences for both students and employees.

Gillian and her husband divide their time between Fairmont, West Virginia, and Bemidji, Minnesota, though they primarily live and work in West Virginia. They welcome you to visit wherever they are residing. Their two children reside in Minnesota.

To view her work, visit GillianBedford.com. Paintings also featured in this edition's cover and inside cover.



Call for Art Submissions!

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

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

“A Kingdom of Uses” — What Does That Look Like?

Katya Gordon

*Originally published in **New Christian Woman**, 22 October 2025. Reprinted with permission of the author.*

“A Kingdom of uses.” Sometimes a phrase I have known since childhood takes on new meaning with a new state in MY life. This happened to me this summer, a season full of unexpected developments—a long-awaited sailing trip in Greenland, an epic 6-day journey home, my mom’s death, a stent for my husband’s heart, a re-injured head for a niece, and a family reunion at memorial service time. It may seem like an unlikely time to discuss use, but now that fall is here and life is settling down, I notice things that I did not see before, that seem to live out this idea of a “kingdom of uses.”

I did not start out the summer thinking much about the kingdom of uses. First, there was a long-planned adventure. My husband Mark and I joined another couple to sail in Greenland together, a rare opportunity. As it turned out, this trip was dampened almost from the start with the realization that my mom was failing, maybe this time finally. By the time we got far enough north to take ferries and flights back south, it was clear that we might not get back in time to say good-bye. While Mark and I were flying over the fjords of Greenland, he in the pilot cockpit in a most unusual turn of events (another side story), the most beautiful flight imagin-

In retrospect, what stands out about that extraordinary period of time between mom's first real sign of failing and the service two weeks after her death, was the feeling of awe in how seamlessly it all worked out.

able, my mom made that transition to the spiritual world.

What followed (after three more days of travel) was a period laden with “formative moments,” exhausting yet exhilarating, emotionally meaningful, long-awaited reunions, conversations, and meals together with loved ones near and far. My external mind was occupied with

thoughts like, “I get to see my cousin that I haven’t seen for 30 years?!” or “How can the grandkids get their breakfasts simply at the Airbnb?” or “Who could accommodate my dear friend?” or “When can we get together to practice singing?” Yet all the while I could sense that this was the “stuff of life” happening, not to be short-changed in any way. My parents’ grandchildren, all of them young adults, were living out some memorable and formative days, and it would not do to miss a minute!

Perhaps most miraculous of all was Mark’s growing chest pain and trip to the ER, resulting in surgery from which he recovered almost instantly, for a situation (blocked artery) that could have killed him in Greenland. In family lore, the narrative became “mom brought Mark home.” Her time was over, but his wasn’t.

In retrospect, what stands out about that extraordinary period of time between mom’s first real sign of failing and the service two weeks after her death, was the feeling of awe in how seamlessly it all worked out. Anyone who knows my mom knows that she could never stand for fuss, or pretense. Honesty was the best policy, even

when propriety might demand otherwise. Knowing this influenced us, consciously or unconsciously. Somehow we all felt, strongly, that mom would only want us to do what we really wanted to do, and nothing more. She was never one for fancies for their own sake; this was the one time in her life that she would have things her way. No one would fuss unnecessarily. No one would choose frivolity over substance. The only things that mattered were to be the things that mattered! So we all did what really mattered to us, and what we felt capable of doing.

What did this mean in practice? First, I adored writing mom’s obituary and even enjoyed the editorial job of incorporating comments from five family members who are also writers!

Second, I love to plan services and have done many at our church in Two Harbors. I felt certain that mom would want to expose as many people as possible to Swedenborg—in a way that would be palatable or intriguing. Especially her friends, with whom she often felt tongue-tied about her own religion. This was her—our—chance! We therefore imagined a service that would not just expose people to “distinct” New Church beliefs, but one that would resonate with them, that would voice beliefs that they perhaps already held without consciously expressing them. We incorporated New Church music that was most beloved by Dad, who even stood up and offered a heartfelt explanation of “what this song means to me,” before we sang “O Precious Sign” with our local choir that didn’t, of course, know the song previously.

My other sisters were naturally passionate about different aspects of the service and the relatives gathering. Vera thought deeply about the doctrinal message that would emanate from readings, sermon, and rituals. She and dad worked through many details that only she had the mental bandwidth and emotional desire to consider. I could absolutely feel my mom rejoicing at these conversations—that we were talking about REAL THINGS.

Mary, who had been the one by mom’s side for the days pre-

ceding her passing, had gone home to California to re-group but returned to do things like arrange flowers for the service, keep track of grandkids' flight schedules, and keep Dad's meals coming.

Lamar, who stayed in Two Harbors for over two weeks, kept communications flowing online, hosted a large family barbecue and gathering at the nearby park, bought breakfast goods for the grandkids at their Airbnb, weighed in on catering decisions, and communicated critical pieces with Dad.

As the central host family, all I noticed was that food kept coming and going, dishes kept being done, people came and went, conversations kept going, food came and went again, the fridge was always full, another meal came and went, somehow seamlessly, everyone doing their part. The bulletin was printed, the catering arranged, the tech guy hired for both the service and the speeches afterwards, church people enlisted for various tasks, flowers kept showing up.

And, being Goodenough girls, we also all managed to get in our running/walking/dipping time along Lake Superior. And Dad got in his naps.

What made it all go so well? Maybe that's what the "kingdom of uses" means! In modern terms, the "community of uses." We had a clear purpose. We all had different skill sets and energy levels. We all came from different situations and lived in different situations. We each did our own job, as we best saw it, to our best ability, and trusted that the whole would be served. And it was. Maybe that's what a kingdom of uses really means. Maybe doing this for a short amount of time, for a specific purpose, where all of us are deeply engaged due to our affections (our love of Mom), we got a sense of what this would be like to live all the time in a heavenly community. Including, I might add, the rest needed afterwards!

In heaven everyone comes into his own occupation He comes into the employment or occupation corresponding to

his use in much the same conditions of life as when he was in the world Yet there is this difference, that he then comes into an interior delight, because into spiritual life ... and therefore (it is) more receptive of heavenly blessedness. (Heaven and Hell 394)

Katya Goodenough Gordon lives in Two Harbors, Minnesota, just a block from the north shore of Lake Superior. She has lived in this picturesque setting since 2008 when she and her family completed their first yearlong voyage living aboard a sailboat. Aside from home, marriage, and family, she is an author and reporter, a radio show host, a climate activist, and an active member of the United Church of Two Harbors. Born and bred in Bryn Athyn, PA, she is increasingly aware of and grateful for the ideas instilled in her childhood from Swedenborg’s Writings, and always looking for ways to spread these life-giving truths in her community and beyond. She can be reached at katyagordon69@gmail.com.



New Church Resources

Besides books, another awesome source of New Church content is NewChristianBibleStudy.org and its accompanying app in the AppStore, The Swedenborg Reader App. This website allows you to read the Word and the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg in many different languages. You can click the green Study button for any chapter in the Word to get a New Church explanation right next to the chapter you are reading. You can deep dive into different topics that interest you. Check it out!

In Memory of Ruth Parker Goodenough

July 27, 1938 – July 29, 2025

Our friend, Ruth Parker Goodenough (87), died on July 29, 2025, with daughter Mary at her side, after a long journey with dementia and a short journey with heart failure.

Ruth was born on July 27, 1938, to Sydney and Mary Parker in Toronto, Ontario. The second of five daughters, she re-met her daddy at age 6, after his 5-years of World Word II service in the Royal Canadian Air Force. She grew up in Toronto with the exception of one year in Winnipeg, Manitoba – “the year of the flood,” she quipped. The historic flood in Winnipeg was in 1950 and they lived very close to the Red River. She was in 5th grade and helped with the sandbags.

Ruth earned a bachelor’s degree in French from the University of Toronto, and another bachelor’s in Education from Bryn Athyn College in Pennsylvania. To her dying day Ruth believed that if more people read, understood, and followed the teachings given through Swedenborg, the world would be a better place. It was in Bryn Athyn that she met her husband Daniel W. Goodenough, who was studying to be a minister in the General Church of the New Jerusalem. They married in 1963.

In 1964 Ruth became a member of Theta Alpha International. During the seventies and eighties she served as the assistant editor of the *Theta Alpha Journal*. She made valuable contri-

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contributions to Theta Alpha and women of the church with both her time and skill in writing.

Despite a lifelong belief in her own mediocrity, Ruth managed to give birth to five children, and to mother dozens of teens and young adults who became part of the Goodenough household in Bryn Athyn. She excelled as a hostess, and served countless Sunday roast beef dinners to

international and dorm students even though, unbeknownst to most, cooking was not her favorite thing! Genuinely interested in “real conversations,” she enjoyed filling the large family home with extended family and friends, and learning what they were thinking and feeling. All the while, she remained supporter, partner, and consultant to her husband in his career as a teacher, administrator, and minister at the Academy of the New Church and Bryn Athyn College, to which they both gave heart and soul. She also tutored English as a second language to international students, volunteered at the Swedenborg Library, and translated French articles into English. Language and literature were her lifelong delights.

Ruth kept the home fires burning on her own for a month at a time when Dan and young adults, along with their own children, took wilderness backpacking trips in the Rocky Mountains. Twice she joined the trips, only to remember that she would prefer to stay home.

In 1989, Ruth and Dan lost their only son, 18-year-old Daniel Jonathan, in a wilderness accident in Wyoming. In the long term, this tragedy brought the whole family closer to the realities of the spiritual world and their interest in it.

At Dan's retirement, they moved to the Big Horn Mountains in Wyoming where Ruth found friends and purpose as secretary of the Big Horn Woman's Club. She also accompanied Dan on some of his pastoral trips in the US. In their free time, they took great delight in square dancing, which they did for decades.

In 2014, they moved to Two Harbors, Minnesota. Ruth made friends playing bridge and volunteering at the library, and continued to host dinners even with short-term memory loss that made life frustrating for her. Always active, she loved to walk along Lake Superior and the streets of Two Harbors, until illness in March 2024 resulted in a move to Barross Cottages, a care facility. She spent her final year there, recording her experiences faithfully with pen and paper, trying to keep things straight, dealing with constant frustrations and confusions, correcting everyone's grammar, and offering bright smiles and intriguing, existential questions to anyone who walked into her room.

With a belief system drawn from Emanuel Swedenborg's Biblical explanations of creation, a spiritual world, and eternal life, she never balked at her own death. We enjoy thinking of her spirit released from her body, her intellect intact, and her joyful reunion with loved ones, especially her parents, her sister Susan, and her son Danny, now gone for 36 years.

Her husband Dan, their children, grandchildren and Ruth's sisters will all miss her, but look forward to seeing her again one day in heaven.

A memorial service was held (and livestreamed) at United Church of Two Harbors on August 16, with special music followed by a reception in the

church basement. The Rt. Rev. David Lindrooth of Bryn Athyn, PA., a long-time family friend, officiated. Both the memorial service and the speeches at the reception can be found on YouTube under:

- *Ruth Parker Goodenough Memorial Service*
- *Remembering Ruth Parker Goodenough*

Ruth's interment and memorial will take place April 4th, 2026, in Bryn Athyn, PA.

This memorial was written by Katya Gordan and edited for the Journal by Kathy Simons.

“The Lord wants to have everyone near Him... He would like to have us not just beside Him but in Him. That is the nature of the Lord’s love.” Secrets of Heaven 1799

An Experiment

Ruth Parker Goodenough

Originally published in the Theta Alpha Journal, Fall 1972.

What is New Church education? Religion lessons? Going to a New Church school? Living among New Church people? Family Worship? All these contribute greatly, but doesn't New Church education depend basically on how parents raise their children? Every day, all day, our children are learning from us, their mothers, and, to a lesser extent at first, from their fathers. We are continually conveying ideas, habits, affections and attitudes which form a deep basis, good or bad, for later development.

What a fantastic job! How can the Lord trust us to do it? How can He bear to risk all those innocent, beautiful children with us amateurs, struggling as we are with our own regeneration and probably not very far along? Does He really think we can provide what they need to help them through infancy, childhood and adolescence into a good and useful adulthood? Does He imagine we can help them through the pitfalls – all the evil of the world around them, all the evil tendencies within them?

Obviously, yes, He does think we can. Mostly He thinks so because He Himself is doing almost all the work. But He does give us a part in it – an important one. It's not just changing diapers and teaching them to say "Thank you very much for the nice time." In his book *New Church Education in the Home*, Rev. Erik Sandstrom, states on p. 70, ...the preparation for regeneration

during childhood is a purely Divine work, while nevertheless parents must cooperate so as to “allow” that Divine work to proceed. The Lord operates by means of influx; but there must be in the mind the things that are capable of receiving the influx. That is how “it is given to parents to cooperate with the Lord” to the end that the child “may be prepared for a life in heaven,” as it is said in the admonition to parents after the baptism of their child.

We can easily muff our part through neglect, mistaken ideas, or unawareness. Shouldn’t we work to find the very best ways to do the bit that is within our province? Is it not vital that we consciously seek goals, methods, attitudes of child-raising that are based on the truths of the Word as revealed to the New Church? Who else has that opportunity and responsibility? Much of value can be gained from secular books, but principles must come from the Lord’s truth. Because He alone really knows what’s what with children, and with life.

This is the kind of thinking that led to the formation of two discussion groups in Bryn Athyn this past winter and spring. The idea of small groups, meeting regularly to discuss the New Church education of our children was proposed at a Bryn Athyn Chapter Theta Alpha meeting in January. About twenty women responded, and they organized themselves into a morning and an evening group, each meeting once every two weeks. (The morning group was possible because of a grandmother and a young mother who looked after the pre-schoolers. What an invaluable contribution!) Both groups decided to begin with a general look at the subject, before going into deeper studies. What better book to use than *New Church Education in the Home* by the Rev. Erik Sandstrom?

Editor’s note: Are there any groups like this one currently meeting (in person or online) in the New Church? Please let the Journal know if you are involved in a discussion group like this. We would love to hear about it! Contact details are in the front of every issue.

In Memory of Marilyn Parker Asplundh

June 15, 1931- October 13, 2025

It is the Lord's greatest wish that we grow in our ability to usefully serve the people around us. He wants this, because through us He can do so much for others, and He wants this because He knows the joy and fulfillment that serving others can bring to our lives. This is a fundamental purpose of our lives in this world. We are placed here to choose for eternity what kind of person we want to be. This is not a single choice. We choose over and over again. A woman doesn't make a single choice to be a wife, mother, an active part of an extended family and a useful member of a community and then all that she does follows from that single choice. Each day she chooses what to focus on and what to dedicate her time and talent to. A person who works sincerely, justly, and faithfully to fulfill the roles in her life will have her mind drawn more and more into seeing and attending to the most important parts of these roles. Marilyn Parker Asplundh's life had a significant influence on so many.

Marilyn Elizabeth Parker was born June 15, 1931 to Joseph Wren Parker and Zella Emmendorfer Parker in Elizabeth, NJ. Her childhood was somewhat colored by the Great Depression and the entrance of the United States into WWII. Marilyn was a Girl Scout, and her mother was a Scout leader. Marilyn's mother taught her sewing and baking. Marilyn said her mother was a

wonderful baker.

Regular vacations were in Maine where Marilyn's Aunt May and husband Victor had a home. Her Aunt May was unusual for her time in that she graduated from college in the 1890s. Marilyn, herself, was very influenced to work hard and do well by the college track English teacher she had at Plainfield High School in New Jersey. Marilyn went on to study at Simmons Women's College in Boston. During Marilyn's senior year at Simmon's College, a man named Robert Asplundh was going to graduate school at nearby Harvard University. Bob invited her on a date. On that date, although she apparently found him dauntingly tall, she saw him insist on giving back extra change that he had been inadvertently handed and noticed the honesty this reflected. They dated for a period of time and then stopped. But through Bob Marilyn got to know a couple in the New Church, Dan and Marion Horigan, who also lived in northern New Jersey. She helped them with child care. She attended the memorial service for one of their children who died at age four and found the ideas about heaven inspiring and something she wanted to learn more about. With the Horigans' encouragement she moved to Bryn Athyn, attended full-time courses at the college to learn more about the New Church and was hired as Manager of the Dining Hall and dietician on the Academy campus during the 1955-1956 school year overseeing meals for about 100 high school and college students.

Meanwhile, Bob Asplundh came to the realization that Marilyn was the woman he wanted to marry. He proposed, she accepted and within half a year they were married on May 26th, 1956, in the Bryn Athyn Cathedral.

After their marriage Bob and Marilyn moved to the Chicago area where Bob worked for the Asplundh Tree Expert Company and they participated in the New Church congregation in

Glenview, IL. Marilyn was the leader of the Girls Club at the Glenview New Church in 1957. It was there that their first two children were born: Eric, often known as Ric, and Kendra. When Kendra was still a newborn the family moved back to Bryn Athyn and were fortunate to be able to get land and build a house on Alnwick Road in 1960, which has been their primary home ever since. Not long after the house was completed Steven was born, followed in time by Susan and Patricia Lee, often known as Lee. This is five children with the oldest being 7 years old, a rich and full life, particularly given Bob's busy career, although Marilyn remembers that he took his turns changing diapers, bathing children, and some of the other errands inevitable with children.

Bob and Marilyn seemed to wonderfully complemented each other. She had a strong perfectionist streak; in contrast, Bob was somewhat more relaxed in some areas of life such as raising their children. Bob also provided an environment in which Marilyn, who sometimes was seen as scarily poised and sophisticated, could relax and enjoy life. He helped bring the fun out in her life. For both of them the New Church was important and attending church on Sunday mornings was a regular habit.

In spite of her growing family, Marilyn accepted the role of the treasurer of the Theta Alpha International, a women's support organization for New Church education, taking on a role that had been filled by her mother-in-law for more than a dozen years previously. She served in that role from 1959 until 1969. Marilyn then served as the Vice President of the Theta Alpha International for a year before becoming President from 1971-1976. One of the perks of this role was the opportunity to travel as a representative of Theta Alpha. Marilyn wrote in 1974:

I've taken on traveling to other Church centers as a delightful bonus of the job as President. In fact, it's become an addiction. Truly, whether official or not, personal visits provide the best

of communication and enable a free exchange of ideas and information not obtained in any other way.

The following year she wrote:

For the past five years my husband and I have been completely spoiled by our travels to Church centers throughout the world. Since the last annual meeting we have journeyed to Glendale, California; and Washington, D. C. in the United States; Dawson Creek, B.C. in Canada, and topped off the year with a round-the-world trip including stops in Auckland, New Zealand; Hurstville, Australia; Johannesburg and Durban, South Africa; and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. ...We have found that New Church people throughout the world speak many different languages but share a common love that joins them all together.

After stepping down as Theta Alpha President, Marilyn continued with roles such as providing flowers for chapel services at the Secondary Schools and College and hosting teas for various events. In 1981 she was invited to join a committee to consider how the New Church could more effectively assimilate new members by helping them to find their place in a New Church

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congregation. In addition to these uses Marilyn was very active in the broader community both in the Philadelphia area and Vero Beach, a favored retreat by both her husband and her.

She was active in the lives of her grandchildren and although she was regularly beautifully dressed,

she would welcome a sticky hug. Marilyn made an effort to attend her grandchildren's plays, performances and graduations and supported their lives in other ways. She conveyed to them that she wanted her grandchildren to grow up to be good and useful citizens. She saw them as the individuals that they were.

Marilyn's beloved husband Robert passed away more than ten years before she did. Family members had a sense that she lost her *joie de vivre* when he died. Although Marilyn had a stoic quality to her nature, her longing to be with him again was often apparent. And now that wait is over for her. She is awakening to a new life in the world to come to be greeted by her husband, her parents, her brothers and others loved in her life. For many of us that knew her, it is not hard to picture her already on her way to becoming an angel in heaven where her love of being useful, her joy in relationships, her love of beauty can find new outlet in the Lord's heavenly kingdom.

Concerning this new life the teachings for the New Church state:

As soon as we arrive in the other life, we are all recognized by our friends and relatives and by people we have known in one way or another. Further, we talk with each other and continue to see each other in keeping with our friendship in the world. I have heard many people who had just come from the world are overjoyed to see their friends again, and their friends are overjoyed that they had arrived and a husband and wife will welcome each other joyfully. (Heaven and Hell 494)

This memorial was written by Eric Carswell and edited for the Journal by Kathy Simons.

Adolescent Religion in the US and at the Academy of the New Church

Theta Alpha Charter Day Luncheon Talk
October 10, 2025

Hilary Bryntesson

Opening the Way: Faith, Freedom, and Formation at ANC

At the Academy of the New Church (ANC) we are dedicated to nurturing our students' faith and their relationship with the Lord. Our mission is central to ANC life—embedded in our chapel program and religion classes, in the classroom curriculum and our extra-curricular activities: *to prepare students for a principled and useful life in this world and to eternity, guided by the teachings of the New Church.*

New Church education is about educating both the will and the understanding. The will enables us to love and act; the understanding enables us to think and speak. The will is the seat of our emotion and motivation. The understanding is the home of our intellect and reasoning. In the New Church, we acknowledge that only instruction can prepare us for heaven (*Heaven and Hell* 512), but we also have to nurture the will and our affections. “No one is ever instructed by means of the truth, but by means of affections of truth; for truths apart from affection do indeed come to the ear as sound, but do not enter the memory. What causes them to enter the memory, and to remain therein, is affection” (*Arcana Coelestia* 3066).

This dual emphasis—truth and affection—guides our work.

At the same time, we are reminded of the Third Law of Divine Providence: there must be no external compulsion in matters of religion. None of us can be compelled as to what we think or will (*Divine Providence* 129). Yes, our students attend chapel. Yes, they are required to take religion classes. Yes, we cultivate a culture shaped by New Church principles. And yet, we must carefully protect their freedom as rational beings in the making. The *Arcana* reminds us that our responsibility is “opening the way.” As Bishop Pendleton said, “Mediate good is the good of childhood.” It is a process.

In recent years, I have sensed a positive trend toward deeper faith among our students. Co-teaching Senior Girls’ Religion with Rev. Barry Halterman has given me a window into the thoughtful and searching minds of our young women as they contemplate love and marriage. But I wanted to understand more broadly: Are we truly nurturing both will and understanding? Are we opening the way?

To explore this, we developed a voluntary, anonymous questionnaire administered to 84 students at ANC, with parental permission in accordance with federal guidelines. We also compared our findings to national data from the Pew Research Center on adolescent religiosity.

In a culture increasingly marked by disaffiliation, ANC students overwhelmingly maintain a religious identity.

Religious Affiliation

Nationally, approximately 62% of U.S. teens identify with a formal religion, while roughly one-quarter to one-third identify as religious “nones,” a category encompassing atheists, agnostics, and those with no specific affiliation. At ANC, 81% of students identify with a religion, and 89% of

respondents identify as New Church. Only 3% identify as religious “nones,” and 16% report believing in a higher power. Even among those who did not identify formally, many affirmed God-centered morality and the Ten Commandments as guiding principles.

The contrast is striking: in a culture increasingly marked by disaffiliation, ANC students overwhelmingly maintain a religious identity.

Alignment with Parents

Nationally, 76% of teens report sharing their parents’ religious beliefs. At ANC, 79% of New Church respondents described themselves as “very or somewhat closely aligned” with their parents’ beliefs.

This matters. “It is well-known...that children take from their parents tendencies toward the kind of love and life their parents have” (*Conjugal Love* 202). Family practice remains foundational.

Relationship with God and Prayer

Fifty-six percent of U.S. teens report feeling close to God. Among ANC New Church students, 76% describe their relationship with God as “close”.

When asked how often they talk to God, 67% of New Church students said “daily” or “a few times a week”. Seventy-six percent report praying “often” or “fairly often.”

Their comments were moving:

- “God is my #1 in everything.”
- “God makes me happy. I work through God.”
- “I put God in every-

We are reminded that “growth must involve a decline” as faith moves from historical to living. Young people may challenge the church. That too is part of spiritual formation.

thing I do.”

- “I thank Him for what I have and the good things that happened... every night.”

There were also voices of development:

- “I’m not exactly close to God, but I don’t want to push away the opportunity to learn about Him.”
- “I don’t know if I believe in God or not.”

Comments like the ones from the second category above, while in the minority, were as likely to come from students who identified as New Church as those who were “nones” or unaffiliated. These comments are not failures; they are evidence of growth. Teenagers experience enormous neurological, hormonal and psychological change. They question. They wrestle. They differentiate from their parents. We are reminded that “growth must involve a decline” (De Charms, *Growth of the Mind*, 1953), as faith moves from historical to living. Young people may challenge the church. That too is part of spiritual formation. We can breathe and trust.

Church Attendance

In the United States, 33% of teens attend church often or fairly often, and rates of attendance are closely tied to the regularity with which their parents attend. Do they attend because they want to, or because their parents require it? Pew Research reported an even split between “because they want to” (35%) and “because their parents want them to” (38%). However, among students who attended more frequently, 61% said it was because they themselves wanted to go. At ANC, 30% of our New Church students attend regularly, as do 20% of students of other faiths.

Our students wrote:

- “I go to church to connect with God through worship and learn about my faith and grow spiritually.”
- “It grounds me.”
- “It gives me peace.”
- “My mom makes me go to church, but now I like being

closer to God.”

- “It dispenses new perspectives or divine truth for free. Also like the congregants.”
- “I go to church 'cause my family tells me to & for the snacks.”
- “I like going to church to connect with the Lord, but sometimes I sleep in.”

Honest. Humorous. Real.

Religious Practice at Home

Just as adolescent church attendance mirrors parental participation, the religious tone set by parents in the home plays an important role. As stated before “...children take from their parents tendencies toward the kind of love and life their parents have.” (*Conjugal Love* 202). About half of U.S. teens say grace before meals; about a quarter read scripture together as a family. At ANC, 44% say grace before meals. Only 8% of New Church students read the Word or Writings together as a family.

Students noticed:

- “Hardly ever say grace now because we don’t eat together because of sports.”
- “I really wish we did more.”
- “I mostly read it on my own. My parents also read together every night.”

A clear trend emerged in both the Pew research and our ANC research - church attendance was associated with more enjoyment of doing religious things with their family.

Biggest Influences on Teens’ Religion

Seventy-six percent of New Church ANC students named parents and family as the biggest influence on their beliefs. Fifty-eight percent listed school. Nationally, only 15% of teens cite school as an influence. This is a profound privilege. Faith-based education matters.

Students also testified that religion motivates service:

- “Very, very much so; it makes me want to serve others.”
- “Community service connects me to God... makes me feel useful and part of His plan.”
- “I have grown up being taught that helping others is right.”

Our mission to prepare students for useful lives is not abstract; it is lived.

Challenges and Doubt

Twenty-six percent of ANC students report doubting often or very often. Forty-two percent rarely or never doubt.

Their struggles are familiar:

- “It’s hard to do the right thing sometimes.”
- “I judge people when I need to work on my own sins.”
- “Balancing my beliefs with the opinions of my peers.”
- “Hard to perfectly live up to your beliefs ALL the time.”
- “I have a hard time following my values and aligning them with my actions.”

And yet:

- “It’s human nature to doubt... God has a plan.”
- “Thinking about the times the Lord has helped me.”
- “Talking about it.”

Doubt, when engaged honestly, can deepen ownership.

Gratitude and Peace

We asked students about gratitude:

- “I thank God for things every night.”
- “I feel safe and at ease knowing I’m being protected.”
- “Whenever I see something beautiful in nature... I think of God.”
- “Everything is beautiful.”

On peace:

- “If I talk to God I feel at peace.”
- “The more I pray the more peace I feel.”
- “Whenever I think about religion, I feel a sense of happiness

because I know that I am loved and being cared for.”

There were also poignant admissions:

- “Religion rarely gives me a sense of peace.”
- “I’m never at peace.”

These responses remind us that spiritual education needs to be paired with thoughtful social and emotional support. At the Academy of the New Church, we are actively developing Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs to strengthen students’ resilience, self-awareness, and capacity for healthy relationships. After all, do we not all need more peace and gratitude in our lives?

How Students Want to Grow

When asked how they want to grow:

- “Getting closer to God, serving Him, church.”
- “To read more about the Lord.”
- “Go to church more often and connect myself more to the Lord.”
- “Feel more connected, I want to grow and read the Word.”
- “Read the Word or Writings with my family..but sadly that’s not our family.”
- “Becoming a more moral individual.”
- “Don’t know still working on it.”
- “I wish it was a more important part of my life.”
- “B-Halt’s class makes me feel very connected and I’m really enjoying it.”
- “I’d like to go to church with my family more.”
- “I am not 100% sure where I stand on it, but I think I want to feel more connected.”
- “I’m trying to get into the habit of [talking more to God].”
- “If I were to identify with a faith, it would be NC.” (Catholic student)
- “I would like to pray more.”
- “Spend more time in nature.”
- “I could pay attention in Mr. Barber’s class.”

Perhaps most touching was this candid observation: “My mom goes to church and reads the Word, but sometimes she does things like going out for a drink or two with her friends.”

It is a gentle reminder that teenagers are always watching. They notice the complexities of adult life. They are quietly discerning what authenticity looks like.

Key Takeaways

Parents matter enormously—faith practiced together shapes belief. School matters as well. The Academy of the New Church has a significant influence on students’ religious identity and understanding, and we strive to provide instruction that opens the way. Chapel matters. Students themselves note that engaging chapel talks foster attention and reflection, and they appreciate the sincerity and openness of their ministers. Chris and Barry connect with teenagers and present truth in ways that can be heard, nurturing an affection for learning about the Lord. We are, perhaps, doing a careful and thoughtful job of guiding without coercion. And finally, we trust the process. There is no break in the Lord’s protection. As the Word reminds us: “Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). May we continue opening the way.

Hilary Bryntesson is in her 37th year of teaching, and still loves it with a passion. She graduated from Bryn Athyn College in 2011 with a M.A. in Religious Studies, and in 2016 with a M.Sc. in Health Education from Arcadia University. Her theses for both masters’ degrees focused on how to teach young people about love, marriage and relationships. Hilly is married to Dr Fredrik Bryntesson who leads the Biology Department at Bryn Athyn College and they have two grown-up children, Emma and Markus.

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

Vera P. Glenn

Introduction

These are some of my memories of living in the old farmhouse and growing up among the apple and peach orchards of the Academy Farm. Part I appeared in the November 2025 issue of the *Journal*. This is part II of III.

In 1928 the Academy said they could no longer pour money into the farm. The Powells could stay there, but they were on their own. My father, just graduated from two years of college at the Academy, gave up any idea of becoming a teacher or a minister to help the family. He and Grandpa became partners and began to make an orchard out of the failing old farm. In 1929 the Depression hit in earnest and all over the country things were under a dark cloud.

The Farmhouse

It was during these bleak times that Edith Kuhl (my mother) came down from Kitchener, Ontario, Canada to work as a sort of governess for the Harold Pitcairn family. At a party in the Stone Room of the Pitcairn family home, Cairncrest, Dave (my dad) and Edith met and began their courtship. They were married in November of 1934. Edith would have liked a home of her own, but there was no chance of that. So, they began to fix up a sort of apartment in four backrooms of the farmhouse, two rooms upstairs and two down.

Mother had some savings from her job at the Pitcairns which were put to good use. They were able to install their own bathroom in part of one of the upstairs rooms. The other part became a sewing room. Here with her Wilcox and Gibbs sewing machine mother thriftily made most of my clothes—including a Sunday coat and leggings and bonnet out of an old brown wool coat of hers. In running the water pipes for the bathroom down the chimney shaft, the plumber made a discovery: an original fireplace that had long been closed up. When it was opened and repaired it made a cozy and charming addition to the living room/dining room downstairs. A French door replaced the old solid wooden door which opened onto the side porch, giving a welcoming private entrance and more light inside. Mother, herself, refinished the wide pine floorboards. With an oriental patterned cotton rug in blue and rose tones, a couch and big upholstered armchair, an antique drop-leaf table, and chairs, she created a pleasant, comfortable room.

Much of our family life was lived in the kitchen. This was one step down from the living room/dining room in the wooden frame addition at the back of the house. There was a pot-bellied stove for warmth in the winter which made it cozy, and a table and chairs. Cooking was done on a new ivory-colored propane stove with green trim and “OVEN” printed on the oven door. The gas had to be lit with a match from the box on a small shelf above my reach. There was a glass-fronted cupboard above the sink that held our dishes: some fiesta ware and orange tinted glassware, favors from the movie theaters. Later, mother got into Stangl ware, which we collected from excursions to the outlet in Flemington, New Jersey. Once, I remember, mother warmed baby rabbits at the open oven door, feeding them with milk from an eye dropper. I think Wag (our family dog) had gotten the mother. And one Easter there were two chicks—one blue, one green—in a cardboard box in the kitchen as a surprise for me.

When my uncles, Joe and Olly, who slept in the front bedroom

on “our” side of the house, went off to college, Mother claimed the large, pleasant room before anyone else in the family could move in. This became my parents’ bedroom. When I was first left alone in the little back bedroom, it seemed a long way down the hall to Mama and Daddy, but I soon got used to it.

I loved my bedroom with a window at each end, bringing in light—morning and evening. There was a big wild cherry tree outside the morning window. When the cherries were ripe, I could lean out my window and pick them. From the evening window I could see over the orchard to the powerhouse and beyond to the red tile roofs of the Academy buildings. One fateful evening, I watched from the window as an arsonist’s fire broke through the roof of Benade Hall.

After I learned to read in First Grade, I fell in love with books and spent hours sprawled on my bed traveling to far-off times and places. “There is no frigate like a book,” as the poet, Emily Dickinson, said. In 8th grade, when I became a Phillies [baseball] fan, I would listen on my little radio to the Whiz Kids win games late into the night and finally clinch the pennant in 1950. Beyond childhood, I slept in that room until I got married at age 32 and moved into my husband Bruce’s house just up the road.

During the Depression years, we were poor, although I didn’t know it and didn’t feel deprived, but lots of people were desperate. Many men, homeless and jobless, rode empty box cars on freight trains or wandered the roads looking for work or a handout. And on a hot summer day such a man came walking down our lane. I saw him from the open window of my parents’ bedroom. He was carrying some sort of box over his shoulder and when he stopped at the edge of the lawn, swung the box in front of him and began to play a tune. I knew he was an organ grinder, even though there was no monkey like in the story books. “Can we give him some money?” I asked my mother. She shook her head. “He walked all the way down the lane,” I said. Reluctantly, she searched out a

nickel from the small pile of change on my father's dresser. "You can give him this if you want to," she said. I felt a little scared, but I was determined. I ran downstairs and out the door to where the man stood. I dropped the nickel into his hand and hurried back to the porch to watch him as he walked slowly back up the lane. We should have given him a drink of water, too, I thought.

We also had the use of the third story on our side of the house. As a child, I spent hours in the big attic playing dress-ups with friends, trying on mother's discarded evening dresses and scrounging in an old steamer trunk for bygone finery. In the attic there was a sturdy door between our side and my grandparents' side, but the dim earthen-floor cellar merged, one space into the other. The furnace, which my dad took care of, was in the far room of the cellar. The coal was in a bin on our side. I remember coal deliveries when the large black lumps would come rumbling and rattling down the chute through the window. And I remember Dad shoveling coal into the glowing maw of the crusty old furnace. Back behind the furnace in the soft gray dust were old glass beer bottles left over from Prohibition when Dad made home brew for his male friends and their "Pitch" games before he was married.

When my youngest aunts, Mary and Sarah, got married, and Grandmother was left with only Uncle Ben in her side of the house, she was finally agreeable to giving up her parlor—this was something my mother had wanted for a long time. Mother soon transformed Grandmother's stiff, formal parlor into an attractive and friendly living room. The dark wooden settee and armchair with the hard and slippery green plush covered seats, stuffed with horsehair, were carried into the attic. The deep doorway between the two parts of the house was made into a bookcase. Mother loved to entertain, and now she had enough space to do it. One of her favorite things to do was to have friends in to play "Pitch," the traditional Powell card game, that mother was very sharp at.

Playmates

As an only child, I have often been asked if I was lonely, and sometimes if I was spoiled. I do remember wishing I had a bigger family to celebrate with when the three of us sat down to a holiday meal like Thanksgiving or Christmas. I didn't mind most of the time, besides my David twin cousins were born only a little more than a month after me, and we more or less grew up together. Laddie (Ladice) and Joey were the closest I came to having a sister and brother. And their mother, Cousin Gladys, was like a second mother. One time I decided to run away from home, packed a bag and took all my dresses on hangers over my arm. When Mother asked me where I was going, I answered, "I'm going to live with Cousin Gladys." However, I only got as far as the end of the lawn before I thought better of it.

Joe, Laddie, and I loved to act out stories from books we'd read or movies we'd seen. We used to put on little plays. The side porch was the stage, with our audience a step down on the lawn. This was probably where my love of theater started. Bryn Athyn was oriented to drama. Plays and musicals were put on by the C & S Club, the Rep Theater, and the Academy Schools. I went to them all and thought they were marvelous. We also did plays in elementary school, in individual classes or all grades. To my sorrow, no one recognized my acting ability, and I never had a leading role. I was always a "lady-in-waiting", a Hansel and Gretel angel, or a pumpkin.

I spent a lot of time playing at the Davids'. Laddie and I often roamed the Pennypack Woods together, or if she came to my house we would wade in the little stream below the house, build dams or play Indian, making pots out of wet clay from the bank and baking them in the sun. One time the three of us—Laddie, Joe and I—decided to be explorers and set off on an adventure to find out where the little stream went. It was tough going through bushes and briars and woods until we came out on the Philmont Country Club golf course where it merged with the bigger mill stream. We pressed on

until we lost our way in a wetland of head high bullrushes and orange-flowering touch-me-nots. By the time we found our way home it was lunchtime. We'd never even told Mother where we were going. That's something I am grateful for from my childhood—the freedom to wander and play all over Bryn Athyn without fear or worry about trespassing or being accosted.

There were Powell cousins too. My favorite was Joan Marino, Aunt Sally's daughter, about two years younger than I was. She would come to visit Grandmother, and we had lots of time to play when she stayed overnight. We often took turns on the swing that Daddy had made for me in the side yard. He'd put a beam between the pear tree and the big black cherry and tied the ropes to that. Under the wooden seat was a scooped-out patch of earth made by the wear of feet pushing off. Or we would go to the barn and look for kittens in the nests in the hay. Or sit in two of the big gray wooden chairs on Grandmother's front porch and play games of cards or Chinese checkers.

Mother once took in a foster child for a year and a little more. Bambi was the daughter of an acquaintance of mother's—a widow. She couldn't keep her child with her where she was working as a housekeeper. I think I was in kindergarten or maybe first grade. Bambi wasn't at school yet. Having another younger child in the house was probably good for me—rubbed off the rough, self-centered edges. We got along all right. I don't remember squabbles, though we probably had some.

Going to school (I started with Mrs. Simons' preschool where we made little loaves of bread, and each day began with the worship circle) really opened up the opportunity for making friends. Doris Acton became a good friend in preschool. I was often invited to her home. One memory in particular stays in my mind of pulling taffy in her kitchen with her brother and sister—stretching it across the open space between the stove and the refrigerator the width of the room.

When I was in maybe 4th or 5th grade, my dad put up a ladder so I could get into the loft above the spring house and look around. I was delighted—the perfect place for a club house. Laddie, Doris, Janet—who joined our class in 2nd grade—and I formed a club. We spent one afternoon cleaning up the loft from years of neglect: dust, spiders, the clay shells of mud wasp nests. There was only one place we could really stand upright that was under the peak of the roof. We hauled some boxes to sit on up the ladder and sat around deciding on a name for the club and what we would do. “The Good Will Club’s” first, and only, project was making books of stiff cloth pages cut out with pinking shears and pasted with pictures from old magazines. We made three books and sent them, with mother’s help, to the Children’s Ward of Abington Hospital. How exciting to get a letter back, thanking us for the books!

Darker Incidents

The Marlin Road gang was a group of neighborhood kids who got together informally to play games mostly on Sunday afternoons. In the spring and summer, we chose up teams and played soft ball or Prisoner’s Base. (Not being athletically inclined, I was one of the last to be chosen.) In the fall it was often Fox & Goose Chase all over the orchard. In the winter, if we had snow, we went sledding on the Philmont Country Club’s steep hill. One snowy morning the fun turned to disaster. A rather obnoxious young kid, just to be mean, was pushing our sleds down the hill after we’d dragged them to the top and were in a group resting. To give him some of his own back, an older boy pushed his sled down the hill. The sled caught the kid in the back of the knees and knocked him over. He screamed. Then he started crying and wouldn’t get up. The older boys said, “Aw get up—walk it off.” Finally, two older girls put him on a big sled and dragged him off home. That afternoon his mother phoned and told me that his leg was badly broken. She wanted me to tell her who had done it. But I deliberately lied and said I didn’t know.

I suppose I was old enough to know better when I committed my first theft. I was not really babysitting but being a sort of companion to a girl some years younger than myself. We were playing outside her house. She showed me a new toy—a miniature pair of clippers like the kind my father used in the orchard. I wanted them badly, and when she wasn't watching I slipped them in my pocket and took them home. Mother met me at the door. She had gotten a phone call—"Had I taken the clippers?" She made me turn around and take them right back and apologize. It was one of the hardest things I'd ever had to do. I remember the incident clearly, as if years later I still have something to repent of. Funny how one's first lies and sins stay with one.



Join the Conversation!

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

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

More Remembering Rick

N. Bruce Rogers

I thoroughly enjoyed Chris Simons' encomium to his deceased older brother Rick whose promising life was lost in Viet Nam. It reminded me of an occasion when Rick came to see me.

The year was, if I remember right, 1967. I was a young candidate for the priesthood, living with my new wife in what was then Echols' apartment. Rick asked to see me because he wanted to know what led me to the priesthood. How would he recognize the call if he were to hear one? We talked, I believe, for well over an hour. I don't remember precisely what we said, but I do remember thinking that after his military service, Rick would probably go on to train for and enter the priesthood. He was earnest. He was clear-thinking. He gave the impression of being a fine young man who would be an asset in the priesthood.

Alas, this was not to be. As Chris reports, Rick lost his life risking his life to save another's. Thanks, Chris, for the article.

Theta Alpha Charter Day Luncheon Meeting Notes and President's Report

Janet Krettek

October 10, 2025 | Noon–1:30 PM
Carl Asplundh Social Hall in Bryn Athyn Church School

The luncheon consisted of a variety of soups, salads, and sandwiches, followed by coffee, tea, and cookies. This generous spread was provided by the Cranch family—Kirsten, Andrea, and Brianne.

The ANC Dancers, under the tutelage of Sarah Gladish, performed a beautiful piece.

President's Report

Many changes have taken place this year. The new Bryn Athyn Church School and the Carl Asplundh Social Hall are beautifully built.

The Academy of the New Church is in a much stronger financial position and has launched a new program directed by Mary Heinrichs Williams called the “Compass” program, through which students may remain part of ANC while following individualized academic paths, including the exploration of career tracks.

Bryn Athyn College is finding its footing as it transitions away from sports teams. As a current BAC student—yes, you heard that right—I can tell you from firsthand experience that the quality of teaching is excellent... and I've been through a lot of schooling! The teachers have shared

that they are here because our students are different. They may not always be able to articulate why, but they truly enjoy teaching them. I understand what they mean. As a Drag-In, I see a difference in spirit, in charity, and a certain innocence. The activities are engaging as well—ballroom dancing, garden club, clay club, poetry night, barbell club, and even Coleman Boyeson inviting everyone to gather in the Common Center to watch a Phillies game. It renews my spirit to witness these young adults exploring and enjoying what life has to offer.

Theta Alpha International has experienced changes this past year as well. As you know, Helen Kennedy stepped down as the Theta Alpha *Journal* Editor. You did not miss the Spring issue—there wasn't one. However, Helen was able to recruit Kris Heinrichs Earle as our new *Journal* Editor. I had a preview of the Fall edition, and I believe you will be very pleased.

Please remember that due to the high cost of printing, the *Journal* will now be mailed in print twice a year only to those who have paid dues. Others will receive the print edition in the Fall only. If you have any questions or concerns, please email me or any member of the Executive Committee.

With Mary Willilams' new role, she has stepped down as our

Please remember that due to the high cost of printing, the Journal will now be mailed in print twice a year only to those who have paid dues.

ANC Liaison. Hilly Bryntesson—whom you will hear from shortly—has graciously accepted the position. Hilly is well organized and always thinking creatively, and I look forward to serving alongside her.

Aaliya Gunther is now in town and has taken on additional responsibilities beyond Social Media.

We also anticipate the return of a few valued initiatives. Cheryl Buss Cooper has agreed to mentor students for the Laws of Life Essay Contest, and we plan to restart the competition this year. As appropriate, Kris Earle will feature selected essays in the *Journal*.

The BAC [Bryn Athyn College] Theta Alpha Women's Award was discontinued about a decade ago. As it was gender-specific, and the Sons of the Academy were no longer functioning, the decision was made at that time to discontinue the awards. I did suggest reviving the Sons—but did not make much progress. ☺ However, perhaps the tide is turning. A minister at the college recently inquired about the awards and expressed support for their return. Conversations with the administration thus far have been encouraging. We are also exploring additional ways to support BAC professors and faculty.

With the completion of this beautiful new hall come some changes. We are now charged for its use and are required to carry event insurance. In light of these and other increased expenses, please note that luncheon ticket prices will increase next year.

Academy of the New Church Theta Alpha 2025 Girls Silver Award Recipients

- Isabella Marie Furness
- Yvonne Paolina Prue

Treasurer's Report

- Vote to accept the 2025–2026 Budget
- Vote to approve the Annual Meeting Notes

A Memorial Resolution was beautifully presented by Shannon Good.

The Theta Alpha Award was presented to Helen Kennedy in recognition of her more than a decade of dedicated service as Theta Alpha *Journal* Editor. Through thoughtful reflection and eloquent writing, she has explored many facets of life and living. Her artistic vision and faithful leadership have shaped and sustained the Journal for over ten years. We were honored to present her with a gift of appreciation.

Hilary Bryntesson was our guest speaker. Her talk, *Adolescent Faith in the US*, was based on a research project surveying high school students about their thoughts on religion and faith. It sparked a lively discussion and underscored the importance of continued research within our schools to ensure we are meeting the spiritual needs of today's youth.

We look forward to seeing you next year at the Charter Day Luncheon on October 9, 2026.

Submitted by Janet Krettek, President

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